



Eliza
Gayle

PENTACLES
OF MAGICK
The Burning

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

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Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
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CONTENTS

[Pentacles of Magick:](#)

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[Prologue](#)

[Chapter One](#)

[Chapter Two](#)

[Chapter Three](#)

[Chapter Four](#)

[Chapter Five](#)

[Epilogue](#)

[About the Author](#)

* * * *

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by Eliza Gayle

Published by Phaze Books

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Phaze Fantasies, Vol. III

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by Eliza Gayle

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Pentacles of Magick:

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a novella of erotic romance by

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[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

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A Phaze Production

Phaze Books

6470A Glenway Avenue, #109

Cincinnati, OH 45211-5222

Phaze is an imprint of Mundania Press, LLC.

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Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
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www.Phaze.com

Cover art © 2008 Kendra Egert

Edited by Kathryn Lively

eBook ISBN-13: 978-1-59426-813-7

First Edition—June, 2008

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

I would like to thank both Lissa Matthews and Luna Carrol, who always help me out at the last minute. Especially Lissa, who doesn't even like paranormal but reads it just to help me.

Thanks for being a great friend.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Prologue

Wild grief tore at Cash as he drove away from his home. Once again a tiresome prophecy and his vindictive uncle had driven him from the only place he cared about. As his motorcycle ate up the miles in front of him, the hollow place inside his soul widened as he left his twin and the woman Grae claimed as his empathic mate.

For his brother's sake, Cash hoped Grae was right. If she could balance Grae's magick then he could avoid their fate. As for his own fate, well, he had made his own choices and pushed his dark magick at every opportunity he could. Using had been his comfort and best friend for too long now—he couldn't turn back, couldn't stop using.

But he could confront the bastard that refused to stop. Find a way to stop him before one of his brothers got killed, or worse, used their black magick against him. No, Reverend Scott Cunningham had to be stopped before something really bad happened.

Now he would decide what would be the best approach. It would take a few days of riding to get there, so he had time to come up with a plan. Despite what most people thought of him, he wasn't nearly as rash and unpredictable as they said. He laughed. *They* was just another word for his nosy, interfering brothers.

His mind wandered back to Rena Gallagher and her theory of balance. She'd been hired by their uncle to study the family Tarot. According to her research, the Ten of Pentacles had

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

clues depicted that meant more than what the prophecy actually foretold. The symbol they'd believed to represent the four brothers actually represented four women. Empaths.

Despite his behavior with Grae and Rena, there'd been a kernel of hope that had sneaked up on him. His ceremonial joining with Grae had pushed their magick and experiences together, allowing him a glimpse into the power dynamic that flowed between the two of them. Proving that, at least for his twin, it did seem possible, and his mate could absorb the damage left behind every time one of them was forced to call upon the stronger dark magick. Unwilling to believe that he could ever overcome his own addiction to the dark, there was still a chance for his other brothers, Denn and Noah.

Cash found it hard to believe that, after all these years, a new piece of the prophecy had been found. Was there a reason they'd only learned part of it? How had it gotten lost, and why did it take all these years to solve it? Had no one in the family known? Or had his uncle known all along and had only needed someone to solve the riddle of the Tarot?

These unanswered questions had him pulling his bike in a sharp swerve across two lanes to reach the shoulder of the road.

"That's it. Someone does know. That son of a bitch. I'd bet money that dear Uncle Scott knows a whole hell of a lot more than he ever let on."

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter One

Selene raced down the highway, pushing her motorcycle to its screaming limits. The wind bit at her around the full-face helmet she wore. Her Busa roared underneath her, vibrating against her legs and arousing her like a good man could. She needed this—the cool air, the rush of speed, and the open road. Staying in one place too long was always a bad idea.

With the open road came the freedom she craved, allowing her to leave all her troubles behind. At least, until they caught up with her again. No matter how hard she ran it would only be a matter of time before her past caught her.

Without warning a dark, powerful force slammed into her, taking her breath away. With its intensity her bike wavered, losing control. She white-knuckled the handgrips, forcing the bike to her own will to save herself from a high-speed crash. Her foot slid on the peg before her boots dug in, saving her from slipping loose. Her limbs started to heat, an instinctive reaction, even giving off a slight glow.

What the fuck?

Using every ounce of strength in her body, she fought to keep the bike up as it leaned closer to the ground. The rough asphalt loomed in her vision. The muscles in her arms and shoulders stretched and burned with the extra effort. *Damn, this is going to hurt.*

As her body inched closer to the highway she felt the loose rocks bouncing against her helmet. She couldn't stop it now,

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

the bike was sliding to the ground in an irreversible slow motion as she continued to race down the highway.

A flash of light to her left side startled her as she bumped against a soft but invisible barrier, which stopped her fall. Someone—or something—was holding her up from the pavement.

"Take my hand."

The command startled her as she turned her head away from the pavement and saw a hand reaching out to her through something, a bubble of sorts, that surrounded his arm with a crackle of blue energy. Unable to stop and think about what the hell was going on around her, other than she was about to become a lump of road rash, she grasped the offered hand. More than anything, she didn't want to eat pavement tonight.

When her hand connected with his skin, the darkness she'd felt slammed into her, stronger than before, consuming her. She looked past the hand pulling her up into the most intense brown eyes she'd ever seen. No, not brown, a dark amber. Mesmerized, she held his gaze as her body heated in defense pushing back against the darkness threatening her.

As he pulled her and the bike upright again, their forward motion on their bikes helped them come came sliding to a stop. She let go of his hand and tumbled to the ground, rolling away in time to prevent her bike from falling on top of her.

The heat built in her fast, whipping up and out of control as she fought to rein it in. It was too late. She jerked her helmet off, struggling for deep, cleansing breaths. *Control.*

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

Have to stop it. Flames erupted from the ground around her, circling her.

"What the hell?" The stranger ripped off his own helmet, revealing dark, wavy hair that curled around his head at the edges. His face looked like he hadn't shaved in a few days, and when he turned his killer eyes back towards her she felt the full effect of his good looks. He was devastating in that dark bad boy way she managed to fall for every damn time. But this time dark took on a whole new meaning as the flames leapt higher and he rushed forward to pull her free.

"Stop!" She motioned for him to stay away. "Give me a few minutes and I will get this shit under control." She closed her eyes, not doubting that he would listen to her. As the darkness crept through her system she fought the pain and anger that came with it. The rage transferred from him to her stormed inside her. Pooling all her energy against the darkness, she pushed it up and out, directing it away from them.

"Holy fuck! Not my bike!" She opened her eyes to see his Harley on fire across the clearing from them. She watched in horror as he ran to it, and the bike exploded before them, knocking them both on their asses.

Her skin instantly began to cool as all the emotions behind the episode were directed outward. She hadn't intended to blow up his damn bike, but at least hers had not been close and they wouldn't be stranded here—*together*. For some reason that one word had her whole body tingling. *Crazy, that's what that is.*

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

She scrambled off the ground with a quick glance around to ensure all the flames had extinguished, and ran over to the sexy stranger. "Are you okay?"

He lay there on the ground staring into the night sky scrubbing his hands over his face. "That was a vintage bike, you know."

"Yeah, I do know." She watched his bike burn, wondering what the hell had just happened. How had she lost control of her power? That hadn't happened since she was an angry teenager. Suspicion curled in her mind, threading through her and filling her with doubt. "Who are you? And why the hell were you so pissed when you touched me?"

"Who am I? Are you freaking kidding me? Who the hell are you? And what just happened here?" He sat up, motioning to his now charred and smoking bike.

"The name is Selene, and I'm sorry about your bike. I'll buy you a new one if I have to."

He stood, unfolding his tall muscular body, at least, from what she could tell under the leather he wore. The dark look he threw her sent a tiny shiver down her spine.

"Well, Selene, I don't think that'll be necessary, but you can, however, start with an explanation of what happened." He watched and waited as she thought about how to explain it.

"Pretty simple, really. I rode a little too fast, lost control, and you came along and saved me from becoming roadkill." She doubted he would understand that a force of dark power slammed into her and nearly incapacitated her. Unless, of

course, he was the one responsible. He had to be. The source had radiated from him in an angry wave.

"That simple, huh? His voice vibrated in anger as he waited for the rest of the story. But he would be waiting till hell froze over before she told her secrets to a stranger who obviously had some pretty big secrets himself. "No explanation for the fire that surrounded you or the fact that my bike just got blown to bits?"

She bristled at his tone. *Damn smartass.*

"What about you? How did you stop my fall and then pull me and my bike back up, all at a high speed?" She looked him straight in the eye. "Don't get me wrong. I'm extremely grateful, but I can't even begin to understand what happened out there." Well, that wasn't exactly true. At the institute she had seen some pretty freaky shit. Nothing surprised her these days.

He stared at her for several long moments as they squared off with each other like two rivals over the same prize.

"Well, Selene, it seems we have a bit of a standoff here. How about a truce for now?" His deep throaty voice rolled over her like smooth brandy on a cold night. He held out his hand in offering. Afraid to touch him again, she strode over to her bike and picked it up.

"I'll take that truce—I don't even know your name."

"Cash."

"Well, Cash, it looks like I owe you a ride. We aren't that far from Boston, why don't we hit it together on my bike? The least I can do is get you someplace that can provide you with a new ride." Although the thought of him leaning against her

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

on the bike frightened as well as excited her, she really had no other option here. He'd saved her and she wasn't about to leave him stranded here. And if he was someone after her, what better way to keep an eye on him? After all, this wasn't the first time she'd run from her prison and she wouldn't put it past them to get creative with her recapture or death this time.

Now if she could just get the tingling in her body to stop every time she imagined him touching her...

* * * *

"I'll drive." He held out his hand, waiting for the keys and the smart comment he was sure would follow. This one had quite an attitude to go along with that chip on her shoulder. That wasn't a problem for him, though. He could totally identify. One black sheep could identify another.

"Are you high? Do I look like the kind of person who would allow another to drive her bike? Uh uh. No way. Not gonna happen."

"I'm sorry, but were you not just about to become roadkill out there before I managed to stop it? Now you think I should let you drive me? Where's the logic in that?"

Lifting her foot to mount the bike, she paused but didn't turn. A sudden blast of heat rushed him, hot but not enough to burn him. He'd let her play for now. But if she kept this up he'd be more than happy to teach the little firestarter a lesson. He'd never actually met one of her kind before, so he would be careful not to underestimate her power, but he doubted she could overcome his magick if need be. When it

came to fire, his little brother Noah had taught him a trick or two.

Still, caution seemed warranted under the circumstances. She'd lost control of her power after the crash, and if they weren't careful someone could get seriously hurt. For now it was up to him to maintain that control, which meant driving.

Calling for a wisp of his own power, he pushed back in her direction a cold blast of air to cool her down.

She turned to face him. "How did you do that?" Looking into her cool blue eyes, he noticed genuine curiosity.

"Do what?" His lips twitched, holding back a smile. She glared back at him.

"Fine. Don't tell me. But hear this: you will not be driving my bike. Call me obsessive, whatever, but no one's hands other than my own touch those handlebars. If you have a problem with that, then you can stay here and wait. I'll send someone out for you as soon as I reach Boston. That should only be about a four-to-six hour wait."

A smile breached his face as she ended her tirade. Annoyance with him clearly whipped up a strong response. He'd love to test all that passion she exuded in his bed, and wrap his hands in the fiery hair of hers, tugging her head back to expose her throat to his mouth.

He imagined kissing a trail along the neck to the curve of her shoulder before traveling down her torso to the lush curve of her breasts. With all her heat he'd bet she would have a spicy flavor. Like chocolate with a cayenne pepper kick blended in. One that would burn him alive and make him crave more. His cock twitched in his leathers with a fierce

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

longing to sample her wet heat. He hadn't even touched her and already he was burning up. He dug deep for a shred of control. This wasn't the time or place for thoughts like these.

He had a mission to carry out, and taking time away from that for sex, even if he would lay odds it would be one of the best experiences of his life, seemed wrong. No, he had to do the right thing, which right now meant getting to Boston and procuring some new wheels. He grimaced. He was sure Grae would give him hell over losing his bike. Even more so if he knew it was because of a woman. He was good at finding the trouble in women.

Although at this point, his twin didn't have much room to talk about things happening *because* of a woman. He'd gone and fallen in love with the woman their uncle had hired to hurt them. Granted, she didn't know why she'd been hired, but still ... He shook his head, not wanting to think about Grae and Rena right now. Their theories of balance still sounded too good to be true and even more impossible for him. He knew that he had already gone too far, used too much magick. He might not be able to save himself from a certain to be short life, but he could help with the asshole they were forced to claim as uncle. The bastard had tortured him and his three brothers every chance he got and even now seemed hell bent on destroying them one way or another.

As he watched Selene's leg slide across the set he marveled how her body curved and molded perfectly to the seat. She looked briefly at him, long enough for that shock of heat to flare between them. This time she didn't push it at him, instead it wove them together. She broke the eye

contact quickly, but the damage had been done or more like the heat had flared.

She slid forward on the seat, making a little more room for him on the bike. She turned the key and flicked the switch, the engine roaring to life beneath her. It was a powerful bike, one not many women rode, but it suited her perfectly. Strong, sassy, with attitude to spare. Nothing like getting a nut over a Busa babe. She looked like trouble and he had enough of that on his own.

What the hell am I getting myself into?

Kicking his own leg across the bike, he slid into place behind her, his semi hard cock nestling between the cheeks of her ass. He groaned inwardly, knowing this ride would kill him. That little bit of contact between them through clothes and all stirred something deep within him. His magick moved. Well, hell, that was new. His body tightened when she turned to give him one last glance before putting on her helmet. That knowing look in her eyes made him want to pull her whole body back against his, skin to skin, to explore, to tempt and taste her...

"You ready to go or do you need some time to take care of something?" Her breathless voice stilled his thoughts. Her attempt at sarcasm fell flat, betrayed by her lust filled eyes and obvious struggle for even breathing. It was nice to know she was as affected as he was. His mouth twitched in amusement, making it damn difficult to keep a straight face.

"Ready when you are, babe." Oh yeah, he was ready all right. Ready to bend her over the motorcycle right there and now and bury himself in her wet, tight heat. Fuck them both

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

senseless until whatever trouble his magick sensed was brewing blew over. He reached down to shift the position of his cock, as the pain from his zipper digging into his now fully engorged shaft was killing him.

He donned his own helmet and wrapped one of his arms around her waist, forcing them tight together. There would be no denying his arousal. *No problem*, he mused, *let's see how she handles this*.

"Let's go, Selene. Show me what you've got."

Her beast of a bike roared underneath them as she shot toward the open highway, spewing gravel behind her. Under his hand her body heated. Not hot, but a subtle sensation like a warm shower on a cold night. Like him, it felt good to ride. Free and easy on the open road, and obviously her fire starting abilities were linked with her emotions. It seemed any surge in feeling such as anger, lust or the myriad of other possibilities heated her. So far anger had been destructive and happiness was comforting. He imagined her in lust, her pleasure. Would her body heat up when he fucked her? Would she warm his pistoning cock as he brought her to climax over and over again?

He sighed. This was going to be a long ride.

* * * *

Selene looked at the sign announcing the miles to Boston and calculated if she pushed her bike hard she could have them in the city before midnight. Night had fallen a few hours ago and the constant press of his body against hers had her itchy and restless. She didn't even need to look at his face to

know he probably needed a break as well. The tension in his hard body against her had been vibrating around them both for hours.

Spying an advertisement for gas at the next exit, she made a decision to stop and take a break. She just needed a little breathing room, not to mention gas for her bike. Maybe some food would help them both. Or some ice cold water to cool them down. She shook her head, laughing at herself. She sounded like a desperate woman about to die if she didn't get a break from a man.

Since when did she let men get to her? Thanks to her battery-operated friend she didn't even need one very often. After the last betrayal from the one man she had trusted, she'd not let another one get even close. That was one mistake she still ran from every day. He would never be satisfied until he caught her. It seemed every time he caught up with her lately, it was sooner than the last. The most recent incident she'd barely managed to get out in time. Innocents had been injured. The memory rode her every time she tried to sleep.

"Hey, Selene. What's wrong?" His urgent question startled her from her thoughts as she realized she hadn't been paying attention to her emotions. Her arms had grown brighter and she was getting pretty hot. "Whatever you are doing stop it. You're burning me."

Not wanting to wait any longer, she pulled the bike off the road onto the dirt and grass just behind a tree. A good a spot as any to rest, right next to the highway but out of sight of passersby.

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

Before she came to a stop Cash bounced off the bike, ripping off his helmet. "Damn, woman, what the hell are you doing?" He ripped open his shirt to reveal reddened skin on his lower abdomen. Right where he'd been pressed up against her on the bike.

"Jesus, I'm sorry. I didn't realize..."

"You didn't feel the heat burning the hell out of me? Are you kidding? Look at me."

She looked at him all right. Smooth, muscular chest with just a fine sprinkling of dark hair that narrowed into a trail that disappeared below the waistband of his pants. She licked her lips at the thought of the flesh hidden there. Most of the ride she had felt the hard imprint of his cock pressing between the cheeks of her ass, driving her mad. It had taken every ounce of willpower not to wiggle back against him.

It had been a while since she had been with a man, and even longer since it had been good. Maybe that's why a prime specimen such as himself had her on an erotic edge, fighting the fall.

"Can't you control your power? And why are you looking at me like that? Don't do that." He took several steps closer as he spoke. The sharp sounds of sticks and leaves crunched under his boots. "You look at me like that and I will take what I want." Her mouth went dry as he moved toward her almost in a surreal slow motion. The air between them alternately heated and cooled. Heat from her and a cool breeze from him? How was that possible?

Despite the cool air her flesh heated further, her body tight in her own skin. She needed to run away as much as she

craved his touch. She shouldn't be thinking about him this way.

What the hell is wrong with me?

He'd seen her loss of control earlier and he seemed rather nonchalant about it. Like he knew what to expect. Who was—no, *what* was he? There was something different about him from the other men who'd come after her. Selene found it impossible to hold onto those thoughts with his tall, half-naked self moving closer and closer. Her nipples beaded against her clothes, rubbing the sensitive skin. Her body throbbed and ached for his touch. In the light of her warmth his amber eyes glowed with a lust to match her own, her last thought before he crushed her to him, taking her mouth with a powerfully demanding kiss. Lips, teeth, and tongue all worked in frantic movements, searching for more.

His hand wrapped around the back of her neck to cup her head, crushing her lips harder against his own. Her own hands roamed his warm, bare chest, savoring the tight muscles flexing as he moved against her. She couldn't help herself, she didn't want it to stop. Parting her mouth slightly, she allowed him the entrance he sought, his tongue smoothing over her lips. When his tongue touched the tip of hers, his taste and essence exploded within her. Not just her mouth, but her whole body. His flavor, a unique wild musk, tasted of wild nights, a cool night breeze, and heat.

Desperate for more, and willing to get it any way that she could, she jumped up into his arms, wrapping her legs around his waist. His free hand caught her ass, pulling her tighter against him. Flesh—she wanted more flesh. She pushed at his

shirt and jacket, baring his lean shoulders to her touch. Pressing her lips against his shoulder, she rained a trail of kisses up his neck, alternating with gentle bites. Damn, she wanted to sink her teeth in him as he buried his thick, hard cock in her wanting pussy.

She wrenched her mouth away from his. "What the hell are we doing?" Her breath came in short, shallow pants.

"Don't ruin the moment by trying to analyze it, Selene." He gripped her bottom lip gently between his teeth, nibbling and stroking with his tongue. Releasing his hand on her ass, he stroked up her torso, close to her leather encased breasts. "You have on entirely too much clothes, you know that."

She laughed "I couldn't agree more." She released her tight hold of his shoulders and reached for the zipper of her jacket. With slow, precise movements, she ticked it down one inch at a time, watching his eyes. She wanted to rush. Just rip the clothes from her body and offer herself up to him. Really, what had gotten into her? With the jacket undone, she let the edges fall loose. The thin tank top she wore underneath did little to hide her protruding nipples as they poked against the fabric, yearning for his touch.

His head dipped forward, grasping one of the cloth covered tips between his teeth. Gently. Sensually. He played with her, driving her crazy for more. When she bucked her hips against his waist a soft chuckle sounded in his throat.

"Mmm. So hot. I'll bet your clit is as hard as this nipple here in front of me. Feeling it? I bet that pussy of yours is hot and wet getting ready for me." Her juice did flow at his

words, threatening to spill onto her thighs. Her body quivered with that need as her hips bucked against him again.

His hold on her ass loosened, allowing her body to slide down a little, settling around his hips. When his steel hard cock rubbed against her clit she nearly exploded on the spot. She gasped, unable to control the pleasurable sensation he had created. His mouth closed over her nipple and sucked it deep inside his mouth, shirt and all. The heat and moisture of his mouth coupled with the friction of his cock on her clit was too much. Her orgasm began to build, pushing her past the point of stopping.

"Please—please," she breathed.

"Damn, Selene, I can feel your heat even through the clothes, it's driving me fucking crazy. I want you with a need I can barely keep under control. Your ability calls to me. Draws me in. Can you feel it?"

Her lust addled brain tried to take in the meaning of his words. *Her ability? The fire? What was he talking about?*

"What? I don't understand," she murmured. Focusing on anything except the pleasure about to burst in her body was impossible.

* * * *

He thrust his hips with a quick sharp jab against her, putting more pressure against her sensitive nub. When her loud moan echoed through the night air, his own groan followed. With little thought to his surroundings or potential danger, he focused on her pleasure. More than anything he wanted to watch her burst apart in orgasm at his doing. Give

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

her more pleasure than she had ever endured. Over and over. The pressure of his building magick increased in his chest, forcing him to release a small amount of it.

The wind around them whipped into a frenzy, blowing his hair and hers, caressing their bodies as he continued to move against her.

"Come on, baby. Come for me. Allow me that pleasure. The pleasure of watching you." She threw her head back and thrashed against him while his own breath came out in hard forced breaths. Hell, much more of this and he would be coming right here in his jeans himself, something he hadn't done since he was a young teen just coming into his powers.

Releasing her head, he moved both hands to her ass, pulling her a fraction tighter against him. Damn, but his cock head nestled perfectly against her. What would she feel like completely surrounding him? Would he even survive that pleasure? He wasn't so sure. He needed to get her naked and find out. His gut told him this was a huge mistake, but they'd gone too far and neither of them could stop now.

"Fuck it," he murmured, before burying his head between her breasts, nuzzling and nibbling every inch he could reach. Her movements against him were wild and hard, rocking them both in the wind.

"Cash," she whispered harshly.

His tongue touched the bare skin of her neckline, tasting and stroking her hot, flaming flesh. "Does this feel good, Selene?" He continued up her curve of her neck to just below her jaw where he paused to nibble her soft spots. "Is this what you want?"

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

"Uh-huh," she nodded her head.

"Then come for me. Come right now."

* * * *

His lips hovered at her ear, encouraging her before moving back to her neck. When he bit her neck again, she jolted with the first wave of sensation flowing through her and bursting through her clit. Her fingers dug into his back as she clung to him while the pleasure intensified as he continued to rub against her. She was unable to scream, or think as her climax burst through her with heat, and bright points of light exploded around her.

His movements slowed but did not stop as she rode the last of her orgasm. With every clench of her spasming inner muscles, she longed to have him inside her and milk him to his own climax. She noticed his breathing was as ragged as her own and wished they were somewhere naked and safe. The intense throbbing of his cock against her was an unmistakable sign of his need for her as well.

Her body grew soft against him with satisfaction as the air whipping around them died down to a soft, gentle breeze, cooling her heated skin. She laid a gentle kiss along his jaw, contemplating what had just happened and the deep satisfaction settling into her chest as she lay against him.

Moments later he eased his grip on her body and gently slid her to the ground. "That was a mistake, Selene. I shouldn't have done that. You don't want to get involved with someone like me, it's too dangerous."

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

She looked up at him in surprise. Him, dangerous? What the hell did he think *she* was? She turned away from him, afraid to let him see any weakness in her. What had happened was no big deal. They hadn't even taken off their clothes. Certainly nothing to get all maudlin about. Yet, as she stood there, still trembling from his touch, she ached for more from him. She zipped up her jacket, taking in deep breaths to calm her heartbeat and cool her body. In an uncharacteristic moment of weakness, she had thought him different from the rest.

She turned to tell him. Let him know he couldn't back off that easy.

He was gone.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter Two

Cash walked farther and farther away from Selene. Every step he took hurt, and he couldn't figure out why. With her ability she would be just fine without him. After all, she was the one with a ride, not him. When she'd come just from rubbing his cock like that he'd wanted nothing more than to rip her pants off and plunge into her body. Pumping her hard and fast until she begged for more, or mercy.

His dick twitched in his pants at the thought, which was amazing considering how tight the front of his leathers were right now. Hell, he didn't think he'd ever gotten this hard in his life. His hand ran down the shaft, rubbing it through the leather, imagining her bent over on all fours and begging him to fuck her. To take her for his pleasure.

He laughed. He doubted the little firestarter was up for his brand of dominance. He suspected she would fight him for control every step of the way. It was best to walk away before things got out of hand. Her fire called to his air, creating a storm between them. When her body had heated to the point of burning ... when she came his cooling air had kept her flames at bay. This time. But what happened when they actually got naked? What would his magick do when he got inside her? When her fiery heat sucked at his dick?

He shook his head. No, he had to stop thinking of her like that. His brothers would laugh at him right now. Tell him how he'd gone soft on a woman. No way. Not him. He liked a variety of willing women. Always had. He just needed to get

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

this one out of his system. But deep down he suspected that was easier said than done. He couldn't stop thinking about her lips on his, or the way her eyes had softened as her sexual heat built.

He couldn't even work up a good mad for her blowing up his classic Harley. He'd really enjoyed riding on the back of her bike. Her riding skills impressed him, despite the near death accident he'd saved her from.

Grae would be pissed at him. He had been given a job to do. One he had demanded. Now he stood out in a forest about an hour or so from Boston. This definitely was not the way to impress his family. He looked around the trees, listening for the cars on the nearby highway. Not hearing anything, he realized just how far away he'd gotten from Selene. A sudden sense of something not right came over him. Pain flared in his chest at the sudden leap of his magick. His instinct to protect and defend what was his overwhelmed him.

Danger.

Something or someone not unlike him was close. And getting closer and closer every second as pressure built in his magick, seeking release.

Selene.

Cash turned back in the direction he had come and took off at a dead run. Selene was in danger and he had left her alone.

* * * *

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

Unsure of what to do, Selene paced the area, debating whether to leave Cash stranded here or to wait for his return. That he'd walked off in the first place left her cold and angry. She could still feel his mouth and hands on her body, stirring up her heat once again. Her sex pulsed with the need for more of him, throbbed at the memory of being in his arms.

Lost in thoughts of Cash, Selene didn't notice the interloper moving in on her. Feeling the displacement of the heat around her and the familiar dark emotions, she whirled around, coming face to face with her nemesis.

"Hey, Selene. Getting kind of soft, aren't ya?"

She so desperately wanted to wipe that smirk off his face. "Hey, Merc. How the hell did you find me so fast this time?"

"Pretty easy when you leave a trail of fire behind you. That kind of thing is going to land you in a lot more trouble than you have with me. For someone who seems so desperate to get away, you sure are behaving recklessly." He was trying to lull her to him with friendly, casual conversation, but she could still see the deadly menace in his eyes. She suspected he was dying to finish this once and for all.

"Shit happens. You've found me again. Now what?"

"That depends on you, sweetheart. We can do this the easy way or the hard way. Which do you prefer?"

"How about my way?" She laughed, noticing that the wind surrounding them had picked up. So much so that her hair whipped around her face. Selene watched Merc's bald head as he too looked around the clearing, watching the wind.

"Looks like a storm is coming, Selene, we don't have time to play tonight." He raised his right arm, showing the gun

that he had trained on her. "And no, I may not be able to kill you, but no one said anything about not maiming you. So think twice, darling."

With no time to consider her options, Selene pulled her heat, using the psychic energy to form a small fireball about the size of a softball.

"Don't even think about it, Selene. I can fire off a shot quicker than you can hit me with that."

"Who said anything about hitting you with it?" She hurtled the flaming ball into the night sky above and beyond Merc's head, traveling down the side of the road about a quarter of a mile. With a precision she had perfected over many years, it hit his black Mercedes right underneath the engine, catching the car on fire immediately.

"You little bitch. Was that really necessary? You think I can't control you on your little bike?"

Selene knew she wouldn't be getting away from him right now. No, she would have to wait for a better opportunity. But she was nothing if not patient. Something else she had learned with years of practice. Yes, she would go with him for now and bide her time for later. At least Cash wasn't here right now. Merc may not be able to hurt her much, but he wouldn't hesitate to kill someone else who got in the way of his mission.

Merc walked up to her with rage contorting the features of his face into an ugly mask. It gave her a great deal of satisfaction to drive him insane. She smiled sweetly at him. "I'm ready to go."

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

Instead of grabbing her by the arm, he fisted his hand around her hair, yanking her against him. Pressing his lips right up against her ear, he spoke. "I've had about all I'm going to take from you this time, you little whore. Any more trouble from you and I'm bound to twist this pretty neck of yours. Or, if I decide not to kill you, maybe something I might enjoy even more." As he trailed his lips down her neck her stomach heaved. For months she had evaded him without hurting him, but right now, with his big hard body pressed into hers and his clammy lips touching her, she didn't care anymore if he lived or died.

Her fire built again, this time a little wild and a whole lot bigger. Both hands burst into flames as she jerked out of his grasp. As he leveled the gun at her again, the already gusting winds pitched her backwards, pulling her away from Merc. As she fought to gain purchase on the road, a sharp pain shot through her leg.

The son of a bitch had shot her. Lucky for her the wind knocked off his aim and she was hit in the leg. She looked down to see it wasn't a bullet he'd gotten her with—oh no, the bastard used a tranq. Trying to reach for the dart, her arm wouldn't go where she told it to. She looked down at her leg and saw more than she was supposed to, there were several darts sticking out of her leg. Whatever he'd shot her with was already working. She wouldn't last long. Her thoughts became fuzzy and thick and she couldn't form a flame in her mind. No way to use her power to save herself this time.

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

The wind screamed in her head as she looked for Merc. He had landed on his butt on the road and ... *wait*—she tried to focus her vision. Scrunching her eyes, she saw too many people. Was someone on top of him? Fighting him? Her legs gave way as she fell to the ground, succumbing to the darkness.

* * * *

Selene opened her eyes to soft burning candles and the smell of cooking food. Her head pulsed and stomach growled at the same time. Looking around the room, she took in the antique dresser, expensive art on the walls, and an odd New Age collection of Tarot cards, crystals, pendulums, and chalices. Strange.

Where the hell am I? Did I fall down the rabbit hole? This was definitely not the compound.

She tried to sit up, struggling because her body and limbs felt weighted down as if they were made of lead, especially her leg, it hurt like a bitch. Looking down at her body, she found herself dressed in only her tank top and some baggy sweat pants that looked five sizes too big for her. She forced her body to move, swinging her legs over the side of the bed.

She remembered Merc hitting her with a tranquilizer and could only imagine where he had taken her this time. The organization had hidey-holes placed strategically all over the country, and since she didn't know how long she had been out she could be anywhere by now. She needed a plan for escape and pretty damn quick.

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

First things first. Food and decent clothes. She rifled through the drawers in the dresser to find only men's clothing. Nice stuff, too. Expensive designer T-shirts and undergarments, even the workout gear looked and felt incredibly luxurious. Now if only she could find some of this stuff to fit her. She padded across the room to the closet to find only more menswear. There were several nice suits with shirts and ties but there was also an equal amount of leather. She slowly breathed in the familiar rich scent.

Her thoughts immediately flashed to Cash and the way his lean, muscular body had filled out his leather pants and jacket. Yum. A little dark cloud settled over her at the realization that she would never see him again. She hadn't even gotten his last name, let alone any other personal information about him. She suspected, though, that she would never forget the affect he had on her or be able to ride her bike again without thoughts of his hard cock pressing against her backside.

Pulling herself back from her wayward thoughts, she closed the closet door and started to search the room for a way out. Walking to the door, she bent down to examine the lock to see if it could be picked. Testing the knob, her eyes widened in surprise when the door popped open. Slowly she peeked outside the doorway, looking for a guard or camera that would be watching her. Spying nothing, she stood up and eased out the door, her bare feet making no sound on the hardwood floors.

Pressing her back against the wall, she waited for any clue that someone was nearby. Hearing no sound and only

smelling the food and—dear God—coffee, she hurried across the landing to the stairs. Until she got to the bottom of the stairs she would be completely vulnerable to anyone who walked into the area. She considered turning around and investigating ways out of the house through other rooms, but damn that food smelled good and she was hungry. She quickly moved down the stairs, trying not to cause any creaks. She reached the bottom with no incident.

With the adrenaline coursing through her body, her limbs were no longer heavy or slow.

Something isn't right here.

Why would Merc allow her free reign of the house? It would only take a few minutes for her to have the whole place crashing down on them in flames. A test maybe? Some sort of new trap? She'd figure it out and eventually find her way out. She always did.

Following the scent of freshly brewed coffee, she headed to what she assumed would be the kitchen. The layout of the house prevented her from seeing the interior of the kitchen without actually stepping inside, or at the very least poking her head in the door. She debated the smart course of action, but when her stomach growled again she decided to go for it.

She moved into the kitchen, coming to an abrupt halt. Expecting Merc to be waiting, she nearly fell over in shock at the sight of the man cooking at the stove. Dressed only in faded jeans, she followed the curve of his spine up and out across his broad muscular shoulders. Tanned, smooth skin, except for a small scar below his right shoulder blade. The

faded color of the skin around the scar indicated the injury was from a long time ago.

Cash.

His dark hair stood mussed around his head like he'd just rolled out of bed. An image of him lying naked in a bed, teasing her with his broad hands and strong fingers, ran through her head. Him lying over her skin to skin as he pushed himself deep within in her warm willing body.

Whoa. Get a grip, Selene.

Truth be told, she was just happy and relieved to see him. She wanted to rush forward and wrap her arms around his waist. Holding on to him like she would a life preserver.

"What the hell is going on here, Cash? Where are we?"

"Well, good morning to you, sunshine." His voice rumbled through his body to hers, soothing her despite his attempt at sarcasm. "It's about time you got your lazy butt out of bed. You hungry?"

She nodded, unable to speak again. She wasn't sure she could without crying or doing some other crazy girly thing while feeling so swamped with this unexpected and unwelcome emotion.

He put the spoon down on the edge of the pan full of eggs and turned to face her, his hand touching under her chin to tilt her face upward to meet his gaze. "I think we have a lot to talk about, don't we?" Selene blinked fighting tears and simply nodded her head again. "But first we eat. You've been out for quite a while and have to be starving. Go. Sit. While I finish this up."

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

Needing a moment to focus on something else, she turned away. Looking around the kitchen, she imagined if he was much of a cook she would be in heaven. Large, oversized stainless steel appliances filled the room, large countertop workspaces gleamed, and there was even a brick oven in the far corner. She peeked out the window over the sink, spying a lush and manicured small lawn with a tall privacy hedge wrapped all the way around it, hiding the view in or out of the place. A small garage stood in the far corner of the yard, connected to the house by a covered walkway.

"Cash, whose house is this? And where is it?" She moved from the window and sat down at the scarred wooden table against the far wall. Running her fingers over the aged wood, she thought the table might be out of place in this elegant kitchen, but instead something about it fit and made the kitchen feel like a home. There were many nooks and cuts in the wood, indicating this table had seen its fair share of use. She even found some initials carved in the corner. Her fingertips ran over them. C.S.

"I see you have already found the carvings of a bored teenage boy." He set down a plate in front of her with a heaping amount of food on it. Her mouth watered at the sight of eggs, bacon, toast and plump red strawberries.

"C.S., is that you?"

"Sure is. Cash Scott, bored teenager and all around troublemaker."

She laughed. She could definitely picture him that way. All dark and broody, dressed in leather even back then. Probably drove his parents crazy.

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

"So this is your house?"

"It's a family residence. My brothers and I lived here for a few years as teens, but for the most part the place stays empty now except when one of the family passes through town."

"Town?"

"Boston. We're in Boston. Not all that far from where we stopped yesterday. Maybe forty-five minutes or so. Your bike is tucked safely away in the garage around back."

"How—who—when?"

He laughed. "Slow down. Eat your breakfast and I'll fill you in on what happened. And then you can answer some of my questions."

She nodded picking up her fork and digging into the fluffy eggs. She had more than a few questions for him as well.

"You must have gotten shot in the leg right before I tackled your stalker guy, 'cause you went down fast after that. Scared the hell out of me, by the way." He laughed at the dark look she threw him. "To say I was angry and scared for you, Selene, is probably a bit of an understatement. I went ballistic on the freak who tried to hurt you." Fear settled in her gut when he turned away. "I thought he was trying to kill you, or at the very worst already had. He deserved no mercy."

She gasped, causing him to flinch. "Did you kill him?"

"Does it make a difference to you?"

* * * *

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

Her ensuing silence spoke volumes. She must care for the asshole who drugged her. Pain lanced through his chest as he imagined the two of them together. His beefy hands caressing her perfect ivory skin, touching her berry red nipples and fucking—

"Uhm, Cash. Why is the wind blowing in here? There aren't any windows open. What the hell is going on here?"

He twisted to face her again, watching the wind whip her russet hair around her face as she bent over gripping her stomach, her face going pale.

"What's wrong, Selene?"

"I'm not sure. Just a sudden nausea." Her answer took him by surprise. Could she be empathic as well? Feel his magick every time he used it? He took a deep, calming breath, willing the power to rest within him again. How had he not realized what the fuck he was doing? As peace quietly returned to the room he debated what to tell her. He doubted she was ready to wrap her mind around the whole witch thing. Very few ever were. But if she physically felt his magick she would need an explanation.

Implications tore through him as he realized he didn't sense the constant anger welling just under the surface like he normally did. In the last twenty-four hours he'd had to use a lot of strong magick. So why didn't he feel sick and angry? How did he feel? He searched for the right word to describe what he felt or should say didn't feel.

Calm. He scrubbed his face with his hands. No, this can't be. He'd already resigned himself to his all too soon fate. Meeting Selene just had him indulging in a hell of a lot of

wishful thinking. His course could not be changed, he'd taken it too far.

"Like you, Selene, I too have an ability. You have control over fire and I have control over air."

She backed away from the table. "How much do you know about me? Who are you? How did you find me?"

"Whoa, hold on. I only know what I have seen. Considering how we met it's a little hard to hide the fact that you can control an element. And I told you who I was." He pointed to the carvings on the table. "Cash Scott. As in Scott Enterprises. You've probably heard of my brother Graelen."

She shook her head, still standing a good distance away from him.

"So Merc is dead?"

Again with the boyfriend. Fuck. "No, your boyfriend is not dead. In fact the sp—uh, the ropes I used to bind him with have probably already been worked loose and I would imagine he is already in pursuit again."

"Then I need to get out of here. Now. I need to get far away from here as fast as I can." She tried to dodge by him, but he grabbed her by the wrist and pulled her to him. He pulled her hips against his own with one hand and with the other fisted her hair, tugging her head back to look at him.

"What's the hurry, Selene? What are you running from?" Up close her scent drifted over him. He should let her go. His recent use of magick left him feeling restless and edgy with sexual desire. That, coupled with her soft, warm body, had him hard and ready in seconds. He needed to fuck, and she was the one woman he wanted more than anything else. His

fingers kneaded her buttocks through the thin material of his sweat pants she wore as his lips crashed down on her mouth. He knew he was being rough but it couldn't be helped.

He had to stop before it was too late. Her sweet taste as her tongue accepted and tangled with his own drove him wild. Her fingers burrowed in his hair, and when she pulled his scalp burned with the painful force. But to his shock and dark delight, instead of pulling him off of her she crushed him to her for a tighter, rougher kiss. His self-restraint snapped on a groan as he ground against her, desperate and needy for control.

Letting go of his hair, her hands scratched frantically down his back to his waist, leaving a trail of pain and certainty that there would be deep red marks when they were done. Her hands went for his waistband, deftly unbuttoning his jeans, and he jerked away from her. For a few moments they stood staring at each other, sawing breath in and out of their lungs.

Squaring off for control, he dropped to his knees, yanking down her pants as he went. The sight of her damp red curls barely covering her slit pushed him to near madness as his mouth covered her sex, tongue delving between the moist lips and lapping at her body like a starved man. With this first swipe over her clit, Selene let loose a cry as her body shuddered around him. His mouth filled with the heat of her orgasm as he sucked and bit at her sensitive bud, prolonging the pleasure she endured to a point that he knew from experience would be near pain.

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

With no mercy he ate and ate at her, bringing her to orgasm twice more until her legs collapsed against him.

"Please, Cash—please."

He turned and placed her on her knees and arms in front of him, stroking the backs of her legs and ass in admiration. "So fucking beautiful."

"Hurry, Cash. Now, please." His cock bobbed with every keening cry from her. He felt like begging himself. He roughly pushed two fingers into her tight but soaking wet pussy, dragging the tips back and forth over her sweet spot. When her cries indicated she was about to come he withdrew and circled his slick fingers around the tight rosebud of her ass. He eased one finger in and she tightened around him.

"Relax, Selene. Show me how much you want it." When he felt the muscles loosen their grip from his finger, he pushed the second one inside. Grabbing the base of his cock, he pushed the head inside her pussy. The heat of it was almost too much to bear.

She wiggled against him, trying to bury him deeper, and he swatted her on the ass in return. "Be still for me, babe." When she didn't follow his instructions he delivered three more smacks across her right buttock until she stilled. When he slowly drew his fingers from her ass she whimpered and moaned for more. He pushed his cock an inch deeper, stretching and working his way in, dying to thrust his full length inside. With a slow glide he strained against her tight flesh, seating his full length inside. With her sharp gasp he paused to let her body accommodate his size.

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

"Damn, you are so tight, baby." His body trembled slightly as he fought for even a sliver of control. "I'll try not to hurt you. I'll go nice and slow."

She shook her head roughly. "No—no, don't want slow. Please, Cash. Please fuck me." She pulled her bottom moving slightly off him before pushing back against him again with a surprising force. He pumped his hips along with her rhythm, rubbing against her sensitive nerves until she cried out once again in release. Her muscles clamped down on him, squeezing with a powerful strength that easily broke through his control.

"So hot, I can't—I'm coming, damn it." He groaned as his body stiffened against her ass. His release came in long spurts.

"Dear Goddess, Selene, what have you done to me?" He gently eased from her body before scooping her up to carry her to his bed.

"Where are we going, Cash?" Her voice sounded satisfied and sleepy. He chuckled; she had no idea what she was in for now.

"My bed. I'll be taking you again in a few minutes."

Her eyes widened as she studied him before a shy smile crossed her face that she quickly hid in his shoulder.

* * * *

Raven pulled into the gas station just outside of Boston to fill up on gas and find a city street map. She'd been driving for hours and needed to pee. She rushed into the store and

headed toward the back, looking for the facilities. She ran headlong into a stranger, falling hard on her ass.

"Shit."

"Sorry about that. I must not have been watching where I was going." A hand reached in front of her to help her up. Looking up to see the idiot who'd gotten in her way, she found herself staring into the face of a dark angel with mesmerizing green eyes. The smile on his face while he spoke captivated her for a moment until her body reminded her of her mission. Bypassing his hand, she bounced to her feet and gruffly pushed past him into the ladies' room.

Minutes later when she returned to the main part of the store, she noticed the customer who'd knocked her on her ass was gone. Good. She didn't have time for chit chat with a stranger. Especially not a pretty one like that. Still, for a fleeting moment her thoughts wavered back to the intensity shining in his eyes. There had been something there.

Grabbing a few snacks along the way, she made her way to the register. "I need forty dollars on pump seven and a detailed street map of Boston." She was always abrupt and straight to the point because she didn't believe in wasting time, and the clerk did as she asked and rang up her purchases.

Propped against the trunk of the car, Raven spread out the map before her. Using her strongest locator spells for hours, she'd been unable to locate even a hint of the witch she sought. That is, until he'd used an enormous amount of energy out in the open yesterday. What an idiot. She'd been able to pinpoint his location to an hour outside of Boston, but

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

when she'd arrived there was nothing there but a strong residue of dark magick and some unexpected scorch marks. She was curious about those. The witch she sought was an air witch, not a master of fire, so she couldn't help but wonder what had happened on that isolated stretch of road the day before.

That was the last she'd been able to pick up on him. He must be hidden behind some incredibly powerful wards. Well, whatever happened out there, he must have popped into a hiding place pretty damned fast and so close to Boston it only made sense he was hidden in the city somewhere.

She yanked her cell phone out of her pocket, pressing star ten. The direct line for the Reverend. He would be waiting for an update by now. She was overdue.

"Hello." His tone clipped in annoyance,

"Hey, Rev. I've got a line on that witch you wanted me to find. Seems he used some pretty powerful magick at mile marker 14 on Route 20 just outside of Beantown. Unfortunately I think he has gone to ground 'cause there's been nothing from him since."

"Boston, huh? Well, I have an address you can check out. A family townhome he might go for refuge."

She dug out a pen and scratched the address down on the map.

"It might take you a while to break through the wards on that place, but I would bet that's a good a place as any to find him hiding." The phone clicked dead in her ear, the good Reverend had already disconnected before giving her a chance to respond either way.

Fucking Bastard. Good thing he pays well.

She palmed the cell back in her pocket and hunted up the address on the map. Studying the geography, she surmised she could be there in under two hours. She folded up the map and stuffed it into a cargo pocket on her left leg. Climbing back into the car, she leaned over to check on the potions she had stored in the glove compartment. She'd been tasked with bringing the witch back alive, but was warned that he was on the verge of turning and would not be easily captured.

Hence the sleep and paralyzing potions. One way or another she would get him back to the Rev and collect her finder's fee. A smug smile played on her lips. Sometimes it paid extremely well to be a witch for hire.

* * * *

Startled, Cash shot up from sleep. The house was still dark and a check of the nightstand clock read 5:15 AM. Sunrise was a little ways off, but something had woken him up. He eased from the covers, not wanting to wake Selene. They'd been up most of the night, unable to get enough of each other. He smiled. No matter how many times he took her, he wanted more. His cock stirred now in his pants just thinking about that pink pussy of hers welcoming him again.

A small wisp of air brushed his arm. He jerked his body around, looking for the source. Seeing nothing, he concentrated on the airflow through the house, down the stairs into the living room and towards the front door. There. A crack. Damn! The wards were broken. Someone was in the house.

"Selene," he whispered. "Get up now."

"What is it?" Looking like she was on autopilot, she sprang noiselessly from the bed. She grabbed clothes to cover herself and palmed one of the ritual knives from the dresser. Her movements were so effortless he was certain she was used to this kind of thing.

"Someone's in the house."

"How do you know?"

"The alarm went off."

She looked around the room. "What alarm? I don't hear anything." Seconds later she was fully dressed and standing by his side ready for action.

"Who are you?" he mumbled.

"What are you talking about, Cash? You know who I am."

"Do I?" He grabbed her hand. "After I get us safely out of here I think we need to have a long talk."

She snorted. "After *you* get us out? I think we'll be doing this together."

He hesitated, staring down at her. He sensed a fierce determination that could prove useful in getting them away. Damn, she was his kind of woman.

"Our uninvited guest is at the bottom of the stairs. We only have a few seconds to get to the back staircase without being seen. Stay close," he warned.

"Is it Merc again? How'd he find us?" Her voice trembled slightly with fear. "I don't want him to hurt you because of me. I can negotiate with him. He just needs me."

He looked at her sharply, pulling her close. "No, I need you and there will be no negotiating. Is that understood?" She

nodded. "Besides, it's not him. It's a female. Come on, we don't have much time." His fingers wrapped around her arm and he hauled her from the room and around the corner. Backs against the wall so they weren't visible from the stairs, they scooted along the landing. Reaching the back staircase, Selene took them two at a time. Not fast enough. When she reached the bottom she hesitated long enough to turn and look behind her at the same time a woman appeared at the top in time to hurtle a bottle towards their feet.

"Hold your breath, Selene, now." He managed the words a breath before the bottle crashed and the inky vapors poured from the broken glass. His eyes burned as they leapt over it and hurtled towards the kitchen. He watched as Selene's hand heated and flared into a flaming ball. "No, Selene, don't," he yelled, but either she didn't hear or she ignored him. Not fast enough to throw up a barrier, he watched helplessly as she flung it at the woman behind them still shrouded in the shadows.

Quick on her feet, the intruder leapt out of harm's way as the flare crashed into the wall behind her. The splintered drywall caught fire in seconds, spreading up and out across the room, flames licking at the pictures and paintings hung on the wall.

Fuck! Where was his brother when he needed some water?

From the corner of his eye he saw the witch had another bottle raised over her head. He grabbed Selene again and propelled her out the back door as the bottle crashed behind them in the doorway. "The garage, Selene. Your bike. I forgot the keys though, so I'll have to hotwire it."

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

"No worries there. There is an extra key on the bike. I'm always prepared when it comes to the Busa. She's my savior." They crashed through the garage door, closing it tightly behind them. Despite the lock being broken he knew he could hold off the witch for at least a few minutes with his magick. He erected a wall of energy around it, blocking the door from being opened.

"What are you doing?" She eyed him curiously.

"Saving our asses, but don't worry about me. Get that bike going and us out of here."

She laughed and reached underneath the rear seat cover, pulling out a small box. She popped it open and grabbed a key from it.

"Let's go, Superman."

She threw her leg across the seat and snuggled into place. Her slender fingers turned the key but she waited for him to turn the bike over. With a last glance at the dark tendrils of magick slipping through the cracks of his shield, he ran over to the bike, hopping on behind her.

"Doors, please." The bike roared to life and he barely heard her request. He pulled a sliver of magick, forming it in his mind into a ball of air meant to blast open the garage door so they could escape. Flinging it at the larger non-shielded door, he blasted a hole through it more than large enough for them to get through. Unfortunately the witch following them must have anticipated their move and stood in front of the door, blocking their path with two bottles clutched in her hand prepared to be thrown. Cash knew desperate measure would have to be taken.

His eyes slid closed as he called up his forbidden magick. The magick each one of his brothers carried inside him, always fighting the constant lure and call. The dark, all too familiar slippery slope that led to his downfall. The wind outside whipped to a frenzy. Cash tried hard to bend the unleashed power to his will with little luck. It was there to save him but not necessarily with any boundaries. Bushes surrounding the garage ripped free from their roots, hurtling towards the dark haired witch who now stood transfixed, stunned by what happened around her.

The sound of breaking glass distracted Cash from his thoughts as he watched the witch drop her bottles and grab at her own throat as if someone or something were choking her. Her fingers scratched at her neck, her face already turning a darker red from the lack of oxygen. The magick crawled through him, hurting both him and the young girl clutching at her throat. He fought it trying to save the witch but it was too late. The dark was in charge, not him. Not Cash and his will to harm none.

When the witch fell to her knees, Selene turned towards him. "Stop before you kill her. She can't hurt us now." The stark fear shining in her eyes cut him to the bone.

"I can't stop it. That's the problem. Power unleashed with no control."

"There's got to be a way."

"You would think, but centuries of my family have dealt with this curse, unable to fix it." The wind blowing the hair around their faces slowed significantly while they talked. Choking noises sounded from the girl as she fell to her knees.

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

Selene grabbed him by the arms, shaking him, pleading with him to find some control. This wasn't the first time this had happened and he doubted it would be the last.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter Three

The moment she touched Cash's arms his power rumbled through her. Her stomach heaved as nausea again washed over her. Her immediate thought was to let go and protect herself from it, but she couldn't. She wanted to find a way to stop him. No one had to die here today. Whatever they were after wasn't worth the cost of a life. It oozed through her with its emotions of anger and frustration sharply etched into it. As her body heated in defense, more of it seeped into her as if attracted by the heat.

"Selene, what the hell are you doing? I can feel you. Stop it now before it's too late for you as well. We can't stop it. We can't help her. Please, Selene, don't do this."

She didn't let go. Instead she channeled all her heat and psychic energy towards the negative energy rolling from him to her, keeping it contained so it didn't spread through her. She fought for a balance, one that would prevent it from taking over her, consuming her. She puzzled through the strands of magick, imagining then like strings being wrapped in a ball. Cash went to push her away and her skin heated, burning him a little to keep him at bay.

"Dammit, Selene, you didn't have to do that. Please listen to me. This is too dangerous."

She opened her eyes scrunching up her nose at him. "Leave me be and shut the hell up. I can't concentrate with your yammering."

"My what?"

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

Throwing him a final withering look, she closed her eyes again to focus. Sweat broke out on her brow as she generated more power and heat, wrestling the energy she'd received from Cash. Once she found the end, she released him, propelling herself off the bike and out into the open yard. She'd managed to contain it into a small condensed ball but she couldn't hold it. Not for long. It pushed and strained against its temporary psychic bond. She called her own power, her heat bursting into flame around it.

She frantically glanced around the yard, searching for somewhere to throw it. Not the garage—her bike still stood in there and it was still their only transportation out of here. Peering down the drive, she saw only an empty street, a few cars, and some small townhomes. Nothing she wanted to destroy. But time was running out and her bindings were wearing thin. She turned back towards the house. It was already partially engulfed in flames, it was her only choice.

Gathering up her strength and focus once again, she flung it high and wide. Aimed straight at the house, the ball of fire connected with the roof right over the kitchen, exploding on contact. She thought briefly of the scarred wooden table in the kitchen. A table four surly boys had eaten and likely fought at. An important piece of their history, and she had just destroyed it. With a heavy sigh she once again remembered why she couldn't be permitted to live in the normal world. No matter her intentions, bad things always happened when she was involved.

With heavy shoulders to accompany a heavy heart, she swung back around to the garage. Cash was on his knees

trying to revive the pretty girl on the ground. Her face was pale with death. Selene could see the streaks on her neck where she had clawed herself in an attempt to get some air in her lungs. Cash's power, whatever it was, had robbed the air right out of her body. A cold shiver snaked down her spine at the thought.

Cash looked up at her, his eyes cold and distant. "She's breathing, I think she is going to be fine." He looked at the house and then back to the garage. "There's a small apartment attached to the back of the garage, we can take her in there. I imagine the fire trucks will be here any minute for the house. It would be bad for her to be seen." As if on cue the faint sound of the shrill fire truck sirens carried in on the wind.

Cash lifted her into his arms with little effort and headed toward the back. She saw his hand move but didn't see him reach for a key or the door, but a hidden door slid open and he walked through the doorway, careful not to hurt the woman in his arms. She stepped over the threshold behind him into a surprisingly lush apartment. She'd gathered he came from a wealthy family from the inside of the townhouse, but the décor in here took things to a new level.

What did I say before about the rabbit hole?

From old money antiques and charm to modern art deco was a huge contrast. Now this looked more like the bachelor pad she would have expected. With leather sofas and recliners placed strategically around a bank of flat screen televisions hanging on the wall, it looked like every man's wet

dream. She tried to imagine Cash sitting in here watching the big game with his brothers. Hmmm. Maybe...

He struck her as more of a boxing kind of man versus your typical football and basketball aficionado.

Behind the leather seating area was a small but efficient kitchen area decked out in small, apartment-sized stainless steel appliances and grey marble countertops. The cleanliness surprised her. The kitchen was spotless as if it rarely was used. Cash disappeared through an adjoining door she presumed would be the bedroom.

What the hell were they going to do now? With a heavy sigh, Selene followed him into the bedroom.

"Cash what are—" The sight of him tying the dark haired woman's wrists to eyebolts over the lake-sized bed stopped her cold. He'd laid her out on the bed, even covering her with a thin blanket. "Is that really necessary?"

"What do you think?"

"Yeah, I guess you're right." She walked closer to peer into the woman's face, trying to not think about the fact that there were hooks in the wall above this bed. Whose room was this? Cash's? Her sex clenched at the idea. He'd struck her as a bit dominating during sex but she hadn't even considered this. "Who is she?"

He lifted her unconscious arm, flipping it over to reveal a small black tattooed symbol on the inside of her wrist. "Do you recognize this?"

"No, what is it?"

"Coven marking. One I'm very familiar with. It seems our unwelcome guest was after me, not you."

"I-I don't understand. Did you say a coven? As in a Wiccan coven?"

"Uhh, sort of. It's a long story."

Selene sank down into the chair next to the bed. "I think we've got time. Unless I am mistaken, and this isn't a secure hiding place. Considering all outside noise ceased the minute the outer door closed, I take it we are not likely to be found in here."

"Smart girl. Observant, too. I'm very impressed."

Her expression didn't change. She sat staring at him, waiting. Inside she might be trembling but he would never see it. Outside she was cold, calm, and collected. It was what she had been trained to be. "Not in here. Let's go to the other room to talk, there's no telling when she will wake up."

Selene rose, following Cash to the living room. She watched him sit on the leather sofa, draping his muscled torso and arms along the back while stretching his long legs in front of him onto the coffee table. His hands threaded through his wavy locks, a resigned gesture. Watching him relax, she longed for something she hadn't dared for in a very long time.

A life.

Swallowing a sigh, she shook herself from her fantasies. Having a normal life was out of the question for someone like her. Termination was in her future soon if she didn't come up with a plan for escape. It was only a matter of time before Merc located her once again. The man was as relentless as a pit bull with a dog bone. He would track her down it was only a matter of time.

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

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While she seemed distracted, Cash took a moment to study her. On the outside she was beautiful and cool. To anyone else she would appear cold. But he knew better. He'd seen and felt her heat. They had linked. The signs were unmistakable. After the magick he had just used he should be violently ill and angry. Yeah, the anger. He'd gotten so used to experiencing it, he felt a little weird without it. She'd absorbed it, then burned it with that final fireball, he would guess. He didn't regret losing his childhood home all that much. As soon as Grae found out about it he would have it rebuilt and restored to the exact specifications it had been. Besides a few personal belongings that would be lost, they wouldn't be able to tell it was a rebuild. Amazing what money and his determined twin could do.

This place was more his style anyway. His gaze swept the room, admiring the simplicity and comfort he had here. All of their houses had rooms like this. Somewhere they could escape to if the main house was breached. This wasn't exactly the first time someone had come after him. No, he stayed prepared for the all too frequent attacks.

"So are you going to tell me what's going on? Or are you planning to daydream all day?" Her smart mouth roused him from his thoughts, bringing a smile to her face. Oh, how he'd love to show her what to do with that mouth. His cock stirred in his pants at the thought of instructing her.

Her plump lips formed a smirk on her face and he thought how lucky she was to be across the room and not sitting next to him right now.

"The woman lying in my bed right now is from a small coven of particularly heartless witches. Ones that for the right price will do just about any job you ask of them. And, considering we saw her up close and personal this morning, I would assume she has been hired to capture, not kill."

"Wait." She held up her hands to stop him. "A witch for hire? Is this some kind of joke? 'Cause I don't think it's very funny." She paced across the room.

"No, Selene, I am serious."

She shook her head, looking confused and very unbelieving. "Since when did I step into an episode of *Charmed*? This is ridiculous. Right?"

He weighed his options here. How much did he tell her? It would be easy enough to make up a story that he was a target because of his wealthy family. That his uncle sought his fortune, not his life.

Then why was the witch trying to capture you? The voice of reason in his head whispered. Good God damned question.

"Selene, think about it. You have already seen that I have abilities like you but different."

"Uh, yeah. I'd say different all right. Sure, I can throw a good flame and on a good day feel and sense emotions around me and even on a rare occasion hear things. But ... I can't control the air, or throw up force fields or open doors without touching them. So yeah, we are—" She stopped mid

sentence, staring at him. Her eyes narrowed as he watched the truth dawning in the clear blue eyes that entrapped him.

"Are you ... are you telling me—no. No. No." She turned and paced again. "You can't be trying to tell me that you are a—are a..."

"A witch, Selene. I'm a witch. A full-blooded one from a long line of true witches." He stood up, walking over to her. His body ached to be close to hers. "It's not a dirty word, you know." When she refused to look at him directly he reached down and touched his fingers to her chin, lifting her gaze to his. "There is nothing to be afraid of. I won't let anything happen to you."

"It's not that," she whispered.

"Open your mind to the possibilities, baby. You may not be a witch like me but, you do have special abilities that make you different from ninety-nine percent of the human population. It's not much of a stretch beyond that to believe in magick." He softly touched his lips to hers, hoping to soothe her fears. "Magick is not bad, people are."

Her mouth opened for him on a soft sigh and what was meant to be a comforting kiss turned electric and hot in seconds. Her tongue stabbed into his mouth, seeking his, sliding against his lips and setting him on fire. Meeting her tongue, he kissed her back, thrust for thrust as if fucking her mouth like how his body burned to be fucking her.

With sure, slow movements, he unbuttoned her top, revealing her bare breasts beneath. She hadn't had time for undergarments when they'd fled from the house, which he was pleased with now. Pushing her top off her shoulders, it

fell to the floor with a gentle wisp. His hands cupped her full breasts, rubbing his thumbs across her tightened nipples. A low moan sounded in her throat as he continued to caress her.

Breaking the kiss, he dipped his head to circle one of her hard tips with his tongue. Her head fell back as her back arched, pushing more of her plump breast to his eager mouth. His teeth nibbled gently until, encouraged by her moans, he bit one. Gentle at first, then a little harder each time, he moved back and forth between them. Pleased with her gasps and moans of pleasure, he increased the pain until she panted and pleaded for him to stop. A sly smile quirked at his lips.

Trailing his lips up the curve of her neck, he nipped at her chin before once again capturing her lips. Her hands left his shoulders, sliding to the waistband of his jeans as she fumbled with the buttons and pushed him towards the couch. He jerked away from her hand, breaking the kiss and pushing her back a few steps.

"No, Selene. This is one place you can't be in control." He paused. "Ever."

Her eyes opened, lust shining back at him. She seemed to be considering his comments. Distracted by her flushed breasts, his hands reached for them, pinching and pulling the tender skin. "I love the way you rise to danger, ready to fight at all costs, but here, like this, it has to be my way. You have to trust me that I will take care of your needs, Selene." He waited, giving her time to consider his words.

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

"Please, Cash, tell me what you want me to do. Let me please you." Her words came out husky and raw with need, spurring him into action.

He grabbed her shoulders once again, hauling her against him. "Be sure about this, Selene." His voice dropped to a commanding whisper. "There's no turning back." Oh, he knew if she wanted him to stop in the middle he would certainly do the right thing, but it might kill him to do so. Already her acquiescing to his initial demand had his cock bumping against his zipper, throbbing to get inside her.

The soft, eager look on her face as she looked up at him had him yearning for his toy bag. The sudden image of sliding a ball gag between her lush lips, fastening it behind her neck, clouded his vision, a sudden wave of overpowering heat searing through him.

"Touch me, Selene. I want to feel your hands on me." He grabbed her hands and placed them at his waist above the waistband of his jeans. The warmth of her skin seeped through to him. As her hands traveled across his bare stomach to his jeans-covered cock, she sank slowly to her knees in front of him. His mouth went dry at the sight and feel of her there. He had to lick his lips, trying to focus on staying in control.

His zipper pulled down and her hands reached inside his boxer briefs, lowering them below his balls. He moaned as he sprang free and she caught him between her hands, stroking up and down his engorged and aching shaft. When the soft, padded tips of her fingers caught underneath the crest his body jerked and pre-come flowed from his slit.

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

"Has anyone ever told you how much air is attracted to fire?" he gasped, barely able to choke out the words when her mouth covered the head of his cock.

"Mmm." Her moan vibrated along his sensitive skin, sensations jerking through his body. No way he was going to be able to take much more of this. Her mouth heated, the increasing temperature warming his near to bursting cock. Her tongue stroked along the underside as she pushed her head farther along him.

"That's it, baby, suck it." His head fell back, getting into the suction and rhythm of her mouth, the pressure building in his heavy balls.

* * * *

She looked up into his darkened eyes. The dark amber now looked nearly black. His magick sizzled across his skin straight into her body. She felt the surge of it mingled with his lust and the orgasm that built within him. It spurred her on. She ran her tongue from base to tip swirling along the vein just under the head. His hands tightened on her head, holding her in place and she knew he was about to come. Her body tightened and shivered with want. The want of his orgasm surged through her.

Just when his groans and thrusts would deliver his pleasure, he pulled her off his dick. Losing balance, she fell back on her ass before he caught her around the waist. Before she could gather her wits and utter a word, he grabbed her wrists together as he pulled her up against his body. The soft hair of his chest rubbed against her nipples,

wrenching a gasp from her throat. Her pussy creamed, coating her slit, readying her for him.

He pushed her back against the wall, holding her wrists above her head. Looking at him, she noticed cotton ties in his hands, the kind used to hold back drapery, moments before he used it to bind her wrists together and then attach it to a rod being used to display a tapestry above her head.

"Clever, Cash, now what?"

A low growl sounded from his throat. "Whatever I want." His finger traced a path down her cheek and jaw, continuing along her throat and shoulder before pausing at the swell of her breast. He teased around the outside edges of her breast and only laughed when she tried to thrust her breast into his hand. "Don't be a bad girl, Selene, I'd be all too happy to take you over my knee." Her pussy clenched. "Have you ever been spanked like that? Spanked until your ass burned like fire, and your pussy dripped with need?"

"No." The word was barely a whisper as her desire raged out of control.

His fingers grasped the waistband of her pants and pulled them down her legs and off her bare feet, throwing them across the room. Both hands grasped her ankles. "Spread your legs for me."

She did as he said, widening her legs. His thumbs grazed up the insides of her legs all the way to her sex. His thumbs reached for her pussy lips, spreading them farther, then he closed his eyes and took a deep breath.

"I can smell you. The rich scent of your lust. Goddess, Selene, you're killing me." He dragged his thumbs across her

slit, pushing his thumbs into her entrance. Her hips bucked against his hands, whimpering, pulling against her bindings, with her head falling back against the wall. The feeling of helplessness enhanced her pleasure.

"So wet. Mmm. So ready." He let his thumbs fall from her sex, his hands grabbing her thighs and lifting her, wrapping her legs around him.

He impaled her, his cock stretching and pushing to her womb. Her breath caught in her throat at the sudden fullness and pleasure shooting through her. She sensed his control being broken as he thrust into her over and over again. She watched the muscles of his arms and chest flexing with each plunge as sensation after sensation built in her, pushing her to the edge.

"Oh, God, Cash!"

He pumped harder, pushing her tight against the wall, his hips banging into her. They both spiraled out of control as he quickened his pace with short, hard thrusts.

"Come for me, Selene. Let me feel that tight pussy milking me."

She moaned at his request. Letting the sensations flow over her pushing her. Pushing her until she exploded in his arms. At the same time his body stiffened against her as a deep moan sounded in his throat, his pleasure pulling more from her than she thought possible. Wave after wave until she thought it might not end. Fighting for breath, his body finally stilled, with them both replete. His arms reached up, loosening the bonds at her wrist and lowering her arms to his shoulder. She collapsed against him. Her body warm and

satisfied, a pain developed in her chest to replace the sexual hunger she had satisfied.

How could a stranger she ran into on the highway end up with such an effect on her? She couldn't do this. She closed her eyes against his shoulder, drawing in his scent. She didn't want to think about it. Right now she needed some sleep and planned to do so in the warmth of his arms.

"Are you okay, Selene?" His voice rumbled in his chest, flowing through her.

"Mmm hmm. Sleepy."

He laughed. "Then let's get some rest. We have a long wait ahead of us before we can leave here."

She didn't really hear what he said. The slow, easy timbre of his voice put her to sleep. When he lowered her to the couch her last thoughts were only ones of warmth and safety.

* * * *

Selene awoke, warm and content. A smile played across her lips as she opened her eyes. She had fallen asleep in Cash's arms and now found herself cuddled in a warm blanket still laid out on the leather couch of his living room. Her body heated all over again as she briefly thought of what they'd been doing just a short while ago. He'd demonstrated just how dominant he needed to be, and she had surprised herself with how much she had been pleased by it. She'd never thought of herself as the submissive type in the past, what with her troubles of accepting any kind of authority, but with Cash she had not only wanted to let him do as he wanted, but she had loved every second of it.

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

Her head snapped up when a low voice sounded from the bedroom. Was that Cash? Maybe the woman had finally woken up. She would need to be interrogated. She threw off the blanket, shivering in the cool air, and searched for her clothes. Jeans on the floor, shirt on the back of the chair, bra in the corner, but where the hell were her panties? Not wanting to waste any more time, she hurriedly dressed without them.

When she approached the door of the bedroom she heard Cash's voice.

"I have a bit of a situation here, Denn."

Who the hell is Denn?

"Coven witch got through the wards on the house in Boston, came after me with a sleep spell."

Selene poked her head just enough in the door to see Cash's naked back. It was hard to concentrate on his conversation with all that delicious male flesh begging to be stroked. Tearing her eyes away from his skin, she finally noticed he held a cell phone to his ear. Her gaze flashed to the bed and saw the witch still bound to the wall and unconscious. Her body twitched and moved a few times. She would be awake soon. She ducked her head back out the door and stood against the wall outside, listening.

"Yeah, made it out of the house okay and captured the witch after nearly killing her." He paused, probably to listen to what this Denn had to say.

"It couldn't be helped. I had to use in order to live. Couldn't save the house, though. It's gone. Burned down

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

during the fight." Selene wished she could hear the reaction of whomever he spoke with. Were they shocked?

"Yeah, the cops contacted Grae shortly after it happened. I sent him a text message to let him know I was okay but didn't go into the details with him yet.

"Hiding in the garage apartment, but I don't think I should stay here for too long. I'm not sure who sent her here or who they might send next." This time when he paused she heard a loud voice coming from the phone. She couldn't make out the words, but he sure was yelling. "I know, you're probably right. What I don't know is why the hell he is so stirred up right now. First Grae and Rena and now me. What the fuck is he up to?"

Thoughts swirled through Selene's mind as she got snatches of images from Cash. Four boys being scolded by an older man. Their father? She certainly picked up anger, but more than that an overwhelming sadness consumed him.

"The witch will be awake soon and may need medical attention. I need your help with her. You need to check her out. I hate to ask you, but she doesn't deserve to die even if she does work for the likes of him.

"There's another complication." His voice hesitated as if unsure what to say.

"An innocent. Well, sort of, anyway. I found her by accident. Denn, she has certain, uhm, abilities. In the same way as Rena."

Who the hell is Rena, she wondered.

"No, it's too late. The change has already started. You need to come and get her. Please do this for me." His voice broke.

What the hell? Who would he call to come and get me? And why? The taste of bitter betrayal welled up in her. Her face heated as she fought against the sheen of tears forming. *Stop that, Selene. Fool.*

She backed quickly away from the door when she heard Cash hang up his cell. Sitting down on one of the chairs, she struggled with her unwelcome emotions towards a man who had just asked someone to come and get her away from him. When he walked into the room she wanted to look at him, to yell at him, to demand answers. Instead she willed her body to go cold. Emotionless. Burying everything she felt as deep as she could until she could come up with a plan to leave.

"You're awake." He sounded surprised.

"Yes." Her voice flat, she couldn't even look at him.

"I just checked on the girl and she is still out but moving around a lot. I suspect she will be awake soon."

"Is she in pain?"

"Probably, but I'm not sure. I've contacted one of my brothers to come and take a look at her."

"Is he a doctor?"

"Uh—not exactly. He is what we call a healer. His magick is of the earth and he has a way with the elements that is extraordinary. Not exactly something that would be embraced by the medical community."

"Oh, my God. Dennison Scott. Of course." She stood to walk across the room, processing the information of who he'd been talking to.

"Yes, how did you know?"

She turned to look at him. "You don't want to know." How could she tell him that her last mission, that she'd ran out on before she could leave for it, was the assassination of his brother? Then again, how could she not? They needed to know because if it wasn't her who completed the assignment, someone else would. She slumped against the wall, her head falling back against it.

"What's going on? What are you not telling me?"

"Something is terribly wrong here, Cash. Too many coincidences."

"Selene, you aren't making any sense yet. Tell me what the hell is going on." He strode over to her, placing his hands on the wall on both sides of her head, pinning her in.

"How did you find me, Cash? Just happened to be passing me on the highway? Where were you headed? Where were you coming from?" Her voice rose, all too aware that her emotions were heating. She slipped underneath his arms and around his massive frame. She had to distance herself. Figure out the why and what of the problem. It was there, she knew it was, she just needed to find it.

"What are you trying to say? You think our meeting was a setup? For what? I think it's time you told me more about who you are and what you are running from."

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

Her own unsettled emotions stared down at her in his gaze. All the closeness they had discovered in each others arms was fading away fast.

"Why don't you tell me, Cash? Why is Denn coming to get me and take me away?"

"You listened in on my phone conversation with my brother?"

Her eyes rolled back. "It's a small apartment, Cash, there's not a lot of privacy in here now, is there?"

He stormed over to the bar, every ridge of muscle in his back and neck tightening and flexing as he went. Anger radiated off of him in waves. *What the hell did he have to be so angry about?*

"You don't understand."

"Uh huh. I've heard that excuse before. You've called for a pick up, that sounds pretty straight forward to me."

"Am I interrupting a lover's quarrel, Selene?" She whirled at the all too familiar voicing snarling behind her.

She looked back at Cash "Not a setup, huh?" Not wanting him to see through her anger to the searing pain she endured, she faced away from him. "I guess you've caught me, Merc. You must be rather satisfied to watch me fall for my betrayer again." The truth settled in her stomach like an acid pill, churning and burning.

* * * *

"Are you fucking kidding me? You think I am in cahoots with this asshole?" Fury burned through Cash at the idiocy of that statement. How could she leap to that conclusion? Air

whipped through the room, pulling at their clothing as he stormed towards her. Looking at Merc he fumed, "How the hell did you get in? You shouldn't have been able to get past my wards? Not without a lot of magickal help."

Merc smirked. "Well, as fun as this little lovers' spat is, you're both wrong. Your new boyfriend obviously doesn't know about your role in the organization,"

"What organization?"

Merc laughed. "Doesn't really surprise me much that you didn't tell him. He wouldn't likely want to fuck the woman assigned to kill his brother, huh?"

The shock of Merc's statement left him speechless as he trained his gun from Selene to Cash, aiming dead center on his chest. Before he or Selene could react the gun fired and, despite Selene's attempt to attack Merc, the bullet slammed into Cash before anyone could react.

He watched the shock and horror bloom across her face. A sudden burst of heat and flame in the room erupted around her as her attention moved to Merc, who foolishly stood watching them both with only a gun for protection. Cash labored for breath as he staggered to his knees. The burst of air racing through the room died to an unnatural stillness as he put all his effort into bolstering his strength.

He watched helplessly as Selene formed a fireball in her hand, intent on killing Merc.

"I wouldn't if I were you, Selene." Merc twisted his body, putting Selene next in the line of fire. "I just saved you the trouble of dealing with a vengeful witch."

With the lack of hesitation of a trained fighter, she flung the lethal flame in the direction of the bastard's head, only for it to stop a foot away, clinging to an invisible barrier. Damn. He'd definitely underestimated the asshole's abilities. He'd sensed a witch, but hadn't expected this much power.

"You stupid bitch. You really think I would come in here unprepared? Why the hell do you think I shot your boy-toy? You have no idea what you have gotten yourself into this time. You should have returned when you had the chance." A keening cry sounded in the room as flames leapt higher around Selene's body.

Cash had no choice, he had to help her. It was the least he could do for her. It was too late for him anyway. He opened his mind and his soul, reaching deep for the power within, clawing to get out. The darkest of magick pushed through him, overpowering him, feeding on his anger and frustration. Cash embraced the black magick, allowing it free reign to gather strength. He used it to get himself off his knees and back onto his weak but steady legs. Glancing towards Selene, he watched her continue to fling fiery orbs at Merc. Before long the entire surface of his protective shield was an entire wall of flame.

He watched the fire lick at the ceiling as his own power began gravitating towards it. Air, inexplicably drawn to fire. Negative energy swirled in the room, a dark wild storm breaking free, a burst of heat so palpable and strong as to be visible pushed out from Selene. It was aimed at Merc, but strong enough as to encompass him as well.

"Goddamn it, Selene, hold on."

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

She didn't even turn at his words, but the radiating heat lessened and his heated skin began to cool.

His magick sought a way through the shield, pressing against it and looking for that wisp of air, indicating a crack. It fanned a flame on Merc's left side and his magick raced to it, forcing it bigger and larger, weakening his protection. The fire hadn't yet burned through, but it was only a matter of time before the heat would get through. Cash just couldn't wait that long. His weakened body wouldn't last much longer, and Merc still held his gun in Selene's direction.

Finally in, Cash wove himself around Merc's legs, draining his inner force. The shield wavered and small pieces of flame burst through. The stench of burning flesh permeated the room as Cash stole his inner power and Selene fought his outer shell.

"Now, Selene, now!" He didn't need to explain further. Her hands raised in front of her, a crackling ball of blue fire forming. Merc screamed just as she flung it, cutting his voice off when his body became an inferno. With one last push of dark, Merc burst into millions of tiny pieces of flame drifting in the air.

Cash quickly sucked the air from the room, extinguishing not only the fire from Merc but the flames that surrounded Selene, too. With the fires out, Cash filled the room with clean, sweet air from outside the apartment. Reenergizing the balance in the room, despite the damage caused by the flames.

Screwing his eyes shut, he gritted his teeth against the onslaught of imminent death. With the last of his magick used

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

up he collapsed on the ground, pain forcing him down. He turned his eyes to Selene, lying on the floor, drinking in the sheer beauty she possessed, grateful that she would be safe for now. Her employer seemed hell bent on getting her back. He only hoped his brother would arrive in time to protect her.

Cash let his eyes slide shut, giving in to the pain and weight pressing down on him. She would live. That's all that mattered.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter Four

Selene reached for Cash, her arms and legs as weak as a newborn kitten. She'd been momentarily stunned from the fire and resulting brief lack of air in the room. Now all she could see was the amount of blood that covered his body and leaked onto the floor, scaring the hell out of her. How he'd managed to stand and work magick she didn't understand. Well, it wasn't as if she actually knew what it took to wield his brand of magick. Her psychic powers always lay just below the surface, waiting for her to use them, which was why it had taken her so many years to gain control. At least, until the last couple of days.

Cold sweat broke out on her body as she crawled on her hands and knees across the room to get to him. Not only was she weak from her psychic ordeal with Merc, but the lingering dark power in Cash pierced through her like the sharpest blade through her flesh. It tore through muscle and tendons straight to her inner core. She gasped for breath with each painful stab.

Come on, Selene. You can do this. Cash is counting on you.

The stench of the black power nauseated her as she crawled through the dense shroud of it around him. Despite her determination, her body instinctively recoiled with each step. Finally reaching his side, she collapsed next to him, spent and used up. Tears tracked down her cheeks at the sight of his pale, stricken face turned toward her. The gurgle

in his labored breathing didn't sound good as she imagined his lungs collapsing. She worried she was too late. She'd let Merc get the best of her and Cash had sacrificed himself for her.

"Come on, Cash, don't die on me. Please don't do this."

Her hand reached over to brush the lock of hair that had fallen across his eye. She didn't care about the pain that caused her. She needed to touch him, skin to skin.

"What the hell happened here?"

Lost in her desperate thoughts of Cash, she hadn't even heard anyone enter the apartment. Anger at her own loss of control, as well as the fact that she couldn't catch a break, had her turning towards the stranger with fire at her fingertips. She twisted her body in front of Cash in a protective gesture.

"Whoa. Careful there, hon. I'm not here to hurt you, so there's no call for that." He raised his hands up in surrender, taking a couple of steps backwards.

"What do you want? Why are you here? How did you get in?" He glanced over her shoulder at Cash.

"Do we have time for the twenty questions? My brother over there isn't looking so good. I'll admit that I'm impressed with your protectiveness of him, but right now you need to let me get to him before it's too late."

She lowered her hand, extinguishing the flames. "You're the brother he called for?" She watched him walk around to the other side of Cash.

"Yep. I'm Denn Scott." She knew exactly who he was, but she thought it wise not to mention that right now. He knelt

down on the floor next to his brother, checking for a pulse. His lips pressed together tight in a grim look. "Pulse is barely there. How long has he been like this?"

"I'm—I'm not really sure. The fight seemed to go by really fast, but time is irrelevant when fighting for life. He uh—got shot first and then pulled some seriously dark magick out."

Denn looked up at her. "You know about his magick?" She nodded. "You know that using dark magick destroys him piece by piece?" He ripped away Cash's shirt to reveal his blood covered chest and stomach. "Damn it, Cash, what were you thinking? You know better than this."

"What do you mean?"

"My dumb ass brother here knows damn well that unleashing the black magick will destroy him. The more often you use, the faster the deterioration. Apparently he has been using way too much."

"But he's been shot. That's why he's like this?"

"Partially, Selene. It is Selene, right?"

She nodded and watched as Denn pulled a black pouch from a bag that he'd carried in. Opening the velvet cloth, he reached in and pulled out what looked to be some dried herbs. She couldn't really tell. He sprinkled them across the wound before placing the bag on the ground next to his feet. He returned his hands over his brother's abdomen and chanted something under his breath.

"What are you doing? We need to call the paramedics. Get him to a hospital."

He looked up at her. "That won't be necessary. I can fix the gunshot. But that's the least of his worries right now."

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

"The black magick?"

"Yes." He went back to chanting and moving his hands back and forth across his brother's body. She felt the crackle of energy seconds before she saw it flow from his palms. The power was tinged blue on the edges and seeped into Cash's body. Worried for him, she grabbed at his hand to lend support.

Their connection sizzled as the power surged forward from Cash to her, whispering along her skin. Startled, she jerked her hand away, looking up at Denn as she did.

"Can you feel that?" he asked.

"Yes, his body is fighting it. Trying to expel it." He shook his head. "Black magick is powerful, that's for sure."

"Not to mention it tastes and smells disgusting." She scrunched up her nose as a fresh wave of the dark settled around Cash.

"You can smell it? And taste it?" He looked at her with a strange puzzled expression.

"Of course. Can't you? It's overpowering."

"No, I can't. I can sense it. Feel the weight of it but that's it. Are you an empath?"

"Not exactly. I have developed some psychic ability. But I've not ever felt anything like this before." Cash's body jerked and stiffened beside her. "What's happening? What are you doing? You're hurting him?" She grabbed at Cash again. "The pain is excruciating."

"The gunshot wound is healing. Unfortunately that gives way to the stronger dark magick consuming him."

She whimpered in response. The searing pain took her breath away as she clutched at Cash.

"Selene, let go. It's hurting you. You're absorbing it, I can feel the transfer." He rushed over to where she sat, grabbing at her arm to pull her away. "Shit!" The heat of her skin too hot for him to hold on to. She couldn't let go. Didn't want to. She had to help him. Save him.

Pain sliced through her as the dark aura ripped from Cash's body and flooded into hers. His limbs jerked and spasmed while her own shook with the intensity.

"Goddam it, Selene. You are going to kill one or both of you if you don't stop. Cash wanted you safe. Away from the danger he represents."

She ignored his protests and shot up flames around her and Cash to keep him out.

The agony in her body grew to unbearable levels as she let loose a scream of anguish. Pulling on every ounce of discipline she ever had in her body, she held fast as the last of the magick left Cash for her. It rumbled and roared through her like a violent storm. She wouldn't be able to hold it for long.

She let go of Cash, and he fell limp to the floor next to her. His pallor was even more deathly than before but his heart beat strong.

"Are their fire extinguishers in this apartment?" She looked at Denn.

"Yes, why?"

"You need to get them now." She pulled herself upright, fire growing around her, and made her way to the door. She

tried to form the excess power into an object she could get rid of to no avail. It clung to her like a second skin. With a last look at Denn, she walked out the door and back into the townhouse garage.

Flames and power crawled across her skin, pulling her, forcing her to expel it any way she could. With no control of it, she watched the fire spread from her body throughout the room, surrounding the gas tank and exploding in a fiery burst.

Cash will survive.

* * * *

Cash's eyes shot open, blinded by the harsh sunlight streaming in through the sheer white curtains billowing in the breeze from the open window. He looked around the room, unsure of where he was, and admiring the ornate moldings throughout. His gaze rested on the open French doors, revealing a terrace just outside. Soft strands of jazz filtered to him from outside on the street as well as the scents of Creole spices. Realization dawned as he acknowledged his location.

New Orleans.

He lay there trying to remember what had happened when the door swung open and his brother sauntered in. "You're finally awake. About time. Thought I was going to have to cast a spell to get your ass out of my bed."

"What the hell happened?" His voice came out rough and gravelly even to his own ears. "Where is Selene?" He gingerly lifted his head and shoulders, trying to push himself into a sitting position.

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

"Slow down, Cash. You've just woken up after nearly two weeks in a coma. Too much too soon and you'll find yourself right back where you started." Denn grabbed his shoulders and pushed him back down on the bed.

"I need to get up and check on Selene. Make sure she's all right."

"She's all right." Lie still and follow my finger. His brother raised his finger in front of his eyes moving it back and forth.

"How do you feel?" Denn asked.

"You mean other than feeling like I have been dragged to hell and back?"

"Yeah, there is that. Although I don't know what you expected, the way you have been using."

Cash cringed at the admonishment in his brother's voice. He closed his eyes, not wanting to see the anger there.

"What happened, Denn? How did I survive? I felt the darkness win."

"You're right. There was nothing even I could do for you."

"Then what the fuck happened?" He pushed past his brother's hands and sat up in the bed.

"Selene did it, Cash. She saved you. It nearly killed her to do it, though."

"I need to see her. Now. Take me to her." He swung his legs over the side of the small bed, testing his strength with a little weight at a time. He looked down at himself, realizing he only wore a pair of shorts.

"I'd like some clothes, too." Finally he stood and stretched his stiff limbs, feeling every pull and strain of his muscles. All considering, he felt pretty damn good. He walked across the

room and strode through the open doorway, pausing for his brother on the landing. When Denn didn't follow him, he poked his head back through the doorway.

"Let's go, brother."

"We can't" The hesitation in his brother's voice struck fear in his heart. He had to force the breath in and out as he imagined why he couldn't see her.

"Why not?" He moved closer to Denn.

"Well, she isn't here."

"What do you mean she isn't here?" He took a few heavy steps closer.

"She left three days ago."

"You just fucking let her go? What the hell happened to make her leave?" He stormed over to the open doors, gulping in the fresh air. He couldn't look at his brother right now. Didn't want him to see how he felt.

"Of course I didn't just let her go. Jeez, Cash. I think if I had tried to stop her she would have blown my ass up. She is quite the hard ass, you know."

Cash laughed at that image. Hard not to when he knew all too well how stubborn she was.

"Why did she leave? And where did she go?" His hands gripped the wrought iron railing wrapped around the terrace, fingers and knuckles turning white from the straining hold.

"She changed back in Boston, Cash. What she did to save you somehow made her different. I don't know how to explain it because she wouldn't talk to me when she recovered. But fear radiated off of her every time I saw her."

"What the hell did she have to do to save me?"

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

"She took on all the dark magick you carried around, absorbing the remnants that always remain. Honestly, I don't know how she survived. The explosion took out our entire garage with her in it. I found her unconscious and buried under three feet of rubble." Cash shuddered at the thought of her small body taken on the weight and power of the magick he'd been using. There would be a special place in Hell for him.

"Don't suppose she said where she was going?" He turned to his brother despite the desperation surely showing on his face.

"No, she took off in the middle of the night. Soon as she knew you were going to be okay. She didn't even say goodbye, catch ya later, nothing."

"Damn it. I have to find her. You should have bound her here."

"I've already got once witch bound here, Cash. I don't think I could hold two on my own. Not without more power. And we see where that got you."

He winced at the sarcastic tone of Denn's voice. He couldn't really blame him. This mess was all his fault. The dark magick is what led the witch to them in the first place. An easy trail for any elemental user to find.

"I've got to go. Need some clothes and a ride. I have to find her. She isn't safe you know. Somehow she is tied into all of this with our illustrious uncle."

"Great."

"Exactly. She had a mercenary tracking her, seemingly to retrieve her, but the bastard knew who I was and was

particularly pleased that he could essentially kill two birds with one stone by finding us together." He moved through the house, following his brother as they made their way down the hall to the master suite.

"You can find some clothes in there." He pointed to a large walk in closet in the back corner of the room.

Cash reached into the dark closet, flipping the switch to illuminate the clothes inside. *Damn*. His brother had become quite the clothes horse since moving to Louisiana. Rows of pants along one wall, everything from silk Armani slacks to multiples of brand new Gap jeans. He grabbed a pair of jeans off the rack and a black t-shirt to go along with it. Quickly donning the clothes, he began considering what it would take to find Selene.

"I'm going to need some crystals, Denn. I have to find her fast."

"Oh, brother, I can do better than that." He walked over to the desk next to the king-sized bed, reaching in to the top drawer and drawing out a small GPS tracking screen.

"Sometimes technology is a whole lot more efficient than magic." He handed the screen over and Cash looked at it.

"You put a tracking device on her?" Denn nodded. "Dayum, I am so proud right now. Who would've thought an earth witch would be so clever?"

"Fuck off."

Cash grinned at his brother. It was a rare moment he got to spend any time with his brothers. Years passed and they all changed so much. Despite their intentions to keep in touch

through the Internet and the phone it just wasn't that same as spending time together in person.

"She's on the move, but at least now it won't take me that long to catch up to her." Excitement coursed through him at the prospect of finding her fast. Taking her fast.

"Grae's right, isn't he? Is there really a chance for us?" asked Denn.

"I really didn't think so. Even after he showed me I still doubted. But damn, Denn, I haven't felt this free in over ten years. It gives me hope. It gives us all hope." They faced each other, thinking of the words that could bring them the freedom they had all yearned for too many years to count.

Find your empathic mate.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter Five

Selene stopped to gas up her new bike and take a much needed rest break. The sun slanted down across her face, warming her skin. She'd been riding hard and long for three days. Trying to escape. She rubbed her hands across the denim covering her thighs stretching out her tired and sore muscles. Every mile she rode farther away from him, the heavier the weight constricting her chest became. Her mind called out to him but it was too dangerous to go back.

She'd changed. Her power had shifted and she didn't know how to control it. That much dark magick, as they called it, had been nearly her undoing. Witches. She shook her head. It still wasn't all that easy to wrap her head around that fact. Merc had certainly surprised her. He hadn't seemed that powerful in the past. She wondered what could have changed. Or who had changed him.

She looked out at the dry and barren desert that went on for miles in front of her, feeling weary and lost. How long would she have to run before she began to feel like she'd survive without him? No matter, really. It was for the best. She was a hunted woman and would be until she figured out what more they wanted from her and there was definitely more. God help her if the company ever found out about the change. So far she was the only one who knew, but everyday it grew harder to hide it. She'd left Cash sooner than she'd wanted because of Denn. Damn, he was one nosy man. He'd seemed on the verge of figuring it out.

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

She wistfully looked over at the pay phone attached to the corner of the building. One quick call to check on Cash. Find out if he was awake. Maybe here his voice one last time. Just to reassure herself...

No!

She left her bike and her thoughts to go inside the ancient gas station to pay for her gas and find something cool to drink.

The little bells attached to the door handle tinkled, announcing her arrival inside the small but familiar store. Being on the run always had her off the beaten path stopping at small mom and pop type places like this. She could find what she needed without worrying about the technology of the modern world finding her here. Damn, her head hurt. The tension reached an unbearable level.

She took the food and drinks she'd picked out to the counter where she was greeted by an older woman with a soft smile. Selene watched her ring up the purchase with strong, sure hands that looked to have seen plenty of work.

"\$33.61 is the total, honey."

Selene peeled some bills from the roll she clutched in her hand, giving them over to the woman. When the woman handed the change back to her, she covered both the money and her hand with her own.

"Such a pretty young girl, but the sad eyes tell a different story. You are living far beyond your years. It's time to stop running and take a stand."

Selene jerked her hand from underneath the woman's.

"With balance comes a great power, when the four are combined it will be to defeat the greatest evil."

"Uh, what did you say?"

"You don't trust in much, but there is one you can trust." The woman pressed a small key on a chain in to her hand. "You need to rest. This key is for Room Seven in the small motel out back. Get some sleep." Selene started to protest and hand the key back to her. "No. Take it. You will be safe there."

She had to admit she was exhausted and desperately tired. Maybe a few hours would do her some good. She took a deep breath, letting loose of some of the shields she surrounded herself with. The woman's intentions were pure and strong. She meant her no harm. Just the opposite. She seemed genuinely concerned.

Selene relaxed. "Just for a few hours." The woman smiled at her. She turned and reached behind her grabbing a bottle of tequila from the shelf and bagging it up.

"This, too. You look like you could enjoy it."

Selene laughed then, surprised at the intuitiveness of this stranger. "You're probably right about that." She accepted the bag. "Thank you."

"No thanks. Just rest. Things will be different tomorrow, I promise."

She shook her head at the woman but didn't respond. No need to tell her that despite her generosity, she would leave in the morning and continue to run.

* * * *

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

After stashing her Busa so that it wouldn't be seen, she slid the key into the lock of Room Seven. She'd been surprised when she'd caught sight of the motel sitting back behind the station. The building didn't look any newer than the store out front, but with a fresh coat of adobe red paint and some recently potted flowers next to each door, all eight units had a homey flavor. It was a welcome she didn't realize she had needed.

The interior was as simple as the outside with just a queen-sized bed, nightstand, and small wardrobe in the corner as the only furnishings. She set her things down on the nightstand and contemplated whether she wanted to sleep or shower first. She bent to remove her leather boots, loosening the tight laces before sliding her jeans down her legs.

She looked at the bag with the tequila and decided she needed a drink first. She padded into the bathroom to look for a glass or cup she could use. The bathroom looked as simple as the rest of the room. She reached for the cups wrapped in plastic on the counter and she spied the tub.

Oh, God.

There in the corner stood the largest white claw foot tub she'd ever seen in her life. She moved closer, making her mind up instantly that she had to soak in that tub before she went to sleep. She turned the faucets on, watching the tub slowly fill with swirling water. She hurried back out to the room, checking the lock on the door before grabbing up the alcohol and carrying it to the bathroom with her.

Pentacles of Magick: The Burning
by Eliza Gayle

With little finesse she stripped the remainder of her clothes from her body, tossing them to the floor. She sank down in the tub with a deep sigh as the heated water flowed over her skin, warming her to the bone. Her eyes slid closed. She couldn't remember the last time she'd allowed herself such luxury.

Long minutes later she reached for the bag containing her drink. When her hand reached inside to pull it out she touched something unexpected. A piece of paper? Her fingers gripped the edge. No, it was thicker than paper. She pulled it out of the bag, realizing it was a card. A Tarot card? *What the—?*

She didn't know much about Tarot, but she recognized the pentacle on the face of the card and the roman numerals for ten. The Ten of Pentacles. She flipped it over and over looking for something that might give her a clue as to why the woman in the store would have given her this card. What could it signify? After a few minutes of studying it, she set it down in favor of a drink.

I'm too tired to deal with this right now.

Ripping the plastic wrap from the cheap paper cup, she poured three fingers of the amber liquid, drinking it down in three fast gulps. Her eyes screwed shut and she crunched up her nose as the liquid went down like live fire. Gasping for a few breaths, she eased back into the water to allow the alcohol and hot water to ease her built up anxiety over the last couple of weeks.

A long while later, when the water had cooled to room temperature and her skin was completely water logged,

Selene decided to get out of the tub. She stepped onto the bath mat, wrapping herself tightly in the soft, fluffy towel provided.

Sleep. She needed sleep.

She grabbed up the bottle of tequila and the lone Tarot card and headed into the other room. The sun had set while she'd been in the bath, and the room was cloaked in total darkness. Perfect for sleeping. She unwrapped the towel from her body, letting the cool air of the room caress her skin. Her nipples puckered and she thought of Cash. His touch.

"You shouldn't have left."

She gasped at the sound of his voice in the room. Her heart stuttered. "What the hell? Jeesus, Cash. Scare the hell out of me, why don't you?"

His laughter rumbled through the room. "Did you really think I would let you just leave?"

"Yes."

"Well, you were wrong." She heard the bed creak as she saw his silhouette get up from the bed and move toward her. Her body tingled at his closeness.

"You shouldn't be here."

"Yes, I should. It's too dangerous for you to be on the run alone."

She bristled at his words. "Is that why you came? Because you thought I couldn't take care of myself? The organization will never stop looking."

"I know. Denn told me what you said."

"I couldn't do it. Can't do it."

"I know."

"How did you find me anyway?"

"I came because I had to."

"You had to?"

"There are things you don't know that you are somehow involved in. Dangerous things. I think it's time for you to meet Grae. My twin. A few weeks ago a woman who studied our family Tarot cards revealed some possible secrets about a family prophecy. I haven't even wrapped my mind around it all, but considering what's happened between us it's looking more like truth than I thought."

"Wait. Did you say Tarot card?" She fingered the card she still held in her hand at her side.

"Yes. Our family history was documented with a set of distinct Tarot cards. Long story, but the short version speaks to a prophecy of four brothers and four empaths who will save them from themselves and their power."

She stepped away from him and sat on the edge of the bed, setting the bottle and card down on the floor, thinking about what he and the old woman had said. "So that's it, then? You're here because you need my help. Somehow my abilities will help your family."

"No, Selene. That is not why I am here. It's true I want to protect you. Keep you safe. But not because my family needs you." He grabbed her shoulders, pushing her down on her back, his body moving forward on top of hers. "I need you. Don't you get it? When I woke up in New Orleans and found you gone I freaked." He ran his finger along her jawline, tracing down her neck and shoulder to the top of her bare breast. "When you left you took my heart with you. There

aren't very many things in this world that I really need. But you are it for me."

Selene's head spun at his revelation. She didn't think she could speak. Tears leaked from the corners of her eyes at his words. Her hands came up to thread through his thick, wavy hair. Pulling him down, she pressed his lips to hers. His taste went straight to her head, leaving her desperate for more of him. She knew she would never tire of his touch. No man could possibly get to her the way he could.

Remembering the card on the floor she wrenched herself free from his mouth. "Wait!" She pushed at his chest, trying to get him off of her. Slowly he eased his body off and to the side.

"What are we waiting for, babe?"

She dove for the card plucking it up from the floor.

"This." She handed it over and watched him look at it.

"Where did you get this?"

"The old woman at the store out front. I found it in my bag. But she said the strangest thing to me."

He tossed the card to the table. "Don't get me wrong, Selene. I am curious about the card and what she had to say but first things first. You, me, naked in the bed." The smile on his face, along with the wicked gleam in his eyes, were her undoing. He was right, it could wait...

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Epilogue

Find your empathic mate. His brother's final thoughts had plagued Denn since he left. Well, that and the witch he'd had to bind to his home. Bringing Raven St. Claire to New Orleans had seemed like the only option at the time. His brother had nearly killed her in self-defense, but they wanted her to live. They needed answers, and right now she was their only lead. Their best guess was that she had been hired by their uncle to locate and destroy Cash. His stomach churned at the idea.

She was an anomaly, a blight on their kind. At least a warlock made his intentions somewhat clear—a mercenary witch, or witch for hire, seemed worse. A loose cannon ready to work for the highest bidder.

He wondered what happened in her life that would cause her to turn her away from her faith. Was it simple greed? Or something more? Did it even matter? Not right now. He and his brothers figured that Uncle Scott would be looking for her, and it was only a matter of time before that search led him to New Orleans and his doorstep.

He gave one last glance at the frail looking woman asleep in his bed. One way or another, a fight was coming. He only hoped Destiny didn't fuck it up.

* * * *

The Reverend sat calmly behind his desk despite the storm raging inside him. Where had things gone wrong? And how could he use them to his advantage?

A knock at his study door interrupted his train of thought, forcing him back to the here and now.

"Yes."

"Sir, there is a woman here to see you."

"And she is..."

"She refuses to give her name."

Ahh, now we are getting somewhere. Maybe she could shed some light on the major fuck up of her witch. "Send her in."

Seconds later a petite, black-cloaked figure walked into the room. When she removed her hood her mass of red curls tumbled across her shoulders. She leveled her sharp green cat eyes, making contact with him immediately. "Reverend, it's good to see you again."

"Is it?"

She blinked at his statement, fear briefly flashing in her eyes before she tilted her chin and straightened her back in a defensive posture. "Of course."

"Good. Then tell me what you have come here to report."

"It's about Raven, the witch sent for the one called Cash." Her gaze dropped contact for a brief second before leveling on him once again. She might be afraid of him, but she had guts, that was for sure.

His dick jerked in his pants, stirring to action. He stood and walked around in front of his desk, taking slow punctuated strides, watching for her reaction. The closer he stepped to her the more pronounced her breathing became, until she finally turned her face away to hide.

"So far she has been unable to complete her mission. In fact, it's been a couple of days since I have heard from her."

"What else?" He knew she was holding out on him. His fingers reached for her hair, tangling through the curls before grasping a handful. She winced at his action as he tugged her head back, exposing her neck to him. When he bent and stroked his tongue along the supple skin of her neck, he felt the shiver that trembled down her body from either revulsion or desire. He didn't care which one. "Tell me, Marissa, tell me what you came here to say."

"She's disappeared. I sent Raven after him, my very best hunter, and she can be found by no one. We have been scrying for her for days with not even a whisper of her presence."

"That wasn't so hard, was it?" He reached with his free hand to the front of her cloak and forced it apart to expose the naked skin underneath. "Are you prepared to make the sacrifice?" He whispered the question in her ear, watching for her reaction.

"What about Raven? You have to help me find her."

He jerked her head back, forcing her gaze to his. "I don't have to do anything for you, it is you who owes me now." She opened her mouth to say something but quickly shut it again. "That's more like it. Besides, I already know where she is..."

He jerked his hand free from her hair and watched her stumble backwards a few steps.

"Now, take off the cloak."

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

About the Author

From the moment Eliza read her first erotic romance novel a couple of years ago, she knew she had found her niche and realized her dream of writing was passing her by. So after years of thinking about it she finally grabbed her laptop and wrote. These days she likes her stories hot and spicy whether they be contemporary, fantasy or paranormal and will write in whatever genre her imagination has conjured that day.

Eliza lives in beautiful North Carolina and spends her days dividing her time between writing, her book video business, a part-time job as promotions manager and raising her two daughters.

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