

ELLORA'S CAVE TWILIGHT



*First Knight*  
My Immortal Knight

DELILAH  
DEVLIN

## **First Knight**

*Delilah Devlin*

*My Immortal Knight, Prequel*

*Book is a standalone.*

While hiding her true identity, Maddie must seduce the mysterious Lord Garon to cement their marriage contract and assure she won't be returned into her lecherous stepfather's care.

Fresh from Crusade in Palestine, Lord Garon has a secret he must hide, a hunger that must be fed, and a dark and uncertain future. Having shed himself of a fiancée he'd never met, he's home to lick his wounds. The only thing he wants is a warm-blooded meal—but the new housekeeper is strangely insistent on giving him much more.

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First Knight

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# ***FIRST KNIGHT***

**Delilah Devlin**

## **Chapter One**

Maddie shivered at the creaks and groans the portcullis made as it slowly rose. The rain-laden wind carried the noises and filled the silences in between with a howling that sounded like the hounds from hell had arrived at the castle gate.

Shouts outside the curtain wall had alerted them only minutes before of Lord Garon d'Albermarle's arrival. With only a bliaut over her sleeping shift, Maddie stood on the first step of the keep, holding a tray with a goblet of wine, ready to offer a proper greeting to her overlord.

"Are you sure this is the way you wish to go about this, M-Maddie?" Egbert asked, fidgeting at her side.

She swallowed against the sudden dryness in her mouth and nodded.

"It be on your head then," he said, his always-mournful tone as dire as one of Father Ansel's Sunday sermons. She sent thanks above that the cranky priest was away or her deception wouldn't last past the introductions.

The clatter of dozens of hooves on the cobbled bridge beyond the gate filled the castle yard with thunder. From the encroaching darkness, the sounds were as ominous as the dark shapes looming on the gatehouse walls. The torches she'd ordered lit sputtered and flared, distorting and elongating shapes so the men riding through the entrance appeared as tall as giants.

Already tired and on edge because she hadn't slept since a messenger had arrived, warning the castle of his lordship's arrival days before, Maddie's fevered imagination painted them darker and larger still.

"Be they devils?" Egbert asked, his narrow shoulders shaking. "No one travels on a night with nary a speck of light in the sky."

"Hush!" The storm whipping at her clothing and the fatigue from months of worry over this very moment combined to make her hands shake and blackened an already foul mood.

The horsemen entered the bailey and a large figure separated from the contingent who approached the keep. As he drew closer, her fears weren't eased one whit. The warrior sat atop a huge black destrier, forcing her to raise her gaze quite high to seek his face.

He wore a helm that left only his square jaw exposed. The darkness cast by the metal nose guard concealed his eyes. Only his mouth gave a hint of his mood—a thin, straight line with the corners crimped downward.

Under his stare, Maddie's knees trembled but her tray never rattled. She squared her shoulders and shot a glance about her at the castle folk. "Stephen!" she called to the stable master. "See to their horses."

In moments, boys scrambled to accept reins, and the creak of leather and the clank of iron filled the air.

The stable master himself approached the dark warhorse at the foot of the steps but the mounted warrior's gaze never left Maddie.

She licked dry lips with an even drier tongue. "Lord Garon?" she asked, although there could be no question who led this contingent. All gazes remained on his intimidating figure. "Please come inside, milord. Your people will see to the comfort of your men."

His mouth twisted. "And who will see to mine?"

Maddie's heart leapt to the back of her throat. "I will, milord."

A long pause indicated he looked her up and down. "And who might you be, madam?" he asked, his voice a deep, hollow rumble.

Maddie remembered to curtsy and then straightened, girding herself to speak the lie aloud. "Your housekeeper. I take care of things now." The latter, at least, was the truth.

Lord Garon grunted. Without a glance at the stable master, he tossed down his reins and dismounted.

When he turned toward her, Maggie's breath caught. *Lord, he's a tall man. I thought it was just the horse.*

Maddie lifted the ornate chalice from the tray to deliver her much-rehearsed welcome.

Instead, his lordship's lips pressed into a tighter line and he brushed past her.

She was left gasping on the bottom step. "What a rude ogre!" she exclaimed, annoyed he hadn't fallen in line with the first step of her plan.

"Watch your tongue, madam," an accompanying knight said tersely as he followed the lord up the steps. "He has exceptional hearing."

"M-Maddie?" Egbert said, nodding toward the door.

She shoved the tray at his belly and grasped her skirts high to rush up the steps.

The plan had seemed so simple. All she needed was to get him alone and addle his sight with a little wine or ale so he'd not care she wasn't the comeliest creature in the keep. Then she would seduce him.

And the sooner, the better. The longer she took losing her virginity, the greater the risk he would discover her identity. The truth was, she would rather copulate with the devil himself than be returned home.

However, this business of copulation, which had seemed a simple, messy, perhaps even enjoyable act, according to the cook, now promised to be a daunting trial.

The lord of the keep turned out to be a giant and as dour as a priest at confession. The thought of being naked with him and accepting his manstaff into her body frankly petrified her.

She rushed through the massive doors, hoping her preparations would meet with his approval. Nothing else could be allowed to mar her well-thought-out plan.

His lordship stood in the center of the hall, hands on hips. Unlike his men, he wore no chain mail, only a leather hauberk to protect his body. He'd removed his headgear, revealing hair as black as midnight and a face as hard as carved granite.

He was everything she'd remembered and more—more frightening, more imposing—and more beautiful because of the differences. Thanks be to God, he hadn't recognized her.

His gaze narrowed on the hall and she looked around to see what might have displeased him already.

Around him servants scurried, delivering warm food to the men-at-arms as boys eagerly divested them of their armor. If she hadn't been observing him so closely, she might not have detected the change in his posture. He scarce seemed to notice the din of activity. His mouth lost a little firmness, his hands unclenched on his hips and his chest rose and fell deeply.

In that instant, Maddie lost a measure of her fear. Here was a man savoring his first night home after a long absence. He had a heart and cared for something at least. Perhaps he wouldn't be a complete troll when making her his wife.

Garon shut out the noises swirling around him and breathed in the scents of his home. The smells remained unchanged even after eight years away—wood smoke from the hearth, the moist mustiness clinging to the stone walls, roasted meat and women.

Unchanged from his memory but enhanced by his "affliction".

Now he could easily discern pheasant from roast beef, sage from rosemary—the laundress's ripened odor from the housekeeper's more delicate musk, which wafted in the air behind him where she hovered.



His sight was as improved as his scent. Even the darkest corners, far from the blazing torches in their sconces, were revealed in varying shades of gray—crisp as the autumn air outside. Outside, in the dark, the housekeeper's eyes had been pale in her pinched, pallid face. He wondered now whether they were blue or hazel.

Sounds reverberated on the walls, a steady rumble of quiet conversations punctuated with sharp bursts of laughter. But the only sound that had raised his interest since his arrival was that of the housekeeper's heart as she'd waited on the steps of the keep—an agitated tattoo indicating fear despite her calm demeanor.

She'd called him an ogre. If she knew the true nature of the beast, her trepidation would become terror.

"Milord, I've secured sustenance for you in your chamber," Raymond, his captain-at-arms, murmured beside him.

Garon thanked God every day that he and Raymond had met on a faraway battlefield and discovered a connection that bound their destinies. Without him he'd never be able to sustain this ruse.

"So quickly? I am hungry and thought I'd have to make do." The throbbing hunger building in his belly had been nearly unbearable the last score of miles.

"Sisters. A friendly pair. They approached me. Said you'd remember them."

He did. Sturdy, lusty blondes. Their names escaped him, but he well remembered how they used to play in his chamber, offering him hours of sensual delight. This time, however, the play would be quick, even deadly if he couldn't harness his appetite. "You will wait outside the door and listen in case I have need of you."

"Yes, milord. If the silence is overlong..."

Garon gave him a sharp, grim nod and turned toward the stairs.

The housekeeper waited at the bottom step, her hands worrying the frayed end of the braided rope securing the castle's keys around her waist. Her shoulders straightened at his approach. "I've ordered a bath sent to your chambers."

"Later. My man will tell you when I am ready." He moved to brush past her, doing his best to ignore the heavenly scent of her skin and the pulse that throbbed at the base of her white throat. Her startled eyes were indeed hazel and too innocent for his purposes.

Light brown eyebrows lowered in a frown. "But, milord, the water's already set to boil. It will be no bother..."

He continued up the stairs, catching a murmured curse from the woman.

So eager to please. She must wonder if her position was secure. At the death of his steward two years past, he'd been informed by courier that another had taken over the management of the estates. As she seemed to be the one in charge, he assumed she was capable, for the land he'd passed through had shown signs of a recent orderly harvest, and the keep was clean, the servants exacting in their care. Tomorrow night he would tell the woman her place was safe. He had little interest or ability in seeing to the daily running of the estate.

That she was a woman filling a man's shoes was only an annoyance. Dealing with her reports on a nightly basis would test his patience and he'd have to learn a measure of trust, which would be trial in itself.

He'd learned the hard way that a woman could best a man without using brute force. Sly intelligence and seductive wiles could win the battle when a man's attention was centered between her legs. He had lost nearly everything to one such heathen bitch—a Saracen's whore with a thirst for blood.

He shoved open the door of his chamber and hunger instantly clawed at his belly, rumbling loudly.

A fire blazed in the brazier in the far corner. The twins lay naked, warming the covers of his bed. Older now, their figures were a little overblown and fleshy, but their lips still curved in welcome. His body clenched as hunger overrode his caution. He climbed quickly onto the mattress to lie between them. The problem of how to take one

without the other screaming the roof down about his ears was less of a concern than feasting on the bounty before him.

"Shall we undress you?" the one with a mole above her lip asked as she scooted closer.

"Later," he growled, earning delighted giggles from the women. He twisted her body over his, her blonde hair forming a curtain to conceal the nature of his "taking". Her screech of delight ended in a shocked squeak as he bit into the tender flesh of her neck.

"Milord?" she whispered, her hands pressing against his collarbone for a moment before her fingers curved into his shoulders, clutching him closer. She moaned and her hips ground into his erection.

"All that from just a kiss?" the other said, a plaintive note in her voice. "Save a little for me, Anne."

Garon's hands fisted in Anne's hair, holding her still while he drew blood from the twin piercings at the side of her throat, sucking hard to assuage his hunger. Tasting of salt and copper, her blood coated his tongue, filled his throat and spread warmth throughout his body.

He sucked harder and she cried out, the rapture overtaking her body to set it trembling above his. As her hips ground harder into his, he widened his legs and slipped a hand to her buttocks, kneading her generous mounds, and then pressing the hard bone of her mons against his cock. He matched her rhythm, bucking against her writhing body to ease the second hunger growing inside him.

A sharp knock on his chamber door penetrated his bliss-fogged mind and he withdrew his teeth, lapping her neck to clean away the smears of blood and close the small wounds he'd inflicted.

She murmured sleepily and burrowed her head against his shoulder, her hips slowing as she fell asleep.

He reached out to snag the other sister, dragging her to his side. When she aimed a kiss at his mouth, he turned from it, not wanting her to discover the length of his teeth, and dragged his lips along her throat. She moaned and nestled closer to his side.

A knock sounded again. He turned toward the door. "Yes, Raymond," he shouted. "All is well."

The door flung open and the housekeeper stomped into the room, her eyes widening at the sight of the two naked women. Her mouth gaped and then shut with an audible snap. Her gaze rose above the bed as though she were examining the ceiling for cobwebs. "I've brought your bath," she said, her voice tight, red flags of color staining her cheeks.

With the sharpness of his bloodlust dulled, Garon's carnal appetites arose full-blown—called to life by the shock and outrage warring in the mousy housekeeper's expression.

Why her face and reed-thin form should appeal didn't matter. That he had to have her and wipe away that look of disgust pouting her full lips did.

Garon's mouth curved in wicked delight. "A foursome then?"

## **Chapter Two**

The woman's hazel gaze slammed into Garon's and she gulped. "I beg your pardon!" she said, her words a trifle shrill.

The woman draped over him like a lumpy blanket stirred. "Milord?" she asked, her voice slurred.

Recalling where his hand lay, he purposely smoothed it up and down the sister's naked flank, drawing the housekeeper's gaze. The sister beside him rose on an elbow to stare daggers at the brown-haired mouse.

The housekeeper's lips thinned and her chin jutted outward.

It was just as well that she was repelled. Although he fully intended to sup from this brown mouse, he didn't want her entertaining any romantic notions concerning their coupling. Better to keep a distance from her and all the castle folk. Soon enough, his nocturnal habits would arouse their curiosity. The more fear he instilled now, the less likely they would be to question him.

Ready for a second more-satisfying meal, he delivered a swat to Anne's buttocks.

She jerked to awareness and pushed back her blonde hair. Her glare quickly turned to puzzlement as her fingers rubbed the side of her throat. "I thought..."

"You dreamed," he said, holding her gaze.

Her expression dulled and she nodded.

"Your bath, milord?" the housekeeper prodded, her voice sounding strained.

Garon raised a hand to cup Anne's face and he caressed her bottom lip with his thumb. "You and your sister may go now."

The sister's breaths huffed beside him but she knew better than to protest. Rising from the bed, she strode naked toward the door, casting a glare at the housekeeper as she passed.

He stared again at Anne. "Go."

Anne gave him a dreamy smile and slid off the bed, passing the other woman as though she didn't even see her standing there. And likely she did not. Beneath the power of his suggestion, her senses would not return until after she slept.

When the sisters had departed, the housekeeper drew a deep breath, seeming to pull her composure more securely around her. "Would you like wine while you bathe, milord?"

"Is that all you're offering?" he asked, dropping his voice to a low, purring rumble.

"You'd prefer ale then?" Her voice grew small, her eyes wary.

Garon reckoned that she'd likely recite the entire stock of beverages in the cellar if he didn't approve one quickly. He was tempted to allow her to continue just to see that hint of anger sparkle in her eyes again. But he was ready to get on to the business of bathing—and baiting the woman. "Wine will be fine."

She nodded and turned back to stick her head through the door, issuing orders to staff who waited outside to do her bidding.

He studied her for a long moment, his glance following the end of her long, brown braid to a bottom that barely rounded the back of her gown. Below that fell an astonishing length of fabric.

Bemused, Garon measured her and discovered he was eager to know whether her legs were sturdy as his warhorse, spindly as a nag's or slender and supple as the legs of an Arab's steed.

She stepped aside, flinging open the door, and a parade of castle folk trooped in, delivering the copper tub and buckets of steaming water. When it was full and the

temperature met her approval, she ordered everyone out, leaving herself quite alone with Garon.

Just before the door slammed closed, Raymond appeared in the opening with a smirk on his lips. The bastard was enjoying the spectacle a little too much.

"That will be all, Raymond," Garon said, shooting him a glare until the door closed.

"Your bath?" the woman reminded him, sweeping her hand toward the tub.

He dragged his gaze back to her pink face. "You will assist me?"

She swallowed and nodded. "Yes, milord."

He rolled from the bed in one quick movement, startling a gasp from her. She took a backward step then stiffened her back. He pulled the hauberk and tunic from his upper body and dropped them to the floor then waited for her to serve him.

Her gaze swept over his chest and downward, locking on the long ridge tenting the front of his chausses. Startlement registered in her expression, but she shook herself and bent to untie the straps at the top of his boots, her hands revealing only a small tremor.

He toed the boots off, one at a time.

She eased his stockings off his feet then drew in a deep breath and reached for the fastenings at his waist.

He stared while she fumbled with the knots, her long fingers grazing his skin, which caused his belly to jump—and her to hesitate.

Swallowing hard, she drew the ties slowly open and gripped the top of his chausses. When her gaze lifted to gauge his reaction, he smiled.

Her reaction wasn't what he expected. Instead of an intense blush, a frown bisected her dark brows. She firmed her mouth and shoved down his leggings and underclothes.

However, the fabric snagged. Surprised, her gaze dropped, and she gasped at the sight of the garments caught on his erection, this time her fair skin flared with hot color.

Garon held his breath, caught between a bark of laughter and a groan. He was surprised by the intensity of his reaction to her nearness. Every sense attuned to her.

His nose hovered just above her herb-scented hair. His heartbeat raced with hers. Heat built in the short space between their bodies.

Her jaw tightened as she delicately pulled his pants outward to free them from the obstruction, and then she had her first glimpse of the reddened bulb of his cock, nestled in the hood of his foreskin.

Garon wanted to growl, so deep was his satisfaction at how long she stared. He tightened his muscles, causing his cock to bob against his belly, and she gasped. A smile stretched his mouth.

Her glance rose to his, her lips tremulous for a moment until she noted the arch of his eyebrow, and then she firmed them into a straight line and crouched to slide the fabric the rest of the way down his flanks, pushing it to the floor.

Sighing now that one hurdle was past, he stepped out of the last of his clothing and nudged the pile to the side with his foot.

Her gaze remained lowered as though she were counting the hairs sprinkling his toes. He gave her time to gather her courage, although he wondered why she was so filled with hesitation. She didn't know him yet, didn't know there were plenty of reasons why she should be terrified.

From his first impression, he hadn't thought her timid. Perhaps a tad innocent, but the bold way she'd pressed him to reach this moment didn't fit with the hint of fear her shallow breaths betrayed.

Before that thought had ended, she dragged in a deep breath and her gaze swept upward, resting for a long, tense moment on his cock, which twitched inches from her mouth.

*Later, sweetling.* "My bath?" he reminded her.

"Over there." She pointed behind her, but still her glance didn't rise above his hips.

He didn't feel impatience for her slow climb to arousal—and he did take her open fascination for his cock as a sign of arousal. Instead, warmth filled him, along with an



intense gratification. Ruffling the mouse's fur would while away many an hour—perhaps even several nights.

He stepped over the rim into the water and found the temperature perfect. Settling into the tub, he sighed and rested his arms along the rim of the tub.

"Shall I scrub your back?" she asked.

He turned at her question, his eyes widening to find her naked, her bliaut and shift puddled on the floor. Her legs pressed close together as if attempting to hide the dark ruff of hair between her legs.

Lord, what legs! Long and slender—definitely more like an Arab's steed.

His body tightened impossibly harder, his cock filling to bursting and riding high against his belly despite the warmth of the water.

Her breasts were small, round and rosy from her blushes, rising and falling quickly with her gusts of breaths. Her long hair tumbled loose now and she pulled it forward to settle over each breast, but the tips of her nipples had lengthened and peeked between the curls.

His mouth watered and he licked the tip of one long eyetooth. He'd suckle from the stems protruding from her rose-brown nipples, perhaps nipping them if she seemed amenable to a little rough play.

He caught himself before he smiled, before he revealed the twin edges of his hunger.

"Do you undress to bathe all our guests?" he rumbled.

"I, um, didn't want to get my clothing wet," Maddie said, not answering his question because he was the first, and she didn't want him knowing it. Feeling self-conscious beneath his stare, she wrapped her arms around her belly before she realized the movement pushed up her scant bosom. She quickly lowered her arms and bent to pick up the clothing she had tossed to the floor.

His indrawn breath halted her, pulling her gaze, although she'd been fighting herself not to stare at him. Short of turning her back fully, she couldn't not look. He filled the room with his broad shoulders, deep chest, ridged belly and thighs that were roped with well-honed muscles. His powerful form was forever etched on her mind.

Never mind that hidden beneath the rim of the tub were his most disturbing attributes. Lord, the part that proclaimed him male was most impressive of all. Darker than his burnished skin, the long shaft shone like silky fabric with ridged blue veins mapping the surface. The rounded head, protruding from the cowl of his foreskin, was berry red.

That was the part he would insert into her woman's furrow to till his crop of children—or so the cook had described the act. The woman had stumbled for a proper way to describe it, but Maddie had heard the coarse terms before. Swive. Fuck. Both made her cringe inside, so “tilling” it was.

Although how exactly he would till her field was never firmed in her mind. Every woman submitted to the tilling at one time or another. She'd survive. No matter that his “hoe” was quite large. Anne and Kate, the brazen hussies, had both seemed eager to fornicate with him.

Perhaps it diminished once it squeezed inside.

His lordship shifted in the large tub, causing the water to overspill the rim.

Maddie rushed forward to lay down linens on the floor.

“Never mind that,” he said, his voice purring again like a large cat. “Attend me.”

In her haste, she'd forgotten her state of undress. His gaze looked her up and down where she knelt beside the tub. *I'm here to seduce him, not clean the floor.*

Still, she was not quite ready to stand this close. “Would you like wine while I bathe you?” Something to occupy him so his piercing gaze wouldn't linger so long over her meager curves. Maddie knew she couldn't compare to the bounty the sisters offered.

“Only if you'll join me.”

Drink with him? "I brought only one cup."

"I'll share."

The low timbre of his voice lifted the fine hairs on the back of her neck. Every word felt charged with double meanings she was too addled to understand. Wine would likely soothe her ragged nerves. She approached the side table and poured a full glass of wine, promising herself to take small sips.

He sipped the wine, seeming to savor the flavor, but not significantly reducing the amount in the cup. He offered it back to her.

She tilted her head and pretended to take a long drink then handed back the cup quickly, hoping he wouldn't notice she'd barely tasted it.

Relieved when he waived it away, she set the cup on the floor beside the tub and wondered why she hadn't taken the full measure. The wine would loosen her fear and ease the pain of her first breaching, but something warned her to keep her wits about her this night.

Lord Garon's dark, watchful gaze left her uneasy about his intentions and passions. She'd heard some men practiced sinful sexual arts, and he had lived for several years among heathen peoples. No telling what perversions he'd learned.

But a bath was just a bath. Perhaps he would enjoy easing aching muscles after his long journey. Perhaps lethargy would ensue, and the tilling would not be quite the vigorous exercise she feared. She picked up a square of linen and dipped it into the bath water, aware his gaze followed her every movement. Working a dollop of soap into the linen, she took her time working up scant suds with the scented soap while she built up the courage to touch him. She gasped when his hand curved around her wrist.

"I don't want you to wash me." His hand tightened and she dropped the cloth to the floor.

Her heart hammered in her chest. "No?" she asked, the word sounding thin to her own ears.

"No. I asked you to join me."

"You meant in the tub? With you?" Her gaze widened on his wicked smile. "But there's no room."

"Climb onto me." He tugged her gently, but she could feel the strength in his clasped fingers and knew he could force her if she refused.

Her hand trembled. "I'm to share your bath?"

"You're repeating yourself." His thumb rubbed the pulse throbbing in her wrist. "You're to see to my comfort, yes?"

"Of course," she said, breathless now. "Joining you will bring you comfort?" At his nod, panic rose. She'd hoped to acquaint herself with his body by bathing him, not sitting on him. "You have so many to see to your comfort," she said, trying to draw out the moment long enough to calm her skittering nerves.

"You chased away the other comforts. I only have you at the moment."

"Wouldn't a wife provide better for your comfort?" *Good Lord, why did I say that?* The last thing she wanted was him thinking about a wife—

"I've nothing to offer a wife." His jaw tightened, and his gaze hardened. "I'll never take one."

Caution flew with the heat of her anger. "But you were betrothed."

"To a child, before my fortunes changed." His gaze fell away and the muscles of his throat flexed. "The contract was broken," he said, his voice losing its hard edge, leaving his words sounding hollow.

Maddie's anger died at the regret she read in his stark expression.

Foolish man! Whatever horrors had visited Garon during his time in Palestine, she would find a way to help him through it. More convinced than ever of what she must do, she gripped both sides of the tub and climbed into the water.

Maddie carefully placed her feet on either side of his hips, as there was no other space to stand. Unfortunately, she was very aware that her legs gaped open and he could see everything.

Despite the momentary bleakness he'd revealed, Garon stared aplenty. His eyelids dipped, his nostrils flared, and he drew in a breath as though he was inhaling her scent.

Maddie's legs trembled.

"Lower yourself," he said quietly, tugging her down until her knees fit snugly on either side of his hips. "Now that's better, isn't it?"

Maddie swallowed, unable to speak. He'd centered the ridge of his sex along her furrow. Better was not the word she would have chosen. Disturbing. Alarming. Both terms were more apt.

He appeared to wait for an answer. His gaze rested on her face, which she knew blazed hotly.

She cleared her throat. "Yes. That's much better."

"Now that we're comfortable, why don't you tell me how you came to be in my keep?" He said this as he pushed back her hair, baring her breasts to his gaze. His hand drifted from her cheek and downward to her chest.

She hadn't known she'd been dying for him to touch her intimately until the moment came. Her chest rose, her breast fitting into his palm as though crafted just for him. The calluses roughening his skin abraded the tips, and her flesh yearned for a deeper caress. "I'll tell you later," she said, not recognizing the breathy voice sliding from her throat.

His other hand rose and fondled her flesh, and Maddie lost the stiffness that held her back erect, leaning closer, sighing when he thumbed her nipples, swirling on the points until she was gasping.

Her hands landed on his shoulders and kneaded the hard muscles they found there, clasping him as hard as her knees clutched his hips below the water.

One of his rough hands smoothed around her back and brought her body closer, until his breath gusted on her open lips. "I would kiss you," he whispered.

"Please," she breathed the word and closed her eyes, reveling in the sensation of his cock resting hard and full against her sex, her breasts sliding against the whorls of black hair on his chest.

"I'll frighten you." His hands cupped her face now, his thumbs sweeping over her eyes, her cheeks, her lips.

Maddie shivered, keeping her eyes closed. "You already do. What does it matter?"

"I'm not ready to share all my secrets."

"A kiss would be so revealing?"

He rubbed his lips against hers and then nuzzled her face, stopping with his mouth beside her ear. "Mine could kill you."

Her woman's core clenched deep inside her belly. He thought a kiss could kill? The poor, tormented man. "Oh. Then I'll wait." She opened her eyes, finding his gaze, sharp and predatory, staring back. However unaccustomed to sharing intimacies with a man, she recognized arousal. Her confidence in her appeal to this man rose. She licked her lips. "Is there something else you would have of me?"

His glance dropped to where their chests met. "Give me your breasts."

Though untutored in lovemaking, she knew his meaning, and while she could have wept over losing the hard ridge pressed firmly against her sex below, she rose on her knees to deliver one breast to his waiting mouth.

His lips latched greedily on to her flesh and his arms swept around her back, pressing her so close she could hardly breathe. She forgot the need pulsing between her legs as his mouth sucked her nipple inside, his tongue swirling then fluttering on the tip.

Below, his cock nudged between her legs and the crown found her opening, pushing inside just enough for her to feel pressure, feeding a growing desire for him to fill her completely.

He released the breast and licked his way across her chest to the other, enclosing it with his lips and sucking so hard she felt the thrilling pull all the way to her womb.

Maddie writhed in his arms, cries breaking free. They sounded like someone else's voice moaning and whimpering. *Nonsense*, she thought, *I never whimper*.

When his tongue clamped on her nipple and rubbed it against the top row of his front teeth, she wasn't sure whether it was painful or pleasurable. But it was divine. Angels playing harps couldn't match the Hallelujahs chorusing in her mind. Her whole body convulsed and she drove down, trying to take his cock deeper inside her, but his hands held her away from her goal.

"Please." She clutched his head to her breast, kissed his hair and pulled it, urging him on.

He released her nipple, causing her to gasp with disappointment, but then he skimmed upward to her neck. Maddie held her breath, hoping for the kiss he'd seemed so reluctant to give.

"Forgive me," he whispered at her ear. Then his mouth opened wide and his teeth sank into her throat at the same time as his hips stroked upward, driving his cock deep into her body.

## **Chapter Three**

Garon groaned as her blood filled his mouth and he swallowed her sweet essence. He'd felt the obstruction that proclaimed her a virgin, heard her strangled scream the moment he'd breached her, but he was helpless to stop now.

He planted his feet in the bottom of the tub and pumped upward, driving his cock into her tight channel over and over as he drank from her, rapture stealing his mind.

She writhed on top of him, fighting his hold on her throat while driving her hips in opposition to his thrusts. Her cries were broken, animalistic in their harshness as she fought and fucked him.

Her channel clasped around him in rhythmic caresses that pulled him deeper, squeezing him so tight it stopped his release, but her grasp was as addictive as her taste and he hammered deeper, lost in a sensual haze.

"Milord! Garon! For God's sake, you're killing her!" Raymond's shout broke through the red cloud of his lusts and he disengaged his mouth, his chest heaving, his body shaking with unassuaged need. Still, he couldn't let her go.

"Milord. She's still bleeding."

Shaking away the inner beast threatening to overtake him, Garon was shocked to see the rivulets of blood seeping in rhythm with her heartbeats and quickly laved the piercings to close them.

More damning, he finally saw that she'd fainted. He'd never noticed she'd stopped moving while he nearly drained her of life. Filled with shame, he eased his cock from her body and his arms from around her slender frame.

Raymond pulled her from the bath and walked with her to the bed. She lay limp in the other man's arms and didn't offer a single murmur when he lay her down on the coverlet.



Garon rose, water sluicing off him, dread filling his belly. "Will she recover?" he asked, afraid of the answer.

Raymond cast a glare over his shoulder. "She will. I'd have thought the sisters would have dulled your appetite."

Garon didn't protest the rebuke. Raymond was more than just his captain-at-arms. He'd proven himself a friend over the long months since Garon had woken as one of the damned. Garon deserved the harsh words. He deserved far worse.

He strode to the bed and looked down at the woman lying motionless against sheets as pale as her face. If not for the sound of her pulse, slowing now but strong, he'd have worried more. Thin, pink rivulets marred her pale neck and her inner thighs.

She'd been a virgin—a virgin, living in his keep—a woman whom his people followed as though she had the right to lead them.

"I thought you'd no taste for virgins, milord," Raymond said, staring at her thighs.

"I was misled." In many more ways than one.

"Do you want me to take her below?"

"Leave her. I'll attend her."

Raymond lifted one sardonic brow. "And will you attend your need before you see to hers?" His gaze dropped to Garon's erection, still painfully hard.

"I'll not abuse her further. Get some rest."

Raymond gave a short bow and departed the room, leaving Garon alone with his wife.

\* \* \* \* \*

Maddie awoke to a sound unlike any she had ever heard—a steady, moist slapping, punctuated by low grunts. She peeked from beneath her eyelids only to discover her husband pumping his hand forcefully up and down his cock above the tub.

"Don't you know you'll go blind?" she exclaimed, forgetting about the embarrassment of finding him conducting such an activity in her concern.

"I won't go blind," he gritted out. "Go back to sleep."

"Father Ansel says—"

"Father Ansel's a virgin and doesn't know a damn thing—same as you," he said, his face reddening as his hand moved faster.

Somehow, seeing him thus engaged took away a little of her unease. He had realized she'd been a virgin. Another hurdle passed. Now how did she tell him their consummation had sealed the marriage contract?

"You should let me help you, seeing as how I'm the cause for...that."

His hand paused and he turned a glare as black as Satan on her. "You will stay where you are."

Maddie thought she might have him figured out. He blustered as meanly as a demon, but he saw to his own need rather than slaking his desire on her while she still slept. Another noble might have taken advantage of the fact she'd been senseless.

Determined to make him see the advantages of having her for a wife, she rose to sit on the bed, letting the coverlet slip to her waist. "I'm too sore to have you inside me again so soon, but I'm told a woman's mouth can be just as pleasurable for a man."

He rolled his eyes toward the ceiling and his hand loosened its grip. "You shouldn't talk to me when lust is riding high."

"Because you'll forget yourself again and drain me dry?"

His head snapped toward her, his eyes narrowing. "What would you know about that?"

She waved her hand, pretending nonchalance while her heart tripped rapidly. One misstep and all would be lost. "Your bite told me everything."

His face hard as granite, his gaze never left her. "Madam wife, tell me how you know."

"You know who I am—" Her mouth snapped shut and she determined to steer the conversation away from her little subterfuge. "I've heard stories. That's how I knew."

"Fairy tales. You believed fairy tales?"

"Of course not, I'm not simple. 'Twas you who bore out the truth of the stories."

The grinding of his jaws while he continued to eye her wore on her composure. "I didn't want to trick you. But you were so adamant in your missive to break our vows. I had to do something."

"Why didn't you ask your stepfather to find you another husband?"

"Because he wasn't moved to find another for me."

His gaze narrowed. "What do you mean?"

"He wanted to keep me for himself," she whispered.

Garon's gaze darkened. "Did he hurt you?"

Maddie let a scowl pull at her face. "Lord no, just sniffed around me so much I knew I didn't have much time to save my maidenhead...for you."

"He'll never touch you. This I can promise." Garon's eyebrows drew together in a frightening frown. "I can offer you a husband's protection but little else. I can't give you children."

"That is a problem," she said, keeping her tone even, her argument logical even though inside she was shaking with joy. He wouldn't send her back! "In order to retain our place here and defy detection, I must reproduce. Later, after we have gotten to know each other better, you might choose a man to see to it."

The thought made her stomach clench in revulsion, but she didn't let him see it. Better to have him believe she was the perfect accomplice to his subterfuge, not a lovesick bride.

His brows rose. "'To see to it'?"

She nodded once. "To plant a babe in my belly."

His head canted, his dark eyes searching her face. "Do you not fear lying with a man again? After what I did?"

"Fear it?" She laughed softly. "I nearly died from the pleasure you gave me. Fainted dead away, I did."

His face lost some of its hard-edged defensiveness. "I thought..."

"That you'd taken too much blood?" She stood, willing strength into her wobbly legs, and walked toward him. With his gaze clinging to her body and his cock twitching, his body betrayed his eagerness. He could glare all he liked, but he needed her. Wanted her.

She stopped in front of him and gazed up into his eyes. "I would have you kiss me first."

His jaw clenched. He didn't move to close the space between them.

"I know," she said, reaching to lay her palm against his cheek. "Your kiss can kill. But the beast inside you is dying for what comes next."

He groaned as his mouth descended to cover hers, his tongue sweeping inside her mouth.

Maddie clutched his shoulders, afraid she'd crumple at his feet. His kiss took her breath away.

Then his mouth softened over hers, his lips molding to hers as he ate her mouth. She slid her tongue along his then swept inward to touch his teeth, finding the long fangs that proclaimed him part demon. She pricked her tongue on one sharp point and lapped over his, sharing her blood in a bond truer than their written contract.

Garon broke the kiss, pulling his head back, his chest heaving. "You were a grubby child in pigtails the only time we met."

"And you were the embodiment of all my girlish fantasies. I fell in love with you at that first sight."

He shook his head. "I don't know anything about love."

"I will teach you." She leaned away and ran a finger along his cock. "As you will teach me. 'Tis the truth, I want you for my husband, Garon. You know that you need me as your wife and partner. Together, we can build a life."

"Right now —"

"Right now," she said, lifting one brow, "you need a little wifely attention." Giving him a sultry smile, she knelt on the linens in front of him and grasped his cock in both hands, hoping the cook's more embarrassing lessons would please him.

Garon held his breath as her mouth opened wide around his cockhead. Madeleine du Bary — no, Madeleine d'Albermarle learned fast. Her hands wrapped firmly around the base of his cock, pulling back his foreskin as she circled her tongue on the swollen crown. Then her tongue and lips smoothed and suckled until he grasped her hair hard and showed her the rhythm that would bring him release.

As he pumped into her hands and eager mouth, he groaned, filled with an elation she drew from his body and his heart. Her wondrous hazel eyes reflected hope and love, two concepts he'd stopped believing would ever be his.

Her teeth gently scraped his cock, and one hand slipped beneath to cup and knead his balls. He threw back his head, helpless to withdraw as cum spurted into her throat. "Madam!" he cried out, swept away by the magic of her gift.

\* \* \* \* \*

A scratch at the door caused the woman sleeping in Garon's arms to mutter. "Come," he called softly, pulling the blanket over Maddie's head to muffle the sound.

Raymond walked in, his gaze going first to Maddie. He arched a brow at Garon.

"Sleeping sound as a sated puppy," Garon whispered. "Not dead."

Raymond snorted then gave him a sly smile. "Marriage seems to agree with you."

Garon aimed a narrowed glance at Raymond. "What I'd like to know is how you discovered she is my wife."

Raymond grinned. "Egbert wouldn't stop his nervous twitching until he'd consumed nearly a pitcher of ale – then the whole tale came spilling out."

"I won't ask why you didn't warn me," Garon said, his hand gliding over Maddie's back. "I'm pleased with the result."

"I thought as much," Raymond murmured. At Garon's raised eyebrows, his smile widened. "I had my ear to the door—in case she needed rescuing again—but by the sounds of your shouts, I did wonder whom I should rescue."

Garon grimaced. "You had a reason for waking me?"

Raymond's expression hardened. "Riders approach. A small band. They bear the du Bary pennant."

Garon went still inside. The little Maddie had told him about her stepfather was enough for him to wish he could let the beast inside him out to play. He'd only need a few minutes' freedom.

"I'll be down. See that Eustace and his men are led into the hall. Disarm them first."

Raymond's eyebrows rose in question. "They are family."

Garon bared his teeth. "They are not."

When Raymond shut the door, Garon turned to the figure huddled quietly beneath the covers. "You stopped snoring minutes ago. I know you're awake."

"I don't snore," Maddie said, flipping back the covers. "My stepfather's here?"

"You have no need to fear him. You are under my protection. And I promise not to kill him – for your mother's sake."

She chewed her bottom lip then lifted her gaze. "You mustn't fight him."

"I'll only leave him bruised," he said, wondering at her concern. Did she have feelings for the man after all? "A bone or two to set."

Her eyes rounded and she rolled from the bed, grabbing her shift and pulling it quickly over her head. "You can't. Pretend I didn't tell you. Please."

"Why are you so concerned for him?"

"I'm not," she said, her gaze sliding away. "I worry for you and everyone in the hall."

She was lying. He could smell her fear—although knowing what he was—she should have none. "I will not lose my control," he said, keeping his voice even.

"I'm not worried about you," she muttered.

"What haven't you told me?"

Her forehead wrinkled, betraying her anxiety. She pulled on her bliaut and tied her belt around her hips. "There's no time. Can't you hear them riding through the gates? Just promise not to fight."

"I won't make any such promise. But I won't provoke a fight either. You will tell me all as soon as we are alone again."

She nodded and let herself out the door. Garon took his time dressing, thinking about the way she had acted. Maddie was frightened. Didn't she know he possessed superior strength to any human man? And didn't she have faith that his men were well-trained in the art of combat? She didn't lack for intelligence. Something else was up.

He'd get to the bottom of it. But first he wanted to take his measure of the man who'd wanted to claim his wife.

\* \* \* \* \*

Maddie didn't await her stepfather's arrival on the steps. *Let him take the insult however he wants.* Why, after two long years, was he here? She must have displeased God for him to punish her like this—to send Eustace on the very night her marriage had been consummated. Everything had been so perfect, so wonderfully exciting up until this moment.

She'd left out a detail or two about the nature of her stepfather when she'd told Garon about him. The devil himself lurked in those details, laughing.

But how could she explain? And how could she protect the castle folk if her stepfather exploded in anger and unleashed his true nature. The walls would be

splattered with blood. Fusspot that she was, the thought of the mess was every bit as distressing as that of all the castle folk at risk, people she'd come to love over the many months while she'd worked hard to ingratiate herself to them.

She'd taken over as steward because no one else wanted the thankless task, had assumed the responsibilities as chatelaine when no one stepped forward to take the housekeeper's keys. They'd been relieved not to have the responsibility and she'd been happy to have a purpose. They'd fumbled along nicely, with only her eye for order and willingness to listen.

Now this. After all this time, Eustace came calling.

Below stairs, servants bustled. When Egbert hurried past, she halted him. "Don't serve the best ale. And tell Cook to undercook the meat. We don't want our guests made so comfortable they'll want to linger."

His shaggy eyebrows shot up but he nodded and scurried away.

The doors to the keep opened inward and her stepfather swept inside with five of his guards. His expression was as dark as a thundercloud. When he spotted her, it was all she could do to stiffen her backbone and face him without expression.

He halted in front of her and scanned her long frame. "I hear Lord Garon has returned. You would not take my word, but now that you know the truth of his retraction, we will leave on the hour."

Maddie raised her gaze and purposely blinked like a dimwitted woman, the kind her stepfather preferred. "What retraction, Father?" she said, emphasizing their relationship, which always grated on his nerves.

Red spilled over his dark cheeks. "I am not your father, girl. And you know damn well I speak of the marriage contract. He broke it months ago. 'Tis time to quit this place and stop your foolish game."

Footsteps, slow and measured, approached from behind, and she stifled a sigh of relief, not wanting her stepfather to know how much she needed her husband's support.



"Eustace," Garon said, his tone deep and laced with amusement. "Maddie and I have come to an agreement. You've come a long way for naught."

Eustace's face grew a deeper mottled red. "You can't want her."

"And yet it seems that you do." Garon gave her stepfather a long, dark look then sniffed the air and stepped closer, pushing Maddie behind him. "Have you been hunting?"

Eustace's gaze flickered; his features grew still. "Why do you ask, milord?"

"Because you stink of wolf."

Garon didn't dare turn his back to Eustace and give Maddie the glare she deserved. Her stepfather smelled like a wet dog. So did at least two of the men who accompanied him.

Raymond stood close enough he'd heard what Garon said. He gave Garon a short, imperceptible nod and backed away. Now Garon had to stall the battle he was sure was coming long enough for Raymond and his men to arm themselves with silver arrows and daggers.

Eustace's mouth thinned and stretched. "You know what I am." Then he too lowered his head and drew a deep breath.

Garon held himself still, knowing the castle folk had to wonder about their behavior but understanding all too well himself that the wolf listened for his slower heartbeats, and likely detected the faint odor of blood on his breath.

He knew the moment Eustace concluded he was vampire because his head jerked back and his hand went to his side.

However, he'd been disarmed before entering the keep. "I will not leave my Madeleine in a blood drinker's care," Eustace whispered harshly.

"And I'd never leave her in a dog's," Garon bit out. "But what shall we do? Even now my men are moving in. They carry silver-tipped weapons. Can you risk injury or to be revealed to these people?"

"Your people can't know your nature. Maddie can't. She wouldn't abide with a wolf. She'd never marry a corpse."

"Oh, she was well bedded. Quite married. And she remains with me. Shall we ask her which house she prefers to reside in?"

"She's a woman," Eustace sneered. "She has no choices but what her father makes for her."

"And yet you said you are not her father. Or is it only when that fact suits you?"

Garon moved in again, pressing the tip of his dagger into Eustace's side. "You have no claim here," he said quietly. "No connection to his house. She ceased being your concern when I claimed her maidenhead. Leave or choose death."

Eustace quivered with rage, but the men stirring behind him told him of their unease with the situation. His gaze went beyond Garon to Maddie, eyes narrowing in an unspoken promise of retribution.

Then he gave Garon one last glare and turned on his heel, stomping away.

Garon curled his fists. Eustace was a coward. He'd have risked fighting a human man for Maddie, but not someone whose strength equaled his.

Raymond strode toward Garon. "The guards on the wall walk have their orders not to take their eyes off them until they have crossed the moat. Then the gates will be closed behind them. The villagers are already being herded into the bailey."

"They will have to stay until we're assured Eustace and his contingent have returned home."

Raymond nodded, one eyebrow quirked. "An interesting turn."

"My wife is full of surprises."

"Your wife is tapping her foot," Raymond murmured. "She's not a patient sort. I think she wants your attention."

"And she shall have it."

\* \* \* \* \*

When Garon closed the door to their quarters, he took his time approaching his wife. He removed his weapons, his hauberk and tunic and sluiced water over his chest, delaying the moment because she'd earned a punishment for not being truthful with him. Twice now.

When at last he faced her, she eyed him warily.

"Why didn't you tell me what Eustace is when you explained why you came here alone?"

Maddie cleared her throat. "I never thought there'd be a need. And I didn't know how to say it aloud without you thinking me touched."

"I am a vampire. You didn't think you could tell me a wolf had sniffed at your skirts?" When her lips tightened but she offered no explanation, he shook his head. "But it does explain how easily you accepted the truth of what I am."

Garon approached her, stopping in front of her, forcing her gaze to rise. When he was assured he had her full attention, he bent toward her. "There will be no more secrets. If you have any left for me to discover, you will tell me now."

Maddie's wide, wet eyes reflected regret, but the longer he hovered over her, the deeper her breaths became.

Her tongue darted out to wet her lips. "I have but one secret, husband." She leaned close enough he caught the heady aroma of her arousal. Her cheeks flushed. "I think you know it already."

"Are you attempting to distract me, wife?"

Her eyelashes swept down. "Am I?"

"You only delay your punishment," he murmured, breathing in her scent and hardening.

Her belly rubbed against him, sliding over his rising cock. "You delay our pleasure."

Garon ground his teeth. "Remove your clothes."

The corners of her mouth twitched, but she stepped back and shed her clothing slowly. When she stood nude in front of him, he bit back a groan. Her small, round breasts quivered with each ragged inhalation.

He raised his hand, palm up. She slid hers over it. When he wrapped his fingers tightly around it, she only breathed more deeply.

"I should beat you," he growled.

Her eyelids drifted down. Her head tilted, mouth pouting for a kiss. "Should you?"

"You endangered this keep, our people."

Her eyes widened and she stared at his face. "I believed in you." She licked her lips again. "You won't beat me."

He firmed his jaw. "No. Never. But don't take that as lenience."

"I won't. I promise. No more secrets."

He led her to the bed, debated turning her over his knee, but his cock throbbed with need. He knew a better way to bring her to submission.

## **Chapter Four**

Garon was so quiet Maddie worried he was truly displeased with her. She almost blurted out that she would get him a switch when he pushed her to the bed, facedown.

Her breath left her, and she didn't get a chance to draw a deeper one because he stretched on top of her, holding her down.

The heat rolling off his skin was like standing next to a hearth. His cock, thick and pulsing, rested in the crevice of her buttocks – an embarrassing predicament.

She held her breath, wondering what he planned.

"Your heart beats so fast," he whispered. "Are you afraid?"

"Of you? No. Of me...yes."

"Why, sweetling?" He kissed the top of her shoulder then raked the edge of one of his fangs along her skin, causing her to shiver.

"Because I want you. Because I don't know what to ask."

"I shouldn't come inside you. 'Tis too soon."

"And yet my body weeps."

He nuzzled the spot beneath her ear, suctioning on the skin.

Maddie moaned and undulated, or tried to. He really was too heavy for her to drag in a deep breath, much less roll her bottom against him. "Can we not try?"

She almost didn't recognize the thin, greedy sound of her own voice.

Garon slid a knee between her legs and she widened them, offering him space, offering her woman's folds, which swelled and heated, growing slick with what she knew now was a woman's pleasure.

His cock prodded against her opening.

"Can we do this? With you at my back?"

"If I move away you must come to your knees."

She understood the mechanics, had seen a boar and sow copulate in such a manner.

"You must move..."

His lips tugged at her earlobe. "So little patience."

"And you have so much?"

His grunt sounded like a snort of laughter and Maddie warmed. She doubted it was a common occurrence and felt gratitude that this was something she could give him. She gave a deep sigh.

"Are you bored?"

"I am waiting," she said, clipping her words.

"Should your pleasure be of greater import than my own?"

"As we're married, shouldn't mine be equal in importance?"

"Since I still have to punish you for your many transgressions, I think you should learn a little temperance."

"I should warn you, since I've promised not to hold any secrets from you, that I've never been able to hold my tongue. And I'm not very feminine in my views."

"Since you've had the running of my estate these past months, I will concede there is some value in having an unfeminine partner. That doesn't mitigate the issue of your punishment."

She stirred beneath him, her sex growing damper and claspings his cockhead. She wished he'd decide her punishment and get on with it, because her body was beginning to quiver and tense with need. "Garon," she groaned.

"What's that?"

"Stop teasing. Please."

He lifted away from her—so quickly, her eyes shot open and she got her hands beneath her to lift her chest and look behind her.

He bent over the edge of the bed then came back with a belt in his hand.

Her heart tripped. "But you said you'd never strike me."

"And I won't. Ever. But, sweetling, I said nothing about binding you for my pleasure."

"Is this something you learned in Palestine?"

His face darkened. And she knew she'd made a mistake. "I'm sorry. I'll never mention it again."

"I would rather you wait until I'm ready to speak. Some subjects bring out the beast in me."

"Will I ever see him? This beast inside you?"

"If ever I learn to trust myself with you. Perhaps. He's not a tame creature." He clasped her wrists in one hand and wrapped the belt around them, cinching it snugly.

With her hands bound, she lay helpless, her nipples digging into the soft linen beneath her. She heard cloth tear and rolled to her side to see him holding a square of fabric he'd rent from her shift.

Garon lifted her by the shoulders until she sat on her haunches then rolled the square and held it in front of her face.

"You would blindfold me?"

"Don't you trust me?"

She didn't trust his silky tone. "Trust you? Heavens no. Not sporting that look."

His eyelids dropped halfway and a slight smile tugged at the corners of his lips. "And how do I look?"

"Very dangerous, milord."

"Is that why your quim heats? I smell your arousal. It deepens."

Maddie pouted her lips and lifted her chin. "Play your game. But I must say, your form of punishment is very strange."

He tied the cloth around her head, knotting it. Blinded now, she sat still, feeling every shift of his weight on the mattress, the heat of his skin as he drew closer.

Lips closed around a nipple and her head dropped back, thrusting her chest toward him. "More, please," she moaned, falling into lust as his lips and teeth chewed and tugged, abrading the sensitive tip. "So strange," she whispered.

"What love?"

"I never knew there was a connection between my breast and my..." She shook her head because she didn't have a gentle term for her own sex.

"How does it feel?" he asked softly, palming her breast and giving it a squeeze.

"As though your mouth were...there, suckling. Every pull..." Heat flooded her cheeks. "I shouldn't be so brazen."

"I don't mind." His lips trailed across the tops of her breasts. "I would rather know your thoughts than have you withhold them. I would know when I please you."

"Do it again."

"What?"

"That...thing you did with your tongue."

He fluttered his tongue against the tip and she shivered. "Now suckle it," she blurted, wondering if she would reach the peak with him fondling her breasts.

"Who is in charge?" he asked, his hand and lips leaving her skin.

Maddie suppressed a huff. "You wanted to know when you pleased me."

"I would have you tell me after I have decided what to do. Otherwise there is no surprise."

She wrinkled her nose. "I was only trying to give you direction, seeing as how indecisive you seemed at the start."

"Indecisive?" Air gusted against her breasts, and she suspected he laughed. Maddie tucked her chin down, pressing her lips together.

A fingernail flicked against a beaded tip, the slight sting making her gasp. Still, she held her words rather than beg him for another.



He flicked it again then did the same to its twin. Her nipples burned, the tips swelling, stinging.

A single finger slid between her legs, tucking into her folds and swirling in her entrance.

When something rubbed across her lips, she stuck out her tongue and tasted herself. Her cream glazed her lips. "'Tis sinful what you do."

Garon watched her slide her tongue across her bottom lip again. She pleased him. So innocent. So eager to learn. His chest swelled with happiness. Tonight he'd not dwell on the future. Maddie hadn't thought beyond their immediate joining. She couldn't know that one day he'd have to leave her, no matter how careful they were with their subterfuge. When he failed to age alongside her, he'd endanger her.

For now, watching her belly quiver, her small breasts swell, and drawing in the scent of her arousal were enough to fill his empty heart. When the day came, he'd not leave her alone. Raymond would take his place in her bed. He'd sire her children and give her the security she deserved.

He leaned down and licked her lip, followed her tongue inside her mouth and poured himself into her, kissing her deeply.

When he drew back, her reddened mouth parted as she panted. Cupping a breast, he suckled it and slid two fingers along her damp folds, teasing her with aimless caresses until she came up on her knees and widened them, tilting to capture his fingers and ride them while he fed on her breasts.

He knew the moment she found her pleasure. Her body tightened, her head fell back, her quim clamped around his fingers and moisture spilled onto his hand. Still cupping her sex to comfort her as the pulses slowed, he dragged off the blindfold and pulled her face against his chest, waiting for her heartbeats to slow.

Maddie snuggled close, pressed her face into the corner of his neck and cried.

"Are you unhappy with this match?"

She shook her head and pressed a kiss against his neck. "I'm overcome. For so long I've had to be strong. While you were away, every decision was mine to make, every mistake mine to rectify. And now you're here and this part is so unexpected..."

He understood what she struggled to say. He too felt a loosening of burdens. "What time we have together," he said, "will be precious."

"Untie my hands."

He slipped the knot at her wrists.

Maddie wrapped her arms around his waist and pressed as close as she could. "The life we share will be beautiful. Never doubt it."

Garon smiled at his slender lioness. The ferocity of her hug and the passion of her words bemused him. He'd linger as long as he could inside her embrace, in her life. He kissed her temple and carried her down to the mattress.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dawn peeked beneath the leather covering the window, hitting the floor far enough away from Garon's skin not to cause her any immediate alarm. Maddie noted the fact and knew that soon her warrior would have to rest. She moaned and lifted her hips, urging him to hurry her release.

The man was driving her insane. His fingers and thumbs rubbed and plucked at her outer lips repeatedly, building a slow-burning heat all along her furrow and deep inside her channel. As a result, an embarrassing amount of moisture seeped from between her legs. His mouth suckled the tender inner lips and his wicked tongue darted in clever little strokes to lap at the excitement slipping from her body.

Garon seemed to consider her cream tastier than wine—at least, that was what he had told her.

"Garon, please!" she said, tugging at his ears.

His laughter gusted hot against her open sex and Maddie wondered what anyone bursting through their door would think of a husband performing such a wicked act upon his wife. Father Ansel would surely have plenty to say during his Sunday sermon. She giggled at the thought.

"You think this funny?"

"I'm sorry. I didn't know a man would like doing something like this or that it would be so pleasurable."

"You're exactly to my tastes, and I'm ravenous," he growled, and rubbed his prickling beard over the small knot of nerves at the top of her opening.

"Husband!" she said, jerking against him, so sensitive was that one little bump. "I think I'm recovered well enough to—"

"Maddie, I promised myself I wouldn't take you that way until you'd healed." His tongue lapped her from perilously close to the other unmentionable opening upward to the knot that was quickly hardening like a pebble.

"But, Garon," she said, fighting for breath, "I'm dying for you to come inside me again. Please!"

He paused and looked up into her eyes. "I might not be able to stop even if I hurt you."

She pulled at his shoulders until he relented and moved up her body to lie over her. Unfortunately, his knees pressed her legs together, preventing her from opening to accept him. She pouted her lips. "This won't work."

"Maddie..." he said, his voice rising in warning.

She'd learned very quickly he liked to be in charge. "Please?"

His brows furrowed in a fearsome scowl. "We'll go slowly."

"Of course," she said, knowing that "slowly" never lasted more than a few seconds between them.

Garon groaned and rested his head on her shoulder. "Had I known what a monster I had created..."

She pinched his sides and wriggled, freeing her knees to bring them up on either side of his hips. "This is how it's usually done."

A knock sounded at the door. "They'll want the sheets," Raymond shouted from the hallway. "I've brought fresh ones."

Maddie giggled. "They only need to remove the bathwater—it's quite pink."

"Good lord, they'll think I gutted you." Garon reached to grab the sheet from one corner of the bed and tugged it free then reached for another corner.

"You know it would be much easier if we both got off the bed first."

"Not as pleasurable though," he murmured as he centered his cock and pushed inside her body.

Maddie's breath hitched at the burning.

He halted all movement. "Shall I stop?" he asked, his jaw clenched tight.

"I'll kill you if you do," she said between gritted teeth, relieved when he pushed deeper.

With the sheet bunched beneath them, Garon rolled abruptly, taking her with him.

When she caught her breath, she realized she was once again riding his hips.

"Raymond, you can have the sheets now."

"Garon!" she exclaimed, her hands coming up to shield her breasts as the door slammed opened. Not that hiding her breasts made a difference. Locked intimately to Garon's groin, there wasn't much the captain couldn't see.

Raymond's dark eyes widened. "You could have told me to come back later, milord." He cast a glare at Garon but nodded politely to Maddie. "Madam."

Instead of letting Raymond snatch the sheet and leave, Garon pulled her hands from her breasts and offered one to Raymond. "Lady Madeleine," Garon said softly, "meet Raymond, my captain-at-arms."

Shock and an unexpected thrill of pleasure lifted goose bumps on her skin. With Garon's cock stretching her inner walls, Maddie could not conceal the other signs of her arousal. Her cheeks heated, her breaths were shallow and her nipples tightened into painful points.

When Raymond grasped her hand, she looked into his amused face and realized something she'd not noted in the few moments she'd glimpsed him the night before. He shared the same dark brown eyes and hair as her husband. His shoulders were every bit as broad. His height was just as impressive, but the rugged edge of his jaw and the sharp blades of his cheekbones were most telling.

She cast a startled glance at her husband who'd watched her as she came to the realization. "He's your brother?"

"Cousin, actually. Twice removed."

"Garon?" Raymond let go of her hand.

"I'll explain later," Garon growled, and plucked at her nipple.

Raymond's interested gaze followed Garon's caress.

"You two will know each other well," Garon said. "Introductions were needed. Leave us now."

With a final glance that raked over her naked body, Raymond left with the sheet.

Garon grasped her hips and rolled once again, settling his body over hers. His hips flexed, driving his cock deeper still. "Another problem solved?"

Dazed with passion, she nodded. "But not too soon, please."

"Will you find him acceptable?"

"He is much like you. I can pretend."

He kissed her lips and pumped inside her, branding her with his mouth and body.

Maddie's thoughts spun away, soaring on the wings of the rapture he built inside her heart and body.

"Perhaps we will take you together," he murmured, hooking her knees with his arms and lifting away to increase the strength and depth of his strokes.

Maddie cried out, the image of both men hovering over her flesh and the liquid heat melting her channel with his thrusts, combining to hurl her over the precipice.

When they'd both sufficiently recovered their breath, Maddie settled her head on his shoulder and idly fingered the dark hair on his chest, tugging him back to wakefulness. "Is it really possible for both of you to take me at the same time?" she asked, keeping her tone quiet—trying not to show how excited the thought made her.

Garon turned his head on the pillow and opened his eyes, a wicked grin splitting his face. "And I thought you such a mouse!"

She plucked his hair hard. "A mouse!"

He laughed and pulled her over him. "One more ride before we sleep?"

Maddie snuggled her sex down his cock, fitting him slowly inside, and then rocked against him, finding the crisp, curly hairs at the base of his groin caused a delicious friction. She rubbed and ground her mons against him until he uttered an oath and gripped her hips to lift her up and down his shaft.

"Getting impatient?" She gave him a sly smile. "I wonder if Raymond will find your bite as pleasurable."

He growled like the beast he was and pumped harder.

Fighting for breath, Maddie leaned down until her mouth hovered just over his. "I think we'll both sleep like the dead today."

## **Chapter Five**

Three months passed in a dizzying whirl of pleasure. When Garon had assured himself he'd given Maddie every first a man could gift his wife, he arranged an outing. The overcast sky and the thick hooded cape Maddie had fashioned for him were enough to protect him from the searing sunlight.

He'd avoided detection as a vampire all this time thanks to her clever arrangements. Raymond's close resemblance wasn't remarkable until his hair was pulled into a tight queue, revealing his strong jaw. On sunny days, Maddie and Raymond rode out of the gates, stopping to talk to farmers in their fields, who doffed their caps to Raymond without giving it a thought. On cloudy days, the three rode together, Raymond's unbound hair making him recognizable as their guard, so no one looked too closely or ever wondered. Garon's secret appeared safe for now.

This cloudy day, he'd sent Raymond ahead to ready the vacant cottage he'd chosen for Maddie's introduction to Raymond. Garon fought his own jealousy but knew this had to happen to ensure her future. He'd school his face into a pleasant mask, hand her into Raymond's keeping and leave them alone. Garon thought that maybe Raymond had fallen under her spell as well because he'd noted the leap of heat in his cousin's gaze when he'd finally told him of the plan to impregnate his lady.

Maddie drew her horse alongside his. "What is the matter? Your eyes are as dark as the thunderclouds above."

"There's nothing wrong." He forced a smile. "And we're almost there."

She glanced around the clearing they entered, eying the cottage. Raymond had spent days cleaning it, thatching the roof and delivering a bed and bedding to make it comfortable for Maddie. Smoke wafted from the chimney.

Raymond stepped out of the cottage, his expression shuttered. His gaze went to Garon, to whom he gave a short nod, and then he stepped forward and helped Maddie from her horse.

"Milady," he said softly, setting her on the ground but not removing his hands from her slender waist fast enough to suit Garon.

"Raymond? What is this place?" She eyed him then turned to her husband. The woman was too clever. A frown knitted the soft space between her brows. "It's too soon."

Raymond stood aside, not venturing a comment. But his dark gaze did sweep Maddie's tall, spare frame.

Garon knew what he saw. Maddie's figure and her appeal had blossomed. Her soft skin, tawny hair and long, coltish legs drew the gazes of many of his men as she strode by. Her long, loose-jointed gait sprang with a joy she was unable to suppress, making her all the more lovely. To hold such beauty, such vibrant energy, made a man feel worthy.

"Maddie. Love." His voice was gruff and he softened it for her sake. "Raymond will treat you well." He pulled at his reins, but she ran to his side and clamped her hands around his calf.

"You can't leave me."

"I can't stay."

"Why?"

"To watch you accept another man?" He shook his head. "Don't ask it."

"But...I thought...rather, I hoped..." She bit her lip and glanced away.

Raymond cleared his throat, drawing Garon's gaze. "If she'd be more at ease, it wouldn't be the first time I've shared a woman."

Garon inhaled, breathing in the crisp, cooling breeze that carried the scent of a peat fire. He locked gazes with Raymond. "You have been a brother to me."



"I know the value of your gift. I won't take liberties outside what you define for me."

"A child," Maddie choked out. "You're to give me a child. That's all this is."

Raymond held Garon's gaze a moment longer. They both knew it was so much more.

Raymond bowed his head. "I will follow your lead, milord."

Maddie squeezed his leg again, tears pooling in her eyes. "I need you."

He glanced down at his hands, still gripping the reins. Already images of what would pass flitted through his mind. Maddie was no longer innocent. She'd kept apace of his lessons and invented her own sensual games to drive him mad with lust.

She could do this. He would help her. He hadn't wanted to be the specter in Raymond and Maddie's bed in years to come when he was no longer with them. But so be it.

He dismounted and walked his horse to the lean-to where Raymond had left his horse tied.

Raymond stepped beside him, tying off Maddie's. "It doesn't have to be today, Garon. It doesn't really have to ever happen. Not if this will make a difference between us."

Garon clapped a hand against the other man's shoulder. "I'd be selfish to consider my own pride. One day, I'll walk away and she'll have need of another man. I want it to be you."

Raymond's expression grew strained, worry shadowing his gaze. "Will she accept your choice?"

Garon quirked an eyebrow. "I leave it up to you to prove to her that you're a worthy replacement."

Raymond's taut features relaxed. A smirk curled one corner of his mouth. "Do you suppose she'll make this easy on us both and be waiting in the bed?"

Garon didn't know. Maddie surprised him at every turn.

They rounded the corner of the cottage and drew up short. Maddie stood nude beside the well, scooping water in handfuls over her shoulders. Her back was turned toward them, the swell of her bottom pronounced by the curve of her back as she sluiced more water over her skin.

Her head canted as she caught the sound of their footsteps. "Seeing as how Raymond has already seen all that I have to offer," she said, still faced away, "I thought I'd save you both a bit of bother."

Raymond grinned and his greedy glance swept over Maddie's long, graceful form.

Garon dug his elbow into Raymond's side and stepped forward as Raymond doubled over, coughing.

Garon reached her first and dipped his hand into the pail to trickle water down her back, watching the rivulet snake down her spine and between her buttocks.

Maddie gave a little moan and widened her stance. "Will you serve me, milord? Will you wash me clean?"

"Don't you think you should wait until after you've a smudge or two of dirt?"

She glanced over her shoulder, her gaze steady. "If I'm to make a child, I would have my body as clean as my conscience."

Garon kissed the back of her neck. "Does this feel sinful to you, love?"

"I have to be truthful. It does feel sinful, and yet I burn."

Garon curved his hands over the tops of her shoulders and bent to whisper, "Can you forgive yourself if you enjoy this too much?"

She laughed softly. "I believe I can. But I don't want you looking at me differently."

"And how do I look at you now?"

Maddie turned inside his embrace, her expression growing serious. "You look at me as though I hold the magic of the moon and stars."

He kissed the tip of her nose. "Nothing you do today will change that. And I'll be relieved if you find joy in this because I don't want you to regret a moment of what it means to be with me."

Maddie lifted on her toes and pressed her mouth to his. "You wear too many clothes, milord." She lowered to the ground then faced Raymond, whose reddened cheeks and taut jaw said how very ready he was for this to happen. "I have nothing to say to you. Not yet."

Garon dropped his hands. She walked past Raymond, her steps light, and entered the cottage without a backward glance.

"Damn me." Garon gave a bark of laughter and drew off his clothes, leaving them beside hers on the ground and glaring at Raymond until the other man shook his head and began to disrobe.

Garon entered the cottage first and found the mattress pulled to the center of the room where gray light from the window lit the bed. Raymond wanted to watch his precious Maddie. Not that he could blame the man. Maddie was stretched across the mattress, lying on her side, a hand propped beneath her head. So young and lithe, so achingly beautiful — milk-white skin embellished with tawny hair above and below. She lay still, a pulse fluttering at her temple.

Her eyes gave away her panic. They were round, unblinking.

"Stop worrying," he chided, coming to the side of the bed. "Remember our first night?"

One eyebrow arched. "When your lusts nearly killed me?"

He winced. "Raymond is just a man. He has his own fears about how this will be."

"Raymond isn't afraid of anyone. Not even you."

A throat cleared and Garon looked over his shoulder. Raymond leaned into the doorway, his hands gripping the top. His body was fully displayed for them both. Everything about his posture and expression was dark, taut, on the edge of violence.

Garon recognized the emotion because he felt pretty much the same—a man wanting to mark his territory but forced to stand down to another.

Maddie had no such inkling of what lay beneath the surface here. Her gaze snagged on Raymond's quickly filling cock. She swallowed hard. "I sincerely hope it diminishes as nicely as does yours, darling, when it's inside me."

Garon's eyes nearly crossed, remembering one of the many misconceptions he'd cured her of when they'd first come together. She knew better now.

Raymond grunted and strode into the room, his gaze raking Maddie's body. "If you prepare her, it won't take long for me to do this."

"You make it sound like a chore," Maddie choked out, a hand going to hide her ruff.

As much as Garon would have preferred that their contact be at a minimum, he didn't want Maddie imagining this as something he didn't welcome. He knelt on the bed beside her, and then lay down, facing her. "Raymond, close the door and join us."

Maddie knew what it cost Garon to welcome Raymond into their bed, but she also knew that Raymond deserved more consideration. He'd been their partner in deception, had protected and shielded Garon throughout their mad dash from Palestine after the Saracen whore had turned her husband.

Raymond would be the father of her child, although the rest of the world would never know it. He deserved kindness and gratitude.

She wished her body wasn't quite so full of "gratitude" at the moment. She'd never hide her excitement over the turn of events from Garon. She worried he wouldn't understand that her excitement had more to do with Garon's willingness to provide her pleasure and comfort than any desire she held for Raymond.

Garon cupped her cheek and bent to kiss her mouth. "You tremble," he whispered.

"I'm not afraid."

"I know. I can smell your arousal."

She groaned and hid her face against his chest. "I wish you wouldn't say such things. I feel as though I need another bath."

Raymond settled on the mattress behind her but was careful not to touch her.

"Raymond, my wife is nervous," Garon said.

Maddie didn't know what else was said, with gazes or gestures, but Raymond moved closer, hot skin blanketing her back, his cock prodding her bottom.

"Oh my," she said, still hiding her face against Garon's chest. Raymond's hand glided slowly over the curve of her hip while Garon kissed her temple and nuzzled her ear.

"I'll not kiss Raymond," she whispered.

"Your kisses shall be mine," Garon said, nodding along her cheek.

"It may take more than the once," she whispered. "To do the deed."

"It may take frequent, even nightly couplings."

"Good Lord," she breathed. "How can we get away to this cottage so often?"

Garon's hand curved around her neck and he tilted back her head so their gazes met. "Raymond already sleeps outside our door. No one will think anything of him placing his pallet inside. 'Tis not uncommon."

"Oh. So he will join us in our marriage bed."

"Nightly."

"Until the child is conceived."

"Would you turn him away so soon? And what of other children you may want? Surely you will want siblings for your first child."

Maddie swallowed. "His duties will never end. What if he wishes to take his own wife?"

"I will never marry," Raymond said, his rough hand squeezing her hip possessively.

Maddie understood now exactly what Garon intended. He'd found a replacement for himself. While Raymond would never be the overlord, he'd see to the rearing of her children, be her companion as she aged.

She blinked at a sudden rush of moisture that blurred his features. "You will not want me to come away with you when our children are old enough?"

Garon kissed her mouth. His gaze was steady, his expression solemn. "When my lack of gray hair and wrinkles becomes noticeable, I shall arrange an accident. A death."

"But I want to be with you. You can turn me. We never have to part."

His eyes closed and he pressed his forehead against hers. "I nearly perished when I was turned. It's not an easy thing. Not assured. And a person might not reach the other side with her soul intact. I won't risk yours."

Maddie started to shake her head, but Garon's jaw tightened, and she knew he'd made up his mind. Still, she had years to wear him down. She'd never concede this argument.

Taking a deep breath, she gave him a smile, hoping he wouldn't mention how her lips trembled. "I love you, Garon."

"I know. You tell me often enough."

"But only when we are...being passionate. I would have you know I love you even when I'm not overcome."

Garon's gaze lifted to Raymond at her back. "My wife has a tender heart and needs reassurance."

Maddie bit her lip to keep from smiling. Garon had returned her words often, but always when they made love. Did he think Raymond hadn't heard him shout it before?

Garon's chest billowed around a deep breath, pressing against her breasts. Then he bracketed her face between his large palms. "I love you, Maddie. Nothing we do here will change that."

She hugged him close then kissed him and drew back. The moment stretched.

The men seemed to be waiting on her to give them a signal because, other than hands smoothing gently over her flanks and breasts, they held themselves still.

Maddie suppressed a huff. She'd have preferred them taking her rather than waiting for her to welcome them, accepting her own share of the guilt for whatever would happen between them.

She rolled to her back. "Since Raymond has more skill, having shared women before, perhaps we should defer to him."

A wicked light entered Raymond's eyes and he grinned. "I doubt Garon will need coaching." He gave Garon one last look. At Garon's nod, Raymond crawled over her body, waiting as she slowly opened her legs to let him settle there on his knees. He bent over her and trailed his lips from the edge of her jaw, down her throat, stopping to suckle behind her ear, then downward, licking over the swells of her breasts until she squirmed because he never touched her nipples.

The way his mouth moved over her skin wasn't so very different from the feel of Garon's. Not that she wanted to imagine it was Garon. Her husband's hardening face as he watched Raymond lapping over her ribs and traveling southward heated her body quite well.

She touched her breasts, knowing Garon watched, cupping them and strumming her fingertips over the nipples as Raymond slipped his hands beneath her bottom and lifted her quim to his mouth.

At her gasp, Garon cursed softly and bent over her breasts, biting her fingers until she pulled them away, then latching on to a nipple and sucking hard.

Raymond's fingers penetrated her, two sliding deep while his tongue teased the sensitive knot at the top of her folds. His head wagged between her splayed thighs as he suckled and thrust, quickening the movements until she was perilously close to the edge of pleasure.

Maddie's breaths hitched. Her hips rose and dipped, straining toward completion. She was almost there, almost...

Raymond kissed her inner thighs and sat back on his haunches, stealing the moment.

Garon kissed her mouth then leaned away as well.

Agitated and terribly aroused, Maddie couldn't help but pout.

The men noted her expression and shared satisfied smiles.

"I would lie beneath her," Raymond bit out.

"Can I conceive that way?" Maddie blurted. "Cook says—"

"Cook isn't the expert," Garon said, his voice even. "And not everything we do will be done with a mind toward conceiving."

"Oh?"

Garon slid a finger along her woman's furrow then brought it to her lips. She opened her mouth and sucked it. Her essence exploded on her tongue and she moaned, digging her head into the mattress and lifting her bottom from the bed, begging for them to end her torment.



## **Chapter Six**

She stared at Garon then glanced at Raymond, whose body was readied for her. His reddened cock thrust straight up from a thatch of dark hair. Every sharpened edge of his body and face reflected a powerful, primitive need.

He was so like her husband. In every way.

Garon didn't want her to feel guilt for her pleasure. Maddie didn't want him to worry that she wasn't grateful for all the thought he'd given to her future happiness. And she certainly didn't want Raymond thinking there would never be room in her heart for him. She only hoped he'd understand that, for now, Garon held precedence.

Maddie accepted Garon's hand and came to her knees, moving to the side and beckoning Raymond with a gesture to take the center of the bed.

Raymond lay down, emotion tightening his jaw. His gaze never left her face. Even lying down, his frame was impressive. Broad shoulders, muscles defined by deep valleys and swollen hills. The dusting of dark hair that stretched between his flat nipples arrowed down his abdomen, broadening again to frame his sex.

His cock drew her fascinated gaze again. It stood perpendicular to his body, pulsing. The satiny cap offering the only hint of softness or vulnerability. All else was hard, veined and twitching for her to do something.

Still holding Garon's hand, Maddie straddled Raymond, but too low around his hips to take him inside her. She scooted down the bed, her knees enclosing his thighs, and then bent to caress his sex with her mouth.

She hoped her husband understood. That she wanted to prove to Raymond she desired him as well as his seed.

Raymond's garbled curse made her smile. His hands clutched the bedding beneath him, bunching up the sheets, but he seemed to fear touching her.

She licked him up and down then grasped his shaft and swirled around and around the crown. Only then did she meet his gaze, challenging him with her eyes.

Fierce color flooded his face. His hands lifted slowly. Fingers thrust through her hair. Still he didn't guide her, simply petted her head while she took him deeper into her mouth.

His scent and taste was unique. Not off-putting in the least, but not the same as Garon's. She liked that, knowing that she'd be able to distinguish them even in the dark.

When at last she rose and fitted his cock between her legs, his hands clutched her hips with familiarity.

Maddie braced her hands against his chest and eased down his cock, the long glide soothed by the moisture her body spilled. When her mons met the crisp curls at his groin, she glanced to the side.

Garon's face was red and sweating. His eyes a little dazed when they met hers. "I didn't know I would be so aroused watching you take another."

Maddie smiled. "You can do more than watch."

Garon's smile was slow and stretched to reveal the twin points that descended with his rising passion. He crawled behind her and cupped her buttocks, helping her to rise and fall faster on Raymond's cock.

"I would halt my own pleasure and see to yours," Raymond ground out. "If you would stop moving...milady."

Maddie thought his formality comical and giggled. She slid a hand between her legs and ringed his cock. Air hissed between his teeth.

"Is that better?" she asked.

"Sweet God," he whispered. "Garon, she will kill me."

"Maddie likes to be in charge," Garon murmured. Then he pushed her down until she bent low over Raymond's chest.

This close, face-to-face, she could only stare into his brown eyes and note the gold flecks that surrounded his pupils. A difference. One she hoped would be passed to her children because they softened his stare. Oddly, lying here with their faces poised inches apart was so much more intimate than being joined below. She was tempted to explore his mouth, but she'd promised Garon.

Garon shaped her hips, tilting them up. His finger circled her forbidden hole.

She bit her lip and felt heat flood her cheeks.

Raymond's mouth stretched into a masculine grin, the sparkle in his eyes saying he knew exactly what Garon dared. Her husband had played there before. Used fingers and the tip of his cock to tease her, but she didn't know if she could do this with Raymond knowing just how wanton she really was.

Garon thrust a finger into her arse and Maddie cried out, rolling her hips and dragging her quim forward and back along Raymond's cock.

"Your wife's pleasure is drowning my cock," Raymond gritted out.

"I have need of her moisture for what I want."

"Thanks for warning me," Raymond muttered.

Garon sank behind her, his tongue tracking the crevice of her ass then circling her hole, lapping lazily around and around, wetting her. His fingers slid along the outside her folds, skimming the moisture, no doubt skimming against Raymond's cock, but Raymond only lifted an eyebrow in response, daring her to mention it.

Maddie grinned down at him and rubbed her pebble-hard nipples against his chest. "Do you know that Garon considers me insatiable?"

"I gathered that. I have been positioned at your door every night since we arrived."

"Did it bother you, listening to us?"

"A time or two the twins gave me sweet release while I listened."

She wrinkled her nose. "Will you continue to turn to them? Not that it's any of my concern."

Raymond scooped his lips along her cheek. "I believe I will have no need of them."

"Everyone in the keep will wonder about you."

"Do you want me to fuck the sisters?"

"Not really. But I don't want you to think me greedy or jealous."

"Your husband is first in your heart. I understand that. I am here only because he needs me. You need me. It is enough for now."

She kissed his cheeks, one at a time then groaned because Garon had decided that he wouldn't be ignored. His cock slipped between her buttocks and traveled up and down the crease. Then he held her cheeks apart and pushed the tip against her hole.

Maddie's eyes closed and she moaned as he pushed inside.

Raymond slipped a hand between their bodies and rubbed her love knot.

Garon pushed deeper and shivers racked her body. Her jaw dropped open and her pulse built at her temple, in her sex, until she felt on the verge of exploding.

"It's all right, Maddie," Raymond whispered, kissing her cheek and her hair. "Let go."

A kiss landed on the back of her neck and Maddie sobbed, canting her head. Garon growled against her skin then bit deep.

The bite spurred them all on. Raymond's fingers swirled over the top of her sex, his hips bucked beneath her, driving his cock deep.

Garon suctioned against her skin, pulling blood from her and stoking the fire curling in her womb until it flared and she screamed.

The men moved her forward and back with their strokes, firm hands molding to her curves. Maddie could only weather the storm erupting inside her as first Raymond then Garon shouted and pounded faster. When at last their movements slowed, Maddie sagged against Raymond's chest.

All three were coated with sweat. The smell of sex permeated the small room. The wet sounds the men made as they disengaged from her body made her smile as she drifted into sleep.

"How can she look so innocent when she sleeps?" Raymond whispered, turning to deposit her on the mattress.

Garon grunted. "She has no shame. 'Tis a blessing."

Raymond sighed and pushed his hair off his face. "I supposed I should slip away. I'll meet you inside the bailey so no one thinks anything's amiss."

Garon reached across Maddie and gripped Raymond's forearm. "Thank you."

Raymond shook his head. "There's no need. You honor me."

Garon let his hand slide away. Raymond strode out of the room. His gaze returned to his wife who sleepily opened her eyes.

"So many blessings," she said, sighing.

Garon kissed her forehead and pulled her closer to his body. "Blessings," he repeated then realized it was true. While his time with Maddie would be fleeting, he'd carry the joy in his heart for all his life. He'd have the duty of watching over the family she made, the family who would carry his name.

\* \* \* \* \*

The horses whinnied shrilly, waking him. Then a rustling at the doorway drew Garon's attention from Maddie, and he looked up to find a wolf filling the doorway, its head lowered and its hackles raised. Howls yipped around the clearing beyond the door, and Garon's heart thudded sluggishly in his chest.

Good lord, he hadn't seen this coming. His outriders had followed Eustace all the way to his keep, and he'd kept men roaming the outer edges of his own demesne to watch for signs the wolf might return.

So this was how it would end. "Eustace," he said softly. "Let's take the battle outside."

Maddie stirred beside him, her eyes slamming open and her heading jerking to the fading light spilling through the doorway, framing the dark wolf.

The wolf snarled and snapped its teeth but backed away from the doorway, allowing Garon a moment to push Maddie firmly away.

"You can't," she whispered, trying to hold him back. "He'll kill you."

Garon gave her one last look. "Don't give him a reason to harm you. Raymond will come for you."

Then he walked nude into the clearing outside the door. Men encircled the cottage. Scurrying feet farther in the forest indicated at least two more wolves served as sentinels.

Garon strode to the well and slowly pulled on his clothing, careful not to move toward his weapons. Eustace seemed content to savor the moment, his wide canine smile displaying his large fangs. A wolf in the woods yipped then howled, and then all three raised their voices.

They celebrated too soon.

The whistle of arrows, one after the other, sent Eustace's men scurrying for cover, but they fell like trees, toppling into one another. In the forest, a wolf yipped then made a frenzied growl that lengthened, deepening in its fervor until it abruptly ended.

Garon stood, staring down at Eustace, whose frame quivered as his gaze darted around the clearing at the small contingent he'd brought with him. All dead now.

Raymond strode out of the forest, carrying a bow with an arrow already nocked and the string pulled taut.

Garon held up his hand to halt Raymond. "Only if he defeats me," he said. "Protect Maddie."

He locked his gaze with the wolf's. "We finish this today."

The wolf trembled then shook his fur and padded side to side as Garon bent his knees and let the change overtake him, the bony structure of his forehead and cheeks crackling as they pushed outward, his arms, legs and torso expanding and hardening.

He called to his inner beast and let him crawl forward, crowding Garon into the back of his own mind where he watched as the beast shook his head, cracked his neck side to side and hastened the descent of his fangs.

Wrapped in a blanket, Maddie watched in awe from the window. Garon was unrecognizable, his face a horrifying mask, his mouth filled with lengthening teeth that ripped at the wolf when he sprang for his back.

The two beasts rolled in the dirt, the wolf ripping gashes in Garon's flesh, his teeth snapping and opening wounds on his forearms. But the wolf never got close enough to his target, Garon's throat. Garon's fierce strength staved off the wolf's charge and swung the animal to the ground. Then he straddled its back, his arms enfolding its large neck and pulling back.

The wolf gagged and scratched at the ground, but in the end, Garon gave one last squeeze that ended in a cracking sound that left the wolf limp inside his embrace.

Garon stood and backed away from the dead wolf then fell to his knees, his hands covering his face as he transformed, his frame melting back into the naked warrior.

Figures stepped from the rim of the forest. Garon's men and the castle guard, including Egbert, holding his bow and stepping warily into the clearing.

Garon pulled his hands from his face and stayed kneeling as the men surrounded him.

Holding the blanket around her, Maddie scrambled from inside the cottage and ran toward Garon, standing between the guard and her husband.

"Maddie, step aside," Garon said. "I've hidden behind you too long."

"I won't let them hurt you," she said, her eyes filling. She aimed a glare at Raymond, who stood still as a statue. Garon's own men knew what he was but waited for his word to step in and save him. Garon appeared ready to accept his fate.

Egbert stepped closer, his narrow shoulders hunched, his face screwed into a scowl as he stared at Garon. "I knew ye be a demon. First night. Didn't I say so, milady?"

Maddie swallowed back her tears. "That you did, Egbert."

Her servant aimed a look over his shoulder to the other men then his gaze landed on Eustace's limp human form. "Never liked wolves. Seems we have a better champion in his lordship."

Maddie stared, watching as Egbert lifted his chin to the other men and they faded into the woods.

Raymond signaled to Garon's men and they too headed back to the keep.

"I saw his men sneaking through the forest when I left you," Raymond said. "I raced to the keep. We underestimated Egbert and the castle guard. They didn't blink when I handed them silver-tipped arrows. Seems they caught a whiff of the problem the first time Eustace graced the halls."

Garon pushed off the dirt and stood, his body trembling. "The fact they didn't try to slay me doesn't mean they won't. I should go."

Raymond gripped his shoulder. "I think you're wrong. They don't see you as a demon. They see you as their protector."

Maddie gripped his arm. "They only need to see you without the subterfuge to know you're the same man they saw grow to manhood here. They only have to watch me with you, my children with you, to know they don't have to fear you."

Garon swallowed hard, and then glanced down at the bloody rows scratched into his flesh. "I should dress."

"Then come back to the keep for a bath," Maddie said, sliding her arm around his waist.



Raymond tossed Garon's clothing at him. "No need to scare the women," he quipped.

Garon snorted and pulled on his chausses and boots but slung the rest of his clothing over his shoulder. He mounted his horse then leaned down and swept Maddie from the ground, ignoring her squeal and depositing her in front of him.

Raymond swung onto Maddie's horse, smiling, and the trio headed back to the keep.

With the rising moon shining through the trees, Maddie leaned against Garon. "You should have let me dress," she muttered. "The women will know exactly what we were about when Eustace caught us unaware."

"The cook will have it arse-ways," Raymond drawled.

"You know about the cook?" Maddie said, feeling heat wash over her cheeks.

"You forget who waited at your door to make sure your husband didn't ravage you."

"How embarrassing," Maddie said, exaggerating her distress.

Garon tugged her hair, tilting back her head, and slammed his mouth down on hers. "This night might have ended badly," he said when he lifted his mouth.

"It most certainly would have if you hadn't been what you are," she said, keeping her voice even. Then she turned and settled her back against his belly again.

Garon's body tightened against her as he mulled over what she'd said. "You think I was fated to be a vampire."

"It doesn't matter what I think."

Garon relaxed by increments, his breathing deepening. When his hand slid around her waist to hug her closer to his body, Maddie smiled.

"Raymond, I think I'll be around awhile."

His cousin's teeth glinted white in the deepening darkness. "There's plenty of Maddie to share."

"The things you say!"

Garon tugged down the top of the blanket and cupped a firm breast. Just a tweak of her nipple and Maddie was ready.

"Patience, woman," Garon said.

Raymond laughed. "She possesses many fine qualities but not that one."

Garon thumbed her nipple and Maddie ground her bottom against him. He kicked the horse's sides and she laughed as it galloped toward the keep. At that moment, she felt close to perfect happiness. The future still held trials, she was sure, but Garon was willing to change and Raymond would add his voice to hers to make him listen.

"So many blessings," she whispered.

## About the Author

Delilah Devlin dated a Samoan, a Venezuelan, a Turk, a Cuban and was engaged to a Greek before marrying her Irishman. She's lived in Saudi Arabia, Germany and Ireland, but calls Texas home for now. Ever a risk taker, she lived in the Saudi Peninsula during the Gulf War, thwarted an attempted abduction by white slave traders and survived her children's juvenile delinquencies.

Creating alter egos for herself in the pages of her books enables her to live new adventures. Since discovering the sinful pleasure of erotica, she writes to satisfy her need for variety—it keeps her from running away with the Indian working in the cubicle beside her!

In addition to writing erotica, she enjoys creating romantic comedies and suspense novels.

Delilah welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her [author bio page](#) at [www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com).

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