



WICKED³:

Wicked Sexy

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Something magic this way comes...

*Wicked*³, Book 1

Callie has always known the Abbotts were different. Witches, though they call themselves “Magians”. They are her second family. Harrison Abbott has been her best friend since they were children. Tucker Abbott, her life-long crush. And their brother, Tyghe? A magical pain in her backside.

When the Abbotts need her human perspective to solve a mystery, she doesn’t hesitate. Especially since it means getting everything she ever wanted. A chance to be one of them, to have magic, even if it’s only temporary.

Someone is attacking young women at Triune, a ritual that helps Magians find their perfect threesome—the match that will complete their magic and their hearts. Callie expected to be dazzled by her first glimpse into the Magian world, but the bone-melting desire between her and the Abbott brothers isn’t part of the plan.

Nor is the decades-old secret that makes her the target of a killer...

Warning: Explicit sex, magical dresses, mind-reading rooms and mind-boggling threesomes.

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Wicked Sexy

R.G. Alexander

Dedication

For Cookie—love is the reason. To my divas and Smutketeers, especially Eden Bradley, for all your encouragement and inspiration. And finally, Beth, a great editor and an irreplaceable friend.

Chapter One

“You think your love life is bad? Try mine. You only need one Mr. Right. I’m expected to find *two*.”

Callie Turner looked up from the dainty cucumber sandwiches the housekeeper, Jenner, always made especially for her when she visited, and promptly choked. Harrison Abbott patted her back, her expression concerned. “You okay, Cal?”

“Two?” She looked at her pouting friend, wondering why she was surprised. Harrison never did anything the normal way. No, the unusual blueblood was more than just rebellious.

She was a witch.

“No Magian has every complained about *that* particular tradition. Leave it to our sweet, agreeable Harrison.” The four-foot-eight, bird-like Jenner rushed over to Callie with a glass of water in her hand.

Harrison blew out a huffy breath. “I just don’t see why we can’t date like ordinary people. Go see a movie or a baseball game. See if we like each other before we bind our magic together for all time. But no. Not us. We have to go to Triune by the time we’re twenty-six. *Have to*, as in, no options. What if I don’t want two men following me around, telling me what to do? What if I want to be—?”

“Like me?” Jenner shook her head with a sigh. “I’m not an ordinary Magian, Harrison. You know that. If I remember correctly, your mother was just as reluctant as you are now. But Moira Abbott has lived in connubial bliss with her Triune match for decades, and with three troublemaking children no less. It’s the way things are done.”

Triune? Didn’t that mean three in one? So every Magian, every female witch *had* to have two husbands? But Harrison’s mother—Callie swallowed. “Are you two telling me that *Uncle* Jackson is actually...?”

Harrison looked over Callie’s shoulder guiltily. “Mom didn’t think it was something you’d understand when we first met you. You were too young. After a while we didn’t know *how* to tell you the truth. Especially since your foster parents were so—”

Jenner made a slashing motion with her hand across her neck, and Harrison stopped midsentence.

Callie set down her sandwich. “Well, damn.”

All this time and she’d never caught on. In a way, it actually made sense. Uncle Jackson *was* always extremely affectionate with Harrison’s mother, Moira. But her husband, Douglas never seemed to mind. Callie thought they were just a touchy-feely family.

Apparently more than she realized.

Her hurt over being kept in the dark for so many years was overridden by fascination. And envy. *Two* men to satisfy her every need? Sign her up. Unfortunately she was just an ordinary human. And humans had rules. She should know...she was a cop. Well, almost. Another month to go. But she *had* always known how to spot when something was up, especially with her childhood friend.

Harrison wasn't just put out about this particular tradition. She had never been very accepting of her lot in life. "One of the most powerful Magians in generations." How many times had Callie heard Moira and the other members of the Abbott family say it? All it meant to Harrison was that she could never have any fun. Could never be normal. She had to be the best. It also meant all her Magian peers either wanted to be her friend, to be close to her magical spotlight, or find a way to trip her up. It drove Harrison crazy.

Callie wanted to feel sorry for her, but it was hard. She'd been coming to this sprawling Dorchester home since an eleven-year-old Harrison had found her huddled beneath a slide at the playground. It had been Callie's twelfth birthday, and no one had remembered. She'd come to the park, determined to enjoy the day, and the sky had opened, ruining everything. The beautiful, if sober young stranger had held out her hand, and Callie had known as she took it that she had made a true friend.

When Harrison brought her back to her large, rambling house, the Abbott family had been so warm and welcoming. Moira said she'd sensed a kindred spirit in Callie, and any friend of Harrison's was a friend of theirs. They had never hidden their abilities, and Callie had never feared them or the world they'd shown her glimpses of. On the contrary, she'd always wished she could be a part of it.

This place became a second home to her. In it she had known the kind of love and acceptance she used to wish for from her foster family. In it she could imagine she was truly was one of them. Truly was an Abbott. A Magian.

She'd never understood why Harrison wanted to be normal.

When the Abbotts went to the annual skyclad festival in Salem to pay homage to the innocent humans who had died there, Harrison had thrown a tantrum, railing against the mandatory nudity. Callie, on the other hand, stayed holed up in her bedroom at home, dreaming she could join them.

When the Abbotts threw a coming out ball to introduce their very special daughter to the Magian community, Callie had watched from Harrison's charmed mirror with Jenner as the young debutant frowned, grudgingly showing off her abilities to an approving crowd.

The grass was always greener, or so Jenner had told her many times. But Callie believed it was an empty sentiment. Harrison didn't know what it was like to be an average human, to deal with the kinds of things she'd had to. Callie was positive she wouldn't like it.

But this wasn't just another rebellion. Harrison didn't look put out so much as nervous. Wired. "So why now? Why, after all this time, have you decided to share this bit of Magian trivia with me? Do your parents know you're telling me?"

Jenner and Harrison shared a speaking glance. “No.” Harrison shook her head. “They’re celebrating their anniversary on a whirlwind European vacation. According to their schedule they should be in Paris. It’s been so long since Mom’s been able to be convinced into taking a vacation from the jewelry store, and we knew she’d come back right away if we told her. I—we didn’t want to worry them.”

Callie leaned back in her chair and crossed her arms. “Worry them? Uh huh, I knew it. Okay, what’s going on here, Harry? Another spell in a fit of anger? Is the postman barking at dogs again? Or did you finally lay a magical whammy on that weird Goth guy from the grocery store who always follows you around?”

“If only.” Harrison stood, pacing around the table in agitation. “Besides, I haven’t done anything that interesting in years. This isn’t about me. Not directly. I need your Spidey sense, Cal. I need you to help me find out who is attacking witches.”

“Attacking? Someone’s been attacking witches? Have you called the police?” Callie pushed her chair back and reached for her cell phone, but Harrison stopped her.

“We can’t, sweetheart.” Jenner shrugged apologetically. “It’s another Magian. There is nothing your police can do.”

“Well, what about *your* police? The Magian law enforcement? I know you have your own code, right?”

Harrison nodded. “The Rede, yes. And the Magian enforcers have done a cursory investigation, but whoever this guy is, he’s flying low under the radar. None of the women had any traces of residual magic on them when they were found. No scrying spell or enchanted object can be found that will even show the victim’s final moments before the attack, and none of them can remember a thing about the man, which should be suspicion enough to delay the next ritual. Especially since there is only one thing we know linking the women.” At Callie’s questioning look, Harrison shrugged. “They had all been participating in the joining ritual this month. Like Jenner said, it’s called Triune. A few times each year, single Magian’s go to Triune to seek out their sexually and magically compatible mates. The same ritual I’m supposed to be a part of in one week’s time.”

Callie ran a hand through her hair. “Harrison, you know I would never be allowed to attend a Magian ritual. They’d sense me as an outsider right away. I’ll help anyway I can, but I’m not sure what it is that you want me to do.”

Jenner patted her shoulder, drawing her attention away from her agitated friend. “You know those makeover shows I love to watch? Our little wonder witch has found a way around your, um, handicap.”

“Gee, thanks. I’m not insulted by that comment at all.” Callie rolled her eyes, but adrenaline filled her at Jenner’s implication. She turned back to Harrison. “Harry? Is she right? Can you make me a witch?”

A dry, male voice immediately dampened her excitement. “Magian, little girl, Magian. And Harrison can’t make you what you aren’t, she’s not *that* good. But, though I hate to admit it, her glamour *is* fairly impressive.”

Tyghe.

Damn. She’d hoped he was out of town.

Tyghe was one of Harrison’s older brothers, and the only dark cloud over her time with the Abbotts. She got along fine with the rest of her friend’s brothers, Tucker and Lorie. Especially Tucker. The eldest brother was perfect in Callie’s eyes. Tall, dark, handsome and above all, kind. He’d always been patient with her. Always made her feel welcome. When he’d shown an interest in Magian law, her own aspirations to be a police officer seemed to link them somehow. Yet another reason for her to admire him, to fuel the fire of her most secret fantasies. She’d had a crush on him for as long as she could remember.

But not Tyghe.

The mahogany-haired scoundrel had teased her unmercifully all through her teen years. Made her feel somehow lacking because she wasn’t like them. Wasn’t Magian. And his piercing grey eyes had always noticed everything. Even the things she didn’t want anyone to see, like the way she reacted to his older brother.

Tyghe smiled as though he knew she was cursing his arrival. “I don’t know if you can do it, Harry.” He tilted his head, studying Callie in her comfortable sweats and hooded sweatshirt. “Do you really think you can turn this ordinary human into a wicked witch?”

Harrison glared at her brother in warning. “Shut up, Tyghe. You’re not helping.”

Tyghe placed a hand to his chest, drawing Callie’s unwilling gaze to his lean, muscled physique. Her mouth went dry. Damn Abbott men. Did they all have to be so stunning? How could she get a good hate on for someone she wanted to lick?

His sigh drew everyone’s attention. “My dear, sweet sister. That’s exactly what I came here to do. Help. Show a little gratitude.”

“He knows?” Callie crossed her arms defensively. She didn’t like the way Tyghe was looking at her.

“I had no other choice.” Harrison wrinkled her nose. “Tucker was already gone on his annual hike into the wilderness before the first attack. Besides, he definitely wouldn’t approve of us trying to catch this guy on our own. And Lorie...well, you know Lorie.”

She did. Lorie was a good guy when he was around, but he wasn’t the most dependable member of the Abbott family. The dreamer, his mother often called him. Since they were children, he’d rather find some remote corner in a dusty Magian library and read than be a part of any of their adventures.

Tyghe came closer. “I know that for once Harrison is right. Each one of the attacks, from what I’ve been hearing, has gotten successively worse. And the lack of evidence makes them highly suspicious. Even those of us who *don’t* have a Nancy Drew complex,” he looked pointedly at Callie, “still know something

is wrong. We can't take a chance that my sister could be the psycho's next target. I'm just not sure she's thought her plan through. Using a human as bait is all well and good, but getting the bait inside is only half the battle. You wouldn't be able to participate. Not unless the men you were with were in on it."

Men? Bait? "Okay, time out. Is Tyghe right, Harry? You want me to go in undercover and flush this guy out?"

Jenner glared at Tyghe before gripping Callie's elbow comfortingly. "He's never been known for his subtlety, but he has a point. We have no intention of using you as bait, dear. We, Harrison and I, both trust your instincts. You may see something our kind has missed. But you *would* be in danger. Just of another sort. We can get you inside, but with the magic Harrison will cloak you with, you'll also have to deal with potential suitors as you search for clues."

"And they will love her. Those big, innocent eyes? That naïve sensuality? The sharks would start circling in no time. And her cover would be blown." Callie's chin jerked sharply at the compliment. At least, she thought it was a compliment. From Tyghe, she could never be sure.

"I wasn't planning on leaving my best friend alone in that place," Harrison grumbled. "Jenner and I would be there with her at all times. All she'd have to do is use that intuition of hers—an intuition not even Tucker can match by the way, and I would zap the son of a bitch until he squealed."

Callie felt her lips twitch. She'd seen Harrison angry, seen the electricity she could generate when she gathered her power close. She knew her friend would protect her. Maybe she'd get in a few good punches herself. What kind of creep went around terrorizing young females? Witches or not, those women had no doubt been at their most vulnerable, searching for love. The last thing one of them would expect was an attack by another Magian at such a sacred event. "I'm in."

"So am I. That's what I'm trying to say. I can attach myself to Callie as a potential suitor, even with the distant cousin story you've decided to run with. I'll turn away any thirds I find unsuitable, which will be all of them, and keep an eye on my troublemaking sister at the same time."

Callie and Harrison made sounds of denial, but Tyghe wasn't backing down. "Ask Jenner. This is the only way your plan will work. Either I join you for her preparations and the Triune, or I will call in the rest of the family. Your choice."

Jenner tilted her head, a small sparrow studying Tyghe with a strange, knowing expression. "He's right, girls. We need a man to make this work."

Tyghe snickered. "Words to live by."

"Don't get cocky, boy. I can still take you over my knee."

Callie looked Jenner up and down, doubting the tiny woman could make good on her threat, but Tyghe looked duly chastised.

Harrison threw her arms in the air. “Fine. You’re in. But don’t interfere with our investigation. You aren’t exactly known for being discreet. As soon as I glamour Callie, we have to start preparing her, getting the word out that there’s a new Magian in town. And that she’ll be coming to this quarter’s Triune.”

What had she gotten herself into? Callie sat on Harrison’s luxurious bed in nothing but a small towel, watching the two women muttering to each other as they gathered their supplies. This was what she’d always wanted. Sort of. She’d wanted to be an Abbott, truly to be a Magian born. Harrison’s temporary fix would have to do.

If it worked, she could finally see the people and places Harrison would tell her about late into the night during those lucky occasions when her foster mother allowed her to sleep over. And those stories Jenner wove at the kitchen table before anyone else was awake. Stories about stormy battles and the origins of the Magians. Tales that took her away from her awkward, unhappy life just long enough to give her hope for something more. Something magical.

Please let this work.

Callie wasn’t afraid of the mysterious Magian they were searching for. They’d given her so much, it was nice to be needed by them for once. And she was looking forward to using the skills she’d been learning at the police academy. Harrison was right, other than Uncle Jackson being her friend’s second father, Callie had an uncanny knack for finding out the truth. It had always been that way. Call it instinct or luck—most of the time it was a double-edged sword. From discovering her foster family believed her a nuisance they’d only kept around for the money, to finding out her math teacher was engaging in extra-curricular activities with the football coach, she’d just always...known. Like a tickle up her spine. And she was always proven right.

The only thing she wasn’t looking forward to was being Tyghe’s pretend love interest for the next week. She could hardly imagine it. Okay, that was a lie. She didn’t *want* to imagine it, but since the idea had been presented it was practically all she could think about.

He was a jerk, but he was a sexy jerk. Always had been. And he knew it too, the arrogant ass. Harrison was always telling her one wild story or another, usually revolving around Tyghe and his kinky predilections. He’d already been reprimanded twice by the Magian law for using his magic in public, and, according to his sister, sex had usually been involved.

Sex with Tyghe in public. She could never be so bold, so brazen. Her skin heated as she closed her eyes, instantly envisioning the stormy-eyed Magian pressing her against a wall and taking her as a crowd of people looked on. He wanted them to look, to know how crazy she made him. Wanted them to know she was his.

“Don’t be nervous, Cal. I promise I know what I’m doing.”

Callie's eyes popped open and she blushed, shrugging. "I know you do, Harry. I trust you not to turn me into a hamster...again."

"Never gonna let me forget that are you?"

"Not a chance."

Jenner smiled, coming to stand on the other side of the bed. "The spirits blessed the two of you when they brought you to each other. It was fate. The bonds of friendship are more powerful than any magic you could name." She sniffled, and the two younger women rolled their eyes, pretending they weren't moved by their gentle companion's words. "I just think it's wonderful that you've agreed to do this, Calliope. That it's finally happening. I only wish it wasn't under these circumstances, but I know you're old enough to take care of yourself."

"What do you mean finally hap—?"

"Please—" Callie reached out to shake Jenner's arm playfully, interrupting Harrison's startled question, "—don't call me that. I'll never understand why the woman who brought me to the home had apparently been so adamant about my name. Calliope? That's just adding insult to injury. 'Here, we don't want you, but we want to give you a name to ensure you get picked on by the other children.'" She sighed dramatically, knowing Harrison would smile.

"Calliope was the muse of epic poetry. The hero's odyssey. It's a lovely name." Jenner sounded miffed on behalf of the monstrosity of a name.

Harrison chuckled at Jenner, but Callie heard an unusual note in her voice. "Yes, well, you can't be trusted. You thought *all* our names were wonderful. I don't believe a woman should be allowed to name her children until she's recovered from childbirth. Especially not *my* mother."

Jenner harrumphed before resting her hand on Callie's shoulder. "She knew exactly what she was doing. She named you after a wonderful young Magian. A man who died before his time, and one of her closest childhood friends. And I believe I've kept enough of your secrets, Harrison *Jennera* Abbott, for you to trust me with your life. It should be easy. I did help bring you into it." She pursed her lips. "Now it's time. We should do this soon so she has a chance to recuperate before tomorrow's salon and fitting appointments."

"Salon? Fitting?" Callie's voice squeaked. The idea of that was far more terrifying than a crazy glamour spell. Enough to distract her from the palpable tension in the air, as well as the origins of Harrison's name.

Harrison smirked. "Uh huh. Did I forget to mention that? It's part of the preparation. What every Magian female about to participate at Triune does. That means the four victims will have gone to the same places we're going, gossiped with the same old biddies, gotten fitted for the, ah, appropriate attire."

"Oh lord. Can I change my mind?" Callie blinked in surprise when her friend gripped her chin between her long, elegant fingers.

Harrison's face was somber, worried. "Yes, Cal. But if you're going to, you need to do it now. Once we start you'll be on everybody's radar. The Magian world will sense your presence, sense your magic, real or not. Not only that, this spell is glamour mixed with a kind of soul calling that Jenner has been teaching me for the last few years. Every being has a little magic inside them—it's just a matter of pulling it out and intertwining the truth with the illusion."

Callie smiled. "Sounds complicated. Don't think you can pull it off, Harry? Don't think you can turn me into a real, live witch?"

Harrison smiled, recognizing the challenge for the answer it was. "Oh I can do it, all right. With Jenner's guidance, I'm fairly certain it will be a perfect success. I'm just not sure what a Cal with magic will be like. You're already impossible now."

"Bring it on, Glenda."

"Zip it, or I'll slip and turn you into a pair of Tyghe's gym socks."

"Consider it zipped." Callie let Jenner lay her down on the silken, ruby comforter, watching Harrison set a bag of herbs, a crystal and some kind of liquid with paint brush beside it on the bed.

This must be a big spell. Harrison had told her once that, though magic was present in every Magian, there were some spells that needed a little extra encouragement. A potion, a ritual, a chant to bring the energy to the surface—to focus the power.

She could only imagine.

Jenner began to mutter rhythmically under her breath, and Callie lowered her lids until she could watch them both through her lashes. She tensed a little as Harrison slid the towel down to her hips, but these women knew her as well as they knew themselves. She breathed out, relaxing against the soft mattress.

Harrison set the small quartz below her belly button, cupping her hands over it and closing eyes that were a darker grey than Tyghe's, but just as stormy.

Callie gasped and felt the tiny hairs on her arms rise as an electric blue light began to flicker between Harrison's fingers. It was riveting. Hypnotic, the way the arcing light circled her hand like a living thing, growing before her eyes until it was all she could see.

She felt her stomach warm, a pulsing sensation against her flesh where the crystal was resting. When she glanced down she realized it was glowing, mimicking Harrison's energy. It felt as though liquid heat was being absorbed into her skin, deep inside her.

Jenner's chant grew louder, and Callie could see her lit with a sunshine yellow energy, joyous, powerful—so big for her dainty frame. She closed her eyes, but she could still see them both as Harrison reached for the small paintbrush, dipping it in the soothingly scented oil and painting it onto Callie's skin. Her neck. Behind her ears. Around her nipples.

It was a sensual feeling. The wet bristles scraping, feather light against her skin. Like a man's stubble. Once more the image of Tyghe pressing her against an outside wall sprang to mind. Only this time, Callie wasn't embarrassed. This time she took him with as much ferocity and need as he was taking her. She didn't care about the crowd. Didn't care about losing control. She reveled in it. Wanted it. Wanted to claim him.

Callie was so lost in the fantasy that the flash of blue-green energy took her by surprise, an electric shock whipping through her system and arching her off the bed.

Something was inside her, reacting to Harrison and Jenner's energy, reaching for it. Her spine was buzzing, bones vibrating almost painfully. Had something gone wrong? Was it working?

As if from far away she could hear Harrison's gasp and Jenner's serene response. "There now. You did a good job, dear."

"I can't believe it. All this time."

Callie tried to talk. *What can't you believe, Harrison? All this time what?* But she felt separated from her body, floating above the bed.

Jenner spoke once more. "I think it might be best to keep this to ourselves for a spell. Your family may not react well. Especially your brothers."

"My broth—oh hell, don't tell me, Jenner. I don't think I want to know. We'll keep quiet. For now. But you and I need to have a private chat. Soon. And Callie—"

"Will be fine. Let's let her rest now, shall we?"

Deserves to know what? Am I dying? It feels a little like I'm dying. Callie was frantically trying to regain control of her body, her vocal chords, but the blue-green energy surrounded her. It began to combine with a lovely violet that calmed her, soothed her. She should sleep. She needed to sleep. Needed to dream.

At least she wasn't a hamster this time.

Chapter Two

“So then he said, ‘Charity, would you rather *the dragon* sleep in the bed?’”

Callie chuckled along with the others at the hairdresser’s punch line. Her laughter was more hysterical relief than reaction to the woman’s tale of woe at her Magian mates and their unusual pets.

She was doing it. Fooling them. No one had questioned the story Harrison had devised, that Callie was a distant cousin from an obscure branch of the Abbott family. Harrison, being the powerful, benevolent wunderkind that she was, had decided to take her under her wing, and introduce her to the eligible Magian males of Boston. Yes, the women in the chairs beside her were eyeing her up and down as potential competition, but none of them knew she wasn’t a witch. Wasn’t magical.

She wasn’t even sure anymore. When she’d wakened yesterday, she’d felt nauseous, disoriented. Different. Jenner had fed her a light broth and cooed over her, taking care of her as she always had. She’d told Callie that she would have to take it slow, until they discovered what kind of power the spell had drawn out of her. Harrison had done her best to make it innocuous, she’d said, something she couldn’t accidentally injure herself with. Only time would tell.

Both of the women had been extremely satisfied, though Harrison seemed less and less sure of their plan as the hours passed. But even she agreed, her senses were telling her Callie was Magian. Like them. Though they knew differently, it was still strong enough that it would fool everyone who mattered. Including, Callie hoped, the one they were searching for.

There was something on the edge of her memory, something she’d wanted to ask her about what happened during the spell, but for the life of her Callie couldn’t remember what it was.

Now she was sitting in an exquisitely beautiful day spa, getting her hair done by a Magian stylist. The only problem was, this place shouldn’t exist. Yesterday when she’d passed this building it had been abandoned, boarded up. Jenner had told her the Magian world worked a little differently than hers. That, in order for them to thrive and co-exist with humans, they’d had to make a few minor dimensional adjustments.

This didn’t seem minor. She didn’t think anything with the word dimensional in it could be. To Callie it was all so...so...wonderful. Right out of a dream or a movie. A large spa filled with gold and marble, bustling with women in various stages of undress, some in facial masks, some in wraps that glistened with magical light. Her fellow human beings were walking and driving by, none of them knowing the wonders

that were a sprinkling of fairy dust away. But this was no fairytale. It was real. She was here. And Charity, the chatty hairdresser, was asking her a question. "What?"

Charity wrinkled her nose as she studied Callie's long, dirty-blonde hair. "I was just wondering where you'd had your hair done before today. Did your family go to those human chop shops? I know some Magians aspire to fit in, but there are standards that no one should ever have to drop below." She shook her head sadly. "These ends are just abysmal, and you need a condition spell in the worst way."

Callie blushed, ducking her chin in embarrassment. Harrison, her own dark locks wrapped in a towel that was literally massaging her head as Callie looked on, stomped over to glare at the woman. "My cousin lost her mother when she was young. She never had anyone to show her how to pamper herself." She looked Charity up and down. "I brought her here because I *heard* you were the best, that a Magian left this place feeling like a queen. Was it all hype? A false advertising enchantment?"

Charity paled and swallowed as she studied Harrison Abbott. Callie could see the hairdresser's mental wheels spinning. The Abbott family was a prestigious one. She did not want to risk her job, her reputation, by pissing them off.

The woman shook her head. "No, no. I only meant...well, she is naturally beautiful, of that there is no doubt. Truly, it would hardly take much work on my part to make her the belle of the Triune." She began to run her fingers through Callie's hair again. "Yes. This can be fixed. A shimmer rinse, a snip here and there. You'll hardly recognize yourself. I don't know what I was thinking."

Harrison winked at Callie before strolling leisurely back to the table where she'd been getting a manicure. A young woman shifting uncomfortably beside her drew her attention.

Callie had never seen a Magian biting her nails before. The telling tickle up her spine was going crazy. As Charity began to work in industrious silence, Callie made eye contact. "You okay?"

The girl's hazel eyes widened, and she glanced around quickly to see if her mother, talking to a group of older women in the corner, had heard the question. When it became obvious she hadn't, her neighbor responded in hushed, intimidated tones. "F-fine. You're Harrison Abbott's cousin?"

"Something like third cousin twice removed on my mother's side, but yes." She saw the girl's lip twitch at her attempt at humor, and smiled. "My name is Callie, what's yours?"

"Veronica. My friends call me Ronnie." She bit her thumbnail anxiously, watching Charity's efficient movements before connecting with Callie's gaze once more. "You don't seem nervous about next week."

"I don't? Well, I am a little. I feel like a piece of meat about to be put on display." Callie saw the relief in Ronnie's eyes, and knew she'd found the right opening. "You too, huh?"

"Yes." Her voice lowered. "I don't know why Mama is insisting. Father thought I could wait one or two of the Triune's out, because of what's happened."

"What's happened?" Callie drew her brows together to form a look of confusion. The less she seemed to know the better. She was from out of town after all.

Ronnie leaned forward. “You mean no one told you?”

Charity was slowing her movements behind her, and Callie knew she was listening intently to their conversation. Apparently her new Magian hairdresser was no different from the girl at her usual chop shop in that respect. Perfect. “Told me what, Ronnie?”

“Four Magian women have been attacked at Triune in the last few weeks. Most were just roughed up, a little shaken, but the last one was beaten fairly badly. Next week is the last time the ritual will happen until the solstice. Nobody knows how or why it has been happening, but I’m afraid one of us may be next.”

Charity made a soothing noise as she bent down and whispered conspiratorially. “Miss Ronnie, I don’t think you have anything to worry about. From what *I* heard... Each of those poor girls has a particular type of magic, and it’s fairly rare. I’m just surprised there have been so many coming out in one season.”

Callie turned her head and met Charity’s knowing gaze. “What kind of magic?”

Charity bit her lip as she considered her client. “The power to compel. None of them had the same type of course. Some had mental, some physical, but it *is* distinctive and rare, as I said. I know only a handful of Magians who have any aspect of compelling in their genetic makeup. Most of *them* are men, and none of them are in this room. Meanwhile, the rest of us have to mix up complicated and time consuming spells to recreate weak, temporary versions of the power.” The hairdresser sighed. “Trust me, I have to re-enchant my styling scissors once a week.”

Callie looked over to Ronnie, now beaming in relief. “You look like you feel better. You don’t have that kind of magic I take it?”

The smiling girl shook her head, holding out her hands until a glowing lime green energy sparked in her palms. The vase of flowers on the hairdresser’s counter brightened, blooms bursting to life before their eyes. Callie gasped.

Ronnie shrugged, misinterpreting the sound. “I know. Not that amazing. I’m just a grower by nature, like my father. Before this started, Mama was lamenting the fact that I had the misfortune to be of age for the Triune at the same time as...” she looked over at the preoccupied Harrison, blushing, “...so many powerful Magians. But now I’m just glad I’m not a part of this curse or whatever it is.”

It wasn’t a curse. It was a crime spree. Charity and Veronica had just given her a vital piece of the puzzle. A clue she couldn’t believe the Magian law had missed. Unless they had been trying to keep that information to themselves. But why?

She found herself wishing Tucker was here. He was a cop, like her. He lived, ate and slept Magian law. He would find out why they’d been shuffling their feet. Why they were allowing innocent young women to go into Triune without the information that could protect them. Surely Tucker didn’t know about it. If he did he would be here, sitting on his sister if he had to, to stop her from going.

What would he think of Callie's disguise? Her actions? Would he be disappointed that she had gotten herself involved, or would he admire her ingenuity? Why did she still care so much? He wasn't here.

Tyghe was.

That was another mystery in and of itself. In her experience, Tyghe rarely did anything without a reason. Usually self-motivated. Other than having the opportunity to play hero to his sister, and be a pain in Callie's ass, she couldn't see his angle.

Yet.

She wanted to go back to the pampering massage portion of her spa day. Why had Harrison taken her from those heavenly hands and into this torture chamber? She came out of the changing room, trying to take a breath in the skin tight cat-suit that was, according to her witchy pal, all the rage for the modern, fashion-conscious Magian. Or prostitutes.

A woman with teased hair the color of a ripe mango came forward with her hands raised. "Ohhh, Miss Callie. Now that outfit makes a statement. No man will be able to resist you."

"I won't be able to resist them either, since I can hardly move," Callie grumbled, causing Harrison to snort some of her peach margarita up her nose. Callie stuck out her tongue. "You deserve it, *cousin*. You no longer get to pick out what I'm trying on. By the way, I don't see you parading around in any of these outfits. Do I get my turn to chuckle at your expense?"

"I'd love to wear something like that. But Mom insists I wear the dress she wore, the dress her mother wore etcetera, etcetera. I'll look old-fashioned and ridiculous. You'll definitely chuckle." Hannah smiled at the saleslady hovering beside them. "Madame Aubrey? I think Callie would like something a little softer. Something a little less revealing."

Madame Aubrey tapped her chin, tilting her head as she studied Callie's body. "I think I have just the thing for the discerning connoisseur. It's our newest arrival. Enchanted to perfectly match the wearer's personality."

"Now that should be interesting."

Oh God. Could this get any worse? She held in her stomach. "What are you doing here, Tyghe? I thought this place was females only."

He smiled at Madame Aubrey as she passed him slowly with a curious grin. He turned to Callie, looking her up and down. His gaze narrowed on the plunging neckline that made her breasts look two sizes bigger than they were. She crossed her arms and glared, but he only quirked his lips. "They make an exception for me. I'm very...generous with my female friends. I may have to buy that for you, Callie. As long as you promise to wear it only in the bedroom. And only for me."

Harrison stood. "I'm suddenly nauseous. I think I need another margarita, maybe a few straws to shove in my ears."

Callie watched her follow the eavesdropping saleswoman out the door, grumbling under her breath at her best friend's abandonment.

Tyghe shut the door, eating up the distance between them with long, swift strides. He leaned close to her ear, gripping her arms when she started to move away. Callie inhaled sharply at the jolt of electric energy zapping through her at the contact. She could almost hear the sizzle.

His grey eyes darkened. Had he felt it too? "Just doing my job, sweetheart. Madame Aubrey knows me, knows I only show up when I want something. Someone. Now she'll tell everyone in the salon that I'm after you. But you have to do your part. This illusion only works if you pretend you want me, Callie, just a little." He caressed her bare arms, his gaze on her lips. "The passion between Magian matches is not a subtle thing. It is powerful. Undeniable. Electric. If I'm one half of your match, you won't be able to stay away from me, just as I won't be able to stay away from you...especially before we find our third and join together officially."

Callie's breath came faster. His touch was taking away her ability to think. Had he ever touched her before today? No. Surely not. She would have remembered the sparks, the intensity. Unless it was a part of Harrison's spell. Her magic, such as it was, reacting to his.

She licked her lower lip, and Tyghe groaned. "We should practice. Pretend you can't keep your hands off me, Callie. I'll make it easy on you. Pretend I'm Tucker."

Her mouth opened to protest and he was there, tongue tangling with hers, lips opening hers wider, taking more, taking everything. Callie closed her eyes and saw swirls of violet and silver sparks burst to life behind her lids.

Tyghe Abbott was kissing her.

He'd driven her crazy with his taunts and sarcastic smiles for over a decade, and now he tasted her like an addict desperate for a fix, like a lover who craved her with a hunger he couldn't control. And Callie was kissing him back. Kissing him back and loving it.

His tongue slid across hers as his hand glided down her back to grip her hip, dragging her body roughly against his. She took a shuddering breath, the sensation of his hard erection pressed against her stomach making her ache.

Her arms entwined behind his neck and when he growled and lifted her higher in his arms, her legs wrapped around his waist. She felt him moving, felt her back hit the wall and then his hips were pressed between her thighs, his cock thrusting against her through their clothes as he continued to feast on her lips.

No fumbled groping in the car after a dinner date, no sweet kiss at the door after a dance had ever felt like this. Not even her one year-long relationship with Mitchell, the man she had thought she might actually marry, ever made her feel this. This was desire. Hunger.

Callie pulled back to gasp for air. Her outfit and Tyghe's touch were making it hard for her to breathe. She wanted it gone, wanted to shred it from her body so she could feel him everywhere. On her. Inside her.

Her eyes opened in shock when she heard the shredding sound. She looked down to watch the outfit fall in small pieces toward the ground, merging back together in a neatly folded pile at Tyghe's feet. But he was still holding her. How...?

"Madame Aubrey didn't tell you about this particular outfit did she? The designer knew it would be too hard to take off in the heat of the moment, so they charmed it to fall away." His sparkling eyes met hers and he grinned wickedly. "But only when the wearer *really* wants it to."

Callie felt her face heat, but she could hardly deny it. She couldn't bring herself to feel embarrassed or ashamed either. That would come later. Now she needed him. Needed more. She could feel the rough denim of his jeans against her bare sex, and she rubbed against him, her legs tightening around him. "Are we done practicing?"

His smile disappeared, and his jaw clenched. "Not even close." He shifted, and she felt his hand cup her damp sex, his thumb searching for, and finding, her sensitive clit. "Wicked little Callie," he murmured against her cheek. "I know exactly what you need."

Yes. She felt that electric jolt again as he slipped one finger inside her, both of them groaning at the tight, delicious fit. She bit his chin, rocking her hips against his hand, all instinct and demand. She had no thoughts but this. Him.

"That's right. Moan for me, Callie. Like my touch drives you crazy. Magian matches love touching. They need it. It strengthens their magic, charges their spirits."

It felt amazing. The heat in her belly became a fiery blaze as another finger joined the first, the stretch made easier by her liquid arousal. He pumped inside her, faster and faster, driving her crazy with need. She slid her hands into his hair and placed desperate, open-mouthed kisses on his neck. He smelled good, spicy. His taste was addictive.

"Callie, I—" But she didn't want him to talk. Didn't want to think. She covered his lips with her own and slung her hips forward, feeling his fingers press deep inside her. Oh God, so deep.

Her climax took her by surprise, like a summer storm, lightning crashing around her, electricity vibrating up her spine and shooting through her limbs. "*Tyghe.*"

"Yes. *Fuck.* I can feel you coming around my fingers. So tight, Callie. Would you squeeze my cock that tightly? Callie? Baby?"

Callie felt him lowering her to her feet, heard the worry in his voice as though from a distance. It wasn't stopping. The waves of energy rolling through her body were growing stronger. Pulsing within her like a powerful drumbeat. Pleasure so intense it was almost pain.

She opened her eyes again and gasped in shock. Violet arcs of light swirled around her, around him. She could see his silver aura around his body, strong with his arousal.

Callie pushed out of his arms, her body tingling more intensely where he touched her. "What's happening? Oh shit, Tyghe. I feel... How do I make it stop?" How did she feel? Aroused? Scared?

Vulnerable? Yes to all of the above. A sudden awareness of her nakedness, and her wild reaction to Tyghe, made her wrap her arms around herself and bend down to reach for the black suit, using the cloth to cover herself.

“Callie, calm down. It’s just the magic. Though it shouldn’t be affecting you like this. This only happens when Magians... Shit, Callie, let me...” He reached out to take her in his arms again, his expression gentle, concerned, but Callie didn’t trust that. He would use this to tease her, to make her feel like she couldn’t handle the gift Harrison had given her. Couldn’t handle Magian passion. She should never have lost control. Should never have let him touch her.

She held up her hand. “Stop. Just go. Get out of here.”

Tyghe froze mid step, his eyes widening, expression stunned as he began to walk backwards. A slow, awkward retreat that sent Callie’s eyebrows into her hairline. What was he doing?

He glared, the tendons in his jaw straining as his body seemed to be moving against his will. “Son of a bitch. I’m going to kill Harrison for playing around with this kind of magic. If I’d known—” He bumped into the door, his hand reaching behind him to open it so he could leave. He gripped the frame of the door, the wood creaking as he tried to still his retreat. “This isn’t over, Callie. You can send me away and go back to pretending you hate me. But you called my name as you came. *Mine*. Don’t forget that.” As he disappeared around the corner, she heard him mumble, “I sure as hell won’t.”

Chapter Three

“What the heck was that, Harry?”

They’d finally gotten back to the Abbott house, their arms full of bags from their trip to the salon. Everything from charmed styling gel to killer heels. Callie dumped her purchases on her bed in the guest room, flopping in the nearest chair with a sigh.

Harrison pushed the bags out of the way and sat on the bed, watching Callie warily. “I don’t know, Cal. I swear. That was not supposed to happen.” She grimaced. “I feel like I’ve been saying that a lot lately. All I wanted was for you to have enough magic that you would be recognized as one of us. Jenner...” She hesitated, as though there was something bothering her, before shaking her head with a resigned laugh. “What I want to know is what were you and Tyghe fighting about?”

Callie’s brow furrowed and guilt had her looking away from her friend. “Why do you think we were fighting?”

Harrison held up her hand, counting off on her fingers as she spoke. “First of all, you two are *always* sniping at each other. Secondly, I saw him in the lobby on his way out, and if looks could kill I’d be a dead debutante right now. Plus—” she looked at Callie, the worried, wary, almost guilty look returning to her eyes, “—that kind of power burst usually only comes from intense emotion. Anger. Fear...”

Or hot, sweaty lust, Callie finished the thought in her head. She ran a shaky hand through her hair, distractedly thinking that it had never felt or looked better. It was amazing what a little magic could do.

She tilted her head, a thought suddenly occurring to her. “Would the spell make me act differently? I mean, did you add some sort of Magian aphrodisiac in there or something?”

“Aphro—*no*.” Harrison’s eyes went wide, her head shaking back and forth. “No, Callie, tell me you don’t mean what I think you mean.” At Callie’s blush she snorted in disbelief. “You and Tyghe?”

“No. I mean, we were just...practicing...for Triune.” It must have sounded just as lame to Harrison as it did to her, if her friend’s expression was anything to go by. “I don’t know what came over me. I really don’t. I mean—Tyghe? The boy who turned my face green the night before the first day of eighth grade? The one who cursed my bicycle to chase George Anderson home from school everyday?”

Harrison held up her hands, tears of mirth flooding down her cheeks. “Even you have to admit, that was funny.”

“George didn’t think so. The poor guy was traumatized, and he never asked me out again.” Callie buried her face in her hands. “I was hoping it was your spell.”

"I didn't have anything to do with *that*. I also didn't have anything to do with the level of power you described."

Callie didn't like the sound of that. She looked up. "There's more. I only told you about the energy going crazy. I didn't tell you what I did to Tyghe."

Harrison's smile was hopeful. "Tell me you slapped him for touching you and my faith in womankind will be restored."

Callie shook her head. "I made him leave." Harrison started to interrupt her, but Callie spoke before she could. "I mean *made* him, Harry. I told him to get out and he left like...like he didn't have another choice. He was pretty steamed about it too."

Harrison stilled, her smile disappearing. "Callie, you said Charity gave you some new information about the attacks."

The abrupt change in topic threw her for a moment. "Yeah. She told us that the women had some sort of compelling power that was fairly rare. She was surprised so many Magian's had come out with it at the same time."

Grey eyes narrowed on Callie. "What color was your energy, Cal?"

"Violet. Why?" But she understood. Compelling. She'd compelled Tyghe to leave. "Is that the power you gave me, Harry? The power of compulsion?"

"I don't know how many times I have to tell you. I just gave you a generic magical camouflage and pulled out your own, natural gifts. I couldn't give you compulsion if I wanted to. Like Tyghe said, I'm not that good. You're exhibiting all the signs of a mentalist, someone who compels others through suggestion. You're strong, too, if you can affect a Magian as gifted as Tyghe has always been." Harrison bit her lip worriedly. "I really need to talk to Jenner. I think we should call this off."

Callie jumped up from her chair, grabbing Harrison's arm before she could leave. "No way. Tyghe's the one who suggested I was bait, right? Well, if Charity's right, I just became an irresistible lure. We have a better chance now to catch this guy, to make sure he doesn't hurt anyone else. Who knows? Now that he has a taste for violence, he may not want to stop once he gets everyone with this ability. He might move on to other powers. Other women. Poor, innocent Veronica. You." Callie shook her head. "I'm not going to let that happen."

Harrison looked like she wanted to argue, but something in Callie's expression must have told her it wouldn't work. "I should have called Tucker home. He has a compelling magic too, though his is more physical in nature. Did you know that?" Callie shook her head and Harrison sighed. "Okay, Cal. Let me go fill Jenner in, see what we can do to make sure you have the protection you need by the time Triune rolls around. If we're doing this, I don't want you put in any more danger than you have to be."

She left Callie alone with a soft click of the door as it latched behind her. She looked around the room without seeing a thing. She didn't understand. Harrison hadn't meant to give her the compulsion ability? That meant it had to be something latent inside her.

Every being has a little magic inside them, isn't that what she had said? But surely *that* wasn't hers. She'd never been able to make anyone do what she wanted them to. Her gift had always been at deduction, at getting people to tell her their secrets. That was a sort of compulsion she supposed, though she'd always thought she just had one of those trustworthy faces.

Tyghe had been surprised. Upset. She hadn't meant to force him to move against his will. She'd been embarrassed, confused. Scared by the power of her climax and the magical energy flowing through her. She'd wanted him to go, yes, but not that way. Not by controlling him. It was a disconcerting ability to say the least.

What if she hadn't been able to send him away? He would have touched her again, she knew. Taken her, right there in the changing rooms, where anyone could have seen them...and Callie wouldn't have cared.

In one day, it seemed, so much had changed. She had power. Since her experience with Tyghe she could still feel it, a steady hum beneath the surface. Waiting. And Tyghe. Had she ever thought of him as more than the gorgeous, but troublemaking older brother of her best friend? He'd gotten under her skin easier than anyone she'd ever met. A look from him was all it took to set her on edge. Had it been there even then, attraction disguised as irritation?

If so, she was in serious trouble. It seemed she was doomed to spend her life drawn to men she couldn't have. Magians. Abbotts. First Tucker. Now Tyghe.

After this adventure was over and she graduated from the academy, she might use the money she'd been saving for a rainy day and take a cruise. Somewhere warm and tropical. Away from Boston. Away from temptation. But first, she had a criminal to catch.

It was a moment before she realized she couldn't move. Panic was instantaneous. Was this another strange side effect of having powers? Her brain was screaming at her hands and feet to move, but her body was not responding. She opened her mouth to shout but no sound came out.

"Calm down, Callie. Nothing's wrong. It's me."

Motherfuckingsonofabitch. Tyghe? She heard his voice behind her. How had he gotten in the room without her noticing? He'd done this? Immobilized her? She was going to kill him. As soon as she could move.

He circled her body until he was facing her, his grey eyes narrowing at her venomous glare. "Don't look at me like that. I'd say we're even now. You took my control away, now I've taken yours." He rubbed the back of his neck with his hand, the picture of frustration. "I won't apologize. If you want sympathy find Lorie. Or Tucker. Your heroes would give you soft words and soothing smiles. But that's not who I am."

No it wasn't. At the mention of her earlier actions, she felt herself calming down a little. He looked haggard, and a spark of compassion and renewed heat warmed her as she watched him. He was shirtless, the top button of his jeans undone, his hair damp as though he'd just come out of the shower.

He followed the movement of her eyes and grimaced. "Cold showers don't work for Magians any better than I hear they work for humans. They're just cold." He stepped closer. "It didn't make me stop wanting to fuck you, or take the scent of your honey from my fingers."

She blinked. He pulled no punches with his words, but then, he never had. As simple as that, she wanted him again. The way she had only hours before. Insanely. Thoughtlessly. Wantonly. The energy inside her built, the hair rising on the back of her neck at the static charge.

Tyghe studied her intently. "Your eyes are changing, Callie. Did you know that? They're always the clear blue of a winter sky. But now...now they look darker, like the ocean. What those eyes are telling me is that a cold shower won't work for you either." He looked down at her blouse, and she could feel the hard tips of her nipples scrape against the raw silk in reaction. "I'll release you, Callie, but I warn you. If you send me away again, I won't be responsible for my actions."

With those words Callie felt her hands stretch open, her body freed from Tyghe's powerful hold. She wobbled and sent him a rueful expression. "You know in all these years I never knew what you were capable of. I'm glad. It probably would have given me nightmares."

"I can't tell you how many times you tempted me to use it, brat. But nightmares aren't what I want to give you. Never have been. I think you know it. All you have to do is say yes."

His words started the drumbeat in her veins again. It was crazy. It was the magic. When it was over how would she be able to be a part of this family? To act like nothing had changed? But he was right, some part of her had always known that beneath all the friction between she and Tyghe there was something different. Something that made them circle each other like wary animals. Denying it now was impossible. Even thinking about the horrifying prospect of what came after couldn't stop what was inside her. It was an instinctual need, something deep within her crying out for him. How could she do anything other than give in?

"Yes, Tyghe."

He reached out to trace the collar of her blouse with his fingers, silver energy flickering on the rough pads and making Callie shudder. "Yes to what, baby? Anything? Because I can think of all sorts of things I'd love to do to you. Throwing you over my lap and spanking that tight little ass until it turns pink for leaving me wanting for so long comes to mind. Making you crazy again and again, not allowing you to come until you're begging for it also has its appeal. Would you beg me, little girl? Beg for me to fuck you? To make you come?"

“Kiss my ass, Abbott.” She turned away, angry with him for using her need against her. He wanted her to beg? Why? So he could laugh at her? She wouldn’t be able to take that kind of humiliation. Not from him. Not now.

Callie felt him move behind her, and then she was on her knees on the floor beside the bed, Tyghe’s body burning her through her clothes. “Is that an order, Callie? Are you compelling me? Because you know I’ll have to obey. I wouldn’t mind, I do love your ass.” She struggled halfheartedly in his grip, and he laughed. “Yes, I’d love to spank it. I’d love to kiss it...lick it.” He leaned close to her ear, whispering, “And someday soon, I’m going to fuck it.”

A purely feminine thrill, fear mixed with excitement and curiosity ran through Callie’s limbs in a shivering rush. He felt it and groaned. “Damn it, Callie. Don’t tempt me. I need you too much to be patient.”

His actions matched his words as she felt him shift behind her, shredding her shirt from her back. His mumbled, “I’ll buy you a new one.” was followed by the sound of a button rolling across the floor as he ripped open her pants and tugged them down over her hips.

She loved it. The wildness. Their energies played off each other, growing more heated, more intense with every touch. She wanted him inside her. Wanted to be claimed. She felt primitive. A lioness craving her mate. She leaned forward on her elbows, her back arching to lift her bare ass high against him.

“Fuck, Callie.” She could feel him fumbling with his own jeans, popping open the buttons with a swiftness that made her ache for him. Now.

“Please.”

Tyghe leaned over her again, bare skin to bare skin. His thighs spread hers farther apart. The first slide of his cock against her sex had both of them gasping like they’d been touched with a live wire.

She moaned. “What is that?”

He knew she wasn’t talking about his erection, but the unusual electric sensations that occurred between them with each touch, each caress. “It’s you, Callie. I knew it would be. It doesn’t make a damn bit of sense, but it’s you.”

She cried out in pleased surprise at his first thrust. He closed his teeth around her shoulder, shouting against her flesh as her muscles tightened around him, instinctively reacting to the stretch. He was big. Hard. He pushed through her resistance until his hips were pressed against her ass, his front against her back. On her and in her. Owning her.

Callie pressed her forehead against the floor, rocking her hips when he didn’t immediately begin the rhythm her body was desperate for. She didn’t care that she was half undressed, her pants around her knees. Didn’t care if anyone saw them. She needed to feel it again. Knew this climax would rival the last.

He moaned. He slid one hand between her legs where they were joined, the other slipping beneath her bra to cup her breast. “I’ve imagined this so many times. Fought with myself to stay away from you.” He

angled his hips, going deeper, and they both groaned. "Human or not, I knew I'd never be able to let you go once I got inside you. But it wasn't me you wanted back then was it?" He squeezed her nipple hard between his fingers, and she arched against him, crying out. She knew he was talking about Tucker. She shook her head, not wanting to hear his words, not wanting to be pulled from the moment, but this time he was the one in control. "He never did this, did he? As much as you wanted him to. Never slipped his cock between these luscious thighs. Never touched you outside of your dreams."

Callie made a frustrated sound deep in her throat. Her body was burning with need for him, but his pillow-talk was pissing her off. "Don't think you can match up to big brother, Tyghe? Wanna hear about all the times I touched myself in my bed at night, wishing it was him? We could always stop and talk about it."

If he stopped now she'd kill him.

"I'm a masochist, didn't you know?" He chuckled darkly. She pushed her hips back in hard, angry passion, and he groaned, panting against her hair. "Bad girl. You want me to lose my control, don't you?"

She lifted her head and turned until their gazes clashed. His face was tight with restraint, his eyes dark with need. "Yeah, Tyghe, I really do. Don't hold back. Stop talking and *fuck me*." She felt the burst of energy flow from her to him, knew her need had done it again, sent a compulsion to him. She gasped as his eyes narrowed. "That's not a command, damn it. Just a suggestion." She didn't want to force him. Didn't want this strange magic within her to be the reason he took her.

Tyghe smiled. "Too late. No holding back." His chest lifted, hands sliding from her clit to her hip, from her breast to her shoulder. "You asked for it, Callie. You fucking asked for it."

Callie's spine arched as he began to power into her, his hips slamming against hers, jarring her to the bone. Yes. This was what she wanted. Needed. No pretences. No soft caresses. She wanted to be marked, taken so completely that she would never forget this feeling.

She was being thrown up into the heart of a hurricane, a tempest swirling around her as he changed the angle of his thrusts, hitting a part of her that made her cry out. "Tyghe."

"Yes. *My* name, Callie." His grip on her shoulder tightened, holding her still for his punishing pace. "I'm the one fucking you. The only one who can give you this." The hand on her hip slid over her skin, thumb slipping between her cheeks to press against her ass. "And this."

"Oh God." She wanted it. She wanted his fingers, his cock everywhere, anywhere. She couldn't get enough. Would never get enough. When his thumb pushed inside, his cock still filling her sex, she couldn't hold back. She screamed.

"Oh, you like that, don't you, Callie? You were made for this, made for me. Tell me you love it. That you want more. Tell me you want me to fuck your ass."

"Yes. I love it. *More*." She had become a wild thing, oblivious to anything but the sensations he was creating through her body. His thumb thrust inside her ass, short shallow thrusts that matched the

movement of his cock inside her. A sudden image of another man joining Tyghe, of both of them inside her, taking her, threw her over the edge.

Violet energy exploding around them, mixed with the silver of Tyghe's. Her body was on fire, pulsing with life, with light. She could feel how her climax was affecting him, knew he couldn't wait to join her, to fill her with his come.

Suddenly he was there, shouting out his pleasure as he continued to pump inside her, his grip on her shoulder almost bruising her as he ground against her again and again. He bent down, and she turned her head, kissing him with all the passion inside her.

Tyghe tore his lips away, panting against her mouth. "Pull the energy back, Callie. You can do it. That's right." He groaned when she focused on what he said, focused on calming her energy. "You felt so good, my bad girl. You came so hard. I knew you'd be addictive. I was right. Now that I've been here, felt your tight, wet pussy around me... I'll never get enough."

Her heart jumped at his words, but she knew people said things in the moment that they didn't always mean. She knew enough about his past with women that he wasn't the kind of man who hung around. She needed that, more than fantastic, mind-blowing sex. She needed someone she could count on. Someone to trust.

He saw her expression change and gripped her chin with his fingers. "Don't you dare." He pressed his hips against her, and she could feel his cock, still hard inside her. "Don't deny what this was. Don't pretend that wasn't the best fuck you've ever had. Or do I have to remind you again?"

"Am I interrupting something?"

Tyghe stiffened, his expression closing when he saw Callie blanch at the new voice in the room. "I'd like to say yes, but it appears as though Callie and I are done. For now. Although I think she would rather you'd knocked before you caught us in the act, so to speak."

This *was* a nightmare. It had to be. Tucker Abbott was away on his yearly trip to commune with nature. He couldn't really be standing in the doorway, watching as his brother slid out from between her thighs, leaving her half naked on all fours on the floor, the proof of their passion dripping down her thighs. There was no childhood humiliation she could think of that topped this. Child. She groaned and closed her eyes. At least she knew Magians didn't reproduce unless they were married-matched-whatever. Something she was now incredibly grateful with Jenner for telling her. Not that it made this moment any less uncomfortable. Please let this be a dream.

Tyghe appeared beside her, shielding her body from view. "Come on now, there's a good girl, I brought you one of your T-shirts." He spoke over his shoulder to his brother as Callie, eyes misty and mind in chaos, allowed him to pull the shreds of her blouse from her body and slip a clean shirt over her head. "What brings you home, Tucker? You get lonely in the woods all by yourself? That's what you get for preferring trees and rocks to soft beds and pretty women."

He slid the washcloth between her legs with swift efficient movements, the passionate lover from moments before seemingly gone. She should slap his hand away, but she couldn't bring herself to move. Tucker had seen her with Tyghe. All the years she'd dreamed of she and Tucker being together like this. Well, not like this. In fact, *this* scenario had never crossed her mind.

He would never want her now.

What a perverted woman she was for even thinking about it so soon after having the best sex of her life with his brother.

"Now I have to kill you." Tucker's voice was low and dangerous, but his words didn't register to her until Tyghe was yanked roughly away from her and thrown against the wall.

Chapter Four

“Son of a bitch.” Tyghe swore as plaster flew around his shoulders from the force of the blow. Callie watched as a stone-faced Tucker reached for him again, a dangerous glint in his eyes.

Tyghe, who could have frozen Tucker in his tracks, instead lowered his head and plowed into his brother’s chest, sending them both careening onto the floor beside her.

She leapt to her feet, nearly tripping over her pants in the process. She tugged them up swiftly, her attention never leaving the two struggling men. She had to do something. This was more than the playful sparring she’d seen between the brothers in the past. It seemed as though they were really trying to hurt each other. “Stop fighting. Both of you. Now.” She tried to focus as she said the words. Tried to use her magic.

They stopped, though neither of them looked too happy about it. Especially not Tucker, who refused to look in her direction as he pulled himself up to a sitting position and cupped his jaw where Tyghe had punched him. “So it’s true.” He turned to Tyghe. “Is this Harrison’s doing?”

Tyghe tried to smile, but grimaced instead as he rose, rolling his shoulders. “Do you even have to ask?”

“I suppose not. Though I have to admit, I didn’t think even you would have the nerve to let a woman, a friend of *our* family, put herself in danger merely to get in her pants.”

Callie flinched at Tucker’s words, but Tyghe only laughed mockingly. “At least I take what I want instead of running away from it. You can hike all the mountains, take down all the criminals you like, you’re still the coward.”

Tucker leapt to his feet, his intent clear, and Callie reacted instinctively. She ran between them, a hand on each of their chests to hold them apart.

That’s when it happened.

The jolt she’d felt when Tyghe had first touched her, that same strange energy that had swelled between them when they’d been joined—but more. Callie’s mouth opened on a silent gasp as she lifted her chin to stare at Tucker in shock.

Where her hand covered his shirt sparks of light violet and deep purple swirled around her fingers. She met his blue-grey gaze, heated with anger, surprise and something else. Desire? She trembled. What was happening? It was similar to what had happened when she and Tyghe had touched...but more.

She remembered with vivid clarity a night, years ago, when she'd come to the Abbott house in need of solace. Her foster mother had been cruel, and Callie had felt lost, alone. She ran to the family she wished was hers, the family who didn't treat her as though she were a stranger. When she realized none of the Abbott's were home, she'd been so disappointed that she'd collapsed on the porch and wept as though her heart were shattering.

Tucker had found her. As soon as he'd realized she wasn't physically injured, he'd lifted her into his lap and rocked her in his arms in silent comfort. She'd only been twelve years old, and he fifteen, but she was sure at that moment that she was in love with him. There'd been no sparks that she could see, but she had felt safe for the first time in her life. Warm. Loved.

She'd been devoted to him. But he'd made it clear by his actions through the years that he didn't feel the same. He was always kind, but he never looked at her as though she were a woman. She'd never seen his eyes darken with passion for her.

There was passion there now.

She studied his face. A face she knew as well as her own. The strong jaw, the dimples so deep she could see them even when he wasn't smiling. His full, sensual lips and blue-grey eyes. Eyes that were saying he wanted her. Needed her. He leaned closer, as though he might press his lips against hers, might finally kiss her after all these years of waiting. She tilted her head back.

Tyghe started chuckling again, a grating, sarcastic sound that broke the moment. He stepped away from Callie's touch, and the energy between them ebbed. Callie curled her hand at the loss, stepping back and crossing her arms defensively.

Tyghe clapped his hands together and shook his head. "Priceless. Well, little girl, looks like I'm not the only one who can ring your magical bell, temporary though it may be. If only your hero had gotten here a little earlier, you wouldn't have had to waste your time with second best."

"Tyghe, wait—" But she could hear his footfalls as he headed down the stairs, followed quickly by the slamming of the front door. He was gone. "Damn it."

"I'm sorry, Callie." She turned to face Tucker, standing stiff and uncomfortable beside her. "If I'd known he was in here..."

She sighed. "I know. You don't have to tell me. You wouldn't have come in."

He met her gaze. "That wasn't what I was going to say. If I'd known, I would've been here sooner." He studied the mass of tangles that had been her hair and smiled. "You've changed your hair. It's shorter, and the color is a little different. I like it."

He noticed her hair? Why did that make her heart beat faster? "I went to the salon with Harrison."

At the mention of his sister's name his smile faded. "I have to talk to her. I can't believe Jenner didn't stop her. The fact that she could do it at all is...I didn't know she had this much power." He strode toward

the door, stopping at the opening without looking back at her. “Callie, I... I’ll talk to you later. Don’t worry. I’ll fix everything.”

When he was gone she fell backward onto the bed, her head spinning. Maybe having magic wasn’t all it was cracked up to be. She thought about what had happened since she’d woken from Harrison’s spell and realized she was actually smiling. Who was she trying to fool? She’d had more excitement in one day than the rest of her life combined. More passion and chaos and confusion, not to mention a magical facial.

And Tyghe.

She frowned. She couldn’t deny the strength of her desire for him. Couldn’t even deny that just the thought of him aroused her, made her thighs tingle with heat. Being with him only made her want him more. She’d go search him out right now but she knew he wasn’t in a welcoming mood. She wished he hadn’t left like that, but she couldn’t really blame him. She’d almost kissed Tucker, would have if he hadn’t interrupted, right in front of the man who’d just given her a mind blowing orgasm. Innocent, proper Callie was a hussy when it came to the Abbotts.

She sat up, heading toward the shower. She needed a moment alone before she faced the lion. She knew Tucker would try and put his foot down, try to stop them from going to Triune. But it was too late. Callie was just as stubborn as he was, whether he knew it or not. She was going. And Tyghe was going with her.

He wasn’t backing out on her now.

Callie heard their voices halfway to the kitchen. With her damp hair in a ponytail, her comfortable jeans and sweatshirt covering all evidence of her earlier behavior, she was ready to take Tucker on.

Harrison sounded weary. “That’s what I’m trying to tell you, Tuck. It wasn’t my doing.”

“So then it’s—the only other way would be— *Shit*. This doesn’t make a damn bit of sense.”

There was silence for a moment, then Callie heard the smile in Jenner’s voice as she spoke to Tucker. “Except that, in a strange and perfect way...it kind of does. Don’t you think?” She raised her voice. “Callie, I’ve made you some cucumber sandwiches, love. You must be famished.”

Callie walked around the corner, her gaze instantly clashing with Tucker’s. The frustration in his expression quickly morphed into laughter and shared memories. Leave it to Jenner.

When she’d first started coming to the Abbott house, she’d thought it so grand, she’d mentioned being surprised they didn’t have high tea like the British ladies she’d read about in her books. Moira and Jenner had decided then and there to throw the two young girls a tea party, complete with fancy hats and cucumber sandwiches with the crusts cut off. Callie had made such a fuss over them, mostly because of the novelty that the sweet, endearing Jenner began to make them every time she came to the house. She didn’t have the heart to tell the older woman she’d rather have a cheeseburger.

She accepted the plate Jenner handed her with a grateful smile, wrinkling her nose at Tucker playfully. "Have they filled you in on the plan?"

His expression hardened. "The plan has changed. Magian law will take care of the criminal, Harrison will wait a few more months to go to Triune, and you...well, you can go back to your life. To school."

Where you belong. Callie couldn't help the twinge of hurt she felt at his unspoken meaning. "I'm on a break. Besides, Magian law hasn't done much to stop the previous four attacks, what makes you think it can handle the next one?"

"Five," Harrison mumbled pushing her own sandwich, steak of course, around on her plate.

Callie's stomach growled in envy at her friend's more substantial lunch, then clenched when she caught her meaning. She turned back to Tucker. "There's been another? Is the girl all right?"

Tucker's jaw tightened, the anger in his eyes answer enough. "He killed her didn't he? And there's still no evidence? Nothing to find him but the knowledge that he likes Magian girls with compelling magic, and that he'll be at the next Triune gathering." She set her plate down and planted her hands on her hips. "Are you gonna tell me you have a Magian female lined up? An enforcer like you, who's already made friends at the salon? Admit it. I'm the best bet you have to catch this guy before he can kill more people."

She'd always been able to read his expression. She was right, and he hated it. He spoke stiffly. "At this time we have no trained female who has that particular magic, no."

Callie pounced. "Let me do it, Tucker. I can do this."

"Maybe Tucker is right, Callie." Harrison looked somber. "They killed Marion. I knew her. She didn't deserve to die. I can't imagine what I'd do if anything happened to you."

"When have I ever given you the impression I couldn't take care of myself? When I had to go home on my own to my loving, protective foster parents every night? When I got my black belt in karate? My medal in track? Or how about when I signed up for the Police Academy?" She shook her head at their stubborn expressions. "I am not a wilting flower. Not a debutante who relies on the kindness of strangers. If I was truly Magian, I'd probably be an enforcer like Tucker by now and you know it. If there's anything I can't handle on my own, Tyghe will be with me."

"She's right. Callie can handle herself. And I'll be her backup."

Callie felt her shoulders relax. She wasn't sure he'd ever talk to her again. She turned to see him in a white T-shirt and jeans, his hair wind tousled, telling her he'd come over on his bike. Her rebel. "Thank you, Tyghe."

She tried to tell him with her eyes that she was sorry. She was confused, but she didn't regret what had happened between them. How could she? He winked at her, but she knew he was still holding back, waiting to see what she did. How she acted now that Tucker was back.

Tucker was angry. "I know exactly what Callie can do." He caught her eye and lowered his voice. "I always have."

Jenner walked up to Callie and wrapped a supportive arm around her waist. “We all have faith in you, Callie dear. As long as you know we’ll all be there in case you need us.” She looked at the Abbott brothers sternly. “All of us. Including Harrison and I. We have a few days left—we should use that time to make sure we leave no room for error.”

Callie smiled down at the diminutive woman. “Have I told you lately that I love you?”

Jenner blushed and made a dismissive motion with her hand. “Of course you do. I always knew you were brilliant.”

Chapter Five

“I look ridiculous. And lacy. A lacy, ridiculous girly-girl.”

Callie snorted as she stood behind Harrison in the mirror, shaking her head. “You look amazing, Harry. Like a fairytale princess.”

She truly did. The floor length gown was ivory and grey, bringing out her beautiful eyes. It had capped sleeves and a square neckline that made her look like someone out of a regency novel. But Harrison pulled it off. With her hair upswept and shimmering with diamond pins, she was stunning.

Miserable, but stunning.

“I can’t do it. If this is what Magian men want, then they can find someone else to give it to them.” She grabbed a small perfume bottle from the vanity in her room and squirted the liquid all over her bodice. Before Callie could squeak in denial at the wet spot on Harrison’s chest, the spot changed. Spread. Callie knew her jaw dropped as, within moments, the dress had changed from ivory to black, the length of the dress shortening until it stopped above Harrison’s knees, showing off her long, toned legs.

“Harrison? Didn’t you say your mother and grandmother wore this dress?”

Harrison smiled, shaking out her hair until it fell down her back in wild, ebony curls. “Yes. I’m keeping my promise to her. Technically, this is the same dress. She never said anything about a few alterations here and there.”

Callie shook her head. Harrison would never change. She had to do things her way. It was one of the things Callie had always admired about her. Something she’d hoped would rub off.

Maybe it had. She’d been different this week. Stronger. After standing firm against Tucker’s disapproval, and experiencing the passion she had with Tyghe, she thought she could handle anything. *I am woman, watch me strut*. She chuckled under her breath.

Now she just had to keep that confidence tonight, when she was surrounded by strange Magians, including one that would no doubt try to kill her.

“I hope you change that back before Mom gets home, she may lock you in a chastity belt until your fiftieth birthday for going to the Triune like that.”

Harrison smirked. “I doubt that, Tuck. Mom’s no Puritan. Besides, that would mean she’d be stuck with me for the next few decades.”

“True.” Tucker turned his attention to Callie, who’d been having a hard time breathing since he’d opened the bedroom door. “Harrison, Jenner wants you downstairs. She says she has something to give you, something else that our mother wants you to wear.”

Harrison grumbled as she pushed past her brother in her newly transformed little black dress. “What now? A frilly bonnet?”

Tucker leaned his shoulder against the doorframe, his smile wry. “Looks like you’re not the only one my brother and I will need to keep an eye on. Harrison is in a mood tonight. You look beautiful, by the way.”

She smoothed her hands nervously over the silky fabric of her unusual dress. A cocktail-length beige sheath that had, at first, looked incredibly plain for all the fuss Harrison and Madame Aubrey had made over it. Until she’d put it on.

As it warmed against her skin, it had become a halter dress, lifting and cupping her breasts to show them to their perfect advantage, the skirt loose for easy movement, reaching her knees. Even stranger, the dress’s color kept changing.

She chuckled as she looked down, noticing it deepen from cool blue to passionate purple as Tucker continued to stare. “I’m wearing a full-body mood ring. It’s a bit over the top, even for magical fashion.”

“It’s sexy.” Tucker jerked, standing straighter in the doorway, his expression telling her he hadn’t meant to say that. But he had.

Callie ran her fingers through her loose blonde waves, loving the new shoulder length cut, the shimmering look of it after Charity’s special rinse. She *felt* sexy.

“We should probably get going. Any last minute tips? One cop to another?” She turned for one last look in the mirror, and then he was there, behind her.

God, he was beautiful. He always had been. She was surprised some lucky Magian female hadn’t already swept him away and started raising perfect, dimpled, baby witches.

He stood close behind her, so close she could feel the heat coming off him in waves. She met his gaze and shivered as he licked his lips. “Callie,” he started, his voice rough. “You aren’t a cop yet. And you aren’t...you don’t understand the Magian mind. Our criminals think differently than humans, have different motives.”

“Bullshit.” She ignored his shocked expression and rolled her eyes. “I’ve known your family most of my life. You have the same motives as anyone else. Anger, boredom, greed...lust. Just because a Magian uses their powers instead of knives or guns, doesn’t mean their motives are any more or less complex than a human’s.” She turned around to face him. “You’re quieter than Tyghe, but you feel the same way he does, don’t you? Humans are inferior. Including me. Between the two of you, I’m surprised you ever let me in your house. Knowing such an insignificant species was under your roof must have driven you cr—”

His thumb pressed gently against her lips, silencing her instantly with the powerful spark that ignited at his touch. His eyes narrowed on her mouth, his thumb sliding across her lower lip, opening her mouth with the lightest of pressure.

“You *have* driven me crazy, from the moment Harrison brought you home. I cannot deny that. I also can’t lie and say that for a long time your humanity wasn’t an issue. But not for the reasons you think.” He leaned closer, studying her features so intently she could physically feel his gaze on her skin.

She wanted him to kiss her. Even as this man whom she’d always believed was different told her that her being human disturbed him. Even though she’d been with Tyghe a few days before, though *he* seemed to be avoiding his family home quite a bit since Tucker had returned.

“You want a tip?” His voice was raw, heated. “For tonight, you, Tyghe and I will play the part of a passionate trio. We’ll be at your side, touching you, caressing you, as if we couldn’t get enough of the feel of your skin, your smell.” His thumb left her lips, and he stepped away. “It shouldn’t be any problem for you with my brother. But for this to work you’ll have to be mine as well. For the *Proxenos* to allow us the kind of access we’ll need, you’ll kiss me as easily, as passionately as you do him.”

Callie tried to slow her racing heart. Did he think it would be hard for her? It would be harder to pretend she wasn’t craving him just as desperately as she’d begun to crave Tyghe. But she would give it her best shot. The last thing she wanted was for Tucker to feel sorry for her. “I can handle anything for a night.”

She could pick up the broken pieces of her heart when the magic was over.

“Where’s Jenner?”

“She’ll be around. She left a note for us to wear these. Mom obviously made me some of her special jewelry for the occasion. Knowing her, it’s no doubt rigged to notify her if I don’t wear it to Triune. Think of it as a lucky, nosy, maternal charm bracelet.” Harrison slipped a golden, snake-shaped bracelet on Callie’s wrist, a piece to match the necklace around her own. “Now do you understand how this works?”

Callie sighed, shivering beneath the thick coat Tucker had forced her into. They were standing in a freezing parking garage in Boston after dark, not exactly what she’d imagined when she’d gotten dressed up. But she played along. “Triune? I think so. Magian’s come from far and wide to seek out the perfect threesome so they can live kinkily ever after. Sounds fairly straightforward to me.”

Tyghe chuckled beside her. “Smartass.”

Their eyes met and Callie shivered at the knowledge and desire in his glance. He’d come to her three more times since his altercation with Tucker, sneaking in through her window and driving her insane deep into the night with his insatiable appetites.

She felt guilty, but not enough to turn him away. Not enough not to revel in his lessons, his masterful lovemaking. He'd taken her in the shower, in her guest bedroom... The last time he'd caught up with her in the upstairs hallway, a few, nerve wracking doors away from Tucker's room.

He'd been angry. "I tried to get you out of my mind. Tried to prove to myself that I could stay away from you. I had a woman, ready and willing, dying for me to fuck her, and all I could think about was you."

He pressed her against the wall, lifted one of her thighs over his arm and took her. There were no preliminaries, but then, she hadn't needed any. The moment she'd seen him she'd been ready. Looking at him now, she knew, even with Tucker and Harrison beside them, she needed him again.

His eyes darkened, a turbulent storm, and she knew he was feeling the same intense longing she was.

"If you want me to be sick all over my mother's dress, keep ogling each other." Callie jumped and turned, red-faced, toward her friend. Harrison shook her head. "Thank you. Some things are too disturbing for me to witness. As to what we were talking about before you were...distracted...there's a little more to Triune than sex. Three elder Magians called *Proxenos*, sort of a marriage counselor and judge rolled in one, must give their approval of the match. They usually do, from what I hear, since once a Magian finds their compliments, it's nearly impossible to separate them." She sent a telling look to the two men on either side of Callie. "But you still have to stand before them at some point for judgment, just to be sure. The *Proxenos* are found when they're very young, trained to ensure the matches are not coerced or illusory. So, they would no doubt be able to sniff out our ruse. So, if we could just find the killer before the first round of drinks are poured, we can get the hell out of there before someone turns into a pumpkin."

Callie studied her tense friend. "What if you don't find your matches at one of these things? Or you only find one?"

Tucker's voice echoed in the silent parking garage. "There are four gatherings a year. Magian's are drawn to find their missing compliments, their matches. It's part of who we are, and we know our magic will never see its true potential if we do not."

Callie didn't want to dwell on why his words made her sad. "I suppose you've been to tons of these things by now."

"None." Tyghe sounded resigned. "Tucker hasn't been to a single one. He must be the exception to the rule."

His voice sounded like there was more to it than that, and she felt that knowing tickle up her spine, her Spidey sense, as Harrison called it, but there was no time. A flash of light drew her gaze toward a shiny silver Porsche parked, illegally, in a handicapped parking spot.

The sound of crunching metal made her jaw drop, she watched as the hood of the Porsche peeled away like a sardine can, pulling some of the concrete away with it to reveal a smoky glass door...complete with a large, bald bouncer.

"Well, that's not something you see everyday."

“Hey there, Jake. Long time no see.” Tyghe walked up to shake the behemoth’s hand, the two chatting like old friends.

Callie looked at Harrison. “I think we can guess how many of these *he’s* been to.”

“That reminds me,” Harrison bit her lip as she walked beside Callie. “Magians are a bit...freer with their bodies than the average human. Even those who aren’t necessarily compatible have a tendency to go a little wild at Triune I’m told. Hell, some young trios who are already matched still show up to enjoy the party. Think of every bachelorette party you’ve been to and multiply it times four.”

Tyghe, hearing the last of his sister’s comment, smiled wickedly. “We’re a sensual species. Anyway, how can we know if we compliment each other without sampling?”

Callie was suddenly glad the Abbott brothers would be sticking close tonight. She didn’t want to find out how a lusty Magian reacted to rejection.

Tucker cupped her shoulders and leaned to speak into her ear. “No one touches you but us, Callie. I promise you.”

How could one sentence be reassuring, erotic and frightening at the same time? But she was grateful he’d said it. She didn’t want either of them touched or sampled either. The mere idea made her blood boil. What was wrong with her? “Thanks.”

Jake the magical bouncer smiled at Callie and Harrison shyly, an odd expression on an otherwise intimidating face. “Three eligible Abbotts in one Triune? And this must be the distant cousin Charity’s been gossiping about to everyone within earshot. They’ll be talking about this night for years to come. It’s an honor.” He bowed gallantly, opening a door that had appeared out of nowhere.

Tyghe moved to his sister’s side in front of her, and Tucker followed close behind Callie, sandwiching her between them as they went inside. Callie knew they were already protecting her, and she had to admit, though she could take care of herself, she liked the feeling. She could get used to it. That was a dangerous thought. The closer they got to the point of no return, the more Callie wondered about her future with the Abbott family. Would she still be welcome once this was over? Now that everything had changed?

Tucker slid the warm jacket from her shoulders and handed it to the girl at the coat check counter. Callie could hear the pounding modern beat of the music, and heard the hum of more voices than she’d been expecting. How big *was* this place?

She got her answer when they left the main entrance and headed into the sea of bodies. It was huge. Like a massive warehouse-*cum*-dance club. People upstairs leaned over the railing to study the moving bodies on the main dance floor below. A deejay rocked above the crowd beneath the colored lights. Was his equipment...floating?

Tucker placed his hand on her lower back, guiding her toward the long, bustling bar and her lashes fluttered. She would never get used to the shock of magic she felt whenever Tyghe or Tucker touched her.

The thrill of energy that aroused her instantly, made her want to attack them. She wondered how Magians got anything done, if this was what it felt like to touch each other. Or perhaps, it was just her own emotions, her own desires for the two men making her react so intensely.

“Callie.” She turned at the muffled shriek, smiling when she saw the young woman from the salon, Veronica, waving at her and beaming as though they were old friends. “I’ve been waiting for you to show up. Isn’t this great? I’ve never seen so many Magians in one place in my life.”

Callie smiled at her excitement, secretly agreeing. It was an impressive turnout. The way some of them were dressed, she knew they weren’t from Boston. Doorways must be appearing in parking garages around the world for this event.

She chuckled and gave the girl a friendly squeeze. “You look wonderful, Ronnie. Have you met Harrison’s oldest brother, Tucker?”

Veronica blushed. “Actually, he’s how I got away from my mother. She insisted on coming, and she hasn’t let me out of her sight once.” Her smile turned mischievous. “Until I mentioned that the Abbott men had arrived and she all but pushed me out of my chair and across the floor.”

Tucker winced politely and lifted her hand to his lips. “How can I pass up the opportunity to save a lovely young lady from her mother’s disapproval?” Veronica’s face went from pink to beet red in a heartbeat. Tucker smiled. “She doesn’t have to stay you know.”

Callie watched the girl’s eyes widen. “What do you mean?”

“He means that by Magian law, it is permissible during Triune for you to request the absence of your parent’s presence. Makes sense to me. How can you enjoy yourself and find a compatible, um, match, beneath Mama’s hawk-eyed gaze?”

Tyghe’s charming laugh made Callie smile, as did the look of revelation on Veronica’s face. “She’ll *have* to go?”

Tyghe slid his hand along Callie’s ass, making her jump. Tucker’s fingers twitched on her back, letting her know he knew what his brother had done. If he felt the same kind of electricity she did whenever the two of them touched her, she wasn’t surprised. It was impossible to miss.

His answer to Veronica was clipped. “Yes. It’s the law. You can tell her I said so if you’re nervous about her reaction.”

“Are you kidding?” Veronica twirled, clapping her hands in almost childlike delight. “I’ve had my eye on this sexy Australian for hours. He’s a grower, just like me. Now I can finally approach him. *After* I tell Mom not to wait up.” She hugged Callie again. “You’re always lucky to run into. Enjoy your evening. I know I will.” With a wink and a giggle, she was gone.

“Our good deed for the night. Now we can be bad.” Tyghe’s whispered words in her ear warmed her blood.

Tucker pulled Callie close against his side, his narrowed gaze on his brother. “Harrison?”

“Safely making the rounds with our old friend Conway.” Tyghe glanced at Callie and explained, “Conway is a powerful Magian, and a true Abbott cousin. She is as safe as if she were with one of us. Safer, since Conway’s magic is shielding. The throng will only be able to come so close to baby sister without being pressed back by Con’s energy.”

The music came to a halt as the deejay spoke into the microphone. “Our first success of the night. Early hours, folks, but these three have come back from their private time with a perfect match. Let’s show ’em some Triune love.”

The crowd roared. Callie watched the blushing female, her energy glowing brightly and entwining with her two counterparts’, the different colors swirling around them like miniature fireworks. “Is that normal?”

Tyghe didn’t take his eyes from the threesome as they headed out of sight down a cordoned-off hallway. “If the match is true, yes. It doesn’t last long, but while it does there is no denying it. That glow has saved many a Magian from manipulative families who wish for profitable alliances as opposed to love. This is why Triune, for all its party-like atmosphere, is so important. We aren’t forced into arranged marriages anymore. We learned long ago that an incompatible match can throw our world out of balance. Without balance, we have chaos. Now they go to meet the *Proxenos*, to gain approval for their union.” He leaned around Callie and sent his brother a look. “Speaking of unions, brother...”

“Subtle, Tyghe.” Tucker kept her close as he began to walk through the crowd, Tyghe following close behind.

Callie studied the people they passed, their dancing, writhing bodies so beautiful beneath the strobe lights. “Where are we going? Shouldn’t we be looking for the killer?” Though how she was supposed to study anyone in this kind of atmosphere was beyond her. Why hadn’t Harrison told her this ritual was more like a rave?

Tucker held his finger to his lips, telling her to be silent, even though the music was blasting so loudly she could hardly hear herself think. The bracelet around her wrist warmed, and she looked down in surprise, feeling the soothing energy. Had Moira Abbott made this jewelry to calm her tempestuous child’s nerves? It may not work on Harrison, but it was making Callie feel really relaxed. More than relaxed. A little tipsy.

Tucker turned a sharp corner and led her up one flight of stairs, to a wall of doors, most of them with occupied signs hanging from their knobs. When he found one without a sign, he opened it and pulled her quickly behind him, shutting the door as soon as Tyghe was standing beside her.

It was a white room. Brilliant white. No paintings, no furniture. She couldn’t see where the door that Tucker just closed had been. “Are we in *The Matrix*? What the heck is going on?”

Tyghe laughed out loud and even the somber Tucker smiled, deepening his lickable dimples. “I suppose it is a little like that. The room is enchanted. It will take a few minutes for it to read all of us and come up with the perfect combination.”

“Combination?”

Tyghe licked his lips. “Our fantasies, Callie. The room can read our fantasies. It will find the ones that are most compatible and create a room made just for the three of us.”

“The three of us?” She’d turned into a parrot. “Is this part of the plan? I think I would have definitely remembered if it was part of the plan.”

Tucker walked slowly, determinedly in her direction. “There’s been a new development. After I told my superiors about our plan, they gave me a bit more information. For example, I know for a fact that the powers that be made sure that out of all the people at Triune tonight, only two have compelling magic.”

Callie knew she was one of them, but as she looked into his eyes she gasped. “You?”

Tucker nodded. “And you. I also know that until our magic is revealed through a compatible coupling, the attacker will do nothing. That is the only way these attacks make sense. Not only does that narrow down our list of potential suspects, it leaves us with only one choice.”

She was breathless. “What?”

Tyghe spun her around to face him, his expression unmistakable. “We fuck you, of course. Both of us.”

Chapter Six

As he spoke those words, the room began to form around them. Like paint dripping down colorless walls, filling each corner and crevice until every speck of white was covered.

“Sweet heaven.” Tucker’s ragged whisper captured her own emotions perfectly.

Apparently their minds were hopelessly in the gutter. The room was a veritable cornucopia of copulation. Chains dangled from the wall with bright pink, fuzzy handcuffs at their ends. Toys, including vibrators, blindfolds, a whip, several butt plugs and enough lube for everyone outside to join them lined the shelves beside the bed. That bed. The bed was huge. More than big enough for all three of them to stretch out on.

All three of them. Was this really happening? Was she really going to have sex with the two of them? She was certain she was going to wake up any second. It had to be a dream. Tyghe may only be doing it for the novelty. Tucker may only be doing it to catch a criminal...but Callie? She couldn’t lie to herself. She knew exactly why she wasn’t going to question this fascinating turn of events.

She loved them. Both of them. She’d always known her feelings for Tucker. The ones for Tyghe had come as a shock. All the irritation and insecurity she’d always felt around him had changed over the last week into hunger and desire. She’d missed him when he wasn’t there, and each night he was, only fueled her desire for him. The feelings were just as strong, just as real as the ones she’d always had for Tucker.

But she had to know. “What if it doesn’t work? If the spell Harrison used would allow us to...well for our energies to merge like those others I saw?”

Tucker lifted her chin, turning her face up to his. He looked lighter than she’d seen him in a long time. Younger. “Tyghe told me about the energy you were giving off at the salon. I saw for myself what one of us can do to you.” His jaw tightened, almost imperceptibly, but Callie saw it. “*We are* compatible, Callie. There is no doubt in my mind. Now as beautiful as that dress is, I think its time to take it off.”

Tyghe surprised them both by ducking his knees and lifting Callie over his shoulder, carrying her, she soon realized, to the wall with the handcuffs. “Oh, hell.”

He spanked her bottom playfully. “Don’t play coy with us, wicked girl. It wouldn’t be in here if you weren’t at least curious. And I can’t tell you how happy that makes me.” He set her down, lifting her hand to place a kiss inside her palm, his tongue tracing her life line. Callie shivered, and he smiled, slipping one

faux-fur lined cuff around her wrist. “In the spirit of honesty, you should know this is not the first time Tucker and I have shared a woman.”

Tucker swore and Callie flinched, but Tyghe wouldn’t release her free hand, methodically closing the cuff with a loud click. “In fact,” he continued, grunting when he adjusted the chains to raise her arms above her head, avoiding her knee. “For a year or two there, we developed quite the reputation. I’d ‘Tyghe her up’, and he’d ‘Tucker her out’. Remember that, Tuck?”

Callie glared at him, but it was herself she was angry with. Tied up, the two men staring intently at her, undressing her, she was still aroused. Tyghe unhooked the now flame red dress from behind her neck, letting it drop to the floor, leaving her exposed in nothing but her underwear and heels. She loved the fire that lit in their stormy eyes. She had no shame. They’d done this with other women, and she didn’t care. At least, not enough to ask them to stop.

That didn’t mean she couldn’t torture them the same way they were torturing her. “Thanks for the history lesson.” She jerked her arms, jangling the chains. “This isn’t my first rodeo either.”

Tyghe’s smile was tight. “Why do I get the feeling you aren’t talking about what we did the other night? You mean your old boyfriend. How could we forget good old Mitchell? The rebel without applause.”

“There was nothing wrong with Mitchell.” He just wasn’t Tucker...or Tyghe.

“There was nothing right about him, either.” Tucker grumbled under his breath, surprising her. The few times he’d come out with Harrison when Callie was with Mitchell, he’d always been polite.

“He’s the reason Tucker went a little wild for a while. Mitchell was the first guy you seemed serious about, the first one who hung around long enough to meet all of us. I think Tucker fucked his way through half the single females in Boston before he came up for air.”

“Tyghe, you’re a bastard.” Tucker was unbuttoning his black shirt, his gaze snared by Callie’s hardening nipples.

“Yeah, I’m the bastard. I just didn’t want her hero worship to blind her to the fact that I’m not the only sinner in this room.”

Callie started, her gaze colliding with the vulnerability in Tyghe’s grey eyes. They’d been more intimate in the last few days than she’d ever allowed herself to be with another. Made love in positions and places that made her blush to think about. But they’d never spoken of her reaction to Tucker’s touch. Never spoken of Tyghe’s insecurities. Callie had believed he’d gotten over his concerns. Until now. Now she could see that he was still worried, even after all they’d done, that he’d be pushed aside for his older brother. As much as she wanted Tucker to touch her, as much as the revelation that he’d been jealous of her last relationship thrilled her, she couldn’t let Tyghe think she didn’t want him just as much.

She smiled at him, a little mischievously. “So, what do you do with a woman once you tie her up?”

Both men relaxed at her words. She could see it in the set of their shoulders, their matching smiles. Tucker, especially, had seemed concerned about how she'd take the information about his past.

Tyghe pulled his silk, button-down shirt off over his head. It mussed his fiery hair, making him look a little wild. "I could tell you. But why don't we just show you instead?"

Callie took a deep, shaky breath as the two, stunning Abbott men came closer until they stood on either side of her, their bare chests pressed against her sensitive skin. Tucker cupped her cheek in his hand, turning her face toward his. "I've been dying to kiss you."

His head came down slowly, his eyes studying hers, as if unsure of his welcome. Callie lifted on her toes, arching her neck to press her lips against his, impatient for the taste of him.

Sparks flew. Callie felt as though she were floating, flying. She'd known it would be like this. She'd imagined kissing Tucker so many times. Had always wanted him to be her first. But from the instant his lips touched hers, she knew it had been worth waiting for. Worth all the other kisses she'd had with awkward college boys and blind dates. It was magic.

His anguished moan vibrated against her lips and then his hands were in her hair, angling her head so he could get deeper, take more. The soft kiss turned carnal, intimate. His tongue sought out every hidden part of her mouth. He seemed to be drinking her in, savoring her taste.

Her hands curved into fists, dying to touch him. She whimpered into his mouth when she felt another jolt, another powerful touch. Tyghe. He was on his knees beside her, slipping off her shoes, her thigh-high stockings, trailing tender love bites and wicked licks down her thighs, the inside of her knee, her calf. He tugged her simple, cotton panties down her legs, his breath hot against her wet sex.

Fire burned low in her belly, arousal making her hips tilt helplessly toward his mouth, silently begging. But he ignored her plea, offering only the lightest lick before his lips rose to caress the curve of her belly, the underside of her breast.

Tucker sucked her lower lip into his mouth at the same time Tyghe wrapped his lips around one nipple, his fingers lightly pinching the other. Callie cried out against Tucker's lips, arching her back to push her breast deeper into Tyghe's mouth. *Yes*. It was overwhelming. Hands touching, lips tasting everywhere. But she needed more.

Her clit felt swollen, the cool air of the room torturing her sensitive sex. Her thighs were wet with need, a need she wished one of them would fulfill. She pulled her mouth away from Tucker, gasping for air. "Please."

Tyghe lifted his head from her breast. "Damn, I love it when she begs."

Tucker growled. "Please what, baby? Tell us what you need."

She closed her eyes on a moan, as two hands slid down her sides, tracing her hips before moving inward. Two sets of fingers tangled in the curls of her sex, and two matching male groans filled the air when she drenched their hands with her arousal.

“Fuck, baby.”

“Damn, Callie.”

Tucker bit her chin. “Is this what you need?” He slipped one finger inside her, Tyghe quickly following his lead. “You need us inside you? You need to be filled?”

Oh God. “Yes. Fill me. Fuck me. Both of you. I’ve wanted it so long.” Longer than she’d realized. And when she’d discovered that Magians had two mates each, a part of her had ranted at the fates that kept her so close to what she wanted. So close, yet worlds apart. But not tonight. She could have them—have this tonight.

“Tyghe, watch out. I can’t wait. Not with her. Not now.” Tucker stepped back, pulling away from her despite her sound of denial. Her lashes fluttered, and her eyes went wide. He looked fierce. Primal.

His cheeks had flushed, his face tight, nostrils flared as though scenting his prey. He lifted the hand that had touched her to his lips. Callie whimpered as he licked his fingers, his blue-grey eyes burning with desire. For her.

He made a motion with his hand and her cuffs popped open, releasing her from her confinement. Had Tucker done that? She felt Tyghe reach out, rubbing her arms until she tore her gaze from the watchful Tucker to look at him. He was in bad shape as well. His smile hard, eyes sparking with silver lightning. “He needs you, Callie. *We* need you. That’s what makes you different. No teasing. No drawn out games. Not with you. Not yet anyway.” He winked, and she nodded, feeling the same. She wanted to taste and touch every part of them. Wanted to study their bodies until she knew them better than she knew her own. But not now. Now the beat of her heart was a drumbeat, pounding its impatience through her veins. She needed them inside her. Needed to be whole. *Now*.

Tyghe rubbed her shoulders and turned her back to his brother. Tucker, who’d been bent over removing his shoes and pants, stood. Callie licked her lips, her throat going dry at the sight of his bare body. Broad shoulders, a lean, muscled torso, abs she wanted to slide her tongue over—Tucker was a masterpiece. Perfectly made. And his cock...she swallowed. Hard and flushed and so big, she wondered if it would fit.

He went to lie down on the bed, never once taking his gaze from her body. Tyghe let go of her, and she turned toward him, watching as he quickly stripped off his pants as well. They’d gone after each other so quickly each time, she’d never had a chance to really study his body.

Leaner than Tucker, but just as chiseled, just as blessed in every way that counted. Could you ever have too much of a good thing? She sure as hell hoped not.

Tyghe smiled and tilted his head. “You gonna window shop all day? Or did you want to try something on?”

A surprised laugh bubbled in her throat. She was still laughing when he kissed her. There was no hesitation in his kiss. He took her mouth as though he had every right, his tongue tangling with hers while he walked her backwards toward the bed.

She felt the backs of her knees touch the soft coverlet, and then she was whirled around and lifted, her hands reaching out to balance herself and landing on Tucker's rock-hard chest.

Tyghe was behind her, his arm around her waist as he guided her on the bed until she was straddling Tucker's hips. "Isn't she the sexiest thing you've ever seen, Tuck? Who knew all these sweet, edible curves were hidden beneath those baggy sweatshirts she loves to wear?"

"I did." Tucker wasn't smiling, and Callie trembled at the rough need in his voice.

Tyghe's lips rubbed against her shoulder, his hands smoothing over her hips as he mumbled. "Yeah. I did too." He took a deep breath, kissing her one last time before leaning back on his heels.

Tucker lifted his hands to Callie's hips, biting his lip at the arc of electricity that she could see flowing up his arms at the touch. "Are you ready, baby? I don't think I can wait much longer."

She nodded, lowering her hips until she could feel the wide head of his cock pressing insistently against her sex.

He growled. "You're so wet, Callie. Hot. More." His grip tightened, and Callie's head fell back on a moan as he entered her slowly, inch by thick, delicious inch. She tried to press down harder, take more, but he held her fast. "No. I want to enjoy this. You don't know how long I've...ahh, fuck, baby. So tight."

Tyghe leaned close to whisper in her ear. "I know what he's feeling right now, Callie. I haven't been able to get your sweet pussy out of my dreams since I had you. Staying away from you this week nearly killed me. But the waiting is over. Take him, Callie. Take all of him, that's right. Show him how much you want him."

Tyghe's words as Tucker filled her only added to the eroticism of the moment. Bright violet energy was already swirling up inside her, around her, and she knew there was more to come.

She rocked against Tucker slowly, sensually. He was biting his lip hard enough to draw blood, watching her through his thick, dark lashes as she rode him. Tyghe's hands were caressing her back, his low murmurs of approval guiding her as she quickened her pace, reveling in the feeling of Tucker beneath her, inside her.

Callie gasped in surprise when Tyghe's hand slid around, his fingers massaging her clit as Tucker's hips lifted off the bed, taking her deeper. "Oh God."

Tyghe body was pressing against her back, his cock hard and blazing hot against the cheeks of her ass, his fingers massaging her. "That's right, Callie. You want it don't you? Want to feel both of us inside you. Both of us fucking you."

Too many sensations. Too much. Callie cried out as she came. She could feel her energy reach out to lick at the male bodies surrounding her, heard their groans of pleasure. Tucker's body jerked beneath her when her inner muscles squeezed him tight with the power of her climax.

"Perfect." Tyghe's rasping voice shook as he pushed her forward, until she was pressed breast to chest with Tucker, who instantly took her mouth with a hungry growl.

Tyghe was caressing her ass, spreading her cheeks, but she still jumped when she felt the cool liquid. His thumb rubbed it into her ass, massaging her intimately as Tucker's cock pulsed inside her.

"I wish I could take my time. I have so many plans for this ass, Callie. So many wicked dreams of bending you over the kitchen table and fucking you with my tongue until you scream. Of sliding one of those plugs inside you and making you keep it in all day, knowing as you went to class or talked to your friends, you'd be spending the whole day thinking of me, ready for me to make you come."

He did? She'd never known. She thought he'd hated her for so long. She moaned. So much for her Spidey sense.

Tyghe wasn't done. "Tucker's had his share of fantasies too. Fantasies some of the women we've been with didn't take too kindly to. If he wasn't an enforcer, an Abbott, he'd have been cursed for calling out one woman's name while being taken by another."

Her eyes popped open, and she pulled her lips from Tucker's, meeting his storm-tossed gaze with her own. He'd called her name? Didn't he know how she felt about him? How she'd always felt about him? Her brow furrowed, and his finger came up to smooth the crease. "Later, baby. Now, just breathe."

The head of Tyghe's cock pressed against her ass, pushing inside the tight ring of muscles until she felt a small pop, and he was in. "Fuck. *Fuck.*" She was shaking. Pleasure? Pain? She wasn't sure. Tucker's cock was inside her, her sex tightening around him as Tyghe slowly, but firmly thrust further inside her.

Tucker was kissing her cheek, her neck. "Breathe, baby. You can take us. You were born to take us. Born for this."

She couldn't. She wasn't. But, oh God it felt good. Shocks of electric passion pulsed through her veins. Every small twist of Tucker's hips brought him deeper, further inside her. She turned to look over her shoulder at Tyghe, immediately riveted by his passionate expression. His head was thrown back, his jaw flexing with restraint, eyes closed until he sensed her watching him. He stared at her with something akin to victory lighting his eyes. "Mine." He thrust home, his hips flush against her, fully inside her, and looked over her head at his brother. "Ours."

"Ours." Tucker echoed, tugging her head back around to kiss her, as though he couldn't help himself. He pulled away and grinned, his dimples deepening in his handsome face. Callie was hit by a wave of love so strong it almost blinded her.

And then they started to move.

Callie was caught between them, holding tight to Tucker as the two men began to thrust inside her. One retreating while the other advanced. In and out in a smooth, irresistible rhythm. Filling her. Claiming her.

She felt the power running through her, noticing as she bent her head that silver and deep purple arcs of energy were wrapping around her arms, her body—just as the violet light, the energy that only seemed to be growing stronger inside her, was wrapping around them. They were joining together, body and soul. It was more intimate than she'd ever imagined sex could be. It was making love.

The rhythm grew faster, more powerful. Tyghe was shafting her, his thrusts deep and long, harder and harder. Tucker was lowering her as he lifted his hips, pumping her against him, a low continuous growl of pleasure rumbling from his chest. She wanted it to go on forever. It couldn't. Callie knew she was close again. Already so close to coming. She wanted them to come together, wanted to feel both of them lose control.

She tightened the muscles of her ass around Tyghe, pushing back hard against him. He shouted her name, and she smiled. Tucker saw the telling expression. "He's right," he whispered roughly. "You are a bad girl."

She rocked against his hold, thrusting hard against him, making them both gasp. "I've never been bad before. You must bring it out in me."

His eyes narrowed, and Callie knew she'd won. Their moans mingled in the private room as they began to move against each other with a wildness that had nothing to do with technique, and everything to do with the goal. The bed shook with the power of their thrusts, and Callie felt the power spiking between them.

"Callie, baby, I need—I can't—"

"Fuck, I'm coming."

"Yes."

They came together in a firestorm of light and color. Callie felt as though she were torn apart and put together again in the space of a heartbeat. Reborn. Alive. Tucker called her name, saying it over and over, like a touchstone, a mantra as he climaxed inside her. Tyghe bit her shoulder, hard, his hips pumping furiously against her, filling her with his release.

They collapsed beside each other on the bed, all of them groaning as their bodies separated. Bodies that were, even now, glowing brightly with their magic. And then something strange happened.

A phone rang.

Callie sat up instinctually, a small part of her brain screaming, praying this wasn't a dream. That she wouldn't wake to a phone call from Harrison in her own room, with no magic, no Tucker or Tyghe.

"I'm pretty sure none of us have a phone fetish." Tyghe's sardonic comment drew a chuckle from Callie, but Tucker tensed beside her.

“It’s probably for me. My superiors will want to move this along, catch our criminal while we have an opening. I should get it.”

Tyghe sighed, leaping from the bed to cross the room to where the phone had appeared. “I’ve got this, Tuck. I’ll just tell your boss that it’s rude to interrupt our afterglow just because there’s a psycho on the loose.”

Callie shivered. She’d forgotten the reason they were doing this. Forgotten for a moment that the magic whipping around her was an illusion. All of it was.

“What are you thinking?” Tucker’s voice was low, intimate. She didn’t want to ruin this moment with reality. She wished she had the power to stop time. She would freeze this moment, this feeling of satisfaction and love. She would stay with them forever.

“Thinking that you two really know what you’re doing. I’m surprised women aren’t following you around like lovesick puppies begging for a bone.”

Tucker lifted up on his elbow to face her, his expression sober, intense. “It’s never been like that, Callie. I’ve never felt—” He sighed, running a hand through his dark hair as he searched for the right words. “They weren’t you. I never forgot that, hard as I tried.”

Her eyes blurred. “You don’t have to say things like that, Tucker. I know why we’re here. I know that when this is done I’ll go back to being human, while you and Tucker will eventually have to find a Triune of your own.”

“Callie, you don’t understand. What I’m trying to say, rather badly, is that I—”

“Wow, they *are* a grumpy bunch. Now I know why I decided to get my degree in lazy playboy instead of law enforcement. They want to wrap this thing up. We have to go. Now.”

Tucker blew out a frustrated breath, but Callie leapt from the bed, reaching for her dress. “Let’s go get this jackass before my special afterglow wears off. I wouldn’t want this all to be for nothing.”

Tyghe’s hiss of reaction and Tucker’s silence filled her with guilt. She couldn’t help it. Her heart felt like it was crushing in her chest. She ran into the bathroom to clean herself off, angrily wiping the tears from her cheeks before throwing her dress back on. It instantly turned black. Great. Hopefully it didn’t mean she was going to her own funeral.

Chapter Seven

“Okay, that deejay thing was humiliating. I just love it when hundreds of people are staring at you as someone with a microphone announces you’ve just had sex.” She was trying to fill the silence. Neither man was looking at her, talking to her. She deserved it, she knew. But still. They were a team for the moment. “So do you think he’ll try to catch us before we get to the *Proxenos*? Try to separate me from the two of you? Anybody want to clue me in on the rest of the plan? Seeing as I’m bait and all?”

Tucker sighed, turning to face her in the quiet, empty hallway they’d been directed to. “We have to follow this through, as though we don’t know any better. At least I know now why it’s been so hard for anyone to see the victims’ last actions before the attack. This hallway has a powerful blocking enchantment. Can you feel it, Tyghe?”

His brother nodded. “Kind of unusual for a simple Triune judging, I’m thinking. Someone around here doesn’t want anyone to know what’s going on.”

“This way, all of you.” A man in a long green robe bowed his head, turning to guide them further down the seemingly endless red hallway. “Congratulations on your matching. I haven’t seen such a strong glow for years. A sure sign of a true and joyous match.”

Callie grimaced behind him. Sure sign, huh? They must say that to every trio, because she knew better. Knew it was fake. Tucker reached back to take her hand and squeeze, and she felt herself softening. He was a good man, reassuring her even after she’d been so rude. He was going to make some Magian female really happy someday. Callie would try not to hate her too vehemently.

“Here we are. Each of you are to go into one of these three doors. The *Proxenos* will question you separately, and then you will be questioned together before they can sanction your union officially. Good luck.”

The man disappeared as quickly as he’d come, and Tyghe raised his brow. “This is new. Separate questions? Tuck, I don’t know about you, but this feels wrong.”

Tucker nodded, and Callie silently agreed. Her senses were tingling, the tickling along her spine going crazy. Something was off. Something was a lie. She could feel it. But they had to do it. They were here for the truth, and they had to get it. She reached for her doorknob. “In for a penny...” She looked at her two men and smiled brightly. “Wish me luck.”

It looked like an ordinary office. A judge’s chamber. There was even a set of golden scales sitting on the long oak desk in front of her. But she didn’t see anyone inside. She looked around, noticing the strange

scrollwork and symbols painted along the top of the wall, the glass case filled with an unusual collection of small figurines, all of blonde females, their little faces contorted in various degrees of agony. “Lovely.”

“You like my collection? I have a fondness for the artist. He knows what I like. You must be the Abbotts’s match. Callie, is it?”

Callie whirled around in surprise. An elegant, elderly woman was sitting behind the desk, as if she’d been there from the very beginning. She wore a feminine business suit, and her hair was perfectly coiffed. She’d imagined a dark cloaked figure, someone ominous, but this woman didn’t look as though she’d hurt a fly.

Still, the tickle up her spine was going crazy. “Yes, I’m Callie.”

“What makes you think you are good enough for two Abbotts, Callie? They are the most prestigious family in North America. Their lineage is made up of powerful Magians dating back since the discovery of the continent.”

Callie hesitated, and the woman shook her head. “That was unfair of me. Especially since I can see for myself that you are powerful in your own right. Your energy is strong. Was your mother as powerful as you?”

Callie shrugged, feeling she was safe enough to tell the truth. “My mother died when I was just a baby. I don’t know that much about her.”

The older woman’s eyes narrowed. “What is your compelling power? Show me. Try to use it. Now.”

Okay, this was more like it. The woman was pushing all her warning buttons. Still, she had to see this thing through. She reached inside herself, focusing her energy. “Stand up.”

The woman shifted in her seat, her hands curling on the top of the desk as she resisted the order. “Good. Again. With all your might.”

“Stand up.” She was really trying, but apart from a moment of hesitation, a moment when the woman frowned as she again looked as though she might stand up, it didn’t work.

She smiled at Callie. It wasn’t a pretty smile. “Don’t feel bad. I’ve spent a lot of time on this room. It is full of charms to counter compelling magic. You can never be too careful, now can you?”

This woman did not like her. Or compelling magic. “I suppose not. Is that all, ma’am?”

The woman stood and walked closer to Callie, studying her features with hawk-like intensity. “You look familiar. Don’t lie and tell me you are a distant Abbott cousin. I know every family in existence. You look very similar to a line that died out nearly twenty six years ago.”

She was twenty-six. A shiver of foreboding ran through her limbs. “Oh?”

A nod and smirk was her answer. “The Fairbanks family. The last of them, Euterpe, was the most beautiful of her generation. But like all the spoiled children of powerful families, she believed she could do whatever she wanted. Hurt whomever she wanted. She had compelling power as well. The power to make people want her, the power to make them want to die without her.” She took another step toward Callie,

smiling politely, though her eyes were hard. “All the Fairbanks had the strangest tendency. They loved to name their female children after figures in Greek mythology. Especially the muses. Tell me, dear. Is Callie your true name? Or is it short for something else?”

Her mind reeling, Callie answered thoughtlessly. “Calliope. My name is Calliope.”

The woman gripped her wrist, hard, the strength surprising in one who looked so frail. “It’s you, isn’t it? There were glimmers of potential in the others, they were the right age, distantly connected to your lineage with traces of that evil power, but it is really you. Euterpe’s bastard daughter. The last of the Fairbanks’s line.”

She was the killer. There was no doubt in Callie’s mind. Now in some insane twist, she believed Callie was her true target. The child of a Magian. It was impossible. She knew it was. But she needed to play along. Needed answers. “I told you I never knew my mother. Even if I am the child of Euterpe, what could you want from me?”

“Oh you are her child, all right. You have no respect for authority either.” She dragged Callie closer to the desk, a pull she could not resist, despite her efforts. “When I first became *Proxenos*, it was an honor to my family. I had the wisdom to be the best, and everyone knew it. I could have no match of my own, but it was worth it. My family would benefit from my service.” The woman’s eyes glazed with memory. “Euterpe was my only failure. She loved two men from a questionable family. Two men who were not worthy to continue the Fairbanks line. To make matters worse, my brothers loved her. She had flirted with them at her first Triune, and they had sworn to me their magic reacted to her touch.” She shook Callie’s wrist, bruising it in her vehemence. “She was meant for them. But she fell for physical beauty over the magical law. My law. Came in here and demanded I give my approval, glowing from her recent whorish escapade.”

Callie listened, feeling suddenly sorry for the young Euterpe. “You denied her match.”

She nodded proudly. “I used my full authority to ensure there could be no further copulation between them. It couldn’t be true, don’t you see? She must have woven a spell to get her way. My brothers wouldn’t lie to me.” She took a breath. “It seemed to be working for a time until I realized she’d defied my edict and gone through another to join with her matches.” The woman looked indignant, astounded at the memory. “We got rid of the two men, of course, which wouldn’t have happened if she’d just accepted the truth. I knew my brothers would never be happy without her. I had to do it. When they left her house after the funeral, where I know she denied them yet again, they were convinced they had to fight a duel to the death to win her. That only *one* of them could have her. I couldn’t stop them. They killed each other in cold blood. I knew then. She had compelled them to do it. There was no other explanation. She had to die.”

Her grip twisted Callie’s wrist until it felt as though it would break, but she pushed with her energy, seeking more. “What makes you think there was a child?”

“When I killed her I noticed the children’s clothing folded neatly at the foot of the bed. I searched the house and found a crib, recently used, and I realized she’d had a child with her dead lovers. The only proper course was to find it and put it to death to restore balance.”

“Isn’t that a little over the top?”

She watched the woman lose all her composure. “Blood for blood. I had no family left, neither would she. I could have had romance, fancy dresses and gay parties, but I followed my calling. Followed the rules. She should have followed the rules. When a seer told me her offspring would appear during this Triune, I knew I’d have my chance. A Magian is forced by instinct to seek out their matches. All I needed to do was find a compeller, someone who fit the profile. I was disappointed with all my near misses, but careful. I could have sworn the last girl was the one. She tried to attack me, if you can believe it. But now I know I was wrong. It’s you. The orphan Calliope. You even look like her. It all fits.”

It did fit. That was the scariest part of all of this. Callie was the right age, an orphan. Her name, Calliope, a name that she was adamantly given before she’d been abandoned. But she’d had no powers until Harrison had used her glamour. How could it be true?

The Magian pushed Callie to her knees, the woman’s strength was unbelievable. She lifted the golden scales from her desk above her head. “After all these years, justice can at last be served.”

Callie felt a blazing heat around her wrist, then shrieked in surprise when the golden snake’s head lifted from her bracelet, opened its fang-filled mouth, biting down on the older woman’s hand with an angry hiss.

“What?” The scales fell to the ground as her attacker reached for the small snake piercing her flesh. “You shouldn’t have been able to bring any enchanted weapons into my office. I have protection.”

“You’re no longer protected, Margaret. You know the rules of magic.” The far wall disappeared, revealing Tucker, Tyghe and three other men, their faces grim. “Let the girl go. You must face your judgment.”

“But I am judgment. I am *Proxenos*. My laws were broken.”

“No one is above the law. Not even you.” The tall man beside Tucker reached out with his hand, his golden energy leaving his hands like a lasso, wrapping around Margaret’s body and pulling her away from Callie, her clawed hands curling as she screamed in denial.

Tucker ran to Callie’s side, pulling her into his arms and burying his face in her hair. Tyghe joined them, caressing her back protectively as he watched the others take the old woman away in silence. “I’m glad that’s over.”

Callie sighed. “So that’s it? No energy fight? No shoot ’em up?”

Tucker pulled back with a stern frown. “You sound disappointed. If you’d like to bring her in here again so you can have a crazy girl fight to the death, I can ask my supervisor.”

She shook her head. “No. It’s just, well, a little anti-climactic.”

“We’ll try to make the lack of climax up to you later. Once you agree to be officially joined with us...Calliope Fairbanks.”

Callie tugged out of their arms, shaking her head. Despite her doubts, it couldn’t be true. “Don’t you start. She was obviously a lunatic. I’m not even Magian. There’s no way I could...what?” Tucker was looking guilty. “What aren’t you telling me, Tucker Abbott?”

The bracelet snake slid across the floor casually, as if it was perfectly normal for jewelry to come to life, and Callie moved closer to the men, her laughter tinged with hysteria. “And what the hell is that?”

“I never knew Mom made defensive totems. Her jewelry is usually used for healing and luck.” Tucker sounded just as baffled as she was.

The snake began to morph, the gold growing and spreading to form itself into a four-foot-eight woman with a sheepish smile and tear filled eyes. “Jenner?”

“Sorry about that. It was the only way I was sure you could be safe. When I recognized that woman...well, I lost my composure.” She took a step closer to Callie, the tears glinting on her cheeks like diamonds. “It’s true, dear. You are Euterpe’s daughter. I know. I was the one she asked to take you away. To hide in a place no one could find you until you came into your own. I knew she was related to those crazy Magians who were stalking Euterpe, but I had no idea your mother’s killer was *Proxenos*. She never told me.”

Tyghe rubbed the back of his neck, shaking his head at their housekeeper. “What the hell is going on around here? You’re a morpher?”

Jenner nodded. “Rarer than compelling magic, I know. When your mother asked me to give Harrison the necklace I thought I’d found the perfect way to protect Callie as the matching bracelet”

“So you were on her wrist the whole time? Callie is Magian? Where the hell have I been for the last fifteen years?”

Tucker put his hands on Callie’s shoulders protectively. “What I still want to know is, why did you let her think she was human for so long? Especially after you knew how unhappy she was with her foster family.”

Jenner sobbed, but nodded her acceptance of the censure in both Tyghe’s and Tucker’s eyes. “At first no one could find her. Euterpe and I worked a spell to bury her magic, so she could pass as human. Stay off Magian radar. It worked a little too well. But I had a feeling the day I sent Harrison to the park. And I am the one who suggested she work on the glamour spell. I knew that her power, joined with my own, would be enough to release what was inside you.” She looked pleadingly at Callie. “I took care of you as much as I could. Loved you.”

Callie’s mind was reeling. She turned to Tucker. “When did you know?”

“Last week.” His expression was closed. She couldn’t tell what he was feeling. She turned to Tyghe.

He held up his hands. “Don’t look at me, Callie. I’ve been left in the dark along with you.”

She was Magian? The power she felt, that she'd been feeling, had been hers all along? And Tucker had known. "Is that why you had sex with me?"

Tucker glanced quickly at Jenner then away, a flush tingeing his cheeks. He shook his head. "I made love to you because I've wanted you since I was old enough to know what wanting was. Because I thought I'd never be allowed to have you. At least, not unless I served my people long enough to earn a commission. Then I could have done whatever I wanted. Including marrying a human. That would be the only way around the rules."

"Magian rules kind of suck."

Tyghe looked at the ceiling and agreed with Callie. "Amen to that."

Tucker pulled her back into his arms, ignoring Jenner. "I love you. I have since the moment you walked, soaking wet, into our kitchen. I tried to get over it. Tried to fight it. But Magian or human, whatever you are, you are the only one I'll ever want."

"I would say ditto, but when you first arrived I thought all girls should be turned into frogs. But out of every girl I knew, I wanted to pull your hair the most, so I guess that counts." Callie and Tucker laughed, turning to a smiling Tyghe. He sobered. "I do love you. More than I thought I could, sweet Callie."

Suddenly it hit her. Everything she'd ever wanted was hers for the taking. Tucker. Tyghe. She was Magian. The men who had stolen her heart loved her in return.

"Does this mean I'm forgiven? If so I'll be home waiting for you with some hot tea and your favorite snack." Jenner wiped the tears from her eyes, beamed at Callie for one speaking moment, and popped out of sight.

Tyghe shuddered. "I think the family housekeeper has been holding out on us. Big time. Get ready, Callie. You know she's making plates of cucumber sandwiches as we speak."

Tucker smiled into Callie's eyes. "Will you be with us? Let us be the matches of your heart?"

Callie looked at the two men. She'd known them all her life. They'd driven her crazy, but they'd always been like family. She didn't know anything else. Where she was going, what her mother had been like, or how she would be a Magian when she'd thought she was human for all of her adult life. All she knew was that wherever direction her path took her in, she wanted to walk it with them.

"Yes. I will. I do. I love you."

They both took turns kissing her, and her body grew warm with the memory of their earlier lovemaking. Tyghe groaned when he pulled away from her. "I think we should go back to our room upstairs. To celebrate."

"Sounds good, but shouldn't we find Harrison? I bet she's dying of curiosity."

Tucker chuckled. "Or boredom. You know she's going to be mad that she missed all the excitement."

Callie nodded. "Livid." She tilted her head playfully. "Maybe she could wait a little while longer."

“Harrison’s gone?”

Tucker shrugged. “That’s what the bouncer said. Said she ran out in a hurry as soon as she saw the enforcers walking Margaret out through the crowd. Said she looked angry, but not hurt.”

Callie watched him walk closer to where she was lying, bound on the bed. Her body was buzzing from the anticipation, as well as the plug Tyghe had inserted inside her before casually heading for the shower, sticking his fingers in his ears in case she decided to use her ability to bring him back.

She should have, but she couldn’t believe he would leave her here for so long. Now she was on fire, and as Tucker got his first good look at her face, she knew he could see her need.

“So what did your superior say?”

She bit her lip and he tilted his head, a curious expression on his beautiful face. “Sure you want to talk about this now?”

“I need to know. Maybe it will distract me until Tyghe gets back and I can make him dance around the room in a pink tutu.”

Tucker tried to hide his smile, sitting down beside her and placing his hand on her upper thigh. Callie flinched. She was so sensitive, even the air was arousing her.

“Okay, but I think the *Proxenos* would have reconsidered his quick acceptance of our Triune if he’d known you had such a vengeful streak.” His smile faded. “My boss checked the cold file. Euterpe Fairbanks did have a child, and a Triune match with Harrison and Lawrence Godwin.” He met her gaze, both acknowledging the significance of the names. “She’d also sent several complaints to Magian law enforcement about Margaret’s brothers. But they didn’t believe she was actually in any danger. In fact, Euterpe was under suspicion for the murder of not only our perp’s siblings, but her own Triune matches as well.”

“How horrible.” Callie’s stomach clenched. It was hard to think of the Fairbanks woman as her mother, but what she’d gone through just to be with the men she loved, to protect her child, broke her heart.

He sighed. “After she died there were no leads. Even her childhood governess had disappeared without a trace.”

Callie bit her lip. “Jenner?”

“Jenner,” he caught Callie’s gaze, his own troubled with the past. “I remember when she came to us. I found her and my mother crying in the kitchen. Mom was ready to deliver Harrison at any minute, and I remember being worried that something was wrong. Jenner moved in that night and never left. I don’t know what we ever did without her.”

“Why does that make you so sad?” Callie could see the tortured glimmer in his eyes.

“She should have been with *you*. Taking care of you. You should never have had to spend all those years alone thinking you had no one. That you were abandoned.”

Her heart melted. This was why she loved him. Why she'd always loved him. "She was protecting me, Tucker. The same way you've taken care of me since I've met you. How can I regret my life, when it's always had your family in it? And you."

She felt the ropes that bound her arms loosening, and she glanced at the bed post to watch the knots there unravel by themselves. "Tucker? What are you doing?"

"Taking care of you."

Her body lifted, hovering over him. His eyes were more blue than grey as he studied her naked flesh. "There won't be enough time in this life to do everything I want to do to you, for you."

She felt herself lowering, straddling his lap. The ropes that dangled from her arms pulled her wrists over his shoulders, binding them together around his neck. "You're just as kinky as your brother, aren't you?"

He smiled before he kissed her. "You have no idea."

She couldn't think after that, lost in the sparkling energy gaining strength between them. Passion, barely dimmed by their sober conversation, flared back to life inside her. She wrapped her legs tightly around him, her tongue sparring with his for control.

He groaned, and she smiled against his lips. She could feel his erection pressing hard through his clothing, could feel the answering pulse in her sex. His hand slid between her legs and she gasped, his knuckled brushing against her clit as he unbuttoned his pants.

His lips lifted from hers and her lids lifted, marveling at the love in his eyes. "Calliope Fairbanks, you are mine. Finally mine."

She inhaled sharply as he entered her, the plug filling her from behind making the fit deliciously, unbearably snug. Tucker noticed, his jaw clenching as his hands cupped the cheeks of her ass, pulling her closer. God, it was heaven.

"Get used to this, baby. To being filled like this every night and day for the rest of your life. I'm not letting you out of my sight again. I have a hunch Tyghe feels the same way."

"Sounds, *mmm*, sounds good to me." Callie arched her back, desperate to take more, to take all of him. She rocked her hips against him, slowly, sensually, loving each and every sensation.

Violet and darker shades of purple swirled around them, enclosing them in a cocoon of light. It felt as though she were merging with everything he was. Like magic.

His fingers tightened on her skin, marking her, she knew, as he took control. He buried his face in her hair, his teeth closing on the sensitive curve of her neck. He set a new rhythm. A primal beat that her heart raced to match.

A fuse had been lit inside her. Electricity arcing through her body in a way she was growing addicted to. Yes. So close. So... "Tucker."

He stood up with her in his arms, his muscles bunching and rippling against her skin as he pumped inside her, hard and fast and aching deep. She cried out, feeling her body dissolve into a blinding light.

“Tell me, Callie.”

“Love you. I love you. Oh, *yes*.”

He came with a shout, dropping to his knees with her in his arms as the power of it felled him. Callie felt the fine tremor in his limbs as he held her, crushingly close, and she kissed his damp forehead soothingly.

“I don’t know if I should be worried or if I need therapy, but that totally turned me on.”

Tucker huffed out a ragged laugh against Callie’s chest and she looked up with a satisfied smile. Tyghe stood in the bathroom doorway, his damp skin bare but for one small, obviously tented towel around his waist.

He strode toward them, attempting to look put out. “I can’t believe you didn’t wait for me.”

Tucker stood with Callie in his arms, holding her as easily as if she weighed nothing at all. “That was one long, damn shower for a man with a naked woman tied to his bed to take, Tyghe. You must have more willpower than I do.”

Callie noticed his reddening cheeks, her eyes narrowing in suspicion. “Why were you in there so long?”

He held up his hands. “I couldn’t help it. This is a fantasy reading room after all. Not *my* fantasy, mind you. I never imagined anything like *that*.”

Callie glanced at Tucker and they both smiled, thinking the same thing. She heard Tyghe let out a surprised laugh as his brother took off toward the shower at a run, with her bouncing in his arms. She knew he’d be right behind them. Beside them.

Always.

About the Author

Stolen away by a free-spirited Gypsy as a child (though she still swears she's my mother), I spent my childhood roaming the countryside, meeting fascinating characters and having amazing adventures. As the perpetual "new kid", my friends more often than not were found between the pages of a book...and in my own imagination. I read everything I could get my hands on. At the age of 11, I read my first romance and I've been hooked ever since.

I've been a nurse, a lead vocalist in several bands, a published lyricist and even a returning university student majoring in Anthropology and Mythology. Throughout all of my varied careers, I would sigh as I read one fantasy-filled story after another saying, "Someday I want to write one of those," until one day my husband said, "So do it." And I did. Now I can't imagine doing anything else.

To learn more about R. G. Alexander please visit www.rgalexander.com. Send an email to R. G. Alexander at r.g.alexander@hotmail.com.

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Surrender Dorothy

What Happens When a Wicked Wizard Woos a Wary Witch?

Surrender Dorothy

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Sequel to *Not in Kansas*

Dorothy knows her new neighbor is too wicked to be trusted. As a natural witch, she recognizes the Wizard for what he truly is. As a woman, she recognizes him as a threat to her sanity.

Z has tried everything. Pursued her in dreams, bribed her cat, enticed her with peep shows meant to whet her appetite and drive her crazy. And still she resists. What's a Wizard to do? He came to Earth to have an adventure, not lose his heart to the one witch whose guard he can't get past.

When he finally gets his hands on her, the power between them is undeniable. But Dorothy's family secret could make him sorry she surrendered.

Enjoy the following excerpt for Surrender Dorothy:

He stood away from the wall, his fingers reaching up to undo the top button of his white linen shirt. Dorothy took a step back. "What are you doing?"

He took another step. "Earning your trust." Another button undone. "I never had any interest in Emily. She was merely a way for me to get close to you. I never touched her."

Dorothy bumped against a piece of furniture, altering her retreat without looking where she was going. "You're interested in everyone. You forget I had a bird's eye view of just how interested. Why should I believe you?"

He slipped the shirt off, and it dropped to the ground. Dorothy swallowed. He was beautiful. The ruby amulet lay against his lean, smooth chest, stomach muscles rippling with his slow, deliberate movements as he continued to stalk her. "I was never intimate with any of them, not after seeing you, and you know it. I wanted you to know me. To know my appetites. To want me not in spite of them,"—he smiled—"but because of them. And don't lie and say you didn't enjoy every minute of it."

She had. Dorothy heard the rushing of water and she looked behind her. He'd backed her into a room with a small waterfall. Steam rose from the heated pool at its base. This was a bathroom a woman could die happy in. But first she had to know.

"And Kansas?"

"He was fated to be the king's consort. The magic of our world called him, but yes, I sent the storm. Yes, I was attracted to him. And yes, I slept with him. That is what you wanted to know, isn't it?"

The waterfall blurred before her eyes. "Yes."

"Look at me, Dorothy. Please."

He was naked. Gloriously, unashamedly naked, aroused and looking at her as if she were the only thing he wanted in the universe. If only she could believe that.

He held out his arms. "I stand here before you, Zenamulous of the Crow Warriors, the king's wizard, from a line of wizards dating back to the time of Transformation. I have never used my magic to increase my wealth or power, though occasionally I have used it to increase another's pleasure. I have never repressed my passions, but I've never forced them on anyone either."

His chin lifted proudly, but Dorothy could see a hint of vulnerability darken his gaze. "And from the moment I saw you, I knew you were mine."

The ball was in her court. She could see it in the way he held himself so still. He wouldn't use words or powers to woo her, wouldn't take her in his arms or sweep her off her feet. She would have to make the next move. She would have to choose to trust him...or not.

In spite of her pique, in spite of her insecurities and his past, the choice wasn't hard at all. Hadn't she ridden a storm to find him? A few steps were nothing after that. She stopped directly in front of him, making sure he had a clear view. One twist of her fingers and the blanket fell silently to the floor.

His fiery stare scorched her skin. There could be no doubt he liked what he saw. His nostrils flared when she laid one tentative hand on his bare shoulder, skimming it down his arm to wrap around his wrist. He raised his eyebrow and she smiled, lifting his hand and covering it as it cupped her breast.

Dorothy closed her eyes, reveling in the feel of his hand on her. "Oh none of that." Her lids lifted, startled at Z's low command. "I want you to see everything. To look in your eyes as I make you come again and again and again."

Just that quickly she was trembling, arousal coating her sex and heating her thighs. He inhaled. "Makers, you smell amazing. I don't think I can wait to taste you." He knelt in front of her and she gasped, grabbing his shoulders as he pressed an open-mouthed kiss against her clit. He spread the lips of her pussy wide and flattened his tongue against her, as if he were absorbing her into his blood stream.

Z growled against her sex, the vibration weakening her knees until she was leaning heavily against him, her body bowing over his, hair grazing his back. He grabbed her waist, pulling her down to the floor and lifting her legs over his shoulders.

Dorothy lifted her head to watch him staring at her from between her thighs. She felt a moment's insecurity. Her body was totally visible, completely open to him. He sensed her hesitation. "You have the most sensual body I've ever seen. Soft curves of silk and cream. I could drown in you. You are a goddess, sweet Dorothy. Let me worship you."

Her head fell back against the cool floor as he disappeared between her legs. She gasped when his tongue thrust deep inside her sex, his palms spreading her ass cheeks wide, opening her completely to him.

When his thumb, damp with her juices, pressed against her ass, she trembled. Hadn't she fantasized, as she'd watched him entering that young, beautiful man, watching the look of pain and ecstasy on his

angelic face as the wizard rode him that first night? Hadn't she touched herself and dreamt of him inside her in that way? So forbidden. So wanton. Oh God.

He pushed through the tight muscles, biting her inner thigh at her groan. "No one has ever touched you here." It wasn't a question. "I will. I want you on your knees, begging for my cock in your ass. Shit, I could come just thinking about how you'll feel around me. You're so tight, baby, but you can take me." He twisted his thumb inside her, and she screamed at the fullness.

"Not yet, but soon. Now I want to feel you come against my tongue, taste your sweet cream." His actions matched his words, his tongue sliding deep inside her pussy, fucking her as he pushed his thumb in and out of her ass.

Her love for two men could save their future. Her secrets could destroy them all.

The Chancellor's Bride

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Recently re-elected Chancellor Collin sur-Gaerig is a rising star on the political scene, and everyone expects he'll soon be rewarded with an estate and title. He also has a dirty little secret: he's in love with his manservant, Harral. If anyone—especially the wife he's expected to take—discovers their affair, all his aspirations will go up in smoke.

The mysterious woman he finds lying half-dead in the street is strong, beautiful, independent...and aroused when she catches him and Harral in a compromising position. As Aelis worms her way past their closely guarded defenses and into their bed, they realize she's the perfect match for both of them.

But Aelis has a secret of her own, an ex-lover's blackmail scheme that could get them all killed. To save the men she's come to love, she's willing to sacrifice her own happiness, maybe even her life.

Collin's not about to let that happen. For the first time in his life, he's willing to risk it all in order to have it all. Even if it means he could lose the man he's loved for years—and the woman they both want to love forever.

Enjoy the following excerpt for The Chancellor's Bride:

"Come for another eyeful?"

She didn't scream—no sound could have squeezed past her heart where it lodged, pulsing, in her throat. She did jump half a foot in the air, spinning on her heel and shrinking against the wall.

Harral—gods, where had he come from?—stood there in an untucked shirt and trousers, near enough that she could feel his heat on her all-too-bare skin. As she tried pointlessly to think of some excuse for her being outside Collin's bedroom door, he crowded even closer, his eyes burning, mouth curved in a smug little smile. His menacing posture was a blatant reminder of the incident last night, but she didn't turn her face away this time. She couldn't. His gaze held her rapt, helpless, a thrall.

Time seemed to creep along as he placed one hand on the wall beside her head, and the other gently on her neck. The pressure of his fingers was terrifying and thrilling at the same time. Her pulse-point fluttered against the pad of his thumb, and he stroked across it once, twice.

"That's what you've come for, isn't it?" he said, his voice soft and smooth as silk. "It excited you to see me fucking him last night. It made you wet between your legs."

She thought about denying it, but what would be the point? Her knees had turned to water. Despite her rapid breaths, she couldn't seem to get enough air. If not for his hand at her throat and the wall at her back, she'd have collapsed in a heap. His breath fanned her face like the wind from a furnace. Her cunt filled with pressure, so hot and wet she thought she'd come at the merest touch.

He leaned in until his lips were next to her ear. “Or maybe you’d like to join us. Is that it? Does the thought of us both taking you make your cunt wet?” His hand slid downward by increments, his fingers stealing under the plunging, lace-edged neckline of her bed-gown. His mouth touched her neck, first lips, then tongue, then teeth, raising a shiver of need across her flesh.

“Please...” she whispered.

Please what? she had the lingering sense to wonder. God, definitely not *please stop*. If he stopped, she thought she might die. Her hands sought out the taut muscles of his abdomen through the fine linen of his shirt. Then his fingertips closed over her nipple and she let out a ragged moan, pulling him close.

That was all it took, that small gesture of acquiescence, for his calm to evaporate. The rasp of his stubble scraped her jaw as his lips sought hers, slanting over them, tongue plunging deep. His hand cupped her breast, squeezing, his thumb flicking across the peaked nipple, sending a bolt of pleasure straight to her soaking pussy. Pressing forward, he ground his cock against her mound, and she angled her hips to bring her clit harder against him. Her hands found their way under the hem of his shirt, clutching at the rough-textured skin of his back.

He tore his lips from hers, jerked the strap of her gown from her shoulder to bare her breast, lowered his mouth to it. Sucked so hard she had to bite her lip to keep from screaming.

He paused long enough to growl against her skin, “This is what you want, isn’t it? Tell me you want this.”

She was drowning in lust, one hand fisted in his hair, holding his face to her breast. God, she did want this, she wanted everything he’d said, all of it. “I...”

His lips closed over her nipple once more, pulling hard, his tongue flicking across the hypersensitive bead. She opened her eyes to watch the motions of his mouth on her flesh and in the periphery of her vision saw Collin standing in his open bedroom doorway.

With a cry, she shoved Harral away from her, slid down along the wall a few steps, distancing herself from them both. Swiped a hand across her mouth as if she could wipe away Harral’s kisses.

Collin, dressed only in loose Kahlian sleeping trousers, let his gaze crawl from her tousled hair and swollen lips to her exposed breast. Cringing inwardly, she jerked her strap up and fruitlessly tried to tidy her hair, then realized in horror that his gaze had settled on the junction of her legs. She glanced down to see a patch of her own wetness on her gown, a perfect match for the smaller one on the front of Harral’s trousers.

Her face hot, she resisted the urge to cover herself and forced her gaze to Collin’s.

“Please, don’t the two of you stop on my account,” he said quietly, his lips curling upward at one corner.

Oh, god, what had she been thinking, coming out here to spy on them? Yes, she wanted this. She wanted them both. Could hardly make herself think of anything else. But what she wanted and the safe,

sane, intelligent choice were two completely different things. Regardless of what she'd told Collin in the library, this wasn't just business to her anymore. She couldn't afford to get involved with these men.

"I'm sorry," she said hoarsely. "This was a mistake. If you'll excuse me..."

She turned and fled down the hall, but Collin's voice froze her with her hand on her doorknob.

"I have decided to accept your offer of payment, Aelis," he said.

Her breath wheezed to a stop. Slowly, she turned to face him. Harral stood panting where she'd left him, his hair mussed, face flushed, eyes hot and hard. Collin, in comparison, was the picture of composure. She opened her mouth to rescind the offer she'd made him in the library, but he cut her off.

"I've taken the time to compile a tally of what you owe, from the clothing to the bill from the physician, and I will expect the money within fourteen days. You will not be charged for bed and board—I refuse to put a price on my hospitality—nor for any items you do not take with you when you leave my house. I want to make sure everything between us is fair and above board."

She blinked, stymied. He wanted money? "Ah...thank you."

He smiled coolly. "Good. Now that the matter of your debt is settled, I have just one more thing to say. This door—" he gestured toward his bedchamber—"is open to you should you wish to walk through it. It will remain open—in both directions—for as long as it pleases you. But know this—I will permit no more talk of debts or payment. Behind that door, there will be no trade between us but that of pleasure given and pleasure taken. Do you understand, Aelis?"

"Yes" she croaked, her throat so tight she was amazed she could get the word out.

"Freely," he said, his gaze boring into her, "or it is worth nothing."

She stared, stuck in place by her own terror. After a moment, Collin reached a hand out to Harral. "Come to bed, love," he said softly, lacing their fingers together. He led Harral into the bedroom and, giving Aelis one last meaningful look, shut the door behind them.

She stood rooted to the spot just outside her own door. Smoothed one shaking hand down the front of her gown. The patch of wetness had cooled in the air, but between her legs she was on fire.

Why would Collin take her money and then invite her into his bed? *He would have both my money and my body, he wants to profit twice from the same transaction*, she thought fleetingly. But no. He'd said walking through that door was her choice. And he hadn't even wanted her money until she'd made it clear there was only one other option, one that was unacceptable to him.

Freely, or it is worth nothing.

He wasn't treating her the way a man treated a woman. He was dealing with her as an equal.

Her heart began to pound, hard and fast. Before she could talk herself out of it, she walked straight to his door and pushed it open.

She holds the key to unlock his past—or unleash hell.

Love's Alchemy

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Sidra Patmos has the ability to see the real underbelly of lower Manhattan—a horrifying world where wraiths, demons and a few quirky mortals battle for supremacy. Desperate, she seeks out a paranormal researcher to tell her why her life is a waking nightmare.

Instead of answers, her meeting with the dark and irresistible Van Barlowe unleashes a chain of events far more dangerous than her blackest visions. And a desire she can barely manage to hold at arm's length.

After three desperate centuries, Van has finally found the Alchemist. Sidra. Somewhere locked deep inside her lies the knowledge that will rescue his family from ruin. The only way to reawaken her abilities is to hold his enemies at bay long enough to convince her to step through the mists of time.

Redemption waits there, and a timeless bond ignited by the undeniable pull between them. The missing ingredient: Sidra's willingness to risk that Van's attraction runs deeper than sexual chemistry...

Enjoy the following excerpt for Love's Alchemy:

Sidra sat on the bed and thought about the intense longing for Van that pulled at her, longing older and deeper than possible in the few days she'd known him. She rubbed her palm across the shades of brown silk artfully covering the enormous bed.

"I think he's still in love with you, Van. I think part of me feels his pain, his fear, his excruciating need for you. I don't think it died with his body."

"You finally believe, then?"

Sidra nodded. Since her vision of the past, the evening before, tiny flickers of memory beckoned to her, but she'd been pushing them down. She lay back on the bed, closed her eyes, and with a quick prayer for protection, opened herself to the realization that she was really remembering another person's life.

"Do you remember any more?"

"Bits and pieces. Nothing important, I'm afraid. The smell of wood burning, the sound of heavy glassware, the laughter of men. Utter exhaustion. The feel of a pen in my hand, my arm shaking from tiredness, my eyes burning from sleeplessness. I feel pangs of unfamiliar pain, emotional pain, as if life itself had become such a burden as to be intolerable. Right before I woke this morning I thought I saw men and women gathered around me as I lay in bed. They were crying."

"That all makes sense to me." His eyes looked strained, and Sidra wanted to ease his troubled heart.

"Do you want me to try to understand him, to reach out to him for you?"

Van sat by her side and squeezed her hand. “No, not now. I want you, Sidra. Whatever you might feel for me.”

Sidra opened her eyes. “You only have feelings for your Maker. This has nothing to do with me.”

“I can’t separate the two, love, I’m sorry. I only know that I haven’t felt this way before in my life, and that this is not what I felt for Isaac. I’m desperate for you, Sidra. I know I come with a heavy price tag for a woman who’s lost too much already. Maybe it’s not worth it to you? I can’t promise I won’t die, that we’ll figure this out.”

“We’ll figure it out. We have to.”

“Why?” Van leaned in and kissed her on the lips, moved to her neck, nibbling his way down her cleavage. “Tell me. Say it, Sidra.”

“Let this be enough, Van.”

“I need to hear it from you.”

Sidra fought to keep the last thread of resistance alive. “I’m sure enough women have told you they were in love with you.”

“Many. I wasn’t in love with them.”

“You’re not in love with me. You’re all caught up in your past.”

“Don’t deny me my own thoughts, Sidra. Isaac gave me life, but he also gave me free will. I’m asking for both from you. Tell me you love me back.”

“I love you back,” she muttered.

“You’re really annoying.”

Sidra pulled off her shirt and bra and stepped out of her shoes and jeans.

“Get back here,” he gasped through clenched teeth.

“You’re pretty impatient for a guy who’s been around a couple hundred years.”

“I feel like I’ve had this hard-on for a couple hundred years.”

“Let’s see what we can do about that, impatient one.” Sidra helped him out of his slacks and boxer shorts. Sidra ran her palm along the taut length of his shaft, tracing her fingers over the large veins pulsing with his life’s blood.



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