



Moonlit Magic

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Warning: This book contains sexually explicit content which is only suitable for mature readers. This story has been rated *Total-e-burning*.

Celtic Fire

MOONLIT MAGIC

Bronwyn Green



Dedication

For Matt - Tá mo chroí istigh ionat

Chapter One

"You can't avoid him forever."

Glaring at her best friend, Beckett Matthews crossed her arms over her chest and turned towards the window, watching the lush, green countryside race by. "Sure I can. Just watch me."

There had been nights when she thought it would kill her, but she'd avoided him perfectly well for five long years. Of course, the fact that the Atlantic Ocean had stood between them had made staying away from him somewhat easier.

Now that she'd returned to Ireland, steering clear of Kieran Brennan was going to be a bit more difficult. But, she reminded herself, she was just visiting. This was simply a last minute stop on the European museum circuit. She'd be in Dublin only as long as the Tapestry and Textile exhibition. When the tapestries went back to the U.S. so would she, and Kieran would once again be relegated to the land of memories and mistakes.

It hadn't all been a mistake, had it? Longing flooded her at the memory of his lanky, muscled body pressing her into the cool earth under the stars.

Shaking off the past, she focused on the present. The present consisted of riding from the airport to her aunt's cottage outside of Wicklow with Tara. Every landmark they passed brought back memories better left buried. The standing stones where he'd first kissed her. The pond where they'd gone skinny-dipping after dark. The castle ruins where they'd made love. She closed her eyes, willing away the memories. All roads led back to Kieran.

"Admit it," Tara chided, her lilting accent bringing back memories of every summer she'd spent here at her aunt's home. "You can't stop thinking about him."

Beckett sighed. She'd never stopped thinking about him. At twenty-three he'd been gorgeous. She'd loved running her fingers through his long tawny hair and staring into his deep, sea green eyes. And God knew she'd never tired of touching him—lean and muscular—golden perfection. She clenched her hands, remembering the feel of his sweat-slick skin against hers.

She needed to stop behaving like a hormonal eighteen-year old. That chapter of her life was long past. She'd willingly walked away from everything he'd offered—ran was more like it. She ran home to a lonely existence.

It was stupid to think that her relationship with Kieran would have turned out like her parents' relationship had, but she couldn't free herself from the bone deep fear that he would leave when she needed him most. That he would abandon her like her mother and father. Granted, her mother hadn't had a choice, but her father did. And he chose to leave her and her siblings after her mother died.

Part of her knew that Kieran would never do anything that cowardly, but old fears died hard, apparently. Instead, she'd focused on the physical, fucking him at every opportunity and when he wanted more...she'd run. She pushed away the almost tactile recollection of the way their bodies fit together, only to wonder how they'd fit now.

How had he changed? She could only hope he'd developed a receding hairline and a beer belly. Of course, his voice was probably the same. He'd been able to seduce her by simply whispering endearments in his low, sexy brogue. It wasn't just the accent, though thinking of the way he murmured her name against her neck as he moved inside her had her ready to insist that Tara drop her off on his doorstep.

Frowning, Beckett shifted in the seat of the cramped economy car. "It's been five years. If he's not married, I'm sure he's involved with someone."

No matter how much she might still want him, she refused to get involved with a man who belonged to someone else. For all she knew, he could have kids. It wasn't difficult to imagine him with children—he'd adored his younger siblings and cousins.

For a moment, she pictured him happy and in love with someone else. If she'd stayed when he'd asked her—

Beckett tried to swallow past the rock that suddenly lodged in her throat. The sting of tears burned her eyes and she blinked rapidly, hoping her friend hadn't noticed.

How could she still feel so strongly about him? Sure, he'd been her first love, not to mention her adolescent-long infatuation, but how could she still be moved to the point of tears by imagining him with someone else?

"He's not involved with anyone." Tara glanced meaningfully at her. "He hasn't been with anyone since you left."

Beckett snorted. "How stupid do you think I am?" There was no way someone like Kieran would go a few months without a lover, let alone five years.

"I'm serious."

"So am I. There's no way. It's just not possible."

Her friend glanced away from the road, again. "Have you been with anyone?" she asked even though she already knew the answer.

"That's different."

"I don't see how."

Why had she asked Tara to pick her up from the airport? If she had taken cab, she could have dodged the topic for a while longer. It wasn't as though they hadn't discussed it during the time they'd been apart, but now it seemed impossible to avoid. Beckett dropped her head against the seat rest. Maybe she was still in love with him. Was that the reason she'd never managed more than one or two dates with the guys who'd asked her out? God, she was pathetic.

She released the steering wheel and laid her hand on Beckett's arm. "He needs you, Beck."

She didn't bother to stifle the laugh that bubbled to the surface. Kieran had never needed anyone—least of all her. She doubted that had changed since she'd last seen him.

"He only slept with me because I threw myself at him." She didn't bother to disguise the disgust in her voice.

"That's not true," Tara admonished.

It was, and Beckett knew it. She sighed, wishing it were possible to erase the remorse and humiliation. From the time she was thirteen, she'd followed him around like a lovesick puppy. Which, to be honest, was how she'd acted. At the time, he'd been eighteen. The last thing he'd wanted was to deal with a kid with a crush.

When she'd turned sixteen, she'd begun flirting with him in earnest. He'd ignored it, treating her like a little sister—just like always. The summer she'd turned eighteen, she'd attempted a clumsy seduction. Her face flushed with the memory of her awkward advances. He'd probably given in because she'd worn him down. Maybe he'd simply had nothing better to do. Or worse, he'd felt sorry for her.

The only reason he'd asked her to stay was guilt. Guilt and regret. She'd seen it in his eyes, and she'd still been tempted to say yes. But she didn't. He would have grown to resent

her, and that would have hurt more than outright rejection. No. She'd done the right thing by leaving when she did. How often had she tried to convince herself of that over the last few years? More importantly, how long would she continue to try?

She squinted against the late afternoon sun as the car turned onto the gravel road that led to her aunt's home. The whitewashed cottage sat nestled in a brilliant green valley, filled with heather and gorse. Red and yellow roses climbed the outside of the house and garden trellises. Wildflowers in vibrant pinks, purples and blues rioted haphazardly around the yard. In the distance, she could see the crumbling bell tower at Glendalough. She couldn't wait to wander through the ruins of the monastery again. Situated in between two valley lakes and ancient forests, it was the most peaceful place she'd ever known. There was nothing better than June in Ireland—except maybe June in Ireland with Kieran. But that wasn't happening. Not this year. Not ever again. With a sinking feeling, she knew she'd have to remind herself of that as soon as she saw him. It was going to be a long summer.

Tara parked the car behind an unfamiliar motorcycle.

Beckett nodded towards the vehicle. "Is Aunt Bridget riding a bike now?"

"No...that belongs to her friend."

Getting out of the car, they unloaded the luggage and brought it into the house.

Tara glanced at her wrist-watch. "Shoot. I've got to pick up the poppets from my mum. Are you okay to get settled on your own?"

"Of course. Bring the kids by later. Aunt Beckett needs hugs."

Tara wrapped her in a tight embrace. "I'm so glad you've come back. I've missed you like mad, you know."

Beckett hugged her friend in return. "I know. The phone and email just don't cut it."

The other woman stepped back and smiled, but a dark shadow crossed her eyes. "We really need to talk when I get back."

Worry crawled like bugs over her skin. "Is everything all right, Tara?"

"It's fine—really. There're just some things you need to know about sooner rather than later."

Beckett scowled at her friend. "It's not about Kieran, is it?"

"Not entirely." With a wave and that cryptic comment, she was gone, leaving Beckett alone with her thoughts.

Needing a distraction, she dragged her suitcase towards the bedroom. Sighing, she walked through the familiar cottage rooms. Since she'd been gone, it seemed that time had stopped. The whitewashed walls gleamed brightly in the late morning light in stark contrast to the heavy, dark wood furniture. Colourful scrap quilts covered the beds and the oak mantel glowed warmly above the fieldstone fireplace.

A gentle breeze, heavy with the scent of summer roses, blew through the open windows and she breathed deeply. Sun-warmed grass, sweet flowers and bitter greens. The smells brought back a collage of memories—most involved Kieran. How many nights had she spent with him lying in the dew-wet grass staring at the stars after making love?

Pushing those thoughts away, Beckett ran a hand over an ornately carved chair—Kieran's work. He'd still been working on it when she was here last. Absently, she wondered when he'd finished it. What other changes had she missed?

The whirl of a lawnmower drew her to the window, away from her memories of Kieran—only to be replaced by a whole new set of memories burned into her brain at the sight of him.

He'd unlocked Bridget's shed and had begun mowing the grass along the stream that wove through the property. His chestnut coloured hair hung loose about his shoulders and a silver chain around his neck glinted in the afternoon sun. In deference to the June heat, he'd stripped off his shirt, and his jeans hung low, exposing the glorious curve of his hip and the trail of hair that disappeared into his waistband.

She closed her eyes against the almost tactile memory of brushing her cheek and lips over the glossy swirls that covered his stomach. She could remember the sensation of hot, hard silk against her tongue as she'd taken the wide head of his cock between her lips. She could still feel his shuddering intake as she'd engulfed him, still feel his fingers twining and tightening through her hair, still hear his groan as she'd gone down on him.

Beckett rested her rapidly heating face against the cool pane of glass and took a deep breath. Reliving these memories wasn't going to help her deal with him when they finally had to interact. She might insist to Tara that she was over Kieran Brennan, but she wasn't. Not by a long shot.

Somewhere in the back of her mind, she registered the sudden silence. The mower had stopped. Opening her eyes, she scanned the yard looking for Kieran. She didn't particularly want him to know she was here yet. Especially while she was alone.

The creak of the front door shattered the silence and she whirled to face her past.

“Beckett?”

The rough need in that single word trailed fingers of anticipation along her spine and set her heart pounding in her chest. She swallowed hard, unable to answer any of the questions reflected in his deep green eyes.

Before she could open her mouth, he crossed the room and dragged her forcefully against him. The heat from his sun warmed skin seeped into her as she breathed in his familiar woodsy scent. Now it was overlaid with the tang of sweat and the sharp fragrance of freshly mown grass. His firm, full lips tightened into an annoyed line as he stared at her.

Beckett’s head spun and to her own ears, her breathing sounded too fast and uneven. Kieran’s own inhalations brushed his chest against hers with every breath he took. Her nipples pebbled against him, tight knots of near pain.

“Five fucking years,” he growled. “And not a goddamn word. I don’t know whether to turn you over my knee or take you now.” He shifted, insinuating his thigh between hers. The rock hard proof of his arousal pressed against her stomach and she bit her lip to stifle the threatening groan.

Her cleft flooded with need for his body. Need for him. She hadn’t been in the country for more than an hour and she’d already creamed her panties with want. She was in the same sorry shape she’d been in when she’d fled all those years ago.

Daring a glance at his face, she pushed at his chest. “You don’t want this.”

He laughed, the sound an almost angry bark as his nostrils flared slightly and he pressed her back against the whitewashed wall of the cottage. Lowering his head, he hovered a fraction of a centimetre above her lips. “The fuck I don’t.”

Spearing his fingers through her hair, he held her immobile as he took her mouth, forcing her lips open and delving inside. All thoughts of fighting vanished at her first taste of him. How had she lived without it for so long?

He tightened his grip on her, moulding her to his body as she clung to him, digging her fingers into his sweat-slick skin and pulling him closer. How many nights had she made herself come with the memory of fucking this man, only to fall asleep in her cold, empty bed? Too many. She needed the real thing—needed him inside her—filling her—if only for a little while. Even though it was a mistake of epic proportions, she wasn’t about to stop now.

Kieran groaned as Beckett writhed against him. The rough sound tingled through her body, making her pussy clench. He'd always made that sound when he entered her – like her body was the best place he'd ever been. It was the same sound she imagined when she made herself come with her vibrator, but her toy had never brought her to the same heights Kieran had.

Sliding his hand up her waist he cupped her breast. Her tight nipple hardened further at the brush of his hand. Tight coils of need travelled from her breast to her pussy as he plucked and rolled the tender flesh between his thumb and fingers, catching her needy whimpers in his mouth.

Leaving her lips, he followed the line of her jaw, trailing kisses to her ear and down her neck. He swiped his tongue across the wildly beating pulse at the base of her neck, and her breath hitched as he tasted her.

"I need more," he murmured against her neck.

Dear God, so did she.

Slipping his hand beneath her shirt, he palmed her breast, smiling against her skin as her nipple knotted and pressed eagerly into his palm. With a hurried motion he shoved the bra cup aside and rolled her tightened flesh between his callused thumb and forefinger, pinching gently and tugging.

The feel of his work-roughened hand on her body had her trembling. It was everything she could do not to beg for more. As it was, a breathy moan that barely sounded like her escaped her lips before she could stop it.

He brought his mouth to her ear and bit down on the lobe before whispering, "Remember all the times I made you come just by sucking your nipples?"

"Uh-huh," she whimpered, her breathing shallow. Like she could forget that. The sound of him murmuring to her in Gaelic would drench her panties in nothing flat. God help her if he tried it now.

"Think I can still do it?"

She shivered at the brush of his lips against the outer shell of her ear. She met his heated gaze and drew a shuddering breath. Her tongue darted out to dampen her lips. "I think you could make me come just by talking."

He plucked at the nipple he still held and his eyes glittered brightly at the challenge. "Shall I try, then?"

She trembled, clutching onto his waist. The way he looked at her, she felt like the floor was about to slide out from under her. Her fingers slipped beneath his waistband and she noticed his nostrils flare as he took a breath.

Sliding his free arm around her waist, he pulled her flush against him. His cock was a hard, thick ridge behind his jeans pressing against her belly.

She shifted and tried to pull him closer.

He grinned, his smile almost wicked. "I'm going to take that as a yes."

Instead of responding, she dragged her fingers over his torso, stroking his chest, his back, anywhere she could reach. She wanted to make him as crazy with need as he made her.

"You should know," he grated as she dropped eager kisses on his chest, "that as soon as I make you come, I'm going to spread those pretty thighs of yours and eat you until you come again."

Something low in her abdomen fluttered and clenched at his coarse words.

"It's been forever, but I can still remember the sweet taste of your cream." He nipped at her neck, sending shivers down her spine. "Do you still like to have your pussy licked as much as you used to?"

She couldn't catch her breath. His words wound around her, stroking her, promising her pleasure she'd only dreamed about for the past five years.

"I remember laying you down in the ruins and burying my head between your legs while your juices soaked the ground beneath us. Do you remember that, Beckett?"

Feeling her cheeks flame in embarrassment, she looked away, but he nipped at her lower lip and she met his eyes, trapping herself in his deep green gaze.

"Do you remember what it felt like to have my tongue and fingers inside you? Bringing you off? Do you remember how it felt to have my cock inside you?"

A fresh rush of moisture flooded her, dampening the insides of her thighs. Right. Like she could forget that. Leaning closer, she pushed aside the pendant that hung around his neck and closed her teeth around his nipple, biting gently.

Sliding his hand into the hair at her nape he tugged her head back. He held her motionless, consuming her with his gaze. "Keep that up, *céadsearc*, and I won't last long enough to make you come before I take you."

Céadsearc? Her breath stalled in her throat. Had he called her that from force of habit or did he still consider her his beloved? Her heart stuttered in her chest as she tried to force the stalled breath into her lungs.

He stared at her like he was starving. For her. She wished he'd just touch her already. Her breasts ached, swollen with need. She needed his mouth on her. Without giving herself time to change her mind, she grasped the hem of her T-shirt and pulled it off, dropping it on the floor.

Kieran's eyes darkened as he stared at her nearly bare flesh, his chest heaving.

She shifted under his intense gaze. She'd never stripped for anyone else and his intense perusal left her feeling suddenly nervous. She lifted her hand to cover her exposed breast, but he stopped her.

"Don't," he grated as he skimmed his hands along the curve of her waist, upward to unfasten her bra and slip it from her body. "I need to see you," he whispered as the fabric fell from his hand. Reaching out, he snagged the button on her shorts and released the closure. "All of you."

As the shorts dropped to the floor, he leaned forward and closed his lips around her nipple, sucking it into the wet heat of his mouth. Her back arched and she tangled her fingers in his hair, pulling him more tightly to her.

Kieran alternated between her breasts, devouring one, then the other. Desire slammed through her and her pussy ached with neglect. She needed him to fill the gnawing emptiness inside of her. She sighed. It was more than a physical void. Her heart was just as barren as her body, but with Kieran in her arms, that loneliness was beginning to ebb.

Beckett closed her eyes against the tears that gathered, reminding herself that her body was all he was interested in. They hadn't gotten enough of one another before she left, and he was just making up for lost time. Hell, wasn't she doing the same thing? She didn't want anything permanent with him. She just wanted him to fuck her. And she'd repeat it to herself as often as it took to believe it.

Kieran lifted his head and stared into the eyes of the woman he'd feared he'd never see again. Sliding his hands through the strawberry-blonde silk of her hair, he held her captive for another kiss—laying claim to her body and soul. He still wanted to throttle her for the

hell she'd put him through, but first he planned to bury himself between her legs until she screamed like a *beansidhe*. Sex first, fight later.

For so long he was convinced he'd never see her again. Never touch her. Never taste her. Never lose himself in her lush body. But now she opened for his kiss and pulled him closer. He could scarcely believe she was actually here, grinding against him, dragging her fingertips over his back, urging him closer. If he was any kind of decent, he'd tell her what awaited her in a few days' time, but he couldn't force his mouth to do anything other than worship at her body.

Her hand slipped under the waistband of his pants to stroke his skin. The sensation of her touch ratcheted through him. Her hands on his body felt better than anything he could recall in recent memory and he considered dropping trou to give her better access, but first he wanted to see her come.

Two minutes in her presence and he was reduced to nothing more than a randy school boy. He was pathetic. Irritation edged his lust. He wouldn't be in this position had she stayed when he'd asked her. He'd begged her to stay. Begged her to return to him. He'd have followed her to the States if he could have. Hell, he'd tried to leave this godforsaken isle more than once only to have the *geis*—the fucking curse of the Faery King—rain down upon his head.

Willing away the pain of the past, he breathed her in and the scent of roses and sandalwood twined around him. Innocently erotic—just like Beckett. Well, like she'd been five years ago when he'd first taken her. Unease filtered through his awareness. Who knew what she was like now. She hadn't been bound by the same curse he had. Tara had promised him Beckett didn't have a lover now, but that didn't mean she'd been without one since they'd been apart. Pain shot through him at the thought of her with other men. He pushed it aside and focused on her—on this present moment.

"I know I promised I'd make you come with words alone, but I can't keep my hands and mouth off you."

A wry smile curved her lips. "Do you hear me complaining?"

He dropped to his knees, bringing his mouth even with her belly. The heady scent of her arousal drifted to him as he brushed his lips back and forth over her silk covered mound. His mouth watered with the need to taste her. Hooking his fingers in the elastic of her panties, he dragged the satiny fabric down her legs, loving the shiver that wracked her body.

Swallowing hard, he spread her lips with his thumbs and gazed at her. She was beautiful—pink and glistening. Leaning forward to taste her, he swiped his tongue through her gathering cream as she gripped his shoulders for balance.

“Kieran,” she groaned.

“I’m right here, *céadsearc*,” he murmured between tastes. “And I’m not going anywhere.”

Her juices spilled like honeyed wine across his lips. Thrumming his fingers over her clit, he darted his tongue into her snug passage as she thrust her hips against him. Her fingernails dug into his shoulders as tremors shot through her body. He welcomed the sharp bite of pain. It kept his focus on Beckett instead of spilling in his pants like an untried boy, but he was close. The taste of her made his cock throb and his balls pull up tight. He wanted nothing more than to drive inside her until they were both sated and breathless with exhaustion.

Five years worth of pent up longing and need raced through his body and he knew he couldn’t contain himself any longer. Lifting her in his arms, he carried her to the bedroom that had been hers whenever she’d stayed with her aunt.

“But my clothes, what if Aunt Bridget comes back...”

Kicking the door shut, he tossed her on the bed, glorying in her nakedness. “I’m sure she’ll figure it out.”

She glanced once at the closed door before sitting up and unfastening his belt and unzipping his jeans. His cock sprung into her waiting hands and she brushed the leaking head across her lips, stopping briefly to lick the droplets of pre-cum from him before engulfing his head in the warmth of her mouth.

He heard his response as if it belonged to someone else. Teeth gritted, he inhaled sharply, his hands tangling in her hair. “Beckett,” he ground out.

Taking him from her mouth, she met his gaze, impish humour in her eyes. “Yes?”

He’d almost forgotten how much he loved her playful nature. Except for the aching in his gut to take her and the residual hurt at her refusal to speak with him before now, he could almost believe they hadn’t been apart for so long. But they had and there was plenty of lost time to make up for—particularly since she’d likely no longer be willing to speak to him after she found out what was in store for her.

Shoving the inevitable from his head, he sank to his knees and pushed her back to the bed as he pulled her legs over his shoulders.

"What are you doing?" she asked with a yelp.

Staring past the tight strawberry blonde curls that covered her mound, up the slope of her slightly rounded belly, past her pink-tipped breasts to meet eyes the colour of bluebells, he grinned. "What do you think I'm doing?"

Holding her gaze, he lowered his mouth to her slick sex and lapped at her sweet honey. He slid a finger into her sheath, nearly groaning when he felt how firmly she gripped him. He wasn't going to last five seconds once he got inside her tight pussy. Gently, he added another finger and began to work in and out of her as she writhed beneath his touch.

Her skin flushed a deep pink as she thrust against him. "More Kieran. Harder, *please*."

As if he'd deny her. He added a third finger and worked harder against her, pushing in and out while a fine sheen of perspiration broke out on her skin. Her cries made him long to drive his cock into her, but he wouldn't—not until she came and came hard.

"I can't wait to get inside you, *céadsearc*. I need to feel you come."

She whimpered at his words, murmuring unintelligibly. As he watched, she fingered her own nipples, pinching and twisting them. Christ, she was fucking gorgeous.

He wished he had another set of hands to pleasure her with. Of course, in a few days' time, they'd have exactly that. The King of the *Sidhe* would be joining them. Anger and unease twisted in his gut. He didn't want to share the woman he loved with Aohdan. The bastard had made his life a living hell for the last five years and it didn't look like he was about to stop any time soon.

Frustration drove Kieran and he finger fucked her harder. Her heels dug into his back and she pulled him more snugly against her pussy. She hovered on the edge of orgasm. He was beginning to think he needed her release almost as much as she did. He pulled her clit between his lips drawing on it and flicking it with the tip of his tongue. Her body bowed off the bed and she screamed out her completion.

Gently, he lapped up the juices that coated her cunt and thighs as her eyes slowly fluttered open. "Kieran, please..."

"Please what, love? I'm right here."

She reached towards him. "I need you inside me. Now."

She didn't have to ask twice. Letting her thighs fall from his shoulders to settle on the bed, he urged her to the middle of the mattress and covered her with his body. His cock settled heavily between her legs, slipping through the moisture pooling there. He wasn't even inside her yet, and he was ready to come.

Beckett grabbed his ass and dug her nails in, urging him forward. Bracing his arms alongside her, he slammed into her, stopping as she gasped and stiffened beneath him.

Carefully, he brushed the hair from her eyes. "Did I hurt you?"

Lips pressed together, she shook her head. "No. It's just been a while." A shy smile curved her lips as she stared into his eyes. "Since that last night you and I spent at the ruins."

He wondered if his relief was as evident as it felt. He hadn't expected that she'd be faithful to him—after all, she'd left him, presumably to never return. But the fact that she hadn't fucked anyone else gave him hope that she still loved him.

She shifted against him in a none-too-subtle hint. Slowly he withdrew, pulling against her grasping muscles before driving back in. Christ, how had he lived without this exquisite pleasure for so long? More blood surged to his cock as he swelled almost painfully within her. He ploughed forward again and again as he urged her legs around his waist. The angle of contact changed and he shafted her deeper, harder, gritting his teeth to keep from coming too soon.

The heavy pendant he wore dug into his sternum as he gathered her into his arms, moulding her body to his as he continued to bury himself, revelling in the welcoming clench of her pussy. Contractions rippled around his cock as her release rushed through her, shaking her violently as he held her.

She milked his cock relentlessly. Sharp sensation centred at the base of his spine then streaked outward along his limbs, pooling at the base of his skull before bursting through his cock. His orgasm shot through him, filling her in shuddering gushes.

Beckett clung to him as their breathing gradually returned to normal. Unwilling to pull from her warmth, he continued to hold her close as she toyed with the stone pendant that dangled between them. The words from the note he'd found with the necklace wound through his mind and he wondered if having Beckett in his arms again was due to the magic the note had promised.

A stone that's blessed by lovers' hands

*To bless the wearer with a love that stands.
Through time and toil, no stopping fate
As lovers unite, no hand can break.
So take this token and wear it true,
Destiny awaits with love for you.
A favour I ask from you to me
Once blessed return my gift to the sea.
For others await the hand of fate
My blessing to love's true mates.*

It wasn't any more ridiculous than being cursed by the Faery King, he supposed. And he had put the damn thing on in hope that the spell would prove true. So far, so good. Beckett was naked in his arms and he didn't have any intention of letting her out of this bed before he was damn good and ready.

Gently, he traced her mouth with the pad of his thumb, loving the way her lips parted as she stared at him. "Christ, I've missed you," he breathed as he lowered his head for a kiss.

"I missed you, too," she murmured against his mouth before surrendering and sliding her tongue into his mouth.

Despite the fact that they'd only just finished, he found himself hardening inside her again. He dragged open-mouthed kisses along her neck to the indentation behind her ear. She shivered and her nipples hardened into tight peaks that grazed his chest.

He flexed within her biting back a groan as her sheath rippled around him. As good as he felt right now, his anger still lurked beneath the surface tightening his skin with the same effect as a cold wind. Lifting his head he stared into her bottomless, blue eyes.

"Why?" He supposed he could have been more specific, but in the years he'd known her, Beckett had never had any trouble reading him.

She looked away.

"Why?" he asked again. "I ask you to marry me and you run away without a word. What the hell kind of answer is that?"

She pushed at his chest. "This is a mistake."

Holding her face, he forced her to meet his gaze. "The fuck it is."

She didn't speak.

“How can this be a mistake? You’re all I’ve wanted for five bloody years.”

Her eyes clouded and she pressed her trembling lips together. His stomach dropped to the floorboards in the face of such bare desire and pain reflected back at him. He hadn’t suffered alone.

Chapter Two

Beckett swallowed hard, pushing down everything within her that wanted to squeal with joy. She needed to remember that he didn't really mean it. Not really. "It *is* a mistake. People always want what they shouldn't have. They want things that are bad for them."

The corner of his mouth quirked and her stomach flip-flopped at the sight of his crooked smile. "So you're saying you're bad for me."

"More like you're bad for me," she mumbled. It was true. She'd already suffered a broken heart because of him. Now it crumbled a little more with every kiss, every touch, every whispered word.

"Right. So I just imagined that you milked my cock 'til I was spent, then?" He shifted, his still hard length caressing her swollen tissues. "Which means that I must have imagined you screaming my name loud enough that the neighbours heard it down the way."

Blushing, she took a deep breath, trying to ignore the way his chest hair abraded her tender nipples.

His hair fell forward, partially shielding his eyes, but his firm, full lips were still visible – twisted in an angry frown. "God damn it, Beckett. I wanted to marry you."

Past tense. "You didn't mean it."

"And you're somehow privy to my most intimate thoughts?" He glowered at her.

Needing space to breathe – hell, to think – she pushed at his shoulders. "I'm not an idiot. I saw the regret in your eyes as soon as you asked me."

In a move too quick for her to follow, he grabbed her wrists and pinned them above her head. His weight rested more fully on her pelvis and she felt him swell and harden further inside her. How could he be ready for her again?

Her pussy clenched around him and she bit her lip to keep from groaning aloud. How could *she* be ready for him?

Completely aware of her arousal, he rocked against her, sliding through her passage, slick with their combined releases. His eyes closed and his lips twisted in a feral grimace. Breathing deeply, he opened his eyes and stopped moving, but his arms shook slightly at his restraint. "If you saw regret in my eyes it wasn't because I didn't want to be with you."

"Right." She tried to pull her hands from his grasp, but he held tight and her struggling only lodged him more deeply within her.

"I'd been desperate for you since you'd turned fifteen."

"Took you long enough to do anything about it," she groused.

"I was five years older. An adult. I didn't really fancy doing time for doing you." His eyes darkened as he stared at the slope of her exposed breast. "But don't think I wasn't tempted."

Her nipples constricted at his scrutiny. Lowering his head, he sucked a tight peak into his mouth, and she arched against him. She squeezed her eyes shut, trying to stay unyielding, but he knew her — knew her body too well. With his free hand, he plucked at the other nipple, rolling it between his thumb and forefinger, coaxing a strangled groan from her.

Lifting his head from her breast, he nipped at her lower lip. "Look at me, *céadsearc*."

Her belly twisted and flopped at the endearment. His brogue had grown rougher, more pronounced with his arousal, and the sound of it sent hordes of butterflies marauding through her.

"Open your eyes," he commanded, adjusting his hold on her wrists.

She shivered at his tone, her desire heightened by his mastery of her body. Reluctantly, she complied, trying to mask her response. "What?"

"You still haven't answered the question."

What question? It was hard to think with him slowly rocking in and out of her body.

"Why did you leave?" he elaborated, never ceasing his motion.

She sighed. At the very least, she supposed she owed him the truth. "Look, I followed you around like a lovesick puppy for years and I finally wore you down. I think you felt guilty because of it and asked me to marry you. It doesn't mean we had anything then and it certainly doesn't mean we have anything now."

His brow furrowed as he frowned looking at their joined bodies. "What the hell do you call this, then?"

"Sex. Closure. I left without saying goodbye, so this is goodbye. Five years late."

Incredulousness coloured his features. "This is anything but goodbye, love."

Her heart constricted in her chest and she had to force words past her lips. "It can't be anything else. It just can't."

His entire body stilled. "I love you, Beckett."

Her breath caught and she blinked away tears. "You can't," she said flatly. "You don't even know me anymore."

"Right." His expression hardened. "Do you still pick up pretty stones when you're out walking and bring them home?"

She nodded.

"Do you still alphabetise your book and music collection?"

"Yes," she said, rolling her eyes.

"Do you still only eat the stalks of broccoli and leave the tops?"

She sighed. "It's not like any of this matters, but yeah."

"Do you still colour coordinate your bath towels? Feed the squirrels outside your apartment? Start stitchery projects you never finish? Visit your mum's grave every year and bring her daffodils when they bloom?"

"Yes, yes, yes and yes," she practically growled.

"There you are, then." He shrugged slightly, the small movement torturing her already sensitive nipples. "I know you," he said simply as he held her gaze, almost daring her to look away.

He cupped her cheek, brushing his thumb over her cheekbone. "The new things and changes, I look forward to learning." His gaze hardened as if expecting an argument. "I'm not going to lose you again."

She narrowed her eyes at him and tried to tug her arms free. "You don't have me."

Kieran tightened his hold on her and covered her mouth with his free hand. A fresh rush of moisture coated them both and she groaned at his control over her.

"We both know you're lying."

She tried to argue from behind his hand as he withdrew slightly and pushed forward again, filling her completely. Her cunt rippled around him and her groan caught on his palm.

A slow, wicked grin curved his lips. "Well, that's interesting, isn't it?"

"What now?" she asked beneath his fingers, trying to force a note of boredom into her voice.

"You like the way I'm holding you down – keeping you captive."

"I do not. Now get off me!" Any severity in her tone was muffled by his huge hand.

Ignoring her outburst, he thrust inside her again. "I think you do. Your skin is flushed and your breathing has quickened. Your nipples are hard little nubs begging for my attention." Gently, he licked one aching tip before blowing a gentle stream of air across it.

Biting her lip, she refused to give him the satisfaction of admitting he was right. There was something about being at his mercy that was a total turn on.

"Then there's your pussy."

She glared at him and he laughed.

"When I pin you to the bed or cover your mouth, your cunt floods and grips me so hard I can barely move. You like it."

"Fuck you."

"That's the plan, love." His eyes sparkled with amusement and arousal. "First, an experiment."

Nervous anticipation fluttered through her middle as he freed her mouth and reached alongside the bed. The rustle of denim and leather transformed anticipation to worry. She shifted beneath him, her clit grinding against his pelvic bone. Distracted by the sensation shuttling through her body, she barely noticed when he replaced his grip on her wrists with his belt. She yanked against it as he secured the other end to the open metalwork of the headboard.

"Kieran," she warned. The supple leather of his belt didn't hurt, but she wouldn't get out easily. "Untie me."

"Later."

With long, purposeful strokes, he slid in and out of her pussy.

"You're getting even wetter," he murmured. "So tight. So wet for me."

Using both hands, he pressed her breasts together and sucked on her nipples – one after the other. The scruff on his cheeks and jaw scraped her tender skin, leaving a delicious burn as he feasted on her.

An agonized groan ripped from her. She didn't bother trying to hide her needy response as he nipped and sucked at her flesh. Despite the fact that she could barely admit it to herself, she was exactly where she wanted to be since she'd left. With what little motion she could manage, she thrust against him – urging him faster and harder. She wanted to feel his sun-gold skin under her hands, but she couldn't wriggle free of her bindings. For the first time since he'd secured her, she glanced towards where the belt was attached to the bed and

her pussy flooded at the sight. The dark-coloured leather was an erotic contrast to her pale skin. Helpless, she was stretched out before him—his for the taking. Her internal muscles rippled around him at the thought, and he sucked in a harsh breath.

She met his piercing stare as he lifted his head from her breasts. His eyes were so dark, she could barely discern the green colour. His hot gaze slid over her body, and she shivered under the almost tactile caress. “Looks like we’ve both learned something new. You like being bound.” Dropping his head, he nuzzled the valley between her breasts. “And I like binding you.”

His dark words stroked her inside and out. She bit her lip on a whimper as he thrust deeply inside her.

“I have never seen anything so fucking hot. You stretched and secured,” he whispered as he thrust again. “Waiting for me.” He ground his pelvis against hers, tormenting her clit. “At my mercy,” he whispered, his breath hot against her ear.

He punctuated his thrust by biting down on the side of her neck where it joined her shoulder, and she shattered. Her pussy clamped down on him, rhythmically squeezing him while sensation slammed through her body. Blood roared through her ears while she shook, screaming in his arms.

Her heart still pounded wildly in her chest as she noticed the harsh sounds of their combined breathing filling the room. Becoming aware of her body again, she sighed at the loss as he eased out of her. With gentle hands, he rolled her over and leaned over her back, the ends of his hair tickling her cheek. “We’re not finished yet, *céadsearc*.”

He trailed his lips and fingertips down her spine to the small of her back. His hands urged her to her knees. The belt didn’t give. Her head and chest remained bowed to the bed while her ass was in the air. The mattress sank as he knelt behind her. She’d never felt so exposed, but Kieran’s sharp inhalation was all she needed to know he liked what he saw.

Palming her ass, he leaned forward, dropping more kisses at the base of her spine. “Do you have any idea what it does to me to see you like this?” he murmured against her skin.

Shaking her head was the most coherent response she could manage.

Kieran stroked her thighs and she trembled as he urged them further apart. “So pretty with your ass up in the air, waiting for my cock. Waiting for me to fill you. Waiting for me to make you come.”

She shook as he dragged the wide head of his cock along her cleft. “Oh God...”

Grasping her hips, he surged into her, working his thick length in and out of her pussy, filling her needy body. Heat speared through her as she stretched to accommodate him. How had she done without this for so long? How would she do without it when she left him again?

His fingers dug into her flesh as he shafted her harder. Bruises would be inevitable, but worth it. Wanting him to be as desperate for release as she was, she slammed her hips backward to meet every thrust. Splaying his hand on the small of her back, he steadied her as he drove home.

Her pussy clenched in time with every hot, wet slap of his balls against her cunt. His grunting whispers had long ago switched to Gaelic as he shoved hard and heavy into her willing body. His ragged voice was more than enough to make her come.

Dragging his fingers from her back, he dipped them in her sopping pussy before spreading their moisture over the taut ring of muscles in her ass.

"Kieran?" she called, unable to keep the tremor of fear from her voice.

"Relax," he soothed as he rimmed the puckered hole with his thumb.

With insistent pressure, he pushed his way inside. He worked in and out of her ass in time with his plunging cock, stroking the thin membrane that separated his erection from his hand. For the first time in her life, she wondered what it would be like to be fucked by two men. The thought made her wetter still as he ploughed in and out of her grasping body. The sensations were too much. The grasping became a clawing need that rippled through her cunt, seeking escape.

"Christ, *céadsearc*. You're going to make me come," he groaned, never slowing his sweet assault.

His desperation-laced whisper sent her over the edge. Her release spiralled outward from her womb, sending pleasure spearing through her limbs as contractions continued to wrack her body.

Kieran slammed into her, filling her with hot, shuddering gushes. Gradually, his motions slowed, then stopped. Still inside her, he bowed his forehead to her back and brushed kisses over her spine. Laying his cheek against her damp skin, he wrapped his arms around her and whispered, "*Tá grá agam duit.*"

Tears pricked her eyes and her heart ached. She may have gone five years without hearing the language, but she hadn't forgotten the sound of Kieran telling her he loved her. She doubted she ever would.

Collapsing to the bed, he tugged her down with him and gently unfastened her bindings. Her wrists might be free, but her heart wasn't. *I love you*. The words formed in her mouth, but she couldn't say them. Wouldn't say them. Her heart was barely holding together now—she wasn't about to put it on the chopping block and hope for the best. Swallowing hard, she forced away the pain of loss and focused on savouring this short time with Kieran.

He gathered her in his arms and gently massaged her wrists, placing tender kisses along her shoulder. Closing her eyes, she snuggled into his warmth. Her body ached pleasantly as she stretched and twisted in his embrace. The cool metal and stone of his pendant thumped against her chest.

Lifting it, she inspected the hammered silverwork that twined around a deep green centre stone. The necklace was old—much older than she would have thought at first glance. Unable to ignore her curator training, she turned it this way and that, admiring the craftsmanship of the piece. Granted, she usually worked with fabrics rather than metals, but she could still tell it was old. The mottled shades of green reminded her of Kieran's eyes. Eyes that watched her expectantly.

"Where did you get this?" she asked.

At the suddenly guarded expression in his eyes, she knew she wasn't going to like whatever he was about to say. He opened his mouth and paused.

"It's old, Kieran." She looked more carefully at the bail that supported the chain and then back at him. "Really old."

He shook his hair from his eyes. "It's a long story."

"I'm listening." She let the pendant slip from her fingers.

His eyes tender, he traced the contours of her face. "I think it would be better if I showed you."

"Okay. So show me already."

Leaning forward, Kieran took her mouth in an achingly slow kiss. He lifted his head and grinned. "I think I should show you the shower, first."

She shifted and wrinkled her nose, feeling the sticky results of the last few hours. "Fine, but don't think you're going to distract me." She tapped the stone hanging around his neck. "I want to know what you're being so evasive about."

He laughed as he pulled her to a standing position and quickly wrapped his arms around her. "I'm still having trouble believing you're not a figment of my sex deprived imagination."

She snorted. "Sex deprived? Somehow I doubt you've suffered the burden of abstinence."

Hurt flashed through his eyes, but it was gone before she was sure she'd actually seen it. His arms fell away from her. "Believe what you want. You always have." He scooped up his clothes and made his way to the bathroom down the hall.

She regretted the words as soon as they'd left her mouth, but with no way to call them back she was reduced to gathering her own clothes and following him to the bathroom. Feeling like a complete ass, she pushed open the bathroom door to see him disappear behind the shower curtain.

"Kieran?"

The only response was the sound of the tap being turned and water tumbling into the tub. She pushed open the shower curtain and met his hard green gaze.

"I'm sorry."

He shrugged. "Believe me or don't. It doesn't matter."

Until now, she would have laughed in the face of anyone who suggested Kieran could be celibate for more than three days. Now she wasn't so sure. She'd truly hurt him with her disbelieving words and more than anything she wanted to take them back or at least make it better.

She watched as he tilted his head under the spray of water the droplets coating his body. Thick muscled thighs flowed into slim hips and a trim waist. Amazingly, his thick cock was already half hard again. She watched, almost hypnotised as it rose towards his tightly muscled stomach. All but ignoring her, he quickly scrubbed and rinsed himself. He moved to exit the tub, but she stopped him, placing her hand on the centre of his broad, perfectly formed chest.

Finally, he met her gaze, his jaw tight. She gently pushed him backward to stand under the spray of water and followed him into the tub. Sinking to her knees, she grasped his penis, wrapping her fingers around his expanding girth.

"This isn't necessary, Beckett."

Looking up past his taut muscles, perfectly sculpted by years of hard work, she met his stony gaze. "I'm not doing this because I think I have to." She inched closer and traced the heavy head of his erection with the tip of her tongue.

His eyes closed and he drew a sharp breath through clenched teeth. The needy sound prickled along her skin. He obviously wasn't about to accept her apology right now, but he might accept this.

Kieran fisted his hands at his sides in an effort not to grab Beckett by the back of the head and shove his cock all the way down her throat. It was a nearly impossible battle. She engulfed him entirely, and he couldn't hold back the moan that welled up within him. Despite the fact that he'd just fucked her twice, his dick was ready for more.

Opening his eyes, he watched as her soft lips stretched to accommodate him as he slowly fucked in and out of her warmth. Water sluiced over her, darkening her hair to burnished copper and running in rivulets over her creamy skin. He wanted to lick every drop from her body and fill her again. It was insane. The more he got of her, the more he wanted.

Gripping the base of his cock, she slid her mouth up and down its swollen length, taking him as far as she could. His knees nearly buckled at the wicked rush of pleasure as he hit the back of her throat and slid further still. Reaching out, he braced one hand on the wall for balance and tangled his other hand in her silken hair.

With gentle suction, she pulled back, exposing his cock to the suddenly stinging spray of the shower. He caught his breath at the sensation. After being in the heated depths of her mouth, the water was almost too much, but she wouldn't let up. She worked him harder and faster as she lightly squeezed his balls in time with her sucking.

Coils of bliss tightened at the base of his spine and radiated downwards to tug on his balls. He was close. Much more of this, and he'd be past the point of no return.

"Beckett," he breathed. It was getting difficult to form words. "Stop."

In response, she gripped his cock more firmly, her fingers not quite meeting. Apparently unwilling to release him, she sucked harder, pulling him deeper. Black spots peppered his vision as his fingers twisted in her hair.

"Gonna...come."

She murmured her agreement around his flesh and the slight vibrations from her voice sent him tumbling over the edge. The tight band of restriction snapped and streaks of pleasure sped up his spine to tingle at the base of his skull and back down his spine again before bursting through his cock and down her throat.

Through half-opened eyes, he watched as she swallowed, draining him dry. Finally, she sat back and looked up at him, water droplets trembling on her eyelashes. He pulled her to her feet and into his arms, dropping a tender kiss on her forehead.

"I know you don't believe me, but I haven't been with anyone else."

Of course, some nights he'd been so angry and lonely he'd wanted to, but the *geis* kept him from doing anything about it. If he was honest with himself, it had been more than the bloody curse. He hadn't truly wanted anyone but Beckett.

She tilted her head back to meet his gaze. "I believe you." She had the good grace to look shamefaced. "Look at it from my perspective."

He nodded for her to continue.

"I've known you since I was thirteen and until that last summer, you had one girl after another after another."

"I was young. And randy."

Her lips quirked into a half smile. "Clearly." She shifted uncomfortably and cleared her throat. "You can see why it was difficult to believe you'd go without...well...anything."

His conscious stirred guiltily. The temptation had always been there. Sometimes he wondered, without the *Sidhe's* curse, if he'd have remained faithful. Of course, without the fucking curse he'd have followed her to the States. He wouldn't have let her run away.

"I love you, you stubborn git."

Her lips trembled and she met his gaze. "I love you, too."

The tightness in his chest eased, and he kissed her, tasting himself on her tongue. It was a far bigger turn on than he would have imagined. He sighed inwardly. He wasn't recovered enough for another round, and he doubted she was either. Reluctantly, he broke the kiss and gazed her.

Her eyes filled with tears and she looked miserable—wracked with guilt. Maybe he'd gotten through to her.

"I'm sorry I disappeared without a word."

His eyes burned, but he blinked away the sensation of sudden tears. "Don't think we're finished discussing that, but the water's getting cold, and I'm thinking you're going to want to finish rinsing."

Handing her the soap, he watched as she quickly lathered and washed herself under the spray of the rapidly chilling water. The bubbles raced over her supple curves to swirl around their feet and down the drain.

He skimmed his fingers over the swell of her hip and the indentation of her waist. She'd always had a gorgeous figure, but five years had completed the transformation from girl to woman. Her breasts were fuller and her hips wider—perfect for fucking. Perfect for him. Perfect for the Faery King, too, he supposed bitterly.

Inexplicably, his cock stirred at the thought. Did he *want* to share her with another man? No. He'd just gotten her back. He was only going through with this ritual because it was required of him. Yet dark images of Beckett spread between them crowded his mind. Aodhan's tongue licking her tight little pussy while he fucked her mouth. One cock buried in her cunt and the other working her ass. Both of them suckling at her breasts. The visions in his head were nearly enough to make him come. Again. Would she enjoy two men at once? Would she ever speak to him again once he explained what was required of her in a few days' time?

Anger stirred again at having to share her. He understood that the ritual had been going on since the beginning of time. Certain mortals—those of *Sidhe* descent, like him—were forced to share their women as tribute to the king. And not just any woman would do—it had to be the mortal's mate. The one he loved above all others. In return, Kieran and Beckett would receive the king's goodwill and protection. Kieran scrubbed his hand over his face. He could refuse, of course, but the consequences would mean never seeing Beckett again.

Pushing aside the unpleasant thoughts, he glanced towards her. Head tilted back, she rinsed the shampoo from her long, thick hair. Her nipples stood out from her body like tight little stones, and he couldn't resist drawing one into his mouth and sucking hard. She cried out, clutching his shoulder with a soapy hand.

Unable to help himself, he continued to suckle her nipple while he slid his fingers down into the thatch of tight curls covering her mound. Selfish though it might be, he needed to hear her scream. For him.

Spreading her pussy lips wide, he dragged his fingers up and down the length of her swollen cleft. Her nails dug into his shoulders as she clung to him. Turning her slightly, he let the chilly water beat down on her flesh, smiling grimly at the guttural moan that tore from her parted lips. He quickened the pace, bearing down on her clit with the heel of his hand while she writhed under his touch, her cries rapid and breathless.

Her nipple tightened further against his tongue. She was so close. He could feel her impending orgasm as she strained against him. Lifting his hand, he tapped her clit sharply and her release was instantaneous. Her body stiffened, and she shuddered against him, screaming his name so loudly he was positive Aodhan heard her. Satisfaction curled through Kieran as he soothed her, cradling her in his arms while she caught her breath.

* * * *

Kieran pulled the motorbike to a stop in front of his house and shoved the kickstand down. The way Beckett had plastered herself to his body during the rough ride over the hilly terrain reminded him of every summer they'd spent together. Despite the fact that they'd had no contact in years, they'd quickly fallen back into their pattern of relating to one another. It was as if she'd never left. Their amity gave him hope that the poem had been right, that she'd be back to stay with him forever. Of course, her willingness might falter when she found out what was in store for her.

She swung her leg over the bike and stood up. Unbuckling the helmet, she set it on the seat behind her and inspected the quaint fieldstone cottage.

Suddenly nervous, he wiped his damp hands on his jeans. He'd purchased this house just outside Glendalough the year after she'd left, hoping that someday she'd return and they could live here, eventually raising a family.

He looked around and tried to see everything through her eyes. The cottage sat next to a stream that gurgled quietly and glinted in the late afternoon light. Beckett followed it around the back of the cottage and the outbuilding that housed his wood shop and through the sun-dappled woods that surrounded the buildings. With the ruins of the monastery

standing sentry in the distance and his family in the next village over, it was the perfect place to live.

Her smile broadened as she explored the area. Laughing, she picked up a pebble from the cold waters of the rushing stream and slipped it into the pocket of her shorts. She turned her brilliant smile on him, and he felt the force of it in his chest.

Christ, he loved her. He couldn't help but wonder if it would be enough for her.

"I love it, Kieran. It's so beautiful."

"More so, now that you're here."

She rolled her eyes. "Whatever." Grabbing his hand, she tugged him towards the house. "Let's see the rest."

Unlocking the door, he ushered her inside, watching as she wandered from room to room running her fingertips over the furniture he'd made. He waited, knowing she'd notice the ancient bottle and its parchment sooner or later. That was why he'd brought her here. Sure he had fantasies of fucking her in the bed he'd carved for them. In fact, he hoped to indulge in that particular fantasy in the very near future, but first he needed to find out exactly what the chances of their future were.

Beckett's gasp sounded from across the room, and he knew she'd found the bottle. Cradling it in her hands, she turned to face him. "Where did you get this?"

He tapped the stone pendant around his neck. "It came with the necklace." Crossing the room, he lifted the bottle from her hands. Worn smooth by endless years in the sea, the glass was more opaque than translucent, but the size and shape of the scroll could still be discerned.

"A few weeks ago, I was walking along the beach looking for driftwood to use in a commissioned piece for one of the galleries in Dublin, and I saw this bobbing a few metres from shore. I waded out to get it, thinking it was trash, but then I saw this inside."

Carefully he removed the stopper and slid the brittle paper into the palm of his hand. Setting the bottle on the table, he unrolled the message so she could read the words herself.

Her eyes widened as she scanned the painstakingly written text. "*Kieran*. Look at the date! 1264? This belongs in a museum, *not* in your dining room!"

He shook his head and rerolled the delicate note returning it to the safety of the bottle.

"What do you mean, no?" she demanded. "The paper needs to be carbon dated for authenticity. And holy shit—you're *wearing* an artefact! You took a shower with it on for God's sake."

Colour bloomed high in her cheeks, and she began pacing the room. He grinned. This was the exact response he'd expected. In some ways, she was so predictable. Ever the preserver of history, she stopped in front of him with her hands on her hips. "We have to take everything to Dublin. This find needs to be examined and verified."

Grabbing her fluttering hands, he brought them to his lips and kissed them. "We're not bringing this to any museum, Beckett."

"You can't just keep it. It's historically significant."

"I'm not going to keep it."

She shook her head slowly and then picked up speed. "You're not thinking about doing what the note said, are you?"

He didn't deny it.

"You can't throw it back in the ocean! Be reasonable. This needs to be preserved for ages to come."

He brushed his thumb across her lower lip as he stared into her eyes. She'd told him once that she liked the past better than the present. The past was known. It was unchangeable, but the present and future had far too many variables. She'd hated not knowing what was coming—what the outcome of a situation would be.

He suspected it had to do with the uncertainty surrounding her mother's death—wondering if her mother would even be alive by the time she got home from school. The uncertainty of wondering if her father would ever return home to her and her siblings.

"I have to, *céadsearc*." She opened her mouth to speak, but he rushed ahead, not giving her a chance. "I believe this brought you to me again. Gave us a second chance."

She frowned, her hands on her hips. "The textile exhibit brought me here. Not a necklace and a mouldy note in a bottle."

"Was the Dublin exhibit scheduled when you left the States?"

Shifting uncomfortably, she crossed her arms over her chest. "No."

"Was it a last minute invitation out of the blue?"

Her eyes narrowed. "Are you responsible for that?"

"No. But something is." He smoothed his hands over her shoulders and down the smooth skin of her arms. "I've wanted you to come back since I'd found out you'd left, but it wasn't until I came across this bottle and its message that you agreed to set foot on the island again. I don't believe that's a coincidence."

Her struggle with the concept played across her features as she tried to make sense of his reasoning. He hated to do it to her, but she needed to know. "There's more."

"Of course there is. Are you going to find me a unicorn to ride to see the King and Queen of Faery Land?"

He smiled grimly. "Close."

* * * *

Beckett stared at the man she'd never stopped loving and worried that he'd completely lost his mind.

"Look, I know you think I'm half a bubble off true, but I'm telling you the truth."

"That you're taking me to Faery Land?" She couldn't keep the shrillness from her voice. She would have laughed at the ridiculousness of it all, except she could tell he was completely serious. Just like he was serious about the necklace and the note. Granted, the invitation from the Dublin museum *had* come out of the blue. Usually these exhibits were arranged years in advance. It was unheard of in this business to make a last minute stop like this.

A cold chill skated across the back of her neck as she couldn't help but consider that Kieran may have a point about the necklace in the bottle. The idea was ridiculous. She was a woman of science—hard facts and empirical data. There was no room in her life for spells and mythical beings.

She sighed. As a child, she used to believe in magic and looked for faeries at every opportunity. Memories came rushing back. Kieran. Even though her aunt insisted Kieran was wrong, he was the one who'd insisted there was no such thing as magic.

Studying him, she advanced. "So you're saying that I have to meet faeries?"

His body taut with frustration, he dragged his hands through his hair and scrubbed at his scalp. "Yes," he finally muttered. "The king in particular."

"Right." She crossed her arms over her chest. "When?"

"Midsummer Night's Eve." He watched her warily, clearly taken aback by her seeming change of heart. "Two days from now...at midnight."

"Uh-huh. Correct me if I'm wrong, but wasn't it you who convinced me that looking for faeries was a waste of time? Weren't you the one who insisted that I give up childish pastimes like peering under toadstools and chanting made-up spells?"

Shoving his hands in his pockets, he nodded. "That was me."

"And you've suddenly changed your belief system because...?"

Taking her hand, he led her into the living room and sank onto couch, pulling her down to sit on his lap. She shifted so she could look into his eyes.

"I didn't change my belief system. I lied to you."

A sharp pang tightened her chest at his admission. "You lied to me?"

"I didn't want you to draw his attention."

"Whose?" Her stomach fluttered nervously. "The king's?"

"Yeah. Aodhan's got a bad habit of seducing mortal women, and I thought if I could keep him from noticing you, we wouldn't have to face what's going to happen on the Solstice."

The nervous flutter transformed into a whirlpool of worry deep in the pit of her stomach. "Oh."

"The truth is, he doesn't have to wait for the Solstice. He can appear in the mortal realm at will." Kieran frowned and her nervousness increased exponentially. "In fact, he's been here recently – shortly before you arrived. He wanted to let me know that he plans to make an example of us, and he expects the full summoning ceremony."

Summoning ceremony? "What's going to happen, Kieran?"

"I'm bound to him. I'm part *Sidhe*."

"*Sidhe*? Now you're saying *you're* a faery?" She didn't know whether to laugh or cry. Either the love of her life was going stark raving mad, or she was going to need to seriously rethink her ideas about the natural order of things.

She studied Kieran. He didn't have the look of a madman. He was calm and rational. Well, as rational as one could be discussing the existence of mythical creatures.

"Not full-blooded," he finally answered. "My gram fell in love with one of the King's Court. My mum is the result of that affair."

Beckett took a deep breath and tried to make sense of what he was telling her. It was ridiculous to even consider it, but a tiny part of her couldn't help but wonder if it was possible. He certainly seemed to believe it.

"I tried to keep from falling in love with you. I tried so sodding hard." He shook his head, his eyes soft with unnamed emotion. "But you tromped all over my good intentions. By the time you turned eighteen, I couldn't fight it anymore. I gave in."

He gently tucked her hair behind her ear, stroking her neck as he dropped his hand back to her waist. "Do you remember when you said you saw the regret in my eyes when I asked you to marry me?"

She nodded, her throat too thick to speak.

"The regret wasn't because I didn't want to spend my life with you. It was because I knew the king would demand his tribute."

She swallowed hard as her fists tightened in her lap. "What's his tribute?"

He looked away, as if he couldn't meet her gaze. "Me. You. A night with us."

She blinked rapidly, not sure she'd heard him correctly. This beat the bombshell about the note and the necklace all to hell. "Are you saying what I think you're saying? I'm supposed to be some kind of ritual sex sacrifice for this guy?"

Nodding slowly, he finally met her eyes. "I'll be with you."

"So, a threesome, then?"

He nodded again and pinned her with his gaze. "Before you came back—before I held you in my arms again—I thought I could handle sharing you. But now..."

Hadn't she just wondered what it would be like with two guys? She couldn't deny the way her pussy clenched with need at the thought. If Kieran slipped his hand inside her panties, he'd find them drenched. She pushed her longing away. She didn't want anyone but Kieran. *But he'd be with you* the little voice in her head whispered. "What happens if I say no?" she asked.

An expression of utter misery crossed his face. "Then I'd have to leave you."

"You'd dump me for not doing your long lost relative?" Anger made her voice sharp.

"No! God, no!" He grabbed her shoulders and shook her slightly. "I wouldn't go because I wanted to. I'd be banished from the mortal realm."

A chunk of ice dropped into her stomach and it hurt to breathe.

"I wanted to follow you back to Michigan—more than anything, but he laid a *geis* on me after you left. He cursed me to remain here until you returned."

She fought the impulse to wrap her arms around his neck. "Did he hurt you?" she demanded.

A hard, short laugh shook his body. "Only when I tried to get to you."

Conflicting urges warred within her. She wanted to believe Kieran, but it all sounded like something out of a fairytale. Or the ravings of a lunatic.

After everything that had happened today, she couldn't believe she was adding contemplating a ménage to the list.

"This is...I don't know Kieran. I need to think."

Chapter Three

Beckett stood in the centre of a seven-pointed star within a circle in a grove of hawthorn trees and contemplated her sanity – or the serious lack thereof. Why in the hell had she let Tara talk her into this? Her friend had promised her that everything would be okay, but as the sounds of chanting and drumming grew louder, she wondered about Tara's definition of the word.

Peering at the people who surrounded the circle, she looked for Kieran. Supposedly he was here – unless this was just an elaborate joke at her expense. She didn't recognise anyone other than her so-called friend. Of course, everyone wore hooded brown cloaks, making identification impossible. She tried to focus on the people and the words flowing around her. Maybe, if she could make sense of what they were saying, she could figure out exactly what to expect – other than a threesome with Kieran and the King of the *Sidhe*. Sighing, she realised they chanted in Gaelic. While she might know a few words and phrases, it wasn't enough to get the details she needed.

She wasn't sure when she started buying into the idea that faeries actually existed. She wasn't even sure she really had, but Tara had convinced her that Kieran needed her. So here she was – feeling like a freaking idiot. She shifted uncomfortably in the white, silky dress her friend had been adamant she wear. She was so not a dress person, but Tara had insisted that the king preferred a whole lot of pomp with his circumstance.

She'd also confessed that she'd participated in the ritual herself, a few years earlier. She'd insisted that Beckett wouldn't regret it, but that ship was about ready to sail. Regret loomed large on the horizon. Beckett wrapped her arms around herself and forced a sense of calmness she was far from feeling.

Squinting, she searched the crowd for Kieran, willing him to appear. Over the last few days, she'd realised he was worth the risk to her heart. She'd never stopped loving him. The time and distance spent apart hadn't done anything other than to make them both miserable. Protecting herself from the possibility of problems that had no basis in reality made no sense.

A guy who stayed faithful for five years with no encouragement from her wasn't going to abandon her when things got difficult. He was in it for the long haul and so was she.

The realisation didn't make her any less nervous when she thought about what would soon happen. As she looked again for Kieran, the figure of the star traced into the ground at her feet began to glow with an unearthly blue light, pulsing in time to the rhythm of the drums. Fear slipped like ice through her veins as the colour grew brighter. Panicking, she tried to cross the glowing line, but an invisible wall stopped her, making her skin tingle. This wasn't possible. Her palms grew clammy and her breathing accelerated. The scent of heather and warm, country air filled her nostrils. From the corner of her eye, she saw the people around the circle join hands.

Sure, Kieran and Tara had said faeries and magic existed, but until right this minute she hadn't entirely believe either of them. Now, however, she was willing to consider it. Turning, she pounded her fists against the unseen barrier that surrounded her.

"Kieran," she called out, hating the way her voice shook. "Where are you?"

She tried to swallow past the fear that choked her. Frightened tears seeped from the corners of her eyes, but she swiped them away.

Tara drew back her hood and stepped away from the others. Raising a small silver knife that glinted in the moonlight, she moved closer to the glowing blue lines.

Beckett's stomach twisted. Wasn't it supposed to a sexual sacrifice? This was looking like something else all together.

In a low voice, Tara chanted counterpoint to the others, drawing arcane symbols in the air with the blade as she walked the circumference of the circle. The symbols hung suspended in midair, glowing with that same eerie light. Seven symbols—one for each point of the star. What did they mean?

The drummers subtly shifted their rhythm, creating a more sinuous, seductive beat and the chanting grew quieter, but more intense. It was as if the words and the rhythm caressed Beckett, stroking her nerve endings. The throbbing beat was hypnotic...arousing, and despite her fear she began to sway in time to the music. The anxiety began to drift away. Was there such a thing as musically induced Stockholm Syndrome?

She couldn't look away from the man's long tanned fingers pounding the head of the instrument. Something about his hands looked familiar, making her wish they were touching

her rather than that damn drum. God, what was the matter with her? Where the hell was Kieran?

Using her knife, Tara cut openings through the lines that held Beckett captive, sealing them behind her until she reached the centre.

"What the hell is this, Tara?" she demanded.

"Midsummer Night's Eve." A secretive smile curved Tara's lips and her eyes danced with excitement. Looking towards the people around the circle, she gestured to one of the drummers.

He reached up and drew back his hood, catching Beckett's gaze. She caught her breath at the sharp flash of lust in his deep, green eyes. Kieran. *Finally*.

Handing his drum to the man next to him, he rose gracefully to his feet and slipped off his robe. Beckett's throat suddenly dry, she swallowed hard at the glorious expanse of his bare, muscled chest. His long, golden brown hair hung loose past his shoulders, and he looked more god than man. Despite the fact that she'd had him not more than a few days earlier, she wanted him now with a need bordering on desperation.

Tara motioned him forward. He withdrew his own blade from the sheath at his belt and whispering an incantation, entered the circle much as Tara had. His low, seductive words penetrated Beckett's body, intensifying the knot of longing in her womb. The accent made his gravelly voice that much sexier. She couldn't wait to have him pounding into her again.

Holding her gaze with heated intent, Kieran cut through the last of the magical boundaries. She wanted to plaster herself against him, breathe him in, take him inside her. Swallowing thickly, she watched as a wicked, toe-curling smile curved his lips. A hint of worry shadowed his eyes as he cupped her cheek and dropped a searching kiss on her upturned mouth.

"I wasn't sure you'd show up," he murmured against her lips. The heat rolled off his body enveloping her, and he settled his huge hands at her hips.

His touch set off ripples of need through her body. It had only been two days without him, but it felt like years. She met his heated gaze. "I wasn't sure I would either."

His eyes softened. "There's time. You can still leave."

She knew what would happen if she made that choice. He'd be banished from the mortal realm and she'd never see him again. "I'm not going to lose you. Not now that I'm smart enough to figure out what you mean to me. I love you, Kieran."

He opened his mouth to speak, but she laid her finger across his lips.

"As long as you're with me, it doesn't matter." She quirked a smile at him. "Besides, it might be..." She let the sentence drift off unsure how he'd feel about her involuntary arousal. Desire twisted in her belly and her nipples hardened into near painful knots. The more she'd thought about sex with Kieran and another man, the more appealing it had become.

His breath hissed through his clenched teeth, and his cock throbbed urgently against her belly. He slid his hands upward until his thumbs rested under the curve of her breasts. "It could be what?" he asked.

Unable to form a coherent thought, she tried to slow her rapid inhalations. "Hot?" she choked out.

His gaze dropped to her mouth, and he drew her closer, his thumbs stroking the underside of her breasts. A shiver snaked through her at the sensation of his callused skin catching on the soft silk.

"You're mine, Beckett." The unmistakable promise of sexual fulfilment glinted in his eyes. "You've always been mine." His eyes hardened, and he frowned. "But not mine alone—at least, not tonight."

Her tongue darted out, moistening her suddenly dry lips.

With the hunger of a starving man, he followed the motion with his darkening eyes. "But you're right." He heaved a huge sigh, bright slashes of colour high on his cheeks. "Jesus, Beckett, I don't want to share you, but I can't help but think of how hot it's going to be to have you spread between both of us. How good we can make you feel."

Slowly, he lowered his face to hers, and his warm breath coasted over her skin before he finally closed the distance between their lips. He took her mouth with a hot, needy kiss—as if he had all the time in the world to taste her—as if they weren't surrounded by a group of people avidly watching them. Recalling their audience, she stiffened in his embrace, but he seduced the thought away with the touch of his work-roughened hands. He circled her nipples with his thumbs, swallowing her groan as she trembled beneath his touch.

Splaying his hand through her hair, he cupped the back of her head and angled her nearer as he devoured her. She clutched at his bare shoulders, and he groaned as she opened beneath his fevered kiss. She couldn't get enough of him—not two days ago and certainly not now.

He stroked her tongue, the inside of her mouth, all the while tightening his grip on her hair and pressing her against his unyielding body. Trailing his lips along her jaw, he moved to her neck, slipped his hand into the deep V of her dress and cupped her aching breast. Her nipple peaked into his palm, and he plucked at it, drawing a whimper from her. He smiled against her skin, clearly enjoying the effect he had on her.

"I can't wait to spread your legs and bury my face in your pussy."

A fresh rush of moisture soaked her panties, and she wondered why she'd bothered to put any on tonight.

"But," he continued, "I may have to fight with Aodhan for the pleasure." He growled against her neck.

Her body clenched at the sound of his desire-coarsened voice. God, she wanted him inside her. Now. At this point, she didn't even care that friends and complete strangers watched them.

From the hazy edges of her awareness, she felt Tara draw near. "We must begin, the moon grows old."

Reluctantly, Kieran lifted his head and mouthed the word *mine*. Releasing his hold on her, he stepped behind her, his erection prodding her backside and his chin resting on the top of her head.

Tara trailed her fingers through Beckett's hair much like a lover would. Was Tara coming on to her now? More importantly, did she care?

Tara took Beckett's left hand in her own and rubbed it sensuously. "Just relax," she murmured, stroking her skin.

Beckett felt her body go slack against Kieran's as she allowed his nearness and Tara's touch to cloud her thinking. Without warning a searing pain cut across her palm. Beckett's eyes snapped open to see blood—her blood—dripping from Tara's knife and her own hand.

"What the hell?" When she would have pulled away, Kieran locked his arms around her, keeping her securely in place.

"Trust me," Tara whispered. "You're about to experience something few mortals ever even dream of." With that she closed her hands over Beckett's and squeezed ruthlessly until blood dripped steadily on the ground between them.

Beckett followed the droplets of blood as they soaked into the earth while Tara continued to squeeze. The ground at their feet began to shift and surge. Dirt rolled in waves

where her blood had been spilled. Heart in her throat, she pressed against Kieran, but he refused to budge.

"What's happening?" she gasped.

No one answered.

Keeping one bare arm wrapped around her waist, he pinioned her to his chest. He extended his other arm past her body towards Tara. She grabbed his hand and opened his palm with the still bloody blade. Making a fist, he squeezed so hard his arm shook with the effort.

Beckett watched in sick fascination as Kieran's blood dripped onto the roiling earth at their feet. She hardly noticed when Tara left them alone in the circle. However, if the churning dirt were any indication, they wouldn't be alone for long.

Grass fell aside as the dirt and clay meshed together rising up as if the earth was expelling an impurity. In a matter moments, the mass loomed over her—it was nearly as tall and broad as Kieran.

She tried to swallow past the rock that apparently lodged itself in her throat. Torn between the need to scream and rapt attention, she froze in place watching as the mass of earth took the shape of a man. An eerie golden light emanated from within, pulsing in time to her pounding heart.

Beckett's breathing quickened as her panic rose. She had to get the hell out of here—as far away from this freak show as humanly possible. Thrashing in Kieran's arms, she tried to break his hold on her. He tightened his grip, murmuring soothing sounds in her ear. It didn't help. Tensing her arm, she ploughed her elbow backward into his rock hard stomach. He grunted, and his hold loosened enough for her to scramble away and throw herself against the glowing blue barrier.

Energy raced over her skin as she slammed into it again and again. It wouldn't give. Desperately, she made a grab for the knife at Kieran's waist. He grasped her arm and twisted it behind her, locking his forearm over her chest and immobilising her against his body.

"Calm down, Beckett. It's okay."

The sound of Kieran's voice might have soothed her at any other time, but not now. "No, it's not okay! How can you say that? It's not even remotely close to okay!"

She struggled harder, her head slamming backward against his chest.

"You're safe with me," he soothed.

She waved her bloody hand in the air. "Clearly, I'm imagining this painful knife wound, then. And I—"

Movement caught her attention. The dirt fell away in clumps from the figure before her to reveal a pale, perfectly sculpted man. A perfectly sculpted, perfectly naked man. His skin seemed to glow in the moonlight, and his long inky hair flowed nearly to his waist.

"Holy shit," she whispered.

Kieran stilled behind her, but he hadn't loosened his hold.

She stared at the man who'd materialised before her eyes. If not for his pointed ears—not to mention the fact that he'd risen from the ground at her feet—she would have thought him human.

Violent tremors shook her body. Even if Kieran released her, she wouldn't have been able to move. Other than her harsh, gasping breaths, the night was silent. She watched the rise and fall of the man's chest as he took slow, measured breaths.

Slowly, he opened his eyes, and she stood transfixed. Awash in a swirl of colours, it seemed the entire universe existed in his irises. Constellations collided in a night sky while brilliant autumn leaves blew across a windswept lake. The effect was almost overwhelming, and for a moment, she felt like she teetered at the top of a rocky cliff. Only Kieran's arms around her kept her from sinking to the ground.

"Beckett. You've been too long from these shores."

The soothing sound of the man's voice steadied her, until she realised he spoke telepathically.

"Not long enough," she muttered. *Be careful what you wish for*, she told herself, *you just might get it*. Her childhood dreams had come true. She was staring at a freaking faery.

We prefer Sidhe. His voice was an amused chuckle inside her head.

And he could read her mind. Wasn't that just great. Curiosity got the best of her as she continued to stare at him.

"I am Aodhan, King of the Sidhe." He radiated a sense of peaceful quietness that calmed her strained nerves. He frowned slightly. *"You've kept me waiting a long time for what is mine."*

Before she could answer, he lifted her hand and turned her palm upward. His touch was even more comforting than his voice. Gently, he traced a spiral over the bloodied flesh. As she watched, the blood vanished and her skin knit together, leaving nothing more than a faint scar.

After he did the same to Kieran, he raised his hand, and the area around the circle shimmered and changed. The hawthorn trees bent towards each other and wove together. As she watched, the branches formed a bed draped in rich, green and gold silks. Beckett tilted her head to the side. The bed vanished, the trees righted themselves and the fabric looked more like leaves by the moment. She blinked again and the bed seemed to occupy the same space as the grove of trees.

"Is that real?" she whispered, awed. She would have thought she'd moved beyond the capacity of shock, but apparently not.

Kieran leaned forward, his lips brushing her ear. "On nights like tonight, the faery and mortal realms are coterminous."

"Right," she snapped. "That clears it all up."

"The planes are crossing. Both worlds are visible to those who look."

She peered past the perimeter of the circle. For a moment, she could see Tara and then she was gone—replaced by a group of ethereal looking people—some of whom had wings. Caught between wonder and fear, she stared, trying to take in the shifting scene before her.

Kieran's hands fell heavy on her shoulders as Aodhan moved closer. The king reached out and trailed a finger along the deep neckline of the ridiculous dress she wore. Shivers raced across her skin at his touch and Kieran stiffened behind her.

"You don't wish to share your woman with me," the king finally spoke, addressing Kieran, amusement glinting in his eyes.

"I don't wish to share her with anyone," Kieran corrected. "But tonight isn't about choices, is it?"

Aodhan didn't answer, he stared at Beckett as if he could strip her with his eyes. Who knew, maybe he could.

For a moment, she worried that they would fight over her. Kieran stroked his hands over her shoulders and up and down her arms, while Aodhan stepped closer.

It was actually going to happen. She was about to be smack in the middle of a threesome. With a freaking audience, no less. She squeezed her thighs together to quell the throbbing ache.

"This is probably a really bad idea," she whispered.

Aodhan grinned. "If it's such a bad idea, why are your nipples hard and begging for attention?"

She glanced down at her traitorous breasts. Her nipples poked sharply against the gossamer fabric. "Oh no," she muttered.

Kieran settled his hands at her waist. "Your body isn't saying no."

"My body should be ignored. It has a terrible sense of self-preservation."

He chuckled, his lips at her ear. "I know I said I didn't want to share you, but you have no idea how arousing it is to see you trapped between our bodies, his gaze devouring you, desperate to taste you."

His erection pushed insistently against her bottom as he spoke. "I think he's craving you as badly as I am." Sliding his hands forward, he cupped the sides of her breasts and brushed his fingers across her nipples. "I don't think ignoring your body is the answer."

She couldn't keep the whimper of need from escaping. In response, Kieran thrust lightly against her ass, his hard length pulling on the fabric that covered her.

The heat in the other man's eyes was unmistakable, and his cock began to swell as he leaned forward and took her mouth in a searing kiss, feasting on her mouth. He tasted of vanilla and spice, and she felt giddy—almost drunk off the flavour. He pressed his full weight to her and his cock was trapped between them—hot, hard, throbbing against the softness of her belly.

Just as quickly, he left her lips and began trailing open-mouthed kisses between the valley of her breasts and then up along her neck. With purposeful movements, he slid the dress' tiny shoulder straps off and down her arms, completely baring her breasts. The cool night air kissed her flesh and pebbled her nipples farther. Aching to be touched, she raised her eyes to meet his and she was lost. Lost to the night sky in those fathomless depths.

Aodhan cupped her breasts. His hands felt so good on her body, she pressed her lips together to keep from groaning aloud. His touch was drugging. Was that even possible? He'd emerged out of the ground—anything was possible at this point.

She leaned back against Kieran's chest arching into the king's caress.

"That's it, Beckett," he murmured. "Relax."

Aodhan twisted and pinched her nipples as Kieran cupped her breasts, pushing them forward. The other man took the hint and drew a distended peak into his mouth, swirling his tongue around the aching nub before sucking hard.

Unable to remain still, she drove her fingers through his hair and held his head at her breast. "More," she demanded, her voice a strangled whisper. "Harder."

"Christ," Kieran breathed in her ear as he loosened the closure on her dress and eased it from her, letting the fabric puddle on the ground around her feet. Pushing his hand between her body and Aodhan's, he cupped her mound through her panties and she rocked against him.

"You've soaked these," he groaned. He brought his damp fingers to his mouth to suck her essence from them, and she nearly came from the sight. He slid his hand down her body, and shoved his hand into her panties. Parting her dripping folds, he stroked her, causing her to writhe with need. Far too soon, he pulled his glistening hand from her pussy and held it out to Aodhan. "Taste her," he growled.

Beckett whimpered as the king gripped Kieran's wrist and pulled his fingers into his mouth on a groan. Aodhan's eyes closed as he sucked her juices from her lover's fingers. She'd never seen anything more erotic. Arousal shook her and as she watched the men, fresh cream dripped down the inside of her thighs.

"More," the king demanded.

Kieran fisted his hand in her flimsy underwear and tore them from her body, letting them flutter to the ground. Reaching in front of her, he spread her wide, exposing her wet pussy to everyone there.

It should have horrified her, but instead she rubbed her ass against his erection, wishing he was buried inside her already. Reaching behind her, she unfastened his pants and freed his erection, shuddering as his hot, silky shaft brushed her ass and the small of her back.

Aodhan dropped to his knees and licked her dripping juices from her thighs, groaning as he tasted her. She tried to thrust against him, to hurry him along with it, but Kieran held her helpless against his now bare cock.

Distantly, she could hear the muted sounds of voices from the surrounding crowd. She had no idea if they were from the faery contingent or the people who'd begun the ritual, but aroused cries and the wet sounds of sex reached her ears as the king edged ever closer to her needy pussy.

Kieran stroked her folds as he held her wide, both of them watching as Aodhan finally reached his destination. Flattening his tongue, he dragged it along her cleft, and she screamed at the sensation. She shivered as the sound of her cry split the night.

Both men groaned and Kieran whispered in her ear. "Watching him go down on you has got to be one of the hottest things I've ever seen." Kieran thrust his cock against her ass. "Come for him," he demanded. "Come for us both."

Aodhan circled her clit with the tip of his tongue before sucking it between his lips and scraping his teeth across it. He stroked her labia, circling her opening with the tips of his fingers while she trembled between them. Finally, he slid a finger inside her greedy passage and quickly added another.

"So sweet and tight," he whispered into her head as he slid his fingers in and out of her pussy and sucked on her clit. *"I can't wait to fill you with my cock – to watch your lover fill you – to take you together."*

"We're both going to fill you *céadsearc*," Kieran said, echoing the other man. He slid his hands up her belly to torment her nipples with his damp fingers. Pulling and twisting, he continued to murmur in her ear. "Your mouth. Your cunt. Your ass. We're going to fuck you until you can't remember what it's like to not have us pounding in and out of you."

His whispered words along with Aodhan's mouth and fingers sent her over the edge. Release flooded her body, a rush of dizzying pleasure shooting along her limbs as she stiffened between them, begging for more.

Bring her.

Kieran kicked off the rest of his clothes, swung her into his arms and followed Aodhan to the hawthorn bower. "I promise," he rasped, his voice husky with desire. "It'll be so fucking good."

The hawthorn bed seemed to move, to adjust itself to their bodies. She'd never laid on anything so comfortable in her life. The leaf green bedding was softer than anything she'd ever before felt – a cross between rose petals and silk – a decadent sensation on her skin.

Kieran situated himself behind her back as the bed morphed to accommodate their movement. Half sitting, half reclining, he slid his hands under her thighs. Lifting her legs, he draped them over the top of his, spreading her to Aodhan's gaze.

"Fill her," the king demanded. *"I'm going to lick her cunt while you fuck her."*

Beckett whimpered as Kieran lifted her again and slid his thick cock into her empty pussy. He stretched her sensitive tissues as he slowly tunnelled farther in. He pulled her back to lay against his chest while the other man knelt between their spread legs.

Kieran slid his hands over her hips and down between her legs, to stroke her weeping folds and his own cock as he worked in and out of her. His ragged breath tightened her womb with anticipation. As Aodhan moved closer, Kieran spread her lips wide, and she watched in fascination as the king lowered his head to her mound. Replacing her lover's hands with his own, he touched just the tip of his tongue to her quivering flesh and she squirmed as she tried to get closer.

"Your cunt is so beautiful. Pink and puffy – like you've been fucked recently. Have you, sweet Beckett? Have you let him pound into your tender pussy?"

His words crept into her head, a seductive whisper that twined around her senses, heightening her arousal, making her writhe and cry out. Her juices flooded Kieran's cock and Aodhan's mouth as he continued to lap at her, whispering into her head.

"I love watching you grip him, trying to keep from pulling free – trying to keep him deep inside you." He traced the spot where she and Kieran were joined, his finger caressing her pussy and Kieran's cock. Beneath her, Kieran shuddered at the contact as Aodhan stroked their melded flesh.

Unable to look away, she watched him rub her lover's cock, urging it deeper inside of her. Kieran reached around and cupped her breasts. Twisting her nipples, he pulled at them as he continued to shove into her.

"There's something so thrilling...so primal about watching a thick cock stretch such a tight little cunt. Will you grip me that hard, I wonder? Will you scream for me the way you scream for him?"

Kieran drove upward as Aodhan latched onto her clit, sucking hard. The release that had threatened since Kieran ploughed into her pussy, trembled through her body pushing her down the rough slope of completion. She contracted around Kieran milking him until he groaned against her back and spilled hot and heavy inside her.

Aodhan rose to his knees and brushed the round, damp head of his cock across the seam of her lips. Reaching out she gripped him and stroked the thick length of his shaft as he slid between her lips, sliding across her tongue and down her throat.

"I'm going to take every part of you, sweet Beckett. Your mouth...your cunt...your ass."

She whimpered as he pumped in and out, filling her mouth the way Kieran filled her pussy. She pushed into his thrusts, groaning around the cock in her mouth, barely able to believe she was actually in bed with two men. A fresh rush of moisture dampened her pussy

as she ground her hips against Kieran's. *Call it what it is, Beckett*, she told herself firmly. *You're fucking two men.*

Kieran watched Aodhan's cock fucking in and out of Beckett's mouth. The jealousy and unwillingness to share still lurked within him, but now it mixed with something deeper—something darker. Some primal part of his psyche was turned on by the sight of his woman taking another man, pleasuring him.

Despite the fact that he'd just come, his cock was still hard. Whispering in her ear, he urged her to her hands and knees. She continued going down on the other man, and his dick twitched remembering the feel of her mouth and tongue.

With agonizing slowness, he dragged the head of his cock along her dripping cleft, taking special care to rub it back and forth across her swollen clit. She cried out as he tormented her. God, he loved the way she writhed against him, loved the way she moaned. Who was he kidding? He loved everything about her.

Unable to wait another minute to be inside her, he sank into her slick heat again. Her cunt rippled around him as he shoved forward. His vision went black around the edges as he seated himself to the balls. She squeezed him, pulsing around him as he surged forward again and again finding a rhythm with the other man as together they shafted her.

"She's beautiful, your woman. Warm and tight. So responsive." Aodhan thrust into Beckett's mouth again. *"I want more."* Pulling free of her mouth, he bent and whispered in her ear while Kieran dragged himself from the warmth of her body. The other man moved behind her to take his place. *"She's waiting for your cock. She wants to take you into her mouth."*

Kieran's gut tightened. He wasn't sure how much more sharing he could take, but as he watched the king's cock slide into her swollen cunt, he nearly dropped to his knees. He had no idea how erotic it would be to see another man fucking Beckett.

Her fists clenched in the bedding as the other man repeatedly plunged his wide cock into her pretty pink pussy. Kieran groaned aloud as he watched her stretch to accommodate Aodhan. He'd never felt anything better than being buried balls-deep inside Beckett's cunt, but he had to admit the sight of the other man slamming into her had his balls drawn up tight.

"Kieran," Beckett called. "I need you."

Making his way to the other side of the bed, he knelt in front of her. She opened her mouth and guided his erection inside, sucking him hard and deep. She licked off their combined releases making him ache to come again. Tangling his hand in her silky hair, he guided her movements as she worked his length. Every little mewling groan she made, hummed over his skin until he thought he'd go mad.

Aodhan shafted her harder, and Kieran felt every stroke vibrate through her body. He glanced at the other man in time to see him dipping his fingers into her sopping pussy and rubbing the moisture into the crinkled bud of her anus.

She bucked and shrieked around Kieran's cock as the other man began working a finger in and out of the tight hole. As she grew accustomed to the invasion, he added another, working at her, stretching her.

"Her cunt is just as glorious as I knew it would be."

Aodhan's words whispered insidiously into his mind and try though he did, he couldn't ignore them. He couldn't ignore the dark excitement that spiked through him every time the other man spoke of her.

"After I fill her pussy, I'll take her ass and we'll fuck her together."

Kieran's cock jerked at the thought of Beckett sandwiched between them as they both pummelled her willing body.

The other man added a third finger to the ones in her ass. She stiffened, releasing his cock and screaming out her orgasm. Aodhan lost the battle and thrust once more before spraying into her channel on a ragged groan.

Beckett's arms shook with exhaustion. She wasn't sure how much more she could handle. Kieran slid beneath her and carefully urged her down on top of him. She couldn't quite meet his gaze knowing how he felt about sharing her. It was even worse because she'd been enjoying it—enjoying the sensation of two sets of hands, two mouths, two cocks filling her, bringing her such pleasure.

Gently, he brushed the hair from her face and urged her to look into his eyes.

"Céadsearc," he murmured. *"You're so beautiful. The way you take us both..."* He swallowed hard. *"It's amazing,"* he finished, his voice ragged, his brogue dark and heavy.

Unbelievably, her pussy convulsed a little as the sound of his voice. Even after all this, she wanted more. Shame made her look away. She should only want Kieran. He was the one

she loved. And yet when she thought about Aodhan's promise to take her ass, she couldn't suppress the shiver of desire that riffled through her.

As if he sensed her thoughts, she felt him again at her entrance, spreading the wet warmth of what could only be their combined releases, prepping her for his possession.

Kieran turned her back to face him. "I love you. And I love that you're doing this for me."

Beckett started to laugh at the ridiculousness of the situation, but the laugh turned into a moan as Aodhan scissored his fingers, spreading her ass. "I don't know if you've noticed," she moaned as she ground herself against Kieran's rigid cock, "but it's not exactly a hardship."

He took her mouth in a slow, searching kiss. When he released her lips, he whispered, "I can't believe how hot it makes me to watch him drill you."

Her pussy quivered with need. Bracing her hands on his chest, she slid backward and took his cock into her body. His thick heat slid through the liquid evidence of the releases that had filled her so far tonight. It felt wicked to take her lover while her sheath was filled with another man's cum, but it didn't seem to bother Kieran...and it obviously hadn't bothered Aodhan.

She glanced over her shoulder at him. He gathered the moisture dripping from her and coated his cock with their fluids and did the same to her ass. Release coiled in her womb at the decadent sensuality of the act. At this rate, it wouldn't take much to push her over the edge.

Settling his hand on the small of her back, he stilled her motion and placed the head of his cock at her tight ring of muscles. Slowly, he pressed forward, spreading her untried muscles.

Beckett bit her lip at the sharp flare of pain that radiated outward from where he worked to penetrate her.

"Breathe, *céadsearc*. Just breathe through the pain. This is going to be so good. I promise."

"Relax, sweet Beckett. Soon there will be only pleasure for you."

She exhaled as the head of Aodhan's cock passed that tight ring of muscles and pressed farther into her virgin territory. Inch by snug inch, he pushed deeper. The burn of him filling her ass and Kieran buried in her pussy was almost too much. Finally, he was in.

Stretched and filled she began to writhe against them, but Aodhan gripped her hips, stilling her motion.

"Let us," he murmured.

Kieran pulled back while the other man pushed forward. They took turns filling her body, one driving in while the other withdrew. The friction was delicious and barely tolerable. She wanted to get away and at the same time she wanted more. Their cocks slid together inside her at counterpoint to one another as they slammed home over and over. What had started out as a careful alternating rhythm had become frantic and hungry. Her clit ground against Kieran's pelvis as the men fucked her with a greedy kind of urgency, their balls slapping wetly against her.

The knot of desire in her womb sent tentative spirals outward, and she knew her climax was nearing, but she didn't want to go off until they did. She wanted to be aware of every hot splash of semen filling her as each man lost control. Their rasping breaths and grunted curses drove her need higher as she squeezed their cocks, begging for more.

Kieran slid his hands along her body and grabbed her ass cheeks, pulling them apart and purposely exposing her to Aodhan's gaze. She'd never felt so naked in her life. And she loved it.

"I wish you could see what I see," the king grated. *"Both of us coated with your juices, thrusting into your willing flesh."*

Kieran began to shake as he fucked her faster, pounding into her.

Her internal muscles clutched at him, fluttering around his shaft while her ass did the same to the other man.

Aodhan broke first, spilling inside her in hot gushes of fluid that pushed her over the edge. Her womb spasmed and lights exploded behind her closed eyes as she registered Kieran spurting thickly inside her. Electricity travelled throughout her body as the force of her release shook her.

Aftershocks trembled through her and her blood thundered in her ears as they tried to catch their breath. At length, she became aware of both men stroking her skin and murmuring softly to her, but she couldn't make out the words or even what language they spoke. She was so tired.

* * * *

Beckett woke the next morning, curled in Kieran's arms. Closing her eyes, she tried to remember what happened the night before. She remembered the sex. Oh, did she ever remember the sex. The entire encounter was burned into her memory for the rest of her life.

Closing her eyes, she tried to remember the rest. She had a dim recollection of them pulling from her body and being carried to a warm pool of water. Vaguely, she recalled floating in the heated water while Kieran and Aodhan tenderly cleaned her body and massaged her tired muscles. She didn't remember the trip back to the hawthorn bed, but obviously they'd made it back here.

Opening her eyes, she met Kieran's bright green gaze looking down at her.

"Hey," she whispered. Her throat was a little raw. A result of all the screaming the night before, she supposed.

"Good morning." Lowering his head, he took her mouth in a slow, deep kiss.

Blinking, she looked around. Their clothes were neatly folded on the corner of the bed, but Aodhan was nowhere in sight. Neither was anyone else. The wooded grove was empty save for the birds and a few curious squirrels. If not for the fact that she and Kieran were naked in the forest and the various aches throughout her body, she might think last night never happened. Struggling to a sitting position, she winced.

Kieran sat up and put his arm around her. "Are you okay?"

"Just a little achy."

His eyes clouded with concern. "I'm sorry."

"I'm not." She glanced away as her cheeks heated. In the light of day, it was hard to believe that she'd behaved so wantonly – especially in front of people.

He raised her chin and dropped a kiss on her lips. "Good. Me neither."

Laughing, she gingerly scooted to the edge of the bed and tossed Kieran's clothes to him and slipped her flimsy white dress over her head. The silk slid sensuously over her skin as she watched him pull his clothes on, covering up his tightly muscled body. She planned to get them off again, as soon as possible.

When they were both dressed, he offered her his hand and helped her rise. Behind her, a burst of wind caught the skirt of her dress. As she turned to look, the trees that formed the bed straightened and the blankets spun into a swirling pile of green and gold leaves and

vanished. In place of their bower stood Aodhan with an icily beautiful blonde woman wearing a crown of what looked like dewdrop shaped crystals. Behind her were several males in varying stages of undress. Despite the fact that they'd appeared to her and Kieran, she couldn't help but feel like they'd interrupted something.

Aodhan stepped forward and kissed her cheek. *"Good morn to you, sweet Beckett. You and your man are welcome in my bed whenever you desire it."*

Beckett wasn't sure she'd survive another go-round, but it was nice to know they had the option if they wanted it.

Moving to Kieran the king nodded. *"Your geis is lifted, Kieran Brennan. You're free to leave the isle and lay with any woman you choose."*

The curse had kept him faithful? Realisation trickled through her awareness like ice water. He didn't really want her. She'd been his only option. Beckett's stomach plummeted to her feet and she thought she might be sick. Everything he'd told her had been a lie. He'd said he loved her – said she was the only one he'd ever wanted. Everything they'd shared had been a lie. She'd been an idiot to believe him.

Cold fingers squeezed her heart and the pain she thought she'd never feel again washed over her. It was all clear now. Kieran hadn't stayed faithful to her because he'd wanted to. He'd *had* to. It was part of the curse. It hadn't been love when he'd seen her. It had been desperation. She was a fool. A stupid, hopelessly-in-love fool.

Turning, she ran blindly from the woods.

"Beckett!"

Kieran's footsteps pounded behind her, but she kept running – dodging fallen logs and whip-like branches. Her lungs burned from lack of air, but she barely felt the tears streaming down her face as she broke through the clearing.

"Beckett, stop!"

She couldn't believe she actually thought he'd waited for her. Well, he had – but not by choice.

She stopped, but only because she found herself in Kieran's front yard with nowhere left to run.

She whirled around to face him. "You got what you wanted. I whored myself out so you can fuck whoever you want. So get to it. Got anyone special in mind?"

"It's not like that."

She crossed her arms over her chest. "Time's a wasting, lover. You've got pussy to plough from here to Dublin. Hell...London...New York. You can go where ever you want now, and fuck to your heart's content."

Her stomach twisted in pain, but it was nothing compared to the agony in her chest—the hole where her heart used to be. She couldn't believe she bought his bullshit about waiting for her. Being in love with her.

He grabbed her by the shoulders and held her still.

"I *never* stopped loving you. Never." His chest heaved and his eyes were filled with anguish. "Even though you refused to see me. Refused to take my calls. Refused to even let me know how you were. I had to beg for information from Tara and your aunt to have any news of you at all."

Her soul ached at the pain in his gaze, but she couldn't speak. She couldn't do more than stare at him.

"Yeah, there were nights that I wanted someone—anyone—just to ease the pain of being separated from you. Even if it only helped for a little while."

As he spoke, he backed her against the house.

"But in the end, it wasn't the curse that kept me faithful to you." His gaze softened and he cupped her cheek. "It was you."

Her breath caught in her throat and fresh tears spilled from her eyes.

"I knew we'd be together again. Didn't think it would take five sodding years," he muttered, a hint of a smile quirking his lips. "But I knew we'd be together." He leaned his forehead against hers. "Why would I trash the best thing I've ever had? Why would I ruin a future with you?"

Beckett swallowed hard and tried to make sense of her roiling emotions. Besides the crushing guilt at leaving him without a word, there was the debilitating fear that he'd leave her when she needed him most. But hadn't he just proved that he wouldn't? He'd been in hell for the last five years—because of her. And he still wanted her. Only her.

"I'm sorry," she whispered, swiping at her eyes.

His face fell as if he'd heard what he dreaded most and he released his hold on her.

Before he could move away from her, she grabbed his hand. "Hang on. I'm not done."

He waited, a mask of stone hiding his emotions.

"I'm sorry for leaving. I'm sorry for not trusting you. I'm sorry because I can't think of a single thing I've done to deserve you." She bit her lip and took his other hand. "Mostly I'm sorry I hurt you."

He didn't speak, just brushed the pad of his thumb across her bottom lip.

"Will you forgive me?" she asked.

His eyes softened as he pulled her into his arms. "Are you ever going put me through that kind of hell again?"

She shook her head as she wrapped her arms around his neck.

His entire body relaxed against her at her response and held her tighter. "*Tá mo chroí istigh ionat*," he murmured into her hair.

She recognised the word for heart and you but not much else. Pulling back slightly, she looked at him questioningly.

"It means my heart is within you."

Fragile happiness bloomed within her. She'd been such a moron, doubting him like she had. Her mistrust and fears almost cost her the one person who mattered most.

"I need you to answer a question."

Worry trembled through her middle. "Okay."

"Marry me?" Before she could respond, he added, "I don't care where we live. I just want to be with you."

She nodded, not quite able to believe it. "I'd like to stay here," she choked out.

His eyes brightened like the sun after the rain. Lowering his mouth, he brushed his lips across hers nipping and teasing—gently coaxing them apart. He slipped his tongue inside and tasted her, thoroughly exploring her mouth.

Frissions of need streaked through her belly as she pressed herself against him, unable to believe she was ready for him after the night before. She stared into his eyes as he raised his head. "Let's go inside," she murmured. "We've got a lot of lost time to make up for."

He smiled. "First, we need to do something else. Put this on." He handed her the spare bike helmet and dashed into the cottage, returning with a backpack. Handing it to her, he put on his own helmet, got on the bike and motioned for her to do the same.

Beckett climbed on the motorcycle behind him and hung on as they travelled the winding roads down to the seaside. The salty bite of ocean air filled her nostrils as they drew closer to the shore.

Kieran followed a winding road down to the beach and parked the bike. He got off and stretched, peering out to sea. With a sudden pinch of dread, she knew why they were here.

"Hand me the rucksack, will you?"

"You're not really..."

He nodded. "And you're going to help me."

Shaking her head, she groaned and passed him the bag. "I'm pretty sure this is a crime against museum curators everywhere."

Removing the bottle, he hung the backpack on the handlebar and looked at her, his expression suddenly serious. "If this charm brings someone even a fraction of the happiness it's brought me, then it's worth the risk of losing it to time."

A lump closed her throat. She was happier and more contented than she ever remembered being. Even though every fibre of her being strained against it, the opportunity to share that with someone else was more important than locking it away in a museum forever. She swallowed past the lump. "Let's do it."

A brilliant smile lit his face and her tummy flipped at the sight of it. "I love you *céadsearc*. You know that, don't you?"

She nodded, her heart too full to speak, but she forced herself. "I love you, too." Taking his hand, she pulled him towards the stony shore. "Let's get this over with."

"Before you change your mind?"

"Exactly," she laughed.

Kieran removed the necklace and carefully placed it into the bottle and replaced the stopper. Wading into waist deep water, he drew back his arm and heaved the bottle as far out to sea as he could. The bottle tumbled end over end glinting in the late morning sun before landing with a splash and bobbing in the waves. Ambling back to her, and pulled her back to his front, locking his arms around her. Together, they watched the bottle grow smaller as it drifted farther out into the ocean.

As it disappeared from sight, he nuzzled her neck and his cock grew hard against her ass. "I believe you mentioned something about lost time?"

Her nipples pebbled at the rough brogue colouring his voice, and she turned in his arms. Backing her further into the water, he dragged her skirt upward, baring her legs. She shivered as the chilly ocean water crept up her thighs followed by his hand.

Splaying his other hand through her hair, Kieran lowered his head, his bright eyes darkening as he moved closer. He captured her mouth and delved inside, stroking and drawing on her tongue. She melted against him, pulling him more tightly to her as she wrapped her legs around his waist.

They'd come full circle. Their bodies rocked in time with the gentle waves that carried them towards their future as those same waves carried away the magic that had brought them together again.

About the Author

I live in Michigan with my wonderful husband, two amazing sons and five somewhat psychotic cats.

When not tormenting my characters, I can usually be found helping with reading, writing and art projects in my sons' classrooms as well as providing child care and tutoring for several daycare children.

Besides writing, I also enjoy reading, knitting, sewing, cross stitching, pottery, drawing, jewellery making – basically anything that helps me avoid cooking and cleaning.

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