



MINA CARTER

Tori's
Secret

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Wicked Wraiths 1: Tori's Secret

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Wicked Wraiths 1: Tori's Secret

Mina Carter

Tori's trying to find Mr. Right. So far all she's found are Mr. Arrogant, Mr. Self-obsessed and Mr. Downright Scary. When her latest date ends in her dumping her drink in her date's crotch, a frustrated Tori takes matters into her own hands. One quick spell later and her very own Mr. Right is standing in her bedroom. So what if he's a Wraith, a magical construct. She doesn't care. He'll do the job far better than any of her buzzing friends.

However, the ghostly hunk standing by her bed is hiding more than one secret: like the fact he's not a Wraith at all, but a sorcerer looking for a way back to the land of the living. Jacob needs an in, a chink in some mortal woman's armour. He needs to hear the words "I love you."

Trouble is he doesn't plan to lose his own heart along the way...

Chapter One

"She's all right. Not a keeper or anything but she'll do for a couple of nights in the sack." The voice of her date filtered around the pseudo-Grecian column and stopped Victoria Bennett, Tori to her friends, in her tracks.

Not expecting a patron to stop so suddenly, the waiter behind her almost ran into Tori's back. Managing to scoot around her at the last minute he shot her a glare that suggested she was the living personification of all his woes. On a normal day Tori was polite to a fault but today wasn't a normal day; she just blinked at the guy like an owl as she tried to process what she was hearing.

The hits kept coming. Richard's chuckle floated around the column.

"Of course she'll cooperate. Bit of the Cutler charm... liquid panty remover." He laughed again, a harsh sound Tori had never heard from the handsome executive before. "And if that doesn't work, then a certain special..."

Tori's blood started to simmer as Richard lowered his voice. "Yeah, in her drink. No, don't worry... no blood test will pick this stuff up. It's a lust potion. Mate of mine picked it up at one of those paranormal clubs. Says it turns any woman into an animal. They can't get enough of it..."

She was going to be sick. Richard planned to drug her. How freaking low could you get?

"Yeah, sure thing. If she's any good, I'll give you a call. No, not tonight. Sorry mate, I want my share first. Tomorrow night? Yeah, sounds good. I'll get her over to mine and we'll dose her up. Call a couple of the lads around and have ourselves a little party."

Tori went from simmering to boiling mad in the blink of an eye. He was planning an orgy, was he? She'd see about that! Her spine straightened and Tori walked around the column with her head held high.

Richard was still on his cell. His lips curved into a smile as he smoothly changed the subject. "Yeah, thanks for that, James. If you could send the Delaney tender over and I'll review it tomorrow. Cheers, mate, you too. Oh, before I forget..."

Plastering a sickly sweet smile on her face, Tori sidled up and pressed close to wrap an arm around him. With her free hand she reached for her drink. Richard started a little in surprise but recovered well and quickly covered her hand with his own, shooting her a smile as he carried on his call.

"Richard..." Tori breathed against the side of his neck, whispering a kiss across the sensitive skin of his neck.

"Hmmm?" He flipped the phone shut.

"You know the thing about lust potions?" She pulled away as she twisted her wrist and dumped her drink in his lap. "They don't work on those with Fae blood."

Richard shrieked, a full-on girly shriek, as the mixture of alcohol and ice landed in his crotch. "Bitch! What are you doing?"

Tori stepped back smartly and grabbed her evening purse off the table, stopping only to cast a look over her shoulder. "I hope it gets frostbite and drops off. Have a nice evening, Richard. Don't bother to call."

* * *

Tori was still shaking when she let herself back into her apartment. Slamming the door shut, she dropped her keys onto the hall table and shrugged out of her coat. The light on her answering machine winked at her as she hung the coat up on the peg.

"Tori, this is your mother..."

"Ugh, not tonight, Mom." Tori hit the off button as soon as her mother's tones filled the small hallway. She loved her mother to bits, but there was no way she wanted to sit through a lecture on how she was getting on in years now, and shouldn't she be

thinking about finding Mr. Right and producing some grandkids for her mother to spoil rotten?

Trudging through to the living room, Tori almost collided with one of the household Wraiths as it went about its business. She stepped back with a quiet apology even though the creature, nothing more than a magical construct powered by her household spells, wouldn't hear her and couldn't answer.

Tori flopped down into her favourite chair with relief. Sighing, she dropped her head back and closed her eyes. The trouble was she was *trying* to find Mr. Right, trying her damn hardest, but so far all she'd found was Mr. Arrogant, Mr. Self-obsessed and Mr. Downright Scary.

"Arrrrrgh! Where are all the normal men?" She ran her hands through her hair in frustration. "Oh, sorry, am I in the way?"

The Wraith flicking the feather duster over the coffee table in front of her had stopped, its route interrupted by Tori's outstretched legs. It didn't say anything. It just stayed motionless and silent as it waited for her to move them so it could carry on with the cleaning.

Apologising again, Tori moved her legs, curling them up under her in the chair as she watched the Wraith idly. They were wonderful things, the stuff of magic made real to cope with all those nasty little household jobs most modern women didn't have the time for. Tori didn't know what she'd do without them cleaning up around the place. Sure, she had to do her washing herself -- for some reason her household Wraiths didn't like the washing machine -- but that was a small price to pay.

The Wraith moved around the room, ruthless in its pursuit of the smallest scrap of dust. Tall and slender, it was undoubtedly female, shimmering lines giving form to the ghostly figure. Tori turned her head to try and get a good look at it... at her. They were nearly always female although Tori had seen a male on occasion.

The face refused to come into focus and Tori sighed. It was always the same. No matter how hard you tried to get a good look at them to see what they looked like, what

colour their eyes were... it never worked. It was like they were always out of focus somehow, out of focus and silent.

Tori dropped her head back against the comfortable cushions and rubbed at her eyes. Actually, that sounded like the perfect man; silent, polite and did as he was told. Her hands, balled into fists as she knuckled the corners of her eyes, stopped. She sat bolt upright and looked at the ghostly figure dusting the already spotless dining table.

The perfect man would be a Wraith?

* * *

"Isskal, either you behave or, I swear to God, you'll *never* have sex ever again. Do I make myself clear?"

Jacob stood in the middle of the controller's hall between two burly guards who were giving him the evil eye. He folded his arms and looked at Miknris, the Duties Controller, a dried up old hag of a woman. He wouldn't give her a passing look apart from the fact she was his boss and, technically, he was supposed to do what she said. Why she thought the guards necessary, he didn't know though. He was more a lover than a fighter, and that was precisely the reason he had been hauled in here.

"Yes, ma'am. Was there anything else or can I get back to it?" He pointed over one shoulder with both thumbs, one eyebrow arched in question. "You know how it is, places to see, bored housewives to do."

"Isskal..." The controller's tone was warning as her lips compressed into a thin, white line. Even her nose wrinkled, her expression as disgusted as though she'd just sucked a lemon.

"My name is *Jacob*."

Miknris sat upright in her chair and clicked her tongue in disapproval as she shook her head. Jacob had seen her astral form in the "real world" and the form she wore was beautiful... mysterious and seductive. A world away from the dried up prune sitting in front of him with a disappointed look on her face.

"Isskal, Isskal, Isskal... that *was* your name, before you..." She paused then quickly carried on. "Did what you did and were sent to us."

Jacob's face hardened. "You mean before I got screwed over?"

"You weren't 'screwed over' as you so eloquently put it. You died with an unlifted curse on your soul which qualifies as unfinished business. Which means --"

Jacob finished for her, his voice raised mockingly. "Which means that I'm stuck here being used as a freaking Casanova until I can get some woman to fall in love with me and release me from my curse. Which is *never* going to happen unless I can *talk* to them!"

Miknris pulled an expression like a bulldog chewing a wasp. "You know the rules, Isskal. Wraiths do not talk. Ever. To do so risks the mortals finding out and puts our whole society in jeopardy."

"*Puts our whole society in jeopardy...*" Jacob mimicked her voice mockingly. "Yeah, lady, I got the whole history lesson when the Fates dragged me in here. What makes you think I give a rat's ass about your society? I wasn't born in this godforsaken place and, to be honest, the sooner I fucking leave it, the better. Just those three little words -- I love you -- from anyone of the female persuasion and you won't see me for dust."

Miknris rose out of her seat, her expression going from purple to puce in one easy step. "Are you naturally stupid or is it something you practise at? Because, Lady help me, I can't tell the difference anymore. Exactly what part of 'no talking' don't you understand, Isskal?"

Jacob just looked at her. The woman was as stubborn as a mule, no doubt about it, but two could play at that game, and before his death, Jacob had been a master at it.

"Exactly what part of 'I don't give a shit about your rules' don't you understand, Miknris? I died. I expected the big bright light and busty babes with wings preferably not wearing an awful lot. I didn't expect to be dragged into some sort of netherworld and fucking set to work. *Fucking* being the operative word here."

Miknris' smile was slow but it sent shivers of dread up Jacob's spine. He knew he was complaining like a bitch about his job. After all, a guy didn't expect to buy the farm in a car crash and end up in some freaky version of the afterlife where he was summoned at a whim to act as some bored housewife's gigolo. Okay, so the sex was the

upside of all this, even if some of his partners *were* ten-pinters. All he had to do was lie back and think of England -- figuratively speaking, of course -- but it wasn't enough.

To break this damn curse he needed to get one of them to fall in love with him. To do that he needed to be able to talk to them, say the words himself which would hopefully prompt a favourable response. All he needed was a couple of hours for Christ's sake.

Women had trouble separating emotion and sex, so the women who called him were already halfway there. Emotionally open and vulnerable, they just needed a little nudging in the right direction. Some flattering words and the sort of attention Jacob was so good at and *bang*, words said, job done. He'd be free of his servitude under Madam Fugly here.

Under Madam Fugly. Jacob shuddered and felt sick.

Miknris smiled suddenly. A sickly sweet smile which rang alarm bells for Jacob. Whatever she was going to say, he wasn't going to like it.

"Oh, that won't be a problem for you any longer, Isskal. I wasn't joking when I said you'd never have sex again. In light of your *inability*, shall we say, to control yourself, I'm taking you off the sex roster. You're being reassigned to domestic services."

* * *

The perfect man... the perfect man.

The words went around and around in Tori's head as she lay on her bed staring at the ceiling. Her book lay open on the cover next to her, but unlike normal, it hadn't sent her into the land of nod within a few pages. Tori liked reading and it was a good book; however, usually she was too tired when she finally tumbled into bed to stick with it. Tonight though, she was awake enough to read *War and Peace*.

It wasn't a fictional storyline which buzzed around in her head. It was the possibility about Wraiths which had occurred to her earlier. Perhaps she'd been looking for a man in the wrong places. All the ones she'd met in the last year or so had, to put it

bluntly, been complete assholes. All were men convinced they were God's gift to women, and that she should be grateful they even deigned to look in her direction.

Giving up any pretence of sleep she lifted her head and plumped the pillows. Despite her words to Richard earlier, Tori only had the barest minimum of Fae blood. Her great-great-great-something grandmother had been Sidhe but the blood had been filtered down since then. So much so that all Tori had inherited was a mane of blood-red hair, a pair of exotically slanted green eyes and some trinkets, most of which were beautiful but fairly useless.

The only items of real value were the crystal pendant and scroll sitting on the small altar in the corner of her bedroom. The words written in a scrawling Fae script on the scroll were the spell which allowed her to call her cleaning Wraiths into being.

After ten years of using the incantation, Tori knew it by heart. Evening classes in the Fae language had helped give her more of an understanding of the words she was using so... Her brow furrowed as she thought. If she changed the relevant words in the incantation...

Tori sat up in bed and looked over at the altar in the corner. Not a traditionally carved altar like her mother's, it was more a small footstool with a navy velvet cloth over it. Small and easy to pack away in case she brought anyone home who wasn't into the whole paranormal deal -- people like Richard. It was why he hadn't realised a lust potion wouldn't work on her. He hadn't known about her paranormal blood.

"Well, there's one asshole who's never seeing the inside of my bedroom," she muttered to herself and threw off the covers to slide out of bed. Grabbing the robe off the chair, she padded over to the altar on bare feet and stood before it for a moment to study the contents. Small offerings of fresh flowers and incense lay to one side and on the other were her charms.

The large pendant sat in the middle of the partially unrolled scroll, both placed deliberately in the center of the altar. The chain wrapped around it with a lock of Tori's hair trapped against the stone. Her hair and the words of the spell powered the

enchantment. Holding her robe closed, she leaned forward and picked them up. The pendant held loosely in one hand, she flicked the scroll open and began to read...

*"Thnall terantis Isskal,
Heran juris gerath,
Ceris teranis anak,
Heran Koras go-gothian totalis.
Aranath gosita terabi."*

* * *

Slumped in his new sleeping chambers in the domestic sector, Jacob didn't expect the familiar tugging on the copper collar. Like all Wraiths in service, he wore a calling collar. It informed him when he was being summoned by someone in the mortal world.

Unlike a natural Wraith though, there would be no completion of service and ceremonial removal of the collar. Jacob was a spirit Wraith. He was bound and sustained by the collar, and if it was ever removed, his spirit would dissipate, scattering into the witching to be absorbed.

Nothingness. A fate Jacob had thought was worse than death, but after three years, he was beginning to warm to the idea. The problem was he couldn't remove his own collar and commit suicide... More was the pity.

Turning on his side, Jacob punched his pillows to fluff them up and lay down. Forcing his eyes to remain closed, he tried to get some rest. He needed sleep. Tomorrow was going to be a funfest filled not with the naked women he was used to, but feather dusters and mops. No more silk sheets for him unless he was washing them. Jacob groaned and started to count sheep. It didn't work. The sheep turned into cleaning cloths and mocked him.

Great, even his subconscious thought he was a loser.

The familiar tugging on his collar had his eyes snapping open. Jacob sat up cautiously. He wasn't due on rotation until the morning so what gave? The tugging became more insistent as heat blossomed out from his collar to fill his entire body. Jacob

gasped as a line of fire streaked down the centre of his chest and raced straight for his cock. He was hard in an instant, his balls tight with arousal.

"What the..." he whispered, looking around as though the walls of his cell-like room would provide the answer. They didn't. The blank cream walls remained stubbornly devoid of information. The collar tugged again, and this time it felt like a hand around his cock. A hand that stroked and squeezed, urging him to give in and answer the call.

"This had better not be a call to clean the kitchen," he growled as he closed his eyes and allowed the summoning to take him.

Chapter Two

Tori stood in the middle of her bedroom as the echo of the last word of the spell faded away. A word of power, it echoed in her ears for a moment before it rolled away into nothingness. She looked around the room, not entirely sure what she was expecting.

What she got was nothing.

"Huh, figures. Probably got it wrong anyway."

Sighing, she wrapped the pendant up in the scroll and placed it down on the small altar again. Perhaps she needed to practise her Fae more... The words she'd substituted in the spell should have produced a male Wraith purely for her pleasure. Knowing her luck, she'd said the incantation wrong, and she'd find Eric the nerdy librarian in her bed.

Tori turned, starting to unwrap her robe, ready to slip back into bed and at least try to get some sleep tonight. Halfway done, she stopped like a rabbit caught in the headlights.

There, standing by the side of her bed, was a Wraith.

"Oh my."

Tori's hand stole up to her throat. There were Wraiths and there were *Wraiths*. Tori had seen a lot, but she'd never seen one quite like this.

He was gorgeous.

Solidly built, his toned muscles shimmered in the light from her bedside lamp as he moved, lifting his hand to beckon her toward him. Like the rest he didn't speak, but unlike the others Tori didn't have to try and catch a glimpse of what he looked like out of the corner of her eye.

He had grey eyes, the colour of moonlight, that smiled at her as she approached. Awe swelled in her chest. *She'd done this.* She'd called this magnificent creature into being, and she couldn't quite believe it.

"You came from my imagination?" Unbidden, her hand stole out to touch his arm. Questing fingers found warm flesh and she jumped. "Oh! I expected you to be cold."

He didn't say anything, just looked down at her. Moving slowly as though trying not to startle her, he reached out and laced his fingers through hers. Storm grey eyes held hers as he lifted her hand to place it in the center of his chest.

"Oh."

The strong beat of his heart thudded beneath her fingers as they spread out across his chiselled chest. She'd never considered Wraiths might have anything as mundane as a heartbeat. Why should they? They were creatures of moonlight and magic. Her attention moved over his shoulders and down.

A pair of jeans hung sinfully low on his hips and a tantalising glimpse of darker hair arrowed down to disappear under the denim. Denim tented at the crotch, the thick ridge of an impressive erection pressing against the fabric, desperate for release.

Tori couldn't help a small chuckle. "Pleased to see me... unless that's a permanent state for the kind of Wraith you are. I don't know. I've never done this before you know. You're my first."

* * *

Jacob's cock swelled another couple of inches at her admission. He was her first? Her first what... lover? No, the way she looked -- all luscious curves, that mass of red hair and those exotic cat's eyes -- there was no way in *hell* she was a virgin.

Which was good from his point of view. Jacob was an experienced seducer but there were some situations he had zero experience with. Men and virgins, for example. Thankfully he'd never been summoned to a situation with either. He wondered about that -- perhaps the summoning knew what Wraith would best suit each assignment. His pondering took a back seat as he pressed a kiss against her knuckles.

Speech was forbidden. Possible, but forbidden, and if he tried it he'd be dragged back through the veil so quickly his eyeballs would rattle in his head. Jacob didn't bother to try. He was supposed to be pulling domestic duty, but somehow the fates had screwed up, and he'd wound up in this siren's bedroom. And he had a policy of never looking a gift horse in the mouth.

She gasped at the sensation of his lips against her skin and Jacob smiled. He liked that sound. Just as he liked the way she was watching him -- as if he were the sun, the moon and the stars. It soothed something deep within his soul that she was actually looking *at* him and not through him like the others did. To them he was just a spare cock, something they used to scratch an itch when a vibrator wouldn't do the job, and nothing more.

This one was different. He could tell that as soon as he looked at her. It was the way she hesitated as she touched him and the slight flush on her cheeks as she checked him out from under her thick lashes. On a normal summoning he did as he was told and that was it. He came, he sucked, licked and fucked, and then he left. This one, though, hadn't given an order yet.

"I'm Tori..."

Jacob silenced her with a kiss. Her lips were like chocolate and silk, everything he missed from his mortal life. He groaned and burrowed his hand into her hair. His lips feathered over hers in a soft touch designed to gauge her reaction. Her eyes fluttered closed, but she didn't move, not even to grab his ass or, God forbid, cup his crotch where his cock stood ready at attention -- his arousal courtesy of the summoning. Most of the time he didn't think about it. It helped him do his job, especially with some, but with Tori he didn't need the extra stimulation. She was the sort of woman he'd have pursued with single-minded intensity before his death.

The tentative sweep of her tongue against his lower lip tested his control in ways Jacob had never thought possible. Usually he wanted to get right on with it, wanted to sweep his partner away on a sensual haze so complete they forgot everything but him,

forgot everything but the sensations he created. He was rough and tough at times and never gave anything of himself unless ordered to.

The ones who wanted dominance and a dirty fuck were his favourites, the ones who wanted slow and sensual not so much, especially when he could see signs of an absent husband or partner. As far as he was concerned, they should be trying to build a relationship with whatever man he was filling in for and leave him free to find a woman he could build a rapport with, and some day, get to say the words which would free him.

Because, with very few exceptions, there were signs of a partner in all the bedrooms he was summoned to. Well, apart from the blonde twins a couple of months ago... Tori's tongue flicked over his lower lip again and retreated. It was a sultry invitation to come and play and... Hell, did Jacob want to play.

Done messing about he pulled her hard against him. His hand splayed out to press her hips hard against his, grinding his erection into her soft belly. Without words he couldn't tell her how hot she made him, so he'd have to settle for showing her instead. Following the retreat of her teasing tongue, he deepened the kiss and turned her toward the bed.

* * *

Wraith or not, this guy could kiss. Tori moaned as he ruthlessly explored her lips, then prised them apart and ravaged her mouth with a finesse that took her breath away. Her heart hammered as the cool sheets of her bed met her back. A whimper escaped her lips as he trailed a line of kisses along her jaw to nuzzle her neck. His hand parted her robe, sliding beneath the silky fabric to curve around her waist and then smooth upward.

Tori arched her back as he ran his fingers lightly over her ribcage. Her nipples tightened in anticipation, waiting for him to cup her breast, but he didn't. Settling over her, he rested his weight on one arm and pulled her tighter into his body with the other. The large, callused palm of his hand slid down over her hip and down her thigh. He

continued to pay attention to her neck, finding the spot below her ear that made her squirm and concentrating on it.

Sharp teeth nipped her ear and made her jump. Then the warm brush of his tongue swept away the small hurt and turned Tori's insides to mush. One simple incantation and she had the lover of her dreams. It couldn't be that easy, surely? She couldn't believe this was happening.

It was, though, and faster than she'd thought possible. Travelling down past her knee, his hand reached the hem of her nightgown and started its journey back up her leg. Heat raced through her veins and settled deep in her belly. His hand smoothed up and around the front of her thigh. As he claimed her lips again he urged her legs apart and started to stroke her inner thighs with soft sweeps of his fingertips.

Tori gasped, the sound lost in his mouth, as her pussy clenched tightly. She was already wet. Her cheeks flushed as he parted her folds and spread the slick heat of her arousal over her labia.

Appreciation rumbled in the broad chest she was nestled against, and Tori lost the power of thought as his clever fingers found her clit and circled it. The maddening small circles around and around the sensitive nub of flesh didn't give her the touch she was desperate for. She panted and wrapped her arms around his shoulders, kissing him with a passion she'd never felt with her other "real" partners.

The circling continued. Tori growled in frustration and shoved her hips against his hand in a silent message to stop teasing her. Boldly, she slid her tongue against his, becoming the aggressor. Perhaps it was because she'd imagined him -- because when they were done he would disappear back into the witching -- that she felt she could relax and go with it, allow herself to revel in what she really wanted, and let the sensual creature inside out to play without fear of reprisals. It was liberating, giving herself permission to let go.

A low rumble of amusement sounded in the broad chest she lay against. The next stroke was right where she needed it. Pleasure, white hot and immediate, filled

her, radiating outwards from the tight knot forming above her pussy. She kissed him breathlessly, needing more, demanding more.

He met her demands. His finger circled and flickered against her clit in teasing touches, then slid down to collect the result of her arousal from her wet slit and spread it over her clit. Soundlessly, she urged him on, obeying the instincts of her body rather than worrying "will he think I'm easy/loose/a slut?"

He kissed her hard, driving his tongue deep in a bold, domineering caress. Then he pulled away and moved down her body, leaving a trail of kisses in his wake.

Oh my. She knew where he was going, and her level of arousal hit the stratosphere. He took his time getting there, and she knew by the smile she could feel against her skin that it was deliberate. A soft curse left her lips as he licked across her collarbone with a slow, sensual sweep of his tongue that should be illegal.

Her pussy clenched hard as he moved further down. His lips were a whisper over the sensitive skin of her breast, and his hands moulded them with what seemed like reverence through the thin fabric of her nightgown. Then his lips reached the barrier of the lace and stopped.

Tori looked down in puzzlement -- what was he doing? -- only to find him looking up at her, a question in his eyes. She frowned, not sure what he wanted and almost losing herself in the tempestuous storm grey of his eyes. She'd always wondered what a Wraith's eyes looked like, and his were beautiful. In answer he hooked his hand into the neckline of her nightgown and raised an eyebrow.

"Oh! Yes, it can go... I -- it's old," she whispered, the very idea sending waves of heat licking over her skin. She'd never had a man tear the clothes from her body before. They'd always been too polite and careful, like sex was a boardroom affair with rules and regulations. Tori wanted more than that. She wanted passion and fire. She wanted a man who lost control when he was around her and just *had* to have her, no matter what the consequences.

He smiled and it was like the sun emerging from behind the clouds. His eyes held hers as he pulled on her neckline. The sound of tearing fabric filled the room as he tore the nightgown down the front in a long, slow movement.

Tori lost the ability to breathe. It was the most erotic thing she'd ever experienced. Heat flared in his eyes, need tightening his expression as his gaze moved downwards over her newly revealed body. His visual caress lingered on her full tits. She bit her lip as her nipples hardened to tight pebbles just begging for his touch.

His storm-grey gaze slid lower to the juncture of her thighs, and the fire in his eyes flared into an inferno. Tori flushed, realising she was spread out for his approval like some sort of ancient slave girl in front of her master... or the heroine in a bodice ripper waiting for her dark lord to take her.

Take her. Oh God, yes please.

She couldn't restrain her whimper this time and his eyes flicked back to hers at the sound. A smile curved his lips, sinfully full lips no man should ever be allowed, and he bent his head. Tori gasped as his tongue swirled around one sensitive nipple before sucking it directly into the warmth of his mouth.

With no warning, no preamble, he spread the lips of her pussy and thrust two fingers inside her. The intimate invasion had her hips arching off the bed like she'd been hit with an electric shock. Liquid heat flooded her body as he thrust in and out of her pussy, fucking her with dexterous fingers. Dexterous fingers that stroked and touched in all the right places.

"Oh God, yes..." she moaned, her hips jerking to get more of the delicious sensations as he suckled on her breasts. The hard knot of arousal between her legs expanded and radiated outwards. She needed so much more, her hips moving in small, restless movements against his hand.

"Please." For some reason, with him, she had no trouble asking for what she wanted. "I want you to --"

She didn't get a chance to finish her sentence, didn't get a chance to demand he quit the teasing and just fuck her. In the next moment he moved, settling between her

thighs, and the feel of his hot breath against her pussy wiped all other thoughts from her mind.

He parted her with gentle fingers and the soft touch of his breath washed over her. Tori moaned as her body clenched in anticipation, stilling as she waited for him to move... to do something.

She waited.

And waited.

Then, when she was about to look up and demand he *do* it, his tongue brushed over her clit.

"Oh... my... God --"

She got one brush. One soft sweep as he dragged his tongue against her clit, the rough satin heat pulling at the hooded button of flesh for a second before it swept back. He drove his tongue deep into her body and rumbled in appreciation. Tori almost passed out with pleasure as he fucked her with his tongue then swept up to fasten his mouth over her clit.

He licked and nibbled, feathering his tongue over her in a peculiar non-rhythmic pattern. A pattern that had her tensed in anticipation and on edge, never knowing when the next touch would be. She whimpered and begged, soft words falling from her lips into the silence of the room as her Wraith tortured her with pleasure.

"God... I'm gonna come."

Her eyes snapped open and she stared at the ceiling in shock. Nothing had ever brought her to climax this quickly, not even her private sessions with her best friend concealed in the nightstand. Violently pink and always ready for action with four settings she could count on for a speedy resolution when she needed it. Not quite this quick though. She gasped as he swirled his tongue around her clit again, driving the tightness in her body one step higher.

Just another touch of the warmth of his mouth over her, and the tension would reach breaking point. She'd shatter into a million pieces and bask in the moonlight of

his touch. Her hips pressed against him as she lifted her arms above her head, her body writhing on the bed in sensual abandonment.

He pulled away.

"No..." The mournful cry was out before she could stop it. Tori opened her eyes and looked at him. "What are you doing? You can't leave me like this!"

His smile was wicked as he crawled up her body. Tori swore under her breath as her arousal kicked up another impossible notch. The bastard knew full well what he was doing to her. He settled over her, rocking his hips to rub his cock against her hot, wet pussy.

Tori threw her head back against the pillows. She couldn't do this. Poised just on the edge of her climax, she wanted him to fuck her, drive into her body and just take her, or go back to using his mouth on her and give her the climax he'd teased her with. He rocked his hips again and rubbed the thick shaft of his cock all the way from her wet slit to where her clit pulsed with need.

Tori's control snapped.

"Just do it. Fuck me," she demanded. "Now. Hard."

Poised above her, he smiled then leaned down to claim her lips in a tender kiss. A soft, gentle kiss that was almost innocent in its delivery. A kiss he used as a counterpoint as he reached down between their bodies to fit himself properly against her. The broad head of his cock pressed against the entrance to her pussy for a moment, then still kissing her, he drove into her in one powerful thrust.

Well prepared, Tori didn't feel any pain, even though he was big... far bigger than her previous lovers. There was just friction and a delicious stretching sensation as her body adjusted to accommodate his. He slid into her up the hilt, his hips meeting hers. When they did, he ground against her, pressing his pelvis into hers. Trapped between them, her clit throbbed in response, a pulse of pleasure going through her so intensely she whimpered as he pulled back.

The innocent kiss continued as he did the wickedest things to her body. Each hard thrust was accompanied by a mind-blowing roll of his hips until Tori could think

of nothing but the man who moved over and within her. The tension within her continued to build. She was certain she would be going up in flames any moment.

Breaking away from the kiss with a gasp, she wrapped her legs around his hips, trying to get that extra bit of sensation as she threw herself, heart and soul, into their lovemaking. Their bodies moved in perfect rhythm as they strained toward that perfect release she could feel just out of reach. Flames of desire licked her skin as the room filled with the sounds of pleasure, soft gasps and breathless moans Tori didn't realise at first issued from her own lips.

They were joined by deep groans of masculine pleasure from her Wraith as he smoothed a hand over her thigh and held it to him. Too lost in her own pleasure, she forgot Wraiths as a whole were normally silent...

Opening her eyes, she looked up at him. A feral look somewhere between intense need and male triumph cast hard lines in his expression. His movements became stronger, more forceful, as though he'd been holding back before but now couldn't. A fierce thrill shot through Tori. She'd brought him to this, and as he looked down at her with hard possessiveness in his eyes, she felt a sense of her own feminine power.

He caught her look, and the dark heat that swirled in his eyes rocked her to the core. He claimed her lips again but not in the innocent kiss he'd teased her with earlier. Dimly she realised that earlier he'd been in control, subjecting her to a slick seduction routine, one which bore the hallmarks of much practise. Now, though, he was out of control, subject to the same uncontrollable urges as she was. She liked that, especially liked knowing that he wanted her so much nothing else mattered.

His tongue thrust into her mouth and duelled with hers as he drove his cock into her again. A shudder of ecstasy rolled through her, the first warning signs of her release as the tension in her body spiralled. Her eyes fluttered shut as she gave herself up to it, lifting her hips and matching him thrust for thrust until, with a cry, her back arched.

Rapture slammed into her like a body blow, leaving her gasping. He groaned and, wrapping his arms around her, rolled them over until she sat on top. The

movement drove his cock deeper. Tori screamed in pleasure, a sound matched by her lover's grunt as his body went taut underneath her. His hips slammed upwards as his hands clamped down on her hips and held her in place. His cock jerked and pulsed, pouring his seed deep within her body. Tori shuddered. The change in angle and the sheer size of him meant she felt *everything*. Breathless and weak from pleasure, she collapsed over his chest.

Chapter Three

Now *that* was sex. Possibly the best sex he'd ever had. Jacob lay on his back and studied the ceiling, the mortal woman tucked into his side. Her hair cascaded over his shoulder as her breath whispered over the flesh of his chest, teasing his flat male nipples into hard peaks. Despite the fact he'd just had the best fuck of his life -- or death -- his cock was still at rampant attention and he was ready to go again. Painfully ready as usual for a summoning, but he didn't think it had anything to do with the control his collar had over him.

No, this was all Tori. He'd barely finished with her and he wanted her again. However, nestled into his side, she didn't look ready to move any time soon. She sighed in contentment and dropped a kiss onto his chest, just shy of the nipple.

Jacob bit back a groan. They were done and any minute now she would dispatch him back through the veil so the last thing he needed was more teasing. He was as stiff as an iron bar, and if he had to go back through the veil like this, it would be sheer torture. He'd be up half the night jacking off.

"I enjoyed that. Thank you." Her voice was soft and unexpected. Jacob blinked in surprise and looked down from his study of the ceiling.

His partners never thanked him.

Ever.

To them he was a magical construct, a non-being there for one purpose and one purpose only, the one Tori had summoned him for. Because of the veil of secrecy around the Wraiths, that they were just beings of magic with no sentience -- a cover they'd kept up for centuries -- it didn't occur to any of the women he pleased that they should thank him.

Apart from Tori.

Jacob opened his mouth to answer her, to say something, anything, then snapped it closed. Indecision warred within him. He wanted to say he'd enjoyed it too -- more than enjoyed it, and did she fancy starting all over again? But he couldn't. Whatever had gone wrong and allowed him to be here instead of scrubbing floors somewhere, he didn't know, but he wasn't going to push it.

Instead of words, he dropped a kiss on the top of her head and paused to bury his nose in her hair for a moment. She smelled wonderful, the faint scent of lilac and rose from her hair mingling with another, more exotic scent. Perhaps perfume she'd worn earlier in the day, its traces lingering on her skin, or perhaps just her. Whatever it was, Jacob liked it a lot.

She made a pleased sound and snuggled closer. His arms tightened around her in response, and for the first time in longer than he could remember, Jacob relaxed and enjoyed the feeling of a woman in his arms. It soothed a part of his soul he hadn't realised was damaged.

His hand stroked down her back in an idle motion, his fingertips caressing the silken skin along her spine as he thought. Today was a day for a lot of firsts. Unable to resist, he kissed her again and stayed, resting against the top of her head and closing his eyes. This was nice. Sort of how he imagined it would feel to be married and to have someone to hold at night.

Tori shifted slightly and looked up at him. A tiny frown furrowed her brow and there was curiosity in her green eyes.

"When I called you, I had no idea what to expect..." Happiness lit her eyes as she smiled. "But it turned out so well, and I know I'm stupid for talking to you because you're not a real person..."

You so sure about that, sweetheart? Jacob remained impassive, watching her in silence, the thoughts he wanted to voice staying safely in his head. Unaware of his internal debate, Tori carried on speaking.

"...so thank you. That was lovely, more than lovely. It was fantastic. But --"

Here it came. His time was up and she was going to send him back. Her next words, however, chipped at the icy wall around Jacob's heart.

"I know you're supposed to go back when you're done. I mean, the Wraiths that I normally get... like for cleaning and whatnot... they disappear as soon as they've done the housework. I'd assumed you would since I used the same spell."

She'd used a *domestic* spell to summon him? Jacob's expression must have mirrored his surprise because she flushed a deeper shade of red and dropped her gaze to stammer.

"I know, I know. Sad, isn't it? I'm not even a full Fae so I don't know much about summoning. I just changed some of the words in the incantation. How pathetic is that? I can't get a decent date so I create one from a cleaning spell."

Inventive more like. Admiration filled Jacob's chest. Not many would think to jury-rig an incantation like that.

"The thing is..." She looked up again, worry and an aching loneliness shadowing the deep green of her eyes. "...I don't like sleeping alone. I'd like you to stay, at least until I'm asleep?"

Jacob felt like he'd been punched in the gut. A smile curved his lips then spread, and Jacob didn't do a damn thing to stop it. She wasn't sending him back. She wanted him to stay. He felt like punching the air in triumph. Perhaps Tori was the woman he was looking for, the one who would release him from his servitude.

She was still watching him, and Jacob realised she was waiting for an answer. Before she could change her mind, he nodded and pulled her toward him. Her breath whispered against his lips in a soft sigh as he kissed her gently.

"Oh good, I was hoping you would."

She settled down against him again, her movements as feline as the cast of her eyes, and yawned. Jacob returned his hand to her back and resumed his stroking. Within seconds he felt her breathing deepen as she slid into sleep.

The former-sorcerer-turned-Wraith lay awake for long hours. His mind turned over and over, before he too dropped into a light sleep. He was awakened by soft cries

from the woman at his side. Jacob's eyes snapped open and he reached out for the bedside light. What was happening -- was she okay?

Tori was on her side, facing away from him, but he could see the small, erratic movements of her limbs. It appeared as though she was trying to run from something. Reaching out, he turned her onto her back. She gasped, fear stark on her face even though her eyes were closed.

Relief hit him like a sledgehammer. She was just having a nightmare. Now he could understand why she didn't like to sleep alone and her request for him to stay. She must get them a lot.

As he looked about the room he could see evidence of that; self-help books on the bedside cabinet, a nightlight which could be turned to low to provide a comforting glow, and most telling of all, a battered and obviously much loved teddy bear sat on the chair next to the bed.

An unaccustomed wave of tenderness filled him. It was out of character, felt odd like a suit that was just that little bit too small. He rubbed the centre of his chest for a moment and then reached for her.

She cried out softly and turned into his arms, burrowing into them like a small child seeking safety. Something deep inside Jacob cracked, and for the first time in his un-life, breaking his captivity ceased to matter. She was hurting, and all he wanted to do was make things better.

"Shhhhh." His lips against her hair, he broke the cardinal rule for a Wraith and spoke.

Wraiths were actually fully capable of talking, but for centuries they'd refused to. Not since a warlock way back when had abused their trust and willingness to help and locked them into servitude. The warlock was long gone and that spell broken but the Wraiths had long memories and held a grudge, even if it cut them off from the rest of their brethren.

Jacob wrapped his arms around her and used his larger body to shelter her as though what she was afraid of was a physical threat. She calmed a little, the erratic

movements of her body slowing down to almost nothing. The soft gasps and cries continued despite his hand stroking the soft skin of her back and his murmured assurances in her ear.

Jacob frowned. What else could he do? He didn't have much experience with this side of bedding a woman. Falling asleep with his partners was out since on a normal summoning the magic pulled him back through the veil as soon as the sex was done.

Tori had used a domestic spell though, and that meant he was here until the magic decided he was done. Obviously it was of the opinion that Tori needed him around for more than just sex. That was cool. He could do that.

He racked his brains for something to do, something that would help. Then it hit him, and he leaned his head back against the pillows. His deep voice rumbled in his chest as he launched into the only song he could think of at the moment. Tori sighed, her breathing becoming deeper as the soft strains of "Sittin' on the Dock of the Bay" filled the room.

He smiled when he realised it was working and sang on, his hand stroking her arm idly. This was going to bring a storm down on his head, but he didn't care. She was in pain, and he would do anything he could to make it right for her.

He sang of wasting time and loneliness. A frown furrowed his brow as he realised that the song was a good allegory for his life. He had had nothing to live for, and as he was, nothing was going to come his way.

His collar tugged at his neck, giving him a second's warning before magic swirled in the room. Jacob kept his eyes closed as he rolled the last words off his tongue. They were here to take him back. The notes wept into the silence of the room as he held Tori close and savoured these last moments with her.

There was no way they'd let him come back now.

Finally he opened his eyes to find Miknris standing at the foot of the bed. A scowl furrowed his brow. Dried up old prune would just fucking love this. Holding her gaze in defiance, he turned his head and kissed Tori gently on the temple.

"Sleep well, sweetheart," he whispered then raised his voice slightly. "Okay, do your worst."

Humans couldn't see them clearly, but other Wraiths had no such trouble, and Jacob could see the mocking smile that curved the lips of Miknris' astral form.

Oh, you really don't want me to do that, she mocked, her voice clear as a bell in Jacob's head. *Heel, boy.*

In an instant Jacob was on his feet and stood next to her. His eyes wandered over Tori's sleeping form and a dull ache formed in the centre of his chest. An ache he couldn't define, a pang of something... but what? It couldn't be love; there was no way he could get attached to anyone, even a woman like Tori, that quickly.

She's very beautiful. You always did have the luck of the devil himself. Bit of a pity really...

Jacob arched an eyebrow in question but didn't speak. That was the thing about Miknris. If she wanted to tell you something, she did, and nothing would stop her acid-edged tongue.

Oh, that you'll never see her again. I'm sure the next time she needs 'servicing,' one of the other lads will be more than happy to oblige.

"You're a mean bitch, Miknris," Jacob shot back. He didn't bother to speak mind to mind, but out of deference to the sleeping woman on the bed, he kept his voice low. "Probably why you have to wear that form to get a guy to fuck you."

Her sharp intake of breath told him his remark had hit home, but Jacob was already finished with the conversation. His brow furrowed as he looked at the wall behind Tori's bed. He'd been so intent on the woman herself earlier that he hadn't scoped out her bedroom properly. Icy fingers reached into his chest to wrap around his heart and stop it mid-beat.

He should have checked the room out. He *really* should have checked the room out.

Because above the bed hung a large, intricate dreamcatcher. In subtle shades of green and turquoise, it wasn't the average market stall special. No, whoever had made

it had known what they were doing. The knotted charms and cords were woven skilfully, catching the witching in its enchantment.

It worked. Jacob knew it worked because it had caught something. There, sitting right in the centre like a fattened spider, was a dark, malevolent mass. Something Jacob recognised with ease -- a death-shade.

The world around them started to dissolve like a special effect from a cheap sci-fi movie.

"Shit, no! Wait. We can't go yet," Jacob protested. He struggled as the veil wrapped around them both and pulled the two Wraiths back into the witching. His attempts were futile and within seconds Miknris and Jacob opened their eyes back in the duties hall.

Jacob turned to the short, prune-faced woman... a far cry in appearance from the elegant creature she appeared to be on the other side of the veil. Panic twisted his heart in his chest.

"You have to take me back. Now. Tori's in danger. Didn't you see that shade? If you don't take me back, it'll kill her."

Chapter Four

"It's no longer any of your concern, Isskal. Forget the mortal woman and go about your duties. Maybe if you're lucky, I'll change my mind and put you back on the sex roster. Until then, well, you'll just have to cope..."

Three days later Miknris' dismissive words were still spinning around and around in Jacob's head like an annoyed gnat he couldn't get rid of. Each time his temper and frustration mounted a little more.

Stupid woman wouldn't know a death-shade if one walked up and bit her on the ass, Jacob grumbled to himself as he mopped his hundredth floor that day. How many bloody floors were there in the world anyway? Was he going to have to mop every fucking one of them? At least it was better than cleaning toilets, Jacob's absolute least favourite job.

Sloshing water on the tiles, he attacked them with the mop. He had to get back to Tori. There wasn't anything else for it. If that shade got loose, Tori didn't stand a chance, not with how large and powerful it was. It would suck the life right out of her, and condemn her to life as a Wraith. Without a collar to protect her soul from the ravages of the veil, it would wear out quickly and she'd become nothing more than an echo, a mere whisper of the vibrant woman she had been.

Jacob couldn't... No, he wouldn't let that happen. He didn't know why, but somehow Tori had gotten under his skin. He cared what happened to her because a dead woman wasn't going to say the words he needed to hear. Even as he thought it, though, a small part of Jacob's mind protested the idea he was just interested in her as a way out of his slavery. He cared about her. He'd care about any woman with that thing hung over her like a sword of Damocles.

With cleaned tiles gleaming up at him, Jacob finished off and put the mop and bucket away. It was his last job at this place so he closed his eyes as the witching swept him away to his next. Like being on the sex roster it was one job after another. With this new role there was less time, really *no* time, to relax though. It was just pure physical hard work from one moment to the next.

Jacob opened his eyes on yet another living room and ignored the couple sitting on the couch. They ignored him in turn, something he was used to now. People just didn't see domestic Wraiths, and Jacob only put enough effort into his physical form for them to see his outline. The last thing he wanted was to be noticed by any mortal, unless it was Tori.

He went about his work as fast as he could. Work, shift locations, work, shift again. In the back of his mind was a tiny thread of hope that he'd get picked up by Tori's cleaning spell, but three days later he was beginning to face facts. With the amount of people who used cleaning Wraiths, he could work a lifetime and never be called to the same street again, never mind the same house.

Squirting polish at a glass dining table, Jacob rubbed at the marks on the surface. She was probably dead by now. The more nightmares she had, the more that dreamcatcher backed up behind the shade. From what he'd seen, all it needed was a couple more and the thing would break and release the shade. Then Tori would be dead, a Wraith like him.

Jacob allowed himself to consider that as he moved about the house. Perhaps it wouldn't be so bad? He could shelter her, petition on her behalf for a collar so she wouldn't fade away. They'd be together. Sure, his place wasn't ideal, but they could make a life beyond the veil.

Images assaulted him: coming home from a hard day's work to find Tori waiting for him, getting into bed beside her and knowing she would always be there, a nursery painted in pink. Other Wraiths, even those not natural-born, lived whole lives behind the veil. Normal lives. Happy lives. Why shouldn't they?

Casting an experienced eye around the room, Jacob checked he'd cleaned everything that needed cleaning then packed up his duster and headed back down to the kitchen to put it away. As soon as the cupboard door shut on the cleaning supplies, the room around him started to fade, and he was whisked away again.

* * *

*"Thnall terantis Isskath,
Heran juris gerath,
Ceris teranis anak,
Heran Koras go-gothian totalis.
Aranath gos... oh fuck it!"*

Tori broke off as the incantation failed for the fourth time in a row. Well, that wasn't entirely true. The incantation worked just fine for the purpose it was intended for. Tori blew hair out of her face in frustration as she looked through the open door of her bedroom and into the rest of the apartment.

The ghostly forms of three Wraiths were just visible as they bustled around, cleaning, while in the corner, a fourth started to take shape. As soon as it fully formed, it moved to join the others in their cleaning fest.

Tori dropped the scroll back on the altar, and defeat curled in her chest. She'd have the cleanest house on the block. Scant comfort when all she wanted was the gorgeous hunk from last time.

Why hadn't it worked?

It should have worked; she'd done and said exactly the same things... her brow furrowed... hadn't she? She couldn't remember, not after what had happened that night. Her memory of the exact words she'd used was a little bit fuzzy after the amazing sex.

Conceding that tonight was destined to be hunk-less, Tori stomped over to the bed.

"Knew I'd gotten it wrong," she muttered as she stripped off her robe and dropped it to the floor. Sliding between the sheets she let out a sigh and tried to ignore the frustration swirling through her veins.

Eyes closed, she didn't see the Wraith sidle into the room and pick the flimsy garment up, folding it neatly to place it on the chair next to the teddy bear, or hear when the dreamcatcher above her head was silently removed.

* * *

Gently does it, Jacob told himself as he carried the dreamcatcher from Tori's bedroom in careful hands. He still couldn't believe his luck being called back to Tori's house after days of trying. It had taken him less than two minutes to dispatch the other Wraiths. An easy task when they were all a little bemused as to why they had all been called at the same time. Tori's apartment wasn't big enough to warrant the attention of three of their kind, let alone four.

The dreamcatcher was feather-light in his hands, but Jacob could feel the weight of the shade contained within. It pressed against the edges of his mind, leaving an oily residue that made him want to scrub the inside of his skull out with bleach.

He strode purposefully to the table where he dropped his burden into the salt circle he'd drawn in the centre. As soon as it touched the scattered salt across the wooden surface, the creature within began to thrash and scream.

Jacob's jaw tightened as he fought to retain control of the circle. The magical glyphs he'd drawn in salt on the table around it glowed brightly as it battered at the circle. He couldn't afford to lose control. If he did, if the shade got out, then it was going to go after the only living thing in the apartment.

Tori. Over his dead body -- so to speak.

Jacob started to chant, his low voice filling the room as he began the banishment spell, which would dispel the shade, scattering its form so it no longer presented a danger to the living. It thrashed in its confinement, throwing itself at the boundaries that Jacob had set. His voice rose into the culmination of the spell. It might not have been intelligent or even sentient as such, but it sensed its own imminent demise.

"...*Anak-kral!* So mote it be," Jacob finished, his voice echoing around the room on the last words. Time slowed, all the air in the room rushing toward the dreamcatcher surrounded by salt on the table. Then, with a pop, the shade disappeared, its scream echoing into nothing.

Grimacing, Jacob stuck a finger in his ear and wriggled it about. "Damn, those things squeal more than an accountant with dodgy balance sheets."

Still, he was glad that had gone well. He hadn't cast a spell of that complexity since his death.

"Boy's still got it," he muttered, straightening his collar and posing in the mirror-like surface of the dining room window.

He hadn't been sure it would work, whether the barely visible collar around his neck would block his mortal abilities, but it seemed some things not even a Wraith control collar could block. Leaving everything on the table, Jacob headed for the door. Now that little problem was taken care of, there was just one more thing...

* * *

Tori was asleep, floating in that wonderful, warm place between asleep and awake, when the bed dipped. A soft murmur left her lips as the covers shifted, and a warm body slid in next to her. On a normal day she'd have been out the other side of the bed in alarm and reaching for the baseball bat hidden between the bed and the dressing table, but this time she didn't.

Warm arms wrapped around her to pull her against a solid body -- a solid male body. Something about the presence was familiar to her and comforting. Even though Tori's mind was still mostly asleep, her body wasn't. A delicious, toe-curling shiver ran through her from her head right down to her feet. If this was a dream, she didn't want to wake up anytime soon.

Eyelids closed, she pushed her ass back and wriggled it against the erection pressed there as consciousness returned by degrees. Soft lips nibbled along the sensitive arch of her neck, and she knew who held her in his arms; her Wraith lover from the

other night. No one else had ever kissed her like that, with such tenderness combined with sheer sinfulness.

"I thought you'd never come back," she admitted as she turned in his arms. The bedroom was dark, but she could just make him out in the moonlight filtering through the window.

He seemed far more solid than he had before, if solid was the right word to use. He sure as hell felt solid -- more than solid if the rigid cock pressing against her was any indication -- but before she'd been able to see through him more clearly. He'd been so transparent that for most of it last time, she'd kept her eyes shut because being able to see your own arms through someone was very disconcerting. Kind of killed the mood. Dead.

"I'm glad you came --" Her words were cut off as his lips crashed down onto hers. Tori squeaked in surprise. With a sweep of his tongue, he parted her lips and deepened the kiss, ravaging the soft recesses of her mouth with an aggression that stunned her. It was almost as if he'd been as desperate to get back to her as she had been to get him here. Which didn't make sense.

Wraiths were constructs called from the witching when they were needed. They didn't have needs or wants; they didn't feel desperation or anything else for that matter. Did they? Tori's brow furrowed as she pondered the question. She didn't get very far. Her thoughts scattered as he began to strip her nightclothes from her with rough hands.

The cami-top was the first victim, pushed up past her nipples as his hungry mouth descended. Tori gasped with pleasure as his lips latched onto her nipple, drawing it into the warm cavern of his mouth and sucking hard. Her back arched as fire lanced from her nipple straight to her pussy.

He didn't leave her other nipple unattended. Licking his fingertips, he rolled the hard bud between them as he drew lazy circles around the other with his tongue to leave a wet trail. Then he blew a cool breath across it, making the flesh of her breast pimple and pucker in reaction.

"Ahhhhmmmmhhh..." was the most intelligent reaction Tori could muster as she drove her hands into his hair. Holding his head to her, she offered more of her naked breasts to his lips. She needed the touch of his mouth everywhere, over her breasts, every inch of her skin, her pussy.

A groan sounded in the back of her throat. Oh God, her pussy. Yeah, she definitely needed his mouth there. Heat blossomed in her core and radiated out through her body in waves. An ache formed between her legs, just above the entrance to her body, but he seemed quite content where he was, lavishing attention on her breasts.

Nice as that was, Tori wanted his attention -- and his mouth -- elsewhere. Should she just push him in the direction she wanted, or would that be considered crass? In the end, she didn't have to put it to the test. His lips blazed a trail of kisses down her stomach.

She was ticklish as hell. Tori sucked her breath in hard, not sure if she wanted to laugh or moan in delight. Then he was at the lace edge of her thong. The hot, wet brush of his tongue along the edge of the lace made her jump, then laugh at herself.

"Sorry, it's not you, it's me. I didn't expect -- oh my..."

Her explanation cut off as he ran his tongue down the side of the thong, following the seam where her body met her thigh all the way down. Hot breath fanned out over her panties and her pussy tightened in reaction. He hovered there for a moment before placing a gentle kiss on the damp lace. Tori all but melted under him.

God, was this guy lethal or what? Pity he wasn't real, she'd marry him in a heartbeat. Then keep him chained to the bed for a decade.

"Oh yes, please..." she begged as he planted nibbling little kisses over her lace-covered crotch. Under the fabric her clit pulsed in need. Just that little scrap of fabric was all that parted her from the warm heaven of his tongue. Licking over and over again, swirling around the tight bud until... Tori shuddered, ready to come just at the memory.

He chuckled, a soft sound of amusement, as though he sensed her thoughts.

"You can laugh!" she shot back as she reached above her head and held onto the headboard so she could arch her back and display her body for him. She wasn't a stick insect by any stretch of the imagination; her figure was best described as curvy. Ample curves that she was proud of.

"Just get on with it, please?"

Great, she was back to begging again. She didn't care though, not with this man, not if it got her what she needed. A shuddering sigh exploded from her as his fingers swept under the edging of her panties and pushed them out of the way to expose her. Like before he spread her pussy lips with gentle fingers.

And stopped.

Tori closed her eyes, imagining what he would be seeing. She was already wet for him so her pussy would be flushed with arousal, just waiting for the first gentle brush of his tongue.

He wasn't gentle. Rather than the soft brush she was expecting, or even the single gentle touch she'd gotten before, he attacked her clit with the desperation of a starving man. Using the blade of his tongue, he played with her clit, nibbling and sucking before pulling it into his mouth and suckling hard as though this were a race to see how quickly he could make her come.

Before Tori had been fairly vocal; soft moans, pleas and whimpers. This time though, there was nothing. His actions stole the breath from her lungs. Almost before she'd gotten over the shock of his mouth on her clit, he slid two fingers deep into her body. Finding her G-spot, he stroked it.

Pleasure exploded along the sensitive sheath. Tori's eyes rolled back in her head as he worked both centers of sensation, playing her body like a master musician.

"Oh God! I'm almost there." She tapped on his arm as it curled around her thigh, his hand splayed over her stomach to hold her in place whilst he ravaged her.

"No, not without you, not this time," she begged softly, not sure where this need to have him inside her when she climaxed came from. All she knew was that she

needed his arms around her and his powerful body driving that thick cock deep inside her until she came around him.

His tongue lapped over her in one last quick lick, and then he crawled back up over her. His handsome face was hard -- a feral, possessive light in his eyes. Tori shivered, a frisson of fear wrapped up in the sensual excitement that raced through her veins. It was a look that said, had he seen her on the street, he'd have dragged her down into an alley and taken her hard up against any surface he could find.

"Fuck me," she demanded as he gathered one of her legs over his hip and spread her legs. Tori's pussy pulsed in response as he ran the broad head of his cock over her soft folds then fitted himself against her.

After the last time, Tori was expecting him to surge into her in a hard thrust and follow that with a quick and dirty fuck, but he didn't. Holding her eyes with his he rotated his hips slowly, easing his cock into her in a slow corkscrew motion.

Tori's eyes crossed. A moan escaped her lips and she forgot to breathe. The sensation was exquisite. Her head dropped back to the pillows. That was it, she was in love, definitely in love. Biting her lip she opened her eyes and looked up at him. He was still watching her, his eyes locked onto her face as if he was as fascinated by her as she was by him.

"I wish you were real." Tori lifted her hand and drew gentle fingertips down his chiselled jaw. "I wish I could make sure I always got you, or there was some way I could keep you."

His expression contorted; pain, frustration and loneliness crossing the handsome features for a second. Tori blinked in surprise. That was an emotional reaction if ever she saw one. It was over almost before she realised what she was looking at, and he blanked his expression, giving her a sad smile.

He rolled his hips, pulling out of her only to slide back into her in a long and sinfully sexy glide. At the end of each glide, he gave a small flick that ground his hips against her and set her clit to pulsing.

He did it again. Pleasure radiated out from the coil of tension between her legs as he filled her over and over, her body stretching around him, until she was almost mindless with need.

"Oh God... yes. Do that more," she demanded. "I'm gonna come..."

He wrapped his arms around her and held her tightly against his hard body. "Then come." His growl by her ear had Tori flinching in surprise but the tension in her body wouldn't be denied.

"I want to feel you come all over my cock."

His unexpected words were the final straw, and with a cry, Tori shattered in ecstasy.

Chapter Five

He'd spoken -- said actual words -- meant to say actual words rather than just lose control at the crux point. Jacob knew it was just a matter of time so he was determined to make it count. His own release was secondary to making sure Tori knew about him, about the Wraiths, about it all.

His cock jerked and pulsed as her body clenched around him. Jacob gritted his teeth.

"Not a Wraith, Tori..." he ground out, a gasp leaving him as his balls tightened. He couldn't hold on much longer, and as soon as he came they'd whisk him back through the veil. "Jacob... my name is Jacob... but they call me Isskal. Tori, you gotta help me."

Her sweet body clenched around his in a death grip, milking his cock for all it was worth, and Jacob couldn't hold on any longer. With a mingled roar of triumph, pleasure and frustration, his climax washed over him in a tidal wave of sensation. His body stiffened over hers as, inside her tight channel, his cock pulsed and bathed the neck of her womb with his seed.

That second, in that heartbeat, Jacob wanted to be human, wanted to be mortal, so it would have a chance to take root. An image of Tori heavily pregnant, her belly swollen with his child, filled his mind. Longing hit him and left him gasping.

He'd never known what he wanted before.

He'd just drifted along, treating women like rubbish until giving the wrong woman a love charm instead of the luck charm she'd wanted had gotten him cursed. Now, though, he knew. He wanted Tori. He wanted a family, and not just because it would release him from his curse.

"Love you..." he said as the veil wrapped around him and dragged him away from the woman he realised now owned his heart.

* * *

The shudders of pleasure had barely finished and the afterglow of good sex hadn't even started as he began to fade out.

"What... no. Wait, come back!" Tori demanded, trying to hold onto him, but her arms closed on empty air. "Sonofabitch! Isn't that just like a guy? Cut and run as soon as it's over..." Tori lay back and ran a shaking hand through her hair. Then it hit her.

He'd spoken. Wraiths didn't speak. Ever.

At least, she'd never heard of one speaking and something like that would go around the Fae community like wildfire. He'd said he wasn't a Wraith though. He'd asked her to help him.

"Jacob." She tried the name on for size. It felt right, rolling off her tongue. It suited him far more than the other name he'd given... Isskal. Tori sat bolt upright in bed. "Of course!"

She flung the covers off and scrambled out of bed. Naked as the day she was born, she raced across the room and grabbed the scroll off the altar. Even though she knew the words by heart she scanned them again with wide eyes. "I didn't say Isskath the first time, I said Isskal... I *called* him by name."

You gotta help me...

Quite what she was supposed to be helping him with she didn't know, but whatever it was, it was bad. She'd never seen so much emotion in a guy's eyes as she had in Jacob's. A slow smile spread over Tori's face. She'd called him once so she could do it again, and this time, she would make sure it was for keeps.

* * *

"I knew it, I just *knew* it!" Miknris declared in triumph as Jacob was hauled into the hall of Justice by two burly guards. On his short journey from the summoning chambers, he'd been bounced off enough walls to black his eye and split his lip. Under his clothes other bruises and swellings were beginning to form.

Jacob didn't blame them. They were born Wraiths so all their lives they'd been fed horror stories of what would happen if the "normals" found out the truth. Faced with the man who'd just let the cat out of the bag, he doubted it would have gone any other way.

"You just couldn't keep your dick in your pants, could you, Isskal? I *forbade* you to have anything to do with the mortal woman. For hell's sake, you're on the domestic register now. You can't jump into bed with any mortal you feel like..."

They didn't know. They didn't know he'd spoken. The sense of relief that hit Jacob was staggering to say the least. He thought he was being dragged in here to face a fate worse than death for telling Tori his name.

Shrugging off the guards' hold, Jacob stood tall and fixed Miknris with a steely glare. He might be little better than a slave now, but he hadn't always been. They'd told him his power had disappeared when he'd died and become a Wraith.

They'd lied.

The last few hours with Tori and banishing the shade had told him that, so there was no fear in his eyes as he locked gazes with the prune-faced old crone in front of him.

"No?" Jacob laughed. "How do you plan on stopping me? Because the way I feel about Tori, you're going to need something pretty damn impressive up your sleeve, old woman."

Miknris' smile was soft, but it sent a shiver of fear through Jacob. He was missing something. Miknris was too calm, way too calm. What wasn't he seeing?

"Oh, how sweet. He even knows her name, not just her bra size. Isskal, I don't need anything impressive to stop you. I really didn't want to do this... Boys, hold him, please."

Jacob had been a sorcerer, not a fighter, so when the guards lunged for him at Miknris' command it took them less than a minute to quell his rebellion. Half choked by a brutal headlock, all Jacob could do was glare at Miknris as she approached.

"You can let him talk. Actually, breathing would be a good start. I want him conscious for this," Miknris snapped at the guard who held Jacob.

The brutal pressure on his throat eased up a little, and Jacob dragged gulps of air into his burning lungs as Miknris carried on. "You see, my handsome young friend, all I need to do to stop you is be able to undo a simple buckle. Nothing impressive at all, is it?"

Jacob felt the blood drain out of his face. If she removed his collar, his essence would be absorbed by the witching, and with the amount of magic he'd wielded when he was alive, it would be fast, like falling into a pool full of piranhas.

"You can't do that. That... that's murder."

"Oh, I can, Isskal, and given your complete lack of ability to abide by our rules, I would be neglecting my oath to keep our people safe if I didn't."

She reached for his collar. Jacob struggled, planting his feet and straining against the guards' hold. It was enough to hold his neck out of her reach.

"What about my redemption? All I need is for Tori to say she loves me and I'm gone, free, sayonara."

This time it was Miknris who laughed. "Really? So why has she already called Denaris? Sorry, handsome, you just weren't..." Miknris' eyes wandered down Jacob's body, a look in them which made the sorcerer feel sick. "...*stud* enough for her."

"You're lying."

Tori wouldn't do that to him, would she? And with Denaris? Of all the Wraiths on the sex circuit, Denaris was the only one Jacob worried about with Tori. He had the face of a dark angel, and Jacob had seen the guy raise a woman's blood pressure with just a crook of his finger.

"*Thnall terantis Isskal.*"

The words were just on the edge of hearing. So faint that Jacob wasn't sure whether he was actually hearing it, or whether it was just wishful thinking.

"Am I?" Miknris shrugged. "Believe what you like, makes no difference to me."

"Heran juris gerath..." The ghostly words reverberated in his head. Jacob shook his head to try and clear his ears. They must have hit him harder than he realised because he could swear he was hearing a summoning ritual.

"Ceris teranis anak."

Elation filled Jacob as he recognised the voice. It was distorted and warbled by the veil but unmistakeable. Tori had figured it out and was performing a summoning ritual.

Miknris frowned. "What is it?"

Jacob fought to hide his grin. "Oh, nothing. So, let me guess... no one in my situation has ever won their freedom, have they?"

"Heran Koras go-gothian totalis."

Miknris beamed with malevolent pride. "Not in all my eight hundred years as controller. You've all suffered for your crimes or have passed into the witching."

I'll bet, Jacob thought snidely, with just a little help on the old collar there.

"Why?"

"Aranath gosita terabi!"

Jacob pursed his lips and blew her a kiss as the witching wrapped around him. Her shriek of fury was the last thing he heard as he was pulled back through the veil into the mortal world.

* * *

The last word of the incantation echoed around the room and died away. Tori nibbled her lip as she waited in expectation. Everything was perfect, if a little hastily put together, but it should work. She'd gotten the incantation right for sure this time. Hell, she'd even run it through an online Fae translator to make sure she was getting the words right. She just hoped like hell the program was up to scratch. Using pidgin Fae would be bad when so much hinged on this.

She felt the pressure build up in the center of the room, a warning that something magical was about to happen. It was the usual indicator that a Wraith was about to

arrive. It felt like the feeling when she needed to equalise her ears during take-off on a plane.

Tori scrambled to her feet and moved forwards, her eyes darting about the room as she tried to guess where Jacob would appear. In her hand she had a pendant, another one of her grandmother's, but one she'd never had a use for before now. It was a binding pendant. Tori had never needed to use such heavy duty magic, nor found anyone she wanted to bind to her before. Now she did, not to bind him to her, but to bind Jacob into the mortal realm.

The magic popped behind her and Tori whirled on her heel. A tall man stood behind her blinking and looking a little unsteady on his feet. Tori recognised him in a heartbeat; she'd know that tall, lean build anywhere. "Jacob!" She flung herself at him with all the exuberance of a toddler and threw the pendant around his neck. He grabbed at it -- and her -- like it was a lifeline.

"Tori, thank God. You figured it out." His voice was low and melodic, a sexy timbre in it that shot a thrill straight through her body. Placing a finger under her chin, he tipped her head up so he could look into her eyes. "Thank you, you just saved my life."

He smiled, the expression creasing the corners of his eyes endearingly, and looked down at the pendant. "Binding charm... resourceful. Very resourceful."

Pressure started to build in the room again but not once, twice and then three times. Three different areas surrounding them. Jacob's eyes turned serious.

"They're coming. I don't have much time, Tori. I need more, babe. This isn't going to stop them when they come for me." He lifted the pendant and let it drop against his broad chest. "I broke all the rules coming to you twice..."

Tori cut him off with a quick gesture. She might not have known him long and most of that she'd thought he was a mindless magical creation... No, that wasn't entirely correct. Somehow, deep inside, she'd known from the beginning there was something special about him.

"Just tell me what I need to do. I'll do it."

His eyes flicked over her shoulders. The other Wraiths were already forming and even half-formed Tori could tell these weren't the domestic Wraiths she was used to. These looked more like she imagined soldiers to look...

Jacob looked uncomfortable for a second, almost unsure of himself. "Well... oh Christ, I can't believe I'm actually asking this."

"Asking what?" Tori almost shrieked, her eyes on the men forming around them. She could see their faces now and although she knew Wraiths weren't supposed to harm mortals, "supposed to" and what they actually did were two different things. "Come on, spit it out. They're almost here!"

"I need you to say... that you love me."

Tori looked up at him in surprise. "What? That's it?" she asked. Then, she couldn't help it, she started to laugh. "You're kidding me?"

Frustration chased over Jacob's face. "That's it? That's *it*? I'm glad you think this is so funny. It's not like it's your ass on the line."

Tori made an attempt to plaster a serious expression on her face.

"Oh yeah, that's way better. Come here." Jacob pulled her into his arms and kissed her deeply. It was a kiss of possession and promise, a question and a goodbye all in one. "I love you. Have since the moment you called me with that hacked domestic summons."

He leaned his forehead against hers and let out a deep sigh, as though steeling himself for what was to come. "Take care of yourself, Tori --"

Tori had heard enough. Grabbing his jaw in one small hand, she made him look into her eyes. "Where do you think you're going, mister? I summoned you, if I recall right, and until I'm done with you, you aren't going anywhere. In fact, I'll probably insist you marry me at some point. But only after... oh, about a month in bed?"

He smiled slowly, an unsure look in his eyes. "Does that mean..."

Tori drew him down for a kiss. She hadn't realised it, but her search for Mr. Right had been futile because she'd been looking in the wrong place. "I love you, you idiot."

Jacob's face was a picture. A masterpiece of surprise and relief that almost started Tori chuckling again as she pulled away from his lips. "You what?" he asked, shaking his head as though he couldn't believe his ears.

"I. Love. You. Simple enough for you? Or do I need to break it down even more?"

The Wraiths appearing around the couple were ignored for a moment as they stared into each other's eyes. Slowly a smile spread over Jacob's face. "Well, I'm a little hard of hearing, you know. It's this woman I met. Has me at her beck and call, you know, wearing me out. You'd better say that again, just so these good gentlemen can hear it."

Tori drew closer to Jacob as she looked around at the forbidding faces of the Wraiths surrounding them. Until today she'd never seen Wraiths so solid. They looked just like normal people -- thugs, yeah, but human thugs.

"I love him. I love you, Jacob." An uneasy laugh escaped her lips. It all seemed crazy, all so quick, but deep down in her heart she knew it was right.

"You hear that, lads? She loves me. Now fuck off."

They didn't speak, just looked from Jacob to Tori and back again. The threat of violence hung in the air like heavy incense as the Wraiths considered them. Tori held her breath. Her fingers curled into Jacob's shirt as she waited for someone to move. Her heart thudded in her chest so loud it was all she could hear as the world shrank to this small room and the standoff within.

Then the Wraith at the front nodded, his green eyes amused as he looked at Jacob. Tori could swear he was laughing, something that was borne out when Jacob started to chuckle. The tension in the room disappeared as though it had never been as the green-eyed Wraith bowed, and in the blink of an eye they were gone. Tori exhaled on a shudder as relief hit her.

"Okay, what am I missing?" she asked, not at all sure what had just happened.

Jacob's grin was still on his lips as he turned her to face him and dipped his head down to kiss her. "Let's just say I gave him a message he's very much looking forward to delivering. Now, can we get back to the sex part?"

Tori blinked, struggling to follow the abrupt topic change. Jacob's eyebrow crawled up toward his hairline. "This month in bed I seem to recall you promising me?"

Tori's smile was pure wickedness as she pulled his lips down to hers again. "Oh, yes... oh, *hell* yes. I do hope you've got enough stamina because, baby, I'm gonna put you through your paces and then some."

"Oh, I've got all the stamina you want, sweetheart. Do your worst..."

Mina Carter

Usually I hate talking about myself. In any conversation I'm always trying to find out about the other person. People are fascinating to me, and yeah, I'm a people watcher ;) Ok, me. About me... I'm short, dark-haired and British. The rest is kind of subject to change without notice. I'm quite possibly nutty (insane), and I'm a bit of a control freak when it comes to organisation. Although this doesn't mean I can keep a room tidy, it does mean I know just about where everything is in it!!

I love to write, always have. I write primarily romance, which can span over paranormal, urban fantasy, contemporary and even sci-fi, but always it's about a romance. :D So whether it's brooding bad-boy vamps or handsome starship captains, you'll always find a healthy dose of the alpha male in my stories and the women strong enough to tame them ;)

When I'm not writing, I'm addicted to Photoshop and online RPG's. Usually you'll find me combining all three of my loves (writing, images and RPG's) in a simming group someplace. I virtually live online so the chances of catching me lurking around a forum or two are good as well.

Mina's website is <http://mina-carter.com>.