



*Heart
of Ice*

**Brynn
Paulin**

NOT QUITE WICKED

Heart of Ice

A Not Quite Wicked Tale

By Brynn Paulin

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Heart of Ice

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I'm not bad. I'm just drawn that way~~Jessica Rabbit
To all the misunderstood women out there!

Prologue

Once upon a time...

In a land far, far away, there was a girl who lived in an ice palace high on a hill. Everyone in the land thought she was very bad. In fact, the stories say, one winter, she stole away a shop boy and took him away to her mountain fortress where he stayed until the girl he loved rescued him.

That's one story...

Chapter One

Kai glanced down at the claw-like hand grasping his forearm and fought the disgust that rolled over him. He was *supposed* to be escorting Gerda to this elaborate dinner at her parents' home. He was *supposed* to be happy for this bit of allowed touching with the woman to whom he was betrothed. So why did it all feel so wrong? Why did being so close to her revolt him?

To most, he allowed, her hand wouldn't appear claw-like. People raved about how beautiful Gerda was. So lovely in face and figure. So attractive in her fashionable, well-tailored dresses. A catch for a lowly shop boy. "What a lucky man," they whispered.

Like hell. Gerda was a cage ready to close around him. He was, indeed, a lowly shop boy from a poor family. He had little choice but to marry for their sake. Unless he could come up with some way to wiggle out of the engagement without severe retribution to his kin. His father was beholden to Gerda's father, Franz. It had been a somewhat ignored debt until Gerda had decided she liked the looks of a certain shop boy with black hair and blue eyes.

"Kai, hurry up. We're going to be late," she whined, tugging at his arm. "Why are you being so difficult?"

"Difficult? I'm coming to this party with you when I had other plans for my evening. I'm trying to keep you from slipping on the ice covering this walkway."

She snorted and tugged his arm harder to pull him along. They appeared to walk "side by side," but in truth, she was slightly ahead of him. "That's why you wore these...*clothes* instead of dressing up?"

"These are my best rags," he answered drily. The girl needed a spanking, but it wouldn't do her any good. He enjoyed sliding his hand over a nicely rounded bottom before heating it with a few smacks. His partners had always taken pleasure in that, as well as his other sexual

practices. He had a feeling Gerda would just screech and throw a fit. She wouldn't enjoy any of it. She was a nasty harridan who didn't possess a softer, submissive side.

Perhaps he'd die young.

"We'll go to the tailor next week and have you fitted for a suit. I can't be seen with a beggar."

Beggar? His clothes might not be the same top-notch quality as hers, but they were still good construction.

"Whatever pleases you," he replied, looking around. It was a perfect winter night, clear and crisp with glittering stars overhead. The streetlamps threw frozen beams up into the inky sky. On evenings like this, he liked to walk alone, listening to the crunch of snow beneath his boots and looking at the way frost painted the windows. Some nights, he skated on the lake or rode his father's horse through the shadowy pines.

Not anymore. He suspected Gerda would never allow such freedoms.

Perhaps the ground could open and swallow him and end this all tonight. Better, an avalanche from the surrounding mountains could tumble around him, cocooning him in sweet Gerda-free peace and lulling him into an icy eternal sleep.

As he looked around, he saw a woman across the street knocking on the door to the shop where he worked. Her waist-length white-blonde hair spilled from beneath a fur hat. It brushed the top of her shapely behind, and his interest stirred in a way it hadn't in months. White fur matching the hat wrapped her shoulders. The dress, a shiny light blue, swept the walkway, hiding her legs from view. Though he'd yet to see her face, he knew he'd never met her. He'd remember this woman.

Her tiny fist raised to knock again on the mercantile door.

He pulled free of Gerda. "I need to go help her."

"But the dinner!"

"Peter will never forgive me if I don't attend a customer, after closing or not. I'll be along shortly."

She made a perturbed moue and released a huffy sigh. "Fine. Thank goodness you'll soon be working for my father."

Yes. Huzzah for that. May the sky fall on me.

Kai made a noncommittal sound and started across the street. Behind him, he heard Gerda stomp off, but he paid her no mind as relief filled him. The woman turned as she heard him approach. He was startled to see she was young, perhaps eighteen. She carried herself as an older, more refined woman. What was such a youthful stranger doing out alone in an unfamiliar town?

A faint smile lifted her pale lips as if she had heard his silent wondering. Even in the moonlight, her light blue eyes shone.

“Can I help you?” he asked.

“You are the owner?” she asked with a raised brow.

He shook his head. “No, but I work here.”

Her smile widened a bit more. “You are Kai, then.”

His brow furrowed. *How...* “Yes.”

“You’re wondering how I know your name.” It was more of a statement than a question.

Kai nodded even as she went on.

“Anyone who loves winter as much as you do is well known to me.”

“Kai!” he heard bellowed across the silent evening. Lord, would his whole life be spent at Gerda’s beckoning? His eyes closed at the humiliation as fury raced through him. A hand stroked along his arm and he looked up at the woman, startled at her touch.

“You need not heed her,” she said in a calm, almost otherworldly tone that raised the hairs on his arms. A chill skated along his skin, inching down the back of his neck and into his collar. Cold, invisible fingers spread over the knots in his shoulders.

His imagination. He shook his head, irritated at himself when he envisioned that the sensation came from the woman touching him, not from an errant breeze.

“She is my...betroted.” He choked out the last word. He needed to find a way to be free of Gerda. He couldn’t abide her much longer. Saints, he barely abided her now.

“She is nothing,” the woman before him whispered. Sadness seemed to fill her eyes as she regarded him. It was as if she regretted something he’d yet to understand.

Another wind caressed his back, and this time, he felt himself shoved forward. Kai was not a small man. A mere gust could not move him thus. His eyes narrowed on the ethereal creature before him. Was she a witch of some sort? He fisted his fingers rather than cross himself.

“Who are you?” he demanded.

“Your salvation.”

Or his damnation, he suspected. “Your name?”

She shrugged, the fur of her wrap brushing her snowy-white cheek. “You can call me Wyn.”

Her impertinent blink, accompanied with another faint smile, stoked his desire for her. Here was a woman who could use a spanking and would appreciate it. Whoever she was, he knew he had to know her better, damn Gerda and the consequences for not getting to the party in a timely manner.

“Did you need something from the store?”

Her smile widened, and she leaned coquettishly against the door to the shop, her hands behind her. “You.”

Him? He wished that could be true. He wished he could take her up on the silent offer posed by her stance. She wanted him. He had no doubt.

“I’m already taken,” he sighed. His responsibilities to his family overshadowed any personal desire he might have.

She shook her head and reached to touch his arm once more, but he stepped backward.

“The girl does not have your heart,” she said.

Kai fought back a chuckle. Girl? Wyn appeared to be Gerda’s age, perhaps even younger than his betrothed’s twenty.

“But she has my promise,” he countered.

“Not willingly.” She stepped away from the building and touched his arm. This time, he didn’t shy away. “I hear what you’ve whispered to the wind when you’ve walked through the pines beside the frozen lake. You do not want this, but for your family, you sacrifice yourself.”

His eyes narrowed. “Who told you such things?”

“You did, Kai. You’ve prayed for a way to escape this, and I’m here.”

“Those words for meant for my God, not for a witch!” he protested, anger overriding the fear most men would experience. Anger that this vision before him was evil. Anger that his heart had briefly hoped salvation truly had arrived. Renewed anger that his family had thrust him into a position of having to rescue them.

“Not a witch,” she replied. “Do not fear me, Kai.”

“I’m *not* afraid,” he ground out, making his ire clear. Without another word, he spun around and headed toward the stupid party. He needed to escape to his refuge in the frozen woods, but it was impossible, barred by both Gerda and the mysterious Wyn.

* * * *

The party had been as dreadful as he’d suspected. Gerda had paraded him around like some prized pony while her father and his friends had regarded Kai with smarmy superiority. It was probably overdramatic, but he couldn’t help feeling as if he stood at the brink of hell, staring into the chasm, readying for the jump. The horde of demons waited to eat him alive.

Unhappiness gnawed at his middle as he stared out his window now, his lip curled with distaste. At least the party was over and his duties as besotted suitor were done for another day.

He yanked at the tie around his neck, tugging it free then tossing it onto a nearby straight-back chair. He flicked open the buttons of his shirt. Closing his eyes briefly, he let the air dance over his skin. It wasn’t cool enough. Desperate for the feel of the outdoors, he cracked open his window then sprawled onto his narrow bed. One leg bent upward while his arms crossed behind his head. He stared blindly into the darkness overhead.

“There has to be a way,” he murmured.

“There is.”

He jerked upright, the springs on his ancient bed screeching. Wyn stood a few feet away.

“What are you doing here?” he demanded, his voice urgent yet quiet so he didn’t wake his family.

She laughed, the musical sound like crystals tinkling against each other. Her pale hand waved to the window. “You let me in.”

For a moment, he thought to argue, then remembered she was a witch. Perhaps by opening the window, he *had* let her in.

“What do you want of me?” he asked, resigned to learning his fate. Hopefully, it wasn’t as bad as a future with Gerda. He’d wished for death. Perhaps Wyn thought to grant it.

To his surprise, Wyn knelt before him, her silky blue dress pooling around her as she went to her knees between his parted legs then sat back on her heels. Her palms rested on his thighs.

“It’s what I want for you,” she murmured.

Suddenly, inexplicably, his heart shifted. All his ill feelings about Gerda and worries for his family shifted aside and hope filled him. Hope and...something else. His cock stirred as he regarded Wyn on her knees. She'd seemed so in command of herself earlier, so sure of everything, including him. A façade. He'd seen many women do the same. They acted dominantly in most situations yet submissively in intimate male-female relations. A vision swam through his mind—Wyn kneeling naked before him, her arms bound behind her, her nipples peaking to hard nubs in the cold, her whole being enjoying submission to him.

“Lift your skirt,” he ordered softly.

Her head tilted, her lips parting.

“Do it,” he reiterated before she could speak. His lips compressed, and he watched her, waiting, testing her response.

Slowly, her eyes met his briefly before they lowered, and her fingers bunched the fabric of her skirt. The fine linen inched upward. Bit by bit, it moved until she'd exposed her knees.

“Stop,” he said. “That's well enough.”

“You...do not want more?”

“Of course, I want more. But not now. Not when you're not ready—and you're not,” he asserted, cutting her off when she would have protested.

She leaned forward and kissed the inside of his thigh, and he groaned at the sensation of her lips. They were cold, even through the fabric of his pants.

“Come away with me,” she urged.

He could not.

Wyn seemed to understand his unspoken words. Gliding to her feet, she headed to the window, then turned to frozen mist before his eyes and disappeared through the inch-wide opening of the window.

Saints, what had beset him now?

Chapter Two

Wyn wandered the dark halls of her fortress, agitation her companion as she thought of Kai. She'd never knelt before a man—or anyone for that matter. She was the Snow Queen, after all, ruler from the first bitter wind that chased away the autumn to the last gasp of cold before the crocuses forced their way through the soil. Winter, the season named for her, Wynter.

She bowed to no one, even the rulers of those lesser seasons. Yet she'd gone easily to her knees before Kai and willingly followed his orders. Submitting to him had touched a part of her she hadn't known existed. Her disappointment when he'd stopped her from following his directive had shocked her. So had the warm, melty feeling when he looked at her and spoke in his deep, commanding voice. Of course, if he'd touched her folds, she wouldn't have felt so *warm and melty* to him. To Kai, her cream would feel like ice water. Touching her skin would cause him pain from the intense cold.

That wouldn't stop her from taking him away from the shire where he lived. She'd do everything she could to convince him not to marry that harridan who'd dug her claws in him.

Wyn sighed. She'd watched Kai for a long time. His love of winter surrounded her as surely as if he loved her. That Gerda wench would stomp it out of him little by little until he loved nothing. It would leave him bereft; it would leave Wyn the same.

Angrily, she slapped the wall beside her, rattling the ice crystals that decorated the passageway. This was such pitiful, self-indulgent wallowing. Why did she care so much for a human? Disgusted with the direction of her thoughts, she stalked towards the highest turret of the fortress. Once standing on the precipice, she flung out her arm and sent a blizzard over the Southern climes of Europe, then smiled to herself as she returned inside. A little snow would do them good.

No, it wouldn't. Turning, she returned to her perch high above the rest of the world and pulled back most of the storm's fury, leaving only a chilly wind and flurries to cool the people.

"You are a sad being," she whispered to herself as she made her way through the fortress to her rooms. Inside, a cheery blaze burned in the fireplace, the only part of the fortress constructed of stone and mortar. The rest was pure ice.

The fire was for ambiance. She couldn't feel its heat. Kai would be able to...if he were here.

Her breath trembled from her as she envisioned him. He'd lay indolently across the bed, watching her as she disrobed. She closed her eyes so she could see him more clearly in her mind. She saw him smiling at her, a feral possessiveness in his gaze.

She loosened her dress and the bodice fell away, revealing her pure white silk corset. As she sank further into her fantasy, Kai's eyes flared with lust. He sat up as he had back in his bedroom and swung his legs around so he was on the edge of the bed. His knees parted, the front of his pants straining over his hard cock.

"Take the dress off the rest of the way."

With a nod, she shoved it over her hips, leaving herself in just the corset, her stockings and shoes. She kicked off the shoes, very aware of her bare pussy. Her feet sank into the thick fur rug beside her bed.

He stood, coming toward her. She started to shy away, then remembered, in her fantasy, he could touch her. She wanted him to *touch her*. She *needed* it. Her hands slid up her silk-encased torso, and she struggled to drop back into her daydream and make believe these were Kai's hands.

His fingers closed over her breasts where they rested above the garment. He pinched her tight nipples, and her pussy convulsed, sending a flood into her needy folds.

"You like that?" he growled.

She nodded.

"Say it aloud," he demanded against her ear. "Say 'Yes, Master'."

Another pinch sent streams of pleasure through her. "Yes, Master," she moaned. "Yes...more."

A hand drifted down her body to her pussy. Fingers parted her and slid over her throbbing clit. She dropped to her knees, knowing it was what he'd want. All the while, the touch

rubbed over her nub and brought her closer to the orgasm winding in her belly. Her thighs quivered as her hips strained against it, her thready cries reverberating against the ice-block walls. The sound morphed into a scream of ecstasy as she suddenly came. Her cream ran over her fingers as lightning shot through her and she arched toward Kai's invisible form.

Nothing.

There was nothing there. Wyn could bring herself sexual relief, but it was empty. Just as empty as this great, echoing palace. She sank onto the fur carpet and curled into a ball while the last of the tremors trilled through her, diminishing with each tiny wave. Loneliness, her constant companion, settled around her and she buried her face in the rug's pile before she cried.

She could bring Kai here. She could force him to be her consort—by heaven, she could even convince him to willingly consent to the transformation, but she would never do that. Bringing someone permanently into her icy existence wasn't fair to anyone.

* * * *

Kai dodged Gerda most of the day, managing to run errands just in time to miss her visits to the mercantile. Late afternoon, however, he was sweeping the shop's floor when a cool breeze heralded the opening and closing of the front door. Then a distinctive stomp announced the exact identity of the "customer."

"It's about time you're here," Gerda spat waspishly. "Have you had fun playing all day?"

His lips compressed and he turned a black gaze on her. "I've been working. Perhaps you should try it. It would give you something to do."

"Hmph. Don't snap at me. Since you've been *working*, barely, all day, you probably have enough energy for a small task." Her arm drifted over his arm as she eyed him lasciviously. Her touch sent a wave of distaste through him, a reaction so unlike what he'd felt with Wyn.

Oh Wyn... He tried not to think of her. There was nothing for it. There was Gerda in his future, and Wyn was a witch.

"Papa needs you to help at the inn this evening," Gerda continued.

It wasn't the first time Franz had required slave work of him. He could only imagine what it might be tonight. "No" wasn't an option.

"What is it? Saints!" Kai bellowed as her hand drifted to his chest then started to slide around his waist, heading lower. He lurched out of her grasp while she giggled over his apparent prudishness.

Peter came out of the storeroom at Kai's exclamation and Gerda folded her hands before her, the picture of innocence.

"Papa needs you to shovel the snow from the walkway leading to the lake," she told him.

"Doesn't he have paid men for that?"

"Are you refusing?"

"No." As if he could.

She gave a small smile. "You'll enjoy it. I know how you adore the cold." She lowered her voice. "Then later, I'll warm you."

Perhaps a friendly bear can detain me, instead. "I'll be there after dinner."

"Don't bother with that. I'll have Cook leave you something in the kitchen. We'll expect you shortly." With a *swoosh* of her skirts as she turned, she left the shop with her head at its usual angle of superiority.

"Lad, I don't know how you do it," Peter murmured as soon as the door closed.

Kai resumed his sweeping without comment. Peter was one of the few in town who understood Kai's true situation, but it would serve no purpose to revisit his problems. He had a list of things to complete at his real job before he reported to the inn.

* * * *

All in all, shoveling wasn't too bad. The temperatures had dropped, so most—mainly Gerda—stayed inside. He'd seen only a single couple who'd braved the night to skate on the frozen lake. His friend Heinz and his new wife, Birgitta. They'd sent him a friendly wave, but mostly, they'd been absorbed in each other, which was expected of newlyweds. They'd gone home an hour ago, leaving Kai to his solitude—a good thing, save for his persistent thoughts of Wyn.

He wanted her. He wanted her as he'd never wanted another woman. Damn. He jabbed his shovel harder into the snow. If he worked hard enough, he could drive himself to exhaustion. He'd be too tired to think on her perfect, pale knees. He should have allowed her to keep lifting her skirts. No. It would have been too soon. Stopping allowed her to think on it, be aroused by it, want more and be ready to willingly submit to him.

Did he want a witch as a lover?

Witch? Not really. Wyn? Definitely. He wanted to see what hid beneath her clothing.

He gritted his teeth to get himself back under control. At this rate, he'd be a faithless husband, and that was something he wouldn't allow no matter how he distained Gerda. Once he said his vows, he was committed.

"Good evening, Master Kai."

He glanced up to see Wyn standing a few feet away, just inside a stand of pines. The trees hid her from the inn, but didn't obscure her from him. She called him Master Kai for formality, but he liked the title on her tongue. Master... The vision of her kneeling in front of him returned. They'd find equal pleasure in the dominance and submission play.

"Wyn," he replied with a slight nod of his head.

"You're not afraid of me?"

"Hardly."

"Good." A smile curved her lips. "Come away with me."

"I don't follow orders."

She raised an eyebrow. "You do whatever that...*girl*...demands."

"To save my family. My father is indebted to hers." It rankled him to be caught in this position. Somehow, it made him feel a lesser man to allow himself to be forced into this situation.

"Noble," she replied without censure. He detected a bit of admiration in her tone, which immediately bolstered his pride. She moved forward and a wind kicked up behind her, erasing her footsteps. "I could make your father the wealthiest man in the region. I could eliminate his debt."

"A what price?"

"None."

Kai shook his head. He wasn't simple. "There's always a price. For everything."

She sighed. "You will gain your freedom. I only ask that you spend the season with me."

"As your slave?" he asked, wondering at the servitude she'd require for such a boon. "I won't follow your orders," he reiterated.

"And I take orders from no man."

He stepped closer, letting the shovel fall to the ground beside them. Her chest rose to his with each excited breath. He cupped her elbows, her hands trapped between them.

"You'd take mine," he told her.

“You don’t order *her*.”

“You’re different.”

“You think me weak.”

“No,” he protested. “You’re not weak. I sense you’re very...strong. You’re just not a distasteful, spoiled brat, and you will enjoy the games we can play together.”

Her head dropped forward. “You can’t touch me.”

“I’m touching you now.” He noticed she hadn’t argued his assertion that she’d submit to him.

“Not my skin. I’ll ask nothing more of you than companionship. And when spring comes, you may leave and return to your life. Here if you choose, but you’ll not be beholden to anyone. All you’ve to say is ‘yes’.”

He took a partial step backward, putting a tiny space between them. Grasping her chin with his gloved hand, he lifted her head and looked into her light blue eyes. They swirled with sadness he vowed to remove.

“There are ways to touch,” he said, stroking his thumb along her cheek. “If I go with you, I *will* touch you.” His lips brushed hers and an intense cold went through him, making his skin tingle. That was why they couldn’t touch. Her skin was too cold. He smiled. They’d definitely work around that. He skimmed his lips over hers again and the tingle became a sting.

“Stop...” she whispered. Her eyes pleaded with him, obviously knowing the pain he experienced.

“Stop, *Master*,” he murmured in return.

Wyn blinked at him, his meaning sinking in.

“Kai...”

“If you want me, you will submit.”

Her teeth sank into one side of her bottom lip.

“Wyn, you’ve only to say yes,” he said, echoing her earlier words. “I will only bring you pleasure. I might bring slight pain for your pleasure, but I’d never harm you.”

She wasn’t one to make a snap decision—he could see that in the way she mulled his words before answering. Her teeth momentarily sank into her lip again. She took a deep breath.

“You must never hinder my duties or try to command me on how to do them.”

“This is about you and me. A man and a woman. Not your daily tasks.”

“Then...yes,” she said, then added, “Master.”

He smiled. She was his.

“Now,” she murmured. Her head tilted to the side and her white-blond hair spilled over her shoulder. “You must agree as well, and we will leave this place. I will make your father a wealthy man with jewels you cannot imagine. You will be free.”

“Not too many jewels,” Kai told her.

“I’ve watched you for many years. You are worth all I have.”

He didn’t believe that. He did not want to feel she’d paid for him. Still, he had to think of his kin. “Just enough to free me and feed them...”

She nodded with a smile, and he got the feeling she’d do as she pleased. “Again, we return to the same place.” She grasped his arms, and the wind created drifts around them, hiding their footsteps and their presence. “You must say ‘yes’.”

His lips grazed hers, and he found enough time had passed that only a tingle followed.

“Wyn,” he murmured, feeling the chains of Gerda and her father lifting from him. It was of little consequence. Only Wyn mattered. He caught her gaze and held it. “Yes,” he breathed. “Yes.”

Chapter Three

Ice crystals swirled up around them, obscuring everything from sight and enclosing them in their own personal blizzard. A moment later, there was silence.

“Open your eyes,” Wyn encouraged.

He did, stunned when he saw they were within a room made of what appeared to be ice blocks. Heavy wood furniture with brocade cushions filled the space.

“Welcome to my fortress,” she said.

Fortress... All right. Feeling foolish for not asking sooner, he inquired, “Wyn, who exactly are you?”

Whoever she was, it wouldn't shake his position over her. She wanted it. He wanted it. But a little more familiarity wouldn't hurt.

The corner of her mouth lifted in a sad half-smile. “The snow queen. Winter. Actually my name *is* Wynter.”

Well, he *had* suspected her to be a witch. This was similar if different. He grinned. “What you just did, bringing me here without warning, that was very, *very* naughty.”

She blinked in surprise.

“And,” he continued, testing her reaction and letting her know her status didn't faze him—much. “Naughty woman should be punished.”

“How?” She backed away, her hands laced behind her. The sway of her hips seduced him and clearly told that she wasn't afraid of his words. In fact, she seemed intrigued.

“I said ‘should.’ I won't this time. Next time, warn me first.”

Wyn gazed at Kai, hardly believing he was here in her home. Her lips seemed to burn from where he'd kissed her earlier. He'd touched her. More than once. He seemed to actually like kissing her, though she knew it caused him some pain. There was no way to miss that even if he'd tried to hide it from her.

"I'm just accustomed to using my powers as I need them," she told him. "It didn't occur to me..." She lifted a shoulder and shrugged off the rest of the sentence.

"I'm not angry."

That was good. He was here for the season. It wouldn't do to start off with a battle.

"When your parents check your bed in the morning, they will find a wealth of jewels in your place. A gift on your behalf. Nothing more than that."

"Thank you."

She nodded and walked to a cabinet that had been placed against a far wall. "I don't get to save many people." She laughed without humor as she withdrew a bottle of wine. Hugging it to her chest, she turned. "Most people would view me as cruel. Cruel, heartless winter out to kill every living plant and make humans and animals suffer. Winter, the bringer of illness, famine and death."

"I don't see you that way." He took the bottle from her and placed it on a nearby table.

"No?"

"Winter, sweet relief from the blazing heat." His hands skated along her waist. "Winter, my favorite playground. Winter, turning everything new and beautiful and exciting."

His gloved fingers captured her wrists and held them at the small of her back as he kissed her neck through her high collar. She trembled at the sensation that rippled through her. The material was sufficient to protect him, yet thin enough for her to feel him touching her.

"All my favorite things to do revolve around winter." He nipped her shoulder. "And this season, they'll revolve around Wyn."

That warm, melting feeling moved through her again. She shifted away from him, overwhelmed and a little afraid. It was so strong.

"Wine?" she asked, her voice wobbling.

"No."

"Would you like me to show you the palace? There's no place off-limits to you..."

"No place?" The devilish grin on his face told her where his thoughts had gone.

“You’re a rogue. How did I not see that before?” She felt a blush creeping up her cheeks. In his current human state, he wouldn’t see it. To him, she’d always appear completely pale and bloodless.

“Do you want to change your mind?”

Did he want to? “No, I don’t. Do you?”

He prowled forward, capturing her waist again. “No. Forgive me if I rush... I want you.”

How she wanted him. “You...can’t touch me.”

“Oh, but I can,” he replied. His hands moved upward to cup her breasts. He found her nipples through her dress. His thumbs rubbed back and forth over the peaks.

Wyn trembled. Her legs shook as her pussy turned to liquid. Each ragged breath pushed her into his palms. A moan rolled from her as she dropped back her head and let him have his way. He gently pinched the tips and she gasped.

“My skin...” she murmured.

“I think we’ve figured out that we can work around that.” He brushed his cheek along the exposed portion of her neck. “Take me to your chamber. I want to see you naked.”

She quaked as his breath skimmed over her ear. Taking his gloved hand in hers, she guided him through the great hall to the door that led to the stairs. In moments, they stood in her room near her bed.

Kai pulled off his hat and tossed it on a padded chair near the fire, then ran his fingers through his tousled hair. “We should have stopped at my home for my clothes.”

“No need.”

He laughed. “It’s warm in here with the fire, but I can’t go naked for the entire season or wear these same clothes. You won’t want to come near me.”

“I doubt that,” she replied before she thought to stop the words. Heat rolled through her again. Agitated, she headed for the wardrobe. He followed, his presence surrounding her. She was so accustomed to being alone, just having him within a few feet felt as if he were against her, hugging her close. She liked it.

“Being the queen has privileges,” she told him. Her hand ran along the wardrobe door. “You can have any material desire, just by saying so.” She looked into his blue eyes, the heat in them warming her like nothing else could. The look consumed her. He wanted to possess her and nothing else concerned him. He didn’t spare so much as a glance at the large piece of furniture

before them. “What would you desire...from the wardrobe?” she asked. “Put your hand against the wood and request what you want.”

Still holding her gaze, he pulled off his wool glove and pressed his palm to the door. “White ladies gloves. Four silk scarves. The chest I have hidden in the loft of my father’s barn.”

Wyn tilted her head at his strange requests.

“Important things first,” he told her with a grin. “I think you’ll like them.”

“As you say,” she replied, opening the wardrobe. Inside sat a medium-sized chest, four deep blue scarves, and a pair of thick silken gloves that would reach the middle of her upper arms. Both had over a dozen pearly buttons running the lengths and hugged by dainty button loops. Kai scooped them up in his large hand. The sight was so incongruous, she knew he couldn’t possibly have requested them for himself. Of course, he hadn’t. She’d never thought so. She’d just thought it strange.

He held them out to her. “You’ll wear these, then you can touch me freely—when I say you may.”

When he says I may, her thoughts echoed.

“You remember what you agreed in the pines?”

She closed her eyes. Anticipation wove through her. She’d do as he wished. If she didn’t like it, she’d make him cease. And if he didn’t...well, she’d just deposit him in the farthest village and leave him there.

“Wyn,” he prompted. An edge in his voice urged her to obey him and told her she’d never force him away from her. There was a soft part of her, barely hidden by her hard, frozen exterior that needed his command.

She nodded. “Yes. Yes...Master,” she replied.

“Wyn.” He said her name gently and she knew he used it to calm her. “I won’t harm you. I won’t force you to do what you do not want to. I won’t humiliate you. You have my respect and I want yours—”

“You have it.”

“There might be a bit of pain, some punishment, but it’s all part of the sex. In the bedroom and in all parts of our sexual relationship that might occur outside this chamber, I am Master. No one can help the circumstance of their birth, but how we behave is entirely up to us.

A queen can act the peasant, the peasant can carry himself as a king. You are powerful and I am a shop boy, but I would hope you would regard me as equal.”

“You are no shop boy, Kai. With opportunity, you could be anything. You have been the consort of winter for many years. No one enjoys it more than you do.”

“No one will enjoy you more than I will,” he promised.

“Kai...” she whispered as his unexpected declaration sent a thrill through her.

“Master.”

“Master,” she repeated. “I accept what you’ve said. Master here,” she waved her hand to indicate the outside, “equal there.”

“You trust me?”

“It is why you’re here.” She glanced at the items still in the wardrobe, a wild flurry swirling inside her middle. Her trepidation mixed with an agony of desire to create a need she’d never before felt. Mixed with her curiosity, she could barely breathe. “I’m...ready to begin whatever you have in mind.”

“I think we started a long time ago. What I have in mind is you removing your gown and putting on those lovely gloves. Then I want you to kneel on the rug beside your bed, facing me with your hands together over your ass.”

Wyn paused, and Kai thought perhaps he’d pushed her too fast. He waited mere seconds before she nodded her head regally one time then set the gloves on the small dressing table a few steps away.

Kai put his glove back on, then removed his chest and the scarves from the wardrobe and carried them to the bed. When he turned, Wyn was motionless, watching him. He sat on the edge of the bed and waited in much the same position as in his room that night she’d visited.

His arms crossed his chest. “Continue.”

She reached for the fasteners on her dress. After a moment, her bodice gapped and she pushed the sleeves down her arms. With a small shimmy, she shoved the garment past her hips and let it fall to the floor. Her hands lifted to her corset.

“No. Leave it,” Kai instructed.

She was beautiful in her white undergarments that gave her an image of refinement, but once removed, revealed her wildness. Stockings covered her legs, the corset covered her middle,

but her pussy and her small, perfect breasts were bare. Exactly as he would have asked her to be if given the choice.

“The gloves,” he croaked. “Then come here.”

Her long hair swayed over her breasts as she walked toward him while pulling on the gloves. Fluidly, she dropped to her knees before him and sat back on her heels. Looking up at him with a small smile, she crossed her wrists behind her back. Kai stood, then lifted her hair. Gently, he draped it behind her shoulders and forced back a groan as she nuzzled his thigh near his overly aroused cock.

“No,” he chided her. “Do that again without permission, and you will be punished.”

She closed her eyes and sighed, then nodded.

He needed to stay in control and not misstep in this situation. He believed her when she said he couldn't touch her skin. The tingling and slight pain when he'd kissed her proved that. It would mean he couldn't forget himself and press full on her. It would be difficult. He craved skin-to-skin contact, but they'd make do.

Sitting back on the bed, he regarded her. She had a lovely form, near perfect to what he desired. With the tip of his shoe, he worked her knees further apart so that he had a clear view of her pussy, and she'd feel the cool draft wafting over her slick folds. He could see her glistening cream and longed to stroke his fingers through it and taste her nectar.

He rested his elbows on his knees and leaned toward her. “You know all about me. Tell me about you.”

Wyn's eyes widened in surprise. She hadn't expected him to go this direction. It pleased him to keep her off-balance.

“Me?” she repeated. “I rule the most powerful season of the year.”

“Tell me something personal. Something unrelated to winter.”

“My parents were titans, and I have three sisters.”

Not quite unrelated to winter, but he wouldn't mention that. “Spring, Summer, and Autumn?” he asked.

“Yes. We fought terribly, so our parents separated us. Summer and I were worst, so they placed Spring and Autumn between us.”

“Lovers?” he asked, changing her direction again.

“A few, when I’ve been brave. The polar bears...they can change shape, and their human form can touch me without experiencing pain. They like to wander though. They never stay around.”

He didn’t like that, but he was relieved he wasn’t her first lover. “And you’ve had a human lover before?”

Her eyes clouded and she looked away. “Not really. Eons ago, when I didn’t know better, I tried to... Well, he died from exposure—to me—before we could...” She shook her head quickly as if driving away the troubling memories. “This is why you cannot touch me. I don’t want you to die the same way.”

“I’m not going to die.” He saw it then, her weakness, her force of will. She was strong to combat loneliness and the fear of killing any man she let into her life. She’d chosen solitude for protection. It wasn’t right. Such a beautiful creature should be loved.

“You could. It’s very likely,” she insisted. He scowled and she added weakly, “Master.”

“It seems as if you’d like a spanking.” His cock twitched as he contemplated her weight over his lap, her breasts against his thigh, his palm connecting with her lovely, pale ass.

“I’ve...never had one.”

“Come here.”

“As you wish,” she murmured. She stood, her expression unsure, but she came to him without hesitation. Kai wasted no time, draping her over his legs. He damned the thick gloves that separated her skin from his and wished he could actually feel her flesh. The coolness of her body penetrated his clothing, and he enjoyed it, knowing it was her.

Reaching to the side, he opened the chest. He had a few things inside he knew she’d come to enjoy.

Chapter Four

Wyn craned her neck to see what Kai was doing, but he quickly turned her head so that she faced the floor once more. Her vision was obscured by her hair, but she knew he opened the chest that had once been hidden at his home.

“One of the wonders of my work is that I get to talk to the gypsies and peddlers who come to sell their wares to the mercantile. They have items which we could never sell in the store but that an adventurous shop boy might purchase for his own use. Devices to enhance sex.”

Her eyes widened. She knew nothing of these sorts of things.

“I have implements to decorate your breasts, to tease your skin, to redden your ass, to soothe your empty cunt, to ease my way into your ass—”

“No!”

“You’ll say yes eventually. I have many things to pleasure you.” His covered hand stroked over her behind, the wool of his glove chafing slightly. Anticipation made her squirm, and he gave her a light swat. “Be still,” he ordered.

Slowly, he moved his fingers over her, exploring her curves and delving into her crevices with his rough-covered digits. Arousal welled in her middle, and she shifted again, pushing into him and rubbing against his thighs.

Kai sighed. “You have much to learn, slave.”

Her head jerked up and she glared at him, but when Kai raised one dark eyebrow that dared her to argue, she turned and scowled at the floor.

He bent over her. She quivered at the feel of his large body curling around hers. Her hair rustled as he spoke into her ear. “You are the slave to the Master,” he growled. “You will follow

my commands. You were ordered to be still. Now, you must be punished like the naughty girl you are. Do you understand?"

She nodded.

"Speak aloud, please."

"Yes."

His hand landed firmly on her ass. "Yes, what?"

What had she gotten herself into, and why was it arousing her to such a pitch? Cream trickled from her cunt and dampened her thighs. Her breasts seemed swollen and her nipples were rigid peaks, continually abraded by his coarse trousers.

"Yes, Master," she replied.

"Do you know how naughty girls are punished?"

She could only imagine. "No, Master. Spanking?"

"Some. I prefer the flogger. I want you to stand and go to the end of the bed."

She nodded and rose, only realizing belatedly that she hadn't responded properly. She glanced at Kai to find him shaking his head, appearing both amused and mildly irritated at her trouble in learning.

"I'm sorry...Master," she muttered while she again questioned why she was letting him rule her. Realization came fast as he stood, his large, powerful body seeming to dwarf hers. Because she liked it—that was why she was letting him order her and why she was taking his punishments. She *liked* it and she *wanted* more. Each rumble of his voice, each rough action, just made her more needy for him. She'd never been more aroused in her life. Certainly not by a human man or by the shape-shifters she'd fucked. They'd never been so commanding. They'd all kowtowed to her, letting her lead because of her power. The power, however, was nothing. It didn't give her companionship and make her feel protected. That was the strange thing. Kai's mastery *did* make her feel protected.

"Hmm..." he said in response to her apology. He wasn't letting her off the hook, and somehow, that thrilled her.

She glanced at the mattress and saw he'd already put out a few things, a whip with long, brown leather strips. The flogger. Her legs trembled at the thought of it licking across her skin. She'd experienced incidental pain in the course of her life, the random bump and knock into

things, but never anything like a whipping. There was a black column and two small objects she couldn't identify. He scooped up the latter.

"I suspect you don't know what these are," he said.

"No, Master."

"They're clamps for your nipples. Something to arouse you even more than you would be without them." Grasping her breast, he tugged gently at the tip then slid one device over it. Her areola throbbed, as did her nether flesh. Slowly, he turned the screws on the clamp, closing it on her. She gasped with pain.

"Breathe," he ordered. "It will pass momentarily. I promise you'll enjoy it."

Without pause, he fastened the other into place. While she reeled at the sensation of fiery fingers of sweet agony slithering along her breasts, he guided her to stand, facing the foot of the bed. The feeling on her chest began to transform. She closed her eyes as a strange pleasure filled her. She cried out at a sudden tug at her peaks. Her eyes flew open to find Kai's fingers on two dangling beaded strands she hadn't noticed as he'd fitted the devices on her.

"These will tug down as you bend over," he said. He placed her hands about shoulder-width apart on the footboard of the bed, then adjusted her body so she was bent over. Immediately, she learned what he'd meant as the weights pulled at her. Her pussy clenched. Desperation to be filled overcame her.

"I wish you could fuck me," she choked. She needed to come, and he hadn't touched her sex.

"Don't worry. You'll be fucked."

"You can't—"

He smacked her ass.

"I will find a way," he growled. Though she couldn't fathom how, he'd yet to be wrong.

"Yes, Master," she murmured.

"And...I said you would be fucked, not that I'd fuck you." His fingers slid along her ass. Taking her by surprise, he shoved his shoe between her feet and knocked them apart. "Mmm, yes. Very pretty," he said. "You're so wet. Dripping..."

Her blush prickled a path up her chest and neck to her face. The way he talked to her... The clamps seemed to tighten on her nipples, sending even more tendrils of agonizingly good

sensation ripping through her. She felt on display, somewhat helpless, owned...and she gloried in it.

She moaned as she heard him walk away. Turning her head slightly, she watched his legs as he strode to the chest of his dastardly toys. She heard him rummaging and his hum of triumph when he found what he desired. Quickly, she turned her face toward the floor as he returned, but she saw the leather strands of the flogger swinging next to his leg from the corner of her eye. That had been on the bed though. He must have something else.

“Let’s see how very wet we can get you,” he said. To her delight, she felt his fingers at her cunt, spreading her, his gloves abrading her flesh as he stroked over her. She gasped as something round pressed to her and she heard a muted clink. “These balls are for pleasure,” he told her. “They’ll vibrate and chime with each little movement you make. It’s your task to hold them inside you. Understand?”

“Yes, Master,” she groaned.

His body leaned over hers again, making her feel small and cherished. He pressed his lips to her ear through her hair. “And I intend to make you move a lot.”

Her breath shuddered as he pushed in the first orb. It seemed wide to her unused flesh. It had been so long since she’d had anything but her fingers inside her.

“Do you like that?” he asked, his dark tone making her cunt clench and the ball inside her sing out her pleasure. Without waiting, he pushed in the second one. “Now, hold them tight,” he ordered. “And do. Not. Come.”

Sweet heavens! He demanded the impossible. Already her needy flesh tightened and shook around the balls.

His glove, damp with her arousal, dragged over the exposed portion of her back above her corset, and he stepped away.

The first sting of the flogger when it came startled her, and she cried out. Her body shook, and the toys inside her rang out like church bells on Christmas day. Her arousal coiled inside her, readying for explosion. She breathed raggedly, berating herself for her instant reaction, begging her body to heed his command and not come.

“Do not,” he warned. “There will be worse punishment if you do.”

“Yes, Master. Please...don’t make me wait long. Please.”

“I warn you. Do not come, or you won’t be fucked,” he told her.

No...

Her teeth bit into her lip as the tails of the flogger slapped over her ass again and again. Her body jerked, and muscles she hadn't imagined screamed around the balls inside her, trembling and rippling and threatening an earth-shattering release. She clenched, trying to still the vibrations from the insidious devices, but that only made it worse. Tears filled her eyes, not from the flogging. As it had with the nipple clamps, the pain had become intense pleasure and threaded down from her ass and into her pussy to make her torment even worse.

“Oh please, Master, I can't...”

The leather smacked over her. The stands splayed across her skin, sending a wonderful bite across her ass and upper back. One stray strip flicked over her pussy. She lurched in surprise, and immediately wanted more. What would it feel like if she lay spread wide and he flogged her there on the most tender of her flesh? Her mind swam and colors drifted before her eyes, beautiful representations of the pleasure-pain that filled her. Her whole body seemed more alive than she could ever have imagined.

Suddenly, she was lifted, and he carried her to the bed. Quickly, he lashed her wrists to the headboard with the scarves. “Loosen your muscles. Push gently,” he ordered, sliding his hand along her belly then helping her release the damned chiming orbs into his palm. While she watched, he lapped away the cream coating the balls. “You taste so good, little one. Someday, I want to lick you until you come in my mouth.”

He couldn't. She didn't tell him that. She didn't want to break the mood by reminding him that she could kill him. If only she could let him... There was a way, but it was a forever decision to make. Not one to be considered in the throes of sex.

Kai was moving again, keeping her from darker thoughts as he brought another scarf to her eyes. “I'm going to fuck you,” he said. His finger pressed her lips, holding back her protest. “Trust, little one.”

She struggled against the bonds holding her as he moved between her legs. Then a hard length, much harder than humanly possible, eased into her needy passage. Another toy. Wyn groaned as it filled her, pressing her tissues apart and stretching her enough that she had to momentarily struggle to adjust.

Kai came down over her, his chest to hers, his hips pressed to the inside of her thighs. His body gyrated. He moved the device in his hand as if it were his own member.

“Do you like this cock fucking you?” he growled. “Filling you up, slave? Making you want to come? You want to scream and find release, don’t you?”

“Yes...Master,” she whimpered. Her cunt flexed on the rigid length, and already spirals worked through her, hovering like the ominous clouds of a storm, ready to lash out into lightning at any moment.

“Come...” he rasped against her ear. “Now, Wyn. Come!”

She wailed as it overcame her, and his words thrust her over the edge of reason and into a chasm of swirling bliss that tossed her in unending waves of ecstasy.

He groaned as she shuddered beneath him. While she shook, he pushed up her blindfold. She watched through a gauze-like haze as he kneeled back on his heels and pulled the glove off his free hand with his teeth. Frantically, he ripped open his pants and withdrew his shaft. Heavens, it was so beautiful, so hard and long and thick, and every greedy part of her wanted it inside her.

With gritted teeth, he continued to fuck her with the toy while he stroked his throbbing cock with the same rhythm. His eyes closed, and his cum spurted from him. It landed just below the corset on her lower belly and pussy, and she jerked in surprise. It was so...hot. She’d *never felt* heat! Still, his seed seemed to burn into her as it somehow united them in this act.

“Wyn...” he growled. His face was drawn as he gazed down at her. They *were* united. They were one in this moment, but on the edges of the act stood an emptiness that would fill them as soon as they took time to think. He still could not touch her, and she would still eventually be alone.

Chapter Five

Kai had never been so close yet so far from a woman. The sight of her, the scent of her arousal, the sweet sound of her coming and the clasp of her thighs around him had all brought him to release in one crushing swoop. He'd nearly lost control and fallen over her, shoving aside the obsidian cock and replacing it with his own.

If only there was a way to touch her. He needed to feel her smooth flesh beneath his palms, skin to skin. Soft against hard.

Her submission, while not perfect, was perfect for *him*. Wyn was everything he could have desired in a woman, a mix of all the things he liked.

When he'd come, he'd withdrawn the toy from her. Now he tossed it near the chest. It would need tending before he put it away, and he supposed it would be used a lot while he was here for this season.

A sudden pain slashed through him when he thought of leaving her. How could he desert his precious woman? It should seem odd that they were this quickly connected, but it felt completely right. Perhaps, in part, it was his connection to winter and her long-standing knowledge of him. There were still discoveries to be made, especially on his part, but he couldn't mistake the prevailing feeling that they were meant to be together. Somehow.

He got off the bed, trying not to wonder about how long he could go on without touching her. He liked contact. He liked the warmth of flesh-to-flesh. A frown tugged at his lips. Even if he could touch Wyn, he wouldn't have that. Despite the clothing that had separated them, the iciness of her body had seeped through to him.

"I've displeased you?" she asked, her own brow furrowed at his look.

“No.” He shook his head and gave her a smile as he headed for the scarves about her wrists. “Just thinking. Figuring out things.”

“What things?” She bent and wiggled her arms to loosen the muscles as he released her.

“Touching.”

“Oh...” She sat up and pulled the blindfold off the rest of the way. Sadness filled her eyes as she faced him. “You...like to touch?” she asked. “Some men don’t.”

“I do. I like it a lot. I need it.”

“Oh...”

It frustrated him that all she had to say about it was “Oh.” There had to be a solution. There had to be some way... What on earth? He realized suddenly that her gaze slid away at the mention of touching, as if she were keeping something from him. He held back his instinctive growl. In time, he’d find out what was going on.

He pulled on the glove he’d removed earlier then took off the clamps still squeezing her nipples, she gasped then let out a low groan as the blood flooded into the tips. He placed one of the silk scarves over her breasts, ripped off his gloves then ran his palms over the distended peaks. Absolutely no pain. He could touch her through silk...

A plan formed in his head, and his cock twitched in anticipation. The spent flesh roused eagerly as he continued to stroke her.

“Will your wardrobe work for me if you’re not standing before it too?” he asked.

“Yes. You’re my, um, consort for the season, so it will provide whatever you might need.”

He didn’t like how she’d phrased that, as if she had a new man here every year. “I want to see you naked,” he said. He plucked at her corset strings and loosened the laces enough that she might slide out of it. With a few twists and shimmies, she was free of that garment, her stockings and gloves.

The silk wrapped around his hand, he gently pushed her back until she reclined against the pillows. “Stay there,” he said.

She smiled languidly, her eyelids at half-mast. “Yes, Master.”

Gripped with a desire to kiss her, *now*, he left the bed and headed for the wardrobe before he indulged his need. As quietly as possible, he made his request then scooped it up a moment later. A large silk sheet fit for a king.

At the bed, he dragged it up Wyn, starting at her shapely toes and ending with it just below her eyes. He wanted to see her expressions, and to have her see him. Leaving her shrouded in the white silk, he stepped back from the bed and removed his clothes. The lust in Wyn's eyes pleased him.

Returning to her, he climbed over her on the bed and covered her mouth with his. He explored her lips through the silk, feeling her cool breath as she kissed him back just as fervently. Her legs parted beneath him and came around his hips once more. He sighed at the feel of the luxuriant fabric against him, but still wished for nothing between them. What had he always been told? You get what you get. He'd be happy with this.

His cock pressed to her pussy. He ground against her. Her icy arousal dampened the sheet. What would she feel like around him? Cold water tended to shrink a cock, but he was growing harder and longer as the lips of her sex held him.

Glorying in the ability to touch her, as hampered as it was by the sheet, he molded her breasts. Wyn writhed beneath him, her sighs and whimpers an alluring counterpoint to his own groans.

"Oh!" she cried as he pinched her nipples, knowing they'd still be sensitive from the clamps. "Again, please," she begged. "Please, more."

"More what?" he growled, dropping back into the role they both enjoyed. He squeezed the tips again then palmed the mounds.

"Oh," she moaned. "Master...please..."

"I think I might fuck you now, although..." He paused. Her arms had crept up around him, and though he liked it, he grasped her wrists and brought them to the mattress. He held them firmly. A light of desire flared in her eyes, and he knew she enjoyed the treatment.

"Although," he continued, "I might not. You seem to be a rather naughty slave. Should I reward you?"

"Spank me," she said. "Or use the flogger or the clamps again. But please, please, fuck me, Master. I need you so bad. I've needed you for years."

"Years?"

She looked away.

"Wyn, answer me. Now."

“I’ve watched you. I’ve sometimes seen you with women—not doing the things we’ve done here with your devices, but I’ve seen you dominate women, and um, have sex. They seem...very happy with your, um, rough ways.”

“You’ve watched me have sex?”

“I never thought you’d be with me, that you’d want me or that we could do any of what we have. But I wanted it to be me. I wanted to send out the icy wind I possess and freeze those girls so that you couldn’t... Well, you know what I mean. I’m sorry—”

“You knew my tendencies toward dominance before you brought me here, then?”

“Yes, I suppose so.”

“And somewhere inside you knew it was right for you?” It shocked him that she’d watched him, but it pleased him as well to know that she wanted to submit to him. While she hadn’t wanted to give into him easily at first, she *had* chosen this. “You carry so much responsibility, and you need someone who will take that away from you for a little while. Someone who will command you and give you some relief from the pressure.”

“Not just anyone,” she muttered.

He climbed off the bed and whipped away her sheet. She stared up at him in surprise, fear in her eyes. He knew she thought him angry at her admission, and at the moment, he didn’t mind. A little apprehension on her part was good—for now.

A tendril of wind wrapped around him and pulled him back toward her.

“Stop that,” he ordered. “You are not in charge here.”

The air immediately stilled.

“On your knees, slave,” he rasped. “You want to be mine, then you will submit. Turn away from me. I want your ass in the air and your shoulders to the bed.”

She swallowed and nodded, then scrambled into the position he’d indicated. The worry hadn’t left her face, but he knew she’d be fine as soon as he started touching her once more.

“What did you do when you watched?” he asked. “Did you touch yourself?”

“I just watched,” she whispered.

“And after, when you came back here to your big, lonely fortress and you were all alone in your bed? What about then? Did you touch yourself then?”

“Yes...”

“Yes?”

“Yes, Master.”

“And?”

“And I thought of you. I pretended it was you.”

Perfect. He smiled, loving her at his mercy, loving her hips in the air for him. “Get your legs apart,” he ordered.

She complied.

“More,” he demanded.

Her knees moved a few more inches.

“Now, show me. Reach with one of your hands and show me.”

Tentatively, she touched her pussy, sliding her fingers along her crease and rubbing her nubbin until her pelvis jerked. Wrapping his hand in the silk sheet, he pressed his fingers to the same places. He stroked her until she moaned and rotated against him. Her arm curled back under her head as she took any touch he'd bestow. Her ass rocked backward, and he drove two of his covered fingers into her sopping cunt.

Wyn screamed, her passage immediately convulsing around the digits inside her. Adjusting part of the sheet so it covered her back, he rested one arm across her spine to steady her while he fucked her relentlessly with his hand. Her breathing and the tightening of her body told him she was about to come. Ruthlessly, he pulled free. His palm smacked to her silk covered ass.

“Kai...please...” she moaned.

His hand came down again. He wanted the heat of the spanking flooding her pussy. Even more, he wanted her to know who it was who possessed her. No yearly consorts. No spying and wishing—

“You're mine,” he ground out.

“Yes!”

“Say it!”

“I'm yours. I've been yours since the first time I saw you.”

Making sure the sheet was draped over her to keep their bodies separate, he wrapped a portion around his cock and guided it toward her opening. Without preamble, he surged inside her. He thought he might die from the pleasure of her intense grip. Her muscles were so tight around him.

The moment his cock was fully seated inside her, she went wild, pumping her hips frantically against him and fucking his cock as if he'd pulled it away any second and never let her have it again. Grabbing her waist, he guided her and slowed her movements. *She* was not in charge here.

She cried and thrashed as he moved in a sedate, measured pace. He felt a gust of air pushing him and smacked her ass in response. "Stop, or I won't let you come."

Still, he moved faster. The cold from her body was beginning to bite. It wasn't the sting from before, but just a seeping ache that headed toward the bone for a deep chill. The faster surges staved it off, the exertion warming his body. Wyn's channel started to squeeze his cock and he knew she was close to release.

"You can come, little one," he told her. "You don't have to wait."

"Yes," she screamed. Her whole body tensed and her cunt grasped him tight. As he came, he realized it had started snowing around them.

He pulled out, then rolled to the side as the delicate flurries danced through the air on invisible currents. Wyn turned onto her side, facing him.

"What's this?" he asked, indicating the snow.

She grinned sheepishly. "I hadn't realized..."

"It's pretty." It was especially pretty as she rolled to her back, and the fat flakes landed on her flat abdomen. They didn't melt. Instead, they gathered like wispy feathers decorating her smooth skin.

Her gaze languid, she watched him watching her. Her limbs were relaxed and her expression was as sex-sated as one could get.

"I have to touch you," he muttered.

"No!" she gasped.

Before she could stop him, he reached out and pressed his palm to her flat middle. The snow had cast them in an almost hazy glow as it had combined with the fire. The muzzy light disappeared instantly. Pain rushed forward in its wake. The agony was instant and completely unlike the sting he'd experienced when he'd kissed her. It paralyzed him and spread quickly from his arm to the rest of his body.

"No! No..." Wyn screamed. Her hands pushed at him, but without the covering of the gloves, they only made his torture worse. He couldn't tell her, though. The muscles in his throat

refused to work. He could barely breathe, each intake an impotent struggle. His blood slowed as if turning to slush, and his flesh froze before blessed numbness crept over him. His vision grew dim. His last sight was Wyn's panicked face.

Wyn screamed in terror as she realized what Kai had done. Frantically, she struggled to disengage his arm from where it had settled on her. Frost curled up his arm, and his skin had turned a sickly gray. If they didn't separate quickly, he'd die—she couldn't lose another man that way! She couldn't let Kai die. She loved him.

Desperately, she wrenched at his arm then shoved his body to the side and over the edge of the bed. The fall wouldn't feel great, but she imagined freezing to death might be worse.

Scrambling from the bed, she grabbed up the long gloves she'd worn earlier and yanked them on. She swore as they gave her difficulty, twisting as if they knew her rush. Deciding they were on well enough, she grasped Kai's arms and dragged him toward the fire. He had to get warm and quickly. Panic filled her. When she'd frozen her first would-be lover, it had been an accident, too. Then she hadn't realized what was happening. She'd felt awful, but it hadn't been anywhere near the terror she experienced at the sight of Kai's frozen features.

As tears filled her eyes, they blurred her perspective. His head thunked to the floor as she lowered him.

“Sorry. Sorry. I'm sorry,” she cried.

He groaned. A good sign. But he still needed to be warmer. Scurrying to the hearth, she tossed small logs on the fire then stoked the flames, wishing her powers included the capacity to make it rage. Alas, that ability belonged only to her sisters, Summer and Autumn.

As soon as the blaze had risen—thankfully—to a roar, she rushed to the wardrobe and ordered it to provide brandy.

“Wyn...” Kai murmured.

“Yes, Master?” She shook her head to clear her racing thoughts. “Yes, Kai? I'm right here.” After grabbing the bottle and a glass, she returned to him and knelt by his side. Almost immediately, she realized she couldn't chance him touching her skin, so she leapt up again and grabbed her dressing gown. With it closed and the tie firmly knotted around her waist, she settled again.

“Calm down,” he ordered weakly. Slowly, he moved his arm and petted her thigh. “I’m still breathing.”

Unfamiliar tears trickled over her cheeks. She rarely cried. She swiped at her face with one hand while she grasped his fingers with the other. “You almost died.”

“But I didn’t. And now I know I need to use more caution with you. Are you all right, little one?”

She nodded, bemused that he’d worry for her. No one had seen her as a vulnerable woman before or cared much for her feelings. More often than not, she heard, “I hate winter!” and people feared her. Kai... He seemed to...well, he wanted to protect her even when he’d come so close to death.

“I wish there was a way for me to touch you,” he sighed. “I want to hug you, to have you press your face into my chest, to feel your fingers sliding over me.” He swallowed and looked into the fire.

“I can’t...”

“I know you can’t touch me.”

She could have left it at that and let him believe that was what he’d meant, but the relationship developing between them demanded honesty. Her eyes closed. The truth might end them.

“My parents left me with a means to someday claim my mate. A single shard of pure winter I keep hidden.”

“What do you mean?” he asked sharply. She cringed at the barely concealed anger in his voice. She loved him and suspected he could be her mate. For years, she’d watched for the right man, but she hadn’t understood the weight of this decision until now.

When she looked at him, hurt and fury lit his face. She quickly turned away.

“It would be forever. The man I claim would be chained to my side forever.”

“And?” he demanded, obviously unmoved by that fact.

“And I can’t do that to anyone.”

“Even if he loves you? Even if he wants to be with you?”

She shook her head. This was selfless love, wasn’t it? She was doing the best thing for him though it was the last thing she wanted.

“Stay by the fire and get warm,” she said, getting up. “I almost killed you.”

“There’s more than one way to kill a man,” he murmured.

Unable to reply, she left the room.

Chapter Six

Kai stared into the fireplace at the far side of the main hall, contemplating his situation with Wyn. It seemed to be his main occupation lately—staring and thinking. He loved Wyn, and for the last two months, he'd done everything in his power to convince her of that. Her adamancy that she couldn't make him her full consort never shifted. A few weeks ago, he'd stopped asking.

The sex had been spectacular. It was everything his dominant spirit could have asked for, but underpinning it all was the knowledge there was still one part of herself she refused to submit to him. He couldn't force her. It would have to be her decision.

Though he was warm, he rubbed his hands over his arms. Two months without human contact was getting to him. He had to leave. That broke his heart, but he needed more. He'd never love anyone as he did Wyn, he might even spend his life alone, but he couldn't live with her and not touch her.

And spring approached. Wyn slept more and more as it drew closer. Right now, she was up in her bed. She'd awake toward evening, and the temperatures would drop. He should be sleeping too so that he'd be wide-awake for their activities tonight.

There was nothing to do while she slept. The fortress was devoid of things to keep him occupied—something he would have changed if she'd made him her full consort—and leaving the dwelling was foolhardy due to the constant blizzard raging about the structure. He'd attempted it one day while Wyn had slept, only to find himself pushed back inside by strong gusts and blinding snow.

While she was awake, it was as if the world transformed. Granted, it was mostly talking and sex between them. They enjoyed discovering new ways to find delight without touching skin to skin. Kai was partial to having Wyn tied for his pleasure. He knew she liked it as well.

This past week, she'd commented that it had been a mild winter indeed. She'd been too busy submitting to him to paint the land with frost and snow. That night, they'd left the fortress, and Wyn had taken him to see the countryside as she'd delivered a healthy dose of storms to the land.

In the early hours of morning, they always lay in bed beside one another, inches yet miles apart. When he'd woken a few hours ago, his body pressed to hers and his hand creeping toward her bare skin, he'd decided it was time to get up.

It hurt him that she didn't love or trust him enough to make their union permanent. Tonight, he'd ask her to return him to the village before spring descended and it was too late for her to travel.

"Kai," Wyn said, entering the hall and yawning. "You're up early."

"I almost touched you," he told her flatly, without offering details. She knew he was angry with her over not giving him the shard. He wasn't going to argue with her on the day he'd ask her to take him out of here.

"There is another chamber," she murmured. Neither of them wanted that. Until now, he'd refused to leave her alone while they slept. He'd wanted to be near the woman he'd come to love. The last time she'd offered that option, he'd commanded her not to mention it again.

He shook his head. "You know what I want. Why—"

She held up her hand, cutting him off. Her head cocked. "Someone's coming."

"Who? How do you know?" In all the time he'd been here, no one had ventured nearby.

"I don't know. Several people... A hunting party perhaps." Her brow furrowed, she hurried from the room. Kai rushed after her. She didn't pause until she'd reached the highest turret of the fortress and she stepped outside into a driving wind.

"There." She pointed. "About a mile away."

"You heard that?" Kai squinted his eyes to see the tiny figures barely visible to him through the snow.

"They won't come near. The wall will keep them out." She indicated the band of snow and wind that had thickened around the fortress. "It will disorient them and turn them in circles until they're far away from here."

Too bad. He would have appreciated talking to the men.

"That girl is with them," Wyn rasped out.

“Who?”

“Gerda. The one your family was forcing you to wed.”

“Gerda?” He looked again at the figures. What on earth would she be doing out there?

Wyn nodded then went back inside.

“I want to go down there.”

“Why?” she asked sharply. He tried not to notice the hurt in her eyes.

“I need to leave. I can’t stay here, chancing that I’ll accidentally touch you every night. I can’t be here—” He cut himself off before he told her how much it hurt not to be able to be fully one with her. He hoped she’d call his bluff, though he wasn’t bluffing. In fact, he couldn’t be more serious. Maybe if he were gone, she’d understand how much they needed to be together.

She stared at him. “I thought...”

“You were never meant to be submissive to me. You won’t give all of yourself over.”

“I can’t...”

“I know, but it’s what I need most.”

Her head bowed for a moment, and when she looked up at him again, she appeared as if he’d ripped the very soul from her. Her eyes glassy, she locked her jaw. A moment later, she disappeared in a swirl of ice that battered the room and whipped at his clothes.

In the deadly silence that followed, Kai wondered if he’d done the right thing. He had. He knew he had. To think otherwise would send him down a path of destruction—well, faster down that path. He was already well on the way.

With heavy heart and feet, he headed up to the bedchamber he shared with her. He’d intended to get his things then realized all he had was the box of toys they’d shared. He opened the lid and gazed at the items nestled in the box. These things wouldn’t be shared with anyone else. There was no need to take them.

Going to the wardrobe, he requested a piece of parchment and a quill with ink to pen her a note. He supposed she could read, though he’d never seen a book in the fortress. Due to his father’s insistence and the work in Peter’s shop, he knew how to write as well as read. In minutes, the message had been inscribed. As soon as it dried, he folded it in half and placed it atop the devices in the chest, then shut the lid. One day, when the loneliness hit her, she’d get it.

He took up his coat, hat and gloves. Walking through the fortress for the last time, he headed for the huge iron-reinforced doors.

The magical snow band would grab him as soon as he stepped outside and would propel him away from the castle. At the door, he turned back to the empty hall. He didn't know where Wyn had disappeared to. He supposed this was easier than a tearful goodbye.

"I love you, Wyn," he said. "I wish you could have trusted me."

* * * *

From a high window that hid her from view, Wyn watched Kai trudge from the castle. His final words, carried to her on the wind, echoed in her heart. *I love you*. But she hadn't been enough.

The wall protecting the fortress latched onto him as soon as he stepped outside. Her heart breaking, she held out her hand and guided him quickly through it and toward the search party that had come for him. As soon as Gerda saw him, she cried out and ran across the short distance. She plowed into Kai's chest and her arms flew around his shoulders.

Wyn blinked away the tears blurring her vision and watched her lover. He didn't push Gerda away. He hugged her as if she was the only thing holding him to earth. His face pressed into Gerda's neck and he didn't let go. His arms shifted to slide inside Gerda's coat where Wyn knew he'd find the girl's warm, curvy body.

Wyn turned away. A last fit of anger rose behind her and sent a burst of winter fury after the group to drive them down the mountainside to the village. She didn't need to witness it. She could control the season without seeing it. As soon as she felt them move, she sank to the ground and curled into a ball. She was done for the season. Spring could arrive early. Wyn wasn't casting one more snowflake. In fact, she might never again.

Chapter Seven

“Get up!”

Wyn pulled a pillow over her head and ignored the grinding voice that interrupted her sleep. “Go away,” she begged.

“I will not.” The blanket was tugged away from the bed. “It’s January and your ass should have been out of bed and wrecking havoc across the countryside over a month ago.”

She cracked open one eye and stared up at the redheaded bitch who was dragging her from bed and into consciousness. She didn’t want to be awake. When she was awake, she thought of Kai. Worse, she thought of Kai with Garda’s arms around him and his face pressed into her.

“You’re a mess.”

Only a sister could be so kind. She glared at Autumn, wishing she’d just go away. There was only one method. She has to bring on the winter freeze and drive the wretch from the land. Autumn was right. She was a mess. She’d completely ignored the Southern portion of the world this year, content to let them have autumn until spring arrived.

“You know there are only so many leaves to go around,” her sister complained. “The trees have waited around ugly and bare for months. I can only bring on so much drizzly, gray rain.” She paused in her tirade. “What’s wrong with you? You never sleep like this. Usually, you hide out in this monstrosity and play during our seasons.”

“Nothing that concerns you.” Wyn swung her feet from bed and knocked her ankle against the chest she’d moved to the floor before she’d climbed into bed. Kai’s chest. She sighed and stood. “I’m up. I’m fine. Snow is on the way.”

“Hmph.” Autumn disappeared in a whirl of crackling leaves. She’d always been grouchy when overtired.

Stretching, Wyn moved to the window. The barren land below repulsed her and she sent out a blast of weak snow to give at least minimal cover to the land surrounding her fortress. She’d dredge up the will to do more throughout the day. She was a stronger woman than this. The fact that she’d let her heartbreak over Kai send her into such a spiral disgusted her.

Angrily, she sped through her home, giving it its annual winter refreshing. Ice was patched, any trace of the other seasons was removed, the wall around the fortress was bolstered. Winter was late, but once she got started, it would be a season to remember for a hundred years to come. Kai would rue the day he’d left her. The village would be so thickly coated with ice it would be mid-summer before they saw bare ground. He could cuddle with that *girl* all he wanted, and she wouldn’t warm him. It would be too cold.

The thought of Kai with Gerda brought her up short. Had they married in the months she’d hidden? Could Wyn have convinced him to stay with her? Was she to blame? She had the means of keeping him here. She had only to fully submit and to allow him to become her consort.

No!

She was glad now that she hadn’t given him the shard. He’d left at the first opportunity. An eternity with her would have been too much for him. They would have hated each other before a decade had passed.

Bent on her plan for total world icing, she climbed the tower and stood on the precipice. The world was gray around her, a mire of gloom. Surely Autumn could have done better. She was the most colorful of Wyn’s sisters. Perhaps she just didn’t have it in her, much like Wyn. Had a man broken her too?

From habit, she focused on the village and sought Kai’s presence. He wasn’t there. Who cared? She didn’t want to see him. Going inside, she considered finding another companion for the season. It would distract her, and maybe, he’d know how to use the toys Kai had left. Her stomach knotted. She couldn’t imagine being intimate with anyone but the man she loved. Oh how she loved him.

Going back to her chamber, she sat on the floor next to the bed and leaned against the side. She wasn’t going to sleep. Her sister was right. She had a job to do. She couldn’t stay in

bed. Absently, she stroked the chest, tracing the ironwork with her fingers. It was all she had of Kai. Could she use his obsidian column and pretend it was him and, just for a few minutes, forget she was alone. Or perhaps put on the clamps and envision him commanding her.

She shook her head. It would be empty without him. Still, she flipped open the lid. She wanted to touch what he'd touched. She'd thought she was fine in her ice world, but she needed touch as much as he did.

Her eyes widened when she saw the parchment inside the box. Hands shaking, she opened it and read what he'd written.

My dearest Wynter,

With a heavy heart, I leave you today. You might not read this for years, but even if you do not see this letter until I am an old man on my deathbed, know that I love you. I will love you my entire life, and when I die, it will be your name that last passes my lips. I would have happily spent eternity at your side. Instead, I'll have to live with you only in my heart. Being fully united with you is all I've ever wanted.

Yours, now and forever,

Kai

Tears streamed down her cheeks. She had to find him. Normally, she'd search for the happiest man standing amidst the snow, but since she hadn't sent it, that wouldn't be possible. How would she find him?

The wardrobe. She hadn't mentioned to Kai it could work in reverse. She'd never really used it that way, and she'd been too much of a coward to chance that he would. Opening the door, she stepped inside.

Please do not let me find him in Gerda's bed!

She closed her eyes and ordered, "Take me to Kai!"

The first thing she heard was screams. The second was a stampede of feet running away from her. With a sigh, she opened her eyes.

“Discretion isn’t your strongest skill,” Kai said drily.

Her eyes drank him in. He looked sad, his face drawn and tired, but he was the sweetest sight she’d ever seen. “I didn’t think you’d be in a crowd,” she replied.

“It’s Epiphany. You’ve just landed next to the manger.”

She glanced around, seeing the stable setup and vaguely remember the human’s holiday traditions. “Your...*wife* isn’t with you?”

His features hardened. “I don’t have a wife. I don’t even have a lover. After you...” He scowled. “How could you think that!”

“You left and went right into Gerda’s arms!” she retorted.

“Because I was starved for touch!” He took a deep breath. “*Why* are you here?”

Her head bowed. It wasn’t enough. She had to show him before all the eyes that were peeking through the cracks of windows and doors of the nearby homes. Praying he’d accept her submission, she knelt before him. Her head leaned against his thighs.

“I made a mistake.”

“And?”

“I want to be with you forever.”

“And?” The edge that had filled his voice now softened, and hope filled her.

“I want to submit fully to you. And have you as my Master.”

His hand landed on her head. “Stand up, Wyn.” He wore gloves and as soon as she’d risen, he cupped her face. “When was the last time you brushed your hair?”

She shrugged, remembering that she hadn’t even changed from her sleeping rail once she’d woken. She must look a mess.

“You’ll let me brush it?” he asked.

“Yes, Master,” she replied.

“Then paddle your lovely behind with the hairbrush.”

She quivered at the thought. “Oh yes.”

“Take us home, Wyn. Make me your consort, and I’ll make you mine.”

* * * *

Kai looked up at Wyn as she entered the room. She’d left him in the bedchamber and gone to retrieve the shard from where it had been locked away. It was endearing that she was in such disarray. She looked like his insides had felt since leaving her.

“This won’t be pleasant,” she said. “Some say this comes from a troll’s mirror, but that’s just legend. It is pure winter. It will be painful, but that will pass quickly. It must go into your eye.”

She sat on the edge of the bed where he lay and opened her hand.

In disbelief, Kai looked at the tiny glass-like sliver in her palm. That was all it would take?

“I’m ready.” He was ready for whatever was necessary to be with her. Still, he tried not to instinctively wince at the idea of it going into his eye.

“You’ll have to hold open your eye. I can’t touch your skin until after.”

“Which one?”

“Your left. Nearest your heart.”

Taking a deep breath to bolster himself for the moments to follow, he pushed open the lids of his left eye, exposing it to her. He stared at the ceiling, hoping not to flinch as her fingers came near.

“I love you,” she said. Before she’d finished speaking, her hand obscured the vision in that eye, and pain arrowed through his body. Like the time he’d almost been frozen when he’d touched her, ice flowed through him, seeming to freeze his limbs and racking his being with agony.

“Wyn!” he cried out. Was he dying after all?

“I’m right here. Shh...just a moment longer. I promise.”

Almost as if her words had made it so, the ice receded and warmth flooded through him. Blinking his eyes and feeling no irritation from the shard that had pierced into him, he turned his head to look at the woman he’d spend eternity with. Where once there had been the whitest of skin, she now glowed like the picture of health. Her once white-blonde hair now fell in thick, gold waves over her shoulders. Her lips were rosy pink, and he could see the shadow of her dark nipples through her cotton rail.

Smiling, she shed her nightdress and knelt on the carpet. “What do you wish of me?”

He was already pulling off his shirt and shoving off his pants. “Get up here. I want to feel you against me.”

He heard her getting something from beside the bed, then she was climbing onto the mattress. Without hesitation, he pulled her to him. He groaned at the warm contact of her breasts to his chest.

Rolling so she was beneath him, he captured her mouth and plundered the depths. His tongue thrust with all the lonely desperation he'd felt while they'd been parted. Filled with need, he jousting with her tongue, tasting every part of her.

Wyn groaned, arching beneath him. She parted her legs to cradle him between. Her pussy rubbed against his cock, the lava-like heat so different from the iciness of the past.

Shifting from her mouth, he kissed a path down to her breasts. Wyn cried out as he nipped and pulled at the tips. He loved her reactions, loved that he could have her bare flesh against his tongue.

"Can we use these?" she asked. He glanced over to see the clamps in her hand. She liked the pain, and they could explore that forever.

Rising to his knees, he took them from her. After opening the two bars, he pulled each of her nipples through a device then tightened the screws to the chorus of her cries.

"You're a very naughty girl," he told her. "Winter never came this year."

"I think you can make her come," she replied.

He shook his head, laughing at her rejoinder. "See...naughty, naughty, naughty. How should I punish you, my little slave?"

She bit her lip, but it didn't hide her smile. "Fuck me until I beg you to stop."

"I think you'll suck my cock, and you'll get that spanking. Later."

"Whatever you say. You're going to fuck me first?" she asked hopefully. "Master," she added.

The thought of being inside her was coming close to undoing him. He had to possess her. He didn't hesitate. Parting her, he pushed his cock against her creamy opening and slid right in. Her passage was like fire and so tight as it squeezed him. Reaching between them, he pinched her clit and groaned as her folds immediately grew even tighter. Grasping her wrists, he pressed them over her head then pounded into her pussy in a relentless rhythm that had her screaming and twisting beneath him. The caress of her skin against his enflamed him.

"Yes!" she cried. "Oh yes. Master, fuck me hard!"

"Take me," he growled back. "Feel the cock that will fill you for the rest of our days."

She shook at his words, her cream flooding around him.

“Yes, fill me,” she begged. “Kai! Oh Kai!”

“I love you, Wyn,” he bellowed. “I love you.”

His body went stiff and he pounded forward once more, filling her with his seed for the first time, and taking her flying over the edge into a journey that was just beginning and would never end. With Wyn in his arms, they could face any trial time might bring. She was his queen and he was her master, and they would live happily ever after in their palace of ice, safe and secure in the each other’s heated embrace.

About the Author

When it comes to books and movies, Brynn Paulin has one rule: there must be a happy ending. After that one requirement, anything else goes. And it just might in any of her books.

Brynn lives in Michigan with her husband and two children, who love her despite her occasional threats to smite them. They humor her and let her think she's a goddess... as long as she provides homemade chocolate chip cookies on a regular basis. Brynn is president of her local chapter of Romance Writers of America and also hosts a weekly writing critique group. She's conducted workshops at several writers' conferences around the country as she enjoys mentoring and meeting new people.

According to Brynn, her writing success can be attributed to an eclectic collection of music, her local road construction crews, a trusty notebook, and of course, her husband, Mr. Inspiration, who puts up with a lot in the name of research. Brynn loves to talk to her readers and can be found at www.brynnpaulin.com.

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Art professor Seth Granger has two problems—an absentee life drawing models and a case of unrequited lust. Luckily his troubles have the same answer—his colleague, Dr. Callie Sullivan.

The trick will be getting her out of her clothes and into his studio...and hopefully into his bed. However, she's intent on keeping her mind on her art and ignoring him. Now he just needs to convince her she should be his body of art.

***Sense and Sensuality* by Cara Hart**

Eleanor McLaren leads a subdued life. She hates parties, avoids social interactions, and she cannot talk to men. But within the shell of her timidity lies the heart of a siren. Afraid of her own boldness, she hides her desires. Especially from the man who stars in her dreams of passionate encounters and works in her department.

Eddie Harrington has never lacked for partners in his pleasure games. But for some reason, Eleanor is the one woman he can't get out of his head. She is definitely not the type he usually pursues. Then he sees her at a bar, looking like his wildest fantasy. And one night with her is not going to be enough. The man who never commits just might have met his match-until a mistake from his past forces her to choose between trusting him or walking away.

***Sex Ed* by Mia Watts**

Mina Lasky has a pesky crush on Biology professor, Derek Link. They've worked in tandem in the same University facility long enough that even the sound of his voice makes her hot. It's time

to put the fantasy to an end. Mina signs up to be his guinea pig in a female sexuality lab for those on the doctorate track. She hopes to work Derek out of her system while enjoying some much needed sexual stimulation.

Dr. Derek Link has been itching to get his hands on the quiet, sexy Chemistry professor. He can't believe his luck when she signs up to be his lab. But one night isn't enough and Mina won't admit they can have something a lot more long term.

And when one of the students recognizes Mina, her heart isn't the only thing on the line. With her career in the hands of a blackmailer, and her heart begging to trust Derek, she's beginning to think the lab was a very bad idea.

Other Books Available by Brynn Paulin

Dragon's Blood

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.

Blood Bought

For months, Jonah Genjhury has hunted Athena. Waiting. Planning. Dreaming. Finally, he finds his prickly runaway mate and he knows it's time to claim her for the Cruentus clan—and himself. Athena, however, isn't easy to convince. She fights a union with everything in her. Now he must convince his angry mate she's his while an age-old battle with the Dragon enemies rages around them.

Athena Xanthopoulos isn't having any of this "Dragon" business. They're myths, and she certainly isn't the mate of one of those flying, scaly, blood-sucking creatures. Okay, so he's not scaly most of the time and he's super hot, but that doesn't mean she wants to spend eternity with him. Trouble is...she can't stop wanting him.

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