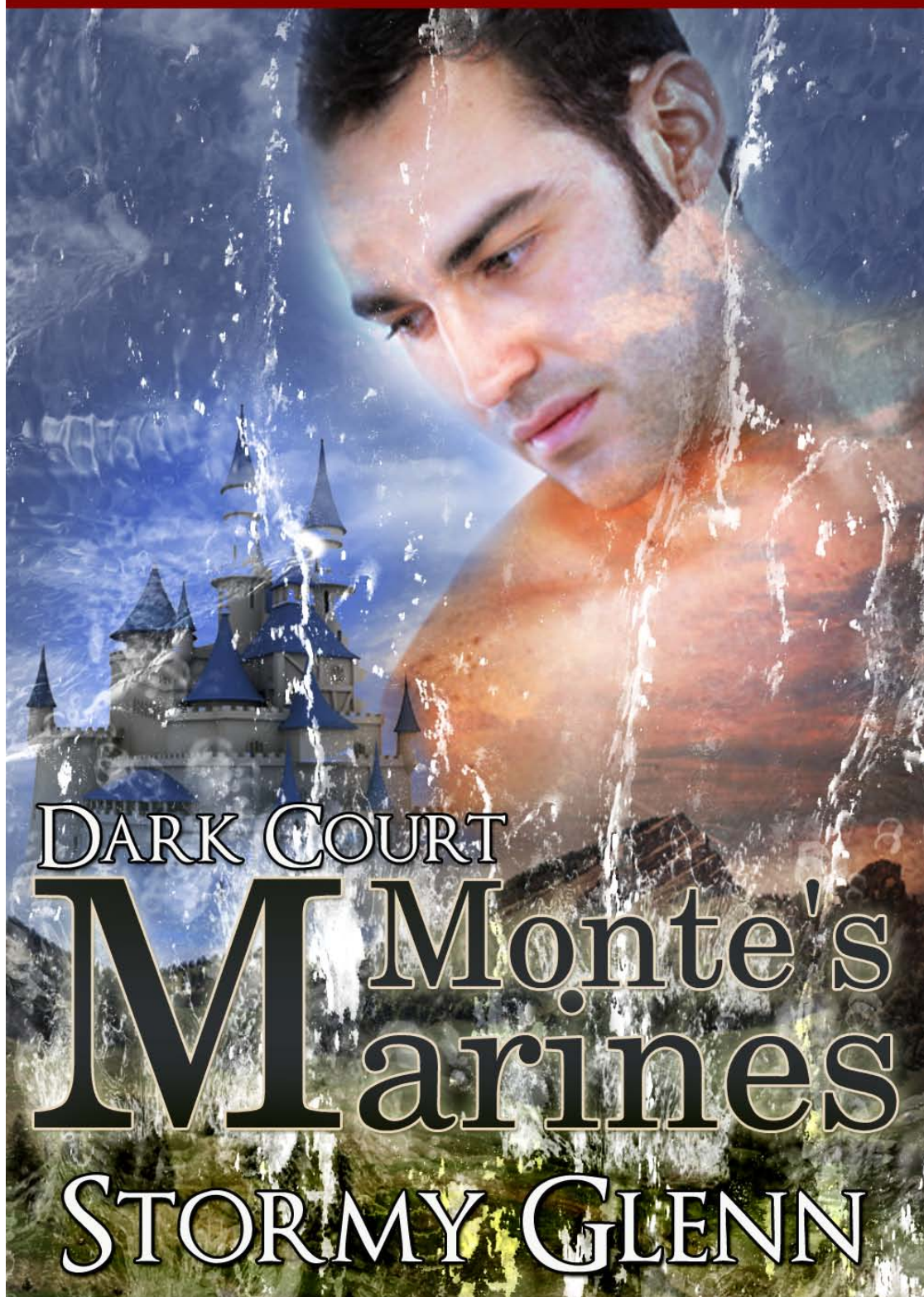


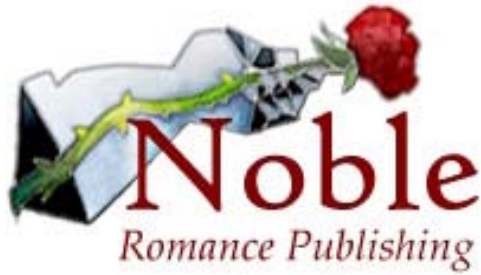
*Noble Romance Publishing*



DARK COURT

# Monte's Marines

STORMY GLENN



[www.nobleromance.com](http://www.nobleromance.com)

Dark Court: Monte's Marines

ISBN 978-1-60592-105-1

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Dark Court: Monte's Marines Copyright 2010 Stormy Glenn

Cover Art by Fiona Jayde

This book may not be reproduced or used in whole or in part by any existing means without written permission from the publisher. Contact Noble Romance Publishing, LLC at PO Box 467423, Atlanta, GA 31146.

This book is a work of fiction and any resemblance to persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental. The characters are products of the author's imagination and used fictitiously.

### **Book Blurb**

Doc Lewis had been in love with Rocky Rodriguez for more years than he could remember but he always knew that his wish to be with the man would never come true. But when circumstances throw them together in the Seelie Court, something changes and the two men give into the desire between them. Their encounter ends with Rocky making a comment that drives Doc from him with a broken heart.

Doc decides he needs to put plenty of space between him and Rocky and going on a mission back to the human world seems like just the thing. Only, the mission doesn't turn out quite like Doc expected when he meets, Monte, the Seelie Elf he's been sent to rescue.

Monte is unlike any man he's ever met and Doc falls quickly for the little elf, bonding with him. But they're being held by government scientists in a secret research facility. Escape is their only possible way to be together, especially after the lead scientist grows concerned over how close they've grown to each other and threatens to separate them.

Between fighting for their lives, the misgivings that fill them all when Rocky arrives to rescue them, and the lack of prenatal vitamins, can these three men find each other? Or will they lose everything because of their doubts?

## Chapter One

Rocky Rodriguez had a real problem. He had a man sleeping in his arms, with his head resting against Rocky's shoulder, and for the life of him he couldn't figure out how he'd gotten himself into such a strange situation. And to make matters even more confusing, he wasn't sure he cared. Doc slept pressed against him, and to Rocky, it felt like the most natural thing in the world.

Like his friend, Zack, Rocky'd been straight all of his life. Well, mostly. A couple of times over the years, he'd indulged in a hand job or a blow job with another man, but that didn't mean anything . . . did it? It sure as hell didn't mean he was gay.

But if that were true, then why did he feel the need to experience more with Doc? Rocky'd known the man for years, and he'd never once saw Doc as anything other than a friend – albeit a close one. Why was he suddenly thinking of him in terms of a lover? And why did the feel of Doc's body pressed against his feel so damn good?

The soft knock at the door drew Rocky from his contemplation of the man sleeping in his arms.

"Come in," Rocky said as quietly as he could. He wasn't about to give up holding Doc in his arms in favor of answering the door, was he ready for Doc to wake up and realize where he was.

"Well, I see he's finally given in to his feelings for you."

"What are you talking about?" Rocky asked as he looked over his shoulder at Zack.

"Oh, please, like you don't know," Zack snorted. "Doc's been in love with you for years."

Rocky wasn't sure how he felt about that, shocked mostly. He knew Doc was gay but he never realized he might be the object of Doc's desires. This new information might change the situation in many ways.

"I thought you didn't know he was gay?"

"I'm talking from experience when I tell you being gay has absolutely nothing to do with what one person might feel for another." Zack smirked. "And being gay isn't half bad."

Rocky felt shock race through him at the smug look on Zack's face. His eyebrows shot up nearly to his hairline. "You let Eljin fuck you." A statement, not a question. He could see the answer on Zack's face and in the careful way he walked.

Zack grinned. His face flamed red but he didn't seem disappointed. "Yeah."

"How was it?" Rocky asked, intrigued. If Zack enjoyed sex with another man, would he?

"Well, just to give you an idea, I passed out from the intensity."

"No shit?" Rocky laughed.

"No shit." Zack grinned. "You might want to try it one of these days. I can promise you, it's nothing like fucking a woman."

Rocky talked with Zack a few more minutes then waited until the man left the room before turning back to the one sleeping in his arms. He reached over and brushed a lock of sandy blond hair back from Doc's face.

The man was really handsome in a rugged, don't-fuck-with-me sort of way. Doc sported a muscular, chiseled body. Rocky could see himself with a man like Doc, assuming he'd be with a man at all.

"Doc," he said softly. Doc wiggled a bit, snuggling closer. "Doc, wake up."

Doc shifted again, rubbing his cheek along Rocky's naked chest. Rocky would be lying if he said the movement didn't feel good. Fan-fucking-tastic, actually. He

wondered what it would feel like to have Doc's hands on his body and not just his cheek.

"Doc, Pete, wake up," Rocky said a little louder. He caressed the side of Doc's face, tilting his head back. He wanted to see Doc's green eyes the moment he opened them. The way they fluttered, Rocky knew he wouldn't have to wait long.

"Rocky?" Doc asked, sleep making his voice sound sultry.

"Hey."

Doc blinked. Rocky didn't think the man knew where he was. He leaned over and gently kissed Doc, licking along the line of his lips. Doc lay still for a brief moment then kissed him back, opening his lips to let Rocky inside.

"Fuck, what are you doing, Rock?" Doc whispered against Rocky's lips, but he didn't pull away.

Rocky chuckled and leaned back a fraction of an inch, his gaze moving up to look deep into Doc's eyes. "Kissing you. Want me to stop?"

"No, but —"

The rest of Doc's words were smothered under Rocky's mouth. He kissed the man deeper, liking the strong, masculine flavor flooding his senses. Doc tasted amazing. Rocky wanted more.

His hands began exploring, touching every bit of naked flesh he could reach. It wasn't until his fingers traced the contours of Doc's well-honed chest that he realized neither of them wore shirts. He was disappointed to discover Doc wore pants while he did not. This would be a lot better if they were both naked.

"Take off your pants, Doc."

Doc looked shocked but quickly complied, pushing his pants down his legs. Rocky felt thick, muscular thighs brush against his, the fine hairs on Doc's legs brushing Rocky's skin a lover's soft caress. He rubbed his legs against Doc's, entwining them together until he wasn't sure who had who.

"Damn, Doc, you feel so good," Rocky moaned.

"Rocky, are you sure you want to do this?"

Rocky chuckled nervously. "I'm not sure what *this* is but I'd like to see where it goes."

Doc seemed satisfied with that answer, if the way he kissed Rocky was any indication. It made Rocky tingle all the way down to his toes. It made him want more. Rocky moved to cover Doc's body until a sharp pain in his thigh brought him back to reality.

"Fuck!" he shouted as he reached down to grab his leg where he'd been shot trying to protect Eljin and Zack. Getting shot sucked. It hurt like hell and made his leg burn. And worse, the wound interfered in what he wanted to do to Doc.

"I wish my leg wasn't injured," he told Doc when the man looked at him in concern. "I want to be inside you so bad I can taste it."

Doc glanced down at the bandage surrounding Rocky's leg then chuckled. "I think I can help you with that."

Rocky arched an eyebrow. "Oh?"

"Roll onto your back." Curious what Doc was up to, Rocky rolled onto his back then eagerly waited for the man to make his next move. His blood pounded through his body so hard he could barely hear.

Doc scooted to the side of the bed and grabbed his backpack. He hefted it onto the bed then spent several minutes rooting around inside. When he finally turned back to Rocky, he had a wide grin on his face and a white tube in his hand. "A gay man's best friend," he said as he popped the top and squirted some stuff out on his fingers.

Rocky wasn't sure how he felt about Doc's statement. He didn't know if he necessarily classified himself as gay, or even bisexual, but he found himself dismissing those concerns for the time being as he watched Doc push his lubed hand between his legs and grab his cock.

A slight sheen of perspiration beaded Doc's forehead. His face looked tight, almost as if he felt stressed. Rocky reached out to touch him, to ask if he was okay, when a long groan broke from Doc's lips. The tension on Doc's face fell away, to be replaced by a look of pure ecstasy.

If that hadn't been an indication Doc enjoyed himself, the hard cock jutting up from his groin would have been a dead giveaway. Rocky's hand trembled as he reached down and grabbed Doc's cock. He gave the engorged shaft several long, hard pumps.

Doc cried out, arching into Rocky's touch. Rocky's gaze darted from Doc's face to where his hand held the man's cock, then back. Doc was panting, his eyes partially closed. His body trembled but the cock in Rocky's hand throbbed.

"That is so fucking hot," Rocky whispered as he watched the man squirm, his skin flushed and sweaty.

Doc's eyes opened. "It gets better." He suddenly moved over and straddled Rocky's body, careful of the injured thigh.

Rocky groaned. He grabbed Doc's hips, his fingers digging into the hot skin. The head of his cock butted against Doc's silky ball sac. Doc moaned above him, moving his body several times and driving Rocky's cock between his butt cheeks. Rocky's fingers dug deeper into Doc's hips. The tingle building in his body seemed to center where his body met Doc's.

"Ready?"

Rocky looked up at Doc, nodding as speech was beyond him at that moment. How could he speak when he could barely breathe? His body was on fire, burning up from the inside out. If things got any hotter, no doubt he'd go right up in flames.

Rocky was even more sure of that fact when Doc started to settle down over his cock. Tight, hot silk slowly enveloped him, caressed him. Rocky feared he'd lose control and come like an untried teenager. The pleasure shooting through his body felt too intense for any other response.

"Rock . . . Rock . . . Rock," Doc chanted as he moved his body up and down Rocky's cock. "I've waited so long to feel this, to feel you."

Rocky's jaw dropped at Doc's statement. He wasn't even sure Doc knew he'd said the words. And he wasn't sure how to take them. Zack suggested Doc felt something for him but could he believe in it or was it just the heat of the moment?



Before Rocky could think further, all thoughts were driven from his mind when Doc settled down fully on him. Every inch of his cock was inside Doc's ass. A niggling notion entered Rocky's mind. He didn't ever want to leave. He never felt so much pleasure as he did buried balls-deep inside Doc's silky heat.

"Doc," Rocky rasped.

Doc's hands landed on his chest. His fingers moved over Rocky's nipples. Rocky couldn't keep a deep cry from leaving his lips. Each tug of Doc's fingers on his nipples seemed to have a direct line to his cock.

He panted, surging into Doc then crying out again as more heat enveloped his cock. His mind exploded with pleasure when Doc began to move his hips, impaling himself on Rocky's shaft, over and over again.

"Fuck! Doc!" Rocky bent his knees and planted his feet on the mattress, pushing up to drive himself into the man above him. At the same time, he gripped Doc's waist and pulled him down, their bodies meeting in the middle.

Rocky looked up to see bright green eyes staring down at him. The intensity of Doc's gaze burned across his skin. He felt a sensuous light pass between them, unlike anything he'd ever felt before. The sensation seared him down to his toes.

A feeling so powerful it made the light fade around the edges of Rocky's eyes rocketed through him. He felt his cock swell, throb. His hands clenched against Doc's hips as he bucked up, burying himself inside Doc's tight ass as far as he could go.

"Pete!" Rocky roared as ecstasy took hold of him and refused to let go. He dimly heard Doc cry out above him, the feel of Doc's inner muscles clamping down on his cock just enough to send him over the edge.

Rocky abandoned himself to the whirl of sensations surrounding him. He felt his cock pulse and throb, filling Doc with his release even as his chest was covered by the man's hot, wet cum.

Rocky panted, catching Doc in his arms when the man fell forward. He could feel Doc's heart beating against his chest, the harsh brush of Doc's breath across his neck.



Rocky stroked Doc's sweat-dampened back, stunned by what just occurred. Amazing, life altering.

Rocky remembered Zack's words and chuckled lightly. "That was nothing like fucking a woman."

## Chapter Two

Everything inside of Doc shattered into a million pieces at Rocky's words. Anguish filled him and stole his ability to speak. He bit his lip to keep from making a scathing retort. Rolling to the side of the bed, he reached for his clothes.

He felt like an old man, tired and worn out. He climbed to his feet and got dressed, moving slowly. Fighting to control his chaotic emotions, he clenched his fists at his side. He moved toward the door, needing to put as much space as possible between him and Rocky for the time being.

"Doc?" Rocky asked.

Doc turned, letting Rocky see all the misery he felt as he stood there, his ass throbbing and dripping Rocky's cum, he suddenly hated the man more than he could express. Rocky's careless words had made a mockery of the love Doc had felt for the man all these years.

"I am not some experiment in gay sex. If you want to see how the other half lives, then I suggest you find some little fuck buddy that doesn't care about you using them, because I do." Doc waved a hand through the air. "There's a lot of guys around here who I'm sure would like to give you a go."

Doc stormed out of the room. Rocky yelled his name, but he ignored him and kept going. His heart ached, his chest felt heavy, like someone sat on him. He never felt such pain in his life. He truthfully didn't know if he'd survive the anguish.

Coming soon on the trail of his torment was a sense of rage that almost made Doc drop to his knees. He'd known Rocky for years, and couldn't believe the man

would treat him so callously. Rocky's sense of honor was one of the things Doc loved about the man.

He could feel tears prickling his eyes even as his face burned with anger. His lips thinned. Although he'd come to Seelie Court to help protect Zack and Eljin, staying there now didn't seem like much of an option. He didn't think he could stand to be in the same room with the man, not now. He needed to leave and go back to the human world.

Doc walked down the long hallway, not sure where he headed until he spotted Zack and Eljin walking inside from what looked to be a balcony. Another man, one he didn't recognize but knew was somehow related to Eljin, walked beside them. The pointed ears and blond hair were a dead giveaway.

"Doc, this is my oldest brother, Conall," Eljin said as he gestured to the tall elf standing next to him.

"Hey, dude, nice to meet you," Doc said then turned his attention to his friend. "Zack, you're just the man I was looking for."

"Hey, Doc," Zack replied. "Is Rocky feeling better?"

Doc glanced away for a moment. He didn't know how to answer that. He imagined Rocky was feeling quite pleased with himself right now. He'd gotten exactly what he wanted out of Doc . . . a good fuck.

"Yeah, I'm sure he is," he finally replied, looking back at Zack and Eljin. "So, dude, now that we've gotten Eljin home safely, it's time for me to do the same. I need to head back."

"You don't like it here?" Eljin asked, a small frown causing his lips to turn down.

"Oh no, that's not it at all. This place is great and I'd love to come back and visit sometime. I just—" Doc gulped audibly. He couldn't meet Zack or Eljin's eyes. "I just need to get back."

"Okay," Zack said, "maybe that's not such a bad idea. We planned to talk to you and Rocky anyway. I'm sure you understand that I need to stay here with Eljin, but we need someone with our history to go back to the human world and search for Monte."

"Monte?"

"Gunny's son."

"Gunny has a son?" Doc was shocked.

"He didn't know about him. Roland gave birth to him after the Unseelie Court captured him," Eljin said defensively. "He never had the chance to tell Gunny."

Doc held up his hands. "Dude, I was just asking." He chuckled to lighten the mood. "I get it, Eljin. Roland would never have hidden Monte from Gunny."

Eljin nodded, looking relieved.

"So, where is this dude?"

"We're not sure," Zack said, looking grim, "but we believe the same people who took Eljin took Monte."

"Fuck!" Doc swore as he pushed his hand through his hair. "That's not good, guys."

"Doc, you need to understand, the only reason they took me was to force me to breed. They want a child that is half Aes Sídhe and half human, a super soldier. They don't much care how they get it."

Doc rubbed his chin as a plan started to form in his head. A mission to find Monte would give him a good excuse to leave Seelie Court. He could also concentrate on the rescue, rather than on thoughts of Rocky.

"I think sending Rocky and I back to the human world is a good idea. With our experience and our contacts, we should be able to locate Monte fairly quickly. There can't be that many secret government labs out there."

"What about Rocky's leg?" Zack asked. "How soon can he travel?"

*Bingo!* Doc's reason for agreeing to the mission. "Well, he shouldn't put too much weight on his leg for the next week. I'd prefer two weeks, but we both know Rocky. After that, as long as he doesn't do anything too strenuous, he should be good to go in a couple of weeks."

Doc tried to look thoughtful, concerned. He actually wanted to shout out his triumph. He had the perfect excuse to leave Rocky – and his heartache – behind. He couldn't get away fast enough.

"Tell you what, I'll go on ahead and do some scouting around, make some contacts. I'll leave word at the bar we hang out in for Rocky. He can join me as soon as he's on his feet. Maybe by then I'll have some leads."

"Are you sure, Doc?" Zack asked. "This is a pretty dangerous situation. These are the same people who tried to kill us on that mountainside. It's a pretty good bet they will figure out you're involved in some way once you start asking questions."

Doc smirked. "Who says I'm going to ask?"

Zack looked hesitant. Doc couldn't have that. He needed to leave. "Look, Zack, you can't go back; Gunny can't go back. They're looking for both of you. It's unlikely that they know about me yet. That should give me some time to do some investigating but I need to get to it before they figure things out. Once they do, they might move Monte and then we'll never find him. That's assuming they haven't already."

Doc knew the moment Zack gave in. His eyes closed briefly. When he opened them again, they were filled with concern.

"Zack, I'll be fine," Doc said quickly. "You know I've done this sort of thing before. Besides, as soon as Rocky is better he can join me."

"Okay." Zack turned to Conall. "Can you make arrangements to get Doc back to the human world?"

"Getting you back through the veil shouldn't be too hard," Conall replied. "I can have an escort ready for you by morning. I'd suggest landing in a different place than the one you arrived from, though. The men who were after you could be waiting."

"Sounds good but I'll need Eljin to tell me everything he knows about the facility and who held him," Doc said, falling into mission mode. "The more I know, the better prepared I'll be. Plus, it would help to have a place to start looking."

"I know I was taken from this side of the veil to the other by humans, not Aes Sídhhe."

"That in itself concerns us, Doc," Conall said. "Only those of the Aes Sídhe can pass freely through the veil."

"Do you think one of the Aes Sídhe could be assisting these people?" Doc asked.

"We've thought of that. No one from the Seelie Court would help but someone from the Unseelie Court might." Conall shrugged. "We just can't know for sure and we can't go pointing fingers until we have evidence."

"Is there some sort of device that could activate the veil between our worlds?" Doc asked. "Something that would make it possible for a human to pass through without the Aes Sídhe?"

Conall's eyebrows drew down. "I don't know. There might be something in our ancient records but — "

"That might be something to look into, Conall," Zack suggested. "We need to know how those humans got to your side of the veil."

"I'll go get our librarian on it right away." Conall grinned. "If anyone can find it, Dorthal can."

"Dorthal?" Doc asked.

"Dorthal has been around since long before even I was born." Eljin laughed. "I'm pretty sure he was here at the beginning of time and they just built the library around him. But Conall is right, if there's something in our ancient records, Dorthal can find it."

Doc started walking down the hallway with Eljin and Zack. He didn't much care where they were headed. His mind was centered on the mission to come. But his heart pounded when they stopped outside the room he shared with Rocky.

"Rocky was resting when I left," Doc said quickly. He hated to lie to his friends but he couldn't face seeing Rocky right now. Not yet. "I think it's best if we just let him sleep. I need him fully healed before he joins me. Is there somewhere else we can go to talk?"

"Well, there is a small sitting room around the corner," Eljin said as he pointed down the hallway. "I suppose we could go talk there."

Doc nodded and started in that direction. He didn't want to give Zack or Eljin the chance to challenge his words. He really had no idea if Rocky was asleep or not. He really didn't care. He had no plans to see the man.

"This is it," Eljin said as he gestured to the tall, wooden double doors with the rounded top. Doc pushed the doors open, surprised at how bright the room looked. The floor-to-ceiling doors on the far wall explained the light.

Two couches sat in the middle of the room, surrounding a small round table. Mounds of colorful pillows littered the couches. Doc walked over and sat down, grunting at the distance he dropped when he did so. The couches were so low he might as well have been sitting on the floor.

Still, Doc found that if he piled a bunch of pillows behind his back, he was actually quite comfortable. He leaned back, stretching out a little, then glanced across to the other couch where Zack was busy getting Eljin comfortable.

Doc still couldn't believe it. Eljin was pregnant with Zack's child, only a couple of months from giving birth. As a medic, Doc knew it should have been impossible. As someone who had seen the truth with his own eyes, he was still stunned by it.

Apparently, as Eljin was of royal blood, he could give birth, something only possible for the royal family of the Aes Sídhé. Eljin was the fifth son of the king, all given birth to by said king.

"How are you feeling, Eljin?" he asked. "Is everything going okay with the baby?"

Eljin looked up and grinned, his hand running down his chest to caress the small mound under his tunic. "Oh yes, the morning sickness is almost gone. From here on out I should just get bigger until the baby is born in another eight weeks."

"Eight weeks? You hardly look big enough to be more than a few months."

"Our gestational period is only five months, each trimester seven weeks long. I'm at the end of my second trimester."

"And you're sure everything is going okay?"

"He's a strong one."

"Oh, that's right, you only give birth to male children," Doc said, remembering what Eljin told him back at Gunny's house.

"We are a male-ruled society." Eljin chuckled as he settled against Zack's broad chest. "I suppose males who give birth only to males makes some sort of sense."

"Has there ever been a girl child born to the royal family?" Doc asked curiously. He was fascinated by the idea of males giving birth.

"Not that I can remember and I'd think I'd know about it."

"Would one be welcomed?"

"Of course," Eljin snapped. He sounded offended. "We cherish our children. We would not discard one because of its gender."

Doc quickly held up his hands in surrender. "Dude, just asking."

Eljin's face flushed. He buried it against Zack's arm. "Sorry," he whispered.

"No, it's okay. I was just curious. I've never heard about a society that only gives birth to males, let alone one where the males are the ones giving birth. There's a lot I don't know, which is why I asked, that's all." Doc reached across the table and patted Eljin's hand. "Now, tell me about this facility and the people who took you."

Eljin seemed to take a minute to gather his thoughts then glanced over at Doc. "Some of it is kind of hazy because they kept giving me drugs to make me compliant. I do remember there were a lot of trees outside the bars on my window, the same kind that grew around Gunny's house."

"Pine, Douglas fir, Spruce, those are the kind of trees in the area surrounding Gunny's house," Zack said. "My apartment and the bar I found Eljin at are a couple of hundred miles south of Gunny's."

"So, the western United States then," Doc mused. "That might give me a starting point."

"I remember everyone except the doctors wore black. I always thought that was kind of strange."

"How long were you there before they brought Zack in?"



"A couple of months, I think. At first they just ran a lot of tests, took blood, stuff like that. But then they started bringing men in. They wanted me to have sex with them so I would get pregnant. I refused."

Doc knew the subject was a touchy one but he needed to know. "Why did that change with Zack?"

Tears fell down Eljin's cheeks. "They said they would kill Zack if I didn't. They had no need of him if I couldn't — " Eljin shrugged, his face flaming. "They gave Zack some sort of shot and said if he didn't ejaculate he would die. I just couldn't let that happen, not because of me."

"A shot? Like liquid Viagra or something?"

"I don't know," Eljin said. "They tossed me into his room. He was tied down to a bed, naked. He was already hard by the time I got there but he seemed to get harder with each passing moment. It looked — it looked painful."

Eljin looked up at Zack. "I'm sorry."

"You have nothing to be sorry for, hummingbird," Zack said, hugging Eljin. "You did what you needed to do to save both of us. Besides, except for your blue eyes, I don't remember any of it."

That seemed to make Eljin feel better, although Doc couldn't figure out why. He'd think Eljin would want Zack to remember their first time together. Eljin seemed to be happier that Zack didn't remember anything. Doc wondered how bad things could have been.

"What happened then, Eljin?" Doc asked. "What happened after you were with Zack?"

"They waited a few days to insure I was pregnant then released him. I made them promise they would. After that, things were pretty easy. I was treated better than okay, I guess, given plenty of food, exercise, sunlight."

"Sunlight?" Doc asked, narrowing in on that word. "They let you outside?"

Eljin nodded. "I was allowed into a fenced-in area for an hour every day so I could get fresh air. I would have escaped then but they always had a couple of guards with me."

"What could you see from there? Cars? Buildings? Anything written anywhere?"

Eljin's eyebrows drew together. "Everything seemed really nondescript, if you know what I mean? The buildings were grey and unpainted. I think my room was underground because we always rode in an elevator when I went outside."

"So, some sort of facility that has underground levels." Doc smiled. "That actually helps a lot, Eljin."

"Really?" Eljin sounded surprised.

Doc nodded. "There are quite a few top-secret facilities out there but the number with underground levels narrows our search down to just a few, especially in an area with trees."

"There were a lot of trees," Eljin said. "Hundreds, I'd guess. Just trees and a dirt road leading away from the facility. It looked like we were in the middle of nowhere."

"Are you sure it was a dirt road?" Doc asked.

"Oh yeah, I saw a truck driving down it one day, and a ton of dust billowing behind it."

Doc sat up and scooted forward on the low couch. "What kind of truck?"

"I don't know. Just a truck. It had four wheels, a cab, a truck bed." Eljin looked confused. "What other kind is there?"

Doc chuckled. "Okay, what color was it?"

"Black, but all of the vehicles were black."

"Eljin, you don't know how much these little things help. Knowing that all the vehicles were black could mean that you weren't at a military facility. It could be a private research facility."

"Can you remember anything about the people who had you, hummingbird?" Zack asked.

"Well, I never really saw a lot of people other than the guards and the doctors. Occasionally, they brought in a couple of men in suits but that was it. They never talked to me, other than to give me orders."

"Tell me about the doctors," Doc said.

"They were doctors. They took blood, ran tests, made sure I ate a balanced diet." Eljin shrugged. "They were doctors."

"Did you ever hear their names?" Zack asked.

"Dr. Carson!" Eljin exclaimed. "He seemed to be the head doctor. He was always giving the others orders and asking me questions. He's the one who ordered Zack's death."

"That's good, Eljin," Doc said. "A name can help a lot. Now, are you sure this Dr. Carson ordered Zack's death?"

"Oh yeah, I'd never forget that. They thought I was asleep because they gave me something. They wanted to examine the baby and I wouldn't let them. Dr. Carson started talking about how Zack needed to be eliminated before he remembered anything, that he would grow a resistance to the drugs they gave him."

"That's how you knew about the pills the doctor gave me," Zack said.

Eljin nodded.

"Okay, Eljin, last thing," Doc said. "How did you escape?"

"That was actually pretty easy." Eljin snorted. "They became lax after I got pregnant. I guess they thought once I was carrying I wouldn't try to get away. I just waited until they gave me another shot to put me to sleep then snuck out through the air vent in my room after they were done examining me."

"But I thought the drugs they gave you made you sleep."

"It did. I took a nap in the air vent then made my escape after I woke up. By then, the guards were running around in a panic. They had search lights and dogs in the woods but I was still at the facility. I just hid away until things grew quiet and I could escape then I ran as fast as I could."

Doc reached over and patted Eljin's delicately boned hand again. "You did very well, Eljin. I know this was hard for you but it is important that I know everything I can if I'm going to find Monte."

Eljin nodded. "It's okay," he said softly.

But Doc knew it wasn't. He could see the chaotic swirl of emotions in the man's azure blue eyes, in his pale face. Doc knew Eljin needed some space.

"I'm going to go find Conall and see how soon we can leave, okay? You make sure you get your big galoot to take care of you, Eljin, you hear me?" Doc got to his feet and started toward the door. "I'll see you both soon, hopefully with Monte in tow."

Doc quietly closed the door behind him, knowing Eljin and Zack needed a few minutes alone together. No one would be able to comfort the little elf like Zack. They truly had developed a special bond with each other.

Doc just wished he could find someone with whom he could develop the same kind of bond. For a long time, he'd hoped Rocky would be that someone but he now knew that was impossible. He might always love Rocky but he could never be Rocky's little boy toy.

He needed a real relationship, someone who cared for him, wanted his happiness. He didn't need someone who just wanted to use him to get their rocks off. Rocky didn't seem to want anything else which meant Rocky was out of the running. Doc would have to find someone else to hold his heart.

### **Chapter Three**

Doc pulled on the straps holding his wrists down. They wouldn't budge no matter how hard he yanked. Neither would the ones holding his legs down to the bed on which he lay. He dropped his head back against the mattress and groaned.

He had been so incredibly stupid. If Gunny, Zack, or Rocky were there they would smack him upside the head. He had been so confident in his abilities that he ignored the obvious signs of a trap and walked right into it.

Doc had no idea how the people holding him even knew him, but they did. They addressed him by name when they captured him. They were waiting for him. The only thing Doc could figure was that they had a traitor somewhere who knew everything that was going on.

As much as Doc bemoaned his situation, he was grateful he came on the mission alone. Rocky, Zack, and Gunner and the rest of his new friends should still be back at Seelie Court, where they would be safe . . . a good thing, because *he* was in deep shit.

Doc tensed as he heard the door to his cell open. He couldn't see the door from his position. Footsteps sounded across the floor then a clean-shaven, pasty face came into view. Doc's first thought was the man looked like every coldhearted military doctor he'd ever met. He was surprised the man didn't have a stethoscope growing out of his ears.

"Ah, Lieutenant Lewis, I see you're awake." The man's smile was thin and false. "And how are you feeling? Any issues left over from your little tangle with the guards?"

Doc grunted and glared at the man. His little tangle with the guards? Is that what they were going to call it? He'd fought with everything in him, using every defensive move he knew. He still got taken down but he knew he took some of them with him.

"Not talking today, Lieutenant Lewis?" the man asked. "Or should I call you Doc? Isn't that what all your friends call you? Doc?"

Now Doc *knew* someone betrayed them. Only the men in his unit and those at Seelie Court called him Doc. Not even his own mother referred to him as anything other than Pete. Well, she called him Petey but it was the same thing.

"Well, no mind. Today, you're to have a visitor, a very special visitor." The doctor placed a stethoscope in his ears then listened to Doc's heart. After he was done, he pulled the ends out of his ears and patted Doc's leg. "I do hope you'll treat your guest kindly. He's such a special young man."

Doc's eyes widened as the doctor pulled a syringe out of his pocket and pulled off the cap. He squirted a bit out of the top then looked down at Doc.

"I do apologize for this but it can't be helped. We've been unable to convince our special young man to cooperate with our research." The doctor shook his head. "It's just not going well. You're our last hope."

Doc started to struggle when the doctor gripped his naked ball sac.

"Now, Doc, if you can't be still I will have to call the guards inside and you don't want that. They can be very barbaric when provoked and they are still upset with you for what you did to their friends. I do not believe they will treat you as nicely as I will."

Doc stiffened, crying out as the doctor stuck the needle of the syringe into his balls. Burning pain shot through him, like he'd been injected with acid. His entire body shuddered and he pulled on the straps holding him down until his wrists and ankles bled.

The doctor patted his leg again after pulling out the needle. "There now, it shouldn't be long before you start to feel the effects. But not to worry, I created this serum myself and know it is not permanent, just a little something to get you in the mood, so to speak."

"W-what did you give me?" Doc whispered.

"It's my own special serum, an aphrodisiac, of sorts. Right now your body should feel hot, kind of achy. In a few minutes, that heat will increase until you feel like your skin might boil off, but it won't. That effect will wear off in about ten minutes and then you'll only feel arousal. Complete, mind-numbing arousal." The doctor shook his finger at him. "But I warn you, your guest is delicate, easily bruised. You must go careful with him. He is the heart of our experiment, not you. *You* can be replaced."

"I'm not going to fuck anyone," Doc spit out through his gritted teeth. The doctor was right. His skin felt hot, crawly.

"You will. You won't be able to stop yourself." The doctor chuckled. "That is the magic of my serum. When it takes full effect on your body ejaculation will be your only

release from your arousal. You won't be able to do anything else. You won't be able to *think* of anything else."

The cold tone in the man's voice chilled Doc to his bones. "And don't think that you can masturbate to relieve your symptoms. That is what is so special about my serum. It is genetically matched to your guest. Only by having sexual intercourse with your guest can you achieve ejaculation. It helps to insure that all of your little swimmers are put to good use."

Doc renewed his struggles against the bonds, driven by anger and frustration. He wanted to get to the doctor and wrap his hands around the man's skinny little neck. He wanted to slowly squeeze the life out of the bastard.

"Uh uh, Doc, be nice now or I'll have to keep you tied down. If you're a good boy, I'll have your restraints removed once I leave the room. If not, you will remain locked to this table. Your choice."

Doc settled down and stopped struggling. He hated being restrained. He had a better chance of escape and fighting if he was free. Still, he had to force himself not to react when the doctor patted his leg again. He felt incredibly vulnerable lying strapped to the bed naked while a madman with a needle talked to him.

"Good boy," the doctor said as he walked toward the door. "Now, behave yourself and we might let you keep your little guest around for awhile. You don't want to find out what happens if you don't."

Doc heard the cell door open and close but he was too overcome by the heat rolling through his body to care at the moment. Lava had replaced the blood in his veins. He felt it start at the tip of his toes and the top of his head, moving until it came together in one huge explosion of fervor in his groin.

Doc thrust his hips into the air, seeking some unseen solace to the arousal building in his system, making his cock harder than marble. He throbbed, ached, his dick pulsing with every rapid breath he took.



Every nerve in his body felt like it was on fire. He could feel the cool air from the vent on the wall brushing across his skin, each systematic, mechanical motion like a tongue licking at his naked skin.

Suddenly, the straps holding him down clicked and fell away. Doc immediately reached down and grabbed his aching cock. He pumped it several times, but the action only made him crave more.

When the door to his cell opened again, Doc quickly rolled over and off the edge and crouched behind the bed. He saw a small figure being pushed into the room and heard the low chuckle from a guard.

"This is your last chance, elf boy," the guard said. "Better get it done this time or the doctor is going to be very upset with you. He might even let me have a shot at your ass." Another evil laugh and the door slammed shut.

Doc watched the small figure shudder and move quickly into the corner, his gaze darting wildly around the room. Realizing the man was probably looking for him, Doc slowly got to his feet so the man could see him then backed away to squat in the corner farthest from him.

"I don't want to hurt you," he said quietly.

The man looked up to the camera situated in the corner of the room then back down to the floor. "You won't be able to stop yourself once the serum takes effect." The words were soft, sad, resigned.

"I'm a lot stronger than I look."

"No one is that strong," the man insisted.

Doc lifted his head and peered closely at his new cellmate. He knew from the slightly pointed ears and long, blond hair the man belonged to the Aes Sídhe. He suspected this was Monte and he needed a way to reach him, to make Monte understand he knew what was going on here, without letting their captors know.

"I think you're wrong," Doc began, watching the man's reactions. He had to choose his words carefully. They were being monitored. "I have this friend. He was my commander in the service. He's the strongest man I know."

"So? If he's so strong, why don't they have him in here? They're looking for a super soldier."

"Because he was too damn smart to get caught." Doc snickered. "No, my friend would never have fallen for the trap I fell into. I'm just a dumb fuck who was too stupid to see the signs in front of my face. I walked right into the trap they set for me."

Doc could swear he heard a small laugh but it was hard to hear much when a sudden rush of heat flushed through his body. He clenched his fists then dug his fingers into his thighs as he pressed his head back against the cool cement behind him. The urges running through his body were getting harder to control.

"The serum is starting to affect you," the man whispered.

"I know," Doc grunted. "I can feel it."

"You could die if you don't—"

Doc shook his head vehemently. "I will not force you to have sex with me because of some doctor's whipped up super Viagra."

The man snorted. "You'd be the first."

Doc didn't know why but that statement made his heart ache. "Have there been many?"

"A few," the man said then ducked his head down to his chest. "Do you find me that unattractive?"

Out of all the things the man could have said, that surprised Doc the most. "No, I think you're very attractive, beautiful even. I just—there's someone that I—"

"You're in love with someone?" the man asked as he looked up and began to slowly creep across the floor toward Doc. "What's that like? I've never been in love before. My father is in love with someone he hasn't seen in twenty years, since before I was born. He's miserable."

"Not anymore." Doc chuckled. He now knew that the man before him was Monte. He just wasn't sure how much he could give away without their observers figuring things out. Doc would prefer to give as little information as possible.

"What do you mean? Do you know my father?"

"I know your fayer. He's the man I told you about."

Monte suddenly scuttled across the floor to kneel next to Doc. "You know my fayer? Truly?"

"I do." Doc looked directly into Monte's eyes. "And he's exactly where he's supposed to be, where he should have been a long time ago."

Monte's brilliant blue eyes widened, his mouth opened just a bit, a quick breath hissing out between his plush lips. "Is he — ?"

Doc nodded.

"And my mayer?"

"Smiling."

Monte's eyes closed. When he opened them again, they swam with tears. "Thank you for telling me . . . er . . . what do I call you?"

"My name is Peter Lewis but my friends call me Doc."

"I'm Monte."

Doc smiled. "I know. I was sent here to rescue you, but" — Doc waved his hand around the cold grey cell they were in — "as you can see, that didn't work out so well."

"But I thought . . ." Monte's forehead wrinkled as he frowned. "If you were sent here to rescue me then why do they want us have sex?"

"I'm not real sure," Doc said, even though he had a pretty good idea. He just didn't want the doctor to know he did. "They ran a bunch of tests on me so maybe that's it. It's not like I'm unfit or anything."

Monte laughed . . . the first one since they met. Doc liked the feeling of warmth it gave him but suddenly the warmth turned warmer then it began to burn. Doc groaned, his body going stiff as he was reminded of the serum working its way through his body.

"Doc?"

Through a haze of chemically induced lust, Doc saw Monte start to reach toward him and knew if the man touched him he might not be able to stop himself from attacking him. He held his hands up to ward him off. "No, Monte!"

"What?"

"You can't touch me," Doc panted. "I won't be able to control myself if you do. I already feel like I'm going to explode."

"It's just going to get worse, trust me," Monte said. "You have to —"

"No, Monte!"

"Is it — is it because you're in love with someone?"

"No, it's not — Look, I care about someone, that's true, but he doesn't care about me. It's kind of one-sided." Doc leaned his head back against the wall and closed his eyes, taking a deep breath. "I can't treat you like a fuck toy, no matter what they've shot me up with. I won't do it."

"You really mean that." Monte sounded so amazed that Doc couldn't help but chuckle.

"Yeah, I do."

Doc's eyes flipped open in shock as he felt Monte's tongue lick across his wrist where the straps had held him down and caused him to bleed when he struggled. He opened his mouth to tell Monte to knock it off when the man suddenly sat up and leaned in for a kiss.

A sweet, masculine flavor floated across his tongue, followed quickly by the faint taste of copper. Doc groaned, unable to keep from pressing his aching body against Monte's. The blood surging through him burned every nerve ending.

Doc wanted to feel Monte pressed against him. He wanted to feel Monte's lips, his hands. He wanted to be buried so deep inside Monte that the man would feel him for the rest of his days.

"Then do it."

Doc reared back, his mouth dropping open as he realized Monte read his thoughts.

"Take me, Doc," Monte whispered, his eyes boring into Doc's. "You have to."

Doc shook his head. "No, no, I don't. I can't."

"If you don't, they are going to turn me over to the guard."

"But — "

"I'd rather have you. Please?"

"Monte," Doc whispered a little louder. He could see the misery in Monte's eyes, the fear and anxiety. Strangely enough, he could feel it too. Monte's emotions seemed to be the only thing that overrode the uncontrollable lust spiraling through him.

"Please?"

Doc stared at Monte for several moments. Could he do this? *Should* he do this? His body screamed yes, take him, fuck him, give us some relief. His heart screamed no, he couldn't do that to Monte. He deserved better. His mind couldn't decide what to do.

Monte took the decision out of his hands by reaching down between Doc's legs and grabbing his aching hard cock. Doc growled. It was the only warning he gave Monte before he attacked.

He rolled Monte's slimmer form beneath his and captured the plush lips that teased him from the moment he saw them. He kissed Monte, running his tongue across those lips before moving inside to explore the warm recesses of the man's decadent mouth.

His hands roamed over Monte's body, stopping to caress a soft valley here, a hard curve there, every bit of naked flesh he could reach. When his hands weren't enough, Doc used his lips. If he was going to take Monte, he was going to make sure Monte enjoyed it.

"Oh god, please more," Monte's voice filtered through the red haze surrounding Doc.

Doc knew they were being monitored. He knew strangers watched their every move. He suddenly felt the strong need to cover Monte with something, to hide him from every eye except his own.

Doc lifted his head and searched the room, his gaze settling on the sheet on the bed. He reached over and grabbed it, pulling it down to cover them from waist to toes. No one needed to see what they were doing, even if they knew.

"Please remove the sheet, Lieutenant Lewis," said a cold voice over the loudspeaker.

Doc looked over his shoulder and glared at the camera hanging from the ceiling in the corner. "No, if you want us to do this then you will allow us some privacy."

"Lieutenant Lewis — "

"No!" Doc shouted.

"Doc, please," Monte whispered. Doc felt the man's hands grip his shoulders. "If we don't do what they say they will just come in here and force us. It doesn't matter."

"Monte."

"Please, you have to believe me. I know what they are capable of."

Doc dropped his head forward onto Monte's chest. "Okay, but you need to promise me you'll stay beneath me. I don't think I can handle them looking at you."

"I promise."

Reluctantly, Doc removed the sheet but he made sure his body covered Monte nearly from head to toe. The possessive, protective feelings he had for Monte confused Doc. He barely knew the man. But that didn't mean he would let Monte parade around naked if he could stop it.

"Spread your legs; I need to prepare you." Doc wrinkled his brow when Monte's face flamed and he turned to look away. "Monte? Pretty baby, you know I have to prepare you. I don't want to hurt you."

"They — they prepared me before I was brought in," Monte whispered, the shame and embarrassment clear in his sullen voice. "They don't want me injured so they always make sure I'm ready."

Doc cupped Monte's face and turned it back to his. "Shh, pretty baby, it's okay." Doc leaned down and gently kissed Monte, his heart breaking for what the man had gone through at the hands of these madmen.

Doc put those thoughts temporarily out of his mind and concentrated on giving Monte as much pleasure as he could. He reached down between Monte's legs and brushed his hand along the crease of the man's ass.

When he received no resistance, Doc pressed in farther, running his finger over the small, puckered entrance he planned to be inside of soon. Shock made him hiss when his finger slipped easily inside. Monte was *definitely* prepared.

Part of Doc wanted to ask him who had done it because they were dead. They just didn't know it yet. Doc would kill them all, starting with the guard. Monte cried out beneath him, drawing Doc's attention from his vengeful plans.

He glanced down to find Monte's head arched back, his lower lip caught between his teeth. "Monte?"

"More, please, more," Monte whimpered.

Doc watched Monte's face as he added another finger. His breath caught at the beauty he saw in the man's expression. Monte's mouth fell open. He looked up, dazed. Then suddenly his body began to undulate as he tried to impale himself on Doc's fingers.

"Fuck!" Doc swore softly. He quickly pulled his fingers free and replaced them with his cock. One swift lunge had him buried ball's deep in Monte's ass. Monte cried out, pulling his knees up to his chest, opening himself more for Doc.

After that, Doc forgot they were being watched. He forgot they were having sex to try and create a super soldier. All he could think about was the sweet feel of Monte's ass wrapped around his throbbing cock.

His whole being flooded with desire. Involuntary tremors began to shake his body. Losing control, he pounded into Monte over and over again. He lost sight of where he ended and Monte began.

"Fuck, Monte, I'm there," he growled as he buried his face in Monte's neck. He never felt so connected to someone in his life. And not only by the flesh. He could hear Monte's heartbeat as if it were his own. He could feel Monte's emotions, the lust and desire, the need that wasn't just sexual.

Monte craved someone to care for him as his father cared for Gunny. He wanted to be the most important thing in the world to someone. He wanted to belong. The need was so acute, so deep, Doc couldn't help but answer it.



"Monte, bond with me, let me be the one," Doc whispered. He felt Monte's body jerk at his words, a sudden stillness filling the man. Doc held his breath as he waited for Monte to decide. Once the bond was formed it could never be undone. It was forever.

Doc realized he'd be giving up every chance he had to be with Rocky, but wasn't that what he did when he left Rocky back at the Seelie Court? Monte needed him, wanted him. Monte didn't want to play games with him. His gentleness shined through from his soul and that's what Doc needed. He and Monte had the same basic desires.

Maybe they could find what they wanted in each other. "Please, Monte."

Monte swallowed. His azure-blue eyes shined brighter than before. "Give me your life, your love, your forever, as I give you mine," Monte whispered.

"Give me your life, your love, your forever, as I give you mine," Doc whispered back. The moment the words were out of Doc's mouth an explosion of sensation gripped his body. He inhaled sharply, his eyes never leaving Monte's as he fell over the edge into bliss.

Monte's mouth opened but no sound came out. His eyes widened even as Doc felt wetness spread between them. Doc groaned, his hips jerked as he filled Monte with his seed. Even before Monte said anything he knew they had created a child in that moment.

"Doc—" Monte's eyes started to fill with tears.

"Shh," he whispered as he settled his body over Monte's. "I'm not saddened by it."

"But you know what will happen, what they will do," Monte insisted.

"We'll take each day as it comes until we can figure a way out of here," Doc said. He brushed a stray blond hair back from Monte's face. "You belong to me now and I will not leave you behind. I'll figure something out."

Doc heard the cell door open behind them and knew the guards had come for Monte. He hugged the man close to his chest for a moment then rolled off of him, feeling his cock slide free with a small plop.

"Go with them, Monte," Doc said. "Don't fight them. You have our child to care for now. You have to keep him safe."

Monte struggled to his feet, his movements slow and awkward, but he didn't fight the guards when they grabbed him and pulled him from the room. Doc's heart ached, crying out for Monte when the man glanced over his shoulder at him.

"Go, pretty baby," he whispered. "Everything will be okay. I promise."

Monte was barely gone from Doc's sight before the guards advanced on him. Doc knew it would be a couple of weeks before the doctor figured out Monte was pregnant. That gave him time.

Meanwhile, he had a few assholes to knock around. Doc jumped to his feet, his hands clenching as he looked at the guards. "Which one of you assholes wants to go first?"

## **Chapter Four**

"How are you feeling today, Monte?"

"Where's Doc?" Monte asked the moment he spotted Dr. Carson. "You said I could see him again if I let you exam me without a fight. That was two days ago. I want to see him."

Monte was greatly concerned. He and Doc had established that they could talk to each other in their minds even if Monte was on the ground level enjoying the sunshine. Unfortunately, he hadn't heard a peep out of Doc since yesterday. He'd done little but worry about the man for the last twenty-four hours.

"Very true," Dr. Carson said. "But I'm afraid Lieutenant Lewis had a small incident with one of the guards and had to be tranquilized for his own safety. I'm sure you understand."

"I want to see him." Fear for Doc caused him to shout. "Now!"

"Please, Monte, calm yourself," the doctor said. "You won't do you or your baby any good if you get upset."

Monte's trembling hand dropped to the barely visible bump at his abdomen, cradling it protectively. "You said if we cooperated you'd let us see each other. I want to see Doc right now."

"Monte, I have to tell you, I'm concerned about this attachment you've established with Lieutenant Lewis. I'm not sure it's healthy."

Monte's greatest nightmare came to life in Dr. Carson's words. He was terrified he would be permanently separated from Doc. They'd been working on an escape plan, but doing so was kind of hard when they were often only allowed minutes together, an hour if they were lucky, and always under guard. In the weeks since they met they were never alone together.

"I don't understand. I thought you wanted us to be close."

"Oh, I do," the doctor replied. "But I think maybe you've gotten *too* close. I wonder if some time apart might do you both some good."

Monte's heart pounded as he tried to think of some argument that might sway Dr. Carson to let him continue to see Doc. In his fear, he drew a complete blank. He began to tremble as panic set in. Doc was the only thing keeping him together. He'd lose it if they were separated from one another.

Wait, he thought. *Maybe that's it!* Monte let his fear and anxiety break through the tight control he held it under. His palms started to sweat. His heart beat rapidly, setting off alarms. He panted harshly as his eyes rolled back in his head, his body beginning to convulse.

"Monte!" Dr. Carson exclaimed as he raced to his side.

Monte heard other medical personnel rush into the room. The blaring alarms were deafening. He ignored the questions shouted at him, the hands that quickly took his vitals, and concentrated on his feelings for Doc, his feelings of loss at Doc's absence.

"Get that damn Marine in here, stat!" Dr. Carson shouted.

Monte floated in a haze of grief. His body shuddered every few minutes, shaking the exam table on which he lay. He knew the release of all his emotions wasn't

necessarily a good thing but he could think of no other way to convince them he had to see Doc.

"Should I prepare a sedative, Doctor?"

"No, we can't give him anything," Dr. Carson replied. "We don't know enough about his physiology when he's pregnant. It might harm him or the unborn child."

Monte would have grinned had his body not chosen that moment to go into another deep shudder. The response to the release of his emotions hurt, but he'd live. The Aes Sídhe used this process to release negative energy and bring on a sense of peace. Monte would feel better for it, but his captors didn't need to know that.

"Ah, Lieutenant Lewis, so glad you could join us." Monte could hear the distain in the doctor's voice and knew he lied through his teeth. Dr. Carson hated the Doc. "We are having an issue with Monte and I was hoping you could help. He seems to be distressed at your separation."

"Monte?" Doc's voice, even slurred as it was, felt like a balm to Monte's soul. "What the hell did you do to him?"

"I've done nothing," the doctor replied, sounding rather insulted. "I was just beginning to exam him when he went into convulsions."

"Hey, pretty baby, how are you feeling?"

Monte blinked, Doc's face slowly coming into focus. "Doc," he whispered. "Missed you."

"I missed you too." Doc frowned as his gaze roamed up and down Monte's body. "*You don't look any worse for wear. Want to tell me what's going on?*"

"*Dr. Carson promised I could see you if I behaved and then he wouldn't let me. He even said he thought we were becoming too close, that he was thinking of separating us. I showed him what would happen if he did.*"

"*Are you hurting?*"

"*Just a little . . . not too bad, and before you ask, the baby is fine. We just need to figure out a way to convince Dr. Carson to let us stay together.*"

"*Okay, give me a moment to think.*" Doc glanced over at Dr. Carson. "Why is his heart rate so elevated?"

"I've been unable to discover the reason, as of yet."

"*Okay, pretty baby, when I grab your hand, slowly regulate your heart rate.*"

Monte bit his lip to stifle a grin. "*Excellent plan.*" He waited until Doc took his hand then slowly lowered his heart rate. His breathing became more even.

"There, now, he's fine," Dr. Carson said. "You may return to your quarters, Lieutenant Lewis."

The guards stepped forward and grabbed Doc's arms. Monte whimpered when Doc was pulled from his grasp.

Doc's deep voice filled his head. "*Now, pretty baby!*"

Monte knew what he wanted. Once again, he let his fear and anguish loose.

His body began to convulse; his heart rate skyrocketed. Alarms sounded. Monte heard yelling but he narrowed in on one voice, the voice of the man whose hand suddenly gripped his. Slowly, he let his body return to normal.

"Christ, what's happening to him?" Dr. Carson shouted. "I've never seen anything like this. None of the other test subjects had this problem."

"You're dealing with a fucking elf, you moron, and a pregnant one, at that," Doc shouted back. "Do you know anything about taking care of him?"

"Guards, get this man out of here," Dr. Carson yelled. "Return him to his cell."

"Dr. Carson," a voice said over the loudspeaker. "Allow him to stay. He obviously has a calming effect on the subject."

"*Who in the hell was that?*" Doc asked, squeezing Monte's hand.

"*One of the suits in the observation room behind you,*" Monte replied, not daring to look in that direction. Instead, he kept his eyes closed and concentrated on his breathing. "*Do you think they bought it?*"

"*Maybe, but I think Dr. Carson is suspicious. He doesn't like me much.*"

"*Please!*" Monte snorted. "*He doesn't like anyone much.*"

"*Just play it safe and get your vitals back to normal, pretty baby.*"

*"Did I ever tell you how much I like it when you call me 'pretty baby'?"*

Doc brushed the hair back from Monte's face. Monte let his eyelids flutter as if he were coming around. *"You are my pretty baby,"* Doc said. Turning to the doctor, he asked, "What's happening? Are his vitals returning to normal? Is he okay?"

"I don't know."

"Monte?" Doc called out. "Monte, can you hear me?"

"Doc?" Monte asked, making sure his voice sounded low and groggy.

"Hey, how are you feeling?"

"I'm okay. What happened? Is the baby okay?"

Doc smiled, rolling his eyes for only Monte to see. Monte could barely keep from laughing.

"The baby is fine. You just had some sort of episode. Your heart rate skyrocketed. You were having convulsions."

Monte wrinkled his forehead. "Convulsions?"

"Yes," Dr. Carlson said, stepping up beside the bed. "Is that normal?"

"I don't know. I've never been pregnant before."

"Surely you've been around others of your kind who have been pregnant."

"No, not really," Monte replied with a straight face. "Usually when someone is carrying they go into seclusion with the father for their own safety and the welfare of the unborn child."

*"Is this true, Monte?"* Doc asked silently.

*"No, of course not,"* Monte replied silently. *"I'm as healthy as a horse."*

"Seclusion? Why on earth would they go into seclusion?" the doctor asked.

Monte shrugged. "I never asked but I guess it's because pregnancy for us can be very precarious. We have a high rate of miscarriages, which I guess explains why there are so few of us."

"Dr. Carson, we'd like to speak with you," came the voice over the loudspeaker. "Please join us in the observation room as soon as you've seen to your patient."

Dr. Carson didn't look happy. He kept shooting glares at Monte and Doc, as if they were somehow to blame. Which, of course, they were, but Carson couldn't prove it. Still, he'd be looking for someone to blame for making him looking like an incompetent fool. Monte had a feeling he and Doc had just made a long-term enemy.

Monte lay there watching as his vitals were checked, the baby's vitals were checked, and the doctor examined him. He hoped they'd stop trying to separate him and Doc now, but only time would tell if Doc's plan had worked.

"Guard, return the patient to his room," Dr. Carson ordered, pulling the latex gloves off his hands with a loud snap. "Lieutenant Lewis may join him for the time being but I want security doubled at all times."

Monte took the hand Doc held out to him and rolled to the side of the bed. He let Doc lift him to the floor, and held tightly to Doc's hand as the guards led them back down the hallway toward Monte's room. He was afraid to let go.

*"Remember, they will be monitoring us, Monte," Doc said. "Keep your wits about you and under no circumstances let them know we can speak in this manner. I believe they would put us both through hell trying to experiment on us if they knew."*

Monte couldn't agree more. If Dr. Carson had an inkling that he and Doc could talk mentally, the testing would immediately begin and they'd find themselves in a whole new kind of hell. So, they'd have to talk normally while conversing secretly. Monte knew it would be hard when he preferred talking in this more intimate manner with Doc.

"Have you eaten, Monte?" Doc asked the minute they were escorted into Monte's small cell.

Monte shook his head as he watched Doc walk to the small fridge he'd been provided. He was allowed to eat whenever he was hungry but only food that was stocked in his fridge or brought to him by the people assigned to care for him.

"I'm rather tired. I usually am after an exam," Monte said. He rubbed his eyes with the heels of his hands. "Could we just lie down for awhile?"



"Yeah, sure." Doc frowned. He peered at him closely. *"Are you sure you're feeling okay?"*

*"I'm fine."* Monte tried to assure Doc. *"I just missed you. I haven't seen you in two days. I need to know that you're okay. I just need to feel your arms around me."* Monte said all of this while getting the bed ready, pulling the blankets down, fluffing the pillows.

*"My arms are waiting."* Doc laughed silently as he lay back on the bed and held his arms out wide.

Monte laughed and crawled onto the bed, moving quickly over to snuggle up against Doc. He lay with his back pressed to Doc's broad chest, his butt pressed to Doc's groin.

The warm blankets covered him and strong, warm arms wrapped around him, one under his head, the other cradling their child.

*"I miss our times like this,"* Monte whispered.

*"Me too, pretty baby."*

*"Do you think we'll ever get out of here?"*

*"Yes, I have no doubt that we will. I won't let our child be turned over to these madmen. He deserves a life of happiness and joy as much as we do."* Doc caressed Monte's stomach. *"Just how is our boy, anyway?"*

Monte hid his smile by turning his head into Doc's arm and kissing the warm skin there. *"He's fine, moving a lot nowadays. Can you feel him?"*

*"Every once in awhile I feel a little flutter against your stomach, kind of like butterfly wings. I figure that's either him or you have gas."*

*"Funny."* Monte pinched the soft skin under Doc's cheek, laughing silently when he jumped then leaned forward and growled into his ear. But Monte sobered as more pressing thoughts began to fill his mind. *"Doc, we are going to get out of here, aren't we? I'm just so worried that Dr. Carson will find a way to separate us or keep us here."*

*"Yes, pretty baby, I promise you, we will get out of here."*

*"Together?"*

*"Of course,"* Doc replied sternly. *"Didn't I tell you I wouldn't leave you behind?"*

"Yes, but – "

"No buts, Monte. We go together."

Monte turned until his chest pressed against Doc's. He buried his face in the crook of Doc's neck. *"Just don't do something stupid like sacrifice yourself to save me. I don't want to go anywhere without you. I love you, Doc."*

Monte could feel the sudden pounding of Doc's heart, heard his sharp exhale. Had he voiced his feelings too soon? He knew Doc still had feelings for his friend, Rocky.

Doc hadn't gone into details but he did say he cared for Rocky. He swore those feelings were in the past, but Monte wasn't so sure. Every once in awhile Doc would get quiet and stare off into space. Monte had a gut feeling he thought of Rocky during those times.

*"I love you, too, pretty baby,"* Doc finally answered. His arms tightened around Monte. *"I won't leave you, not for any reason. I promise."*

Monte turned his head to glance back at Doc. *"Then make love to me?"*

Doc smiled. *"Always,"* he whispered as he leaned in for a kiss.

Monte moved into the kiss, his heart fluttering in his chest at the gentleness Doc showed him. Sometimes he wished Doc would just *take* him, forget he carried a child and was smaller in stature. He wanted to make Doc lose control.

*"Doc,"* he whispered silently when they stopped kissing. They were still so close that Monte could feel Doc's breath on his face. *"I want you. I want to feel your hands on me."*

Doc smiled down at him. *"Turn around, pretty baby, and face the other way."*

Monte turned so he was once again facing away from Doc. Strong hands pushed his drawstring pants down and lifted his shirt. Monte groaned and shuddered when he finally felt Doc's hands on his body.

They roamed over his chest, caressing his skin, tugging at his nipples. His pregnancy-driven, overactive hormones had increased his sensitivity, making Doc's every touch feel so much more intense.

Doc's caresses drove him wild; Monte panted and moved against him. He could feel Doc's hard cock pressing against his ass. That's what he wanted, that long hard shaft, and he wanted it *now*.

Monte grabbed his leg and pulled it up to his chest, opened himself up to Doc. He reached down with his other hand and pressed the head of Doc's cock against his puckered hole, pumping his hips back and forth to create friction.

"Whoa, whoa, pretty baby, I need to get you ready first," Doc said as he moved his hand down to Monte's ass. Doc took over, leaving Monte to just hold his leg to his chest. "Do you have anything?"

"There's some stuff in the nightstand from before when — " Monte swallowed hard. "For when they wanted me to be ready." Monte could feel some of his arousal wane at the memory of having to prepare himself for men other than Doc. It made him feel dirty and ashamed.

"Shh, pretty baby, none of that," Doc whispered. "You had no control over anything they did to you. Just remember that you have me now and I won't let them ever force you to do anything you don't want again. I don't want you to do anything but think of how good it feels when we're together."

Monte nodded and tried to concentrate on the feelings Doc's touch provoked in him. He heard a soft snap then slicked up fingers moved over him. He groaned, trying not to thrust back as Doc stroked his fingers over Monte's entrance.

Even now, they were monitored. As much as he needed to cry out and let Doc know how much pleasure he created in him, Monte also didn't want the people watching to know. This was private between them.

Instead, Monte turned his head and lightly bit into Doc's arm when he felt a finger breach his ass, just enough to let the man know how good his touch felt. "*More, Doc,*" he whispered silently. "*Please, more. I need to feel you. It's been days.*"

"*Soon, pretty baby,*" Doc replied. "*I just need to get you ready for me.*"

"*I'm ready,*" Monte said as two fingers sank into his ass. "*I swear.*"

Doc chuckled behind him. Monte arched his head back, pressing it against Doc's shoulder. He felt little kisses and nips along his throat. "*Doc!*" he pleaded desperately as the heat building in his body started to flame.

"*Okay, pretty baby,*" Doc said.

Monte felt Doc's steel-hard cock replace his fingers. Monte had fibbed a little—he *wasn't* totally stretched—and as Doc entered him he felt a slight burn, but not enough for him to tell Doc to stop. The pleasure Doc brought him far outweighed the pain.

Monte's breath hitched in his throat when Doc sank all the way in. It seemed like forever since he had felt Doc inside of him, not just a couple of days. Monte clutched his leg tighter to his chest and started moving his hips. "*Oh, god. So good.*"

"*Easy, pretty baby, I have you,*" Doc whispered as he rolled partially over to cover Monte's body. Doc gripped him, one hand on his thigh, the other on his shoulder, and Monte whimpered.

The pleasurable tension grew, and Doc increased the pace, slamming into him with a ferocious abandon, out of control. Incredible. Just the way Monte'd dreamed. He reached back and wrapped his arm around Doc's neck, pulling the man's head into the soft curve of his neck.

Monte felt Doc's lips press softly against his nape, but it wasn't enough. He needed more, a stronger bonding. Monte turned and slanted his mouth over Doc's. He nipped at the man's lips until a coppery taste flooded his mouth.

Doc groaned. His thrusts increased in pace and force until he pounded into Monte's ass. Monte held on for the ride. The pressure in his balls built to the exploding point. He cried out against Doc's mouth as his release overcame him and he spilled onto the sheets.

Floating in an orgasmic euphoria, Monte distantly heard a loud roar in his mind. He felt Doc clutch at him and thrust forcefully into him one last time before filling him with hot seed.

Monte broke the kiss and buried his face in Doc's neck. He panted heavily; his body felt languid, melty . . . wonderful.

"*Love you, Doc,*" Monte whispered. Just before he faded off to sleep he heard Doc whisper back in his mind.

"*Love you too, pretty baby.*"

\* \* \* \* \*

Doc held Monte as he slept. *Love you, Doc.* The declaration still sent his pulse racing. He never thought he'd hear those words come from anyone's mouth, let alone from Monte.

He knew he'd never hear them from Rocky. Even with Monte in his life, wonderful, giving, beautiful Monte, Doc still couldn't stop occasionally thinking about Rocky . . . and aching for him. He supposed he never would stop caring. He couldn't turn his feelings off so quickly after years of loving the man.

He just needed to make sure to keep his feelings for Rocky tightly locked up inside and away from Monte. Doc would die if he ever made Monte feel bad or unloved, unwanted. He needed to make Monte and their child his first priority.

Monte gave him so much. He seemed to love Doc unconditionally, giving everything inside of him to their budding relationship. Doc knew instinctively, before Monte even said anything, that the man loved him. His feelings showed in every gesture Monte made.

Doc would be crazy to give up what he could have with Monte for some man who didn't really want him. He needed to get them the hell out of the freak circus they were being held in so they could have a life together.

In the weeks since he'd been captured and met Monte, Doc discovered several things. One, most of the guards became lazy after awhile, as long as Doc didn't start any trouble. Sometimes, he had a hard time controlling his temper, especially when they taunted him about Monte.

Two, Doc discovered he could slip his foot out of the GPS monitoring device strapped around his ankle. The morning after he met Monte, the guard had strapped the monitoring device to his leg. They always knew where he was.

And three, deliveries were made to the lab at the same time every Tuesday. A truck carrying fresh, organic vegetables would come, unload, and then leave, usually under the watchful eye of the guards, but not always. It depended on the guards.

The place was run very efficiently if one looked past the lethargic guards, the array of sexual contact going on between the staff, and the political backstabbing between rival scientists, Doc thought, tongue-in-cheek. The damn place was a circus filled with evil freaks.

Doc wasn't at the lab more than a week before he discovered they were not the only lab rats in the building. He didn't know who else was involved, but he'd overheard the guards talking about other test subjects.

He needed to consider taking them with him and Monte when they left. He just couldn't leave them behind, not when he knew what the scientists were doing. Well, he wasn't positive *what* they were doing to the other test subjects but he had a pretty good idea . . . more super soldiers.

Doc jerked slightly and lifted his head when he heard the cell door open. One of the guards walked in with a tray in his hands. The man set the tray on the counter then turned to stare dispassionately at Doc.

"Your lunch." The guard looked bored. Lunch detail must not be that exciting.

Doc waited until the guard left then carefully pulled away from Monte and got to his feet. He grabbed the lunch tray and brought it back over to the bed, setting it on the small nightstand. He lifted one lid, wrinkling his nose when a sour scent filled his senses. He quickly slammed the lid down and reached for the other one.

Doc lifted the second lid then slammed it down just as fast. His heart pounded and he tried to look casual. He peaked through his lashes, up toward the camera in the corner, and held his breath. Had the camera picked up the small silver key and thin piece of plastic lying just under a leaf of lettuce?

He sat on the edge of the bed, trying not to stare too intently at the lunch tray. This could either be another trap, or someone could be trying to help them. Doc didn't know which theory to believe. Both held their own danger.

If it was another trap, why? Was it another part of the experiment or did someone want a reason to keep Doc and Monte apart? An escape attempt would certainly do that. Dr. Carson would have every right to keep them separated.

If someone was trying to help them, that didn't necessary mean less danger. Doc had no idea who would want to help them in this place. As far as he knew, everyone except the test subjects was in on the experiments. Who could they trust?

Doc glanced back at the covered dish. Could he trust whoever sent the key and the card? If he did, and things went south, he'd be putting not only his life on the line but that of the man he loved and his unborn child. Was it worth the risk? Did they have a choice? They needed to escape before the baby was born.

A mixture of conflicting emotions spiraled through Doc. He clenched his fists and tried to decide what would be the best choice. He couldn't do anything to endanger Monte, but staying kept them in constant danger.

As his gaze swept over his lover's sleeping form, Doc knew what had to be done. Despite the danger, they had to take the chance. Doc tucked the blankets more tightly around Monte's shoulders. He hoped he'd made the right decision.

Grabbing the food tray, Doc set it on the bed, placing the bulk of his body between the tray and the camera. He lifted the lid off the plate with the key and the plastic card. He picked up the key and examined it, immediately recognizing it as the key that unlocked the monitoring device around his ankle.

Next, he studied the small, rectangular piece of plastic. Red on both sides, the card had the number one written in white on one side, a metallic strip across the bottom on the other. Doc knew from his time in the service that he was looking at a level one security pass.

He just hoped level one meant top security and not the bottom of the barrel. They would be up shit creek if this card would only allow someone to walk in the front door. Doc slid the key and the security card under his pillow.

He lifted the other lid, once again wrinkling his nose at the sour smell. The lettuce was wilted. The mashed potatoes were runny and kind of yellow-looking. Doc had to wonder if the spoiled food was all part of the escape plan because it certainly gave him ideas.

*"Monte, pretty baby, you need to wake up."* Doc waited a moment then moved, shaking the bed. *"Monte, wake up."*

Monte began to stir. Doc quickly laid a hand on his shoulder and stroked him through the blanket. *"Wake up, but don't move. I want them to think you're still sleeping."*

*"What's going on?"*

*"We're getting out of here."*

*"But – "*

*"Trust me, pretty baby, I have a plan."* Sort of. *"Pull the blanket up over your head. I don't want them to see you. We're going to try and make them think you're still in bed, okay?"*

Monte whimpered then pulled the blanket over his head. Doc tried to frown instead of smile. An actor Monte wasn't but he might fool everyone just long enough for them to escape. "Shh, Monte, sleep," he said out loud for the benefit of whoever might be watching.

He grabbed the plate of spoiled food off the tray and walked to the door. He banged with his fist until a little window on the door slid open, a guard peering through it.

"Yeah, what do you want?"

Doc held up the plate. "What the hell is this? I can't let Monte eat this shit. It's spoiled. He'll get sick. Bring him something else, something fresh."

"What are you talking about?" the guard asked. "There's nothing wrong with that food. It was brought in fresh just a little while ago."



"Smell it and tell me if you'd want to eat it." Doc held the plate up closer to the window. "You can tell just by looking at it that something is wrong. This stuff is disgusting."

The guard frowned and peered down at the plate. "Looks okay to me."

Doc pointed back toward Monte. "Do you really want to take the chance that something is wrong with this shit? If he gets sick, it's on *your* head." Doc pointed up to the camera in the corner of the room. "And *they* are monitoring us. They'll know it was you who refused to get Monte good food and made him eat this slop."

"Alright, alright." The guard sighed. "Just stand back."

Doc took several steps back into the room. He knew they would only have moments after he knocked the guard out to escape before everyone would be alerted and alarms would sound. "*Monte, get ready,*" he said silently. "*The minute I knock this guy out we have to move.*"

"*I'm ready.*"

Doc's heart raced and his body tensed as he waited for the guard to open the door and come inside. He just needed to get the man far enough into the room to be able to attack without anyone outside the cell seeing it.

The door opened slowly, almost too slowly for Doc's liking, and the guard stepped inside. Doc held the plate just out of the man's reach. *A little bit farther.*

Just as the guard took another step, the lights suddenly went out, plunging the room into complete darkness. Doc froze for a moment, fear racing through his body like ice.

"What the fuck?" the guard snapped.

Doc lunged, brought out of his frozen state by the guard's words. He smashed the plate across the man's head then landed a roundhouse blow to his chin. The jerking back and forth and the combined blows should momentarily cut off the blood flow to the guard's brain, making *his* lights go out too.

Within seconds, the guard lay on the floor, out cold. Doc leaned down and started unbuttoning the man's shirt. *"Monte, get up and get dressed,"* Doc said. *"Help me with this guy. I don't know how long the lights are going to be out."*

*"What happened?"* Monte asked. *"Why is it dark?"*

*"I don't know, pretty baby, but I'm not about to look a gift horse in the mouth."* Doc said as he stripped the guard. *"I want to get this uniform on. If we can get everyone to think I'm a guard, it just might give us some extra time to get away."*

*"Oh, good plan."*

Doc quickly pulled on the uniform. A little too tight, but beggars couldn't be choosers. Doc would take what he could get. Grabbing the guard by the arms, he pulled him across the floor to the bed and lifted him up onto it.

He unlocked the monitoring device and locked it around the guard's ankle. He patted the man on the head, and covered him up with the blankets, leaving just a tuft of light blond hair showing. It wasn't Doc's exact color but it might be enough to fool people for awhile.

*"Come on, pretty baby, let's go,"* Doc said as he crossed the room. He paused when he heard a small crunch under his boot then remembered the plate he'd smashed up against the guard's head. *"Monte, don't move. There's broken glass on the floor."*

He quickly felt around for any large pieces and hid them under the covers with the guard. He walked back to Monte, picked him up and carried him the few feet to the door before setting him back on his feet.

*"Ready?"* Doc asked as he picked the guard's electric baton off the floor. The weapon might come in handy, and he hoped he had a chance to use it on a few of the new "friends" he'd made there over the last several weeks. He knew from personal experience a blast from the baton hurt like hell.

*"Uh . . ."*

Doc chuckled. *"Just play along with whatever I say and keep your head down."*

Doc cautiously opened the door and peered out. Red lights illuminated the place enough to see that the hallway was empty. No alarm, which seemed rather strange.

With the lights going out, there should have been one. He grabbed Monte's arm and pulled him out of the cell, shutting the door behind them.

Taking a deep, calming breath, Doc clutched Monte's arm and they started down the hallway. They hadn't taken more than ten steps when another guard came walking around the corner up ahead.

Doc forced himself to keep moving. His heart was beating so fast he was sure the other guard would hear it. He kept his head down and his hand tightly wrapped around Monte's arm as he tried to pass the guard.

"Hey, where are you going with him?"

"With the lights out, Dr. Carson wanted him taken to a more secure location. He's afraid the subject might get hurt."

The guard studied him for several moments. Doc was just beginning to think he might have to take the man out when the guard suddenly rubbed his hand down his face, looking pale.

"Shit! I hate this fucking job."

Doc nodded and grunted.

"Do you think we should move the other lab rats too?"

Crap!

"Might not be a bad idea. If we gather them up, we can move them in one group, get it over and done with." Doc leaned closer to the guard and winked. "I got me a sweet little thing waiting upstairs. The sooner we get this done, the faster I can get up there."

"Oh yeah?" the guard asked. "Blonde, brunette, or redhead?"

"Does it matter?"

The guard laughed. Doc swallowed past the lump in his throat then joined him.

"Does she have a friend?"

"Blonde, brunette, or redhead?" Doc asked.

"Does it matter?" the guard asked.

"No, guess not," Doc said as he slapped the man on the back. "Okay, let's get these lab rats together and take them to a safe location and then we can head upstairs. I have a break coming and I plan to enjoy it."

## Chapter Five

Monte's legs trembled as he listened to Doc talking to the guard like they were old friends. In that instant, he thought about turning back. He wasn't even privy to Doc's plan.

*"Doc? Please, can we just go?"*

*"Soon, pretty baby," Doc replied. "I can't just leave the others here if there is a chance we can get them out as well. You know that."*

*"Yeah, I guess, but I'm really starting to think military intelligence is an oxymoron."*

*"Do you not want me to try and save the others?"*

*"No, of course not."* Monte felt like a heel. He knew rescuing others was ingrained in Doc's personality, a part of who he was, a part Monte greatly admired.

But that didn't mean he wasn't scared out of his mind. He just hoped the guard didn't see the sweat dripping down the side of his face, or if he did, assumed it was due to Monte's condition.

Doc shook Monte's arm a little. "Why don't you open the doors and I'll keep these guys corralled. It wouldn't do for one of them to run off."

"Yeah," the guard snorted as he fingered his security card, "Dr. Carson would most likely make one of us his newest test subject." The guard shivered. "That man gives me the creeps."

"It's his eyes, man," Doc said, playing along. "They look right through you like you aren't even there."

They walked down the hallway, stopping just around the corner from Monte's room. Monte hung back, watching the guard and Doc chat. The guard swiped his security card and opened the door.

Curiosity pushed Monte forward. He took a step and peered around Doc, into the room, but all he could make out in the gloom were a few pieces of simple furniture and gray cement walls.

"Out," the guard said to whoever occupied the room. "You're being escorted to a more secure location."

Monte's eyes bugged when he got a good look at the man who stepped out of the cell. He reminded him a lot of his cousin, Eljin. Delicate-looking and small-boned, he even had pointed ears like Eljin and the same long, white-blond hair. The only thing different were the breathtaking, transparent blue-green wings coming out of the man's back.

When the man looked hesitant, Doc reached out and grabbed his arm, pulling him over to stand next to Monte. The man looked bewildered, glancing between Doc and Monte as if he didn't understand why they were there. Monte gave him a slight shake of his head.

"Who's next?" Doc asked.

The guard snorted. "Well, this is the freakiest looking one. There's another elf boy in the next room." The guard shook his head. "I just don't understand why Dr. Carson wants to experiment on these freaks. They should all be put down, if you ask me. They're just as creepy as the doctor."

Monte felt Doc tense next to him. "*Doc! No!*"

"Yeah, I hear you," Doc finally answered the guard. "Let's just get them where they need to go so we can visit my little nurse."

The guard nodded and moved farther down the hallway. He swiped his security card and opened the door. "You have to be careful with this one. He's a fighter. He's not under my watch but if we're going to move one of them we might as well move the rest."

Doc nodded. Monte just barely kept himself from doing the same. He knew what the guard was talking about. Each test subject was assigned two guards. Like assigned

'handlers', the same two guards took care of them at all times. Except for passing them occasionally in the hallway, Monte never saw another guard other than his own.

This time, Monte stood back as the occupant in the room stepped forward. He quickly coughed to stifle a gasp. An Unseelie elf. As an Aes Sídh, Monte could easily tell the difference between a Seelie and an Unseelie elf. Seelie elves usually had some shade of blond hair. Unseelie elves had black hair.

*"Doc, that's an Unseelie elf."*

*"A what?"*

*"An Unseelie elf,"* Monte repeated. *"You know, from the Unseelie Court, the people who held me and my mayer for two years. They're not to be trusted."*

*"So, we'll keep a close eye on him,"* Doc replied. *"I'm not leaving him behind no matter who he is."*

*"But – "*

*"No, Monte,"* Doc said sternly. *"It doesn't matter what he's done or who he is. No one deserves to be a science experiment. If we leave him here, we're just as bad as Dr. Carson."*

Monte didn't like Doc's reasoning, but he understood. Doc had high moral standards. He couldn't, in good conscious, leave someone to be tormented if he could stop it. No matter who they were. Still, Monte edged a little closer to Doc when the Unseelie elf walked out of the cell.

*"Where did Dr. Carson want you to take the elf boy?"* the guard asked.

Doc grinned. Monte knew what was coming. He grabbed the strange fairy's wrist and pulled him back, his gaze darting to the Unseelie elf. Would he interfere? Would he cause problems for them? The curious look on his face told Monte nothing.

The guard turned to shut the door. Doc took the opportunity to knock the guy over the head with his electric baton. The guard cried out and slumped to the floor.

*"Help me,"* Doc said as he tried to pull the guard into the cell. To Monte's surprise, the Unseelie elf leaped forward and helped Doc carry the guard into the room. The two men stepped back into the hallway, and Doc closed and locked the door before turning to face Monte and his fellow escapees.

"Remember, you are all prisoners here. I'm the guard. We have to convince everyone of that if we're to get out of here."

"Why would you rescue us?" the Unseelie elf asked. "Why would you care?"

Monte bristled. He crossed his arms over his chest and looked the elf up and down. Typical for an Unseelie to look a gift horse in the mouth. "Not everyone thinks like you and your kind. Some of us have a sense of honor."

"Monte!" Doc exclaimed. "You're not helping the situation, pretty baby. He's as much a prisoner here as we are. It doesn't matter who he is."

Monte snorted. "You say that now because you've never been held prisoner by the Unseelie. I have. I know how they act and not a damn one of them can be trusted. They'd just as soon stab you in the back as look at you."

"Let's just get out of here," Doc said as he grabbed Monte's arm and started tugging him down the hallway. "We can argue the merits of the Unseelie Court at a later date."

*"I still don't trust him,"* Monte said silently as he fell into step beside him.

*"You don't have to,"* Doc replied. *"I'll keep an eye on him if it makes you feel better but we might need his help to get out of here. Better to have him on our side than the other side. Once we're out of here, he can go his way and we can go ours. Okay?"*

*"Fine."* Monte glanced over at the man. He didn't seem like an evil person but looks could be deceiving.

Monte knew that first hand. He'd spent the first two years of his life in the Unseelie Court. He knew how cruel they could be. He may have been just a toddler at the time but he would never forget the things they did to his mayer. He still had nightmares from it.

"Who are you?"

Monte looked away from the Unseelie elf to the fairy. He'd never actually seen a real fairy before and he lived in the land of the elves, so that was saying something. Fairies kept to themselves, living deep in the woods between the Seelie and Unseelie Courts. They didn't associate with others.

"My name is Monte. This is my leannan, Doc."

"Why are you here?"

Monte rubbed a hand down his distended stomach. "Same reason you are. The scientists want to use us to create a race of super soldiers."

The man frowned and looked around. He seemed confused, and Monte briefly wondered if the fairy was playing with a full deck. He seemed kind of spacey. His wings fluttered wildly behind him.

"What's your name?" Monte asked.

"Natiri."

Monte glanced over at the Unseelie elf. "And yours?"

"What do you care?" The man smirked. "We're untrustworthy, remember? I'm surprised you even took the time to let me out of my cage."

Monte just rolled his eyes and looked away.

"Sareed, my name is Sareed," the elf answered a few moments later. "Did you really spend time at Unseelie Court?"

"Two years," Monte replied. He glanced over his shoulder at the dark-haired elf. "It wasn't pleasant."

"No, I imagine it wasn't. I'm sorry." Sareed sounded embarrassed.

Monte frowned. An unusual reaction, and definitely not one he'd expect from an Unseelie elf. From his experience, Unseelie elves took pride in being as mean and cruel as possible. And they sure never apologized for their abhorrent behavior.

"Everyone, quiet," Doc exclaimed suddenly. "Get in a line. Keep your eyes down."

Monte, Natiri, and Sareed immediately did as Doc ordered. Monte tried to swallow past the lump in his throat but his mouth was too dry. The fear rocketing through him made his steps falter. If not for Doc's hand on his arm, he probably would have been frozen in place.

Three guards walked by. Two of them hurried past as if they had somewhere to be. The third slowed to look them over. "Where are you taking them?"



"Dr. Carson wanted them put somewhere more secure until the lights came back on," Doc replied. "I was just doing as he ordered."

"Do you need assistance?"

*Crap!*

"Actually, that would be great. You never know what one of these guys might try and do," Doc said, which made Monte wonder if he had lost his mind. "If you can take the dark-haired one that would be a big help. But be careful. I hear he can be trouble."

The guard immediately stepped forward and grabbed Sareed's arm. "Where are we headed? The exam room?"

"I was kind of thinking of the exercise yard," Doc said. "It's totally fenced in. We can cage them all up in the same place, keep an eye on them. The exam room has too many things they can get their hands on. The yard doesn't have anything but grass, nothing they can use as a weapon." Doc looked at Monte and smirked. "I wouldn't put *anything* past these flea bitten mongrels."

The guard snickered, pushing Sareed forward. "Yeah, I hear you. If the paycheck wasn't so good I'd be out of here in a split second. This place gives me the creeps. Sometimes I think I'm working in a freak farm."

They walked down the hallway to the elevator. Monte watched Doc wrap his hand around Natiri's arm. Smooth move, he thought. Doc had no idea which floor the exercise yard was on. By holding onto Natiri with one hand, and Monte with the other, Doc made sure both his hands would be full so the guard would have to push the button and choose their floor. Monte ducked his head to hide a grin. Doc really was a genius at thinking ahead.

The elevator ride seemed to take forever but Monte knew only a few minutes passed before it came to a stop and the doors slid open. Monte immediately recognized the hallway that led to the exercise yard he was taken to for an hour every day.

"Did they get the deliveries finished before the lights went out?" Doc asked.

The guard shrugged. "Don't know. Not my area."

"Do you think you can keep an eye on them for a minute once we get them to the yard? I have a little something coming in on the truck and I'd like to get it before the driver leaves. I was supposed to pick it up on my break and then the damn lights went out."

"Yeah, sure, if you promise to share."

"I might be persuaded. I was talking with one of the guys downstairs. I got me a hookup with this pretty little nurse upstairs." Doc chuckled and nudged the guard in the ribs with his elbow. "My break isn't long, but it's long enough."

Monte, Sareed, and Natiri were led down the hallway to the exercise yard. Doc managed to hang back just a little, allowing the guard to precede him, Monte, Sareed, and Natiri out in the grass. The moment the guard moved ahead of them, Doc struck.

Doc wrapped his arm around the guard's neck. Sareed leaped forward, used the heel of his right hand and slammed it up into the guard's nose then landed a left hook. The guard's body slumped to the floor.

Doc and Sareed picked the guard up and carried him back inside the building. "Monte, find us a closet or an empty room where we can hide this guy."

Monte looked around, trying a couple of locked doors until he came to a large metal one near the end of the hall. He pulled it open and looked down. The sour scent of rotting garbage rose to greet him. He glanced over at Doc, his nose wrinkling.

"Will a garbage chute work?"

"Perfectly," Doc said. They heaved and grunted, pushing the guard's body into the chute. Monte heard a loud bang, several thuds, then nothing. He couldn't imagine what the guard would look like when he woke up, *if* he woke up.

"What now?" Monte asked.

"Now we go find that delivery van and get the hell out of here."

Monte followed behind Doc, praying they wouldn't run into anymore guards. He could feel Natiri walking so close behind him the man stepped on the back of his heels a few times.

Doc checked several doors along the hallway. Monte knew he was looking for an exit door to the delivery loading area. Needing to give his shaking hands something to do, and wanting to expedite their escape, Monte walked to the other side of the corridor and started checking the doors on the opposite side.

He opened one door and almost closed it before he realized he could see outside. "Doc, over here," Monte said, waving Doc over.

Doc joined him at the door and they both peered out. There wasn't a whole lot to see: a set of double doors, several stacks of produce, a couple of carts. But just beyond the open double doors, Monte spotted the produce truck. Bingo!

"That's it, isn't it?" Monte asked, excited they might be so very close to escaping.

"Looks like it." Doc stepped out onto the cement loading area. "Stay here."

*Yeah, right!* Monte hurried through the door right after Doc. When Doc turned and glared down at him, Monte shrugged. "You said together or not at all."

Doc opened his mouth as if he would argue. He stared down at Monte for a moment then rolled his eyes. "Fine, let's go."

Monte knew from the tone of Doc's voice that he was trying to sound put out but the small grin on his lips gave him away. Monte bumped his hip against Doc's. "Love you."

"Love you too, pretty baby, now get your sexy little ass in the front seat."

Monte hurried to comply, yelping as Doc smacked his ass when he passed. He glanced over his shoulder to see Doc helping Natiri climb into the bed of the truck. Sareed climbed in beside Natiri.

Monte crawled into the front passenger seat, shutting the door behind him. A moment later, the driver's side door opened and Doc climbed in. He looked at the ignition, behind the sun visor, under the seat.

Monte frowned. "What are you doing?"

"I'm hoping to find the damn key to this hunk of junk."

Monte pursed his lips. He opened the glove box and rifled around, finding nothing but papers, a box of tissue, and some candy bars. He slammed it closed and started looking around the cab of the truck. No key.

He turned and noticed the window between the cab and the back of the truck. He got up on his knees and slid the window open.

"We need to find the key," he told Sareed and Natiri.

Sareed rolled his eyes and climbed out of the truck. He opened the driver's side door, leaned into the cab and reached under the dashboard, yanking down some wires.

Monte's eyebrows shot up when Sareed stripped and twisted the wires together and the engine came immediately to life. "Where in the hell did you learn to do that?"

Sareed shrugged. "I haven't always been a lab rat," he said simply before shutting the door and climbing back into the bed of the truck.

Monte waved his hand at the steering column. "I didn't know you could do that."

"Yeah, it's called hotwiring," Doc replied as he drove the truck away from the loading dock. "I just don't know how to do it."

"How are we going to get through the gate?" Monte asked when he spotted the guarded security entrance.

"Who says we're going through the gate?" Doc asked as he turned the truck in the opposite direction and started down a long, dirt road that led into the woods. "I scouted this place out for some time before I fell into that stupid trap. I happen to know there's a back entrance that's never used."

"Just how did you — ? Watch out!" Monte screamed. A dark figure stepped out in front of the speeding truck. Monte grabbed the dashboard when the truck skidded to a stop, dust billowing up behind them.

"Rocky?" Doc whispered.

Monte watched in shock as the man opened the passenger side door and climbed into the cab. Monte quickly scooted over toward Doc, placing a hand on Doc's thigh.

"What the fuck are you doing here?" Doc shouted.

"Rescuing your dumb ass," Rocky shouted right back.

"I think I've handled that part of things just fine, thank you."

Monte felt like a ping pong ball as he looked back and forth between the two men.

"If you handled it so damn well then why have you been imprisoned inside that lab for the last two months? You obviously needed help getting out."

Monte felt Doc's gaze slide down to him. He returned the look with a weak smile, unable to summon up more at the moment. The sight of Rocky, the man Monte knew Doc had feelings for, was just a little more than he could take at the moment.

"Can we just go?" Monte asked softly.

Doc patted his hand. "Yeah, pretty baby," he said then turned his attention to the road, ignoring Rocky.

But *Monte* couldn't ignore Rocky. For one thing, the man was huge, every bit as big as Doc. For two, Doc loved the man, maybe even more than he loved Monte. How could he possibly compete with a human who was every bit as gorgeous as Doc?

Even if he discounted Doc's feelings, the two men still had so much in common: years of friendship, their time in the Marines, even the fact that they were both human. Monte had nothing like that. Well, almost nothing. Monte rubbed the soft swell of his abdomen. He had one thing Rocky didn't have.

He glanced over to see Rocky looking at him with a peculiar look on his face as if he were trying to figure something out. Monte scooted closer to Doc until he was pressed up against the man's side.

*"You okay, pretty baby?"*

*"Yeah, I'm fine."*

*"I don't want you to worry about Rocky,"* Doc said as he patted Monte's hand. *"I told you I would never leave you and I won't. I love you, remember?"*

*"Yeah."* But did he love Rocky more?

"You must be Monte." Monte turned to see Rocky still watching him. He nodded, not really wanting to talk to the man. "Your fathers are anxiously awaiting your return to Seelie Court. They kind of thought you'd be there before now."

"Things came up," Monte replied.

Rocky snorted. "I'll just bet they did."

"What in the hell is that supposed to mean?" Doc snapped.

"You know exactly what it means." Rocky waved his hand around the cab of the truck. "You've obviously had an escape planned. Why did it take you so long to put it into action? Too busy boning the locals?"

"Look, you son-of-a—" Words were lost as a loud whizzing sound filled the air, followed by the crash of shattering glass. The truck swerved and headed right for a large tree. Monty screamed. A large body suddenly pressed between him and the dashboard, grabbing the steering wheel and turning the truck away from the tree.

"Get on the damn floor!" Rocky shouted. "Everyone get down."

Monte scooted across the seat and climbed onto the floorboard. He could hear strange pings hitting the truck as it continued to swerve. He looked up in time to see Rocky pull Doc across the seat and climb in between him and the door, sliding down into the driver's seat.

Rocky handled the truck like a pro, stopping it from veering off the road and recovering from the fishtailing. The trailing dirt cloud must have helped obscure them from their pursuers, because the sounds of gunfire cut off abruptly.

Monte looked over at Doc, who sat slumped across the bench seat. His heart pounded and a cold chill swept up his back. Doc wasn't moving and there was a lot of blood coming from his head.

"Doc?" he whispered as he reached out to touch him, his hands trembling. "Doc?"

## **Chapter Six**

Rocky's blood rushed through his veins as adrenaline pushed through his system. He was in battle mode. Fight or flight. In this case, with civilians that needed to be rescued and Doc bleeding, he knew it was flight. He needed to get them all to safety.

Even though the rough road demanded he concentrate on his driving, Rocky couldn't help shooting Doc a glance. He wasn't moving. Blood covered the right side of his head. Rocky knew he'd been shot, he just didn't know how badly he'd been injured.

"Turn him onto his back so I can get a look at the wound," he ordered Monte.

Other than to shudder, the man didn't move.

"Monte!" he shouted. "I need to see how badly he's injured and I can't stop the truck. You have to turn him onto his back so I can see his wound."

After a few moments and a lot of grunting, Monte finally got Doc turned. Blood covered most of Doc's right side but the bulk of it seemed to come from his head.

"You need to put pressure on that wound," Rocky said. "Pull off your shirt and use it to stop the blood. If we can't stop the bleeding, he could die."

Monte worked quickly, pulling his shirt over his head to press it against the bleeding wound on Doc's head. Rocky wasn't sure which one of them looked paler.

"Will he die?" Monte whispered.

"Not if I can help it."

"I love him."

"Yeah." Rocky nodded, resigned. "I thought you might."

He'd seen the hostile looks Monte shot in his direction from the moment he climbed into the truck. He knew there was something between him and Doc. And judging by the way Doc talked to the smaller man and touched him, he cared for Monte too.

Rocky wasn't sure where that left him. He expected to rescue Doc and try to figure out where things went wrong between them. He knew before Doc even stormed out of their bedroom at Seelie Court that he cared for the man as more than a friend. He just hadn't realized it, and now it might be too late.

"Do you love him?"

Shocked by Monte's question, Rocky jerked the wheel and the truck swerved. So Monte and Doc had discussed him. How much had Doc revealed? Did Monte know he

and Doc fooled around before Doc left Seelie Court? Did he know Doc had supposedly been in love with Rocky for years? Did Monte know how much Doc meant to Rocky?

"Yes, I love him."

"What are we going to do?" Monte whispered.

"You're going to keep pressure on the wound and I'm going to get us to someone who can help." Rocky waved his hand in a dismissive gesture. "The rest—we'll figure out the rest later. Right now, getting Doc some medical treatment needs to be our first priority."

"Where can we take him?" Monte cried. "They will be looking for us everywhere."

"I have a few ideas, Monte, don't worry." Rocky could think of one place to take Doc where he could receive the medical help he needed without being turned in to either the police or the people chasing them. "Did Doc ever tell you about his mom?"

"He told me a little," Monte replied. "But I don't see what—"

"Doc's mom is a medical doctor."

Monte inhaled softly. "She can fix him?"

"I certainly hope so, but we need to keep him alive long enough to get to her. It's a good two hundred miles to her house. Even skirting the speed limit it will still take us a few hours to get to her. I'll drive as fast as I can. You just keep pressure on that wound."

"But there's so much blood."

"We'll stop somewhere and get something to clean it up, bandage it."

"Will that help?"

Without thinking, Rocky reached over and patted Monte's hand. "Yes, Monte, the cleaner we keep the wound, the less chance of infection. As soon as we can, we'll pull over so I can take a look at it but from what I can see, it's just a flesh wound."

"Is that a good thing?"



"Well, it could be better but a flesh wound means the bullet just skimmed the side of his head. It'll bleed a lot, and he'll probably have one hell of a headache when he wakes up but he *should* wake up."

"Should?" Monte's voice wavered.

"It's the best I can give you right now, Monte, until I can take a look at it." Rocky smiled, trying to reassure. The man looked pale and anxious, and Rocky needed him to remain calm. "Just keep pressure on it."

Rocky glanced in the rearview mirror then the side mirror. He couldn't see anyone following him but that didn't mean they were in the clear. For all he knew, the damn produce truck had a GPS system in it and the people from the lab were tracking them even now.

"Monte, we need to get rid of this truck and find something else to drive."

Rocky almost laughed when Monte's eyebrows shot up to his hairline. "And you expect me to know where to find one? You do remember I'm not from this side of the veil, right? I wouldn't know where to look for a vehicle even if I knew how to drive."

"No, actually, I was just letting you know what was going on."

"Oh."

"There's a mechanic's garage on 5<sup>th</sup> Street in the next town over, about thirty miles from here," came a voice from behind them. Rocky turned to see the dark-haired elf leaning through the small window between the cab of the truck and the back. "We can get a car there."

"Friends of yours?" Rocky asked.

The man shrugged nonchalantly. "We know each other."

"How well?" Monte seemed to be pretty naive about the human world. This elf was not. Rocky had to wonder about that.

"Well enough to know they'll keep their mouths shut and not ask too many questions."

Rocky nodded. "Works for me."

\* \* \* \* \*

Light shone through the windows of Mara Lewis's house. Rocky pulled up outside, sighing with relief. Between exchanging cars at some seedy, low-rent garage and stopping for some temporary medical supplies, he felt like he'd been traveling forever to reach their destination.

Rocky pulled the minivan they'd exchanged for the produce truck into Mara's driveway and turned off the engine. He glanced at the dark-haired elf sitting in the passenger seat next to him. Rocky suggested he try and sleep but the man had yet to doze off. He imagined he wouldn't get any rest until he felt truly safe. Rocky couldn't blame him.

"Will you keep an eye on them?" Rocky asked as he pointed to the sleeping trio in the backseat. "I'm going to go inside and let Mara know we're here."

"Yeah."

Rocky waited for the man to say more, say anything, maybe even ask who Mara was, but when the elf remained silent, Rocky climbed out of the van and walked up the front walkway to knock on the door. A moment later, it opened, the chain still in place.

"Mara, it's me."

"Rocky?" the woman asked. She shut the door and unhooked the chain then opened the door again. "What on earth are you doing here?"

"Is anyone else here with you?"

Mara smirked. "No."

"Look, we're in trouble."

"You and Petey?" Mara asked as she looked past Rocky to the minivan sitting in her driveway. "What kind of trouble?"

"The kind of trouble that can't be reported to the police." Rocky grimaced. "Doc's been shot."

Mara's face paled. "Oh my god, where is he?"

"He's in the van but before I bring him in you need to know something."

"I don't need to know a damn thing," Mara snapped. "I need to get to my son."

When Mara tried to push past Rocky, he reached out and grabbed her arm.

"Mara, wait, please."

The tears in her eyes when she looked up at him made Rocky wonder if he should just let her go but he knew he had to warn her first. She would be in danger the moment they stepped through her door. She might be in danger now and they hadn't even gotten out of the car.

"Mara, the men who are after us, they work for the government. If you get involved with this your life will be in danger. You need to know that."

"Do you really think I care?" Mara asked, jerking her arm out of Rocky's grasp. "If Petey is injured, I need to see to him."

"Wait, Mara, there's more."

"Then explain it to me while I work," Mara said as she hurried to the van.

Rocky rolled his eyes and hurried after her. Mara Lewis was just as stubborn as her son, one of the qualities he actually liked in the pair. They stuck by their convictions, and he had to admire them for it.

Mara was opening the van door just as Rocky reached her. He heard a small squeak from inside before he moved Mara out of the way and leaned inside. Monte had covered Doc protectively with his body. Natiri was pressed back against the far wall. Sareed just looked bored.

"Monte, this is Mara, Doc's mom," Rocky explained as he pulled Mara over to stand next to him. "She's the doctor I told you about. She can fix Doc up but we need to get him inside so she can treat him."

Monte stared intently at Mara for several moments then slowly moved out of the way, allowing Rocky to lift Doc out of the van. Rocky was impressed when Sareed jumped out of the front seat and helped him carry Doc into the house. The man didn't seem that interested in helping anyone but himself, but he'd come through for them several times.

"Bring him in here," Mara said as she led the way into a small exam room she kept set up in her home. "Just put him on the table."

Rocky and Sareed placed Doc carefully on the table. Rocky turned to find Monte and Natiri hovering in the doorway. "Why don't we go into the other room and let Mara work?"

Monte shook his head. He walked into the room and hovered next to Doc. "Can I help?" he asked.

Mara glanced up with a look of surprise. She pointed to a bowl of water and a pile of washcloths. "Try and wipe as much blood off Petey as you can but stay away from the wound. We don't want it to get infected."

"Petey?"

"She means Doc, Monte."

Monte turned, his eyebrow raised nearly to his hairline as he mouthed silently, *Petey?*

Rocky chuckled, amused by the look on Monte's face. "She's his mother, Monte. That's what she calls him."

Monte nodded and turned his attention back to Doc, carefully wiping the blood off his body. Rocky watched for a moment then turned and led Sareed and Natiri down the hallway. He pointed out the bathroom then led them to a guestroom.

"You can get some rest in here if you need it. I'll see about getting something together for us to eat."

"When are we going to leave?" Sareed asked. "You know they will figure out we're here sooner or later."

Rocky nodded. He knew. "Let's see what Mara has to say about Doc's condition and go from there."

Sareed rubbed his hands up and down his arms as he walked over to look out the window. "It's not safe here."

"You can leave anytime you want, Sareed," he replied. "You're not a prisoner here."

"Aren't I?" Sareed asked. "If not here then out there. Wherever I go, I'm a prisoner."

"Do you want to return to Unseelie Court?"

Sareed snorted. "I'd rather be a lab rat."

*Okay. Interesting.* An Unseelie elf that didn't want to go back to the Unseelie Court. "Then what do you want, Sareed? You're an adult. The choice is yours."

Sareed glanced over his shoulder, and Rocky caught his breath at the lost look on the man's face. He'd judged Sareed as someone who knew what he wanted, who had no trouble going after it. But the vulnerability he showed now gave Rocky pause.

"Can I stay with you?" Sareed asked. "Just until I make a decision?"

"Of course," Rocky replied. "You can stay as long as you need to."

"And me?"

Rocky smiled over at the small, winged man. "Yes, Natiri, you can stay too."

"I want to go home," Natiri said. "I just want to go home."

"Where is home for you?" Rocky asked. He turned to address the strange-looking man directly. He thought he'd seen the weirder side of things when he met Eljin. He thought it strange to discover elves were real, but Natiri? He took the cake. The man had *wings*.

"My home is in the forest between the two courts." He looked at Sareed for a moment then glanced down at the floor, his face flushing. "We don't mix much with the others from our world."

"You mean you choose not to get involved."

"We do not involve ourselves in the petty squabbles between elfin cultures, that is true," Natiri said, each word punctuated carefully, "but we do not fight petty squabbles as you do, either. My people care more about the good of the community and not the individual."

"Bullshit!" Sareed snapped. "Your people care more about keeping to themselves and holding onto what is theirs rather than trying to help those in need."

Rocky could see where this was going. Both men had a different view of life, he assumed based on the cultures in which they were raised. They would never agree regarding what was right and what was wrong. He needed to put a stop to this before he had a full blown argument.

"Okay, that's enough," Rocky said. He quickly stepped between the men and glared at each of them in turn. "We're not here to debate about whose culture is better. We're here to save our asses and you two arguing isn't going to help."

Natiri flushed and returned his gaze to the floor. Sareed snapped his mouth shut and turned to stare out the window again, his posture stiff. Rocky rolled his eyes. "Just play nice, okay? I'm going to go check on Doc."

He turned and walked out, leaving the two strange men in the guestroom. A few steps took him back into Mara's exam room. Mara was sewing up a laceration on the right side of Doc's head. Monte occasionally wiped the blood away as she sewed.

"Okay, hand me those scissors," Mara directed, pointing toward a small tray of surgical instruments. Monte picked them up and handed them over. Mara cut the thread, gave the scissors back to Monte then proceeded to wrap Doc's head with gauze.

"How is he?" Rocky asked, coming up to stand beside Monte.

"He'll be okay." Mara glanced up for a moment. "You did a pretty good job of caring him before you got here."

Rocky smiled weakly. "Doc taught me a few things over the years. He always said we all needed to know basic first aid in case he wasn't around. I guess I remembered a few things."

"Well, it was enough. He has a laceration on his right temple. It'll give him a monster of a headache when he wakes up but he will wake up. That's the good news."

"And the bad news?" Rocky asked. He gritted his teeth as he waited for the other shoe to drop.

"I won't know how much damage was done until he wakes up," Mara said. "Head injuries can be tricky. The slightest wound can cause a huge amount of damage

while the largest wound doesn't cause any. It's basically a crap shoot. I won't know anything until he wakes up."

"Fuck!" Rocky exclaimed. He pushed his hand through his hair then rubbed it across the back of his neck as he walked over to look out the window for several moments. His heart ached with the thought that Doc could suffer permanent injury.

Rocky couldn't imagine it. Doc was Doc. He was always around. Rocky knew he relied on that fact for too many years. Suddenly faced with the prospect of losing Doc, his deep feelings for the man rose.

"Can he be moved?" Rocky finally asked, his voice low and solemn.

"I'd prefer he not be moved for at least twenty-four hours, if not longer."

Rocky glanced back at Mara. "What if we don't have a choice?"

Mara took a deep breath and let it out, her gaze going to her son. "Then we move him. But I'm going with you."

"Mara — "

Mara held up her hand. "It's not up for debate, Rocky. Petey is my son. I will do whatever I have to do to keep him alive and well. Deal with it."

"You don't understand the situation we're in, how much danger we're facing," Rocky insisted. "People with guns, lots of guns, want us dead. They won't hesitate to shoot you if you get in the way."

"So, if I don't understand, then explain it to me," Mara said.

Rocky felt like he was under a microscope when Mara crossed her arms over her chest and glared intently at him. He always hated it when she looked at him like that, usually when he and Doc had done something really stupid.

Rocky was saved from answering when Monte suddenly cried out, grabbing his stomach before he started to collapse. Rocky leaped across the space between them and caught Monte before he hit the floor. Monte's eyes rolled back into his head. Heart pounding, Rocky looked over at Mara in concern.

"Bring him over here," Mara said as she gestured to the small couch in the corner. Rocky picked Monte up, surprised at how light the man was, and carried him over to the sofa.

Mara immediately went to work, checking his vitals. She placed the stethoscope on his chest for a moment then frowned, moving it down. Her eyes widened considerably as she moved the stethoscope down even more to the slight mound of Monte's abdomen.

"Rocky?" Mara's voice sounded strained.

Rocky grimaced. He hadn't been sure when he saw Monte pull his shirt off and he saw the slight distention of his abdomen but he thought the man might be carrying. Having his suspicions confirmed only reinforced his belief that he'd screwed up with Doc. Now Doc might be beyond his reach.

"I told you that we were in trouble."

"Rocky, this man is pregnant."

Rocky nodded. "Yes, I suspected as much."

Mara's face was white. "You know about this?"

"I know some."

"How is this possible?"

Rocky reached up and brushed the blond hair back from Monte's head, baring his pointed ears. "He's not human. He's a Seelie elf."

"A what?" Mara whispered.

"There's a veil, like a gate, between our two worlds, the human world and the elf world. Monte comes from the elf world, a place called Seelie Court."

"Seelie Court? Like the Tuatha Dé Danann? I thought that was just a legend . . . a fairytale."

"Apparently, it's less of a fairytale than we thought. Monte and Sareed are elves. Natiri is a fairy. I don't know how they were taken but Monte was captured with his cousin, Eljin. They were both taken to a research facility a couple of hundred miles from here."



"Why?"

Rocky snorted and pointed toward Monte's stomach. "Guess."

"But — "

Rocky laid his hand on Mara's arm. "There's more, Mara."

"More? How can there be more than this?"

"I suspect Doc is the father."

Mara's mouth dropped open as she looked down at Monte's abdomen, her face ashen. "The father? But how is that possible?"

"From what I understand, the men of Monte's family can give birth. It has something to do with them being of royal blood. In his family, only the men have babies. You remember Gunny, our commander in the service?"

"Yes."

"Gunny is Monte's father, or fayer, as the Aes Sídhe call them," Rocky said. "It means the father of his creation or the sperm donor, basically. His mayer, or birth father, is a man named Roland."

"My god!" Mara exclaimed.

Rocky didn't know what else to say to Mara. She was a medical doctor. She dealt in scientific research not fantasy. He imagined being faced with a pregnant man was hard enough. Finding out Monte might be carrying her grandchild had to be mind boggling.

Monte's eyelids began to flutter and he groaned. Rocky moved closer, grabbing the man's hand. "Monte? Can you hear me?"

"Doc?" Monte whispered.

For some unknown reason, Rocky's heart squeezed in his chest. "No, Monte, it's Rocky."

"Where's Doc?" Monte asked as he struggled to sit up.

"Lie back down, Monte," Rocky encouraged as he gently pressed down on Monte's shoulder. "You passed out."

"Where's Doc?"

"He's sleeping right over there." Rocky pointed to the exam table. "He got shot, remember? But he's fine. He just needs rest."

Monte didn't lie back until he saw Doc's sleeping form. When he did, he breathed a huge sigh. His eyes closed and his body relaxed back against the couch.

"How are you feeling, Monte?" Mara asked.

Monte opened his eyes to look up at Mara. "I'm okay."

"Can I ask you a few questions?"

Monte nodded.

"Rocky tells me you might be pregnant. Is that true?"

Rocky smiled when Monte's blue-eyed gaze darted to him. "It's okay, answer her questions, Monte. She just wants to make sure you're okay. Besides, she's Doc's mom. That means she's related, doesn't it?"

"I guess." Monte looked back at Mara. "Yes, I'm about nine weeks along."

Mara swallowed. "And Doc is the father?"

"Yes, he's the fayer."

"I guess that makes me the grandmother." Mara laughed nervously. "I don't think I'm old enough to be a grandmother just yet."

"I'm sorry," Monte said quickly.

Rocky could tell he was just as nervous as Mara. He bit his lip to hide a grin. He had no doubt Mara and Monte would become fast friends once they got over the initial awkwardness of the situation.

"Oh, honey," Mara said quickly, "no, that's not what I meant. This is just all such a surprise to me. Until a few minutes ago I didn't know this was even possible. I always assumed because Petey prefers men that I would never have grandchildren. This is —"

"A surprise?" Rocky supplied.

"Yes, I can definitely say I'm surprised."

"You're not —?" Monte started.

Doc moaned, drawing everyone's attention. Mara jumped up and hurried over to her son. Rocky took a moment to help Monte up then the two of them rushed to Doc's side.

"Doc?" Rocky whispered.

Doc's eyes fluttered and opened slowly, turning toward him. A small grin broke out over Doc's face. "Rocky."

Elation rocketed through Rocky at Doc's softly spoken word. He glanced over at Monte. "See? I told you he would be okay. There's nothing to be worried about."

Doc turned his head to look at Monte, a small, confused frown crossing his features. "Hi."

"Hi," Monte repeated.

"Who are you?"

## Chapter Seven

Shock and heartache siphoned the blood from Monte's face as his world shattered around him. His hand trembled as he patted Doc's arm and tried to smile through the clog of tears forming in his throat. He blinked several times.

"Just a friend," he whispered.

"Monte—" Rocky started.

Monte held up his hand to stop the man. He shook his head, too overcome by grief to speak. He knew from the moment Doc started talking about Rocky all those weeks ago that he cared about the man. To have it so blatantly shoved in his face was heart-wrenching but not unexpected.

Doc loved Rocky. Monte always knew that. He had just hoped for awhile that Doc might love him too. Now Doc didn't even remember who he was. To Monte, the fact he could be so easily forgotten spoke volumes.

"I'm glad you're okay," he said softly, feeling more tired than he ever had in his life. He glanced around the room, not exactly sure what he hoped to find, maybe a hole to fall into? Monte just wanted everything to be over.

He rubbed his stomach, remembering he had some connection with Doc, even if Doc didn't remember him anymore. A connection they'd share for the rest of their lives. He focused on that thought to keep from slipping into the despair that was trying to pull him under.

"I want to go home, Rocky."

Monte jerked when he felt Rocky's hands land on his shoulders.

"He has a head injury, Monte," Rocky said softly. "Give him a little time. He'll remember you."

"He remembered *you*."

"We've known each other a long time."

Monte shook his head. He knew that wasn't it. If Doc really loved him he would never have forgotten him. Doc remembered Rocky because he truly loved him. "I just want to go home. Please."

"Okay, I'll take you home as soon as Mara says we can move Doc."

That wasn't exactly what Monte hoped for but it would do for now. Once he was home he wouldn't have to see Doc and be reminded he loved a man who loved someone else. "Can I go lie down somewhere?"

"Yeah, sure, there's a guestroom right down the hallway."

"Thank you," Monte said softly. He looked at Doc one last time only to stifle a cry when he found Doc gazing at Rocky with such tenderness it actually made his heart hurt. Monte hurried out of the room as fast as his shaking legs would carry him.

He ran down the hallway to the first empty bedroom he could find and threw himself down on the bed. He pulled his knees up and wrapped his arms around his stomach then gave into the grief spiraling through him, great heaving sobs shaking his entire body.

"Monte." A hand landed on his arm as a heavy weight sat down on the bed next to him. "He's not himself right now. You have to understand that. He'll remember you as soon as his head clears."

"You don't know that," Monte replied. "He might never remember me."

"Yes, he will, I swear."

A small sob escaped Monte's lips. "Please, just take me home, Rocky."

Rocky patted his shoulder several times. "Okay, if that's what you really want. We'll leave first thing in the morning."

"I want Doc," Monte murmured. "I want him to love me again."

Without warning, Rocky picked Monte up in his large, powerful arms and cuddled him close. "Oh, baby, he does love you. He never would have been with you for so long if he didn't love you. He would have just rescued you and brought you home. He never would have stuck around."

"But he doesn't remember me," Monte complained, feeling the hurt all over again. "I watched the pain and anguish my mayer went through without the man he loved. I can't do that. I'm not strong enough. I can't have this baby alone."

"You won't have to, Monte, I promise."

Monte fisted his hand and beat it against Rocky's chest. "You can't promise that."

Suddenly, Rocky grabbed Monte's face and tilted it back. Monte looked up into Rocky's deep brown eyes as the man stared down intently at him.

"I *can* promise, Monte. If Doc doesn't remember you, if he can't be with you, for whatever reason, I will be there for you."

Monte frowned. "Why would you do that? You don't even know me."

Rocky released his hold on Monte's chin and stroked along his cheek. "I've known Doc for fifteen years. If he cared enough about you to be with you then that means you're special. And no matter what happens, I have to respect that. I know if Doc were in his right mind, he'd take care of you. And until he can, I will."

Monte stared. Rocky sounded like he really meant what he said. That surprised him. "You said you loved Doc," he said. "How can you promise you'll take care of me when he said he loved me too? Don't you hate me?"

Rocky chuckled. "No, I don't hate you."

"But —"

"Monte, I can't explain it to you because I don't fully understand it myself. I just know I have to take care of you, okay? Maybe because Doc loves you, maybe because you're so special. I don't know. But, whatever it is, I just know what I have to do it."

"You're crazy."

"Yeah, probably," Rocky replied. "Is that a bad thing?"

"You do remember I've been living in a laboratory for the last several months, right? I'm used to crazy."

"Then you'll let me take care of you until Doc remembers you?" Rocky asked.

Monte frowned. He wanted to deny Rocky's request. There was a part of him that felt resentful of the man's mere presence. But Rocky looked so sincere Monte found he couldn't deny the man's request. Finally, he nodded. "Yeah, I guess, but only until we get home. My family can take care of me then. It's not fair to ask you to do this."

"You're not asking, Monte," Rocky replied as he patted Monte's hand. "I am."

Monte snorted. "I still think you're crazy."

"You're probably right," Rocky said.

"Do you really think he'll remember me?"

"I do," Rocky said. "He loves you. A man doesn't forget that. Somewhere deep down inside he knows who you are."

Monte dropped his head to look down at his hands and twisted them together nervously. "He loves you too."

Rocky grimaced. "I'm not so sure about that. I had my chance with Doc. I blew it. He has you now, and your baby. He has no reason to give me the time of day."

Monte shook his head. "I don't know exactly what happened between the two of you. Doc never told me. But I know he still has feelings for you. I've always known that. I hoped to have a little more time with him before he went back to you but – "

Rocky gripped Monte's hand tightly. "Listen, you have to stop thinking like that. Doc is not going to leave you."

Monte's smile trembled as pain welled up inside of him again. "He already has."

Rocky opened his mouth to reply, but the door suddenly flew open. Rocky moved quickly, setting Monte down on the bed and placing himself between Monte and the door. Monte relaxed when they saw it was only Sareed . . . then he got a good look at the man's pale face.

"What is it?" Monte asked, his heart pounding. "Is it Doc?"

Sareed shook his head. "They're here. Natiri spotted them coming down the road."

"Shit!"

Rocky jumped to his feet and Monte rushed after him. They raced into the living room. Monte stood by the living room entrance while Rocky plastered himself against the wall and peeked out of the small slit next to the curtain.

"Mara, get Doc ready to go and gather whatever supplies you might need," Rocky directed. "We're leaving here in two minutes."

"Rocky?" Monte looked to the man he'd inexplicably come to trust in the short time they'd known one another. He didn't understand why he had confidence in him – maybe because Doc trusted him – and the reasons didn't matter. Right now, Monte needed Rocky's strength.

Rocky crossed the room and grabbed Monte's hand. His gaze was intense, direct, and brooked no refusal on Monte's part. "Monte, I need you to be strong right now. I want you and Natiri to go help Mara prepare Doc for travel, okay? Sareed and I are going to leave a few presents for our guests."

Monte nodded and walked down the hallway to the room with Doc. He didn't even look to see if Natiri followed. He'd been out of Doc's presence for just a few minutes, but already Monte missed him.

He entered the room to find Mara hurrying around, putting stuff in a large, black bag. Doc sat in a chair by the bed. He looked dazed and a bit confused. Monte crossed the room and knelt at his feet.

"How are you feeling, Doc?"

"Where's Rocky?"

Monte dropped his gaze before Doc could see the tears forming in his eyes. "He'll be here soon; don't worry." He stood and turned to Mara, no longer able to maintain such close contact with Doc without completely breaking down. "Mara, is there anything I can do to help?"

"No, sweetie, just keep an eye on Petey for me."

*Yeah, right.* Monte glanced back down at Doc. The man's eyebrows were drawn together, the corners of his mouth turned down. "Doc, are you okay?"

"What? Huh?"

If the situation hadn't been so dire, Monte would have laughed. Doc was totally out of it. He acted like he'd been drugged, but Monte doubted Mara would do that to her own son. Then again, what did he know about human medicine?

"Does anything hurt besides your head?" Monte asked.

"What?"

Monte rolled his eyes. He knelt back down in front of Doc and grabbed his hand. "Doc, you need to listen to me. Rocky needs your help."

"Rocky?" Doc looked around the room. "Where is Rocky?"

"There are some bad men after us." Monte pointed to the bandage on Doc's head. "The same bad men who shot you."

"I've been shot?"

Monte caught Doc's free hand before it reached his head. "No, don't touch it. Your mom doesn't want us to mess with it. It might get infected." Monte patted Doc's



hand. "It's a long story and I'll tell you all about it when we get to safety but right now, I need your help, okay?"

Monte felt like he was talking to a toddler, and in a way he was. Doc was zoning bad. He wasn't going to be much help to anyone. Monte only hoped he could keep Doc out of trouble if the shit hit the fan.

"Rocky will be here in just a few minutes and then we are going to go to my home, where Gunny and Zack are waiting, okay? We'll be safe there. So, when Rocky comes, I need you to do exactly what he says so we can get there."

Doc nodded but he still seemed agitated for some reason. Monte learned why when Rocky suddenly walked into the room and Doc immediately calmed, settling back in his chair. Apparently, only Rocky's presence gave Doc peace.

"Hey, Doc," Rocky said as he walked over, "how's the head?"

"I'm okay." Doc gestured to Monte. "He told me we're going to visit Gunny and Zack?"

Monte shrugged when Rocky's gaze shot to him. "He kept asking for you. I had to tell him something." The sad softening in Rocky's eyes was too much for Monte to handle. He turned away, leaving Rocky to deal with Doc, and went to help Mara.

"What can I help with?"

"Oh, just Petey," she said without even looking up. "He needs —"

"Rocky is taking care of Doc right now."

Mara glanced at Monte. "Are your friends ready to go then?"

"Rocky, is everyone ready to go?" Monte asked without looking.

"Yes, everyone is standing by," Rocky replied. "We're just waiting on you all."

Mara patted her bag. "Then I'm ready to go too."

"Monte, Natiri, would you help Mara get Doc?" Rocky asked. "I need to keep a lookout for anyone following us. I want everyone to head to the back yard. We're going to go through the gate into the alley and down the street. Try not to look suspicious."

"What about Natiri?" Monte asked as he turned to look at the man. He waved his hand at the blue-green transparent wings. "Won't they look suspicious?"

"I've got just the thing for that," Mara said as she hurried out of the room. She was back a moment later with a shawl, which she carefully draped over Natiri's back and shoulders. "This should work just fine."

"Okay, everyone," Rocky said as he started out of the room, "stay close to the buildings and be as quiet as you can. Sareed is going to lead the way. Mara will go next. Monte, I want you and Natiri to take Doc next. I'll bring up the rear."

Monte nodded and walked over to stand next to Doc. He held out his hand. It felt weird holding Doc's hand when the man didn't even recognize him. They were like two strangers just meeting for the first time, instead of lovers and soon-to-be parents. It made Monte's heart ache once again.

Monte tried to remember what Rocky told him, that Doc would remember him. He tried not to let Doc's emotional distance affect him. Plastering a smile on his face, he pulled Doc through the back door.

"Come on, Doc," Monte whispered as he hurried after Mara and Sareed. It was dark outside, with only the glow from a street lamp down the street to light their way. Still, two elves, a female, an injured man, a soldier, and a fairy . . . even in the shadows, they stuck out like no one's business. Monte felt certain they'd be spotted, if not by the people from the lab, then by the people inhabiting the neighborhood. They didn't exactly blend in.

"How are you holding up, Monte?" Rocky asked as he came up behind him. "Any issues?"

Monte glanced over and knew from Rocky's lowered gaze that the man referred to the child he carried. Rocky was looking right at his distended abdomen. Monte shook his head. "I'm good, but thank you for asking."

"You'll let me know if you have any problems?"

Monte rolled his eyes. "I'm fine. You'll be the first to know if I have any problems, promise."

"I'm just worried."

Monte started to lean into the comforting hand Rocky laid on his cheek until he heard a soft cough from beside him and remembered Doc's presence. Doc, the man who loved Rocky and not him.

"I'll be fine," Monte said. "You just worry about getting us back to Seelie Court. I'll worry about everything else." Monte pulled away from Rocky and started walking again. He had no idea where they were headed but hoped they reached their destination soon. He just wanted to go home.

Monte paused to glance back at Rocky. "How are we going to pass through the gate?"

"I'm not sure," Rocky said. He looked around. "I don't know this area real well and I don't think there is any place for us to cross over around here. We need to get to somewhere that has water."

Monte gestured down one side of the street then the other. "Pick a direction."

Rocky grinned. Monte wasn't sure what the man found so amusing about their situation but Rocky's merriment was contagious. Monte suddenly felt more optimistic and calmer than he had moments ago. Maybe, just *maybe* they could get out of this situation in one piece.

## Chapter Eight

Doc glanced over at the attractive blond-haired man talking with Rocky in the corner of the motel room they'd rented for the night. There was something that intrigued him about the man but every time he tried to figure out why, it made his head hurt.

He did know he didn't like the way Rocky hovered over the smaller man but he didn't know if that was due to his feeling for Rocky or the unknown ones that Monte caused him. Doc's head swam with confusion.

Added to all of that was the quick escape through the streets they'd just made. He didn't understand what they were doing or who they were running from and no one

would explain it to him. Running from the *bad guys* didn't really amount to much of an explanation.

"How are you holding up, son?" Mara asked as she sat down on the bed next to Doc. "Does your head hurt?"

Doc smiled over at his mother. That was another thing that confused Doc, his mother's presence. Doc understood he'd been injured and his mother was doctor. What he didn't understand was why he simply wasn't taken to the local hospital?

"Mom, do you know what's going on here?" Doc asked.

"I think Rocky could explain that better than I could."

Doc glanced over at Rocky, frowning when Rocky wrapped an arm around Monte's shoulders. A small growl rose to his lips. Shocked, he swallowed back the sound before it could escape.

He took in the touching scene, trying to decide which bothered him more: Rocky touching Monte, or Monte touching Rocky. Just thinking about it made his head hurt.

Doc groaned and rubbed the heel of his hand against his temple.

"Petey? Honey, is your head hurting?"

Doc nodded.

"Who is Monte?" Doc asked. "Why is he here? Why are all of us here?" He glanced over at his mother. "What in the hell is going on, Mom?"

"Petey, you really need to have Rocky explain this to you."

Doc gestured to where Rocky hovered over Monte. "He seems to be a little busy playing with his boyfriend at the moment, Mom. I don't think he has time to explain this shit to me."

"Don't be ridiculous, Petey, Monte isn't Rocky's boyfriend. He's yours. Rocky is just comforting him because your —" Mara suddenly slapped her hand over her mouth, her eyes going wide.

"My *what*?" Doc asked quietly as he looked at his mother in shock. His boyfriend? Surely that couldn't be right. He glanced over to the small, blond man, truly

taking in his features, as if for the very first time. Monte was a very attractive man by anyone's standards.

He had a slim, wild beauty and his long, white-blond hair hung down nearly to the curve of his rounded ass. His features were delicate in nature, giving him an almost ethereal look. But it was the deep, azure-blue eyes that kept peeking up at him that intrigued Doc the most. He felt like he could drown in their depths.

"If he's my boyfriend, then why is he over there with Rocky instead of over here with me?" Doc asked. His feelings of agitation grew with each passing moment. "And why is Rocky touching him?"

"Petey, honey," Mara said. Doc glanced down to the hand she placed on his arm. "Monte is – well, he's special and when you woke up after getting shot, you didn't remember him. I think it upset him a lot. Rocky's just trying to comfort him."

"Does he have to comfort him so closely?" Doc snarled, surprising himself. His mother was right; he didn't remember Monte but he still felt a level of possessiveness for the man that shocked him.

Doc shook his head. He'd wanted Rocky for so many years, it felt like that want had always been there. He barely looked at other men anymore. So how, and when, had he developed these unfamiliar feelings for the little sprite-looking man? He had a strong urge to go over there and take Monte in his arms, to hold him close. He didn't want Rocky comforting him. *That's my job.*

When Monte glanced back at him again, Doc smiled. Monte's eyes widened for a moment before Doc saw them fill with tears and the little man quickly looked away, his shoulders drooping. Monte moved closer to Rocky, and Doc's chest ached at the sight.

What the fuck? If he and Monte were truly a couple, then Monte shouldn't become so upset when Doc smiled at him. He also shouldn't be seeking comfort in the arms of another man, even if that man was Rocky.

Driven by anger he didn't fully understand, Doc jumped up, stormed over, and grabbed Monte by the hand, pulling him out of Rocky's arms.

"Mine!" he said.

Rocky's eyebrows shot up. "Excuse me?"

Doc frowned. This wasn't right either. None of this was right. He wanted Monte with him but he wanted Rocky with him as well. He didn't want to be at odds with Rocky.

Doc dropped his grip on Monte's hand and stepped back. He shook his head at Rocky. "I don't—I don't understand this, Rocky." He felt so confused.

"Doc," Monte said softly.

Doc glanced down. Damn, the man was just so beautiful. Rocky was beautiful too, but in a much different way. Rocky was raw, masculine, drool-worthy, male. Monte was cuddle-me-close and stare-in-awe beautiful.

"It's okay, Doc," Monte said.

"Mom—my mom said you were—that we're—" Doc stammered. "She said we were—"

"What did she say, Doc?" Rocky asked.

Doc looked over at him. "She said Monte was my—" Doc swallowed hard. "My boyfriend."

"He is." Rocky's softly spoken words confused Doc but not as much as the slight hint of pain he could see in Rocky's brown eyes. "You and Monte have been together for awhile now."

Monte made a small, whimpering noise. Doc looked back to see a lone tear slide down the man's cheek.

"Monte?" he asked. "Is that true?"

Monte licked his lips. "You are my leannan, yes," Monte whispered, "but it's okay. I know you don't remember me, that you love Rocky. I understand and I won't stand between you."

"Monte," Rocky began, "don't—"

Monte held up his hand, stopping Rocky's words. "It's okay, Rocky, really it is. I love Doc and that means I want him to be happy, even if it means he's with you and not me." Monte's hand fluttered at his collarbone. "I just want him to be happy."

Doc frowned as Monte turned and walked away to go sit on the bed next to Mara. The sadness he'd seen in Monte's eyes was overwhelming. He looked like his entire world had been ripped apart.

"If you don't go after him then you're more stupid than I thought you were."

Doc swung around to look at Rocky. "Could you just this once tell me what in the hell is going on? If Monte is supposed to be with me then why is he with you and if he loves me then why is he giving me to you? I just want some fucking answers, Rocky."

Rocky blew out a deep breath and pushed his hand through his dark brown hair. "Shit!" he snapped. "This is all so fucking complicated."

"Just tell me, Rocky," Doc demanded.

"We can sit while we talk," Rocky said as he gestured to the two chairs by the window. "You need to conserve your energy. I doubt we'll be here very long before we need to take off again."

Doc sat down. He crossed his arms over his chest and waited for Rocky to start talking. He could see his mother lean in close to Monte. He watched her lips move, and knew she must be comforting him when he saw her wrap an arm around Monte's shoulders. Once again, Doc was assaulted with the need to be the one comforting the delicate man.

"Who is he?" Doc asked, knowing Rocky would understand who he meant.

"He's Gunny's son," Rocky began.

"Gunny's son?" Doc was shocked. He never knew Gunny had a son. Gunny never said anything. The implications of being involved with the son of his gunnery sergeant suddenly slammed into him. "Oh shit! Gunny's going to kill me."

"He might." Rocky chuckled.

"How in the hell did I get involved with him?" Doc asked. "I must have been out of my mind."

"I'm not sure exactly how it happened," Rocky said. "I wasn't there. I just met Monte yesterday."

"Do you know how we met?"

"Yeah, I think I do." Rocky folded his hands together and rested his elbows on his thighs, his gaze following the man who held center stage in their conversation. "You were sent on a mission to rescue Monte. The same people who are after us – the ones that shot you – were holding him. Somewhere along the way, you got captured as well. I think that's when you met Monte."

"How long ago was that?"

"Long enough," Rocky replied. "I know you've been together for a couple of months, at least."

"He's – " Doc shook his head as he watched Monte. "There's something about him. He's – "

"He's special," Rocky supplied.

"Yeah, I guess that's what it is," Doc said. "You know, my mom said the same thing. I just don't understand why I don't remember him. If we were involved, why don't I remember him?"

"You do have a head injury, Doc."

"I remember you," Doc said. "I remember that I – " Doc's face flamed as he realized what he'd been about to say to Rocky. He never told Rocky of his feelings.

"That you love me?" Rocky whispered.

Doc's eyes widened, shock rocketing through him. "You know?"

Rocky gazed dropped and he stared at his feet, avoiding Doc's gaze. "I kind of knew," Rocky replied after a few minutes, "but not until recently. If I hadn't fucked things up between us so badly, we might be together now. But I did and now you're with Monte and I have to accept that."

"How did you fuck things up between us?" Doc asked, curiosity eating away at him. "And since when was there an *us*?"

Rocky looked at the ceiling as he sat back in his chair. "Before you went on your mission I was shot." Doc opened his mouth to ask what happened but Rocky's raised



hand stopped him. "It doesn't matter how, I'll explain later. Suffice it to say, I was shot and we were . . . together."

Doc swallowed past the lump those words created. "Together?" he whispered. "Together how?"

Rocky just stared at him until Doc felt heat flush his face. *Oh, we were together, together.* "Damn, and I missed it," Doc mumbled.

Rocky chuckled. "Well, *I'll* never forget it, that's for sure."

"So what happened?" Doc asked. "Why aren't we together now?"

"I was an ass," Rocky said. "I said something stupid and you took it the wrong way. You left on the mission before I could pull my foot out of my mouth."

"What did you say?"

"It doesn't matter. Like I said, it was stupid. And by the time I healed and came after you, you'd been captured."

"And that's when I met Monte?"

Rocky nodded. "He really is special, Doc, and you'll be even more stupid than I was if you give him up."

Doc frowned. "If we were together then why are you supporting my being with Monte? He was doing the same thing. It's like neither of you want to be with me; you both keep trying to pass me off to the other one. Am I that horrible?"

"Christ, no, Doc," Rocky snapped. "That's not it at all."

"Then what is it?" Doc gestured between Rocky and Monte. "Explain this to me then because I have to tell you, I don't understand."

"Monte loves you. I love you. We both want you to be happy."

Doc's mouth dropped open as he stared at Rocky. "You — you love me?" he whispered. Doc felt a rush of joy followed by a wave of confusion.

He'd wanted Rocky for years. To hear the man say he loved him brought pure joy to Doc's heart. Pure joy, but not *complete* joy. Every time Doc's gaze fell on Monte, he knew something was missing from the equation.

"Yeah, Doc, I do," Rocky said. "I think I've been in love with you for years. I just never realized it. By the time I did, you were gone and it was too late."

"And Monte?"

Rocky drew in a deep breath. "He loves you too, maybe even more than I do. He'd do anything for you, even give you up, if that's what you wanted." He shook his head, avoiding Doc's eyes. "But I'll tell you now, you don't want to let him do that. You may not *remember* Monte right now but you *do* love him." Rocky finally met Doc's gaze. His brown eyes were dull, saddened. "You'll regret it, Doc, if you give Monte up. He's probably the best thing that ever happened to you."

Doc could only stare at Rocky in shock. He never heard the man talk like that before. He especially didn't expect him to admit his love then try and fix Doc up with another man.

"What happens now?" Doc finally whispered.

"Now, you should go talk to Monte, get to know him," Rocky said. "Maybe you'll remember him but even if you don't, give him a chance. He needs you far more than I can ever explain."

"What about you?"

Rocky shrugged, looking back at the floor. "I'll be okay. I just want you to be happy and I think Monte can do that for you."

"I don't—I don't know how I feel about all of this," Doc said. "I know how I feel about you. I've known for years. I know there's something there with Monte, too, but I don't know what."

"You love him."

"Do I?"

Rocky nodded. "Trust me, you love Monte."

"But I love you too," Doc whispered. "What am I supposed to do about that?"

## Chapter Nine

Rocky's heart ached at Doc's words. Even now, hours later, they still bounced around in his head. He leaned back in his chair and glanced around the room. Doc and Monte slept on one of two beds in the motel room they'd rented for the night. Mara and Natiri slept in the other bed. Sareed insisted on being on guard duty and stood by the window. Personally, Rocky thought the man was too uncomfortable going to sleep in a room full of people he didn't know.

He glanced back over at Doc. Even asleep, Doc was gorgeous. His face looked less pinched, less stressed. His body curled around Monte's in a way that made Rocky wish he could be in the same position, and it didn't seem to matter much to Rocky's heart which one of the men he spooned with.

Over the last several hours as he watched Monte and Doc talk and get to know each other, Rocky realized his feelings for Monte were growing. He cared about the little man almost as much as he cared about Doc.

He felt like his heart was being ripped in two, one part going to Doc and one part going to Monte. And neither man would ever be his. They were meant to be together, not with him. That left Rocky out in the cold, alone, a feeling he didn't much like.

Rocky got up and headed into the bathroom. He needed to splash some water on his face or take a cold shower, something to get his mind off the two men sleeping together in that bed without him.

His mind filling with fantasy images of the three of them together, Rocky quickly shed his clothes and climbed into the shower. He couldn't keep from thinking of how it would be, how erotic, how hot.

His mind overloading, Rocky leaned one hand against the shower wall and grabbed his aching cock with the other. He closed his eyes as his head dropped forward. He couldn't seem to stroke fast enough to keep up with the images playing out in his head.

The pressure in his balls built; the intensity of images increased. Rocky bit his lip but even that didn't keep his groan of ecstasy contained in his mouth. He imagined Doc on his knees. Rocky's hard cock slid past the man's lips as he fucked Doc's mouth.

His hand clenched into a fist against the shower wall as he thrust his hips forward. Doc just opened his mouth wider, swallowing Rocky down until the head of Rocky's cock hit the back of the man's throat. Doc licked and sucked his shaft.

"Oh, fuck, Doc, suck my cock," Rocky groaned. He dropped his hand from the wall and tangled his fingers in Doc's hair. Bending his knees a little he was able to get great penetration, thrusting into Doc's mouth over and over again.

Rocky's cries grew louder; his body flamed. Heavy, hard pressure built in his balls. He knew when he blew it would be monumental, unlike any blow job he'd ever experienced. It was Doc, after all.

"Fuck!" Rocky cried out as the intensity building in his groin reached a fever pitch, "take it, Doc, swallow every last fucking drop."

The mouth covering his cock tightened. The sucking pressure of Doc's mouth almost pulled Rocky from his position against the shower wall. Then suddenly, he was there. Rocky's desire detonated and he erupted, spilling shot after shot of cream into Doc's sweet mouth.

"Fuck!" Rocky exclaimed when he was finally able to speak. His arms and legs shook from exertion. His mind reeled. He wondered if the real thing would feel as good as his imaginary lover.

Rocky chuckled and shook his head when he saw his hands tremble as he poured shampoo into them. He wanted both Doc and Monte to the point where he could actually feel their breath on his body. If that didn't say he was fucked, he didn't know what did.

There was a very real possibility he'd never have either of them. Rocky knew he needed to accustom himself to that. They loved each other and had something to build their future on. Rocky just had a wish.

He tried to push such useless thoughts to the back of his mind and concentrate on the immediate. He needed to get Doc, Monte, and everyone else safely home to the elf side of the veil. That needed to be his top priority. He could think of others things after that.

After rinsing his hair and body, Rocky climbed from the shower. He quickly dried off and redressed. He hated the fact that he needed to put dirty clothes back on but he didn't have anything else with him.

He walked back into the main room, noting that Doc and Monte still slept peacefully on the bed, wrapped in each other's arms. Rocky knew he'd be lying to himself if he didn't admit he was a bit jealous. He wanted to be wrapped in their arms too.

"Do you think we're going to get home?"

Rocky turned to see Sareed watching him. He stood by the window, his gaze going from Rocky to the small slit in the curtains then back to Rocky. He was the only other person awake at the moment.

"Yeah, we'll make it," Rocky said. He didn't know if it was true but he had to believe it. They'd made their way through Mara's neighborhood until they came across the cheap motel, where they'd decided to stop and hole up for the night.

Rocky didn't want to put too much stress on either Doc or Monte, both men being in delicate conditions, albeit for different reasons. They were his primary concern, followed closely by the responsibility of getting everyone home safely. Speaking of which . . . .

"Where is home for you?" Rocky asked. "I know you're from the Unseelie Court but that's like saying you're from Kansas. Do you actually come from a town or do you just say Unseelie Court?"

Sareed chuckled lightly. "I was actually born in a place called Gorias but I've spent most of my life going from place to place. I spent the last few years here in your human world."

Rocky cocked his head to one side as he regarded the man curiously. "You've been in the human world for a few years? How in the hell did you get captured then?"

Sareed shrugged. "I tried to go home."

Rocky waited for Sareed to say more but he didn't. "And? There has to be more to the story than that. How did you get captured? Were you already on the other side of the veil?"

Sareed nodded. "Yeah, I had just passed through the veil when I was taken. I thought if I passed through the veil in the Unseelie Court that I would be okay, that no one would catch me." Sareed shrugged again. "Guess I was wrong."

"Who would catch you?"

"Anyone in the Seelie Court." Sareed pulled on his long, black braid. "I stick out like a sore thumb in the Seelie Court. Anyone would know I was Unseelie just by looking at me."

"So, you crossed the veil into the Unseelie Court?" Rocky asked. All this Seelie and Unseelie stuff made his head spin. Why didn't they all get along? They were all elves. They should all be working together to make their world better, not fighting between themselves.

"Yes. Granted, the area I entered wasn't far from the Seelie Court border but it *was* on Unseelie Court land. I figured I would be safe. Imagine my surprise when I ran into a band of armed humans."

"Humans. Eljin mentioned that humans took him from your side of the veil."

Sareed nodded. "Probably the same humans who took me."

"We need to figure out how they are getting through the veil, Sareed," Rocky said. "My understanding is that humans can't pass through the veil without someone of the Aes Sídh with them."

"Normally, that would be true, but if they have one of the four treasures of the Tuatha Dé Danann then they can get through the veil without the assistance of the Aes Sídh. Anyone can."

"The four treasures of the Tuatha Dé Danann?" Rocky asked. "What in the hell are those?"

"The Aes Sídhé have four major cities: Falias, Gorias, Murias and Findias. Murias and Falias are located in the Seelie Court, Gorias and Findias in the Unseelie Court. With me so far?" Sareed asked.

Rocky nodded. "Sort of."

Sareed chuckled. "Okay, each city has a magical treasure, something that is unique to that city. If a human were to get their hands on one of those treasures, they could pass through the veil without assistance."

"And how could a human get their hands on one of these treasures?"

"They haven't been seen in centuries, not since the Tuatha Dé Danann traveled to Ireland. Many believe the four treasures were taken to Ireland then but I'm beginning to think they were just stolen."

"By humans?" Rocky asked.

Sareed shrugged. "By humans, by the Aes Sídhé? What does it matter, they were stolen, plain and simple."

"What are these treasures?" Rocky asked. "Do they have some sort of magical powers or something?"

"Many believe they do," Sareed replied. "I'm not so sure. I think that maybe the Aes Sídhé make their own magic, good or evil. I don't think they need a treasure to do that."

Rocky sat back in his chair and watched the young man. Sareed was a conundrum to Rocky. On one hand, Rocky had been told that all Unseelie elves were evil. And, while Sareed seemed to be distant and looked out for himself, he didn't seem evil. He seemed like someone who had to look out for himself because no one else would.

"Sareed, why did you leave the Unseelie Court?"

Sareed's face flushed, and Rocky raised a brow. That was not a reaction he expected from the fierce little man.

"I wasn't wanted there anymore."

"Wasn't wanted?" Rocky repeated. "Care to explain that statement?"

"I was banished, okay?" Sareed snapped.

"Why?" Rocky persisted.

Sareed rolled his eyes. He crossed his arms over his chest and leaned back against the wall next to the window. "I refused to participate when ordered to go on a raiding mission across the border."

"Why?"

"Because it's wrong." Sareed waved his hand in the air. "Oh, I could care less about the actual raiding thing. Our people are starving and we need food. It was the killing I didn't go for. I was a soldier in the army and my commander ordered me to execute the farmers we were raiding. I refused and helped them escape." Sareed shrugged. "After they beat me, I was banished and left behind for the Seelie to find. I escaped to the human world before they could find me."

"Then why go back?"

"I missed my people," Sareed mumbled. "You don't know what it's like out here, trying to hide who I am from everyone. You never know who might turn you in, who might come after you, who might hurt you. It's horrible, not much better than the Unseelie Court, but at least there, the people torturing me were my own people."

"Is the Unseelie Court really that bad?"

"It's worse." Sareed snorted. He gestured to where Monte slept in Doc's arms. "He was right when he said it was hell. I'm just sorry he had to experience it. There are many in the Unseelie Court that would have seen the torture of him and his mayer as giving them their due."

"You don't sound like you think much of the Unseelie Court."

"I guess I don't," Sareed replied. Rocky could hear the sadness in his voice. "I don't know if the Seelie Court is that much better though. In fact, the human world isn't either. I guess there aren't a whole lot of places that are."

"I think you have to make them better, Sareed. I don't think it happens on its own."



"I don't think I have that particular talent." Sareed chuckled. "I've pretty much fucked up everything I've ever been involved in. I mean, look at me now. I'm on the run from a psychotic doctor who wants my DNA so he can produce super soldiers."

"But you can't have babies like Eljin and Monte, can you?"

"No, only royal males can give birth. In the general population, only the women carry young," Sareed said. "I'm not royalty. Hell, I don't know what I am. I never knew my parents."

"Then you could still be royalty, right?"

"Are you serious?" Sareed scoffed. "I barely qualify for the rank of second class citizen. There's no way in hell I'm royalty."

Rocky shrugged. "You never know."

Rocky smiled over at Sareed as the man began to chuckle. He opened his mouth to say something about Sareed being the long lost son of some royal when he saw a shadow pass outside the window.

Rocky jumped to his feet and leaped across the space between them, smashing into Sareed and pressing him against the wall. He quickly covered Sareed's mouth with his hand before the man could say anything.

At Sareed's frightened look, Rocky shook his head and nodded toward the window. Sareed turned to look then nodded. Rocky took his hand away and stepped closer to the window, flattening his body against the wall and peering through the small crack between the wall and the curtain.

He could see two armed men creeping along the walkway outside their room toward the decoy room they'd rented, the empty one. They'd rented two rooms, one in Rocky's name, one in Mara's, and they'd rented them over an hour apart. He was sure the motel clerk didn't know they were even connected, which was the idea. Hopefully, the people tracking them would go to the empty room, giving them a better chance to escape.

Rocky pointed to their four sleeping companions. Sareed nodded and hurried across the room. He woke Doc first. At Doc's questioning look, Sareed put his finger to his mouth and pointed back at Rocky.

Rocky gestured toward the window and made a motion with his fingers that he'd seen two men walking outside the door. Doc nodded and rolled off the bed. He immediately started pulling on his shoes.

Nadir, Monte, and Mara looked worried but stayed quiet as they got dressed and ready to go. Rocky kept an eye on their visitors. The two men continued down the walkway toward the decoy room they'd rented, which was just what Rocky hoped they'd do.

Rocky knew they'd only have moments to get away, and only one chance. There were more than likely others waiting for them. He could only hope he and his companions could slip by without getting caught.

Once everyone was ready to go, Rocky motioned for them to stand in a line against the wall behind the door. He checked through the curtain one last time. The two men he'd seen walking past the window weren't in sight, but that didn't mean they weren't around. The parking lot looked empty, almost too empty . . . and certainly too quiet.

With a sense of dread, Rocky motioned with his hand for everyone to follow him and stepped out the door. The group quickly made their way down the walkway to the corner of the building.

The escape route Rocky mapped out when they arrived called for them to get to the corner of the building and head down the alley to the next street over. From there, they might be able to reach the subway or find an empty cab. That was the plan anyway.

That plan came to a halt when Rocky spotted the two men standing just around the corner. He stepped back and motioned for Doc to join him.

"Get them out of here," Rocky said. "Get them to a waterfall or a large body of water and get them home. I'm depending on you, Doc."

Doc frowned. "Rocky, no, we can all go to —"

"No, we can't," Rocky said. "Someone has to slow these guys down. You're injured and none of the others have the experience. I'm the only one who can do this, Doc, and we both know it." He cupped the side of Doc's face and leaned in to give him a gentle kiss on the lips. "Just go to Seelie Court with Monte and be happy."

"Rocky —"

"Just go, Doc." Rocky cast one last look at Doc then looked to Monte. He could see the tears in Monte's eyes as the man shook his head. Rocky smiled then turned away. He could feel tears prickling his own eyes as he waited for them to leave. It seemed forever before he heard their steps fade into the distance.

Rocky rubbed his hand over his face and took a deep breath, telling himself this was for the best. Someone had to stay behind and distract those chasing them. Rocky was the best man for the job.

Nadir and Mara couldn't fight. Sareed could but he'd need to help keep Doc and Monte safe. And Doc and Monte needed each other more than anything else. Rocky was going to make sure they got the chance to see where their relationship could go.

He wasn't planning on dying or anything but he knew death was a very real possibility. The men he needed to slow down were armed. He might be armed as well but there were two or more of them and only one Rocky.

Rocky peeked around the corner again. The men were speaking softly, pointing to the floor above them. His mood brightened a bit. They thought Rocky and his crew were upstairs. That might work in his favor.

Rocky walked back to the stairwell and crouched down under it. He pulled out his gun and checked the chamber. Rocky grimaced. He was out of bullets. He re-holstered the weapon and pulled out his knife. The gun would draw attention anyway.

Rocky could hear the men speaking, their voices growing louder as they came closer. He gripped the knife in his hand. The seconds ticked by so slowly Rocky could feel each drop of sweat dripping down his temple.

His body tensed. He heard a small, scraping sound behind him and swung around, knife raised for attack. The breath rushed out of his lungs as deep relief filled him.

"What in the hell are you doing here," he whispered.

"Helping your ass out," Sareed sneered as he crouched beside the building, drawing Rocky down with him. "Besides, if you think I'm going back to Seelie Court without someone on my side, you're out of your ever-loving mind."

Rocky rolled his eyes.

"Do you have anything bigger than that?" Sareed asked as he nodded toward the knife Rocky held in his hand. Rocky shook his head. "Then you'd better duck!"

## Chapter Ten

Monte jumped when he heard the scuffle start behind them. He knew Rocky was fighting for his life, for *their* lives. Thank goodness Sareed insisted on going back to help.

After all of the shit he'd given Sareed about being an Unseelie elf, Monte realized the man was turning out to be unlike anyone he'd ever met. He had his own sense of honor, one Monte admired. He respected the man even more for going back to help Rocky.

Monte's heart ached at the thought he might never see Rocky again. In the last twenty-four hours, the man had come to mean a lot to Monte. He didn't want to see the last of him . . . but rather more, much more.

*What a mess I am*, Monte thought. He'd developed feelings for Rocky, and he still wasn't sure where he stood with Doc. Both men were driving him crazy. Doc still didn't remember him but he'd taken a huge turn, coming to talk to Monte and sticking close to him.

The topic of the baby hadn't come up, not yet. Monte didn't know if he trusted the change in Doc enough to discuss it with him. There was still the matter of Doc

remembering Rocky, but not remembering him. Until they dealt with that, Monte didn't know if he and Doc even had a future.

The fighting behind them grew louder even as they walked farther away. Monte's heart pounded. Rocky would never make it, not even with Sareed's assistance.

He grabbed Doc's hand and pulled him to a stop. "Doc, you need to go back and help Rocky and Sareed. Mara, Natiri, and I can get away on our own. We'll be fine. Rocky needs help." He gestured back to the fighting. "Rocky needs you right now."

Doc looked indecisive. "Monte, I can't—"

Monte started pushing him in the direction of the fighting. "Go!"

Doc frowned. Without warning, he reached out and hauled Monte into his arms. He leaned down and claimed Monte's lips before he could protest.

Monte felt the kiss zing through his body from head to toe. While it hadn't been that long, Monte felt like eons had passed since he felt Doc's lips press against his. *Oh, how I missed this.* Doc's lips, his body, his strong arms. He missed everything about the man.

"Okay, I'll go save Rocky," Doc finally said as he lifted his head, his eyes intent as he gazed down at Monte. "But you have to promise me you'll keep yourself safe. I *need* you to be safe."

Monte smiled. "I'll make sure I stay safe if you promise to come back to me."

Doc nodded. "I won't leave you."

Monte nodded, unable to speak past the lump in his throat. He'd heard those words before. He didn't know if he could believe in them anymore. He didn't have that much courage.

Monte watched Doc walk away, resisting the urge to pull him back only by telling himself he'd done the right thing. He gazed after Doc for another moment then turned and followed after Mara and Natiri. It took him just a few moments to catch up.

"Where's Petey?" Mara asked.

"He went to make sure Rocky and Sareed get away safely."

"In his condition?"

"He'll be okay." Monte tried to assure Mara even though he wasn't sure he believed it himself. "He's just checking on them, that's all. He won't get involved in the fight."

When Mara started to lag behind, Monte grabbed her by the arm and yanked her along behind him. 'Come on, we need to go. I promised both Rocky and Doc we'd get to my side of the veil."

"How?" Mara cried. "How are we supposed to do that?"

"We need to find water, a lake, a river, preferably a waterfall, some sort of water that we can pass through."

"Like a curtain?"

Monte nodded. "Something like that. Think of the veil as a circle. It doesn't matter if the circle is lying down, standing up, or on the ceiling. It just needs to be wide enough for us to walk through." Monte chuckled. "Hell, we can crawl through the damn thing if we need to."

"Would a fountain work?" Natiri asked.

"If it was big enough." Monte replied as he glanced over at the small, winged man.

"Is that big enough?" Natiri asked as he pointed behind Monte.

Monte looked to where Natiri indicated then did a little happy dance. "Yes, yes, that's perfect," he said as he pulled Mara along. He stood at the edge of the fountain and marveled that humans could be so stupid to place a veil gate right out in the middle of a small courtyard.

It wasn't a large fountain but it was big enough for their purposes. It was round, with a statue in the middle. The sides were knee height, the water level just below that.

"Natiri, you go first," Monte said. "Mara and I will follow."

Natiri nodded and stepped up onto the ledge. He jumped off the side into the fountain, and his body passed right on through the water and disappeared.

Mara gasped.

"Okay, we're next," Monte said, before she could ask questions. He stepped up onto the edge of the fountain. "Are you ready for this?"

"What about Rocky and Petey?" she asked as she looked back over her shoulder.

"Sareed can get them through the veil; don't worry." He pulled on Mara's hand again and wrapped his other hand around his stomach. "Come on, let's get your grandson home."

"Oh god, the baby," Mara exclaimed as she looked down at Monte's distended stomach. "I totally forgot the baby."

"It's okay; this has been a pretty crazy night," Monte said. "And you've only had a few hours to get used to the idea. I've had weeks."

"Oh, but Monte," she cried.

Monte patted her hand. "Really, it's alright, we just need to concentrate on getting home where we'll be safe. We can worry about all the rest of this later, okay?"

"I – Monte, watch out!"

Monte turned back toward the fountain, just as three men suddenly rose up out of the water. He pulled Mara's arm and jumped back, intending to run until he recognized the Seelie Court emblem on two of the men's uniforms. He put a hand over his chest to still his racing heart.

"It's okay, Mara, they're guards from Seelie Court," Monte said when he could speak. "They won't hurt us."

The third man, one Monte didn't recognize, stepped forward. "Are you Monte?"

Monte nodded and tilted his head to one side as something in the man's features made him curious. "Who are you?" He stepped back when the man reached out to him.

"Gunny?" Mara said.

Monte snapped his head around to stare at Mara then looked slowly back to the man she'd called Gunny. He thought he detected a shine of tears in the man's eyes.

"You're Montgomery Barnes?"

Gunny nodded.

"You're my fayer," Monte whispered, stunned to finally be gazing upon the man. He looked exactly like his mayer, Roland, had described, right down to the stocky body and cropped hair. Only time had turned the once-dark hair a salt and pepper gray and his face looked more aged than the way his mayer had described the young man he'd fallen in love with. No matter, Monte thought. He still looked impressive.

"Yes, son, I am," Gunny said, "and I've come to take you home."

\* \* \* \* \*

"You stupid son-of-a-bitch," Rocky mumbled as Doc leaped into the fray, jumping on the back of their nearest attacker. He grunted as the heel of one of the other soldier's foot connected with his lower rib cage. He ducked the man's next kick and took the opening to lean in and kick out, connecting with the inside of the guy's calf. The man went down, howling and grabbing at his leg.

Rocky turned to go after the next guy just in time to see Doc start to go down after a punch to his face. As Rocky leaped across the ground between them and swung at Doc's attacker, he distantly realized that the loud roar he heard was coming from his own mouth.

Rocky's fist connected with a solid thud, but he didn't wait to see if he'd caused any damage before he swung with his other fist. Then, grabbing the man by the shirt, Rocky pulled back his right arm and delivered a series of blows to the man's face.

Petrified anger overrode his natural sense of fair play, his only desire to hurt the man who hurt his Doc.

"Rocky, enough!"

Rocky turned to growl at whoever grabbed his arm before he could swing again. The sight of Sareed's worried face filtered through the cracks in the red haze surrounding Rocky. He paused and stared at the man in confusion.

"If you hit him again you're going to kill him," Sareed said. "He's already unconscious, and I'm pretty sure he's going to be in the hospital for quite awhile."



Rocky glanced at the man he held by the front of his shirt. He really *was* a bloody mass of messed up goo. Rocky was pretty sure he'd broken the man's jaw. He had no doubt he'd shattered his nose.

Rocky released his hold on the man's shirt and watched him drop to the ground like dead weight. He gave him one last look then stepped over his body to reach Doc. He knelt down next to the man and checked him over for injuries. Except for a slight bump on the side of his head, he seemed fine, but unconscious.

Rocky shook his head as he grabbed Doc and picked him up, easing him over his shoulder before standing. "Come on, Sareed, we need to get our asses out of here before someone comes looking for these goons."

"Shouldn't we—I don't know, search them or something?" Sareed asked as he gestured to the three men lying on the ground.

Rocky shrugged. "I guess it wouldn't hurt but be quick about it. We don't have much time. I'm sure someone heard the fight." Rocky grimaced. "I have no doubt the authorities are already on their way."

Sareed quickly rifled through each man's pockets and relieved them of their weapons and a few other items. He shoved everything into a backpack he'd taken from one of the men and shrugged his arms through the straps. He looked toward Rocky. "Okay, ready."

Rocky grunted and started carrying Doc down the walkway in the same direction Monte and the others had taken. He didn't know if he and Sareed would catch up but he could hope. But more than anything else, he prayed Monte had gotten away safely.

They hadn't gotten farther than the parking lot before two large shadows suddenly fell across their path. Rocky skidded to a stop and started to pull Doc off his shoulder, ready to drop into a fighting stance, when one of the shadows stepped into the light.

"Fuck, Gunny," he whispered harshly, his heart pounding. "You scared the shit out of me."

"Nice to see you too, Rocky," Gunny said. He gestured to Doc. "Is he okay?"

"Define okay." Rocky pulled Doc off his shoulder and carefully laid him on the ground. "He's been shot in the head and the damn fool jumped right into our fight."

Gunny chuckled. "That sounds about right for Doc," he said, "or you."

Rocky rolled his eyes. He knew Gunny was correct but that didn't make him any happier about the situation. Doc was injured. He had no business running into a fight with a head injury. He could have been more seriously injured. Then again, what had he expected? Doc wouldn't leave someone behind if he could help. The man could be a complete moron at times.

"Did you see Monte?" Rocky asked, suddenly remembering the other man. "He left here with Mara and Natiri. They were looking for a water source, a gate through the veil."

Gunny nodded. "Yes, we ran into them just down the street. There's a nice-sized fountain down there. That's where I came through."

"Hell, let's get going then," Rocky said. He reached down to scoop Doc back into his arms when the man's eyes suddenly popped open. He drew in a quick breath as if he didn't have any air in his lungs and sat right up, looking around wildly.

"Monte!" Doc exclaimed. "Where's Monte?"

"Monte?" Gunny asked, his voice laced with confusion.

"Yes, you fool. Monte. My leannan."

## **Chapter Eleven**

Monte hopped from one foot to the other as he waited impatiently for Gunny to come through the veil. He felt as if hours had passed since Gunny'd gone to find the others, but he knew it was only a few minutes.

He stared through the veil and tried not to count the seconds, but his anxiety rode high. The two men who held his heart were on the other side of the gate, most

likely in a fight to the death. Most assuredly on the run. Monte's heart ached with the thought of what could happen to them.

Funny, how a dangerous situation could bring to light one's deepest emotions. Only in the last few moments had he realized how much he cared for both Doc *and* Rocky.

Monte's legs gave out and he sank onto the steps leading up to the gate. He cared for Rocky. How in the hell did that happen? Rocky had claimed a piece of his heart just as Doc had, and he didn't have a clue what he was going to do about it. He was damned if he did and damn if he didn't.

He loved Doc, carried his child, but Doc didn't remember him. He only remembered his love for Rocky. Monte loved Rocky too, but Rocky was just being nice to him because he cared for Doc.

Either way Monte looked at the situation he was fucked. He loved two men and neither of them loved him. That left him all alone and pregnant, not a good place to be.

Monte rubbed his hand down his face. Tears of exhaustion coursed down his cheeks. Sometimes carrying young sucked. His emotions were all wacky.

"Are you doing okay, dear?" Mara asked as she sat down next to him.

Monte shrugged. "Yeah, I guess."

"Is the baby okay?"

He caressed his stomach and smiled, despite his breaking heart. "Yes, he's fine. I think we're both a little tired and I'll be glad when we get home so we can rest."

"So, Gunny's your father?" Mara asked after a moment.

"So it seems."

"But you've never met him until now?"

"No. Before I was born, Roland, my mayer, was captured by the Unseelie Court. We spent two years being held captive before we were release. My mayer told me about my fayer, of course, but I'd never met him."

"Mayer? Fayer?" Mara asked.

Monte chuckled. "Mayer means birth father. Fayer is the father of my creation, or the sperm donor. It's our version of the human terms, mother and father."

"Sperm donor?" Mara laughed. "Then it's really true? Your kind only creates children with other males?"

"Only in the royal house," Monte explained. "Our general population is more like humans. The women get pregnant and give birth. It's actually a pretty good indicator if someone has royal genetics because only the males in our house give birth."

"Do you have any idea how strange this is to me, being a doctor and all?" Mara asked. "Add the fact that your child is my grandchild and –"

"Grandson."

"Huh?"

"You said grandchild," Monte said. "I'm carrying your grandson. Only males of the royal family can give birth and we only give birth to males."

"That kind of cuts out the need for a woman, doesn't it?"

"To a point, I guess. We've had royals mate with females before, but none of those women were royals."

"So, any child born of a mating between a royal and a woman wouldn't be considered a royal?" Mara asked.

"I guess they would be but I don't know," Monte replied. "It hasn't happened in my lifetime."

Mara laughed as she patted Monte's thigh. "I'd sure like to be around when it did. It would be a hoot!"

Monte chuckled. He liked Mara.

"What do grandmothers do?" Monte asked out of curiosity.

"The same thing grandfathers do, I imagine."

"I never had a grandmother, just two grandfathers," Monte explained. "I just kind of wondered if they were different."

"No, not really," Mara said. "Our job is to love our grandchildren, spoil them rotten, sugar them up, and then give them back."

Monte's eyebrow shot up. "Really?"

"Well, not really," Mara said. "We all want good things for anyone we love, happiness, good health, and a long life. Grandparents want the same things for their grandchildren. We worry just as much, care just as much as we do with our own children." Mara grinned and bumped shoulders with Monte. "We just don't have to say no when the baby wants something. We can spoil them rotten. It's kind of in the job description."

"I think that's pretty fair." Monte laughed. He patted the hand resting on his thigh. "I think you're going to make a wonderful grandmother."

"Thank you, Monte," Mara said. "I'm very excited about the prospect. I kind of figured with Doc liking men and all that I'd never have a grandchild. You don't know how happy this makes me."

Monte looked down at his feet as sadness filled him once again. "I'd be happy if Doc remembered who I was."

"He will," Mara said. "You just have to give him time."

"Rocky said the same thing."

"He's right. I know my son. If he cared about you enough to make a child with you then he won't forget who you are."

Bitterness welled up inside Monte. He shook his head. "He didn't care about me when we made the baby. He did that to save me from the guards. The caring came afterward."

"But it did come," Mara insisted. "That has to tell you something."

Monte tightened his lips. It *did* tell him something. It told him he'd been really, really stupid. He made a child with a man who didn't care about him, committed himself to that man for life, bonded with him forever. And now that man didn't even know him.

Monte stood and brushed off his butt. "Hey, um, I'm going to head up to the castle. Why don't you —"

"Castle?" Mara whispered. "You live in a castle?"

Monte chuckled at Mara's astonished look. "I'm a royal elf. Where else would I live?"

"But a *castle*?"

"It's a nice castle."

Mara laughed. Monte smiled then started down the steps. "The guards will stay here and wait for Gunny and the guys. Do you wish to wait with them or come back to the castle with me?"

"Oh, um . . . ." Mara looked from Monte to the large stone circle that housed the gate between worlds. "I suppose so I'll go with you, if you're sure the guards will wait here."

"They will." Monte nodded. He reached over and grabbed Mara's hand then turned and walked down the road that led to the Seelie Court castle. As much as it made his heart ache to walk away, it brought him joy to be heading home.

He missed his father and the rest of his family. He wanted to surround himself with people who cared about him. And then he wanted to sleep for a week.

Ten minutes later, Monte and Mara arrived at his home. He waved to the sentries as he passed through the front gate, smiling when they waved back and offered no objection to his entry. At least people here seemed to know who he was.

"I can't believe you actually live in a castle."

Monte smiled. "It's nice. Later, I'll give you a tour if you like. Right now I need to see my mayer."

"Of course, I understand completely. Just point me in the direction of a bathroom." She paused then asked, "You do have bathrooms, right?"

"We have bathrooms." Monte chuckled and waved down a passing servant. "This is Mara, my leannan's mother. Please see that she is shown to a room and have food brought to her."

"Thank you, Monte," Mara said. "Now go find your mayer. I'll be fine."

Monte nodded and hurried inside, making a beeline for his mayer's room. He was dirty, scruffy looking, and in need of a lot of rest, but he was home. The sweet

scents Monte associated with home and safety filled him as he ran up the large staircase in the main entryway . . . fresh air, the woods, and lemons.

Monte absently wondered why he associated those smells with safety and home. A strange combination but one Monte held close to his heart. As the smells became stronger, Monte quickened his pace.

"Mayer," he called out as he rushed into Roland's quarters. "Mayer? Where are you?"

"Monte?"

Monte turned to see his mayer walking in from the balcony off the living room. He raced across the room and threw himself into his mayer's arms, breathing deeply, inhaling the scent that was uniquely his mayer's.

"Oh my god, Monte, where have you been?" Roland whispered as he hugged his son. "What happened to you?"

"It's a long story, Mayer," Monte replied. He leaned back to look up into his mayer's face. "I'll fill you in later and answer any questions you have, but right now, I need food, a bath, and some rest, and not necessarily in that order."

Roland frowned and glanced pointedly at Monte's stomach. "You're carrying, aren't you?"

Monte nodded and waited for his mayer's reaction.

"And the fayer?"

Monte shrugged and pushed away from Roland. He slowly walked around the room, noticing the things his mayer held dear, the things that decorated his private quarters.

Monte found it telling that most of the items situated around the room were family mementoes and pictures, not fancy statues and vases. The pictures on the walls were of him and his mayer, not expensive artwork. Monte hoped his quarters would be much the same when the baby came.

"His name is Doc, well, Pete, but I call him Doc."

"Doc? Zack's friend, Doc?"

"Yeah, I suppose so," Monte replied, glancing over at his mayer curiously. "Do you know him?"

Roland nodded. "Yes, I met Doc when he came before with his friends."

Monte could see the hesitant look in his mayer's eyes. He knew the man wanted to say something but anxiety held him back. Monte could guess what it was about. "I met an interesting man at the veil, Mayer."

"Oh?"

"He said he was my fayer, Montgomery Barnes."

Roland let out a huge sigh. "I wasn't sure how to tell you, Monte. Gunny came with Doc and his friends when they brought Eljin home."

Monte nodded. "Doc told me all about it. In fact, one of the first things he talked to me about was you and Gunny finding each other. That's kind of how we met and started talking."

"Where is Doc now?" Roland asked.

Monte shrugged. "The men who took me were chasing us. Rocky and Sareed stayed behind to distract them while the rest of us got away. Doc went back to help them. I'm not real sure where he is right now."

"Sareed?"

Monte chuckled. "Sareed is an Unseelie elf but he is the most unlikely Unseelie elf I have ever met. After what we went through when I was a toddler I never thought I'd say this but I consider him a friend, Mayer."

"An Unseelie elf? You would be friends with an Unseelie elf?"

Monte could hear the astonishment in his mayer's voice and knew how the man felt. He'd surprised himself when he said the words. But Monte knew he spoke the truth. He considered Sareed a friend.

"Yes, and not only do I consider Sareed a friend but I would trust him with my life and the life of my child. I already have and he's come through for me every single time."

"Are you sure he's an Unseelie elf?"



Monte chuckled and nodded. "He's not like any Unseelie elf I've ever met. Just wait until you meet him."

"I actually think I'm looking forward to it." Roland laughed.

Monte put his hand to his head as a sudden wave of dizziness overcame him. He reached blindly for the nearby chaise lounge with his free hand and quickly sat down before he fell down.

"Monte?" Roland asked as he rushed to Monte's side. "Are you okay, son?"

"I really think I need to lie down, Mayer," Monte said. "I've had a very exciting few months and I think it is finally starting to catch up to me."

"Of course, Monte," Roland said as he helped Monte to his feet. "Let's get you into bed and then we'll have the healer come check you out, just to make sure everything is okay."

Monte nodded then wished he hadn't when his head swam. He let his mayer lead him down the hallway to his quarters next door and went immediately to the bed. He crawled up onto the mattress and sprawled out on his back.

He almost laughed as his mayer hurried around, grabbing a rag and a bowl of water and setting them on the small table next to the bed. He pulled clean clothes out of Monte's dresser and laid them on the end of the bed.

"Okay, son, you just lay there and rest," Roland said. "I'm going to get some food for you and find the healer."

Monte nodded. "Thanks, Mayer," he said. "It's good to be home."

"It's good to have you home, son."

"Oh, Doc's mother, Mara, is here as well. I had someone show her to a room and get her some food. You might want to check in on her. I think she's a little overwhelmed."

"I'll take care of it, my son."

Monte smiled and watched his mayer walk out of his quarters. He rolled over to his side and wrapped his arm around his stomach. Monte closed his eyes and prayed that sleep would overtake him quickly. He was so tired he ached. God, what a mess. He

had a baby coming, Doc didn't remember him, and Rocky would never be his. Everything in his life was going to shit!

He closed his eyes and let the exhaustion flooding his body pull him down into darkness. There just didn't seem to be any reason to stay awake.

## Chapter Twelve

"Do you think you could slow down just a bit, Doc?"

Doc glanced over his shoulder at Rocky and frowned. "I need to get to Monte."

"Well, you're sure as shit not going to do it any faster if you break your fool neck."

Doc ignored Rocky and kept his quick pace toward the fountain Gunny pointed out to him. He needed to get to Monte as quickly as he could. Something was wrong. He didn't know what but he could feel it. If he didn't get to Monte, he could lose him.

Reaching the edge of the fountain, Doc didn't waste any time. He leaped over the edge and right into the water. He held his breath as the water covered over his head and he went through the veil that separated the human world from the elf world.

He felt his stomach roll as the water whirled around him then finally dumped him out on the elf side of the veil. Landing hard on his hands and knees, he shook his head to clear it. Going through the veil was a bitch.

He climbed to his feet and started slowly down the steps. His body still shook, but he wasn't about to let that slow him down. He didn't even stop when he heard Gunny, Rocky, and Sareed come through the gate behind him. He just kept heading toward the castle off in the distance.

By the time he reached the front gate, Doc was panting heavily. He felt like he'd run a marathon. But physical exertion wasn't the only thing making his heart pump wildly and his breathing erratic. The entire walk, all he could think about was Monte and how badly he'd fucked up.

Doc couldn't believe he hadn't remembered Monte. The man was his lover; he carried Doc's child. Monte should have been the last person Doc forgot. He couldn't even imagine how devastated Monte must have been.

Only after he'd poured over the events of the last twenty-four hours did he remember *not* remembering Monte. The knowledge had filled his heart with so much pain, his knees had grown weak. But he remembered Monte now and he needed to get to the man and tell him so. That goal was the only thing that kept Doc's feet moving.

"Halt!" a guard shouted.

"Stop where you are!" shouted another one as they both raced toward Doc.

Doc ignored the guards and raced through the castle entrance. He could hear them give chase and he sped up. Doc reached the front doors just as the guards caught him by the arms and pulled him to a stop.

A sword was pressed across his throat, his arms tugged behind his back. Doc froze, afraid to move for fear the steel at his throat would cut him. He didn't even swallow, not that he could have, even if he wanted to. A large lump suddenly formed in his throat.

"Whoa, guys, back off with the blades. He's a friend."

Doc heaved a sigh of relief when he heard Gunny come up behind him. He felt the sword across his throat slowly lift away. Once it was gone, Doc reached up and rubbed his neck, thankful he hadn't been cut.

He'd seen how sharp the guards' swords were before he left on his mission. They sharpened them continuously, honing them into fine, deadly blades. They could cut through a man's neck like butter.

The moment the guard drew his sword back far enough, Doc stepped back. He bent over and rested his hands on his knees, taking in several deep breaths. He felt a hand pat him on the back and he looked up to find Gunny standing beside him.

"That was sure fire stupid, son," Gunny said. "You know that, right?"

Doc nodded. "I figured I needed to get to Monte no matter what."

"Well, I can understand that, Doc, but this isn't the way to do it." Gunny gestured to the two armed guards who stood off to one side, staring at them intently. "These guys, they don't fool around with the safety of the royal family. And I don't think they have a sense of humor."

Doc stood and waved a hand at the guards. "I'm sorry, guys, I swear. I'm just trying to get inside to my leannan, Monte. I'm sure you know who he is. His mayer is Roland."

The guards nodded, their stiff postures lessening a bit. "Fayerye Monte came in awhile ago. His mayer is with him now."

Doc sagged with relief. He gestured toward the castle. "Can I go in?" he asked. "You can escort me or whatever it is you need to do. I just need to get to Monte."

"Come on, Doc, I'll show you where he is," Gunny said. "His quarters are right next door to mine and Roland's."

Doc eagerly followed Gunny inside the castle. The thing inside of him, whatever it was that told him something was wrong with Monte, was growing stronger. He needed to get to the man and fast.

Gunny led him up the huge winding staircase in the entry to the third floor. They went down a long hallway lined with antique wooden furniture and colorful tapestries. Every now and then someone rushed past them.

Doc began to notice they all seemed to be in a hurry. And they all seemed to be coming from a set of doors at the far end of the hall. The closer they got, the harder Doc's heart pounded until he thought he might pass out.

Just as they reached the doors, they swung open. Zack stepped out into the hall, followed closely by Roland. Doc's heart skipped a beat when he saw the tears streaming down Roland's face.

"Roland," Gunny cried out, rushing to his leannan's side. "What's wrong? Is it Monte? Has something happened?"

"Yes. M-monte," Roland stammered through his tears.

Doc pushed his way past Roland and Gunny to get into the room. His steps faltered when he got inside, his gaze going to the bed. Monte lay there, unmoving, his skin so pale as to be almost transparent.

"Monte?" he whispered as he stepped closer.

"Peter."

Doc turned to look at his mother. She never called him Peter. She always referred to him as Petey, except when something was serious. The way her hands twisted together told Doc this was very serious.

"Mom, wha — ?"

Mara shook her head. "I'm not sure, son. I don't know enough about his physiology to make a determination." Mara waved her hand around the room. "And the medical equipment is sparse, as you can see. Under the circumstances, I just don't know."

"Is he — ?" Doc stopped speaking, unwilling to put his thoughts into words.

"He's alive for now," Mara said quietly.

"And the baby?"

Mara shook his head. "I just don't know, Peter."

Doc's heart refused to believe what his mind was telling him. Monte was too strong to be the pale, thin body that lay in the massive bed before him. He had too much life in him, too much spirit.

"I'd like a moment alone with him."

Mara nodded and walked out of the room.

Doc slowly walked to the bed and knelt on the floor. He reached out and grabbed Monte's hand, rubbing his thumb up and down the delicate skin. Tears prickled his eyes as he looked down at Monte.

"Hey, pretty baby," he whispered. "It's me, Doc." Doc paused. He didn't exactly expect an answer, and he didn't get one, not even a flicker of an eyelid. "Mom says you're not feeling so hot. I hope it's not because of how stupid I was when I got shot because I know who you are, Monte. I know exactly who you are."

Doc reached up with his free hand and brushed Monte's sunlight blond hair back from his face. "You wouldn't believe how horrible I felt when Rocky told me what an asshole I had been." Doc chuckled anxiously. "I could never really forget you, Monte. You're my leannan, remember? We bonded and everything."

Doc moved his hand down Monte's frail body until it hovered over his distended abdomen. He took a deep breath, afraid of what he would find, then gently laid his palm over the small mound made by their baby.

Doc felt like a rope had wrapped around his neck when he felt nothing, no movement, no life, no baby. He couldn't breathe. No, he thought. *I can't lose them. They're my life.*

He buried his face in the blankets next to Monte and let his grief overtake him, his control shattered. He didn't even look up when he felt someone kneel next to him and wrap an arm around his shoulders. He no longer cared, no longer wished to live.

Why should he, when Monte and his baby lay on the bed, slowly withering away right before his eyes? Maybe if he hadn't claimed Monte this wouldn't have happened. If he'd been able to forget Rocky, Monte would know how much he was loved and fight for his life.

"Doc," Rocky said, his voice trembling.

Doc lifted his head and turned to see Rocky kneeling beside him. He was stunned by the silent tears he saw running down his face.

"Rocky, wha—?"

"He's quite the man, your Monte," Rocky said, his eyes on Monte's face. "He wrapped me around his little finger in under an hour." Rocky took a deep breath and released it slowly. "I'd do pretty much anything for him, and for you."

"Rocky, I—"

"You know, I never considered being with a man until that night we were together," Rocky said. "And I didn't sleep with you because I wanted to try out a man instead of a woman. I only said what I said because of something Zack said to *me*."

Doc swallowed. "Wh-what did Zack say to you?"

"We were in my room and you had fallen asleep in my arms. When Zack walked in he said you had finally given into your feelings for me." Rocky glanced over at Doc. "Imagine my surprise when that thought made me happier than a pig in shit?"

Doc swallowed again, the lump in his throat getting bigger. "You were happy about it?"

Rocky chuckled. "I was fucking ecstatic. Zack's assertion meant I could finally admit to myself – and to you, if I hadn't fucked it up so badly – how much you meant to me." Rocky's gaze moved back to Monte's face. "But then if I had, we never would have met this little guy and then where would we be?"

"Then why did you – ?"

"Why did I say what I did?"

Doc nodded.

"Zack just told me how wonderful it felt to be with a man. He even let Eljin fuck him. He said it wasn't anything like being with a woman." Rocky chuckled nervously, his face flushing. "It wasn't, but that probably wasn't the time to say anything either."

"You could have chosen a better time, yes."

"Yeah," Rocky said as he looked back at Doc. "I'm sorry about that. It really came out wrong. I wasn't using you to see what it was like to be with a man, I swear. I didn't have any desire to be with another man, just you." Rocky's gaze shot up to Monte then back to Doc. "Well, you and Monte, but other than that I've never even been really attracted to another man."

"You're attracted to Monte?" Doc asked then snapped his mouth shut and tightened his lips before he could say anything else. He wasn't sure he could handle hearing much more.

"Who wouldn't be? The man's beautiful . . . inside and out."

Doc turned away from the intense look in Rocky's brown eyes. He could see something in them that spoke to his heart but he couldn't put a name to it. He didn't know what to say, but he had to say *something*. The silence in the room was becoming too thick.

"So, what now?" he finally asked.

"I guess that's up to you and Monte," Rocky said. "I'll only ever ask this once. If you say no, I'll understand and never ask again. I'll just walk away, no hard feelings."

"Just ask already, damn it," Doc snapped.

"I want to be with you and Monte," Rocky said quickly, almost too quickly for Doc to follow, but he did.

His mouth dropped open in shock. "You what?"

"Look, I know I have no business asking this. You and Monte are together, I get that. You've bonded. But I care about both of you and I want you in my life, you *and* Monte."

"I don't know what to say, Rocky," Doc whispered, thoroughly stunned. Rocky's proposition never once crossed his mind. Doc had pretty much given up on ever having Rocky and put most of his heart into Monte. But Rocky would always retain a part of him.

"Just say you'll give it some thought?"

"He will."

Doc's head snapped and his gaze flew to Monte's face. Monte lay there staring at him, his azure-blue intense.

"Monte," Doc cried as he moved up to sit beside him. He leaned in and gently kissed him. "How do you feel?"

"Don't you think you'd better answer Rocky?" Monte asked.

"I—" Doc glanced between Monte and Rocky, unsure of what to say. Maybe Monte didn't understand that he'd regained his memory. "Monte, I remember everything: you, the baby, the research facility, everything."

"And?"

Doc frowned. "And what?"

"What does that have to do with you giving Rocky your answer?" Monte asked. "You know you love him. I know you love him."

"But —"



Monte lifted his hand and cupped Doc's face. "But nothing, Doc. You love both of us, right?"

Doc slowly nodded. He heard Rocky inhale sharply next to him but couldn't look away from Monte's face.

"Then if all of us agree, why can't you have both of us?"

"That doesn't make any sense, Monte," Doc whispered. "You know I care about Rocky. I've never hidden that fact from you, but I love you too. Why would you be willing to share me with Rocky?"

Monte smiled. "Because I care about Rocky too."

## **Chapter Fourteen**

Rocky was momentarily speechless in his surprise. While he had hoped to be involved with both Doc and Monte, he never expected it to really happen.

Now, Monte had not only encouraged Doc to answer him, he'd said he cared about Rocky too. The events of the last few minutes were almost more than Rocky could take in.

"Monte," he said quietly, "do you know what you're saying?" He had to be sure. If he started to believe in Monte's words and they weren't true, he didn't know if he could get through his disappointment.

Monte nodded as he turned his gaze to Rocky. "I know exactly what I'm saying. Doc loves both of us. I love both you and Doc. And you love both me and Doc. What else is there to say? Why do you need to make it so complicated?"

"Because three men don't love each other and share the way you think!"

Monte's blue eyes zeroed in on Rocky's. "Says who? Your human societies? Guess what, Rocky, I'm not human. I don't think the way you do. If I did, do you think I'd be lying here carrying another man's child?"

Okay, there just wasn't a good answer for that one, not in Rocky's world, which he realized had just taken a turn he never could have imagined in his wildest dreams. The absurdity of the situation hit Rocky and he began to chuckle.

He held up his hand when Doc and Monte frowned at him. "You don't understand," he said. "Here I am, begging you both to accept me. Monte says he does and I'm arguing with him about it."

"So, basically," Doc said, "you should just shut your damn mouth."

"Or put it to better use," Monte piped in.

"Not until my mother says you're okay," Doc said. "You're not going to do anything strenuous or even move from this bed until you and the baby are cleared. Is that understood?"

"I don't think there's anything wrong with the baby," Monte whispered as his hands covered his abdomen. "I was just so tired earlier. I think that's pretty normal under the circumstances."

"I know, pretty baby, but Mom is going to take care of you," Doc promised. "You just need to rest until Mom says you're okay."

"And when the hell will that be?" Monte asked.

"In our world, men aren't usually pregnant so I don't rightly know. However" — Doc gestured between him and Rocky — "I'm sure Rocky and I can keep you occupied until then."

"I'd like to consult Monte's doctor, healer, whatever they call them over here, and see what he needs, maybe get him on prenatal vitamins," Mara said as she walked into the room. "I don't think they have a pharmacy over here."

"Then we'll make a trip back to the human side and find one," Doc said simply.

"Back to the human side of the veil?" Monte whispered. "You'll have to arrive in a different gate if you don't want those men to catch you."

Doc frowned. "There's a different gate?"

"Of course." Monte chuckled.

"You mean the one in the forest that we came through with Eljin and Zack?"

"No," Monte said, shaking his head. "Remember that any large body of water can be used as a gate on your side of the veil. On our side, we have just the one gate in the Seelie Court. The gates from your side of the veil lead to that gate. That's why it's guarded."

"And this works the same on the Unseelie side?" Rocky asked.

"I would assume so but I can't be sure," Monte said. "It would make sense that it does, wouldn't it?"

"Yes," Rocky said, "and that might be how the humans are getting to your side of the veil, Monte." He rubbed his chin as he remembered his conversation with Sareed. "Sareed mentioned something about the four treasures of the Tuatha Dé Danann. He seemed to think they weren't really taken to Ireland but rather stolen."

"The four treasures of the Tuatha Dé Danann?" Doc inquired. "What four treasures?"

Rocky waved his hand, dismissing Doc's question. "That doesn't matter right now. I'm more interested in knowing if the humans are using the Unseelie gate to come and go between worlds."

"How would we find out?" Doc asked. "My understanding is that the Unseelie Court hates everyone from the Seelie Court. It's not like we can just go over there and ask."

"No, but we can talk to Sareed about it," Rocky said. "He's been through the Unseelie gate. He knows a lot more than we do about it."

"Where *is* Sareed?" Monte asked.

Rocky turned to stare at the man, shocked he'd forgotten about Sareed. In all of the commotion, Sareed had gotten lost. Rocky dropped his head forward onto the bed and groaned. He felt like a world class heel.

A moment later, he lifted his head and shot Doc and Monte a sheepish grin. "I guess I better go find our wayward elf."

"You'd better take Gunny with you," Doc said. "We don't want a repeat of earlier."

Rocky chuckled. "I wasn't the one with the steel blade across my throat, dude. That was all you."

"Uh, steel blade?" Monte asked.

Rocky laughed as he climbed to his feet. "You explain it to him while I go find Sareed."

Doc nodded and climbed up onto the mattress with Monte. Rocky took just a moment to look at the two men cuddling on the bed and then made himself turn away. It took all of his control to walk out and leave them there when what he really wanted to do was join them.

Rocky found Gunny waiting outside in the hall. "Hey," he said, "do you think you could help me find Sareed?"

"Sareed?"

"The dark-haired man we were with when you found us," Rocky explained. "He's a very unusual young man."

"Dark hair?" Gunny frowned. "All of the Seelie elves have blond hair."

"Sareed is an Unseelie elf, which I find rather interesting considering all of the horrible things I've heard about Unseelie elves. He's nothing like that." Rocky rubbed his chin. "To tell you the truth, I don't think any of us would be here if it wasn't for Sareed. He saved our butts more than once."

"Then by all means, let's go find this young man of yours."

Rocky followed after Gunny, down the winding stairs to the first floor and through the main doors. The moment he stepped outside, he skidded to a stop, stunned by what he saw before him.

Several armed guards stood around in a half-circle. Kneeling in the middle of them with his hands clasped behind his head was Sareed. Natiri stood off to the side looking nervous, bouncing from foot to foot as his wings fluttered wildly.

"What in the hell is going on here?" Rocky shouted as he stormed forward and grabbed Sareed's arm, yanking him to his feet. "Why in the hell are you treating him like this? He is not the enemy."

"He's an Unseelie elf!" one guard shouted.

"He's a friend," Rocky insisted. "He also saved my life, and Monte's life. What right do you have to hold him here?"

"Rocky," Sareed said quietly as he tried to pull his arm away, "you don't know what you're doing. I am an Unseelie elf. I'm their enemy."

"No, Sareed, you used to be their enemy," Rocky said. "Now you're a friend and they need to treat you as such. I don't know how things are done here at Seelie Court but where I come from, when someone saves your life, you don't treat them like a prisoner."

"Rocky, this isn't your world. Things are different here."

"And that might explain why your world — both courts — are going to shit!" Rocky waved his hand at the guards. "These armed guards can't even keep their royalty from being kidnapped."

"They were taken by humans!" One of them snapped. "They had weapons we do not have."

"There's an old saying in my world," Rocky said as he turned to stare at the guard. "You don't bring a knife to a gun fight. Well, that's exactly what you're doing. You're bringing a knife to a gun fight."

The guard held his sword up. "This is a sword, not a knife. It was given to me by my father and has been in my family for —"

Rocky pulled out his handgun and pointed it at the guard. "This is a gun. Now, which weapon do you think will do more damage?" Rocky took a few steps back. "Can you reach me from where you are? Because I can still shoot you from here." He took another step. "Or even here."

"Of course not, but —"

"You need to change the way you think if you want to have any hope of defeating the people coming into your world," Rocky said as he shoved his gun back into its holster. "You can start by understanding that not everyone who is different than you is out to get you."

The guard slowly lowered his sword. He looked confused, his forehead wrinkled, his lips drooping at the corners. "The two courts have always been at war, for as long as I have been alive. How can you expect us to change our way of thinking?"

"By realizing that not all Unseelie elves are bad just as not all humans are bad. Yes, there are bad on both sides, but I'll bet if you looked at every one of your inhabitants you will find at least one who is not an upstanding citizen."

Sareed snorted. Rocky glanced in his direction. The man looked like he was ready to roll his eyes. He even had his arms crossed over his chest. "You have something to add to the conversation, Sareed?"

"You're trying to fight centuries of discord, Rocky."

"I didn't say it had to be done overnight," Rocky replied. "Life doesn't happen that way, but we can change it one person at a time. Look at Monte. He hated you on sight but he told his mayer that he not only considers you a friend but trusts you with the life of his child."

Sareed's face paled. "He — he said that?"

Rocky nodded. "He did. Roland told me himself while Doc was checking on Monte. He wants to meet you." Rocky smiled at the astonished looks on Sareed's and the guards' faces. "For a man who spent the first two years of his life in the Unseelie Court, and who harbored a lifelong hatred for anything Unseelie, Monte changed his mind pretty quickly after meeting you."

Rocky didn't miss the curious looks the guards cast in Sareed's direction. He said it only took changing the mind of one person to start something. He thought it started with Monte but maybe Sareed and the guards could start something as well.

"If Monte's mind can be changed, after everything he went through at Unseelie Court, don't you think other people can change their minds too?"

"He really said that?" Sareed asked again.

"He really did."

Rocky's head snapped around when he heard the voice behind him. He found Doc standing there, Monte cradled in his arms. Roland and Mara hovered next to them, both looking a little anxious.

"I thought you were going to stay in bed, not exert yourself until Mara cleared you?" Rocky asked as he walked over to drop a light kiss on Monte's lips.

"I'm not exerting anything," Monte protested from the safety of Doc's arms. "I don't see what the big deal is anyway. People have babies all the time. I'm pregnant, not terminal."

"And said pregnant man passed out from exhaustion," Mara snapped, "which isn't good for you or the baby."

"I've had a busy few days," Monte snapped right back. "Sue me!"

"I'd rather get you back into bed," Mara said. "You need some rest, maybe a lot of rest."

Monte smirked and arched an eyebrow at Mara. "Fine, you want me back in bed? Make it worth my while and I won't even argue about it."

Rocky bit his lip to keep from laughing when Mara rolled her eyes. He had no doubt Monte was going to give the good doctor a run for her money during this pregnancy.

Seeing the glare in Mara's eyes darken, Rocky stepped between them. He gave Doc a slight nod. "Okay, let's get Monte back to bed where he can rest. He can direct the show from there."

Doc nodded, a slightly amused grin on his lips, and turned to carry Monte back inside. Rocky glanced back over his shoulder. "Sareed, can you join us?"

"Me?"

"Yes, you," Rocky said. "We could really use your help."

"Why don't you and Doc go get Monte settled," Gunny said as he stepped forward. "I'll help Sareed get cleaned up a bit, get some food in him, then bring him to Monte's quarters."

Rocky suddenly realized that Sareed looked a little worse for wear. He should have thought of that. Rocky grimaced. The man had been through just as much shit as the rest of them over the last few days. "Yeah, that might be a good idea. What do you say, Sareed? Can you go with Gunny while we get Monte back in bed?"

Sareed eyed Gunny for a moment then slowly nodded. "Cleaning up a bit would be nice," he said quietly. "But what about Natiri?"

"He can come too," Gunny said.

Rocky could see that Sareed was still hesitant and after the welcome he received, he didn't blame the guy. "Sareed, Gunny is not only a friend but he's Monte's fayer. He's a good guy and he'll take care of you. He won't let anything happen to you or Natiri."

Sareed nodded. He grabbed Natiri by the arm and dragged him over to stand next to Gunny. Rocky's words seemed to be enough to make the man feel a little better, or at least to put some of his trust in Gunny. As for Natiri, well, Rocky had yet to figure the man out. As usual, he remained silent, merely watching those around him with unabashed interest.

"Then it's settled," Rocky said. "We'll meet in Monte's room in say . . . an hour?"

Gunny nodded.

Rocky was hesitant to leave Sareed and Natiri but he knew they would be in good hands with Gunny. Besides, he needed to check on Monte and make sure the man was okay.

Rocky would die if anything happened to Monte, especially after he'd been given the green light to pursue a relationship with him and Doc. Rocky just hoped they both felt the same way once some time had passed. He didn't want to put his heart into a relationship if both men weren't onboard with the idea.

Despite his trepidation, Rocky could barely keep himself from sprinting up the stairs toward Monte's quarters. He walked into the room, closed the door quietly behind him in case Monte had fallen asleep and moved farther into the room.



Rocky skidded to a stop, the air rushing from his lungs as he caught site of the bounty laid out on the bed before him. Both Monte and Doc lounged back against the large pillows, slowly caressing each other's naked bodies.

"Fuck me," he whispered.

Monte chuckled. "That depends on how fast you get naked and into this bed," he said as he crooked his finger and motioned for Rocky to join them.

Rocky started pulling his shirt over his head when he realized Doc hadn't said a word. He needed to know the man he craved wanted the same thing he and Monte wanted. He dropped his shirt on the floor and glanced at Doc.

"Doc?"

Rocky nearly swallowed his tongue when Doc rolled off of the bed and started walking toward him. Damn, the man was gorgeous. Doc was also incredibly aroused if the hard, reddish cock jutting from his groin was anything to go by.

Doc's hands went to Rocky's pants. He had them unzipped and pulled down Rocky's legs before Rocky could assimilate what was going on. He'd been concentrating too much on taking in every inch of Doc's naked body.

The moment Doc grabbed his cock, though, all of Rocky's attention centered there. He licked his suddenly dry lips and tried not to thrust himself into Doc's tight grip.

"I remember how good this felt pounding into my ass," Doc murmured as his lips skimmed the skin at Rocky's shoulder. "I think maybe Monte would like to feel it too."

Yeah, okay, he could do that. Rocky glanced over at Monte and knew he would be lucky to get into the man's gorgeous ass before he came. Monte had the fingers of one hand wrapped around his cock, the others buried in his ass.

Rocky panted. The sight was enough to make a celibate man rethink his choice in life. Knowing he might be lucky enough to be buried in that delectable hole in a few minutes made Rocky's entire body shudder.

"I think you like that," Doc said, his voice laced with amusement.

Rocky looked at him sharply. Except for his one time with Doc and the few times he played around when he was younger, Rocky had no real practical experience with men. He'd be mortified if Doc made fun of him.

"He's gorgeous, isn't he?"

Rocky nodded. His tongue felt too thick in his mouth to speak. Doc had started caressing his ass, his fingers trailing between his cheeks. They pressed in a little more with each stroke.

Doc stepped around behind Rocky, his arms immediately winding around Rocky's waist from behind. Doc wrapped one hand around Rocky's cock again, and anchored the other at his hip. Rocky exhaled hard when he felt Doc's thick cock nudge between his ass cheeks.

"I've been on the receiving end of this bad boy," Doc whispered against Rocky's neck as he stroked Rocky's cock. "Now it's Monte's turn. And while you fuck Monte, I'm going to fuck you. What do you think about that, Rocky?"

Rocky groaned and his head fell back against Doc's shoulder. Doc had pushed his hips forward just a bit. Rocky could feel the head of Doc's cock brush against his tight entrance. He ached for more and thought to bend over and demand it, but he also wanted to feel Monte's body at the same time.

"Now?" he rasped.

Doc chuckled and pushed Rocky toward the bed. "Our little man seems just about ready there. Why don't you go check?"

Rocky couldn't get on the bed fast enough.

## **Chapter Fifteen**

Monte laughed as Rocky scrambled up the bed to him. He knew things weren't settled between them, and certainly not with the happenings around them, but he felt they were on solid enough ground to give himself over into Rocky's care.

He spread his legs to accommodate Rocky's larger body and the man settled down over top of him, leaning to one side so as not to put pressure on Monte's distended stomach.

Monte smiled up at him. "Hi."

"Hi," Rocky whispered.

"Come here often?"

Rocky's chocolate brown eyes widened for a moment then he laughed. "Not too often but I'm hoping to change that."

Monte pulled one leg up and wrapped it around Rocky's back. His hard cock brushed against Rocky's abdomen. He reached for the man, his hands gripping Rocky's shoulders as he pulled him closer.

"I think that's a wonderful idea," he murmured against Rocky's lips just before he kissed him in earnest, pushing his tongue into the man's mouth to explore, to taste.

And Rocky tasted really good. Monte groaned. Sweet and masculine, all at the same time. Monte wanted to eat him up, lick by delicious lick. He started with the soft skin on Rocky's neck.

Monte heard Rocky grunt softly, felt his body shudder. He leaned back to look up at Rocky only to find the man's eyes closed. His features were pinched tight, his lips pressed together in a thin line.

At first Monte thought Rocky was in pain but then the man's mouth fell open and he started panting. His face flushed with desire. His body started jerking as he pushed back. Monte knew just how he felt.

"Feels good, doesn't it?"

Rocky's eyes flickered open and he looked down at Monte. He had a dazed, confused look on his face. "It's — I've never — "

"It gets better," Monte promised but Rocky didn't look convinced. "Get on your hands and knees. You'll see what I mean."

Monte was tussled around a bit when Rocky climbed to his hands and knees but he loved the view when he looked at the body hovering over him. All those thick muscled ridges and smooth edges . . . Yum!

Rocky's chest rose and fell with each rapid breath. He sounded as if he'd just run a marathon. Monte grinned and stroked one hand down over the man's chest to his abdomen. He grabbed the bottle of lube he'd been using earlier with the other hand.

His fingers encountered a small trail of hair and he followed it right to Rocky's hard cock. He quickly lubed his hand then grabbed the hard shaft. Rocky jumped and moaned, his hips snapping forward as he drove himself through Monte's fingers.

"Fuck, Monte," Rocky hissed, "you can't—I'll—I'll come without you!"

"Well, we can't have that, now can we?" Monte chuckled. He let go of Rocky's cock and rolled over onto his stomach. He could hear Rocky's slight inhale as he pushed himself up onto his hands and knees and scooted himself back against the man, wiggling his ass against Rocky's cock.

"I'm assuming you know what to do from here?" Monte asked as he glanced over his shoulder and winked.

Rocky smirked and grabbed Monte's hips, jerking him back just a bit more. Monte's laugh quickly turned to a groan of delight when Rocky's cock pushed between his ass cheeks.

Monte's breath hitched as that thick cock sank slowly into his ass, inch by inch. Monte knew Rocky was trying not to hurt him but the pace was torture. He fisted the sheets beside his body and pushed back, impaling himself completely on Rocky's cock.

"Christ!" Rocky groaned.

Monte felt the man's head rest between his shoulder blades.

"That may not have been your smartest move, Monte."

Monte pulled forward just a bit then slid back down Rocky's cock, just to be sure of the fit. Perfect. Not an inch of wasted space. Monte did love a well-endowed man, and he now had two.

*"Doc, are you about ready to do this?"* Monte asked through their bond.

*"Coming in now, pretty baby," Doc replied.*

Monte chuckled silently. *"I can tell," he said. "Rocky's entire body is shaking."*

*"Do you think I'm hurting him?"*

Monte thought about the cock he could feel throbbing in his ass. He thought about the small pants he heard in his ear and the hands that desperately clenched the sheets next to his.

*"No, I think he's just a little stunned at how good it feels," he finally replied. "Why don't you start moving so he will start moving? I'd like to get fucked sometime before our company arrives."*

*"Yes, Your Highness." Doc chuckled.*

A moment later, Rocky grunted and thrust forward into Monte. He knew Doc was thrusting behind Rocky. The pace they set was erratic, wild, and drove Monte to the heights of pleasure in a flash. Exquisite, he thought. He never wanted it to end.

"Rocky," Monte whispered as he wiggled beneath the man, eager to feel his hands. Rocky was quick to comply. He kept one hand on the bed to hold his full weight above Monte, and used the other to slowly stroke down Monte's side.

Monte's entire body quaked when Rocky reached his cock and wrapped his long, strong fingers around the rigid shaft. Between the hard cock in his ass and the hand wrapped around his cock, Monte lost himself on a wave of decadently delicious sensations.

It took him a moment to realize the low, keening noise he heard came from his throat, but he couldn't seem to stop. There was no way he could contain the moans of pleasure, not when his body was lighting on fire.

Monte convulsed as the fire moved south, igniting in his groin. The two loud roars behind him played as background music as he soared to an awesome, shuddering climax.

Monte collapsed on the bed, his body languid. Once again, he felt Rocky's head come to rest between his shoulder blades as pulse after pulse of hot liquid filled him.

The bed bounced beside him. Monte opened his eyes to find Doc lying next to him, watching him carefully. Monte smiled a weak, satisfied smile. He felt Rocky pull away and fall down on his other side, the man's arms still wrapped around him.

Monte rolled over, his back pressed against Rocky's sweaty front. He clasped one of Rocky's hands and one of Doc's, holding them together at his chest.

"*Doc, we're not done,*" he whispered silently to his leannan. He held up their combined hands. "*Do you want to take this last step with Rocky?*"

"*Do you?*" Doc asked back.

"*If we do, you need to know it can never be undone. The three of us will be connected forever.*"

Doc's gaze dropped away from Monte's for a moment. Monte worried Doc might not want Rocky on a fulltime basis. He worried Doc might want Rocky more than he wanted him. He just worried.

When Doc turned back, his eyes glittered with unshed tears. "*If I bond with Rocky, will I lose you?*"

"*No, of course not,*" Monte said quickly. "*We're bonded. That won't change no matter what you decide.*"

"*I can't make this decision on my own, pretty baby,*" Doc said softly. "*This concerns both of us.*"

"*I care for Rocky; I won't lie to you about that. I never would have agreed to be with him if I didn't want him to stay. I want both of you.*" Monte frowned. "*Is that greedy of me?*"

Doc grinned. "*If it is, then I am guilty of the same thing.*"

"*Then you want this too?*"

"*I do, but I don't want you to think it means I don't love you too.*" Doc reached over and cupped the side of Monte's face. "*Nothing will ever make me stop loving you.*"

"*Then get the knife from the table next to the bed.*"

While Doc rolled and searched for the knife, Monte climbed to the top of the bed and leaned back against the multitude of pillows stacked there. Rocky sat up, a confused frown on his face.

"In my world, when one person takes another as their leannan, there is a bonding that occurs," Monte explained. "A ceremony takes place, during which they're bonded together forever."

Monte turned to look at Doc as he rolled back over and scooted to the top of the bed to sit next to Monte. He knew Rocky was confused. The bonding between people wasn't widely discussed so many didn't know of it.

"Doc and I are bonded," Monte said as he turned back to face Rocky. "He is my leannan, as I am his. We have not known each other as long as you have known Doc but I wish for you to enter into this bonding with me, as does Doc."

"Bonding?" Rocky whispered. "You want me to bond with you? Both of you do?"

Monte nodded. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Doc do the same. "We do. We love you and want you with us always. But you need to understand that once you bond with us, it can never be undone. You will belong to us, and only us, for the rest of all our lives, just as we will belong to you."

"What—?" Rocky swallowed hard. "What do I need to do?"

"Hold out your hands."

Monte was a little surprised by how fast Rocky complied but he just smiled and grabbed Rocky's wrists, turning his hands palm side up. He held his own hands in the same manner.

"Doc?"

Monte winced when Doc drew the sharp blade across the palm of his hand. Blood welled up and spilled over. Doc did the same to Rocky's hands and then his own.

Monte reached one hand out to Rocky, the other out to Doc, clasping them both so that their mutual cuts met together. Doc and Rocky did the same.

"Now, repeat after me," Monte said softly, solemnly. He was about to commit his life to Rocky for the first time and reaffirm his bond with Doc. "Give me your life, your love, your forever, as I give you mine."

"Give me your life, your love, your forever, as I give you mine," Doc repeated.

"Give me your life, your love, your forever, as I give you mine," Rocky repeated.

Monte didn't know if it was the blood exchange or the words they spoke together but the moment Rocky stopped speaking, a brief shiver rippled through them as their bond was formed, strengthened, and cemented for all time.

An electrical shock seemed to arc through all of them. Monte could feel his heart race as the electricity pulsing through their bodies settled in his abdomen. His body tingled then pressure built until Monte grew afraid.

"The baby, something is wrong with the baby," he whispered as he turned wide eyes down to his distended abdomen. Monte arched, crying out as a sudden sharp pain flooded him and took his breath away.

But just as suddenly as the pain appeared, it disappeared. Monte panted. He clutched Rocky and Doc's hands tightly. Both men hovered over him, their concern written in every line of their faces.

"Monte?" Doc asked. "What is it, pretty baby?"

Monte shook his head. "I don't know. There was this tingling then a sharp pain but now it's gone."

"I'm getting your mother," Rocky said as he pulled away and rolled to the side of the bed.

"Get my mayer too," Monte said. "He might know what's going on if Doc's mother doesn't."

Rocky nodded as he pulled his pants up then raced from the room. Doc barely had time to clean them both up and get them dressed before the door burst open and people rushed in.

Rocky went to Doc's side of the bed, Mara to the other. Roland and Gunny hovered at the end of the bed. They looked horrified. Monte followed their gazes to the drops of bright red blood on his hands.

"Oh no," Monte said quickly. "That's not it. We bonded with Rocky."

Gunny's expression didn't change. He just turned to look at Rocky. Roland, however, let out a loud sigh of relief, one that confused Monte until his mayer spoke.

"You've bonded with both Doc and Rocky?" Roland asked.



Monte nodded.

Roland moved around the side of the bed. Mara gave him a little glare as he pushed past her to sit on the edge of the mattress. He reached out for Monte's hand, patting it softly as he smiled.

"Oh, my son, you never did like doing things the simple way."

"What do you mean?" Doc asked. "He was in pain, a lot of pain. This has nothing to do with our bonding."

"Actually, it has everything to do with your bonding," Roland said.

"Did we — did we cause harm to the baby by bonding?" Rocky whispered.

Monte glanced over. Rocky's face had paled. His jaw clenched tightly.

"No, not at all," Roland insisted.

"Then what in the hell happened?" Doc asked. "Why was Monte in pain?"

"A bonding is a very serious thing. I'm sure Monte explained that to you. However, a bonding between three people, even in our world, is unusual. It does happen, but not often."

"What does tha —?" Doc started, only to stop when Roland held up his hand. Doc snapped his mouth closed, his lips tightening into a thin line. Monte grabbed his hand and squeezed it. Doc squeezed back.

"Normally, such a bonding occurs at the same time, not with weeks, or in this case *months*, in between. After that, any child created carries the genetics of both fayers involved in the bond."

"Both fayers?" Monte gasped. "That's possible?"

"Oh yes, it's very possible, but as I said, when a three-way bonding happens, it usually happens at the same time and almost always before a child is created. You've kind of done things in reverse."

"Will it — does that mean —?" Monte licked his lips and tried to speak and be heard past the pounding of his heart. "Is the baby okay?"

"The baby is fine," Roland said, smiling. "What Monte felt was the baby's metamorphosis, so to speak."

"Meta what?" Doc asked.

"Metamorphosis," Roland replied. "Basically, Monte bonded with Doc and got pregnant then bonded with Rocky. The pain Monte felt was the baby taking on Rocky's genetic makeup and mixing it with Doc's."

"Excuse me?" Rocky whispered. "Did you just say the baby has taken on my genetics and mixed them with Doc's?"

Roland chuckled and nodded. "When there is a three-way bonding, any child born of that bond has the genetics of the mayer and both fayers. Its nature's way of insuring that every child born into the union will be equally loved by both fayers."

"I would never — that wouldn't have mattered to me," Rocky whispered. He looked lost, confused. "I just want Monte and the baby to be safe and healthy. I don't care who the father is."

"And that's a wonderful thing, Rocky," Gunny said as he stepped over to stand next to him. "From what Roland has said, this is just nature's way of making sure. You should be happy about this."

"But I don't want to take anything away from Doc," Rocky said. "This was his baby first."

"It's still my baby, Rocky. You're not taking anything away from me," Doc said as he held out his hand to Rocky, pulling the man down to his level. "Only now, it's your baby too. We should be celebrating, dude. You and I made a baby with Monte. We're going to be fathers."

"Fayers," Monte corrected.

Doc rolled his eyes. "We're going to be fayers."

"Then you're not upset?" Rocky asked.

"I'm ecstatic," Doc said. "What, did you really think I'd be willing to share the man I love with you, but refuse to share my children? Remember what Monte said, this is forever. This just bonds us together even more."

"How do you feel about all of this, Monte?"

"I think I hit the fucking lottery." Monte smirked. "Now there are two of you to change this baby's butt."

## Chapter Sixteen

Doc leaned against the balcony doorframe and watched Rocky cuddle Monte to sleep. After all of their excitement two weeks ago, Monte still seemed too tired easily. Roland assured him that Monte was fine but would need more and more rest as time went by.

Doc still couldn't help being concerned for Monte's health despite what everyone told him. He was a military man, even if he was a medic. What did he know about babies and pregnancies?

Zack suddenly came to mind. He'd been through what Doc was presently going through. He might have the answers he needed. Doc pushed away from the doorframe and walked over to the bed. He gently shook Rocky.

"I'll be back in a few minutes," he whispered. "I'm going to go talk to Zack about this whole baby thing."

Rocky nodded. "Take notes."

Doc pressed his lips together to keep from laughing as he quietly headed out of the room. Rocky must be as confused as Doc. He was just coming into this. Doc had known about it for a few months.

He walked down the large hallway to the royal apartment two doors down, glad they were so close to their friends. He knocked softly, knowing Zack would strangle him if he woke the baby up from his nap.

Zack was incredibly protective of his new son. Doc was pretty sure he and Rocky would be the same. Still, he found it amusing the way a newborn baby had wrapped his big, bad, unit commander around his little finger.

The door opened. Rocky was surprised to find Zack standing there, his new son of just a few weeks cradled against his chest. It was a little weird to see such a big man hold such a small baby.

"Hey, Dad, got a few minutes?" Rocky chuckled.

Zack grinned. "Sure, come on in."

Rocky followed Zack inside the quarters he shared with Eljin and quietly shut the door behind him. Zack walked to the lounging area and continued to pace back and forth a little as he gently patted the baby's back.

"So, what's up?"

Doc gestured to the baby. "How's this all working out for you?"

"It has its ups and downs," Zack said, "But I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world."

Rocky nodded. He didn't expect Zack to answer any other way, but still . . . "So, about those ups and downs . . . ?"

"Late night feedings." Zack chuckled. "Hell, feedings every few hours. This guy is a glutton. Then there are the dirty diapers, cranky baby syndrome, and absolutely no privacy. I haven't even gotten laid since the little bugger was born."

"And you still wouldn't trade it for anything in the world?"

"Nope, not a minute of it."

Doc chuckled at the peaceful look on Zack's face. The man looked as happy as a pig in shit. "You know this is all very weird, right?"

"Yeah, I don't think it can get much weirder."

"Oh, yes it can." Doc snorted.

Zack quickly looked over at him and slowed his pacing. "Oh?"

"Well, you know Monte and I bonded back at the research facility and he became pregnant."

Zack nodded.

"When we bonded with Rocky, since Monte was already pregnant, the baby changed and is now the biological child of both Rocky and me. Roland called it a metamorphosis."

Zack's eyebrows shot up and his mouth dropped open. "No shit?"

"No shit."

"How do you feel about that?"

"You mean the whole sharing the baby with Rocky thing?"

Zack nodded.

Doc shrugged. "Other than the fact that it's very weird, it doesn't bother me. I love Rocky. You know that. Sharing Monte and the baby with him is just an extension of that love."

"So, what *does* bother you about this then?" Zack asked. "That *is* why you're here isn't it? Because something about all of this bothers you?"

"Monte," Rocky said. "I'm worried about him. I mean, what in the hell do I know about pregnancy and babies and —"

"I'm pretty sure you know about as much as I do," Zack said. "But not to worry, Doc, you learn as you go."

"And that's a good thing?" Doc scoffed.

Zack laughed. "Here," he said as he stepped over and held the baby out to him.

Doc backed up several steps, shaking his head.

"I might break him." Doc wasn't actually sure he'd ever seen a living breathing person as small as Zack's baby. He couldn't have weighed more than a sack of sugar.

Zack ignored Doc's protests and placed the baby in his arms, showing him how to support the baby's body properly. Doc stared down at the tiny infant in awe.

He was so busy checking all of the baby's delicate body parts he almost jumped when two little blue eyes popped open to look up at him. The baby didn't cry, he didn't whine. He just watched, as if curious about who held him.

"Is he real?" Doc whispered. He had serious doubts. It just didn't seem possible that something so small could be real.

"Oh, he's real all right." Zack chuckled. "Just wait until you don't feed him fast enough and you'll find out just how real he is. He has a serious set of lungs on him."

"Have you named him?"

"We named him Calum," Zack said. "It means dove. Considering I call Eljin *humming bird*, it seemed appropriate."

"It is," Doc said softly as he brushed his hand over the soft blond hair on Calum's head. "It's the perfect name for him."

"So, what has you so worried about this, Doc?" Zack asked. "People have babies every day. There's nothing to be afraid of."

"Yeah, right."

"What scares you the most?" Zack asked.

Doc swallowed. "What if – what if something happens to Monte or the baby and I can't fix it? I don't know anything about babies and pregnant men or –"

"Then learn," Zack replied. "They have healers here, you're mother is here. I'm sure they can teach you everything you need to know. You won't get the degree you'd get from a fancy university but you might learn enough to care for your loved ones if needed."

Doc rolled the idea around in his head. The more he thought about it, the more he liked the suggestion. He already had a lot of training in the medical field. He knew everything there was to know about combat injuries. He could add to that knowledge by learning about elf babies and their mayers.

Doc took one last look at the beautiful baby sleeping in his arms then handed him back to Zack. "Thanks, Zack."

"I didn't do a thing," Zack replied as he cradled the baby against his chest.

"Yeah, you did, and you know it," Doc said.

"Just don't start thinking I have all the answers because I'm learning as I go."

"Understood."

Doc was in a much better frame of mind as he walked back to his quarters. He would need to talk to his mother and the official Seelie Court healer, but at least now he had a plan.

He had a little spring in his step as he walked into the rooms he shared with Rocky and Monte, but he slowed to a stop in the doorway when he found the room filled with people.

"Did someone call a meeting and forget to send me the memo?" he asked.

"Conall wants to plan a mission to the Unseelie Court," Rocky said from where he sat on the couch with Monte snuggled next to him. "When Eljin and Monte were kidnapped, Eljin's father assumed the Unseelie Court had them. He knew nothing of the humans taking them. He started negotiations for their release and the Unseelie Court went along with it even knowing they didn't have Eljin or Monte. I don't think going over to the Unseelie Court to look around a bit is a bad idea."

Doc nodded and made his way across the room to sit down on the couch on Monte's other side. "It might not be a bad idea, but I don't think sending in a bunch of people is going to gain you anything but trouble. You need a small, non-threatening unit."

"I was thinking you, Rocky, Conall and me," Gunny said. "The three of us know how to work together and I'm sure Conall can follow orders easily enough."

"Hey!" Conall protested but Doc could see the amusement in his eyes.

"I wouldn't mind getting a look at the Unseelie gate either," Doc said. "I wonder if it's guarded as closely as the one here. These humans are getting through somehow."

"There's always the other gates."

Doc snapped his head around to stare at Sareed in shock. *Everyone in the room* turned to stare at him in shock. Sareed shrank back until he stood almost totally behind Conall.

"What other gates, Sareed?" Doc finally asked. "Why haven't you mentioned this before?"

"Each court has two gates," Sareed said quietly. He glanced around the room, his brow wrinkling. "Didn't you all know that?"

"No, Sareed, we didn't," Conall said as he grabbed Sareed's arm and pulled him forward. "Tell us, please."

"There are four gates, one at each of the four directional points, north, south, west, and east." Sareed frowned even more. "You really didn't know?"

"No, but how do you know?" Conall asked.

"I traveled through the second gate in the Unseelie Court when I first went into the human world. Our main gate is in the center of Gorias, right in the town square. The second gate is in the countryside. After I was exiled it seemed like a better choice than going back to Gorias."

"Do you know where the secondary gate in the Seelie Court is located?" Rocky asked.

"Yes, of course. I just don't understand why you don't. I thought everyone knew about the four gates." Sareed's gaze flew around the room. "It's in all our history books."

Not a word was spoken as Conall stormed to the door and yanked it open.

"Guard, would you please ask Dorthal to join us, escort him here immediately? And ask my mayer and fayer to join us as well."

"Yes, fayerye."

"What's going on, Conall?" Doc asked the moment Conall shut the door.

"Dorthal is the official Seelie Court librarian. I guess you could say he is also our historian. If there's a second gate in Seelie Court, I want to know why he never said anything. I've never even read anything about it in any of our history books."

"Do you think Dorthal could be involved in all of this?" Rocky asked.

"That reminds me. Sareed, didn't you say something to Rocky about the four treasures of the Tuatha Dé Danann? I remember talking with Conall about any sort of device that might help a human come through the gate without the Aes Sídhhe." Doc glanced at Conall, noting his confused look. "Conall, you told me you couldn't think of



anything, remember? You were going to talk to Dorthal? If what Sareed says is true then why didn't you know about the four treasures?"

"What four treasures?" Conall asked.

"The four treasures of the Tuatha Dé Danann," Sareed said. "The Lia Fáil or Stone of Fál, the Spear of Lug, the Claideb or sword which belonged to Núadu, and the Coire or cauldron of the Dagda."

"Sareed," Conall said quietly, "we've never heard of these treasures."

"But that doesn't make sense," Sareed said. "Everyone in Unseelie Court is taught about the four treasures. I've always known about them."

"Tell us about them, Sareed," Doc encouraged.

"Well, each of the four cities of the Aes Sídh has a mystical treasure unique to that city in some way. Anyone holding that treasure can go through a gate. Legend says the four treasures were taken to Ireland many centuries ago but as I told Rocky, I've always doubted that. I think they were stolen."

"Four treasures, four cities, and four gates," Rocky mused. "I'm beginning to see a pattern here."

"Yes, but what pattern?" Doc asked. "And why did no one here know about the other gates or the four treasures?"

They were interrupted by a knock at the door. Conall arched an eyebrow and went to open it, admitting his mayer and fayer and an older man who shuffled in behind them. Conall closed the door but Doc noted he put himself between Dorthal and the door.

"You are having a party?" King Tuathal asked.

"More of a discovery meeting, Mayer," Conall said. "Dorthal, why don't you tell your king about the four treasures of the Tuatha Dé Danann? And then you can tell him about the four gates into our world. You might also tell him why an Unseelie elf knows more about this than any of us. Apparently it is common knowledge in the Unseelie Court."

"What in the hell are you talking about?" King Tuathal asked as he looked around the room. "What treasures, what gates?"

"Go ahead, Dorthal, tell him."

The old man shrank beneath Conall's glare. He shuffled across the room and sat down in one of the vacant chairs. He took several deep breathes as he looked at everyone in the room.

"I always knew this day would come," he said. "I just didn't expect it to come so soon."

"What are you talking about, Dorthal?"

"Your Unseelie elf is correct; there are four treasures and four gates."

"What?" King Tuathal exclaimed. "Why was I never made aware of this?"

"Many years ago, before kings ruled the Seelie and Unseelie courts, when we were one people, the elders decided that too much power in one hand would be dangerous to our people. It was decided that the four treasures would be taken away and hidden."

"But they were stolen, weren't they?" Sareed asked.

"Very astute, young man." Dorthal nodded. "Yes, the four treasures were stolen, never to be seen again by our people. It was always suspected humans took them, but we could never prove it. With all of the comings and goings lately, I guess that mystery has been answered."

"And the gates?"

"I admit to not knowing much about the Unseelie gates," Dorthal said. "I only learned about the four gates when I took over as librarian. It is a secret known only to us, one that we are sworn to keep."

"Considering everything that has been happening," King Tuathal said, "you didn't think it was a good idea for me to know about all of this? My son was kidnapped. Monte was kidnapped. They were experimented on by humans."

"I do apologize, King Tuathal, but I take my vows very seriously. The history that was handed down to me by my predecessor explained what could happen if these treasures or the other gates were discovered and used against us."

"But they *have* been used against us, Dorthal," Doc insisted. "Someone is using the gates to kidnap the fayerye and hand them over to humans. And humans are coming and going at will into this side of the veil. All of your careful planning and deep, dark secrets are being used against us."

"Besides that, the Unseelie Court knows all about them," Sareed added. "If they know, why shouldn't you know? Although, if the elders decided this before the two courts split, I wonder why the Unseelie Court knows and how they know."

"A good question and one I may be able to answer," Dorthal said. "While our two courts are at odds, the sanctity of the historical records and their keepers has never split. We do still talk to each other on occasion."

"Then you can ask how the Unseelie know, right?" Rocky asked.

Dorthal nodded. "I cannot promise how long the answer will take to arrive, but I can ask."

"Is there anything else I need to be aware of, Dorthal?" King Tuathal asked, "Any other secrets you might be hiding?"

"No, Sire, these are the only secrets I have."

"Then go and ask your questions," King Tuathal said. "I will be down later to discuss your duty to your king and your people."

Dorthal nodded and got to his feet. Doc held his tongue until the man shuffled out of the room. What he had to say needed to be said to only those in the room, the men he trusted. Once the door was closed, Doc stood and turned to face the group.

"I think we need to continue with our plans to investigate the other gates in both courts," he said. "I also think we need to do a little more investigating into these four treasures. Someone, somewhere, knows something."

"Agreed," said King Tuathal, "Gavril and I can handle the research here with Dorthal's help, hopefully, if you can handle the gates, Conall."

"Yes, of course, Mayer," Conall replied. "We were already planning a mission to investigate the gates when we discovered this issue with the treasures."

"If I might interject here," Sareed said. "Doc and Rocky will never pass for anything except human. They'd be spotted instantly if they crossed over into the Unseelie Court."

"Your point?" Conall asked.

Doc detected a bit of tension between the two men but he couldn't figure out why. He knew there was animosity between the two courts but Conall didn't seem like the type to hold that against someone who'd proven himself trustworthy.

"If Conall could disguise his blond hair, then the two of us could sneak into the Unseelie Court to investigate the gates there without anyone ever knowing. Doc and Rocky could investigate the one here in Seelie Court. I can draw them a map."

"Hair dye," Doc said. "If we could dye Conall's hair black then he would look just like an Unseelie elf."

"Dye my hair?" Conall asked as he fingered a long, blond hair lock.

"It'll fade and grow back blond, Conall," Doc said. "It's only temporary. In fact, if we make a quick trip back through the gate to the human world, we can just buy some temporary dye. It will wash out in a shower."

"Then that's the plan?" Rocky asked. "Sareed and Conall will go to the Unseelie Court while Doc and I investigate the gate here in the Seelie Court. King Tuathal and Gavril will go through the history books with Dorthal and try to find anything that pertains to either the gates or the four Treasures of the Tuatha Dé Danann."

Everyone nodded.

"Great," Doc said, "then I suggest that we all relax for the rest of the night and meet first thing in the morning to plan the missions."

"Excellent idea, Doc," King Tuathal said. He grabbed the hand of his royal consort and leannan, Gavril, and walked out with Sareed and Conall. Doc turned back to Monte and Rocky and arched an eyebrow at the two men.

"Looks like we're going to pretty busy over the next few days," he said as he walked toward his lovers. He knelt on the floor at their feet and winked at them. "Maybe we should make some plans of our own?"

## **Chapter Seventeen**

Monte bounced from foot to foot as he watched over the balcony railing for any sign of Doc or Rocky. Word had arrived that they were seen entering the city limits. They should be home any moment.

Three whole weeks was a long time to go without seeing either one of them. That was how long it took Doc and Rocky to get over to the human side of the veil and get black hair dye for Conall.

They hadn't even returned home before going to investigate the Seelie gate. They just sent word through one of the guards that they would be just a bit longer than they thought. 'A little bit longer' felt like forever.

The weeks had given Monte's uncles, King Tuathal and Gavril, enough time to make their discoveries on the four treasures of the Tuatha Dé Danann. They had indeed been stolen and now resided in the human world as far as anyone could tell.

No one was exactly sure where they were but King Tuathal thought there might be a lead in their history books, or in the Unseelie books. Someone had to know something.

A sudden noise below the balcony caught Monte's attention. He glanced down to see the main gates opening. He held his breath as he waited to see who walked through.

His heart raced with joy. Doc, Rocky, and Conall were coming through the gate. They looked tired, dirty, and in need of some food, but they were alive and walking up to the castle under their own steam.

Monte let out a loud cry and raced from the balcony. He had to grab the banister as he ran down the stairs to keep from falling but he couldn't reach the bottom fast enough.

The main doors opened just as Monte reached them, and Doc and Rocky walked in. Monte threw himself into the arms of the closest one, feeling Doc's arms wrap around him. A moment later, another set of arms wrapped around the both of them.

"I missed you both so much," Monte whispered.

"We missed you to, pretty baby," Doc whispered back.

Monte felt hands move over his stomach, which had grown in the three weeks since Doc and Rocky had been gone. The baby bump wasn't too much bigger but it was noticeable.

"Our baby is bigger," Rocky said.

"I told you that would happen." Monte chuckled. "It's going to get a lot worse before it's over too. I'm going to be as big as a house, just you wait."

"I think you look beautiful, pretty baby," Doc said.

"What did you find?" Monte asked as he stepped back to gaze at his two Marines. "Did you find the Seelie gate like Sareed said?"

"We found the gate, Monte," Rocky said, "but I don't think it works. It's covered in ivy and moss, practically falling down. Doc and I both tried to go through it several times but we couldn't get it to work."

"And the Unseelie gates?"

"Conall and Sareed could only get to the one in the country," Doc said. "The other one is set up smack dab in the middle of Gorias, not a good place to be right now. The Unseelie Court ruler has implemented martial law. Anyone caught out and about without papers is imprisoned. They decided avoiding that gate was safer at the moment."

Monte nodded. He couldn't agree more, but the martial law thing worried him. It sounded like the Unseelie Court was getting worse by the day.

"We did get you something when we went to grab the hair dye for Conall," Rocky said as he dug into one of his pockets. He pulled out a small bottle and handed it to Monte. "Prenatal vitamins, just like the doctor ordered."

Monte pouted as he looked down at the bottle of pills. "Damn! I was hoping for chocolate."

"Covered, pretty baby," Doc said as he handed Monte a small brown bag. "Let me introduce you to dark chocolate truffles."

Monte opened the bag and peeked inside at the pile of dark chocolate balls. "Oh, you do love me."

"Always," both men replied, chuckling.

"Now come on, take us upstairs," Doc said. "Rocky and I need a long bath and an even longer nap. We're dirty, hungry, and exhausted."

Monte looped his arms through Doc and Rocky's and started up the stairs with them. He glanced over his shoulder when he heard footsteps following them. It was his cousin, Conall. Monte frowned.

"Where's Sareed?" Monte didn't miss the quick look between Doc and Rocky. His curiosity rose a notch. "What?"

"After Sareed showed Conall where the Unseelie gate was located they both joined up with us on our way home." Rocky shook his head, looking sad. "I'm not sure exactly what happened but Sareed left in the middle of the night."

"He just left?" Monte asked.

Rocky and Doc both nodded. "He left Conall a note but your cousin refuses to talk about it," Doc added. "He simply said Sareed made his choice and we needed to respect that."

"Personally," Rocky said, "I think something happened between the two of them, but like Doc said, Conall refuses to discuss it."

Monte cast a long look at Conall. The man's lips were pinched tight, his face pale. Monte wasn't sure if Conall was going to explode into a rage or deflate into a crying fit. Either seemed to be a possibility, if the sullen look on Conall's face was anything to go by.

"Maybe I should go talk to him?" Monte asked.

"You can talk to him later," Doc said. Monte let out a small squeak as Doc swung him up into his arms and carried him the rest of the way up the stairs. "Right now, you need to pay attention to us. We haven't seen you in ages."

Monte laughed. "I can do that."

~The End~

### **About the Author**

Stormy Glenn believes the only thing sexier than a man in cowboy boots is two, or three, men in cowboy boots. She also believes in love at first sight, soul mates, true love, and happy endings.

When she's not being a mother to her six teenagers or cleaning up after her two 70-pound lap puppies, you can usually find her cuddled in bed with a book in her hand or her laptop, creating the next sexy character for her stories. Stormy welcomes comments from readers. You can find her web site at [www.stormyglenn.com](http://www.stormyglenn.com)

\* \* \* \* \*

If you liked Dark Court: Monte's Marines by Stormy Glenn, you might also enjoy the following books from Noble Romance Publishing:

[Dark Court: Dark Side of the Veil by Stormy Glenn](#)

[Call Me Sir by Stormy Glenn](#)

[Call Me Sir Too by Stormy Glenn](#)

[Picture Me Perfect by Stormy Glenn](#)

[Sammy Dane by Stormy Glenn](#)

[Spank Me Once Anthology by Various Authors including Stormy Glenn](#)

[Forbidden Love Anthology by Various Authors including Stormy Glenn](#)