

OVERBOARD

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Cover Artist: Shara Azod

Editor: Jennifer Puckett

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CHAPTER 1

On a Cruise Ship in the Atlantic Ocean

Dallas knew something was up. She sat at the table surrounded by vacation goers of the worst sort. Pretentious at best, these people in their silks and furs were the types her Uncle Mitch would have called onions -- all translucent layers and no core. Their chirping chatter held no interest to her. She was far more concerned with what her uncle's widow and her child were planning. She watched Mae and her daughter, Belle surreptitiously from the corner of her eyes. She was flanked by the two women as if they were afraid she would escape from their greedy little clutches.

Going on this cruise so soon after Uncle Mitch's death had been a mistake. Dallas knew Mae and Belle were more than a little upset he had left his entire fortune to her, while they were to receive a monthly stipend that was far less than they had spent in a week when Uncle Mitch had been

alive. What Dallas had not counted on was they would be so upset they would try to get rid of her.

By pure chance, she saw Belle pour some kind of clear liquid into her wine, wine Mae had insisted she try. Dallas wasn't much of a drinker, and she damned sure wasn't about to drink when Belle and Mae were her only companions. But instead causing a scene and demanding Belle show everyone the vial and tell her what was in it, Dallas decided to play along. She held her glass to her lips intermittently without ingesting a drop. She wasn't sure exactly what the mysterious liquid was supposed to do to her, so she simply followed Mae's lead.

The older woman pretended to be deep into a conversation revolving around some fashion designer's latest collection, but Dallas noticed she seemed to pay an awful lot of attention to her. First were the expectant glances, then questions as to whether or not she was feeling all right. Dallas played along, pretending to be a little dizzy and slightly disoriented. Nothing could have been further from the truth. She was focused on the woman she called "aunt" out of respect for her uncle, but never when he was not around and never out of respect -- Dallas had no respect for the money grubbing selfish bitch.

While Uncle Mitch was being eaten inside out by cancer, Mae and Belle were nowhere to be found. They never let his horrible disease get in the way of their social calendar or incessant spending sprees. The only thing either woman cared about was money and their own comfort. It had been Dallas who had sat with her uncle, watching him wither away from the robust man he had once been. He had been the only family she had ever known, now he was gone. There was no way in hell she was going to let all he had built up over his lifetime fall into the hands of these women.

“You look tired, dear,” Mae gushed, her skeletal hands making the flesh on Dallas’ arms crawl as she attempted what was supposed to be a caring gesture.

Dallas didn’t have to fake the look of severe nausea.

“I think I will go back to my cabin and lie down,” she effected what she hoped was a feeble voice as she carefully climbed to her feet.

“Oh! We will go with you,” Mae twittered, her unnaturally high voice grating on Dallas’ last nerve. “Belle, come help me with your cousin.”

Belle was NOT her damn cousin. She was Mae’s daughter, but she had never been Uncle Mitch’s child. He had adopted her when her married Mae and tried to be a father to her, but Belle was her mother’s daughter

through and through. She had no desire to be close to Uncle Mitch. She only wanted what he could do for her.

Just as soon as she got out of the dining room, she was going to confront these fake gold diggers. She was going to get them out of her life for good, unless they wanted to go to prison for attempted -- whatever they were attempting. She could easily overpower Mae. The woman was all of one hundred pound soaking wet. Belle was another story. Though Belle was naturally big boned, she was weak with no real muscle definition. She shouldn't be a problem either.

Dallas leaned a little bit too heavily on Belle, thoroughly enjoying the other woman's labored puffing as she exited the dining room and made their way down the dimly lit passageway. She was just about to announce her pretense when her heel snagged on the carpeting, twisting her ankle and sending her sprawling toward the floor. Dallas tried to adjust her weight, pivoting her body a little too much in the opposite direction, causing her head to slam against the corner of the bulkhead.

Spots danced in front of her eyes despite the fact her lids were closed. The world seemed to careen on its axis. She tried to pull herself up to her knees, but there was an invisible ton of bricks forcing her to stay down.

“How much of that stuff did you give her?” she vaguely heard Mae hiss.

“I gave her the whole vial.” That markedly low nasal whine was unquestionably Belle’s.

Dallas wanted to snap at both women she was not so stupid as to drink what Belle had so clumsily dumped into her wine glass. Wanted to, but she couldn’t seem to open her mouth.

She heard a sharp *smack* followed by Mae fuming, “She is supposed to drown you dumb twit! What if there is a toxicology report?”

There was a whimper followed by silence. Mae was thinking, not a good sign.

“Well, we will just have to change plans. We will dump her overboard as planned, but we won’t call out for help. We will just return to the dining room like nothing happened. Sometime tomorrow afternoon we will report her missing.”

No! Dallas tried to scream, she tried to move her limbs to fight off the grasping hands dragging her toward the open deck, but nothing was working right. Her eyes refused to open, her mouth remained firmly shut in spite of her best efforts. She was helpless as she was drug across the cold

deck, helpless as the two out of shape women struggled to prop her against the rail, and helpless as she was shoved over.

CHAPTER 2

In the Atlantic

Thane floated on his back, enjoying the feel of the sun kissing his pelt with its golden rays. Life was good. His belly was full, the sun had finally come out to play and there was a very gorgeous human floating by hanging on to a piece of driftwood...

Wait, human? Was a human doing floating around in the middle of Atlantic Ocean? There was no land within miles of here. Diving underneath the calm surface of the deep blue-green water, he swam over to where the little human hung on to her piece of wood.

“What are you doing?” he asked , bobbing his head out of the water directly in her line of vision.

The human took one look at him and screamed, her tenuous grip sliding from her makeshift life raft as her body slid under the water. That could not be good. As far as Thane knew, humans still couldn't breathe under water. That's when he remembered, he was still in seal form. His question had come out as such.

"Oops."

Diving back under the surface, Thane shifted his upper body to human form so he could grab her. As long as he kept physical contact, she should be able to breathe without any complication. Being magical had perks like that.

"What to do, what to do?"

He could drop her and let the sharks have her. Humans were trouble, problems his kind didn't need. Not that there were many of his kind left. Looking down at the creature in his arms, Thane was at first curious, then quickly became entranced. Never had he seen a human with such dark mysterious skin. It was like onyx mixed with gold and copper. How fascinating. Its lips were full, like little kissable pillows, shaded a deep rose. He wondered what it would be like to taste such lips. He had heard tales of kissing humans. Some claimed there was immense joy to be found beneath

the sheets with these creatures. Although female selkies were a dying breed, Thane had never been tempted. Women held very little interest for him. He enjoyed his solitude.

The more he looked at her, the more Thane felt the stirring of something peculiar. He had never felt like this before. The thought of letting this little human become food for the simple headed sharks became increasingly abhorrent. No, the primitive creatures would not be tasting his newly discovered juicy morsel. This one was all his.

“I suppose I have no choice but to keep her.”

For now anyway.

With a heavy sigh, Thane began the long swim toward land with his cargo. Taking her to the mainland was out. Times had changed, humans no longer believed in the people of the Otherworld. Some still lived among the ungrateful cretins, some shifter types and the like. There were even rumors not all the berserkers of the North had died out, but no one had seen one of the animal warriors in centuries. Most of the Fae, minor gods and goddesses, pixies, and brownies had retreated into a plane of their own making. There were still enchanted isles surrounding Scotland. Some of the

less social druids maintained the place for solitude when they became tired of the pretense of living among the ignorant.

Humans thought themselves to be so smart. None ever imagined the fantastic world that lived right in front of their eyes. No human eye, no metal launched into the sky, no navigation equipment could detect lands warded by those of the Otherworld. It wasn't the only such enchanted isle, but he did not feel comfortable leaving the waters he knew so well to search out one. He would take her there.

The trip took longer than it should have. Thane could not seem to stop himself from stopping ever so often to check his human's breathing and to just stare. He noticed a nasty gash on her head. He had to take time to heal it, but not so much so she regained consciousness. It was so much easier when she was not awake to fight or scream.

She really was beautiful. The most beautiful being he had ever seen. Mermaids with their bright exotic coloring and lush bodies didn't have a thing on her. She was wearing some kind of fancy dress, a type of which he had never seen before. The almost sheer, wet fabric clung to the curves of her body, leaving very little to his imagination. Did all females have breasts so full that stood out so high? Her nipples were long and tight. Thane felt

his mouth begin to water as he examined them through the light lilac color of the gown. He could just make out the darker circle at the peak of the round globes, with those delightful pointers, thrusting up at him. Even though the water this far north was frigid, he felt his entire body heat to dangerous levels. The seal pelt that encased his lower body felt unbearably tight.

What the hell was she doing to him? She was not even awake, yet she had invaded every available spot in his brain! Perhaps she was no human at all, but a witch. A sorceress sent to tempt him, or a siren leading him to his doom. But wait, sirens sang a man to his demise, and Thane was no man. He was a selkie. An ancient mythical being. He had been on this earth for hundreds of years. He was no easy game for sirens, or any other Otherworldly person. Witches spells had no effect on him.

Then why was he so fascinated by this little human? What was it about her that made his skin sizzle despite the cold waters?

"I will take her to the isle for just a little while," he promised himself. "Once she is recovered and I have worked her out of my system, I will return her to her world."

Even as the words left his lips, he knew them to be a lie. The longer he held her in his arms, the more he wanted her. The libido that had lain dormant for more years than he dared count had awoken with a vengeance. He did not want this tiny slip of a human for a few nights. He wanted to learn all her secrets. He wanted to know what treasures made her smile so that he could bring them to her. He wanted to see her belly swollen with his pups.

Thane stopped dead in the water less than fifteen minutes to his destination. Oh, by the cruel, cruel Fates! After hundreds of years, just when he had stopped looking, hoping or wishing, Thane had found his mate!

“And by the sea gods, she is...*a human!*”

What the hell did he do now? Did he dive and take the unconscious woman to the council of elders to mate before she knew what was going on? Did he heal her and wait until she awakened, then explained things to her? Humans were not known to be open to Otherworld beings. Magic tended to freak them out a bit, at least that was what he had heard.

Looking down at his now precious cargo, Thane noted the strength of her little chin. Although she was out cold, her fists were clenched as if

ready to fight. This one was going to be feisty. In spite of his obvious dilemma, Thane couldn't help but grin. Life was certainly about to get interesting. He couldn't imagine a woman like this one standing meekly as the council inspected her for defect. Not that such a thing would stop a mating, it would just require a group healing rather than an individual one.

Making a decision, Thane reversed course. He would compromise. He would have the elders inspect her now. When she woke up, he would explain the situation and make her his. Simple.

CHAPTER 3

On the Enchanted Isle

Dallas was on fire, her skin burning from the inside out. She tried to move her arms, but they felt like they were bound by something. The last thing she remembered was drifting in the middle of the ocean, clinging to a piece of driftwood, and then...and then...

Bolting straight up, Dallas gasped for breath, expecting to find herself sinking like a stone to the bottom of the ocean. She was shocked to find herself in a rather primitive looking cabin of some sort. Looking down she saw she couldn't move her arms because she had been wrapped rather tightly in several coarse blankets. Where the hell was she? The last thing she remembered was some ginormous seal thing sticking it's cold wet nose into her face, then she could have sworn the thing shifted into a man.

Shaking her head as if that would clear the cobwebs, she glanced around. Maybe she had washed ashore and some kindly fisherman type saved her. That was why there was dead fish laying in her lap on top of the itchy blanket.

Dead fish? With blood curling scream she flung the fish off her without touching the icky things. She liked her fish cooked -- period.

"Auck! Woman, ye damned near busted my ears!"

Dallas screamed anew at the strange, very nude man sitting in a chair right next to what she supposed was a bed of some sort. It felt as if it had been stuffed with straw and covered with a sheet.

"Oh, and sure, do it again!"

Dallas stopped screaming. The man scowled at her as if he had every right to be irritated with *her*. As if she were the one sitting there in all her glory, like it was the most normal thing in the world. And despite the fact his glory was very, very glorious indeed, it was damned freaky to be drowning one minute and waking with some naked stranger staring at you.

“Well excuse the hell out of me!” she yelled at the rude little, okay, big man.

As he stood, Dallas felt her eyes expand in her face exponentially. Really, really big man! He had to be pushing seven feet. His body was all muscles and smooth lightly tanned skin, and not one hint of hair, except at his-

“Dear sweet Aunt Mary!”

Now that was a cock! It looked like a freaking kickstand. And it wasn't even hard! It just lay there, against his leg, like a python just waiting to attack. Then right before her eyes, it started to, gulp, grow. Soon it was pointing straight at her, as if accusing her of some heinous crime. Funny how she had a sudden near uncontrollable urge to confess, confess what she had no idea, but she was sure she could think of something.

“Ye had best be getting used to it, seeing as how it’s yours now.”

She probably might have managed to pull her jaw off the ground and place her brain back in some kind of order, if it hadn’t been for that sentence. He had said it as if he was upset about it, like she had done something to him. Never mind the fact he had said it at all, which was just weird. What did his abnormal schlong have to do with her?

“Look, dude-”

“Thane.”

“What?” This was just getting weirder by the minute.

“My name is Thane, lass, your mate.”

Fighting to extract herself from the scratchy blankets, which was harder than she ever believed, almost managed to calm a great deal of her anger. Whoever had wrapped her up apparently thought they were swaddling a baby. Probably Mr. Naked here. Finally free, she threw the offending things off of her and surged to her feet, pointing her finger upward in the generally direction of his face.

“Look, *Thane*,” she laid the sarcasm as thick as she possibly could, to let him know she really didn’t give a shit what his name was. “I don’t know who you think you are, but I am not your anything! If you saved me,

I thank you, though I think it was probably that odd looking seal. But you need to cover yourself and treat me with some kind of respect. I didn't ask to be in this dilapidated little cottage of yours, but I will be damned if I'm staying. Just point me to the nearest phone and I am outta here!"

"Ye doona like the cottage?"

She was prepared for craziness, but the look of hurt that crossed his face made her regret her little tirade just a little teensy bit. She had ripped dude's home after all. That was not very neighborly of her. She was just about to apologize when all of the sudden, she was standing in the most opulent room she had ever seen in her life. A huge platform bed made of a deep dark wood with four posts that were intricately carved at the four corners damn near touched the ceiling. The floor was covered with genuine honest to goodness Persian carpets, Queen Anne chairs were placed strategically around the room. The armoire, the knick knacks and all of the furniture looked immensely expensive.

"What the fuck did you just do?" It was more of a yell than a question, but damn it, this shit was freaky! Rooms did not just change in a blink of an eye.

She was dead. She had died -- drowned, in the middle of nowhere with no one to mourn her. How shitty was that? It was just so unfair. Sinking down to the floor, fat salty tears rained down her face. She didn't bother attempting to wipe them away. What was the point? Dude wasn't real, none of this was real.

"At least Mae and Belle will never get their dirty hands on Uncle Mitch's money," she tried to console herself, ignoring Mr. Horse Hung completely. He no longer mattered seeing as how he was merely a figment of her dead imagination. She had never been into vanilla anyway. "At least I had a will. All the money will go towards a worthy cause and they will be out of luck."

It wasn't much but it made her feel a little better. Too bad she had to be dead so she wouldn't get the satisfaction of seeing their faces when they learned of that little piece of information.

The lass was daft. Or maybe she waterlogged just a bit. He had been all prepared to hand her his pelt, a MAJOR concession on his part, and her she was blubbering about being dead.

“Ye are NOT dead woman! I saved you! Me, Thane! And I am not a seal! Do ye not know the difference between a seal and a selkie? Are ye completely daft?”

Well of course she was. Why else would she be sitting on the ground when he had conjured many a fine chair for her lovely ass. And it was lovely. In spite of his extreme irritation, his cock bobbed in agreement in his appreciation of her fine form. And here he had thought she might be a wee put out he had gotten rid of her ruined fancy gown.

With a heavy sigh, he sat down on the floor to face her. Human women were fragile things. He had to remember that, now that he was about to mated with one for life. His father had warned him this might happen. It was a good thing he had contacted the elders, along with his sire prior to her coming around. The elders had inspected her and declared her fit to bare his children, as was expected when one mated with a human. It was not surprising in the least many of them expressed envy at his great fortune. It was a damned good thing he decided upon his current course of action. It had allowed him time to investigate the modern human world. It had been amazing to see how far they had advanced, yet they managed to stay as boorish as ever.

Yes, it was a shame she was human, but her dark skin was soft and beautiful, her lips full and welcoming, more than made up for her humanity. She was far more mysterious and beautiful than any other woman he had ever seen, even those of the Otherworld. She had hips meant for riding, in fact, all her curves were a playground of delight. Best of all, she would be able to mentally survive the trip the depths for their mating ceremony. Not many humans could deal with such a thing. Although it was impossible to convert a human to selkie form, she must undergo something of a transformation to allow her to breathe underwater and to live beside him for many, many years to come. Every selkie must return to the sea from time to time, though he would be forced to live the majority of at least one lifetime on land until she was comfortable with notion of ocean living. After that, if he could convince her, she needed to be able to live in the sea.

If he ever got that far, that is. She was just sitting there in some kind of daze, staring off at nothing in particular, rocking back and forth with her arms clutched tightly around herself. Hell, if she wanted a hug, all she had to do was ask. He was not the most handsome of his parents' pups, true, but he was not all that bad.

“Come here, lass.”

Thane wasn't sure what surprised him more, that he sat on the floor and opened his arms to her, or that she readily climbed in his lap, laying her head on his shoulder. He was not the touchy feely type in general. Although he felt nothing short of foolish sitting on the floor in the opulent room he had created just for her, he felt as if all was right with the world.

The daft lassie fit as if she had been born to be right where she was. Now that he thought about, he supposed she was. There was only one female born for every selkie male. Gaia in her infinite wisdom had expanded the pool of mates to every sort of female on the earth, due to the lack of female selkies. It may take a fellow centuries to find a mate, but once he did, that was it. Given that their mates could be found anywhere, there were many who never found their other half and were cursed to live a solitary life. As the selkie lifespan was so long, no one knew for sure how long it was, it was a sad existence indeed.

After a time, many simply disappeared, preferring to live life away from others in the deep rather than to watch as males all around him found their one and only. Others were even worse off, finding themselves mated to some of the most vicious of creatures. His brother was mated to a

mermaid, poor sap. Mermaids were notoriously mean to the point of being just plain evil.

“There are worse things than being mated to me ye kin?” Thane supplied helpfully. “I can give ye yer heart’s desire, and I cannae leave ye for verra long. And ye will nae age as yer kind is want to do. Well, after the ceremony anyway, but a few days should nae add many wrinkles. I will never even look at another female, and part of my powers will be transferred on to ye after we are well and truly bonded. Plus, I am not all that bad to look at. The mermaids say I am an excellent lover. So all in all, lass, I think ye are getting a pretty good bargain. After all, ‘tis I who is stuck with a human.”

Thane finished his statement with a huge grin, inordinately proud he was able to state such a convincing case. Yet after five minutes, he began to worry his little lass had heard none of it. She lay silent in his lap, her warm cushy behind nestling his cock which had become as hard a granite, and was now weeping to be inside his mate. Yet another testament to his stellar control. He had yet to throw the wee lassie to the ground and ravish her as every cell in his body demanded he do. He was a veritable rock.

“Lass?”

Looking down, Thane found the woman was staring directly at his smooth chest, a frown marring her beautiful face. He didn't like it. There should be no reason for his woman to frown, not ever.

"What was your name again?"

A huge grin split his face. Now they were getting somewhere. "I am called Thane. And ye are...?"

"Hello, Thane. It's nice to meet you. My name is Dallas, Dallas Craig. If you will kindly point me to the nearest passenger boat, airport, train or bus station, I will just be running along. I would love to stay, but you are insane, and I cannot possibly sit around on the lap of a crazy person. So I really must be going." The human-Dallas (what an odd name for a human), pointed those devastating melting brown eyes dead at him and smiled. His cock jumped in approval. But then she had to continue talking. "If you could just give me back my clothes?"

CHAPTER 4

There was no way off this rock! Dallas had tried to go around what appeared to be a freakishly small castle, but there was a dense, heavy gray

fog that encompassed both sides of the place, and the sounds emitting from that fog were not encouraging. The only place she could go once out of the massive oak door was to the shore directly in front the rock structure. There wasn't a boat in site, and all she could see was miles and miles of blue-green sea.

The color of Thane's eyes...

"Stop that!" she shouted out loud as if her wayward brain would listen if she said it instead of thought it.

Yeah, right. All she could think about lately was Thane. The crazy ass man was just too fine for words. He was taller than most white men she had ever seen, except for maybe NBA players. Unlike basketball players, Thane was built much more solidly. He wasn't all bulk and hulking muscles, but he wasn't lanky either. His muscles were well defined, and she knew from experience he was hard as rock. Her poor knuckles still ached from the first time she had to punch him. The ass had had the nerve to just laugh at her efforts.

And that weapon of his. Dropping down at the water's edge, Dallas dribbled the cool water on her neck. The man simply refused to wear clothing, leaving her in a constant state of arousal. How could a girl not get

all hot under the collar looking at all *that* all day every day? She had only been here all of three days, and in that short amount of time, he had invaded her very dreams. As soon as she settled into a nice, healing sleep she would start dreaming about those large hands caressing her body, that caustic tongue put too much better use between her thighs. And that dick of his...! He was built for sin, no doubt about it. Too bad he was out of his freaking mind.

Who ever heard of a selkie? Yet, that was what he kept insisting he was. She wrote off the neat little trick of turning a shack into a three room castle full of all kind of decadent furnishings. She had been feverish. Yep, that was her excuse and she was sticking with it. And as far as his daily trips out into the ocean not to return for hours, well she was convinced he had a boat moored somewhere out there. For some reason he was holding her captive. Perhaps because he had never seen a black woman before and he was simple fascinated by the notion of a woman with skin much darker than his own.

From what she could ascertain from his accent, they were somewhere in Scotland. It was probably the Highlands given how deliciously barbaric

Thane was. Wait, no-not delicious. Irritating. He was over bearing, egotistical, sweet in his own way, oh so sexy, and...

"Damn it! Get out of my head you bastard!" Dallas fumed, hurling a stray rock out into the ocean.

"Ye will nae get out yer frustrations by abusing the sea, lassie. And I assure ye, my parents were mated right and proper, as we will be soon."

Speak of the devil and he will appear. She didn't bother to deny she was speaking of him. He would never believe otherwise, so what was the point?

"I have no idea what you are talking about," she sniffed indignantly, sticking her nose in the air and waltzing past him back into the mini-castle. "And would you please put some damn clothes on!"

She didn't have to look in his direction to know a shit eating grin was plastered all over his face. The unrepentant ass knew she had a devil of a time keeping her eyes off that massive appendage of his. With each passing moment it was getting harder and harder to stop herself from climbing all over him and having her wicked way with his body. Whenever he was near, her skin itched and burned to be close to him. Just this morning she had awakened to find she had literally crawled all over him in her sleep.

And did he just ignore it and pretend it never happened like she needed him to? No! He had to grin and invited her to do some in depth exploring. As if!

At least he had finally supplied her with clothing, if you could call it that. The simple hopelessly antique dress was made for easy access. It was free flowing without being shapeless, infinitely comfortable, and easy to get in and out of. It was just one continuous dress with no zippers or buttons to fool around with. Surprisingly, the simple silk kept her warm from the chill, and the deep burgundy contrasted beautifully with her skin. It seemed to cling to her figure though it was incredibly easy to pull on and off. And goodness, how she longed to pull it off and rub herself all over her captor.

A low moan escaped her lips before she could call it back. Damn, but the man was fine.

“It will only get worse, lass.”

Dallas jumped at the deep murmur right in her ear. He was standing so close she could feel waves of heat emanating from his bare skin. How had he gotten right up next to her without her noticing? What would be

like to touch him? Was his skin nearly as smooth as it looked? Would his skin be salty if she licked him, just a little?

“What will get worse?” her voice was a hoarse croak, but she really wanted to know. Was he counting on her craving becoming too much for her to bear? Would he taunt her to the point of insanity?

“Mating heat. Yer lovely body recognizes its mate. If only the daft woman in possession of such a bountiful playground would recognize it as well.”

“Mating heat. Riiiiight.”

If it wasn't this mating crap, it was the constant insistence that he was some kind of magical seal-man-thingie. Selkie, that's what he called himself. She was willing to admit she had no idea how he seemed to make food appear out of nowhere, she had no idea how the candles lit at the exact right moment, and she couldn't quite figure out how a modern bathroom seem to appear out of nowhere after her complaints about the hole in the floor and an old fashioned pump with a huge wooden tub thing, but she was NOT going to jump off the deep end and say Thane was some kind of mythological creature. He was a man. An oddly hairless

(except for the glorious midnight black mane), smooth, beautifully constructed man, but a man nonetheless.

So why do you get so wet you are fairly dripping every time Thane is near?

There were days when Dallas fervently wished she could turn her brain off. Always rationalizing, her damn mind was. There was nothing rational about her situation. She had to get out of here and back to Texas, preferably before Mae and Belle made it back with their crocodile tears with their grubby little hands stuck out for her money. She didn't have time for a completely insane, albeit devastatingly handsome loon of a Highlander.

But the only way out was through that sexy slice of fruitcake.

Turning on her heel to face her nemesis, she considered her options. It would certainly be no hardship to go along with his delusions, within reason of course. If she played along for a little while, perhaps he would take her to civilization long enough to get away. It would be difficult to even appear to suspend her disbelief...*Yeah, right. You want to jump his bones and you know it.* Okay, fine, it would be no sweat off her back to pretend to be his mate or whatever. But she had to play this right.

"So what does this mate stuff, uh, entail?" Dallas batted her eyelashes, a move she had seen Belle execute repeatedly. Taking a step

forward, she boldly ran a finger across his smooth, well defined chest. Damn, his skin was warm and inviting. Splaying both hands against the expanse of the hard area, she leaned forward for just a little sniff. He smelled like the ocean and wind and the wild outdoors. Her mouth watered as her nipples pebbled into hard points. Just a taste, one little taste...

“Lass, if ye kept it up I will nae be able to...”

Thane’s mind blanked at the first swipe of her warm, wet tongue against his skin. He had waited too long as it was. The mating heat began gently at first, probably to allow the destined couple time to get to know each other. Unfortunately for humans and those fated to be with them, the gentle forty-eight hour period was not enough. Thane was walking on a very thin ledge when it came to his little human.

He didn’t know what was worse; Dallas nude, or Dallas in the form fitting dress he graciously deigned to allow her to wear. While the magnificently nude Dallas had him salivating and precariously close to throwing her down on the nearest surface, the dressed Dallas set his mind to wondering of all the ways he could undress dress her, half dress her, or

take her fully dressed. Instead of feasting his eyes on her hills and valleys, he was imagining all the different ways he could expose them for his pleasure.

Dallas confounded him in a way no other female ever had. He found himself visiting his father daily for counsel on how to deal with her. Not that his father was much help, Thane's mother was a siren.

Thane had very limited experience with Dallas' kind. His sire had once been with a human female thousands of years prior, so his help was a little outdated. The world had changed drastically, as Thane had found out. He had found the ancestral human home his family had set up in the case one of them found themselves bound to the land dwellers had lain abandoned, seeing as how neither he nor his brothers had bothered to visit it. None of them ever considered they may ever need it, no matter what the elders had warned. Thane had to expend more magic to set him up as a human than he had ever used before. Now that he had found his mate, he could not simply return to the sea at will, nor would he be able to make their home in the watery depths. He needed his mate much more than he needed to ocean, though he would have to return from time to time.

He could not imagine not offering his Dallas every advantage, therefore it was necessary to resurrect the ancient title one of his uncles had tricked the ancient King of Scotland out of many eons ago. Thane had found, to his chagrin, Scotland had long since been annexed by England, meaning he had to expend energy and magic to travel there to set up his long since defunct title as well as to set up his human fortune. That task was greater than he had ever expected.

In the meantime, with patience he never knew he had, Thane waited, allowing Dallas as much time as she needed to become accustomed to him. His father had warned him against it, yet Thane knew with all Dallas had been through, she was hanging on by a thin thread. The last thing he wanted to do was push her over.

Then she touched him.

As long as she was running from him he was fine. He had not overtly touched her at all, afraid he would not be able to stop. He had begun to despair she would ever come around. The feel of her hands on his body lefty him breathless and weak in the knees. But her tongue, Sweet Mother, his body was set to flame by the first little innocent swipe of the wee instrument of torture.

With a battle cry he had not uttered in centuries, Thane swept his woman in his arms, charging inside and up the narrow stone staircase into the room he had created just for her. The act of dropping her on the bed was the last concession to any semblance of control she could claim. Thank the gods his Dallas did not attempt to deny him, it would have driven him out of his half-gone mind. Instead she looked up at him, her chocolate eyes wide with wonder and anticipation. He could see her chest heaving with every harsh breath she took.

Not willing to take the time to undress her, Thane simply waved his hand and the dress was gone.

“Sweet merciful goddess, ye are...”

There were really no words for what she was. Thane paused, rocking back on his heels just to drink her in. Lovely could not begin to describe her. The goddesses could take one look at her natural form and howl in envy. She was lush and full, every inch the woman. The darkness of her skin against the pale sheets entranced him. Dark and mysterious, everything about her called to him as deadly as the sirens that led mortal men to their doom. He wanted, no needed to learn all her secrets. His fingers actually trembled as he reached out to touch her, her skin sending

an electric current all through his body. Running his finger across the surface of her flesh, watching the contrast of their skin tones sent his rock hard cock to weeping.

She was built for the gods, yet she had been given to him. No selkie was ever as blessed as he. He would spin lifetimes playing here, this body would bear his progeny, this woman would share his lonely life. Funny, he had never realized he was so very lonely until now. He craved her heat in a way most selkies craved the water. For her, he would gladly give his pelt. Just for her.

“Lass, I do nae think I can go slow or be gentle,” his voice was a deep purr he barely recognized. His head spun at the magnitude of what was about to happen. Finally, he would take his mate. Three days in a span of thousands of years meant nothing in the grand scheme of things, yet to him, it had been a lifetime. Watching, waiting, wanting but not touching had taken a toll on him unlike anything he had ever been through.

“Don’t go slow,” her whispered words penetrated his brain like a bolt of lightning. “Take me, please, Thane. I burn.”

CHAPTER 5

Dallas was an inferno of need. Her body was awash in flame and Thane had done nothing more than run his finger across her body. She was so wet she could feel her juices flowing. Why did he just touch her? Wasn't this what he had wanted all along?

Then his lips descended and all doubts were cast to the winds. He didn't merely kiss her, he possessed her, his tongue seemed to stroke her flames higher as he tangled his with her own. She found he was breathing for her, as she could not seem to draw in enough air, and she couldn't care less. His hands gripped her hair in a painful hold, forcing her head back for his plundering. His free hand savagely pinched and kneaded first one breast, then the other. His body was wedged between her splayed thighs, that oh, so massive cock rubbing sensuously against her dewy opening, but never entering. Her body arched and twisted, but to no avail. He was not going to take her until her was good and ready. Heavens knew she was more than ready. She wanted it all, and she wanted it now.

"Ah, lass, I told ye this would not go easy," Thane growled down at her, breaking away from his soul stealing kiss. "But I will nae hurt ye. I must properly prepare ye, I am no wee male."

"I don't care," Dallas protested. She didn't. She just needed. "I need you. Please, fill me."

She couldn't recall ever feeling so empty before. Every nerve center in her body was alive and screaming. Her hips bucked in desperate pursuit of what she knew only he could provide. She tried to grab at him, but he was too quick. He pinned her arms to the mattress, nipped her neck as he did so.

"Easy, Dallas, lass. We have all the time in the world."

Yeah, that was easy for him to say. Every touch sent shivers acing through her even as her flesh heated to the point of boiling. His hands were everywhere, softly exploring as if he had never touched a woman before-

No way. The man was far too sexy and far too lethal to be a virgin. Still, the way he touched and tenderly kissed her neck, her shoulders, her belly, it made her wonder.

"Are you a virgin?"

Dallas really hadn't meant to blurt it out like that, but she was kind of glad she had. She really wanted to know. Not that she would stop if he was, but it would be nice to know if she was going to have to charge here.

Thane didn't bother to stop his exploration to answer. A simple growl was all she got in reply, followed by a sharp slap, right against her exposed, tender sex.

She would have been upset, if only the burning sting didn't feel quite so good. Not too hard, not too soft, but just enough to make her juices flow over time. It pushed all thoughts of Thane being a virgin quickly out of the way.

As if the little slap never happened, Thane resumed his aching slow perusal of her body with his hands, his mouth, his tongue; never touching her where she wanted him most but just outside the areas that screamed for attention. The side of her breasts rather than the nipples, her chin and neck rather than her mouth, the insides of her thighs rather than her weeping sex. He was driving her insane with the butterfly kisses and soft caresses.

She realized belatedly that was probably his intention all along. She was fast reaching the point where the man, or whatever, was in serious danger of being ravished by her. No matter how hard she tugged on those silky locks of hair, he just refused to be budged. He was driving her insane with need, and she had just about had enough when finally she felt the hot

wet sweep of his tongue along the seam of her pussy. A groan of pure need passed through her lips as she grasped his hair in an effort to bring him closer.

Still, Thane took his sweet time, his tongue taking long leisurely swipes from her clit to her desperate opening. Dallas was considering punching him in the side of the head when he suddenly sucked her clit into his mouth, sending seismic shockwaves from the tip of her toes to the top of her head. Her orgasm was so unexpected, she couldn't even scream, her breath leaving her body in a rush.

"That's it, *leannan*. Come for me."

As if she had a choice?

Her eyes opened in mere slits as she watched him watching her, his fingers delving deep inside her as she rode the waves of one of the most powerful orgasms she had ever experienced in her life. And he had managed it with his mouth alone.

"I want more, *leannan*. Do it for me again."

His thumb flicked at her engorged clit as he said the words, causing her to gyrate her hips, welcoming his oh, so talented fingers deeper. She as ensnared by eyes, unable to look away from the orbs that help her captive.

His thumping on her clit was relentless, she couldn't have stopped the second orgasm if she tried, and there was no way in hell she was going to try.

Thane was spell bound by the sight of his mate in the throes of ecstasy. Nothing he had ever witnessed was ever so beautiful, so pure. It didn't matter his cock was so hard it hurt, he had to taste her again. Dipping his head between her splayed thighs, he drank in her essence, licking up every drop so that none was wasted.

"So sweet," he murmured against the soft, wet fold of the pussy he wanted to spend forever getting to know.

In the back of his mind he knew time was running out. He needed to make her his mate in every way before entering the ocean with her to finalize their bond. But he could not stop himself from feasting on her sweet tangy essence. The more he tasted, the more he wanted. He feared his hunger would never be satiated.

"Please, Thane," Dallas thrashed, her body arching off the bed in both an attempt to break away, yet bring him closer. "I can't...I can't...Oh!"

Her voice broke as he brought her to yet another orgasm. Perfect. She was perfect. Her responses only drove him to want to drive her mad with need -- need of him. Only him. He had a fierce, primitive need to drive any human man she might have ever been with out of her mind forever.

"Please," Dallas sobbed, her hold on his hair attempting to yank him away from her now soaking sex. "I want you, I need you inside me."

Thane's cock jerked and wept at her words, as if it had heard and agreed wholeheartedly. Burying his face against the soft skin of her inner thigh, gasping for breath. One little sentence uttered in a sultry, panting breath and his control damn near slipped completely.

Rising to his knees, he pulled her on to her lap, only intending to hold her while he worked to suppress his most burning need. But as soon as he pulled her in place, Dallas wiggled her succulent ass and pressed her hot pussy right up against him.

"Lass, ye have to move back," his voice was more of a wheeze than anything else, barely audible with the huffing breaths permeating the room. "I will nae be able to hold back."

Deep chocolate orbs clashed with those the color of the stormy ocean.

“I don’t need you to hold back,” Dallas told him in a remarkably steady voice. “I need you.”

She had scarcely spoken before she found herself being lifted and impaled in one fell swoop. She screamed in pleasure and pain as her nails dug into the hard tissue of his shoulders.

“Oh, aye lass,” Thane groaned against her hair. “So tight, so damned good!”

Despite his best efforts to keep her immobile, Dallas wrapped her legs around his waist, her feet digging into his buttocks and lifted her body only to slam down on his entire length. Once, twice, until Thane grasped her hips to take over the rhythm of their dance.

“Thane! I’m going to-oh, shit I’m cumming!”

Her walls clinched so tightly against him, Thane thought his did was being choked to death. And oh, what a way to go!

“Fuck!” he roared as he exploded inside his woman. His woman. No other female had ever felt so right, so flawless. Maybe she was right and she had died taking him with her, because this was surely paradise.

CHAPTER 6

Dallas awoke to the sounds of the waves lapping against the rocky shore. Seagulls called overhead, probably spotting a school of fish close enough to the surface for capture. The cool breeze blew softly, cooling her still heated skin. She smiled softly as she snuggled closer to her new lover's chest. The world could go hang for just a while longer. Who knew crazy people were so...vigorous?

"Leannan, it is time, ye must wake up."

She really didn't want to, but she couldn't very well bask in the afterglow forever. Cracking open her eyes just a sliver, she was shocked to see they were outside the tiny castles and Thane was walking into the surf.

Shit! She had forgotten he thought he was some kind of seal-man. Now the fool was taking them both to a watery grave after the consummation or whatever.

"Put me down!" she screeched, but clutched his shoulders in a death grip. "You may think you are some kind of seal, or whatever, but I am a human and I cannot live underwater!"

"Ye will nae have to live underwater, *amaid!* How many times do I have to tell ye..."

“Then where exactly do you think you are taking me?” Dallas demanded, eyes narrowed and nostrils flared. “I certainly don’t see any *land* in the direction you are walking. Perhaps you think we should go for a swim?”

“Hauld yer wheesht, woman!”

Thane figured the only way to get her to shut up was to show her. Her high pitched scream was abruptly cut off when he dove under the water, transforming only his legs as he did so. The quicker he got this ceremony over the better.

In spite of the fact she could breathe just fine under water now that had mated good and proper, she was holding her breath, her head buried in his chest.

Dallas , lass you can breath, Thane told her telepathically, exasperation heavy in the voice he projected.

No, I can’t! I am not some kind of sea creature, and neither are-Hey! You are talking in my head!”

Thane couldn’t help but laugh at her incredulity. She was breathing now, and that was the most important thing. Although her grip hadn’t lessened and her nails where embedded in his skin, she was looking up at

him with such wonder, he had to kiss those softly parted lips. Once their mouths touched, Thane could not let go with just a little peck. He allowed his senses to guide them as his tongues invaded the cavern of her mouth, tasting all her sweetness, while keeping her mind off where they were.

All too soon, they arrived at their destination. Thane reluctantly broke away from the kiss and stared down at his woman.

That was nae so bad, was it, leannan?

Dallas couldn't speak. Never mind she was actually in the arms of man who had apparently lost his leg and developed something that resembled a seal's tail-so not sexy-but she was the also at the bottom of the ocean. Not to mention they were surrounded by half-human sorts of creatures.

We are nae human, amaid!

She didn't need to see the frown on his handsome face to know she had said, or rather thought something wrong.

Geez, sorry. I am only human.

She had considered what she had thought kind of mild given the circumstances. How many women would stand, or be held, here all calmly

surrounded by half-seal men, a couple of mermaids, and something that looked like some kind of sex goddess?

She is a Siren, and she is my mother, Thane provided.

Wow! No wonder he was all gorgeous and heavenly. And if the dude, or seal-man, next to her was his father, looked like her seal-man was going to stay fine for quite some time.

Thank you, leannan.

Yeah, so we are here why?

She would deal with the fact he hadn't been lying and he was apparently sane much later. She just couldn't assimilate that right now. One step at a time, and the first step was to come to grips with the fact that she was now the mate of a...What the hell had he called himself...selkie?

Oh, dear sweet merciful heavens! She was mated? Was that like married, or was it something much more permanent? Swinging her shocked gaze up at Thane once more she realized two things with stunning clarity. The first was that he could read her mind. And it seems that she could read his. There would be no keeping secrets from this one. The second thing was that mated might mean she would have to stay down here forever. How could she be mated to a, a...male that was going to live

far longer than her own human body would allow. What would happen when she started to age and wither away? And what kind of children would they have? Would they even be able to have children? Would she have to go into the ocean to give birth to little seals?

You think too much, amaid.

What hell does that mean anyway? There were a million other questions she had for him, but damn it if he was going to call her something, damn it she wanted to know what it was. She had no idea why that was the most important thing to her right this second, but it was.

Foolish woman, Thane's voice had taken on a decidedly husky quality. Kind of like he was...Did he just call her a fool?

Oh, really? I am a foolish woman? I am not the one who had no idea what indoor plumbing was until it was explained to me! I am not the Neanderthal who just plucks the first female he sees out of the ocean and declare she is my mate then take her down to the middle of the ocean in front of-OH!

Thane grinned like a bandit as he slid home into his woman. Damn, she was so sexy when she was all riled up. He was going to have to keep her all irked and vexed just so he could fuck her out of it. Her eyes blazed as if they were on fire, her chest heaved, her breasts rising like offering.

Oh, aye lass. Your pussy grips my cock just right.

Thane had wondered how he was going to get her to mate with him in front of his elder and the high council, now he realized all he had to do was throw her off a little. Blessed Fates, what he not accounted for was how his wee lasses affected him. Bracing his feet against the sandy bottom he thrust repeatedly into his the warm cocoon of his woman, driving all other thoughts but him and what he was doing to her from her mind.

All too soon he felt spasms convulsing around his cock, sucking his essence from him. All around them, the elders began chanting, binding Dallas' life force with his own. A golden glow surrounded them as the writhed together, cresting the peak together.

Thane! I can't stop!

Dallas' stared at her mate in wide-eyed wonder. He held her gaze steadily even as he continued to stroke deep inside of her. Wave after wave of ultimate pleasure engulfed her body, each new orgasm building on the last. Surely the body was not equipped to handle this much pleasure. Sure was positive she was going to explode from the inside out. She could vaguely hear some kind of bizarre mantra in her head, she knew the voices was from neither Thane nor her, and that somehow it was changing her,

binding her tightly to the enigmatic man who held her, but she didn't care. She didn't care she was stark naked in front of heaven knows who, being pleased within an inch of her life. All that mattered was Thane.

Thane...

The word was no more than a whispered prayer before everything went black.

CHAPTER 7

Thane frowned down at his woman. She had been asleep for twenty-four hours, he was beginning to worry. The elder's had warned him that she needed time to recuperate from the bonding, that her system had formerly been fragile, therefore the transition would be harder on her than others. He didn't like this at all. The thought that she might be impaired in some way ... his heart beat hard against his ribcage. That could not happen. Dallas had fast become his everything. He needed to see her glaring at him, to hear her calling all sorts of names he couldn't begin to understand.

"Leannan, it past time ye woke up," he demanded in his most imperious tone. She hated when he used that "tone of voice" as she so often put it.

"What the hell does that mean anyway?" Her voice was hoarse and a tiny bit slurred but it was something.

"Originally, it meant leman, who was the lairds--"

His words were cut short by a well placed pillow to the face. Thane couldn't contain his joy. She was back!

Raising one brow he looked down at where her head was buried beneath the other pillows gracing the huge bed he had created for her and brought with them to the mainland. It was where they had first come together, he was not about to leave it on the enchanted isle in the middle of nowhere.

"But now it simply means sweetheart." That statement earned him a one eyes glare, causing his face to split in a giant grin. Aye, she was back.

"Do ye nae think tis time to explore your new home?"

"If we are still on that damn island I think I might kill you," Dallas grumbled, not all ready to leave the comfortable bed to see more rocks and water.

“We have come together good and proper, there is nae need to keep ye confined any longer.” That earned him a glare with both eyes. Better and better.

“You ass! You kept me there on purpose?” Dallas bounded for where he sat at the end of the bed, pelting his chest with both fists. “Dickhead! Conceited oaf! I could have been home by now!”

“Lass, ye are tickling me.” Thane had the gall to laugh at her best efforts to punch him in the gut. Damned man! “And if I had taken ye to the mainland, would ye have agreed to mate with me?”

Dallas stopped mid-swing. Ha he brought her to civilization after finding her floating in the ocean, she would ran as hard and fast as she could from her seal-man, never giving him a chance to prove he was indeed what he said he was.

“And how many time do I have to tell ye, I nae seal-man! I am...”

“Selkie, I know, I know.”

Dallas was instantly contrite. She could feel the twinge of pain her words had caused as if it were her own. She had really hurt his feelings. She hadn’t meant to, but there was still much unfinished business she had

to take care of. First and foremost, she had to see her aunt and step-cousin pay for throwing her off the damn cruise ship.

Funny, she should have been a complete basket case after the last several days, but she wasn't. So she had mated with a selkie, had been taken to the bottom of the freaking ocean and had sex in front of his parents and various other people, well beings. She was strangely okay with all of it. Except the sex in front of the in-laws. That was just creepy. And more than a little sick.

Thane fell to his back in a fit of laughter, as if the whole thing was hilarious. Dallas didn't see a damn thing funny about the situation. How the hell was she ever supposed to face them ever again?

"Lass, tis expected. Ye had to be bonded tae me. It was the only way."

"Whatever," she grumbled under her breath. It was appalling, all naked and getting it in front of the people that had given Thane life. Ew!

"I swear, lass," Thane had approached her silently and was now busily wrapping his arms around her. How could she not melt into those strong, perfectly formed limbs? "They will nae hold it against ye. They

have gone through the same thing. Now, please, let me show ye the home I have made for ye."

Put that way, it would have just been rude to say no.

"Fine, but I kind of need to put on some clothes. *Modern* clothes, thank you very much."

This castle was nestled against the Northern Scottish cliffs; a real castle this time, not some bizarre tiny structure. The entire building had been updated with all the modern conveniences without distracting from its natural beauty and charm. Dallas found herself choked up at Thane's thoughtfulness. He had remembered everything she had raged about on the island, like not having any clothing, television, radio, or a computer. The man had made her an office, an electronic nirvana complete with giant plasma, satellite, dual DVD players and a wall to wall stereo system. She had no idea one stereo system could be so damn big!

"You did all this for me?" Dallas was flabbergasted. She had had some decent boyfriends in the past, but seeing as how she was stinking rich, no one had ever thought to actually give her anything of real value.

“Of course!” Thane puffed his chest, looking all adorably offended.

“Ye think I would nae think to provide for my own woman?!”

“Don’t get your panties in a twist,” she laughed in affront. “I am touched. And we really need to talk about this woman thing. I mean, you can’t just go around calling me woman, or lass or your leman. Especially not your leman.”

“I told ye...”

“Yeah, yeah, I know. It means sweetheart now.” Dallas waved her hand in the air as she walked back into the castle, marching toward one of the sitting rooms that had modern furniture.

Plopping down on the thick stuffed leather couch, she narrowed her eyes and pointed her finger directly at him. Thane felt trepidation crawl up his spine. This was not going to be pleasant. He was fast learning once Dallas got started the only way to stop her was to...

“Wipe that shit eating grin off your face!” Dallas ordered. “We will not be having sex right now. We need to get things straight.”

“Ballocks,” Than muttered under his breath. Sitting down in the chair across from him he braced himself.

“Look, I know we are mated and all. And I appreciate that,” she began in her best down-to-business voice. “Now, I need to go back to the States as soon as possible. I promise as soon as I sort out the whole bitch trying to kill me thing, I will be back-”

“NO!”

CHAPTER 8

“Excuse me?” No he did not just get all caveman on her.

Yep, there he was, hovering over her, his aquamarine eyes all furious and...concerned. Okay, so it was cute. Maybe even sexy, still, no one told her no. She was a grown ass woman.

“Look, I am not saying I won’t be back.” She wasn’t sure she could stay away. Even now, in the middle of a good old fashioned showdown, she felt herself leaning ever so slightly toward where he stood, which was not so wise seeing as how she was still seated. Sure enough, she lost her balance and fell on her face, right at the damnable man’s feet. That was just galling.

“There is nae way I’ll be allowing ye to traipse off without me, ye keen?” The bastard had the nerve to lower his voice while leaning down

and plucking her off the floor as if she was a child. “Just look at ye, ye cannae even manage to sit still for a spell.”

Okay now she was ready for a fight; the kind that got the juices flowing and the blood pumping.

“Allow me? You aren’t going to allow me? I don’t know who the hell you think you are, but no one allows me to do a damn thing! I will do whatever the hell I please and woe to the asshole who tries to stop me!”

The little speech would have probably been far more effective if he hadn’t been cradling her in his arms, or steadily making his way up the massive curved staircase towards the bedroom they had just vacated a few short hours ago. Dallas tried desperately to hold on to her righteous indignation, but unfortunately her pussy just wasn’t listening, moistening more and more with every step. She found herself rubbing against his suddenly bare skin, anxious to get closer. Hell the suddenly part didn’t even bother her as it should have, she was getting used to things appearing and disappearing. She just wished he had made her clothes disappear as well.

By the time he dropped her on the mammoth bed, Dallas was literally panting with anticipation. It was should have been shameful

really; she had been intimate with the magnificent creature that was Thane exactly twice, yet her body burned for him. Her soul recognized him as her own with a surety that rocked her to her core. These things just didn't happen in real life. The thought that she was really was dead, drowned in the freezing waters of the northern Atlantic crept into her consciousness once more.

"If I have tae tell ye again ye are NAE dead woman, I will be spanking that gorgeous arse but good!"

Dallas blinked up at the gorgeously nude man before her. His skin was all warm looking, sun kissed and smooth. Her tongue darted out to run across her lips as she contemplated his tiny puckered nipples on that perfectly formed chest. Slightly darker from the rest of her body, that area seemed to be calling to her in a personal invitation to taste their wares. Oh, yum...Wait, she was supposed to mad at him about something wasn't she?

"Can we talk about this later?" She couldn't think straight right now. Not with all that flawless male flesh all in her face.

Thane threw her a wicked grin that did not bode well. Stupid her, she got wetter instead of getting worried. Until, that is, she blinked and found herself wearing nothing but the most scandalous underwear she would

have never bought for herself, her hands tied together above her head.

There was little point in asking how he did it, being as he was magical and all, but the why started to weigh heavily on her mind.

“Okay, maybe we should talk now.”

“Ye donnae seem to kin what the word ‘mate’ mean, lass.”

Thane spoke in a low measured tone, neither showing anger or irritation. That had to be the most irritating thing about him, his failure to get riled. He ran his fingers over the contours of her skin in a lazy manner that didn’t match the heat radiating from his eyes. There was no stopping the shiver of anticipation coursing through her body.

“Spread yer legs, lass.”

Dallas couldn’t really explain why she complied, but she did comply immediately. There was just something in the softly spoken words that inspired instantaneous obedience.

SMACK!

“HOLY SHIT!”

The slap against her pussy was sharp, it stung like a son-of-bitch, yet as the burning heat spread the sting blossomed into a delightful pulsating pleasure she could not even begin to describe. The soft, lingering but closed

mouth kiss he placed on her cloth covered cunt helped add to the budding sensation, making her rock her hips upward. Whether it was for a kiss or another smack, Dallas couldn't begin to say.

"Are ye still thinkin' ye will be going anywhere without me, lass?"

"Uh?" Was he seriously asking her a question that required careful consideration as to how to answer right now?

SMACK! SMACK! SMACK!

That last one landed just right, sending Dallas over the edge. Her scream was without sound as her body convulsed, her thighs tightening against nothing but air. It might have been an orgasm, but it was one of those exasperating ones that left a girl all needy for more.

"Answer me, Dallas," Thane demanded, running a single finger along her still covered slit.

There was nothing he wanted more than to make the straps of silk disappear, but he needed to lay down some boundaries. They were newly mated; their bond was far too tenuous to let his mate just wander off without him. Even if they had been mated for a hundred years, he still wouldn't have let her go.

The woman she was going to confront tried to kill her. If she thought he would ever allow her to confront them alone-well, she would just have to learn wouldn't she? Nothing under the heavens would ever stop him from taking care of what was his, and she was all his.

"Thane, if you don't get your sweet ass over here and do me now I might have to kill you!"

That's the Dallas he already loved more than life itself even though he was just beginning to know her. Here she was all tied up and helpless, giving him orders. As much as he would love to oblige, the simple question of who was the man had to be dealt with here.

"I think there is something ye need to be tellin' me, lass." There was no way to keep the aching need out of his voice. His balls were drawn up so tight, he was lightheaded. Submission was not in Dallas' vocabulary, he would never expect her to capitulate that much. But a little give- he had to have that much.

"I am not going anywhere without you!" Dallas spat in his general direction. "Now get your white ass over here! Now!"

With a growl of satisfaction, Thane threw himself at her, making her underwear and binds disappear simultaneously. No sooner than he cover

he sweet body than he found himself flat on his back, looking up at the most erotic thing he had ever seen in his life.

Dallas had straddled him so fast, he thought for a second *she* had been using magic. She grabbed his cock in a firm grip, guiding him to exactly where he wanted to be. With a twist of her hips, she was sinking down on him, her head thrown back, her bottom lip caught between her teeth. Damn, that was sexy. Her breasts rose and fell with her heavy pants. Her nipples all taut and erect. Stunning.

Taking a deep breath, Dallas braced her thighs against Thane's and dropped her body down on every inch of his gloriously thick, wonderfully long cock. Sweet merciful heaven, nothing had ever felt so damn good! He stretched her so full she wasn't sure she could contain all of him, but she was going to her best to try. Wiggling to ensure he was firmly planted, she leaned forward, bracing her hands on his wide shoulders. She had to move cautiously at first, sliding back and forth slowly, allowing their combined juices to lubricate them both for easier movement.

Thane snarled beneath her, but allowed her the freedom to work it the way she wanted to. At least, he did at first. When she began to move faster, her hands moving from his shoulders to his chest to give herself

better leverage and allow her to sit up, the massive man began to thrash, bucking up so hard his cock reached her cervix, viciously stabbing her g-spot with such force, there was nothing she could do but hold on for the ride as she came over and over again all over his dick.

“Aye, lass,” Thane barked in broken pants, his hands slamming her hips down on him. “Just like that. Come for me, *leannan*.”

As if she had a choice in the matter. Her body quaked uncontrollably, not stopping even as Thane flipped them over, placing her legs over his shoulder. He was hammering her so hard, so right, she was starting to see stars.

“Are ye ready for me, lass?” he huffed. “I need to come inside ya, lass.”

“Oh, hell yeah!” What a stupid ass question.

With a roar that surely was heard for miles around, he splashed inside her womb, his groin mashing against her clit, sending her into yet another round of hopeless orgasms. Damn, the man was sweet between the sheets.

Snorting with what she supposed was supposed to be laughter, Thane dropped down beside her, pulling her into the warm shelter of his arms. Oops, she forget he could read her thoughts.

As you can read mine, lass.

Too much trouble, Dallas yawned sleepily, never noticing she had answered him mentally. *Now go to sleep. We need to catch an early flight to get to the States before Mae and her cow of a daughter.*

Thane smiled into her hair. She was learning.

CHAPTER 9

Dallas tapped her fingers impatiently against the high gleam of the mahogany conference table. Mae and Belle had lost little time. They had apparently decided against reporting her missing the next day after throwing her overboard. Right after dinner, Mae had caused commotion, causing the ship's captain radio in for help to search for her missing niece.

She had to hand it to the older woman. It had been a smart move. The captain had thought Mae's niece had probably hooked up with another passenger,. So he had spent the night trying to reassure Mae while sending out a half-hearted search around the ship. When Dallas hadn't turned up

after yet another day, they had called for help. Had Thane not saved her, chances where Dallas would have been dead by then.

Mae and Belle had left the ship immediately, returning to Texas to have Dallas officially declared “Missing” and trying to make a move to take over the estate left to her by her Uncle Mitch. Dallas was sorry she hadn’t witnessed the nasty surprise that she had already taken steps to protect her uncle’s money from his grasping wife. Her lawyer had implicate instructions the estate could not be touched by any family member if she was ever declared missing. Her legacy would be managed by her uncle’s personal accountant unless or until she was legally declared dead.

In the event she did die before having heirs of her own, the money would be divvied up between a select group of charities. Under no circumstances would a dime ever be seen by her dear “Aunt” Mae or her cousin Belle.

Why did yer uncle allow that child to be named Belle? Thane’s gruff voice sounded inside Dallas’ head. *There is nothing beautiful about her.*

Belle could have lived up to her name. She should have lived up to her name. But with her perpetual pouty sour face, she looked like a prune

without the wrinkles. Her figure was full and could have been quite appealing if she didn't insist on wearing clothing that did not fit her body type. For a full grown woman with curves, she was always trying to squeeze into high name fashions designed for women with no discernable shape at all. As a result she tended to look like a very uncomfortable stuffed sausage.

Stop it! It was incredibly hard to concentrate on the business at hand when he kept cracking on the duo on the other side of the table.

It had taken some doing to convince Thane to go to the proper authorities to take care of Mae and Belle. He had wanted to send them to another dimension to be tortured of all of eternity. As much as Dallas detested the two women, that sounded a bit extreme.

Leannan, they tried to kill you! Thane could not figure his woman out. Despite being able to stare death and danger in the face without blinking, Dallas had a soft heart.

Instead of leaving the next morning as Dallas had wanted, they had taken a week getting to know one another. He had pulled every trick in the book to keep her in the bedroom. Thank the gods his woman was highly responsive. His reasons had been two-fold. He really did want to get to

know his intriguing little human better. He also had read her intentions. She really did want to let the proper authorities take care of this despicable woman and her demon spawn. That was not going to happen.

He had had to wait until Dallas was asleep each night before diving into the deep to arrange for a proper sort of punishment. The attempted murder of a selkie's mate was serious business. They were a dying race of beings. For the Otherworld who had lost so many, such a thing could not be allowed to stand. The council had agreed with Thane wholeheartedly; these two must be made an example to all who dared to mess with the Otherworld. He had no idea who was about to walk through the door of the conference room in which they sat, but he knew they would not be human F.B.I. agents.

As far as Thane was concerned, a mere human jail was too good for the likes of them. Had they succeeded in killing Dallas, he would have been cursed to live a solitary life without a mate. The thought sent a shiver of pure terror down his spine. He could not imagine living a single day without nibbling on those soft lips, or burying himself between those succulent thighs. Stifling a moan, Thane shifted in his seat, trying to hide his growing hard on.

This is not the time or place for that. Dallas had probably meant that to be some kind of rebuke, but Thane detected more than a little desire in her thought. Just to push her buttons, he purposely projected images from last night. How she had looked to him on her knees, legs spread for his pleasure. *I mean it, Thane .*

“Must we be subjected to this, this *Euro-trash* pawning you? It is bad enough you drug your own family in here like common criminals,” Mae sniffed indignantly.

Thane was shocked to see his hand playing in Dallas’ hair.

“My fiancé is affectionate,” Dallas retorted. “And you didn’t act like family when you threw me overboard.”

“If you had any evidence of that, we would have been arrested!” Mae snapped. Then obviously remembering she was supposed to be laying the part of the wronged but understanding and loving aunt, she quickly changed her tune. “I mean really, Dallas. You are my niece. Why would I do something so horrid?”

Dallas rolled her eyes at the saccharine tone, but said nothing. She wasn’t about to give “Aunt” Mae the pleasure. The bitch was mad if she thought she was going to get away with what she had done. She didn’t

bother to let the older woman know she had the upper hand in this game. She much rather watch her sweat it out and let her break down then to let her know what was coming next. Mae had no idea Dallas didn't ingest any of whatever it was that was in the vial Belle had poured into her wine.

"For all I know," Mae went on, "you met this-this *man* on the ship and conspired with him to frame me...us."

Dallas felt momentary sympathy for Belle when the girl noted her mother's slip of the tongue with a cringe. *Yeah, your mother cares for no one but herself*, she silently noted. But then, Belle was a full grown woman. A young one, but a woman nonetheless. She should have known better.

"Why the hell would I do that?" Dallas asked instead of saying anything to Belle. There was no point, she had made her bed.

"Because you knew about the new will?" Belle asked snidely. "You knew Mitch-Daddy hadn't cut us out of his will, but left everything to Mama."

Dallas blinked at the younger woman in absolute awe. The poor thing believed that. Dallas knew for a fact there was no other will. Uncle Mitch hadn't made the will read after his funeral until his last round of chemo hadn't killed the cancer.

“There was no other will, Belle.”

“Of course there was!” Mae broke in, grasping her daughter’s hand. Her beady eyes darted everywhere but directly at Dallas. “It was found when we finally started clearing Mitch’s things-after we returned from the cruise. I could not stay aboard that boat after you disappeared.”

“Did you see this will, Belle?” Dallas noted Belle was getting increasingly agitated. More and more interesting.

“Of course she has!” Mae answered for her.

Dallas was about to explore this interesting little development further, but the doors opened and two F.B.I. agents walked in. A buzzing awareness swamped Dallas’ brain, the hairs on the back of her neck stood straight up. She was all too aware two things at once; the first was, those were no mere F.B.I. agents, the second was that her “mate” had some serious explaining to do.

CHAPTER 10

Thane knew he was in trouble. He could practically feel the molten heat of Dallas’ anger radiating in waves off her body. Mentally rubbing his

hands together in glee, he leaned back with a grin. There were going to be some serious fireworks in the bed tonight.

You are so dead.

No yelling, no screaming, just a softly thought threat. Thane's cock jumped. Dallas was at her most formidable when she was well and truly pissed.

Nae, luv. I am quite alive. More so than he had ever been in a lifetime.

Who, or should I say, what, are they?

Thane glanced at the duo who had walking through the door. Both beings stood about seven feet tall, heavily muscled with fierce expressions. The crone Mae started visible shaking and her cow of a daughter stared slack jawed as the huge men made their way to the table. They carried themselves like warriors set about a serious task. Although Thane had to admit while he found the situation most serious, he was more than a little unnerved at the two. Not that he would ever admit it. Their physical appearance was meant to inspire fear and trepidation.

Berserkers.

Dallas jerked her narrowed gaze from the two men who looked a hell of lot more like linebackers than F.B.I. agents to her man. Did he just say

berserkers? Did such a thing even exist? *Well of course they do*, she thought to herself. *If seal boy here can exist...*

Woman doona think I will nae spank you right here in front of the old crone and her cow.

One of the men must have caught on to their unspoken conversation. He paused at the head of the conference table, his brow arched as he watched them mentally bicker. Dallas decided right then and there she had had just about enough of the whole mystical being thing.

"Look," she said out loud completely unmoved by the berserkers implicate power. "I don't know who asked you here, but I think we can let the normal human justice system take care of these two." Waving her hand in Mae and Belle's general direction.

"What in world are blabbering about?" Mae demanded. "You brought us here!" Immediately seeing how she might work the situation to her advantage. "Belle!" managing to clutch both her still open mouthed daughter and her chest at the same time, she did a parody of a faint. "That man has done something to her mind! He has brainwashed her. Something is wrong I just know it."

Both men ignored Mae outright, focusing their attention on Thane.

“Your woman is bold.”

Dallas would have told the red headed one off, seeing as how he was the one who had spoken, but Thane placed a firm hand on her arm. Not a mental warning, not a word, just one hand. It spoke more than words ever could.

“She is,” was his only reply.

Turning their attention back to the other two women, the blonde spoke in a slow measured voice.

“Mae Craig, you have been found guilty of the attempted murder of a selkies’ mate. For such a crime, death is too much a mercy for the likes of you. An example must be made. You are hereby banished to the frozen tundra for a thousand years. You will be chained about the neck and exposed to the Elementals. The wind shall whip at your flesh, your blood will run cold, yet you will not die. At the end of your confinement, you will spend a thousand years in the desert plains. Such will be the pattern of your existence forevermore.”

The red head turned to Belle. His voice was neither slow nor measured. It was deep and dark, sending a chill through every person in the room. “You will be trained.”

“What the hell is going ...” Mae never got to finish her sentence. She disappeared in a puff of smoke.

The redhead held out his hand to Belle. “Come.”

To Dallas’ shock, Belle went. The three walked out of the room just as calmly as you please.

“Thane, I am so going to kick your ass.”

Thane smiled, slowly climbing to his feet. “I look forward to it, lass.”

Epilogue

Months later...

Dallas could have sworn she could hear the sea with her head resting on Thane’s chiseled chest. She loved it here in the Scottish Highlands. Most of all, she loved it here in her man’s arms. His hand idly stroked up and down her cooling flesh, lulling her to sleep.

I’m sorry, Dallas, for what my mother and I did. I hope one day you will forgive me?

Dallas jerked upright in the bed. “Belle? Damn! How could I have forgotten? What the hell happened to Belle? ”

Right after her “cousin” had been escorted out of the F.B.I. conference room, she and Thane had gotten into a heated argument that ended the way all their arguments ended, with her legs in the air and his cock stuffed deep inside her. Right there on the table, until Thane had whisked them back to her apartment.

Thane smiled softly, pulling her back into his arms. “She is fine. She is-reformed.”

“You heard it to didn’t you?”

“Aye.”

“Where is she? Where did they take her? Is she all right?”

“Shhh, lass. The cow is fine. Happy ensconced in Finland with her berserkers.”

“Wait, more than one? How come she gets two and she tried to kill me and I only get one?”

“Because lass, I am a thousand regular men. Surely I am two or three berserkers. Ye are blessed.”

“You are the most conceited...”

Thane cut her off the only way he knew how. Much, much later, he rolled over, pulling his woman with him. "See, lass? I told you. All the selkie you will ever need."