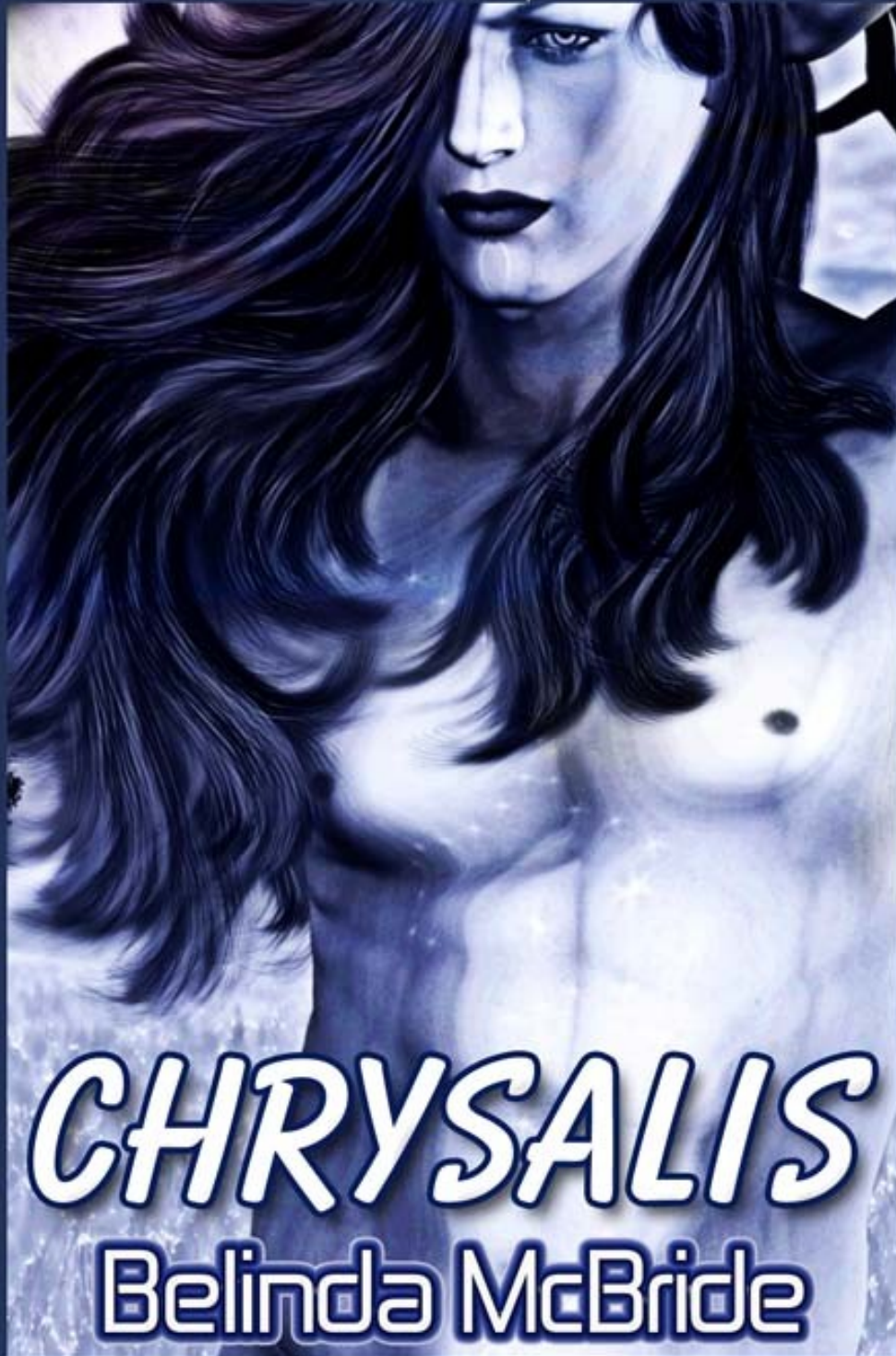


*Snowfire*



*Changeling Press*

**Snowfire: Chrysalis**  
**Belinda McBride**

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**Snowfire: Chrysalis**  
**Belinda McBride**

**Kell is haunted by memories of a place that doesn't exist. He dreams of a face he's never seen. He senses that somehow his life is wrong. Compelled by loneliness and isolation, he walks away from everything in a quest for answers.**

**Come with Kell as he journeys down a long, snowy highway to a mysterious town called Arcada. Maybe, just maybe, he will find his answers there.**

**And maybe he will find himself as well.**

## **Snowfire: Chrysalis**

Vintage sports cars don't handle all that well in the snow.

Not that the elderly Jag lets me down all that often, but as we crawled through drifts on Highway 70, I began to get the feeling that my long journey was about to come to an end.

The snow fell in those tiny, crystalline flakes that are so fine they dazzle the eye. When you try to make a snowball, it just falls apart like sand between the fingers. At first, it barely settled on the roadway, dancing away from the headlights of the car, but in time, the snow began to drift and blow across the road, eventually obscuring the roadway completely. I navigated using the slight elevation of the blacktop and the instinct that rarely lets me down. I was guided by the odd compulsion that had taken me from all that I knew for the promise of all that should be.

I'd been wandering in a funk for what seemed years, having sold my apartment and my business. Life had dried up, lost its appeal. One Tuesday I looked around and found myself alone, friendless and so painfully, obviously different from the general population, that it was clearly time to move on.

In the midst of my unhappiness, I remembered a face I'd never seen. I had memories of events that had never happened. A place came to mind, the memory of a small town that my family had visited in my youth. It was quintessential small town America, a town square, City Hall. The sort of place you generally see only on a movie set. Normal. In fact, that was the nickname of the place. While I couldn't remember the name of the small city, I vividly remembered the signs entering the city limits. They playfully welcomed the traveler to "Normalville, USA." I'd forgotten the state, the name of the town, even what part of the country we'd been in. Only that happy sign

lingered in my memory. Funny, though, my parents never recalled seeing that sign. In fact, they hadn't remembered the town at all. I couldn't forget.

Weeks on the road grew to months, wandering aimlessly from state to state, town to town. Like a vagrant, I lived out of my car. Some nights I slept pulled over at truck stops; other nights I slept in roadside motels. Oregon found me in a yurt by the Pacific Ocean. I sat there on the western edge of the continent and watched the sun drop behind a veil of luminescent clouds, wondering why those colors had been absent from my grey existence. Shifting through those clouds was a face from my dreams... a surreal vision of fire and ice. It was a face I'd sought in every person I'd encountered since the dreams had begun.

In time, the elegant Jag grew muddy and dim looking, and my carefully folded clothing sat in stacks on the back seat. Trash was collected daily, and I'd grown skilled at timing my motel stays so that my lank, black hair never grew too dirty, my body odor never became too offensive. My future was waiting somewhere on the highway in front of me. I didn't know what... or who... beckoned, but I was prepared.

I lived off take-out sandwiches and diner fare, but my weight never varied, not a single ounce. My five foot seven frame remained lanky and poorly muscled, again reaffirming my status as a boy-child, even well into the sixth decade of my life.

That had been the first real evidence of how different I was from other people. One day, I realized that my staff had grown old in my employ, but oddly, none ever remarked on my seeming youth. Like always, when they saw me in the morning, it was as though they were seeing me for the first time. At the end of the day, I was forgotten, until once again, they saw me in the morning. That was the way I wanted it to be. That was the way it *had* to be.

Decades of careful investment and savings kept me in funds. Like all my kind, my luck seemed to turn that way. Even as I traveled, my fortunes increased.

But I remained invisible, even as I had been in "normal" life. When the police stopped me for speeding, they approached the window of my car, having already

forgotten why they pulled me over. I could literally get away with murder, if I so chose. But I didn't choose that path. Why would I?

So in the middle of a heavy storm, the afternoon grew to night, and I crossed into the city limits of a small town. Blowing snow blurred out the name of the place. The sign indicating population looked blurry. The local high school teams were the Falcons and the Cubs, their games were sponsored by Eagan's Pharmacy.

Together, the Jag and I crawled into the town to be greeted by the huge, friendly sign, unchanged by decades, illuminated even in the heart of the storm.

Welcome to Normalville, USA.

We cruised down the approach strip. To my surprise, Mae's Diner was open for business. Through the foggy glass I could clearly see a uniformed figure hunched over a plate at the counter. Several other diners were seated at tables. I had little appetite, or I might have gravitated into that brightly lit haven like a moth to a flame.

Instead, I searched for a likely place to put up for the night. Most towns like this had motels on the outskirts.

Cruising around the town square, I paused to marvel at the fantasy images there, a couple walking slowly in the snow, hand in hand, their laughter carried in silver puffs of breath. A half-hearted snowman stood near a bench, an apple propped in the forked branch of his wooden hand. I had to laugh.

It was on the route out of town that the car finally decided that she'd had enough. We were nearing city limits. Businesses grew far apart, trees hugged the road, eerily still in the snow. The engine gave a sigh and we rolled to a stop on the shoulder of the road. No amount of coaxing brought her back.

Sighing, I looked back. It was a good mile back to town. My cell phone was tucked into my coat pocket. When I pulled it out, the battery was charged, but it had no reception. No doubt the local mechanics were safely home and abed by now.

I could... I should get out of the car and lift the hood. Perhaps I had some latent mechanical skill that would repair the Jag. But metal and mechanics had never been my

friend, except when the metal was precious, cradling a rare gem in its clasp. Then my hands held genius.

So I sat in the Jag, watching the snow come down, comfortable in the knowledge that cold weather never really bothered me.

It had been perhaps an hour before I stirred from the odd, serene trance that had overtaken me. My skin tingled, alive with the chill in the air. It was well past midnight, yet the snowscape was oddly illuminated. I rubbed fog from the car windows to see that the snow had come to a momentary halt.

The world felt as though it had been frozen in time, leaving me alone to marvel at the perfection of nature. Unlocking the car door, I emerged from the Jag, letting the chill embrace my body. My head was naked. I wore only a leather jacket over my tee-shirt, but the frigidity of the night kissed my bare skin. As I exhaled, a plume floated from between my lips. Once again I exhaled, this time with focus, and the plume shattered into millions of tiny sparkles of ice.

I laughed in sheer delight.

Turning, I knew I was no longer alone. My rescuer had arrived in a pick-up truck, parking behind the dark silhouette of my disabled car. The figure that emerged and approached me was slender, not so tall, and delightfully androgynous in appearance. Nearly as undefined in nature as myself.

"Need a ride?"

The voice was not high pitched, nor was it deep. I still didn't know if this was a man or woman. A knit cap was pulled close to my rescuer's face. Slender legs were clad in denim. The heavy jacket and lace-up boots could belong to either.

Knowing full well that I projected a similar appearance, I felt an odd twinge of sensation that was foreign, yet alluring. Arousal?

"I'm Pim."

I nodded, extending my bare hand. Even through the heavy glove Pim wore, I felt a tingle of electric attraction. "Kell. And yes, if you could drop me at a motel?"



Pim dropped my hand and turned away, climbing back into the truck, leaning over to unlock the passenger door. As we began to roll away, I thought briefly of clothing and toiletries, the essentials to take me through the night.

"Don't worry. I've got everything you need."

In the dim light, there was a gentle smile dancing on Pim's pretty lips.

\* \* \*

Inside the kitchen of the cozy Craftsman style house, I saw that Pim had short, rust colored hair, and upon shedding the heavy coat, I saw a sweetly sexless body, narrow hips, flat chest, thin and almost childlike in stature. I knew exactly what Pim would look like naked because we were the mirror image of one another. Six decades into life and I still looked like an adolescent, with undeveloped muscles and sex organs.

If not for the dormant nub between my legs, I'd easily pass for a girl.

Smooth face, slender arms, wide, deeply colored eyes. But Pim's were the color of forest. Mine were the color of the night sky.

"Show me."

I lifted a brow at the slightly imperious command. "Show you... what?"

Pim paused, and the more I watched, the more I determined that my new acquaintance was female. Mannerisms gave it away, the crooked eyebrow, a hand on the hip. The warm, teasing fragrance that drifted onto the air as the layers of clothing came away.

"Show me yourself."

Now that stumped me, so I stood awkwardly, uncertain what to do next. Finally, I felt compelled to admit the truth that had never been uttered aloud, the secret that my parents had taken to their grave. "I'm a Changeling."

Pim's mouth dropped open slightly, and then closed once more. Taking my hand, she led me into another room, the living room of her house. In that space, I smelled spiced apples. It was warm and cozy. Without warning, several candles glowed to life.

"You've never... I'm sorry. I've never met a Changeling." She seemed to struggle for words, and I enjoyed the play of emotion over her face. She turned to the fireplace and gazed at it a moment. Magically, flames came to life, flickering sinuously with nothing to feed them but her will. She was a fire elemental... My opposite. My perfect match.

"You're an ice elemental."

"I suppose. I don't know much about this."

"You stood out in freezing weather without discomfort. I saw you blow ice into the air."

She had me there. I'd never really thought about it before.

"You've never emerged from..." She waved her hand in my direction. My body. My poor, sad little body.

I grinned and flushed in embarrassment. "I thought this was all there was."

In truth, I'd spent decades watching the people around me living, loving, copulating and reproducing. I'd ached for that indefinable something that they had. There had been a few experiments with men. My inability to attain an erection precluded sex with women, though they held my attention. Instead, I allowed myself to be used by males, hoping to feel something other than... used.

However, no connections had formed, and the few men who were attracted to me were fascinated by my youthful androgyny, not my personality or character.

Pim frowned and cocked her head, looking me over in curiosity. "Yet you must have abilities, you drew me from miles away."

Yes, I had abilities; I knew that much about myself. It was poor compensation for such an isolated existence. But perhaps that isolation had come to an end. Perhaps my compulsion to return to this place had been a need for the companionship offered by another of my species.

"Kell, think of your body as a shell... a chrysalis."

She began to disrobe. I did the same, watching her as she watched me slip out of jeans and a long-sleeved tee-shirt. Soon enough, we stood bare before one another. The

sexless nub between my legs gave a twitch, drawing my eye. My balls grew tight, not against the cold, but with an amazing and delicious sensation. My penis began to grow and lengthen, drawing a smile to both our faces. It was barely the size of my thumb, but still, it was an erection. My first.

“You’ve never... Of course you haven’t.”

I lifted a brow at her comment, and she gave me a saucy grin. “You’ve never come into your true form, so of course you’ve never had an erection... or climaxed.”

True. But then, I’d never realized that I had another form.

“Okay, Kell. This body... it’s a shell, one that harbors your true form. This is for our safety. It enables us to exist among the others.”

She reached out and took my hand, holding it while she looked into my eyes. As I watched, her image shifted, grew hazy. She grew taller, and her hair flowed from her head, writhing into long, twining lengths. The rusty color morphed to flame. Her slender, boyish body grew willowy and tall, much taller than me.

Her eyes didn’t change, except to become... more. The green sparked with copper flame, they grew larger, more exotic. Standing before me was the very image of grace and beauty and heat that had haunted my dreams. My hand dropped unconsciously to my penis, which had grown surprisingly large and heavy. I rubbed it, my back arching in frustration at the sensation of need.

“You’re like a butterfly in a chrysalis. Don’t think about the change, just be.”

Just *be*? I let my eyes drop shut, conjuring up images of myself the way I should be. While I stood, Pim moved closer, her arms coming around my body. She was curvy and warm, her skin like heated silk. Without opening my eyes, I cupped a breast, feeling its weight in my hand. When I bent to kiss the sweet tip, she gasped softly. Encouraged, I tried it again, pulling the nipple into my mouth, suckling gently.

My hands wandered her body, my mind completely forgetful of its mission. I traced the dip of her waist, the curve of her back as it sloped to her bottom. Her hands trailed down my belly, reaching to fondle my cock, making me blissfully hard. She

stroked, and then squeezed my member, and I was too thrilled by the new sensations to feel embarrassment at my puny size.

We slid to the floor, unconcerned about finding a bed. The floor was fine for our first carnal adventure.

The goddess that was Pim kissed her way down my body, her hot tongue leaving pink marks on my skin. She kissed me. She was fire, and my skin grew pale and icy, fiercely alive. Our mouths met, our tongues tangled, and steam rose into the air.

With intensity, she pulled away, twisting her body to mine, her head dropping between my legs. She nuzzled, pulling my cock into the heated cavern of her mouth. The moan that broke from my chest was deep and husky, unlike any sound I'd made before. I sounded... male.

My skin tingled, chilling even more. Oddly, that seemed to be evidence of my mounting arousal. Working my way around her body, I finally had her positioned, and I trailed kisses down her thighs. She gasped when I nipped the soft skin of her belly. Suddenly inspired, I licked my way down the slit of her pussy, watching in fascination as steam rose, only to freeze in the air around us. With only a thought, ice crystals danced in the air, tinkling and chiming their ethereal music.

Her lips wrapped around my cock, and in the haze of my lust, I became peripherally aware of two things. First, something was happening to my body, tension growing in my back, in my balls. My need to thrust into the heat of her mouth overcame the desire to return pleasure. My head dropped to the floor as my hips twisted. I reached down, grasping her head, striving for that release I'd never before experienced.

Secondly, my body was acting in a fashion I couldn't fathom. My lank, shoulder length hair felt surprisingly long, my sallow skin bore a luminescent glow. Rolling my head to the side, I could see markings shimmer, and then disappear on my arm.

And oddly, Pim felt smaller, lighter.

There wasn't time to think of such things.

Following an instinct that I'd never before experienced, I pulled from her mouth, rolling Pim to her back.

She glowed in the dim light. Steam rose from her body, rising, freezing, and falling in clouds of shimmering ice crystals. Her hair pooled around her head. Her breasts were luscious globes made only for me.

I settled between her parted legs and with her help, guided my cock to her body. For only the briefest moment did I pause to stare in shock at the huge, engorged member cradled in her small hand. Surely that was not me?

My belly was flat and muscled. My hands joined hers, they were long and graceful, the skin ivory pale. My hair cascaded down my back. She looked up at me, her lips parted, eyes glowing.

"You're beautiful, Kell. Such a beautiful creature hiding inside that shell."

But she was beautiful lying there, and once again, my cock drew my attention. I notched the head into the wet, heated entrance of her body and gave an experimental push. She shivered as I withdrew and thrust again. Once I was safely on my way, I lay over her, seeing my blue-black hair pool down onto her arms and her chest.

When I pumped into her sheath, she met me in tempo, reaching down to part her labia, easing my way into her depths. When I could go no further, she clasped my head, pulling me down for a kiss that reached to my very soul.

"I came here for you, didn't I?" My voice was a low whisper.

"I waited for you. For a very long time, Kell." Gently she stroked my face, my neck. Her fingers traced my skin. Glancing down I saw tattoo-like marks on my chest and torso.

"These are the marks of your clan. Someday, we'll find them. You should know your family."

"What are we, Pim?"

She thrust gently, her sheath clasping my cock in a powerful grip. I fairly went blind with the sensation. "Lovers. Mates. Life companions."

"And what is this place?"

She was rocking now, my cock surging into her depths, and then withdrawing, again and again. Pim reached out and held me tight around the waist. Her other arm came down and she clasped my ass, sinking nails convulsively into my skin. It stung, and prompted me to move faster.

“It’s an old place. A safe place. We can live here. Now stop talking!”

Her legs came up and she dug her heels into the backs of my thighs. I could feel the muscles of her body gather, tighten.

“Oh...” Her climax started on a shout and ended on a sigh. Her slender body writhed and bucked under mine. Waves of heat flowed upward, flames danced on the air around our laboring bodies, quickly extinguished by the ice crystals that tumbled from the air.

I groaned at the heat that cradled me, warming my very soul. As Pim’s climax slowed, I gathered her body to mine, rolling her to her knees. I knelt, once again glancing at the pair of us in the reflection of the window.

The man there was tall and magnificent, hair so blue as to appear black. His lips were full and sensual, his body lithe and powerful. Bold, black runic marks decorated the skin of his chest and arms. Vivid blue eyes burned with cold fire.

He was beautiful.

We were beautiful.

I covered her, mounting her, sinking my cock into her wet fire. Pim had recovered. She rose back, impaling her body onto mine again and again. My hips pivoted into hers. She reached back, clasping my leg. I buried my face into her shoulder, hearing my own harsh, panting breaths.

“Like that... Oh, Kell, just like that!” She groaned and shook with impending climax.

Icy fire raced up my spine, my vision went black, broken by white starlight. The first orgasm of my life grabbed me and shook my body. With every thrust, ropes of seed burst from my cock in an exquisite melding of fire and ice. Tears ran from my eyes, falling as frozen droplets to her skin, where they sizzled and evaporated.

All around us, the air shimmered, steam, ice and flame danced together in surreal harmony. Tiny white lights danced in the air, dancing to a melody of their own. When I could move no more, I fell to my side, weak and drained, but unwilling to let her escape from my clasp.

Slowly, my body warmed while hers cooled. The air cleared and fog settled on the window. The flame of the candles steadied and the fire danced in the hearth. "Pim, what just happened?"

She was quiet for a moment before finally rolling to her side, facing me. "We mated."

I knew that already, no mystery there. "But... what happened? I changed. Is this forever?"

She trailed a finger over my lips, up to my cheek and across eyebrows that were now bold and arched over exotic dark eyes. "This is you. The other is for safety. That's how we exist most of the time these days. We can't walk among humans like this."

She was right. We were too foreign, too magical.

"You'll learn to control the ice, the same way I control the fire."

"We're Fae?"

Her smile was gentle and understanding. "That's one name for us. We're just different. Older and much rarer than humans. In time, when we've both grown up a bit more, we'll seek out the clans. But for now..."

"For now?" I leaned over into her body, smelling the warm fragrance of her skin, feeling my cock grow heavy once again. I nuzzled the soft skin of her breast. Spiced apples teased my senses, the fragrance of Pim.

"For now, we stay here and grow strong. We live and love among the humans. Here in Arcada."

"Arcada." So that was the name of the town that had called me back. It felt good on my tongue.

"That's what we call it. But you know it has a nickname."

"Normalville."

She laid her head on my chest, running fingers through my hair. "Welcome home, Kell of Arcada."



## **Belinda McBride**

*Belinda lives in the wilderness of the Siskiyou Mountains and at night, she runs naked with a pack of wolves...*

Uhh...

Belinda lives *near* the Siskiyou Mountains and shares her home with a pack of Siberian Huskies who like to pretend they are wolves. And she usually keeps her clothing on when she goes outside.

Being born into a multi-racial family gave Belinda a unique outlook on the world and a love for history and genealogy. Her great-grandfather was a noted Comanche leader who was one of the founders of the Native American church. Other relatives were bond servants from Scotland, Mongolians from Central Asia, and a foundling of African ancestry. And then there was her grandmother, who had two husbands... at the same time...

Belinda loves to travel, collect rare gemstones, make soap and spend precious time with her daughters. Her degree is in History with a Cultural Anthropology minor. On weekends, you will often find Belinda ringside at a dog show, comb and spray bottle in hand.

She invites you to visit her website at [www.belindamcbride.com](http://www.belindamcbride.com), or email her directly at [belinda@belindamcbride.com](mailto:belinda@belindamcbride.com).