



Beautiful Trouble Publishing

VISCERAL:

The Faerie and the Wolf

JEANIE JOHNSON

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THE BACKSTAGE AND THE DOES

Second Edition

Jeanie Johnson



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Visceral: The Faerie and the Wolf, 2nd Edition

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Dedication

To all the ladies from all the Yahoo boards—your encouragement (read: demands) to write the Otherworldly series has been a constant blessing. Your love of the characters and story is always a source of amazement for me. Thank you so very much. And to the usual suspects—Momma—your guidance and "Momma ways" (aka—LOVE) are always what I need when I need it; Rolanda, Dréa, Vonglorious, Shara, Alcira, Charly K, Aunt Donna, Thumper, Rhonda and the Red Stiletto Book Club [Cherria Moore, Carolyn Ladson, Glynis Bell, Nonnie Jackson, Dawn Redd, Linnell Miller, Christy Hawkins, Constance Grier, Linda Grier, Rhonda Scales, Sheila Neismith] Rock on ladies! And to my New Zealand contingent—Karlo and Jax—y'all are so very special, and I wouldn't have gotten to the end of this book without your honest and enthusiastic feedback. And last but not least—to my man:

I love you. - THE Jeanie

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Caveat

This work of erotica contains adult language and sexually explicit scenes, which are smoking hot. This book is intended only for adults, as it is defined by the laws of the country in which the purchase is made. Keep this book out of the hands of under-aged readers.

The Who Done It and Why

Compound Labs: The Secret Compound where the Grotesque Man engaged in unauthorized genetic and DNA testing/enhancing on unwilling subjects including Sunny Delaney Mann. It was destroyed in a battle that pitted the hired mercenaries and rogue scientists in the employ of the Grotesque Man vs. the wolves of the Black Ridge Pack, the Healer—Destiny Mann, the Empress and Emperor of Western Vampire Nation (WVN), the Locke Brotherhood—the physical executors of punishment for WVN, and the Elemental Faeries.

Faerie: Otherworldly members who are as powerful as they are physically striking. Similar to the mortal realm in structure, their kingdom is set apart by its sheer beauty. Often using their powers for mischief or to sate their many appetites, they do not enjoy good reputations among the other Otherworldly members. Still, given their power they are usually given a wide berth.

Elementals: The *Faeries* who control the elements of earth, wind, fire, and air. Originally, Gaia controlled the elements. When her daughters demonstrated powers at birth, she trained them and entrusted the realms to them when they came of age.

Esmeralda Jensen: A beautiful but weak Magick with dreams of grandeur that never came to fruition despite marrying into power. Mother of Chloe Jensen, the most powerful Magick born since Ruler Paradisa Artashir.

Lord Paramount Ethon Artashir: One of the most legendary Vampire warlords known to the Otherworldly community. He fought in and later led the Army of Vampires when Lord de Vires' father ruled the Western Vampire Nation.

Paramount Invictus Vadoma: The very first leader of the *Locke Brotherhood* and a highly respected and senior member of *The Society*, he was one of Lord de Vires' most trusted friends. Mate to Kanika Vadoma.

Kanika Vadoma: A powerful Magick, daughter of Paradisa Artashir. Mate to Invictus Vadoma.

Kyros: A bastard of the highest order and a powerful Vampire whose grand plan is to control...everything (including the Mortal Realm and all Otherworldly realms) by any means possible. Known by numerous monikers due to his ability to use magick that briefly allows him to alter his appearance. Beneath the magick, he is grotesque...except for his cock, which is by all accounts a most magnificent piece of art.

Paradisa Artashir: A powerful Magick and Ruler over *all* of the Magicks. Mate to Lord Paramount Ethon Artashir.

Nafrini de Vires: Keeper of Souls. Mate of Serafeim de Vires. Mother of Astarla Hart Montague.

PROLOGUE

Tuesday Alexis Grace, better known as Tag, moaned as she came to. Slowly opening her eyes, she quickly closed them again as they felt like they were being pierced by a thousand shards of glass. *Sheesh, I really need to get off of the juice*, Tag thought hazily as she rubbed her forehead in an effort to soothe the tattoo of what felt like fifteen hundred jackhammer-wielding construction workers drilling into her skull.

“Don’t touch your head,” a deep voice she semi-recognised growled near her ear.

Tag took her time opening her eyes this time, knowing what was going to happen when she did—the light was going to blind her. Still, she opened her eyes, but surprisingly, she didn’t feel any pain thanks to a head blocking the light. Though she looked right at the person, all she could make out was a fuzzy halo of light around his or her head. She tried to smile but she was pretty sure it resembled more of a grimace, being she was filled with pain.

“Wh-h-hat happened?” Tag winced at the sound of her voice.

Why did she sound like shit, and why did she feel so damn weak? she wondered. Of course, she had to wonder this with her eyes closed.

“You got hit in the head,” a deep, masculine voice replied.

Though the words were simply said, why did she get the feeling he was smiling? Bastard.

“No shit, Sherlock. Where am I?”

“My house,” he answered, still managing to sound all smiling bastard like.

Tag felt the need to smash the man in his head so he could share in her misery. How fuckin’ cheerful would the bastard be if he was disoriented and in pain?

“Oh, so we’re in Disney World?” Tag asked.

It might’ve been rude, but she wasn’t into playing games, especially when she couldn’t remember the fucking rules! Before he got a chance to respond, they were interrupted by a loud banging. Thankful that the banging wasn’t coming from her head, she was concerned when the noise was accompanied by an angry, raised voice—not that she could do a thing about it in her state.

“I’ll be back,” bastard said, sounding all Arnold-wannabe.

Even in pain she was unable to stop the smart-assed reply that fell from her lips. “Whatever, but you really need to work on your Austrian accent.”

Hearing the door close, she closed her eyes tighter and focused on getting the jackhammers to at least go on mute, if not ceasing all together.

“Where is she?” Jesse Tseena-Gero asked Jaron Mann.

Similar in height and weight as well as looks, the two males faced off in Jaron’s doorway. Both had the thick, raven hair and rich skin that hinted at their Native American heritage, but their eyes set them apart. While Jaron sported the trademark Mann emerald green eyes, Jesse’s eyes were hazel and his skin a much richer shade of brown. Not known for their softness, right now both of them were damn near arctic. Standing well above six feet, it was evident that neither was about to give into the other, despite being blood related.

“She’s safe,” Jaron said.

Jesse simply lifted a brow at his cousin’s response before replying. “I want to see her.”

When Jaron didn’t make a move to let him through, he made to push past his cousin. However, Jaron slammed his hand onto the doorframe, preventing him from entering.

“Not so fast,” he said, his steely gaze never leaving Jesse’s face.

Jesse stared at the arm barricading him from the sight of his best friend before piercing Jaron with a hard gaze.

“Excuse me?” Jesse said, feeling his temper beginning to rise.

He’d always had a close relationship with his cousins, but there was something about the way Jaron was acting that was grating on his last nerve.

“What is she to you?” Jaron asked.

“Why is that any of *your* business?” Jesse countered his cousin’s question with one of his own.

“It’s my business because I want to know,” Jaron said.

Crossing his arms over his wide, muscular chest, Jesse looked at his cousin as if seeing him for the first time.

“What you want and what you get are two very different things, Jaron,” he answered softly.

“Are *you* involved with her?” Jaron asked whilst sweeping him with anger-filled eyes.

“That’s none of your business,” Jesse answered.

He didn’t even flinch as Jaron raked angry emerald eyes over him.

“I. Want. To. Know.” Jaron bit out each word.

No telling what sort of violence would’ve resulted from Jaron’s arrogance and his own stubbornness, had they not been interrupted.

“Hey, Jesse,” Tag’s voice slid through their anger.

As always, she was smiling. Wondering how she’d managed to sneak up on both of them, he moved swiftly past his cousin and walked directly up to his best friend.

“How’re you doing, Tag?” Jesse asked as he gently hugged her to him before setting her back and looking her over.

Though she looked a little dazed, her golden eyes still twinkled and she still wore her trademark grin. Reaching up, she kissed his cheek before answering.

“Hi cutie, I’m just fine,” she responded a moment before her eyes rolled up into her head and she fell in a dead faint.

Though she was already in Jesse’s arms, Jaron pushed him out of the way and caught Tag before she could hit the floor. Holding Tag to his chest, Jaron turned and glared at him.

“You’ve seen her; now you can go,” Jaron snapped before turning towards his bedroom.

Jesse was an observant man. Only the way Jaron cradled Tag so gently stopped him from maiming him. Still, he wasn’t about to let Jaron go without a warning.

“Be careful, Jaron. Tag’s not one of the sluts you cavort with. You hurt her and I *will* kill you, blood

relative or not,” he promised and walked out of the front door.

Though he knew Jaron heard him, his only response was to slam his bedroom door shut.

CAREER ONE

Jaron watched Tag sleep soundly in his bed and asked himself for the hundred-millionth time what the hell was wrong with him. He was making enemies of his brothers, the other *Elemental Faeries*, and now his cousin and this woman didn't even *want* him! Though he hadn't responded to Jesse's warning, he'd heard it and he knew that he'd meant it. Jesse might be younger and friendlier, but he was still a Mann. It was clear that he had a special connection with Tag. Knowing that it wasn't sexual didn't stop him from being jealous at the familiar way he'd touched her.

Frustrated, he breathed in deeply, filling his nostrils with her unique scent. It took everything within him, but he managed to tear his gaze away from the temptation that lay in his bed. Running a hand through his hair, he turned to his window and watched the falling snow blanket the area.

It was hard to believe that just a few hours ago, Tag had been busy storing her band's equipment into the luggage compartment of their touring bus. Initially, he'd been pissed about the fact that she'd been working alone, especially after what she'd recently been through at the Compound Labs. But then he'd watched how meticulous she was about

packing and realised the reason she worked alone: she had a little bit of OCD—everything had its place.

Noting the brilliant smile on her face did something to him. Instead of offering to help, he simply stood back and watched her go about her task. He observed in reverent silence as the most frustrating woman he'd ever met did something as mundane as load a bus.

He was already fascinated with the golden woman, but her next sequence of actions really held him spellbound. Pausing in her actions, she turned her face up to the sky and let the snowflakes fall onto her face. Exhaling, she seemed to embrace the crisp air and blackness of night. After spending several moments still, she suddenly shuddered. Instinctively, he knew excitement rather than cold was the catalyst for the fine tremors that racked her body.

He knew she'd been granted some kind of meeting in the *Faerie Kingdom*, but that was the extent of his knowledge. He didn't get a chance to ask more, as she was so focused on getting the band ready to move on. Though he did everything in his power to get up under her, she barely paid him any attention. She remained steadfast, and thus, he was ignored as she went about band business. He watched her say her quiet goodbyes to the other band members, and wondered why she had to touch them to say goodbye.

Though most of the band members were related to him in some way or other, he still wanted to rip all of them to shreds as she hugged and kissed each man with warmth and genuine affection. His wolf was already close to the surface, but it was almost fully upon him as he watched her interact with Jesse. She hugged him so hard and held him for so long that Jaron felt his canines lengthen. He had to leave the bar to stop himself from throwing his cousin bodily through a window.

And then she'd just left. She hadn't looked at him once, hadn't uttered a single word, hadn't turned back. She'd just...left. Now frustration had him leaning his forehead against the cool pane of the window. Though he stared out into the night, he didn't see a thing. He was consumed with the events that had occurred after he'd followed Tag from the band's bus and into the trees that lay to the west of his club.

He'd seen the swirling air that she'd been moving towards—he'd known to stay away from that. But then he'd glimpsed the man standing in the shadow of one of the trees. Though he didn't know who he was or what he wanted, Jaron was already running. So was the strange man, who was already upon Tag. He called out a warning to Tag, but she didn't hear him. Spotting something large and

presumably heavy in the stranger's hand, he redoubled his efforts, but it had been too late.

Tag had began to run towards the portal that would've taken her home to the *Faerie Kingdom* when the stranger hit her directly in the back of the head. Though Jaron suspected that was his plan, he lost his mind all the same. Moving as fast as his wolf allowed, he ached to shift but held off so he could exact revenge. Grabbing the man by the back of his shirt, he hauled him away from Tag's prone unconscious body and proceeded to beat the shit out of him.

Jaron took great pleasure in beating the shit out of the prick who'd hurt his woman. *WHOA!* his mind protested. Tag wasn't his. *But you want her to be*, his wolf replied. Jaron grimaced at the voice in his head and the protests of his wolf, before blatantly ignoring both. He'd deal with them later; right now he had scum to see to.

His body still vibrating with rage, he held the man off of the ground and snarled into his face.

"Who sent you?"

The man had to spit out a mouthful of blood in order to answer him.

"The prince," the man gasped out.

Tightening his grip on the man's throat, he growled out yet another question. "Why?"

“Tuesday Grace is to serve her whole banishment in the mortal realm. Her sentence is not over and won’t be for a long while.”

Jaron didn’t know exactly what that meant, so he simply stored the information away where he’d think on it later. Delivering a few more blows simply for shits and giggles, he landed a staggering punch that broke all of the man’s ribs, along with a parting shot.

“Tell that snivelling little fucker to stay the hell away from Tag. If he sends anymore of his bitches—and I don’t mean that in a complimentary way—after her, I’ll hunt the prick down and rip his throat out. Got that?”

Seeing him nod, Jaron had thrown him through the portal, which closed in on itself before disappearing.

The sound of Tag sighing in her sleep pulled him from his memories. Turning, Jaron looked at the woman in his bed. Moving closer, he considered the questions gnawing at his insides. How old was she? Though she looked like she was in her early thirties, the *Fae* never really aged. How did she like to spend weekend afternoons? Having met her sisters, the *Elemental Faeries*, he couldn’t help but wonder what type of *Faerie* Tag was. He wondered if there was an *Elemental Faerie* of aggravation.

Sighing, he realised that most of his questions would go unanswered. His sigh wasn't due to the lack of answers, as the *Fae* were stingy with information about their species; it was due to the fact that he wanted to know. Never before had he wanted to know anything about a woman outside of her name. Instead, women wanted to know about *him*, more specifically how to please him.

Without considering his actions, Jaron found himself reaching for Tag. Pulling back just before his fingers made contact with golden skin, he exhaled noisily. Closing his eyes, he berated himself for his lack of control. He berated himself more for caring. Never having wanted a woman with this all-consuming intensity, he found himself frustrated. He just couldn't stop himself from caring, just as he couldn't pretend that she didn't get to him. Dammit!

"Hey," the object of his thoughts whispered.

Snapping his eyes open, Jaron looked down at Tag and quickly became ensnared by her golden gaze. As always, each time he considered her name, he cringed. Obviously, he was going to have to do something about her nickname, but that would have to be later, as right now opportunity was calling—no, screaming—his name. Watching the fire light her eyes, he amended his statement. He'd have to worry about her nickname much, much later.

“Hey, yourself,” he replied.

He was proud of himself for sounding nonchalant. *Cool, calm and collected*, Jaron chanted in his head as he stared down at Tag. Damn, she looked good in his bed. His blood red sheets went well with her. The red made her skin and eyes appear a little bit darker. He chuckled thinking of how Tag was a good accessory to any bed she was in; then he snarled imagining her in any other bed besides his. Before he could get worked up good and proper, he watched as her eyes shifted. There was something in the golden, swirling depths...something that drew him in.

“Kiss me,” Tag said on a whisper.

Though his cock hardened considerably, Jaron scowled. He didn’t appreciate his reactions to her. Before he could move, Tag wrapped one of her hands around the back of his neck and pulled—hard. He’d forgotten how strong *Fae* women were rumoured to be. It was a good thing he was a wolf—otherwise, she might’ve made him her bitch. Not wanting to waste time fighting, he brought his head down slowly. Stopping just before reaching her lips, he closed his eyes and inhaled. She smelled so good, felt so soft.

His lazy exploration was interrupted by her sounds of impatience. Knowing that she wanted him

just as bad as he wanted her caused him to smirk. *This is how it should be*, he thought.

His celebratory speech was interrupted by the woman herself. Obviously tired of waiting for him to kiss her, Tag pulled harder. This time he allowed her to have her way. Finding himself sprawled half on top of her, his breath caught as *she* kissed *him*.

She kissed him like she drummed, and she drummed like she was born to do it. Her kiss was a Public Service Announcement alerting him that she was a lot of woman to handle. While he appreciated the warning, he didn't need it. He was, after all, a Mann, and one thing all Mann males knew how to do was handle a feisty female. Her kiss communicated that she was about to fuck him. Growling, he took over the kiss and communicated his answer: he was going to let her.

The kiss was a prelude to the earth-shattering sex he planned on throwing down. Jaron let go and allowed his passion to come out. It was a kiss laced with need, with promises and with dominance on his end and reciprocity on hers. He could have kissed her forever, and he would have if he didn't need to breathe. Reluctantly pulling his mouth away from hers, he buried his face in her neck.

Tag moaned. Though he was still recovering from their kiss, he couldn't help but note that small

sound was the sexiest thing he'd ever heard. That husky moan went from her mouth straight to his cock. Groaning in response, he knew then that he'd never forget that sound. That was the sound he wanted to wake up to, fall asleep to, and go to his death to.

Opening his mouth over her pulse, he slowly licked her before gently scraping his teeth over the delicate skin. Careful of the canines that had lengthened at the sound of her first breathy sigh, he traversed a path from her wrist to her neck. His hands beneath the covers that he'd tucked around her sleeping form, he gripped her wide hips, wanting, needing to get a hand between her legs.

"Jean-Marc," she breathed.

An icy hand gripping his balls would've had less of an impact in the heated moment than the reality of Tag moaning some other man's name. Jaron jerked up and off of Tag. Though his mind was an eddy of tumultuous emotion, Tag didn't seem to be suffering any ill effects. While he moved away from her, she immediately snuggled into the comforter and smiled peacefully as her eyes drifted shut.

SHIT! She'd been sleep kissing...sleep moaning...sleep sighing. Realising that even in her sleep she slew him caused his mood to move from dark to pitch black. Even in her sleep she ignored him. Though he was off of the bed, he needed to put more

distance between them. Walking back to the window, he turned his back to her in an effort to shut her out. Yet while he could close his eyes on her beauty, he couldn't chase her scent from his nostrils, couldn't pretend that her presence didn't affect him.

Damn female. He wanted to shake her awake and demand that she tell him whose name she dared to moan when *he* was the male making her hot and wet. Had he even been the cause of her arousal? Or had it been Jean-Marc? *Fuck it.* He didn't care; he wouldn't care, he decided.

Spinning around, he was about to leave his bedroom when he was grabbed out of his time and space and hauled into something that resembled a blue-coloured hell. Not knowing what this place was, he knew it was the last place he wanted to be. It was hot for no damn reason, and blue flames licked at every surface.

Attempting to free himself from whatever or whoever held him off the ground proved to be a futile task. Turning his head, he caught just a glimpse of a female who could only be Adena. Her skin and her eyes gave her away. Like Tag's, her golden skin appeared to be sprinkled with gold dust, although she was a bit more burnished in colour. Whereas Tag's eyes were like pools of liquid gold, this female's eyes were a medley of colours rather than one absolute

shade. Despite the subtle difference in colouring, she had that same mesmerizing way about her. Everything about her reminded him of a fiery sunset...and magic. Yet as beautiful as Adena was, her beauty fell far short of Tag's.

Ah, so he was in Adena's realm. Being that Adena was the elemental *Faerie* of fire, that explained the cheery surroundings. Standing beside her was a male who reeked of power. Towering over Jaron's own six and a half feet, the man made him look positively dainty. What the hell was going on? And further, where the hell was he, if not in the biblical Hell?

"Why is my sister not in the *Kingdom*?" Adena inquired.

Though her words were phrased as a question, from his brief encounter with her during the battle at the Compound Labs, he knew that she was levelling criticism at him. Though she had a facade of calm, he knew her to be just as ill-tempered as Tag. At least she had a better name.

"You want to let me go, pal?" Jaron asked the giant who, despite his obvious power, looked at the *Faerie* with an uncannily gentle expression. It was obvious that he was completely under Adena's spell...and just as obvious that he didn't care who or what knew it.

“I will let you go when we have our answers, *shifter*,” the giant said without a care in the world.

The giant reminded him of his brother Jamieson in both stature and temperament. Though he possessed great strength, Jaron would bet the giant only unleashed it when there was a threat to anyone under his protection. As he was mated to Tag’s sister, Tag obviously fell under his protection. That thought had his wolf immediately rising to the surface. Tag was his to protect...not that he wanted her or anything. It was simply that she’d been hurt on Mann Territory.

His thoughts were interrupted by her sister’s voice slicing through him.

“Perhaps you did not hear me the first time I asked, wolf. Why is my sister not in the *Faerie Kingdom*?”

Jaron recoiled at her tone. Like most females Adena was irrational. Still, he knew it would be best to answer her demand.

“She’s not here because *your* prince sent someone to keep Tag from making her appointment in the *Kingdom*.

“What happened to Tag?”

“She was knocked unconscious.”

“But she is well?”

“She’s resting.”

“And what happened to the prince’s henchman?”

“I sent him back through the portal with a message for the prince.”

“Ah, so you’re the reason the *Kingdom* is in a tizzy.”

Jaron did not know how to respond to that, so he remained silent.

Though she remained calm as she questioned the *shifter*, Adena was anything but. Already in danger, Tag had now suffered injury. That did not sit well with her at all, especially being so soon after the recent battle that had required all of the sisters to intervene. Obviously, something would have to be done about this.

Knowing Tag was safe, she turned her attention to Jaron. It was obvious he was taken with Tag in a way that that no other male—mortal, *Otherworldly* or *Fae*—had ever come close to equalling. She knew that he was completely spellbound by Tag and that her sister was just as taken with the *shifter*. Though she didn’t know this wolf, from the hard set of his mouth and the ice in his emerald eyes, she suspected he didn’t appreciate the way his heart and body reacted to Tag. And knowing her sister, she was certain Tag didn’t appreciate the way her heart and body reacted

to the wolf. The way they insisted on denying the chemistry between them caused her to smile inwardly. Knowing they'd both surrender to that chemistry despite their resistance had her smiling bigger.

Despite the physical and emotional distance they tempted to put between them, their bond only deepened with every passing moment. Regardless of what they both thought they wanted, they needed each other. Soon, the *Elementals* were going to have a wolf *shifter* in their family mix. Tag had done many things that got under the *Royal Faerie's* delicate skin, but this would top them all. Imagining the fallout, Adena didn't even bother trying to hide the smile that blossomed over her beautiful face.

Sensing the wolf's growing agitation, Adena pulled herself from her fantasy of the events yet to come. Narrowing her eyes, she looked at the wolf. So great was his need to return to her sister, he looked on the verge of fighting her husband even though that would be a losing battle. *How cute*, she thought.

"Let me kill them now, wife," her husband pleaded.

She couldn't help but smile at Sage's request. He begged to kill those who hurt their family like a child would beg for ice cream.

"Please, wife. I promise to leave their putrid souls," he said while looking into her eyes.

“Sage...” Adena responded.

As much as she enjoyed pleasing her husband, she couldn’t allow him to kill anyone—*yet*. Though she didn’t say “no,” from the way his shoulders slumped the tiniest bit, he knew she meant “no.”

“If you just give me a few moments, I know I could convince you, my beautiful one.” He waggled his eyebrows suggestively.

“Sage, please. We have company,” she purred.

“They have hurt her again, and besides this being conduct unbecoming males, much less males of a *Royal House*, it angers me,” he said, all playfulness gone from his voice.

“It angers me too, but you still cannot kill anyone right now.”

This giant was Adena’s husband? Figured. Still, Jaron could not fucking believe he was being dangled in the air whilst Sage attempted to seduce Adena into allowing him to kill some being—a being he sincerely hoped was not among that group. That was just damn rude. What was even ruder was the fact that Sage’s wife was turned on by the giant’s pleas. Already an inferno, the room became noticeably hotter. He could literally feel Adena’s desire. Her hand was at her

throat, lids heavy with lust closed over her multi-coloured eyes. Hearing the sigh that escaped her lips had him wanting to get out of wherever the hell he was before she gave into her desire and allowed her husband to kill him—not that he'd go down without fighting.

As he struggled against the giant's hold, his remark about the prince hurting his woman caused his own temperature to rise—not that Tag was his woman.

“While I understand that you want to kill him, I'm afraid I've got dibs on that, big man,” Jaron growled.

“Dibs?”

“Dibs,” Jaron said.

“What does this ‘dibs’ mean?”

“It means that it is my right to kill him because I called it first,” Jaron explained.

“That may be, but I've wanted to kill him way before you even knew he existed.”

“How about we share killing him, then?” Jaron asked.

He couldn't believe he was negotiating over the right to kill the male who dared to have Tag hurt. Still, he'd take what he could get, since he doubted he'd be up to fighting anyone if he had to first fight the giant who was still holding him in the air.

“You want to help me?”

“Yes.”

“But you are so...*little*,” the giant said as he glanced at him.

It wasn't his remark so much as the superior smirk on his face that had Jaron taking offense. Having more strength than sense, he lashed out at his captor. Using his feet as leverage, Jaron braced his weight against the giant and pushed off. The giant's hold on him loosened just enough for Jaron to slip from his grip. Using his wolf agility, he jumped up and aimed a roundhouse kick at his head. Smiling when it connected, he followed it up with a spinning kick to his middle. Though it felt good to get some of his own back, his foot felt like he'd tried kicking through a highway retaining wall. Landing gracefully on his feet, he ignored the pain in his foot and awaited the giant's reaction.

Instead of the retaliation he'd braced himself for, all he received for his efforts was booming laughter. Shaking his hair from his eyes, he watched the giant hold his stomach and laugh his fucking ass off. Snapped from her desire, Tag's sister stood beside her husband with a smile that reminded Jaron of Tag.

“What's so fucking funny?” Jaron asked.

The giant immediately ceased laughing. Peering at him from his foot-and-a-half advantage, he responded.

“Do not speak so basely in front of my wife, *shifter*,” he warned.

Though no more words poured from his mouth, the giant’s eyes said plenty. Even half shut from anger, Jaron could plainly read the message he silently conveyed: talk like that again in front of his woman, and he’d give Jaron the fight he was itching for.

Though he didn’t care that he was an ass to males, he knew better than to show his ass around females—unless they begged him to, very prettily. Looking at Tag’s sister, he offered his apologies.

“I apologise,” Jaron said. “Adena, you want to call off your man?” He stopped, realising that he hadn’t been properly introduced. Sure, she’d called him “Sage,” but considering how damn crazy this whole scenario was, that could be a pet name.

“Fine. By the way, this handsome cretin is my husband, Sage. I apologise, Jaron Mann, for failing to introduce Sage.”

It didn’t escape Jaron that Adena didn’t apologise for snatching him out of the human realm, or for her husband holding him hostage.

“I’m sure you can appreciate that my thoughts lie only with my sister’s well-being,” Adena said in a tone that lacked the haughtiness with which her earlier words had been laced.

Feeling his wolf stand down, he exhaled.

“I understand completely, but what I don’t understand is why the *Faerie* Prince would want to harm Tag,” Jaron said honestly.

“Because he’s an ass,” the giant answered.

“Sage,” Adena warned.

“What? The man is an ass,” Sage said, unapologetic.

“While that may be true, it is not the answer this wolf is seeking.”

Turning back to him, she responded. “It’s a long and complicated tale, Jaron Mann.”

“It would be good to know what I’m dealing with here,” Jaron said.

“Come, we will venture to your home. There I will explain everything,” Adena said as she gracefully waved her arm.

Before he could even blink, Jaron found himself—along with his two *guests*—back in his house. Inviting them to take a seat, he watched as the giant settled Adena on his leather couch. Though he’d included both of his guests in his invitation, the giant declined. Instead of taking a seat, he made his way over to his entertainment centre. Looking like a kid let loose in a candy store, he simply ran his hands lightly over the television. Though Jaron normally didn’t allow others to play with his toys, he understood the call of high-end electronics.

“Sage is fascinated with mortal gadgets,” Adena said by way of explanation.

“Can I get you anything to eat or drink, Adena?” Jaron asked.

“A coffee would be lovely, Jaron Mann,” Adena responded with a smile.

Jaron nodded. Before he left the room, he picked up the remote and switched on his television, surround sound, and DVD player. He couldn’t help but grin witnessing the giant’s reaction to his entertainment system coming to life. If he liked this, he’d love the setup in his basement, where he had a theatre complete with one hundred inch high-definition screen, high-definition movie projector, surround sound, movie theatre-style seating for fifty wolves (or twenty-five giants), a popcorn machine, an ice-cream machine, and an icee machine. This entertainment was nice, but the one in his basement was a wet dream. He’d had to keep his brothers away from his basement, scared that they were going to try and make off with it.

Jumping away from the entertainment centre, he sat heavily on the armchair. Though his armchair was constructed to fit the largest of Mann males, it was a tight fit for the giant. Sage didn’t seem to mind, as his attention was fully on the movie that played.

“And your husband?” Jaron asked.

Adena simply shook her head.

“Sage will be enamoured with your television for as long as it is playing, if I allow it. Not only is he fascinated with mortal gadgets, he’s enamoured with mortal television programs.”

Jaron nodded and set about getting the Fire *Faerie* a coffee. Handing her the drink, he settled himself on the loveseat facing Adena. Though he was more than ready to hear Tag’s tale, he couldn’t help but be drawn to the couple in his midst. He hadn’t failed to notice the way they looked at each other. For all of his power, everything about the giant seemed to soften when he looked at his wife. He wondered what it was like to love someone so deeply that that love was visible to anyone who cared to look. Sighing, he hoped he never had to find out. It wasn’t his goal to shackle himself to one female. A powerful, handsome, wealthy male, he preferred fucking his way through the world’s population of women—mortal and immortal alike.

Adena’s silky voice pulled him back to the present.

“You want my sister.”

It wasn’t even a rhetorical question. Adena uttered those four words as if it was an indisputable fact. She said it all casual-like, in the same way that one would say the sky is blue, grass is green and water is wet. Jaron concentrated on not choking on his

coffee, noting that being shocked into an injury seemed to be a habit around beings related to Tag, and of course the woman herself.

Gathering himself, he put down his own coffee and answered honestly.

“Yes,” he said, knowing better than to lie to a woman who controlled fire.

The scowl that settled over his face at his admission grew grimmer as he watched the soft smile settle on Adena’s lips.

“And yet she wants nothing to do with you outside of sex,” Adena stated.

Grinding his teeth, he took a deep breath before defending himself.

“I have yet to make her see how good we could be together.”

Though he was attempting to sound confident, from Adena’s responding laughter, he’d failed miserably. It seemed that laughing at him was a theme among the members of Tag’s family. Never having been the brunt of jokes, Jaron didn’t know how to respond, although he sure as hell didn’t appreciate it.

“You *will* be explosive together, but that’s not something *you* would need to convince her of, Jaron Mann,” Adena said with the small smile that never seemed to leave her face.

Jaron felt himself responding to Tag's sister. He literally felt himself wanting to confide all manner of things about himself to Adena. *What the hell?*

"Adena has that effect on males. They meet her, and suddenly they find themselves spilling their guts. While some accomplish that verbally, others do it physically. It's just her thing," a melodic voice said from beside him.

Following the direction of the new voice, Jaron looked up and saw the other three *Elementals* standing in his living room...along with three additional males who immediately flocked over to his television. It didn't take more than a glance to realise that the males crowded around Sage were with them. Turning to look at the males who blocked out the entire side of his house, he was glad that everything in his home was constructed on such a grand scale. Tag's sisters obviously had a giant fetish.

Under normal circumstances he was sure he'd be bothered by the presence of his unexpected guests, but nothing in his life had been normal since meeting Tag. While he couldn't be bothered, he couldn't help but be confused by their nonchalance. He listened to Tag's sisters happily chattering away as if it was a normal occurrence to make themselves at home in a house where their sister lay sleeping after being rendered unconscious by a henchman commissioned by their

prince. *Why weren't they plotting to overthrow prince?* If anyone had hurt a member of his family or his female, he'd be deep in the throes of revenge.

Adena's voice once again pulled him from his musings.

"Jaron Mann, allow me to formally introduce the rest of our clan. This is Isaura—*Faerie of Air*, Naida—*Faerie of Water*, and Dianthe—*Faerie of Earth*."

Pointing to the giants, she introduced them.

"The black-haired man is Dianthe's husband, Falcon. The man who looks like my Sage is his brother Riven, who is the husband of Isaura. The man with the clean-shaven head is Naida's husband, the Archangel Gabriel."

While each of the sisters was a powerful being, it was clear that they all deferred to Adena. As soon as she'd begun making introductions, all chattering had come to a halt.

"What are your intentions with our Tag?" Isaura asked as soon as Adena finished the introductions.

Having a feeling he was being vetted, Jaron took his time answering. It wasn't that he had to search around for the truth; he simply didn't want to be on the receiving end of some angry *Fae* if he said the wrong thing.

"I want her," he said simply.

There was a moment of silence before all four sisters burst out in raucous laughter. Dianthe was almost bent in half as she howled with laughter. Isaura was slapping the end table so hard, he was sure that any moment the heavy oak would cleave in half from her blows. Naida was the most reserved in her laughter. She merely held onto the edge of the couch, relying on it to keep her from falling to the floor. Adena simply grinned.

“And you are all laughing at me why?” Jaron asked the four women.

“You’re a *shifter*, Jaron Mann, and last time I checked, you guys hated our kind,” Isaura answered once she pulled herself together.

“She’s right. You *shifters* aren’t exactly renowned for understanding the ways of *Faerie*,” Naida said.

“I’m not an *average shifter*; I’m a Mann,” Jaron said through gritted teeth.

“Oh, yes you are—average, that is,” Dianthe said with a twist of her lips in his direction.

He was beginning to see why so many *Otherworldly* beings refused to deal with the *Fae*. It wasn’t that *Otherworldlies* were species-ist against the *Fae*; it was that the *Fae* were damn annoying. Not only did they laugh at you all of the time, they also had the potential to kill you without “*meaning*” to. And

then there was the fact that *shifters* couldn't smell their intentions or their feelings. Though Jaron was perturbed, he wasn't mad. Something told him he was being tested by Tag's sisters for whatever *Fae* reason had flitted through their *Fae* minds.

"Why do you guys insist on being so freakin' loud?" Tag's voice slid through the cacophony.

All eyes turned to her, as did his. Her curls were mussed, her face had pillow creases in it, and her eyes were a lazy gold. And she was the most stunning woman Jaron had ever seen. She was turning him on so good, and all she was doing was smiling at her sisters. His cock hardened, and his mind raced with fantasies involving the two of them.

As soon as she stepped from his bedroom, her sisters crowded around her, peppering her with questions. Without considering his actions, Jaron moved in and settled her in a chair at the table and planted himself right next to her. If he would've moved his eyes off of Tag, he would've noticed the smiles and *I told you so* looks on the faces of her sisters.

Sitting Tag next to him at the table, he waited while her sisters joined them in the kitchen. Though he didn't wrap Tag in his arms, he did rest his arm on the back of her chair. Noting the way Tag moved forward so he wasn't actually touching her, Jaron

ground his teeth but said nothing. Instead, he stretched his legs out in front of him and listened to the *Elemental Faeries* quiz their little sister.

“How could you miss the meeting with the Elders, Tag?” Naida asked.

“It wasn’t intentional,” Tag said with a wry twist to her lips.

“What happened?” Dianthe asked.

“She was hit in the back of the head by this,” Jaron inserted and held out the club-like weapon he’d taken from the male *Faerie* who’d attacked Tag.

All of the sisters took turns looking at the weapon that was inscribed with the Royal insignia.

“That little fucker,” Isaura swore as she handed the weapon to Dianthe.

He smiled as he listened to the other sisters add their own invectives.

“I offered to kill them, but your sister won’t let me. Even the *shifter* offered to help,” Sage threw in while bopping along with Ellen as she danced with her audience. “We can still do it. Just say the word.”

Jaron couldn’t help but smile as he listened to Sage’s words. It wasn’t what he offered as much as the fact that the giant didn’t bother taking his eyes off of the television as he casually offered to commit what surely amounted to some kind of *Fae* treason. Who knew such a big man was addicted to the Ellen show.

“Sage—” Adena began.

“Hey, maybe Sage is onto something? If we kill those stuck-up bastards, then Tag would be the last of the Royal line by title, being that Papa was the last *Faerie* Lord before he...you know,” Naida said with a look of innocence that was in stark contrast with her words.

“Even the *shifter* can see how wrong it is. He’s willing to help,” she said in an attempt to convince Adena, who was shaking her head no.

“And we could call her Queen Saturday!” Riven chortled happily from the other room.

“Shut up, Sir Fart-A-Lot!” Tag teased.

“How about Queen Friday instead? Everyone likes Fridays,” Gabriel teased as he turned his dark eyes brimming with laughter towards her.

“You can join him in the shut-up corner, Water Boy,” Tag teased right back.

The mood in the living room elevated as Tag’s brothers-in-law continued to tease her. Meanwhile, the atmosphere at the table remained heavy. With the exception of Adena, all of Tag’s sisters looked as if they were planning a very bloody revenge.

“Has anyone considered talking to the Royal Family?” Jaron asked.

He expected a “yes” or a “no,” not the absolute silence he received in response. All conversation came

to an immediate halt. The only noise was provided by the television, and even that seemed muted. Every eye in the room zoned in on him right before every damn one of his “guests” broke into raucous laughter.

“Didn’t I tell you the *shifter* was funny?” Sage elbowed the giant next to him in the ribs.

“Wow, Thursday, you really know how to pick ’em,” Riven said.

“I didn’t pick him. He just won’t leave me alone.” Tag shrugged.

That comment sparked another round of laughter—laughter that Jaron noted was *again* at his expense. Though he was sure he’d be on the losing end of any brawl he started in this company, he was finding it hard not to growl his displeasure.

“Why does your family insist on laughing at me all the time?” Jaron spoke directly into Tag’s ear.

Despite being agitated, he noted the lack of physical response from her. Every other woman shivered at his touch, trembled at his proximity, sighed from his attention. Not Tag. *Dammit!*

“Possibly because you say crazy things,” she returned evenly.

“Like what? Talking to the Royal Family is crazy? I’m guessing that they don’t really like you, hence the attack and you missing the sit-down with the old *Faeries*,” he said.

Tag grinned at his words, and his cock hardened at her grin. Gritting his teeth, he willed his cock to stay in his pants.

“Dude, for a start, one does not have a *sit-down* with the Royal Elders. Secondly, they’re not all old,” Tag said.

“Why were you banished anyway? Did you laugh at the prince or something?”

His question directed the noise level right back to silent—again. However, unlike the last time, there was no follow-up laughter. There was also no smartass comment from Tag. Though Tag’s smile remained, Jaron instinctively knew he’d hit a nerve. *About fucking time.*

“How did you know I was banished?” Tag asked calmly.

Looking around at his guests, he couldn’t help but notice the look of wariness that lined their faces. What had brought on that look? And why did they all look like they were on the verge of sprinting from the room? Tag was many things: annoying, blasé, smug, frustrating—*especially* frustrating— but frightening wasn’t an adjective he would’ve put on the list.

In comparison to her sisters who ruled the elements and her brothers-in-law who looked like they could singlehandedly take on the Titans *and* the Greek gods, it would seem that Tag would be the lesser threat.

Looking over at her, he perused her Jennoncé—Jennifer Lopez/Beyoncé—body. Yes, Tag was sexy as all fucking get out, but he couldn't bring himself to think of her as frightening.

“The guy who attacked you told me.”

Though Tag nodded, she didn't say anything. She appeared to be mulling over something—something he guessed was going to be unpleasant for the hearer. Something along the lines of “hey, you have spinach in your teeth” or “heads up, your balls are hanging out of your shorts.”

“My banishment is none of your business, but hey, thanks for helping me out,” she responded.

As far as comments went it wasn't bad. Still, it wasn't satisfying either—at least not to him. Apparently, it satisfied the rest of the room, as they collectively released sighs of what he could only describe as relief. Never one to back away from a challenge despite the sexy package the challenge came in, he pressed on.

“Because I saved your life, in my culture you are indebted to me,” Jaron said.

Sure, he was pulling at straws, especially as Tag and her sisters had saved the lives of two of his brother's mates, but also the life of Destiny's sister—the Empress of Western Vampire Nation. But being that he'd been unsuccessful at gaining Tag's attention

for more than half a second, he unashamedly ran with it. Tag's laughter rang through his ears. The unamused sound was accompanied by a spike in the room's temperature.

"No problem, what would you like? Three wishes? Or how about your very own rainbow with a pot of gold at the end?" she asked as she stood and attempted to move past him.

Catching her wrist and gently encircling it, he asked, "Why so pissed? After saving you from your own people who for some reason want to keep you out of your home realm, I now have a houseful of *Faeries* and their giant mates 'visiting' me. I think I'm due the courtesy of an explanation at the very least," he said as he gently caressed the inside of her wrist.

He watched Tag's lips mash together in what he guessed was annoyance a moment before he felt her attempt to discreetly shake off his hold. Once again he found himself irritated at her attempt to avoid physical contact with him. He didn't release his hold, although he knew that she was strong enough to break it should she choose to.

"You have four *Faeries* and their mates in your house because *you* brought me here, but that's about to be remedied," Tag said calmly as she finally pulled her wrist from Jaron's grip.

Jaron let her go (not that he had much choice), but he got right in her face. Though *Fae*, Tag was no one's omega, and as such turned and stood toe-to-toe with him.

"Back up, dawg," she warned.

Like all wolves, Jaron despised being called any derivative of "dog." He found that he especially hated it when it fell from Tag's tempting mouth.

"I have a right to know—" he began.

"Nothing. Thanks for helping me, Jaron. Sorry for the inconvenience and all that, but I'm leaving and taking my family with me," Tag said as she looked over his shoulder at the guests assembled in his home. Immediately, the males abandoned his entertainment centre and joined their mates.

"Tag—" he began again.

This time he was interrupted by a bright flash of light. Thinking one of the *Elementals* had zapped him, he concentrated on maintaining his equilibrium as white spots danced in front of his eyes. When he was able to focus again, he realised that he had a new "guest." It was a new guest whose wings would span the length of the room if he unfurled them.

The new arrival wore a silver leather kilt and black leather Roman-styled sandals that laced up his calves, and Jaron didn't need to have met him before

to know who had just paid him a visit: Azriel, the former Archangel of Death.

There were volumes of books penned about his stunning looks (not that Jaron was looking) and prowess—both on and off of the battlefield.

Shaking his hair out of his eyes, he assumed a stance that could only be described as arrogant. “Well, hello there, beautiful ladies,” Azriel purred before sweeping the females with a look that had all of their mates growling.

Holy shit, literally.

CHAPTER TWO

Just as the legends said, Azriel was absolutely stunning (not that Jaron was looking); and also like the legends claimed, Azriel knew it. Towering over most beings, his multicoloured wings spanning seven metres (22.965 feet), he was awesome in angel form, so much so that most beings couldn't stand to look upon him. Even his semi-human form was amazing. Resembling twin rivers of raven glossiness, parted in the centre, his long hair poured down his body like falls over a mountain. Seemingly carved from a mountain, his bronze skin shone with an inner light that he'd possessed even before being recruited to lead God's army of angels. Not satisfied with settling on one eye colour, he chose them all. His gray-blue-green-purple-brown eyes sparkled with promises. His full lips were always ready to deliver a come-on, whether it was an invitation to his bed or to battle. Females found themselves unable to resist him...and Azriel took full advantage of that fact.

Much to Jaron's annoyance, Azriel affected even the *Fae*. He stood still—legs spread and wings extended—as if giving the females time to appreciate his beauty. Every female in the room sighed and returned his smile. Jaron kept his wolf beneath the surface—*barely*.

It was a moment before he realised he'd made a mistake. While most of the females in the room had paused to appreciate Azriel's looks, Tag stood there with a look of impatience on her face. Noting that anomaly, Jaron's frown turned into a smirk. Tag wasn't affected by Azriel. *Wait a minute*, his wolf interrupted his inner celebration. *If Tag isn't affected by Azriel, how the hell are we going to get her to fall under our spell?* Damn, he hadn't thought about that.

"How's it hanging, Az?" Tag asked the former Archangel, as she gave him a level look.

Azriel smiled at her, and par for the course, women reacted to that. In this case, it was one of her sisters. Her sister's moan prompted all the other males to advance towards him.

"What are you doing here, Azriel?" his brother Gabriel asked with barely contained rage bubbling beneath the surface.

Equal in height, the only evident physical difference between the brothers was in their hair and wings. Gabriel's hair was shorn, and his wings were no longer visible.

Azriel didn't advance; he simply gave his brother a mocking smile that caused the tension in the room to jump another notch. *Interesting.*

"Long time no see, Gabriel," Azriel said instead of answering his brother's question. Pausing, he continued bating his brother. "And where is your beautiful wife? Oh, there you are. Dear Naida, you're lovelier with every passing season and as beautiful as the tides are endless."

Jaron watched Naida put a restraining hand on her husband's arm, preventing the two Archangels from doing more than facing off.

"Anytime you want a *real* Archangel, I'm there for you, Naida"

Suddenly Gabriel was lunging for his brother's throat when Tag squeezed between the two males.

Placing a hand on their shoulders, she told them off.

"C'mon you two! You guys are old enough to know better. Now shake hands and make up," she said sternly.

Tag could feel Jaron's wolf rippling. She knew that he was all set to defend her (even though she didn't need defending). Moving quickly to prevent one of many brawls just waiting to happen, she spoke.

Glowering first at Gabriel and then at Azriel, she told them both off. "Dudes, this is so not cool, and you

are not going to wreck Jaron's house 'cause you two like picking on each other like squabbling bitches."

As if she heard Jaron's silent objection, she looked over at him and apologised. "No offence."

Accepting her apology and knowing that it wouldn't be the last from her to him, Jaron inclined his head even as he stepped closer to Tag and used his body to shield hers.

"Gabriel," Tag warned before turning once again to Azriel, who flashed another shit-eating grin.

"Quit the bullshit, Az—you know that crap won't work on me. Now tell us why you're here?" Tag demanded.

"Your mother sent me, my goddess. You're a sexy, little thing aren't you, Tuesday Grace?" Azriel said.

Obviously, his flirt was on auto-pilot.

"She was concerned when you did not arrive for the Royal Court retrial," Azriel explained.

Grimacing, Tag asked, "She's not on her way there, is she?"

"Not yet. She asked me to check on you first," Azriel answered.

"Tell her I'm okay and that I'm just trying to sort things out here—" Tag began.

Adena stepped forward. "Tag, baby girl," she began.

Tag turned and pinned her sister with a look before speaking. “No, go and tell Mama that I’m fine, I just have things in the Mortal Realm that I must deal with first.”

Azriel frowned at Tag,

“Lying to your mother is not wise, Tuesday Grace, especially when she has all of that power at her disposal,” Azriel said.

“She’ll believe you though. Please, Azriel, I must sort things out, but I need time,” Tag insisted.

Azriel took a moment to consider Tag’s request before nodding.

“Well, always good to see you again ladies, gentleman, *brother*. Ladies, take care of your beautiful selves. Good day,” Azriel said as he dissolved into a million little stars before disappearing completely.

No one completely relaxed until all were sure that Azriel had departed. He hadn’t completely disappeared before Gabriel was grabbing Naida up in his arms and orbiting from the realm. One by one, the rest of her sisters and their mates followed suit. Though Sage had a possessive arm around his wife, they remained.

“I think you are wrong to do this, Tag. Mama will be pissed when she finds out you deceived her,” Adena said.

Though she spoke calmly, the warning in her tone was evident.

Tag sighed before responding. “Addie, it will work out. I just need to figure things out, then I’ll let her know.”

“Do you think your mother will kill Azriel in a fit of rage when she finds out you lied to her, Saturday?” Sage asked with hope lacing the question.

Smiling, Tag shook her head before answering.

“No, Sage, I don’t think Mama will be killing anyone because I lied to her. She’ll understand once I explain everything to her—in my own time,” she added.

Sage’s hopeful look disappeared, giving him the appearance of a petulant child whose favourite toy had been taken away.

“Keep me informed, Tag. If you do not I will go to Mama. And before you go off all half-cocked, you are to remain with the wolf at all times. I mean it, Tag,” Adena warned.

Though she spoke to Tag, she looked straight at Jaron as she delivered the last bit of her warning. Before Tag could even protest, Adena settled herself into Sage’s arms and orbbed from the realm.

Jaron watched as Tag wandered towards the window of his lounge area. She spent a few tense moments looking out the window before finally turning and facing him.

“I apologise for all of that. Families, eh? Can’t live with them, can’t have them killed off,” Tag said half-heartedly.

“So are you going to tell me now?” Jaron asked Tag as he leaned against the breakfast island.

Tag frowned at him from across the room.

“Tell you what?”

“Why you were banished from the *Faerie Kingdom*,” Jaron reminded her.

Tag simply rolled her eyes.

“Too long and too stupid. Look, I’m truly grateful that you helped me,” Tag said as she moved to the front door.

“But...” Jaron said casually as he watched her gather her knee-high leather boots and pull them on.

She said nothing. She simply pulled her long black leather trench from the coat rack and pulled it on. She was all set to step out into the storm that was steadily building into a frenzy...like he was going to allow that.

Her ensemble in place, she turned to look at him with a frown. Hands on her voluptuous hips, standing in what he dubbed a “come gets some” pose, and

swathed head-to-toe in black leather, Tag had no idea how damn good she looked. Needing to address her frown, Jaron tamped down the need to get all up in her personal space. Taking a deep breath, he swallowed his growls of appreciation but he couldn't do shit about his canines, which had lengthened.

"But what?" she said with more than a tinge of exasperation in her voice.

"You're grateful I helped you...but?" he said.

Tag inhaled slowly. "I need to sort out some things."

Of course she did, he thought as he moved to the coat rack and pulled off his own coat and scarf.

"Let's go then," he said as he shoved his arms through the sleeves of his coat.

Removing her hand from the doorknob, Tag turned slowly. She said nothing, but the look she gave him said "fuck you" quite clearly. And oh, how he wanted to, but now was not the time. He allowed the grin he was holding back to light his eyes.

"Oh no, *dawg*, you get to stay here. I don't work well with others," Tag said seriously.

"Sorry, *Faerie* Girl, I'm coming. The last thing I need is your sisters and brothers-in-law wrecking me and my house. Adena told you to remain with me at *all* times," Jaron reminded Tag with a grin.

“She was just blowing off steam. I can handle myself perfectly fine. I don’t need you to—”

Jaron cut Tag off by palming her breast and slamming his mouth down onto hers. Every time he touched her he wanted more. Despite his body protesting mightily, he pulled back and walked through the door a split second before Tag’s senses returned. Waiting on the front porch, he gulped in deep breaths in an effort to calm his body. He watched as Tag touched her fingers to her lips. The fullness of them tempted Jaron like nothing on earth ever had. He ground his teeth before speaking.

“You coming?” he asked Tag.

Tag looked all set to argue, which was a look she frequently wore. As tempted as he was to argue with the feisty *Faerie*, he simply raised an eyebrow at her. Though he knew he’d pissed her off, she didn’t say anything. She simply moved past him and headed for his Jeep with her head held high.

“So where are we going?” Jaron asked Tag as he drove for the third hour with nothing but a few directions from her.

“To see the Elvin Warrior King,” Tag answered plainly.

Jaron couldn’t help the smile that spread across his face or the question that tumbled out of his mouth.

“Like David Bowie in the movie *Labyrinth*?”

“No. Bowie played the Goblin King. Think Elrond from *Lord of the Rings*,” Tag corrected.

Her response had Jaron frowning. It wasn’t *what* she said. It was *how* she said it. She said it with so little emotion. How the hell did one even joke with no emotion? Biting back cusses, Jaron simply schemed. He now had two things he needed to find out about the golden woman sitting in his passenger seat. First, what had Tag done to gain a sentence of banishment from the *Faerie Kingdom*? Second, why the hell did she have virtually no emotions?

Though Tag knew her silence was annoying Jaron, he didn’t press her to speak. She liked that about him. *You like a whole lot of things about the wolf*, her body said. *Whatever*, she returned. Jaron’s comment stopped her from giving her body a piece of her mind.

“*Lord of the Rings*? Okay, I didn’t realise there was a forest in the middle of the city.”

“Elves learned to adapt, just like you wolves with clothes and walking on two feet and everything,” she said.

Just as she suspected, her remark got to Jaron. Instead of snapping something back, he simply gripped the wheel harder and emitted a low growl. Tag couldn’t help but grin. It was nice to know she grated on his nerves just as much as he grated on hers.

They drove for another thirty minutes before she instructed Jaron to pull up outside a steel and mirror-windowed monstrosity of a building. Jaron raised his eyebrows but remained silent. Grabbing his hand so security would know he was with her, she waltzed right through.

“Elves run the largest communications company in the Northern Hemisphere?” Jaron questioned as they stepped into the elevator.

Pressing the button for the top floor, she answered:

“No, elves do not run the largest communications company in the Northern Hemisphere; the Elvin Warrior King owns it,” Tag said by way of explanation.

Being that the Elvin Warrior King liked his technology, the elevator moved a lot faster than most.

The only way one would know they were moving faster than normal was the speed at which the numbers on the L.E.D screen flashed by. A musical ding alerted them to the fact that they'd arrived on the top floor. Instead of making a move to exit the car, she laid a restraining hand on Jaron's arm., Slowly, she turned to face the back of the elevator, waiting as the walls parted and two lethal males pointed two equally lethal swords at them.

"How come they don't have pointy ears?" Jaron said in a sotto voice.

Tired of that question, Tag simply ignored him even as she dragged him after her.

"Tuesday Grace! Get in here, baby!" the giant behind the heavy desk bellowed.

Letting go of Jaron, Tag grinned and went straight to him. As usual, he grabbed her up into a grizzly bear hug before lifting her clear off of the floor and swinging her around.

"Who let the dogs out?" Carlisle Mason asked as he set her back on her feet.

Hearing Jaron's responding growl, Tag bit her bottom lip to stop herself from cracking up.

"Uncle Carl, be nice. Jaron Mann, meet The Elvin Warrior King—Carlisle Mason. Uncle Carl, this is my...friend, Jaron Mann."

The Elvin Warrior King was Tag's uncle? Did Tag know any males who didn't have power in spades? Looking at the giant black man she addressed as "uncle," he couldn't help but also wonder if Tag knew any males who weren't fucking giants. The large, dark-skinned male only had eyes for Tag, yet something told Jaron that those eyes didn't miss anything...or anyone. If he was a betting wolf, he'd bet that he'd already been thoroughly eyeballed.

When he finally set Tag down and turned to look at him, Jaron couldn't help but do a double-take. Carlisle Mason had skin the color of dark mahogany, but he had the most startling blue eyes he'd ever come across. The combination was stunning to say the least. With an arm around Tag, he stepped forward and held his huge slab of a hand out to him in greeting.

"Good to meet you, son. Are you in my Tuesday's band?" Carlisle asked him even as he crushed the bones in his hand.

"Good to meet you, Mr. Mason. No sir, I'm not in Tag's band."

Jaron made sure not to show any reaction to the pain Carlisle's handshake caused. He simply grinned and bared it.

"Uncle Carl," Tag said admonishingly.

Carlisle made a production of letting Jaron's hand go, but Jaron was simply grateful that he did. He watched as Carlisle cradled Tag's face. Jaron could barely see her face in between the meaty slabs the man called hands.

"What's wrong?" Carlisle asked Tag.

Tag grinned at her uncle.

"Nothing. I just need to pick your brain for a minute," Tag said easily...too easily, Jaron thought.

Settling his bulk onto a large leather couch, he pulled Tag down beside him. Embracing her, he asked, "About what, darling?"

Yeah, about what? Jaron wanted to know. Jaron noticed that he was allocated to the couch opposite, but he couldn't be bothered to be insulted now. He was too close to finding out information on Tag.

"My banishment," she answered.

Jaron's ears perked up at that. Carlisle sighed noisily even as he gently brushed his massive knuckles against Tag's jaw.

"We've been through this before," he said softly.

Tag bit her lip. It was clear she had something to say, but before she got another word out, Carlisle asked a question of his own. "Tell me what happened and why you've got a lump the size of China on the back of your beautiful head?"

“First you have to promise me you won’t let any of the boys loose,” Tag said.

Jaron looked around at the figures he assumed were the *boys* Tag was speaking of. Dressed in black and olive uniforms, they took up a lot of space. These *boys* looked like they ate a cow or two at *each* meal.

Each one of them looked like they would quite happily rip someone limb from limb...for no reason at all. Creator forbid they actually had a reason, like someone got between them and their food or cut them off in traffic. Jaron found himself wondering what the hell kind of vehicles fit *boys* of their size. The Mann brothers were not small by anyone’s estimation, but within the past ten hours Jaron had met men who would make Jamieson look like a slim teenager—a slim female teenager at that.

“I can’t promise any such thing, Tuesday Grace,” Carlisle said with a grin.

“Uncle Carl,” Tag said before amping up her plea. “Please? For me? I just need some answers.”

“Am I going to like the questions?” Carlisle asked.

“Probably not. There are bound to be some things you won’t like, but you have to promise no retaliation. I’m begging you not to get involved in this. Promise me, Uncle Carl,” Tag said stubbornly.

“Tuesday,” Carlisle began, before emitting a sigh. “I won’t let any of the boys loose; now spill.”

Jaron watched as Tag took a deep breath and exhaled slowly before telling her uncle about the latest incident in her long banishment. And then he watched Carlisle.

Tag might not display much emotion, but Carlisle Mason was a whole ‘nother story. Carlisle clenched his fists so tightly that Jaron could see the white of the man’s knuckles. Tag’s uncle practically vibrated with the need to do some damage.

Several moments of silence passed when Tag was finished her story. The Elvin Warrior King said nothing. He simply breathed deeper, as if getting more oxygen into his lungs would tamp his need for violence. The only movement in the room came from Tag, who took one of her uncle’s hands in both of hers.

“I’m sorry, Uncle Carl. I didn’t mean to bring you down,” she started.

Carlisle used his free hand to cover Tag’s mouth. Obviously, she was saying words that the male had no intentions of listening to. If the situation hadn’t been so dire, Jaron would’ve smiled at the shock on Tag’s face...well, what he could see of it. Her gold eyes displayed astonishment that someone would dare shush her.

“First, never again let those words pass your lips. You never need to apologise to me for telling me the truth. Second, do not apologise for that little...*boy* and his ways. Do you understand me, Tuesday Grace?”

The Elvin Warrior King spoke gently but with complete authority. Tag nodded as best she could with her uncle’s hand covering her mouth. When Carlisle removed his hand, it revealed a grinning Tag. A real smile, not one of those cut-out ones she seemed to paste on.

Witnessing the love that passed between uncle and niece, Jaron began to feel like a voyeur. Perhaps voyeur wasn’t the right word. He was feeling...*jealous*? his wolf supplied. Jaron stamped that down regardless of the fact that it might be true. Why did she smile at everyone else? Touch everyone else? Was he that repulsive? Great, now she had him doubting himself. Shit.

“So why is there a *shifter* with you? Courtesy of your mother? I would’ve thought she’d send Azriel at least. This one looks like he can barely handle you, much less any danger coming your way.”

Tag held in the hysterical laughter that bubbled to the surface at her uncle’s observation. Noting that

Jaron had gotten to his feet at her uncle's intended insult, she rose to prevent Jaron from doing something stupid. Jaron might not be as big as the men in her family, but he was a straight out brawler. Before she'd lost consciousness, she'd witnessed him tearing shit up.

"Jaron, he's just teasing. Don't let him get to you. Uncle Carl, you promised to behave," Tag said as she stood between her *friend* and her uncle.

She felt Jaron rest his hands on her shoulders. Of its own accord, her body sought his and settled against it. Tag was surprised to feel warmth spread throughout her body. *Interesting*, she thought as she fingered the platinum necklace that pulsed around her neck. It was still there, thank the Goddess.

"Now look, *boy*," Carlisle began.

Tag slapped her uncle's arm. Her uncle probably didn't even feel it; still, Jaron couldn't help but smile at the protective gesture she made on his behalf. Her uncle didn't take insult. He merely made pincers out of his forefingers and thumbs and went for Tag's cheeks. Tag turned her head away in time, but her uncle still managed to pinch her cheeks.

It was obviously a game they'd played many times. Just as obvious, it was a game her uncle always won. Finally play time was over and when it was, Jaron's arms had slipped around her shoulders and

Tag was firmly in his embrace. So caught up in her game, Tag probably didn't realise that she was arching into his warmth, but her uncle did. Still, Jaron kept his triumphant grin at bay.

"Why is Azriel not here? No insult meant, son, but as much damage as I know wolves can do, my sister would not allow just *anyone* to look out for our little Tuesday Grace."

Jaron nodded, understanding perfectly. Didn't mean he agreed—*much*.

Who better to look after your youngest female child than the very man who'd been appointed as the Commander for God's Army of Angels? You couldn't *buy* protection like that; then again, they weren't talking about normal everyday people here.

"I can look after Tag perfectly fine, Mr. Mason," Jaron said.

The Elvin Warrior King looked at him with those piercing blue eyes. Jaron imagined Carlisle saw right to the core of him. After several tense moments, he smiled.

"I'm sure you can, son, but I'd prefer to have a few of my colleagues go with you just to ensure—"

Tag cut off her uncle's words. "Uncle Carl, you promised!"

"No, Tuesday, I didn't promise. What I said was I wouldn't let any of the boys loose. I didn't promise

anything about not protecting you,” Carlisle said smugly.

Damn, Jaron thought. He had to give Tag’s uncle credit. Elves were renowned for being wise, but behind his easygoing facade, Carlisle Mason was nobody’s fool.

“Uncle Car—” Tag tried again.

The Elvin Warrior King held his large hand up, effectively stopping Tag’s tirade before it even started.

“If you do not take a few of the boys, *I* will come with you and your *friend* here,” the crafty old bugger said.

Jaron meant “crafty old bugger” in a completely respectful way, of course.

“But—” Tag spluttered.

“Yes or no, baby?” Carlisle asked.

Tag looked absolutely mutinous. Her eyes were blazing with what looked to be real emotion. Too bad, she’d walked straight into this situation, just as her uncle undoubtedly knew she would. Taking a deep breath and releasing it, she answered through gritted teeth.

“Fine, just two of the boys.”

“Five.”

“What? No!”

“This is not a request, darlin’,” Carlisle stated.

“But you said a few!” Tag countered.

“Five is a few.”

“The hell it is—”

“Tuesday Alexis Grace! I am shocked—”

Jaron couldn't help it. He let loose the laughter that had been bubbling in his gut ever since Tag had walked so neatly into her uncle's trap.

“What the fuck are you laughing at, *dawg*?!” Tag turned in his arms and asked.

“You two are hilarious. Ever thought about taking the act on the road?” Jaron teased.

Tag tried to stomp on his foot but he was too fast, which only served to kick her frustration up another level. Tag tried to slip out of his embrace, but before she could, he spun her around and kissed her before he could stop himself.

Jaron might've been the aggressor, but then Tag boldly shoved her tongue in his mouth. Their tongues battled for supremacy, their kiss becoming increasingly aggressive. He was sure that he felt the earth move. Though he couldn't smell her arousal being she was *Fae*, Jaron was positive that if he shoved his hand down her pants she'd be wet for him.

Somewhere in the distance he heard a throat clearing, but he ignored it. It wasn't hard with Tag wrapped all around him.

“HEY!” someone bellowed loud enough to make his ears ring. Despite the ringing, Jaron continued to

kiss Tag. It wasn't until he felt his hair being pulled hard enough to burn like fire that he remembered where he was. As he lifted his head from Tag's, they both spent a few moments drawing air into their lungs. He wanted to gather her closer but for some reason couldn't move forward. It was then he realised that her uncle held his hair.

"Now I know how you wolves like to get all frisky anytime and anywhere, but you will not be shoving your tongue down my niece's throat in front of me anymore unless you're in front of a preacher who has just pronounced you man and wife. Otherwise you're going to be losing some body parts. Got that, son?" Carlisle asked nonchalantly even as he stood with his hair wrapped in his fist.

"I apologise," Jaron croaked as he tried not to grimace in pain.

Carlisle immediately let go of his hair and approached Tag.

"It's not fair, Uncle Carl" she pouted.

Seeing her pout, the Elvin Warrior King simply pulled Tag against his chest and kissed the top of her head.

"Of course it's not fair, but I really don't care about fairness when it comes to your safety. Being that Azriel isn't here, I know you've somehow sweet-talked him into not telling your mama the story you

told *me*, so in lieu of your crazy-ass mother I will be the mean parent and put you on restriction. Meanwhile, the wolf and a few of my boys will help keep you safe and sound,” Carlisle said with a smile.

Jaron watched Tag sigh. She knew she was beaten. Her uncle might dote on her, but he wasn’t playing when it came to her safety. Despite his scalp being on fire from where the Elvin Warrior King had damn near ripped it from his scalp, he couldn’t help but admire his style.

“How about something to eat? I’m starving!” Carlisle said loudly. “You staying to eat with your old uncle?”

It was meant to be a question; however, it came out as an order. Tag nodded even as she apologised to him with her eyes. Jaron merely inclined his head as if to say *no worries*. And there were none. Sharing a meal with her uncle in attendance would help Jaron keep his straining cock to himself...at least as long as there was food on the table.

CHAPTER THREE

Five warriors were what the Elvin Warrior King promised, and five warriors were what Tag and Jaron got. They had to travel in two custom-made SUVs. The amount of weaponry fitted to the vehicles themselves, let alone the warriors, was simply astounding.

“Your uncle doesn’t do things by halves, does he?” Jaron commented as he observed the warriors unpacking the vehicles. Besides enough weapons to outfit an army, they packed a competition-size grill and enough food stuffs to feed several countries for several months.

“Hmph,” was Tag’s answer. She was sitting in front of Jaron’s laptop, trying to contact some other *Faeries* she knew via the Internet.

“Why don’t you just orb your friends here?” Jaron asked Tag as he watched her type something.

She was so focused on her task she didn’t notice Jaron as he gazed at her. The tip of her tongue poked out from where she gripped it between her teeth as she read and typed.

“Orbing is only for those with powers. I have none, and even if I did, I couldn’t use them here.”

Realising that he needed to let her concentrate, he stopped interrupting her.

Jaron didn't say anything else because he was busy looking at Tag. The line between her eyes signalled her concentration. Though he was accustomed to beautiful women, he never got tired of looking at Tag.

At first glance, Tag might seem plain. A male might be tricked into overlooking her being she did nothing to draw attention to her looks, unlike the many females with which he was acquainted. Another glance clued you into the fact that there was something more to her. She glowed. The glow wasn't the result of cosmetics. The glow emanated from within her, making her already light brown skin look like it was dusted with some kind of golden powder.

Her long eyelashes swept away from her gold eyes like thick ferns. Her plump lips gave Jaron an uncomfortable jolt to the groin, especially when he pictured that mouth wrapped around his hard and aching cock. And her curls...Creator, he could see his fingers buried in all their softness as her mouth did everything he begged Tag for.

Tag wasn't petite by any measure. She was above average height and weight. She had wide hips, muscular thighs and a rounded ass. Damn, that ass. She was a lot more woman than he was accustomed to, but there was simply something about that much woman that made him think how good it would be to

take her from behind without fearing he'd break her. Already having had her body felt pressed up against him, he didn't have to imagine how she'd feel.

Biting the inside of his cheek to keep his wolf from howling, Jaron slammed the trap door down on *those* particular thoughts. His wolf leapt within him, wanting, needing, demanding this woman.

"Do you mind, pal?" Tag asked.

Though Jaron didn't say anything, she knew the wolf was watching her. He was always watching her with those emerald eyes of his. She wasn't sure what he was thinking, but whatever it was had to be something real good, being that his eyes had started to glow. So lost in his thoughts, Jaron didn't even blink as he stared at her.

"What the hell are you looking at, dude?" Tag tried again to get Jaron's attention.

It didn't work. He seemed mesmerized, and his eyes were becoming brighter and brighter.

"Take a photo. It'll last longer," Tag snapped.

Finally, he realised she was talking to him.

Shaking his head as if to clear it, he addressed her. "Excuse me?"

"No," Tag said.

“Pardon?” he asked as he snapped out of his reverie.

Tag blew out an exasperated breath.

“You’re staring at me.”

“I didn’t realise,” he began.

“Well, stop it. I’m trying to concentrate, and the last thing I need is a salivating wolf on my hands,” she said dismissively in the hopes it’d make him stop.

“I’m not salivating,” Jaron spat defensively.

“Oh, I’m sorry. Should I have said ‘*stop pointing that thing at me*’ instead?” Tag asked while looking pointedly at his hard-on.

Despite his body clamouring at him, Jaron remained rooted to the spot. If he didn’t he’d spread the delightful Tag over his desk and let his wolf loose. Hell, who was he kidding? He’d spread her all over his house and enjoy every fucking minute of it!

The sound of Tag clearing her throat jerked him out of his fantasy. “Dawg!”

“You know, for a *Faerie* you can be a real bitch, and I don’t mean that as a compliment,” Jaron hissed.

Tag simply sighed and gave him a “couldn’t care less” look.

“Wow, did you come up with that all by yourself?” she asked.

With the Elvin Warrior King’s soldiers quartered in his basement game room, it definitely wasn’t a good idea to upset Tag. In fact, upsetting Tag would be detrimental to his health. Stepping back, he attempted to rein in his growing ire. Despite turning him on so damn good, Tag was the most frustrating female he’d ever met in the entirety of his life, which was saying something considering the women he knew.

Instead of storming over to Tag and dragging her beneath him and fucking her senseless like his cock had been demanding since that first time he’d seen her playing dice with his brothers and cousins, he snarled at her. “Do not goad me, woman.”

And of course Tag wasn’t the least bit intimidated by his surliness. “Fuck you,” she said as she rolled her eyes.

Jaron actually heard and *felt* the barb...and snapped. He wasn’t sure whether it was his control or his sanity that had snapped, but either way he’d had enough. He might be a wolf shifter, but a male could only take so much before something gave.

He emitted a growl that would have any other being running for the hills, but the sassy, smart-mouthed *Faerie* sat there and faced him without a fucking care in the world. With lust strumming

through every fibre of his being, he stalked over to Tag. Lifting her off of her feet, he slammed his mouth over hers.

His wolf howled, demanding more. He thrust his tongue even deeper in her delicious mouth. He was demanding, but then so was she. Tunnelling her hands through his hair, she raked his scalp with her short nails, every touch causing his cock to twitch.

He fitted her more snugly against him, lining up her sweet pussy with his straining cock. Rocking his cock against her jeans-covered pussy, he was on the verge of his own climax. As he pulled back a smidge, an aromatic scent assailed his senses. It was the smell of Tag's arousal. Finally! The enticing scent almost brought him to his knees. Not one to kneel at the feet of any being, he could think of nothing more he wanted to do than to bury his face in her sex and taste the proof of her desire. He needed to reassure himself that he had *actually* gotten a reaction from the blasé *Faerie* who had him hard every time she cut her gold eyes his way.

He was considering the most expedient way to remove her jeans when he was interrupted.

"You need to learn to lock your door, bro," Jamieson's deep, gravelly voice cut through his love-drunk mind. Later Jaron would wonder how the hell he managed to stop himself from going further. Right

now, all he knew was that he did stop, but neither he nor his wolf was happy about it.

Jaron had grown up fighting with his brothers and cousins. Sure, in all those years they'd had some knock-down, drag-outs, but never had he felt such an intense desire to rip one of his siblings apart than in that moment. Taking a step back, he dragged in deep breaths. The scent of her arousal was still strong in his nostrils, though it was fading. Shit. Reluctantly, he allowed Tag to slide down the wall so that she was on her own two feet.

She stared up at him with lust burning brightly in her golden eyes. Witnessing and smelling her desire had him rethinking his no fratricide vow. Surely his parents would understand. Dammit. Still breathing hard, he took a minute step away from Tag in an attempt to bring his lust under control. He didn't give a flying fuck whether his brother witnessed his erection, but he had respect for Jamieson's bond mate.

Tag had never been so overcome in all of her years. Jaron Mann did something to her. For that matter, he did a whole lot of things to her. His passion

blazed so brightly she felt as if she were in the presence of another sun. She couldn't help but be turned on seeing the evidence of how desperately he wanted her. Hearing him greet his brother like an old friend, she marvelled at his control, considering that she wanted to beat Jamieson for interrupting them.

Instead of beating him, she looked at the smiling Sunny. Seeing the woman's expression, she couldn't help but smile back. Sunny was one righteous female. Linking arms, the two women made their way to the basement, leaving the two wolves to do whatever it was that wolves did when not sexing up their females.

Jamieson Mann might be called many things, but stupid wasn't among them. No way in hell was he stepping across that threshold until Tag was out of eyesight. He was a wolf, and being a wolf, he knew Jaron was not happy...and from the look on Tag's face, neither was the *Faerie*.

"It better be good, Jamieson," Jaron growled.

Jaron's wolf was so close to the surface that his voice rivalled broken glass. Able to feel his brother's need and frustration, Jamieson swallowed the chuckle that wanted so desperately to spring forth. Jaron was lusting hard after that *Faerie*. He did, however, do

nothing to hide the smirk on his face. Ah, it looked like the habitual flirt Jaron was getting his comeuppance. Seriously, the Creator should reward him for not outright laughing at Jaron, who was busy chanting something about not killing him. As fucking if. Their mama would skin them alive if she caught them fighting, and if there was one wolf none of them wanted to tangle with, it was Charity Mann.

“Would I bother you with shit?” he asked.

Seeing Jaron shake his head, he continued.

“I just came by because I received an interesting message from Destiny,” he said quietly as he finally ventured away from the threshold and made his way to the kitchen.

Jaron watched as Jamieson made himself at home in his house. Rummaging through the restaurant-sized refrigerator, he reappeared holding a whole chicken and a leg of lamb in his hands.

“And that message would be...” Jaron let his sentence trail off as he watched his brother make quick work of the food.

Apparently, Jamieson didn’t realise his impatience, because instead of answering he simply

continued to eat like it was going out style and time wasn't of the essence.

Tired of waiting for his brother to remember there was something to life outside of food, fucking and fighting, he snarled his name. "Jamieson!"

"All right, all right. Geez, let a wolf get some sustenance, would you?"

Jaron ground his teeth and waited as Jamieson grabbed a two-litre of Coke and swallowed half of it before attending to him. Seeing all traces of teasing flee from Jamieson's face, Jaron tensed, knowing whatever his brother said would not be good.

"Your *Faerie* has some interesting and powerful people in her corner," he began.

That's what Jamieson interrupted him to say? Oh, hell no. Feeling his pent-up anger begin to seep out, he snapped at Jamieson, unconcerned about his status as the Beta. At that moment, all he cared about was the pulse that was close to exploding in his pants.

"I know that!"

As usual, Jamieson ignored his outburst. Fucker. "And with that comes even more powerful and possibly more psychotic enemies," he finished.

"Like who?" Jaron asked even as his anger fell back to a simmer.

"Everyone but the *Vamps* and us." Jamieson delivered that bombshell as cool as you please.

Everyone. Damn. Needing to know everything, he fixed himself a coffee. This wasn't about to be a quick conversation.

"Explain."

"Everyone is after Tag. Her own kind are the most bloodthirsty—there has been a reward posted for her," Jamieson said.

Jaron mulled over his brother's words.

"Tag has a price on her head?"

Jamieson nodded. "Just her head. If she's brought back alive there will not be any happy, dancing little *Faeries*," Jamieson said.

Jaron couldn't even bother being amused at Jamieson's depiction of the *Fae*.

"All I know is that she's banished, although she was meant to meet with elders of the *Faerie Kingdom*. When she tried to re-enter their world she was attacked by the prince's henchman. I'm guessing it was him who established the bounty?" Jaron commented.

"Possibly. Destiny was just told by a '*friend of a friend*' about the danger and the reward being offered, not who set it up," Jamieson answered.

"How did Destiny's friend know Tag was with me?"

"She didn't know. It was just something she said in passing."

“And what am I meant to do, because I’m sure as shit not letting that asshole get his hands on her?”

“Keep my daughter safe,” a husky yet melodic voice said softly.

Jaron and Jamieson turned quickly and faced the human personification of Mother Earth. Though she was known by numerous names and titles, their kind referred to her as Gaia. She was a sight to behold. She looked like a goddess, and not simply any goddess, but a goddess who routinely had altars built in her name and songs composed in her honour. She glowed with equal parts power and beauty.

The deep green silk she was swathed in complimented her deep mahogany skin and put one in mind of mighty forests.

Her piercing blue eyes reminded him of oceans; her dark mahogany skin reminded him of rich soil. Her hair was a mass of black curls interrupted by ribbons of colour throughout the thick tresses, reminding him of autumn. Her bare shoulders and well-defined arms brought to mind the roots of strong trees. The hint of cleavage the dress revealed reminded him of life, for a woman’s breasts gave sustenance just as her body brought forth life. He was awed by this goddess...and humbled by her.

Knowing they were in the presence of royalty, both he and Jamieson bowed their heads in respect.

Acknowledging their show of respect with a nod of her own, she looked them up and down. Though she said nothing, he knew she was judging them. Neither he nor Jamieson spoke as they looked upon the goddess who wielded such power.

Gaia was almost too beautiful to look upon for too long, so both he and Jamieson kept their eyes averted. While she considered him and Jamieson, Jaron considered what it must've been like for the many suitors who had fallen under her spell. Rumour had it that Gaia had as many suitors as the oceans had sand. Yet Gaia had not been moved by any of the *piddly* gods who had promised her trinkets such as entire planets.

Supposedly, she had fallen for a bad boy who'd done nothing to gain her love or respect. Her father had tried everything to prevent her from dating this bad boy, but Gaia had a will that was equally strong. No telling what would've happened if she hadn't met and fallen even harder for the baddest *Faerie* known to all mankind.

Known by the historians as the Dark *Fae*, he'd been banished by his king not for doing anything wrong, but simply because he was too strong and thus presented too much of a challenge. As dangerous as he'd been before his banishment, he was even more dangerous after it, as he'd bonded with Gaia before

anyone could stop them. That bonding had resulted in the birth of their first four daughters—the *Elemental Faeries*. That monumental event caused an uproar within the *Otherworldly* communities, as it resulted in one family having a disproportionate amount of power. Not only did Gaia have control over the earth, but her daughters would be ruling over the elements. The rest of the *Otherworldlies* held their collective breath at the thought of what future progeny between the Dark *Fae* and Gaia would produce. Yet before anyone had a chance to speculate, the Dark *Fae* and Gaia had split.

Just like any other celebrity couple breaking up, sides were taken. Despite rampant speculation, neither Gaia nor the Dark *Fae* had spoken about the schism. The Dark *Fae* had gone his way, and Gaia had gone hers. To this day no one knew what had happened. One moment they'd been happy and living the *vida loca*; the next moment, they'd quietly split. Gaia had returned to her own home, and the Dark *Fae* had returned to the *Faerie Kingdom* as a new ruler came to power who'd reinstated him into the royal line and returned all of his possessions within the kingdom. Just when things had quieted down, Gaia had announced that she was pregnant. Already accustomed to his daughter's streak of independence, her father simply sent his recently-hired assassin to

see to her safety during her *delicate* months. That assassin was Azriel.

When Gaia had given birth to what everyone had assumed was a human child, the rumours flew thick and fast, each trumping the other in sheer ridiculousness.

Tag's name should've been Speculation because everywhere she went, questions (that were never answered) were raised. Unlike other *Fae*, Tag could pass for human. She didn't have that aura of *faerie*-ness that the *Fae* had, so one could be forgiven for thinking Tag was human. Tag also didn't possess the dark colouring or the aura of power that was a keystone for the members of their families. In fact, the only indicator that she might belong to Gaia and the Dark *Fae* was the golden eye colour she inherited from her sire. Apart from the eyes, Tag seemed so...ordinary. It was that seeming ordinariness that caused beings to question whether she was a true child of Gaia and the Dark *Fae*. While Gaia and the Dark *Fae* might be willing to forgive many insults, an insult against their child was not one of them.

It wasn't until the Dark *Fae* had returned to his wife's side that the rumours regarding their fifth child being human had been quieted. While those rumours might've been silenced, new ones sprang up, especially after the Dark *Fae* left...and took their youngest child

with him. Supposedly, he and Gaia made some sort of pact about Tag. No one knew anything about anything except for the fact that the Dark *Fae* and Tag had sequestered themselves somewhere deep within the *Faerie Kingdom*.

And then the present *Faerie* queen had come to the throne, bringing with her a male child who would one day inherit the *Faerie Kingdom*. Soon after, the Dark *Fae* had gone missing.

Alarmed, Gaia had gone down to the *Faerie Kingdom* and demanded that her husband be found. The current queen of the *Fae* had promised to do all that she could, but she'd done nothing of what she'd promised. Instead, she'd turned the *Faerie* elders against the Dark *Fae*. That was when the shit had hit the fan.

Jaron watched Gaia stroll around as if just casually dropping into a *shifter's* house in the Mortal Realm was something a goddess did every day.

Thinking that he should say something, Jaron cleared his throat and spoke softly. "I want to assure you that I have Tag's safety at the forefront, Goddess."

"Oh, I know you do. I simply wanted to meet the *shifter* who has the protection of my youngest daughter on his shoulders. I expected you to be bigger," Gaia commented as she looked him over with critical eyes before switching her gaze to Jamieson.

“More like him,” she said.

Jaron bristled with controlled anger. He had been called *little* all fucking day, and that shit needed to stop. As pissed as he was, he was still smart enough to know that it was in his best interest to keep his fucking mouth closed. Telling a goddess—any goddess, much less Gaia—to shut up would not bode well for him.

“Goddess—” Jaron started, but before he could get the rest of his sentence out, his kitchen was once again overrun by beings. The *Elemental Faeries* and their husbands, as well as the boys the Elvin Warrior King had dispatched, were suddenly in his midst. A few moments later Sunny and Tag made their way into the kitchen. His house was becoming a regular central station, Jaron thought bitterly.

“Hey, Mama,” Tag said with a smile as she walked into Gaia’s open arms.

The goddess’s face softened so much that he momentarily forgot about her power and simply saw a mother and her child.

“Goddess,” the warriors said as they knelt in front of Gaia.

Not even bothering to let Tag go, Gaia spoke around an armful of daughter.

“Good warriors, I thank you for your assistance in keeping my youngest child safe. My brother spoke

well of you all. He is blessed with such loyalties,” Gaia said formally.

The occasion became more festive when Gaia greeted her other daughters. Tag introduced Sunny to her mother, who was just as affectionate to Jamieson’s bonded as she was with her own daughters.

“Is it me, or are there giants in here?” Jamieson asked Jaron as they leaned against the breakfast island.

His eyes never leaving Tag, Jaron simply grunted. He knew his brother wouldn’t be offended by his lack of manners, as Jamieson’s eyes hadn’t shifted from Sunny for one second. The two brothers remained in the background amongst all the happy greetings and whatnot.

Embracing the occupants, Gaia readied herself to depart.

“It is good to see you all again. Sunny, warriors, it is good to meet you. I must take my leave now, my darlings,” Gaia said as she kissed each of her daughters and Sunny. Turning to look at them, she beckoned them to her.

“Mann brothers, come,” Gaia demanded.

Immediately, they straightened their shoulders and did as she bid. Following her out into the blizzard, Jaron was surprised to discover that he wasn’t cold. He hazarded a look at Jamieson, and they smiled, sharing a thought.

“I chose you, Jaron Mann, to protect my daughter because there are very few *shifters* who have power like you. Tag needs a powerful male. She has a legacy that her father and I worked upon all our lives.”

Shock rendered Jaron silent. All day he'd been told how fucking small he was, which was a new and unpleasant occurrence. Sure, he wasn't as big as Jamieson, but he was a good-sized wolf.

“All day I've been told how inadequate I am, so I am curious as to why you say this, Goddess?”

Gaia took her time answering. It was several moments before she turned. Looking deep into his eyes, she answered.

“The *Faerie* queen and the prince know that the throne they sit upon is governed by the *Fae* themselves. If the *Fae* were to find that they are undeserving, the former line of royalty would be reinstated. Tuesday Grace is the only descendant of that line, and she alone would rule over *all* in the *Faerie Kingdom*. This is why there is such a high price upon her head.”

Though he was surprised by that reveal, he noticed that she didn't address his original question. Still, Tag was in danger, and her safety was more important than his pride.

“But she was banished,” he began.

“Yes, a miscalculation on the queen’s head, but she will reconsider her ways when this is all said and done,” Gaia said.

“Why was she banished?” Jaron asked, fairly itching to know the answer that neither Tag nor her siblings would answer.

“That is something my Tuesday Grace will have to choose to share with you, Jaron Mann,” the goddess said.

Though he wanted to ask more, he noticed that the goddess suddenly looked weary. Still, she was a goddess, and thus she persevered. Inhaling deeply, she seemed to gather her strength. Looking deeper into both his own and Jamieson’s eyes, she spoke.

“Jaron, Jamieson, I ask but one thing of you both. You must find a way for Tuesday Grace to return to the *Faerie Kingdom* before they succeed in assassinating her.”

“Consider it done, Goddess,” he and Jamieson said in unison.

Gaia nodded. Looking directly into his eyes, she smiled, and suddenly Jaron saw Tag in that smile. Tag got her smile from her mother.

“She is not meant for the Mortal Realm, Jaron Mann. Ensure that she makes the right choice.”

With a nod, Gaia walked into the heart of the storm. The snow became thick around her; then she disappeared into the whiteness.

“Wow, you get to have all the fun,” Jamieson chortled as he and Jaron walked back to the house.

Jaron could scarcely make out his house from the distance. He hadn’t realised they’d walked so far. Feeling the effects of the cold now that they weren’t accompanied by Gaia, he hastened his steps.

“Shut up,” he tossed out as he trudged alongside Jamieson.

“So whatcha gonna do about the *Faerie* Girl?” Jamieson asked.

“Protect her,” Jaron said aloud.

Inside, he added an addendum. *Fuck her silly when you all leave.*

“You forget I can hear what you’re thinking,” Jamieson said, grinning.

I didn’t forget a fucking thing. Jaron spoke via the telepathic link the Mann brothers had with one another.

Jamieson howled with laughter as they continued to walk.

“So you going to come home? There are more of us to look out for your *Faerie* Girl,” Jamieson said quietly.

“I’ve got the Elvin Giants in there. I don’t think anyone would be stupid enough to try anything here,” Jaron said.

Jamieson’s eyebrows rose.

“You’re relying on *strangers* to help protect your *Faerie Girl*?”

Jaron didn’t know if it was an accusation or merely his older brother asking him a question. Before he could ask, he felt pain shoot through his brother. Looking down, he noted the hole through Jamieson’s shoulder accompanied by blood pumping out of the wound. Moments later Jamieson fell to the snow-covered ground.

With a snarl of anger, Jaron shifted, and in a blink of an eye he was running towards the sniper. He didn’t even have to pause to locate him, as he could smell the sniper’s triumph as he ran for the forest. That sense of triumph surprised him, considering any shot that wasn’t a kill shot was a sure fire way to get your ass killed. Any sniper worth his or her salt knew that. As Jaron stalked the assassin, he called to his brother.

Are you all right? he asked Jamieson.

I’m okay, and yourself?

Jaron smiled at Jamieson’s smartass answer. Jamieson was definitely going to be okay. Still, he could hear the pain in his brother’s tone.

Can you make it inside?

Yes, thank you, although I won't be going inside until we catch this fucker, being that I'm not a pussy and all. I'm right behind you.

Jamieson Mann was many things, but until recently finding his mate he'd been one of two things: a smart ass or just plain violent. He was now a combination of both.

Spotting the shooter, who was dressed entirely in white, Jaron made to leap at the man and tear out his throat when a movement from the corner of his eye caught his attention and stopped him cold.

Sunny stood leaning against a tree. She was just standing there calm as anything with one calf crossed over the other. For all the world she appeared as if she was just hanging out. Jaron was about to cover her when she made a subtle motion with her head in his direction. Remaining where he was, he noticed that the sniper was just as mesmerized by Sunny as he was.

"Nice day for a stroll, don't you think?" were the first words out of her mouth.

Jaron didn't know what to do. Sunny was dangerous, but she was also in danger. As much as he wanted to get to the sniper, he didn't want to do anything that inadvertently got her hurt. His musings were interrupted by the sound of Jamieson. His brother was a stealthy wolf; Jaron knew Jamieson was

intentionally making noise in an effort to gain the shooter's attention.

The sniper made the mistake of taking his eyes off of Sunny. Moments later, Sunny was on the man. Puncturing both kidneys with razor-sharp blades, she stood back as the sniper fell to his knees. Jaron couldn't help but grimace as he watched the steam rise from the man's wounds. That was going to leave a mark. Before the shooter could fall facedown into the snow, Sunny was in his face.

"Who sent you?" she asked him.

Despite the pain he had to be in, the sniper simply shook his head.

"I'm going to kill you no matter what, so you might as well tell me," Sunny said.

The sniper's eyes widened. It was probably the way she was delivering it more than the contents. There wasn't even a speck of panic or fear about her. There was just calm assurance. Jaron couldn't help but be impressed. No wonder Jamieson was in love with the human. She was more wolf than half the male *shifters* Jaron knew.

She's so fucking hot, ain't she? Jamieson's voice filtered into Jaron's head.

Jaron didn't bother turning. He didn't need to, as Jamieson was behind the sniper, just waiting for the opportunity to take him down. Jamieson was as

stealthy as they came, and he was sure the sniper didn't know that a second wolf had joined the party. Then again, the shooter's attention was on Sunny...as was Jamieson's.

Jamieson's eyes were riveted to his mate.

She's definitely impressive, brother, Jaron agreed.

Sunny didn't consider herself a high-maintenance kind of chick. Nor was she hard to please. She simply needed decent food, a clean place to lay her head, and oh yeah, for no one to try and kill her man. The fact that this motherfucker had the audacity to try it pissed her off so bad she would've been shaking with rage if not for her spectacular control.

"I'm waiting," Sunny said with narrowed eyes on the stranger who'd shot *her* man. Oh hell to the motherfucking no he didn't. Though her facial expression didn't change, Sunny was grinning inside. Hanging out with Destiny was not good for her vocabulary, but oh, it was good for her peace of mind. The *Vamp* was a down-ass chick.

"The prince," the sniper said.

Already having spoken to Tag, Sunny didn't need to know anything else. She knew exactly *who* the prince was, and it wasn't the one who wore platform heels and hung with the Revolution. Not even pausing, Sunny slit the man's throat. Before she could wipe her blade off on his down jacket, a ball of fire incinerated the dead man before his face hit the snow. Jaron, Jamieson and Sunny looked in the direction of the fireball. A pissed off Adena stood there...and of course an aroused Sage stood beside her. With a nod, she turned and walked back into the house.

"You always get to have all the fun," Jamieson said with a grin that turned into a grimace of pain.

Sunny was beside her man in a heartbeat. Looping his good arm around her shoulders, she got him to lean on her.

Jaron would've shifted, but he was sure his brother would have a problem with Sunny seeing all his wonderfulness. Instead of shifting, he loped on the other side of Sunny, keeping an eye out for her and avoiding the sight of Jamieson's naked ass.

You wish you had an ass as good as mine, Jamieson said.

Whatever. Lucky for you, I like your mate; otherwise I'd shift and let her see what a real man looks like.

Shift and I'll kill you, Jamieson said.

Like I'd simply allow you to kill me. And fighting me would sort of ruin your little act. You are not that fucking hurt, dude.

Sunny doesn't know that. I like it when she takes care of me.

You are such a pussy.

Least I'm getting some...dawg.

When you heal up in all of a day, I'm kicking your ass. Of course, it'll have to be while Sunny is distracted.

Yeah, but what are you going to do when she's not distracted and discovers you've hurt me? Ha ha, now shut up so I can focus on my woman coddling me.

As soon as they got near the porch, Sage opened the door and threw a blanket at Jamieson.

"It's ten degrees below zero and your dick is swinging in the wind. My wife doesn't need to see that," he growled.

"And neither do our wives," the other giants said as they stepped out on the porch.

One of the Elvin Warriors joined them and tossed a blanket at him. “And neither does the king’s favourite niece.”

Being sure to remain behind Sunny, Jaron shifted and wrapped the blanket around him. Wow. A houseful of jealous giants.

He watched as Jamieson was fussed over as soon as he stepped into the house. Every one of the *Elementals* was cooing over Jamieson...and of course Jamieson was soaking it up like the asshole that he was. It wasn’t until Sunny told them in no uncertain terms that to touch her man would not be good for them that they backed away. Of course, Jamieson ate that shit up.

“Are you going to make me all better?” he asked all pitiful like.

“Nope, but I am calling Destiny,” Sunny replied as she pulled out her phone and fired off a text.

A few moments later a dishevelled Destiny and Jack flashed into the living room. It was a good thing he didn’t require privacy or anything.

Shaking his head, Jaron walked into his bedroom. Being that he had guests (and had been warned) he couldn’t simply strut around butt naked. Nor could he remain wrapped in a blanket now that Jack and Destiny were here, because Destiny wouldn’t let that shit go and Jack would do nothing to stop her

teasing. Damn *Vamp*. If he didn't like her he might be tempted to strangle her. (That is if he had half a mind to fight Jack to the death, along with her father, her mother, her best friends. Damn, why were all the women in their expanding family so fucking dangerous?)

Dropping the blanket, he strolled to the closet for some clothes, but he was interrupted by a sound that was a cross between a moan and a gasp. Turning, he discovered Tag standing by his bathroom door. Her gaze was riveted by his naked body. Instead of covering up, he spread his legs and grinned at her.

Tag didn't shy away from the challenge. Lifting her eyes, she made her way up his body...slowly. He felt *that* look as if she were actually touching him. When her eyes finally met his, they were filled with gold fire. No words were spoken. She simply licked her bottom lip. His cock grew impossibly harder.

With one more look at his cock, she walked out of his bedroom.

CHAPTER FOUR

Walking out of his bedroom, Jaron walked right into the fresh round of questions that Destiny was firing at the Elvin Warriors like only *she* could.

“Elves? So how come you don’t have pointy ears? Hey, do you have a bow and arrow like what’s his name from *Lord of the Rings*? Jackie, what’s that guy’s name?”

“Legolas,” Jack answered absently before burying his face in her neck.

Seeing the pained looks on their faces as Destiny grilled them like cheese steak, Jaron couldn’t help but feel for the Elvin Warriors. He’d seen lesser males fall to their knees and beg for Destiny to stop, not that their begging ever did any good. No one knew how to ride a subject into the ground like Destiny. When Destiny latched on to a subject, she didn’t let it go until she was good and damn ready. From the sparkle in her eye, she didn’t look like she was anywhere close to being ready.

Accustomed to handing out bloody vengeance, he bet the Elvin Warriors were considering the consequences of telling Destiny to shut up. Being they didn’t try such a thing, he knew they’d come to the same conclusion everyone on the receiving end of Destiny’s enthusiasm did: it wasn’t worth it.

Dangerous all by herself, Destiny was also related to and allied with too many powerful motherfuckers including the Empress of Vampire Nation, Lady and Lord de Vires, Gaia, the *Elementals*, the Elvin Warrior King, and the Black Ridge Pack.

Jaron didn't know how Jack did it. Jack's little *Vamp* got in all kinds of shit on the regular. Yet, instead of curtailing her, he simply stood at the ready to rip out the throat of anyone who disrespected her in any way, shape or form. Even now when she was busy testing the patience of the powerful males, Jack simply nuzzled her whilst ignoring everything but the woman occupying his lap. Poor bastard. No one would believe that this besotted fool was not just Alpha of the Black Ridge Pack but also the Supreme Alpha of the Northern Hemisphere.

His Beta was no fucking better. Sitting on the couch with his mate fussing over him, you'd think he'd had nine toes and an ankle in the grave instead of one measly shoulder wound. All healed up courtesy of Destiny, he was busy getting into shit—chiefly his mate's pants, much to Sunny's embarrassment. Jaron watched Sunny slap at Jamieson's thick wrists to no avail. Whenever she protested, his brother would simply growl something into her ear and her lips would part on a sigh. Sunny was absolutely beautiful in Jamieson's presence. If Jaron hadn't seen it for

himself, he would never have believed that the soft woman who sat on Jamieson's lap was the same woman who'd killed a man just outside his house not even a half hour ago.

As much as he complained about Jack and Jamieson, Jaron sensed a change within them. Nothing outward; still, there was *something* different about his brothers. Jaron couldn't put his finger on it, but he'd figure it out one day. Taking a seat, he pulled Tag into his lap. For once, she didn't protest. She actually snuggled into him. *Interesting.*

"Yeah, Legos. So do you guys have a bow and arrow? Huh?" Destiny continued her line of questioning.

"No ma'am, we don't have bows and arrows, although we do have big guns and bullets," the appointed speaker for the group answered seriously.

Destiny scowled. "What about a crossbow? Oh, you should so get one of those because they're freakin' cool. Hey Jackie, do you have one?"

When Jack shook his head, Destiny bounced happily on his lap. "Guess what I'm getting you for your birthday?"

"Socks?" Jack suggested hopefully.

Destiny cackled at that before wrapping her arms around his brother.

“Hey, are there any female Elvin Warriors?”
Destiny suddenly asked

“Our females are forbidden from becoming warriors—” he began.

That was all the poor fellow got out of his mouth before an astonished Destiny slapped her hands on the dining room table and began a tirade about the rights of females.

You have a full house, Jack communicated with Jaron via their telepathic link.

I know. Luckily they brought their own food, or I might have to purchase a store or two. I thought we could eat, but that was before seeing those giants pack it away, Jaron answered with a smile.

You could come home, Jack suggested.

I do not want to bring these giants. Mama would be cooking all day and all night thinking they need to eat all the damned time, Jaron said instead of telling Jack the real reason why.

Understood, brother, but if you need us we are here for you, Jack promised silently.

There was never a doubt in my mind, Jack. Jaron turned his head to look at his Alpha, and the two brothers nodded to each other.

“As fascinating as all of this is, my woman is tired. We’ll be going now,” Jamieson said as he stood with Sunny still in his arms.

The way Sunny was wrapped all around Jamieson, she didn't look tired at all, but he wasn't going to comment on that.

"Of course she is, being she had to save you two and all. We'll see you later—probably much, much later," Jack said with a sly smile at Jamieson.

Jamieson took a moment to start some shit before leaving. "Destiny, Jack said that the Chevy big block could win against the 6.1 litre SRT Hemi V8."

Fuck you, Jack, Jamieson said along their telepathic link. Jaron didn't even have to be looking at him to feel the smirk in Jamieson's voice.

The gasp Destiny emitted could probably be heard round the world. A true car aficionado, she took her cars real seriously.

Jaron was interested in seeing how Jack was about to extricate himself from that little tidbit. He was sure Jack didn't think such a thing, much less say it, but yeah, Jamieson had put it out there, which meant Destiny was going to have a thing or three million to say about that. But before Destiny could even gear up for her tirade, Jack simply palmed her mound through her jeans. A brilliant tactic, for as soon as his fingers connected with her clit she gasped out her pleasure. Capturing his hand within hers, she flashed them out of his house.

“We will be taking our leave now, Princess, Jaron.” The Elvin Warriors stood and hurried out of the room. They literally ran as if they feared that Destiny would suddenly reappear and continue lecturing them. Poor bastards. Destiny could find them regardless of where they hid, and when she did (and she would), she’d finish her lecture regardless of how inconvenient it was for them to hear it.

“They just called you Princess Jaron,” Tag tittered with a grin. Thrusting a hand into her curls, Jaron pulled her head back so that she was practically lying across his lap. Her face was tilted towards him.

“Tell me no,” he growled as he stared at Tag’s lips.

Tag’s eyes darkened to a deeper shade of gold, and he felt his canines lengthen in response.

“No...” she said softly.

“The spare room is behind me. Go now before I—” Jaron began.

Reaching up, Tag cupped his face in her soft hands.

“...way am I letting you get moral on me, *dawg*,” Tag finished.

Jaron’s cock stood up and saluted the world. Tightening his fingers in Tag’s hair, he pulled her head up to meet his and kissed her with all of the pent-up passion within him. He had no idea how they made it

into his bedroom. All he remembered was that one moment Tag was on his lap, and the next moment he had her spread out on his bed. They didn't separate once during their kiss...and he didn't want to. Their kiss was hotter than some of the actual sex he'd had in his past.

Tag wasn't passive at all. She gave all she had and then some on top of that. She tugged at his clothes just as desperately as he tugged at hers. Finesse was lost in their haste to get skin to skin. They were simply a medley of hands, arms and legs. Tag's skin was so soft, her hips mouth-watering, her ass voluptuous. She made him hungry, and her body was sustenance. He couldn't help but pull his *Faerie* harder against his body.

When he took a gumdrop nipple between his lips and pulled hard, Tag curled her fingers into his hair and moaned loudly. He did not let up, he simple switched to the other nipple. Dragging him closer to her breast, Tag bucked her voluptuous body beneath his.

Jaron laved at each nipple, pausing every now and then to nip. Despite their erratic breathing, he took his time touching Tag. If he'd stopped to consider it, he'd have realised that he was *actually* making love to Tag, but he was too busy immersing himself in her to consider anything but the female beneath him.

Groaning in pleasure, he busied himself by touching and licking every single millimetre of brown-gold skin that he could reach.

When he swirled his tongue near the lips of her pussy, he was rewarded with a chorus of groans and gasps from Tag. Smelling her arousal, he emitted a few groans of his own. Her arousal was beautiful. The scent of it enticed him, the heat of it scorched him, the fact that he was the reason for it humbled him.

Jaron growled, feeling Tag lift herself up onto her elbows. His wolf only settled down after he assured himself that she wasn't trying to get away. He smiled when he realised she was simply getting more comfortable so she could watch him love her with his mouth. She watched with heavy-lidded gold eyes, and Jaron couldn't help but watch her as she watched him. Tag was so fucking hot, and yet he bet she had no idea how sexy she looked.

As he sought her clit with his long, thick tongue, the taste and feel of her pussy in his mouth almost made him come. He'd never experienced that before. *What was this woman doing to him?* he asked himself as he delved a bit lower and licked his way up. Whatever he was doing was working, as Tag moved a hand into his hair. Jaron smiled around her clit before diving into the best pussy he'd ever tasted in his entire life.

Jaron kept eye contact with Tag as he licked and nibbled at her plump, sweet pussy and clit. Feeling her cream against his chin, he lapped at her clit a little harder, savouring each reaction. He felt his eyes shift when he witnessed Tag bite into her bottom lip and draw blood. Subtly, the combination of that and the scent of her nectar taunted his wolf. *Ours!* his wolf claimed. *Damn right*, he responded.

When Tag tightened her thighs around him and emitted a gasp-groan, Jaron knew that she was moments away from coming. Instead of backing off, he latched onto her clit and sucked harder. Tag screamed his name as he induced her orgasm. But it wasn't simply one orgasm that hit her; it was a litany of them. Loving the feel of her plump ass thrashing in his hands and the sensation of her clit in his mouth, he didn't consider relinquishing his hold on her.

Not once did they break eye contact. Watching Tag orgasm was the sexiest moment of Jaron's life. Then again, almost every look she had and every experience they shared was the sexiest, hottest thing he'd ever seen or experienced.

When her arms wouldn't hold her any longer, Tag slumped back against the pillows. She was still gasping for breath when he moved up her body, licking and nibbling along the way. Finally reaching her mouth, he devoured it. He felt Tag shudder as she

tasted herself on his tongue, which he'd thrust into her mouth. Tag pulled her mouth away and gasped out an order.

"Fuck me, Jaron. Fuck me *hard*."

Always the consummate giver of pleasure, Jaron lifted his hips and plunged his hard cock deep into Tag. Groaning in ecstasy, she met every thrust of his hips with a thrust of her own. The sounds of his cock driving deeply into her wet pussy and their harsh breathing filled the room.

"Harder," Tag demanded.

Jaron could do nothing but comply. In pleasuring Tag, he pleased himself. He was *almost* there—*almost*. Wanting to give her more pleasure than she'd ever had, he stroked hard, fast and deep. Sweat rolled down his spine as he fucked Tag so hard that the heavy bed actually moved across the floor. Through it all, Tag met him stroke for stroke. Knowing Tag was again getting close to yet another orgasm, he leaned down so that his face was snuggled into the curve of Tag's neck. Gently nipping the lobe, he spoke directly into her ear. "Come," he commanded.

Just as he'd instructed, Tag came. Screaming his name over and over, she gripped him hard. Her muscles pulled him deeper into her body, demanding his own climax. Feeling his cock pulse, he gritted his

teeth and surrendered to the pleasure swamping him. Her lush body welcomed him like lines ten through thirteen from the poem “The New Colossus.” Though he wasn’t one of the huddled masses, he was an exile and Tag was his new home. Calling out her name, he spent himself giving her everything he had to give.

Inhaling deeply and stretching his long body, Jaron immediately knew that he was alone. Opening his eyes, he looked at the clock on the nightstand. It’d only been an hour since he’d last loved Tag to sleep for what had been the fourth time that night. Smelling her exotic scent, he looked around for her. He spotted her in the doorway of the bedroom wearing nothing but that platinum necklace and a smile. He wasn’t sure if the smile was due to the loving he’d given her or the Popsicle she was sucking on.

“Hey, *dawg*.”

Hearing the huskiness in her voice, he couldn’t help but smirk knowing he was the cause of that. She’d screamed her voice out somewhere around the third orgasm. From her raised eyebrow, he was sure Tag took issue with his smirk, but she didn’t say anything. She simply deep-throated the Popsicle. Jaron swallowed—hard.

“Why don’t you bring your sweet pussy over here, *Faerie?*” Jaron suggested.

His voice was hoarse with pent-up lust. He couldn’t take his eyes off of Tag...and she knew it.

“You just need to heel, *dawg*,” she said.

Though she called him “dawg,” Jaron wasn’t insulted—Tag was simply trying to get a rise out of him. Throwing the sheet off of his body, he showed Tag *exactly* what had risen. Seeing his erect cock, she put the whole Popsicle in her mouth, then pulled the stick out minus the Popsicle. Damn, he thought as she sashayed her fine ass towards the bed.

Before Jaron could stop her, she crawled up between his legs and took his cock in her ice-cold mouth. Being that she still had most of the Popsicle in her mouth, it should’ve deflated his cock, but the combination of her hot lips and the feel of the tip of his cock hitting the back of her throat had Jaron on the verge of howling his joy to the world. The frozen treat melted rapidly around his cock as Tag slurped at it. It wasn’t simply the feel of the cold treat and her hot mouth that had him hardening; it was the look of pleasure on her face that pushed him to the brink. She looked like she was enjoying herself...immensely. Leaning back on the pillow, Jaron fisted his hands in the sheets.

“Oh fuck!” Jaron hissed as Tag began to hum.

“Watch me,” Tag ordered softly as she wrapped her tongue around his cock.

Crunching his abdominal muscles, he did as she instructed. His eyes were glowing, his canines had lengthened and his cock pulsed in her mouth. Tag smiled around his length and squeezed his heavy balls. Slamming her mouth back down upon his cock, she sucked harder. He felt himself swell in her mouth. Tangling his hands in her hair, he held her head down and poured himself into her mouth as he howled her name at the top of his lungs.

Enjoying the view from the balcony of Jaron’s bedroom, Tag fingered the platinum necklace that hung around her neck. Hearing him snoring loudly, she smiled...and gave herself props. *Who was the Faerie? Yep, she was.* Swiping a hand down her face, she noticed that she could smell him everywhere on her. The scary part was that she didn’t mind. She could get used to waking up in Jaron Mann’s bed. Damn.

Pulling her mind from the thoughts of the man whose scent she was bathed in, she considered the conversation she’d just had with Jesse. He’d told her of the band’s recording contract and asked her if she

would join them in the studio. He may have asked, but his tone clearly stated that the band had decided they wouldn't be making the album without her. Tag hadn't said yea or nay, but she did tell him that she'd think about it.

Of course Jesse didn't bother hearing her "I'll think about it." He pretended to be all understanding before demanding that she be there in two weeks and disconnecting. Jesse was lucky he was her best friend, because she didn't give anyone else such leeway.

That Jesse. He was something else. He was also a Mann...just like Jaron. Simply thinking his name caused her body to react. Last night had been amazing. While Jaron had been busy fucking her brains out, she couldn't help but wonder what it would be like to be able to truly give herself over to the sensations of being loved by Jaron Mann. Despite her emotions being bound along with her powers, he still managed to turn her on.

Tag could only imagine what would happen if she *was* able to feel the emotions that went along with the grand loving she'd received from Jaron. His hands, mouth and cock all served to make her feel so damn good. Grinning to herself, she turned her face up to the sky and allowed the slowly falling snowflakes to caress her face. Closing her eyes, Tag let her sister's gifts continue to fall upon her skin as she considered

Jaron. This had to be a mistake. She shouldn't be feeling a damned thing for *him*...for that matter, she shouldn't be feeling a damned thing. Even though she didn't have emotions, she still fought her feelings for Jaron when all she really wanted to do was just crawl into his arms and stay there.

She tried to convince herself that Jaron was like all of the other males that had tried to get into her pants, but it wasn't working. Despite his arrogance, she'd willingly *allowed* him entry into her body, and not just once, but numerous times and in some rather inventive ways. All the while she'd happily allowed him into not just her body, but into herself. And more than that, he'd given her not just one orgasm, but so many she'd lost count.

Damn that wolf. It'd been a long time between orgasms, so her mind was a little clouded at the moment. Inhaling deeply, Tag looked out onto the wintry scene. There was no way she going to let her bound emotions out to play. She didn't simply have a bone to pick with the prince, she had a whole fucking skeleton to pick with Jaron. Before she could deal with the Jaron problem, she had to find a way to solve the small issue of being on the *Otherworldly* Most Wanted list.

Jaron watched Tag as she stood on the balcony.

Simply thinking about Tag made his whole body hard. Looking at her beauty almost made him feral. Jaron felt his canines lengthening as he perused Tag's naked form. Despite being naked as the day she was born, she didn't appear to feel the cold. Then again, she was a *Faerie*, and *Faerie* skin didn't feel things the way humans or *shifters* did. He stopped mid-thought and smirked. *Faeries* didn't feel things like most beings, but she sure as fuck felt his touch like no other female had. He'd gotten off watching her reaction to him as he touched her, stroked her, and licked her to orgasm time and time again. Her skin literally glowed a golden hue, lighting his way.

Even now when she was a good twenty paces away, her body glowed a path that his eyes couldn't help but follow. Her wind-tossed curls were the only thing hiding her body from him. And what a body it was. Her skin was adorned by the most amazingly detailed tattoos on her shoulder blades. *Her wings*, she'd said when he'd traced the tattoo with his tongue as he'd taken her from behind. The design flared out around her shoulder blades before winding a path of beauty on each side of her spine, then tapering off just above her voluptuous ass.

Jaron had found another tattoo when his head had been buried between her thick thighs. The tattoo was of a cobra coiled and ready to strike. Spotting it, he'd smiled his ass off before devouring her pussy like a starving man let loose in an all-you-can-eat buffet. That *Faerie* did a lot of things to him; foremost, she made him hungry.

Needing his *Faerie*, he grabbed the comforter off the floor. Wrapping the comforter around himself, he walked out onto the balcony and pulled Tag into the warmth of his body. Despite the temperature not affecting her, she sighed and burrowed into his embrace.

Jaron couldn't help but smile as he recalled the moments of pure, unadulterated passion he'd experienced in Tag's presence. Holding her in his arms calmed him. When she'd held him in her body, he'd felt at home. Tag was the most passionate female he'd ever been in the same room with, much less made love with. Though there were many things he didn't know about her, Jaron knew that Tag didn't give of herself easily. Being on the receiving end of Tag's passion made him feel like the luckiest motherfucker alive.

Prince Lylelay watched his mother, Rhiannon, the *Faerie* queen. Many had referred to her as Rhiannon the Evil in private. He'd had those who had done so publically executed. It was, after all, treason to mock the ruler of your kingdom so he didn't feel the least bit of remorse. Of course, he wouldn't have felt the least bit of remorse if it hadn't been treason.

"She is planning something. I can feel it," his mother said as she paced her meeting chambers in the floating castle that hovered over the *Faerie* lands.

Lylelay didn't need to ask who *she* was. His mother was speaking of none other than Tuesday Alexis Grace, or Tag, as she liked to call herself. As always when he thought about Tuesday Alexis, many thoughts flooded his mind. First and foremost was jealousy. She was a half breed, and yet she was the most powerful *Faerie* he'd ever met. Of course, anomalies like that were bound to happen when one's mother was the goddess of the entire earth and one's father was *The Dark Fae*. Still, it rankled him that she'd have that kind of power.

"I have kept her in the mortal realm, Majesty. She will not be coming back anytime soon," he said in an effort to reassure his mother. From the furious look she gave him, his efforts did not work. The cold rage in her ice blue eyes would have anyone else running for cover. Indeed, it had even him shivering.

He knew Tag was the reason for the bulk of her rage, but from the look in her eyes, he could tell there was something more. Her anger had a desperation to it that he'd seen in the eyes of many *Fae* he'd visited...but never from his mother.

“For how long, Lylelay? She can come back into our *Kingdom*...”

Lylelay shook his head.

His mother's eyes narrowed as she looked at him.

“The only way she is coming back to the *Kingdom* will be *in a box*, as the humans say.”

His mother's eyebrows rose. Whether her shock was due to the content of his message or the phrasing, he wasn't sure.

“Why?”

“I sent our assassins to the Mortal Realm,” he said quietly.

His mother's eyes widened, and moments later her thin lips spread into a smile. Walking up to him, she patted his cheek.

“You do your mother proud, son,” she said as she kissed his cheek before exiting the meeting chambers.

Lylelay literally felt his mother's glee over his announcement. His plan meant that she could rule the *Kingdom of the Faerie—forever*. His mother loved power...more than anything else. He loved it too.

Feeling her glee, he couldn't help but return her smile. Praise from the *Faerie* queen was in short supply. She might be cold, but she was *his* mother. She was avaricious about her power...and that was one emotion he could understand.

Waiting for her to exit, he walked out onto the wide balcony that looked out over the whole *Faerie Kingdom*. It was paradise. Only lush colours greeted the eye everywhere one looked. No wonder his mother didn't want to give up her rule.

Each time he looked upon their kingdom, he couldn't help but feel. Just like he did every time he thought of Tuesday Alexis. If his mother had still been present, she would've seen his pain at having sent out the most experienced and evil *Fae*—apart from his mother—to kill Tag...the only woman he'd ever loved. The *only* woman he would ever love.

CHAPTER FIVE

Star, Destiny, Sunny and Tag sat with their backs against the bar watching the Elvin Warriors dance. It was a lot like a car accident—both frightening and fascinating. They just couldn't look away even though they all knew that they should.

"It should be a requirement that if you're that good in battle, you've got to be good at dancing as well," Destiny said as they all watched in horror as one of the Elvin Warriors executed a move with his hands linked in front of his face.

"Maybe it's 'cause they're so damn big that it's impossible for them to move everything around in time to the beat?" Star suggested as she sipped her soda.

"I resent that statement, Starbright. I'm not a small woman—"

"Whatever. What does Jack call you? Teeny Tiny?" Sunny teased before breaking out in hearty laughter.

Everyone who had ears knew that Destiny hated the nickname the Mann brothers had given her. "Is it my fault that I'm not NBA centre tall? I mean, c'mon, I'm a plus-sized woman."

"Yeah, well that may be, but in comparison to those wolves, you're a midget," Tag teased.

Tag couldn't believe she was so comfortable with these three women. All had connections to the Mann brothers, and each of them was one badass chick.

Destiny's humour-laced voice interrupted her thoughts. "Oh, so we're playing name-calling now?"

Uh oh, Tag thought as she shook her head. She'd only recently met Destiny; still, she'd known her long enough to recognize her about-to-start-some-shit voice. Then again, ninety percent of the time she spoke, she was on the verge or in the midst of starting shit. She couldn't help but like that about the *Vamp*.

"How 'bout we name Tag here *the best meal Jaron's had in years*?" Destiny suggested with a sly grin.

Oh snap, Tag thought.

"Says the *Vamp* covered in love bites," Tag teased back.

"Oh, quit it," Destiny admonished good-naturedly before turning to a laughing Sunny. "Sunny, I wouldn't be so smug."

"Who, me? You know Jamieson is sedate in comparison to the acrobatics that you and Jack get up to," Sunny responded while her eyes searched out said "sedate" man.

Tag didn't miss the way she licked her lips when she spotted Jamieson.

“You forget that noise carries around *Wild Dogs*, and then there’s the fact that your man is *not* quiet,” Destiny teased Sunny as she took a sip from her iced tea.

“Sunny, don’t worry about Destiny, being that she’s noisier than a group of banshees when she’s with her man,” Star teased.

Their good-natured bantering was interrupted by the smooth voice of Jamieson Mann. “Ladies.” Though he included them all in his polite greeting, his eyes were on Sunny.

“Hey, Jamie,” they all said. Well, except for Sunny, who was busy trying to pretend she wasn’t turned on by her man.

Jamieson had been minding his own business, talking with his brothers when Sunny had given him that come-hither look. When he’d seen the tip of her tongue trace her succulent lips, his cock had gone rock hard. He’d had no choice but to excuse himself and go to her. Despite the fact that Sunny wasn’t looking at him, he could smell her from across Jaron’s bar.

“Woman, let’s dance,” he whispered as he gathered Sunny’s womanly hips in his hands. Pulling her closer, he got another whiff of her heat. He was so

tempted to spread her out on the bar and taste her. The only thing that stopped him was the fact that she was still shy about her body. Being that she was the most beautiful woman in the world, she had no reason to be. He always reiterated that fact when they were together, and he'd continue to do so until the end of their days.

"I'm not so sure it's safe on the dance floor," Sunny said, looking pointedly at the Elvin Warriors doing moves that defied grace and balance.

"It's not safe for *you* until I'm balls deep in you, woman, so come on," Jamieson growled into Sunny's neck.

He hadn't meant for anyone but his woman to hear *that* comment, but the music had cut and changed as he began speaking. His voice carried across the bar, causing many snickers. Perhaps if he'd had a lesser woman, he might be bothered giving a damn that others had heard, but Sunny wasn't a lesser anything. He always wanted her, and from the way her heartbeat increased, Jamieson knew that she wanted him just as fiercely.

Emitting a soft growl, he pulled Sunny closer. Sunny might still be a bit shy about his ardour, but the truth was that she was equally demanding in bed...and out of it. She was always wet for him, which was good being that he was always hard for her. Scenting her

arousal, his wolf demanded its mate. Though he couldn't see himself, he was sure he looked like the predator he was...and Sunny was his prey...and his prayer.

Watching Jamieson take Sunny in his arms and sway to the rock song that was blasting, Tag could only say one thing. "Wow. I don't know what song either of them are hearing in their heads, but I'm betting it's not the song the rest of us are hearing."

"Wolves are so base," Star sniffed.

Hearing Star's remark, she and Destiny gave each other "what the fuck" looks before turning to Star and bursting into laughter.

"That may be so, but *Vamps* are freaks...HARD," Tag commented.

Before the remark had hardly left her mouth, all eyes turned to her.

"Oh, really?" Destiny asked in that shit-starting way of hers. "I heard *Faeries* have some pretty awesome tricks up their sleeves."

"Not as many as *Vamps*...at least that's what I've heard," Tag coughed behind her hand.

“Oh, you must be talking about Dessie. She’s into all sorts of shit,” Star said before yelping when Destiny shoved her.

Star made a production out of being pushed, but Destiny merely rolled her eyes.

“And the winner for best bullshit damsel in distress goes to...Starbright!” Destiny announced as if they were at a film awards festival.

All three of them were laughing heartily as they gained their feet.

“I don’t know about you all, but cutting the fool makes me thirsty,” Star said as she signalled the bartender for a refill of her soft drink.

“You sure it’s not a certain silver-haired vampire who’s got you thirsty?” Tag asked as she followed suit.

She’d just placed her glass on the bar when she felt someone approach. Being that the bar was filling fast, she wasn’t bothered. It was only when he leaned in too close that she began to feel annoyed, as she didn’t like anyone crowding her space. Before she could tell him to back the fuck up, he touched her back. Immediately, she knew he was *Fae*.

“You are dead,” were the only words the *Fae* male got a chance to get out of his mouth.

Turning, Tag grabbed a beer bottle off the bar and smashed it into his face. Not even waiting for him to register what had just happened, she laid into him.

And bless the crazy *Vamps*, they were right by her side kicking his ass. Punching him in the face, she wrapped his hair around her fist and slammed his face into the bar—not once but repeatedly. She didn't stop until she'd pretty much made peanut butter out of the peanuts that littered the bar. Of course, the nuts were now mixed with *Fae* blood, but that happens when you piss Tag off.

“What the fuck are you doing here?” Tag asked the *Fae* male as he struggled to breathe.

Instead of answering, he spat in her face. Tag could take a lot of shit, but being spit upon wasn't one of those things. It didn't help that he had a mouthful of blood and nuts...at all. Using the sleeve of her peasant shirt, she wiped her face so she could clearly see the motherfucker she was about to kill. She was about to smash in his face some more, when she felt a hand wrap around her waist. *Jaron*. She didn't even need to look to know it was him. He was the only being who would dare such a thing. Well, besides males who wanted to kill her, that is.

Inserting his body in between her and the *Fae*, he stopped to wipe her face with a clean towel he seemed to have pulled from thin air. Finished with his task, he kissed her. And damn if he didn't do a good job of it. Without taking his eyes off of her, he picked the *Fae* up by his face and hurled him across the bar.

Fae males weren't pussies. And they weren't exactly small, yet Jaron heaved him seemingly without effort.

Though it wasn't any more than fifty feet, the *Fae* male howled in pain the entire journey. Bouncing off of the wall and crumpling into a bloody heap, his howls increased when he saw that he'd landed in the midst of not just the rest of the Mann males, but Lukas Montague and the Elvin Warriors. Already on her shit list, the male *Fae* quickly realised that it was about to suck being him.

The music was still playing, but the patrons had all stopped dancing. Feeling something in her hand, Tag looked down...and quickly looked back up when she saw what she held. In her hand was the scalp of the *Fae* male. Gross. Quickly dropping the hair/skin, she shuddered. That was just too nasty for words.

Before she could think another thought, Jaron was busy washing her hands. It wasn't just the fact he was cleansing her hands that got to her; it was *what* he was cleansing her hands with. Jaron was cleansing her with high-end scotch. And when she said high-end, she meant it. The sixty-year old Macallan sold for \$3500.00 a shot or \$42,000 per bottle. Oh yeah, and it'd been sold out for a hot minute now. Damn, that wolf.

She'd never considered seeing hygiene as erotic, but that was before she'd been cleaned by Jaron Mann.

How the hell was washing one's hands a turn-on? It wasn't, and someone should've told that to her pussy because it was doing somersaults. She didn't know what music was playing, but all she heard was "boom chica now now."

Finishing his task, Jaron made quick work of washing his own hands in the soap and water that had suddenly appeared. She was about to ask him if he thought perhaps the Macallan had been overkill, when he started to remove his shirt. Seeing all of that hot, glorious, bronzed skin come into view, all she (and almost every fucking thing in the bar with a vagina) could say was, "Oh, damn."

Here she was, shirt splattered with blood, beer and nuts, with a *Fae* scalp at her feet, a scalpless *Fae* across the room getting the shit kicked out of him, and all she could think about was how fucking fine Jaron Mann was. *And also beating the shit out of all of the females who were staring at him.* This just wasn't right. Dammit.

"Stand guard," he said.

His harshly barked order pulled her from her fantasies.

A half second later, she had a wall of broad Mann backs blocking her. A second after that, Jaron was cutting her soiled shirt off of her with his lethal claws. Dropping it to the floor, he deftly removed her

bra (which didn't have a speck of anything on it) and pocketed it before gently cleansing her with the warm, wet towel. He went about the task quickly. Finished, he dressed her in his own shirt, kissed her soundly, swatted her ass, and made his way to the *Fae*. Judging from the look on Jaron's face, that wasn't going to go well for the *Fae*. Seeing him grab him by the remains of his face and drag him out of the bar, she was certain it wasn't. That was the last glimpse she got of the *Fae*, because a contingent consisting of a medley of Mann boys, the Elvin Warriors, and Star's guard completely surrounded her and her friends.

Star thrust an ice-cold Coke in her hands. Destiny shouted for someone to crank the music up. Moments later the dance floor was once again rocking. Everything had happened so fast. It may've seemed like it took forever, but in reality less than two and a half minutes had passed. Damn, those wolves were efficient at squashing trouble. Taking a healthy swig from the bottle, she relished the cool taste even as she lamented the loss of the laughter she and the girls had been sharing just a few minutes before.

"Sorry, girls," Tag apologised.

That got her a glare from Sunny, a push from Destiny and a shove from Star. It also got her a chorus of:

"Shut up."

“Oh, no, you didn’t.”

“No fucking way you should be apologising for that fucker.”

“In fact, you should be thanking him because it looks like you’re going to be getting a sound fucking from Jaron,” Destiny said.

Trust Destiny to say something completely and totally inappropriate. Immediately the mood lightened. Instead of kicking around any more regrets, she came back with something completely and totally inappropriate of her own.

“Maybe it’s Jaron who’s going to get a sound fucking from me.”

“Who sent you?” Jaron asked the *Fae* he and Tag had literally *scalped*.

Later he’d smile at the irony of doing something his ancestors had done whilst waging war against each other and their enemies, but right now he needed answers. *How dare some motherfucker come in and touch his woman.* He hated the fact that he couldn’t smell those *Fae* bastards. If he could, he would’ve known instantly that someone who shouldn’t be was too damn close to his woman.

“You will all die!” the *Fae* said.

Despite having received some serious damage from Tag, his brothers and his boys, the Fae wasn't scared...at all. That worried Jaron. Men without fear like that were usually used for a reason, and the reason scared him as much as the *Fae's* apparent lack of fear.

"That's not really answering my question, pal," Jaron said calmly as he stared into the *Fae's* deranged eyes.

"Tuesday Grace will never be the Ruler. She will die here with you *shifters* and mortals."

Jaron had had enough. Letting go of the *Fae*, he didn't even watch as he collapsed back onto snow-covered gravel. Standing straight, he turned to walk away, knowing that his brothers had an eye on the *Fae* male as he turned his back on him.

"She will never rule the *Kingdom*! Never!" the deranged *Fae* yelled.

The *Fae's* yell was interrupted by a yelp and then a gurgle. Turning quickly, he found Adena and Sage. Sage snapped the *Fae* in quite a few pieces. Damn. When he was finished breaking him, Adena cleaned up the mess with a controlled burn. In seconds, all that remained of the *Fae* were his screams and soon even those were gone, carried away with the rest of him.

"Where are the rest?" Sage asked Jaron with an excited gleam in his eyes.

Jaron shook his head even as he smiled. He actually felt himself liking the giant.

“Sorry dude, there was only one,” Jaron answered.

Adena scowled, her gaze darting to the darkest corners of the parking lot. A moment later her eyes began to shift displaying her power. The flames that illumined her eyes were as impressive as the woman who wielded such power.

“Jaron Mann, *Fae* never travel alone.”

Jaron’s heartbeat tripled as the sound of an enraged Destiny suddenly hit his ears. The Mann brothers and Lukas hauled ass back into the bar. Before he reached it, Jaron slammed headfirst into a concrete wall. Oh, not a wall, Sage’s back. How the hell had the giant gotten in front of him?

“Dude, you okay?” Sage asked Jaron as he tossed someone out of the way.

Rocking back on his heels, Jaron looked out at the chaos spread before him. The bar was in the midst of the biggest, noisiest bar fight Jaron had seen anywhere, ever.

“Duck,” Jaron warned the giant instead of answering.

“Barbeque,” Sage answered with a frown, as he took the full impact of the wooden chair across the back of his head.

Jaron couldn't help but grimace. Seeing the giant simply brush the wood chips off his shoulders, he realised the giant probably didn't even feel it. A second later, a blazing dagger of flame formed in Sage's hand, and he threw it at the culprit. The flames consumed him and then burned out, not touching anything except for the intended target. Damn.

Jaron couldn't help but be impressed.

"Helps that the wifey is the elemental Fire *Faerie*," a grinning Sage said.

Jaron grinned at Sage's use of the word *wifey* when explaining Adena, who looked the epitome of calm as she scoured the bar for Tag. He couldn't see Tag. *Shit*.

Find your Faerie now, brother. We can handle this, Jack's calming voice soothed him. Jaron nodded in response to his Alpha, knowing Jack couldn't see the gesture but also knowing he could feel it.

Feeling the thumb of the female *Fae* assassin dig harder into her windpipe, Tag just knew she was going to pass out. Looking into the assassin's eyes, she saw no emotion. Obviously, she was a good assassin. Not good enough, though, Tag thought. A seasoned assassin wouldn't waste time toying with her victims.

“Come on,” Tag wheezed out.

“And he said you were a fighter. You shame your *Faerie* heritage,” the woman said coldly as she squeezed just a little harder.

Tag resented the dig. It wasn’t as if it was a fair fight. The assassin had ambushed her as she came out of the stall. She kicked out at the woman, but she continued to hold her easily—too easily. *Fuck, fuck, shit!* Tag cursed in her head.

A moment later the door to the bathroom flew open, and Tag and the *Fae* assassin went stumbling to the spotless bathroom floor. Later, Tag thought, she must commend Jaron on how clean he kept his place. The Howler was a top notch establishment. Suddenly she felt herself being lifted up and away from the assassin.

“Vampires *and* a human, blah,” the *Faerie* assassin spat as she looked at the three women who’d busted in the door.

Star stood in front and Sunny, and Destiny flanked her. Tag had never seen three more beautiful women.

“*Faerie* bitch with an attitude,” Star said as her way of greeting.

“You have no business here. Be gone,” the assassin snarled as she got to her feet elegantly and pulled her with her.

She faced Star fearlessly, which caused Star to virtually double over in laughter. Tag wished she could get words past her aching throat, but she couldn't. She reached out in an attempt to stop Star, but Sunny and Destiny stopped her.

"This is her thing. Let her play a little," Destiny said.

"Did you just say 'be gone'? Wow, you really need to come up with better lines. I would've said something like 'Fuck off' or 'Unless you'd like to be fed by an IV for the rest of your life, you should get the hell outta here,'" Star said all casual, as if she was discussing the weather instead of provoking one of the deadliest killer of the Royal Assassins.

"You involve yourself in things better left alone, *Vampire*," the assassin snarled.

In response, Destiny and Sunny snatched her from the clutches of the assassin and left the bathroom. The swishing door revealed the picture of Star and the assassin facing off. Tag was confused. She hadn't expected the confrontation to end so soon...so peacefully.

"Holy shit," Tag said as Sunny and Destiny helped her into the bar proper.

The dance floor was littered with bodies. Some writhing in pain, some covered in blood, some just plain dead. Tag watched a few more being dispatched

by Jaron and his brothers. Star's husband and one good-looking *Vamp* by the name of Craven were impaling and lopping heads from bodies with amazing speed. Sage and Adena stood off to the side watching the various fights with concern on their faces, as their gazes darted all around the bar searching for Tag. As soon as Adena spotted her, she orbed to them and took over the holding duties from Sunny and Destiny.

"Such entertaining fighters these *shifters* and *Vampires* are. I'm highly impressed," Adena said by way of greeting.

She followed her greeting with a hug. Tag didn't want to worry her sister further by telling her that she was hurting her, so she simply accepted the hug and tried to hug Adena back as best she could despite the pain.

"She's baaaaaacccckk," Destiny sing-songed.

Before Tag could comprehend what Destiny meant, Adena pulled her aside as Star went flying past them with the *Faerie* assassin on her back. Everyone backed up as the two women rolled to a stop under the flashing disco lights. The screaming guitars that accompanied System of a Down's "Chop Suey" was the soundtrack the two women fought to.

"You have to stop her—" Tag tried to speak loudly, but her voice was so hoarse.

“Star can handle herself, Tag. Don’t worry,” Destiny assured her even as Adena helped her onto a stool. Everyone including the Mann brothers, Star’s husband, and the Elvin Warriors stood away from the two women who were eyeing each other up, ready to inflict violence at the slightest provocation.

“Why don’t the guys—” Tag began only to be cut off by Sunny.

“Star would kill them, and the Mann brothers will never fight a woman even if she’s trying to kill them.”

Tag simply shook her head. Her eyes were drawn to her brother-in-law, who slapped Lukas heartily on the back. Tag was amazed the *vampire* didn’t go flying across the room from the force of the blow.

Her thoughts were interrupted by the sight of Jamieson counting off hundred dollar bills. Da hell? Were they actually betting on the fight like it was a fucking sanctioned boxing match?

“Do not worry, little one. Astarla Hart-Montague is the strongest *Vampire* to walk the earth.”

That may be, but Star was still Vampire! She was fighting a Faerie. Faeries were stronger in every way possible!

Tag wanted to yell at them, but she was distracted by the action on the floor. The assassin

threw the first punch, which snapped Star's head back. *Oh shit.* Star righted her head on her neck and grinned. Her fangs were fully extended and her eyes were bright with...mirth. That was when Tag realised Star was indeed enjoying herself. *Crazy Vampire.*

Star sized up her opponent. The punch had hurt like a bitch, but she grinned through it. After all, the assassin was reportedly among the most sought after killers in the *Faerie Kingdom*. She'd only made two mistakes. One, fucking with her girl. Two, thinking she had a chance to whip her ass in any kind of combat.

"Two hundred says Star takes her out in under five minutes," Jamieson called the bet.

Still recovering from the mighty slap on the back Sage had given him, Lukas grinned at the men as they began handing over money to Craven, who'd been proclaimed the official "*holder*." Lukas waited while others called out their bets before placing his own.

"Three minutes and twenty-five seconds, gentleman," he said as he handed over the five one hundred dollar bills that would put him square for the

betting. The Mann brothers took the bet and went back to watching his little Star beat the living shit out of the *Faerie* assassin. Actually, Star wasn't at the "beating the living shit out of her" stage yet. She was merely toying with the assassin. Lukas got hard watching his woman hand out justice. She had skills he was completely in fucking awe of...not that he'd admit such a thing to her. Star would let it go to her head, and she already took too many chances in his opinion. Thinking of the magical scarves his mother-in-law had gifted him with, he smiled, knowing he was going to use those scarves to tie Star's voluptuous form to the bed...and fuck her all night long.

"Three minutes and ten seconds," Destiny said, watching her sister beat the shit out of the assassin.

Sunny glanced at her.

"What?" Adena asked Destiny.

"She'll dispose of that *Faerie* bitch in three minutes and ten seconds," Destiny elaborated with a shrug.

Shock coloured Adena's face, but a moment later, she threw her head back and laughed heartily.

"I do love *Vampires*. You're all so bloodthirsty," a still grinning Adena said.

“Three minutes and eleven seconds,” Sunny countered.

“You’re gonna lose, Sunshine,” Destiny said with a shake of her head.

“Exactly what are we betting for?” Tag asked hoarsely.

“Whoever wins the bet gets to dare the losers, and they’ve gotta do it,” Destiny said with a grin.

Sunny and Adena both fist-knocked Destiny. Tag frowned but tossed in her own bet. “Three minutes and nine seconds.”

Star was getting bored. The *Faerie* assassin’s arsenal seemed to consist of merely punching and kicking really hard. Sure, she had a few other fun moves that impressed her, but damn, she was a fucking *Faerie Assassin*. Shouldn’t she at least be able to avoid her punches? Useless. It was time to end this farce.

Star dodged yet another punch. This time she didn’t even pretend she was going to allow that shit to connect. In the space it took for the *Fae* assassin to retract her fist, Star stepped back and rubbed her hands together. Sure, it might look a little Mr Miyagi-ish, but this was the most expedient way for her to

build energy. The stupid assassin just watched her do it. *Oh well*, Star thought as she felt the burn of the energy radiating from her body and running along her arms and through her fingers.

Finally, giving an eyebrow waggle, Star launched herself at the assassin with her hands in front of her. She hit the assassin right in the chest. The sparks that came off the assassin stunned the *Faerie* woman. Star didn't even let her get in a blink before she yanked her to her feet. Lifting her above her head, she threw her against the bar where the girls sat watching. Star stalked after her.

"Now I think you owe my friend an apology," Star said as she smashed her fist into the *Faerie's* face.

An apology didn't come quick enough, so Star continued to backhand the woman again and again until words gurgled from her throat.

"I. Am. Not. The last..."

Wrong words. Star punched her for her stupidity.

"You. Will. Die," the assassin promised.

Still the wrong words. Star punched her again for wasting her time. She delivered a litany of punches along with a lecture.

"Wow, you guys really have a problem with apologising, don't you?"

Digging a little bit of fight out of somewhere, the assassin pushed away from the bar and emitted what Star guessed was some kind of battle cry.

Star stood still and waited as the *Faerie* came after her with a sword. Sighing from boredom, Star realised it was one of hers! Bitch! Moving to the side, Star pulled the woman's arm, dislocating it in the process. Kicking her, she angled the sword up so that it entered under the woman's chin and came out at the top of her head.

Star couldn't help but think of the chorus to Pink's "You and Your Hand." She could think of no truer words as the *Faerie* assassin fell dead at her feet. Star was a nice *Vamp*. She really was, but no one fucked with her man, her friends, or her fucking swords. Period.

Using the corpse to clean her sword of *Fae* blood, Star grimaced when she realised she had some blood on her boots. Dammit, these were her favourites. It didn't matter that she had ten more pairs exactly like them. She didn't appreciate blood on her boots. Sighing, she used the slain assassin like a welcome mat and wiped her boots clean.

The silence that swathed the bar was broken by Destiny.

“WAY TO GO, STAR! HA! THREE MINUTES
AND TEN SECONDS! IN YOUR FACE
MOTHERFUCKERS! I WIN!”

Ah, she loved that *Vamp*.

CAREER SIX

Fascinating—that’s what it was, absolutely fascinating. Tag watched Destiny argue *another* point with the Elvin Warriors; of course, that was when Riven and Fallon decided to get involved. That situation went from bad to worse...for the men, that was. Of course Destiny would brag every now and then in their discussion how she was close to two thousand dollars richer, since she’d taken out their wagered money as well. With the help of her witnesses—Tag, Adena and Sunny—the men had grudgingly handed over their money without a word of protest. And Destiny being her, she made sure to sing a victory song and execute a dance to go with it.

Back at Jaron’s house, the ladies were busy oohing and ahing over each other’s weaponry. It was a real “show me yours and I’ll show you mine” kind of thing. The oohs and ahhs got really loud when her sisters showed off their weaponry, which was all made from the elements they controlled.

While the ladies were busy with weapons, the guys were busy with games. Jamieson and Lukas fought it out against Sage and Gabriel while Jack and

Jaron egged them on. As if he sensed Tag watching him, Jaron turned. Meeting her eyes, he gave her an arrogant smile. It shouldn't have affected her, but nevertheless all her good parts get real warm and moist.

All in all it was pretty peaceful. Well, as peaceful as it could be considering the room was packed full of beings whose sanity was questionable at best and were all there to protect her and if necessary, kill to guarantee her safety. She didn't know why, but Tag felt panic beginning to rise inside her chest. She fought it, but it continued to bubble beneath the surface. *She had to get out.*

Burying her panic beneath a grin, she headed for the door. Intercepting her, Jaron caught her hand and accompanied her onto the large porch. Once outside, he trapped her body between his and the rail she was leaning on. Guiding his hips between her spread thighs, he leaned in and kissed her.

She kissed him back just as fiercely as he was kissing her. His tongue made a leisurely sweep of her mouth, leaving no part of it untasted. Goodness, he could kiss! Trusting him, Tag let herself be carried away on a wave of passion.

Jaron moved his mouth from hers and nuzzled the area under her chin and between her shoulders. His minty breath caused her skin to tingle. She

shivered when his mouth grazed the platinum necklace. “Um...” she said breathlessly as she rocked against him.

“Yes?” he growled against her neck.

“Thank you,” Tag said honestly.

Her words caused Jaron to pause. Laving the small bite he’d just nipped into the hollow of her throat, he lifted his head and looked deeply into her eyes. Though his gaze was intense, she met it full on.

“For what?” he asked her, sounding all kinds of confused.

“For looking out for me,” Tag said softly.

Jaron was busy exploring the wonderful hollow of Tag’s throat when she thanked him. Already puzzled at why she’d thank him, he asked her about it. Her answer threw him for a loop.

“You sound like I won’t be doing it any longer,” he said.

Tag stared into his eyes for what seemed an eternity. Finally, she blinked. Exhaling, she sought his eyes again. There was no change in how she looked at him or even in the emotion (or lack thereof) in her eyes, but Jaron knew something was off. He didn’t like the feeling crawling up his spine.

Something was about to jump off; he just didn't have any fucking idea what it might be.

"I'm leaving. With the assassin gone there's no one else stupid enough to come after me," Tag said all matter-of-factly, like he was going to allow that shit.

Feeling his canines burst from his gums, he stepped away from Tag before he did something crazy like throw her down and fuck her into submission. Running his hand through his hair agitatedly, he paced back in forth. He managed to hold onto the anger that her little announcement had roused...barely.

"Where are you going?" He kept his back to her so she wouldn't see his anger.

"Jesse called me earlier and told me the band is—"

Not even bothering to listen to the rest of her sentence, Jaron swung.

"You're going off to play in the fucking band?!" he exclaimed incredulously.

"Jaron, you know I'm a musician. This is something that the band—" Tag began quietly.

The significance of the circumstances suddenly hit him. Tag only used his name when she was totally serious.

"No, you're right. You should go," he said tightly.

Before he could stop her, she reached out and caressed his cheek. That was a lie. He could've

stopped her. He just didn't want to. Feeling a shudder go through his big body, he turned away, breaking the contact. "At least I'll get my house back," he said softly.

Tag didn't say anything, just like he knew she wouldn't. She simply turned to him and looked at him with eyes filled with...*nothing*.

"I just want you to know that—" she began.

"Yeah, I know you're grateful, but hey, it's all part of the package—protection and fucking," Jaron said bitterly before turning and walking back inside before he said anything else that made him look as stupid as he felt.

Seeing Jaron walk off, Tag sighed and fingered her necklace that pulsed beneath her touch. She closed her eyes and leaned her head on one of the columns, grateful that she couldn't feel a damn thing. She knew if she kept saying that, it wouldn't be long before she believed it. Mustering every last bit of her strength, she inhaled and walked back into Jaron's house.

Jaron watched as the Elvin Warriors packed their gear. He could hear Tag speaking to Jesse on the phone. Hearing her laugh, he wanted to slam his head through the nearest wall to stop himself from thinking.

Keep her, his wolf muttered angrily as it circled around in his brain. He ignored it. Turning away from the window, he watched as Tag picked up the duffel bag that Jesse had dropped off the day he'd come over...the day he and Jaron had butted heads.

"Well, it's been fun," Tag said as she slung her bag over her shoulder and settled it diagonally across her body. Jaron tried to smile back, being he wasn't affected by this *Faerie*. *Bullshit*, his wolf snapped.

"Yeah," was all he could think of to say for a moment.

Seeing his lack of response, Tag looked at a loss for words. Her smile slipped a bit. She was about to say something when she noticed the appointed speaker for the Elvin Warriors waiting patiently for her.

"Take care, *dawg*," Tag said.

With her grin still in place, she stuck her hand out for him to shake. He did not shake hands with women he...liked. Choking back emotions, he took her hand and pulled her into his body. With a growl, he covered her lips and kissed her like nothing else mattered. He didn't give a flying fuck who saw.

Hearing the Elvin Warriors coughing discretely, he ignored them and buried his fingers deeper into Tag's curls. He held her close to him as he kissed her. Instead of pushing him away like he expected, Tag held him just as desperately and kissed him back.

Finally, when neither of them could breathe, they stepped back. Reluctantly, he released Tag. Breathing heavily, she stared at him. Jaron's eyes were drawn to her necklace, which was literally pulsating. The necklace looked *alive*. How had he never noticed that before?

"Goodbye, Jaron," Tag said softly as she walked past him.

Jaron didn't return her goodbye, and neither did he watch as she walked away from him. He only looked back once he heard her settle herself in the seat. The Elvin Warrior who'd settled her in the SUV bowed his head respectfully to him before getting in behind her.

The SUVs started. One of them beeped before pulling out and making its way down his driveway. The silence enveloped him. Grinding his teeth, Jaron reached for his cell phone, ready to ring any woman available. What better way to get over one woman than with another.

He caught himself mid-sentence. *What the fuck?* He didn't need to get over Tag! *Liar*, his wolf cackled

at him. Once again, he ignored it. Before he could finish dialing, two things happened. First, the Elvin Warrior King and Lord de Vires flashed onto his porch. Second, the twilight sky was lit by an explosion on his driveway.

The grotesque man watched as the *Faerie* queen walked into his new laboratory with her regal head held high. He really did love the royal bitches. They were always so much fun to break.

“You summoned me,” were the first words out of her mouth. She didn’t look at him directly, but he didn’t expect it. Few beings could.

“Why so gloomy, dear Rhiannon?” he asked her with a grimace that passed for a smile.

Rhiannon looked at him properly for a moment, then her gaze skittered away before answering. “I despise the mortal realm.”

“But mortals are so entertaining,” he said as he stood and limped his way over to her.

He could tell her control was slipping. Despite her facade, she was afraid of him. He could taste her fear, and it excited him. She didn’t flinch when he lifted his scarred hand towards her cheek. However, when he touched her with his cold hand, she did flinch.

When his hand wrapped around her delicate throat, her eyes widened and filled with fear.

“My liege—” she began.

He simply grinned and watched her, wondering if she’d chance scratching at his hand wrapped around her throat or remain still. She did the sensible thing and remained unmoving. Pulling her in so close that she couldn’t look anywhere without seeing the scarred flesh that covered his face, he spoke.

“You’re a stupid cunt, Rhiannon. Do you really think you can rule your pissy little kingdom without me? Did you think I wouldn’t know of your plan to eliminate the *true* queen of the *Fae*? Did you think eliminating her would make me go away?”

They were rhetorical questions; still, Rhiannon shook her head.

“Then why did you send your assassins to the mortal realm? They were defeated so easily, and now you’re back at square one and I have to reshuffle my plans because you’ve messed everything up—*again*.” Snarling, he pushed Rhiannon away from him as if touching her offended him.

“My liege, please, you must understand,” she began.

Ah, the begging. Begging was even better entertainment than fear, especially when done by the so-called better echelons. Having the *Faerie* queen on

her knees in front of him while she begged was simply a bonus. He watched as she pled as if that would make a difference. Surely she didn't believe he had any *feelings* for her whatsoever? He laughed internally when he realised that she did. Sometimes the snotty ones had to be reminded exactly where their place was, he thought with a grin. And her place was exactly where she was: on her knees before him like the subservient bitch she was.

He unbuttoned his trousers and pulled the zipper down. Of all the things on his body his cock was truly a work of art. No blemishes whatsoever. It was always funny to watch women look from his scarred face and body, then back at his perfect cock. In the midst of her begging and pleading, Rhiannon realised his intent too late. Grabbing her long hair, he pulled her forward so she was eyeing his cock right up close and personal like.

"The only thing I want to hear from you, Rhiannon, is the sound of my cock hitting the back of your throat. I will think of your punishment later, but for now, suck."

As if mesmerized by the fleshy perfection, Rhiannon stared at his cock. Then without further ado, she did as he ordered and took him deep into her mouth. He moaned as he fucked the *Faerie* queen's

hot little mouth. Ah, the royal bitches, always so much fun to break.

Tag stumbled away from the burning vehicles. The Elvin Warriors kept her within the circle they formed. Grasping her arm, they kept her from falling. Looking up to thank them, she quickly tried to scramble away when she realised it wasn't the Elvin warriors that surrounded her but Prince Lylelay's men.

"Do not attempt to run, Tuesday Grace," the prince's deep, melodic voice rang out loud and clear.

Lylelay's in the mortal realm? Tag wondered as she eyed the warriors who surrounded her.

"What have you done?" Tag spoke to the space in the middle of the flaming vehicle where she'd heard the prince's voice. Walking easily through the flames, he was before her before she could even think to attempt to run like the voice in her head was telling her to.

Prince Lylelay was a handsome *Faerie*. His most striking feature, his purple-blue eyes were hypnotising at best and deadly at worst. His silky hair reached his hips, and his long, lean-muscle body was encased in the garb of Royal *Fae*. The leather pants and hooded robe looked more like monks' robes than anything

royalty would wear. However, Tag knew exactly what hid beneath that robe, and it was nothing god-like or forgiving for damn sure.

“What have *I* done? I’m doing only what’s necessary,” Lylelay said coldly.

Tag felt her heart beating wildly in her chest. The Elvin Warriors were dead! She could feel the panic coming in rushes and could do nothing to stop it. Not even her necklace was helping her. *Shit, shit, fuck!*

“Lylelay, please—” Tag tried to appeal to the *Faerie* who’d comforted her when her father had been taken and promised her he would always look out for her. Looking into his eyes, she knew that *Faerie* was long gone...just like her father.

“Do not address me as if I am your cohort!” the prince snapped.

“Prince Lylelay—” she began, but stopped when he stepped forward.

She attempted to take a step back as he approached, but his warriors held her still.

“You will not threaten my mother’s rule,” the prince bit out.

Tag swallowed hard. These might be her last moments, but she wasn’t going out without a fight. Raising her chin, she looked Lylelay right into the eye as she pictured the battle that was about to jump off. Silently, she calculated the position of each warrior

and how quickly she'd need to kill them in order to get away. She knew she was going to lose, as she had no weapons, but she was determined to put up a helluva effort.

Not waiting for Lylelay to get the first strike, she kicked her leg up with lightning speed and knocked him on his ass before arching higher and kicking her captor in the face. Feeling the blood from his nose trickle down her cheek, she knew she'd done some damage. Grabbing his sword, she took one of the prince's men's head off even as she kicked another, digging her boot into his eye socket. With an upwards motion she struck another, snapping his eye bone and driving it into his brain.

Turning, she faced Lylelay and the remaining warriors. Gaining his feet, Lylelay glared at her with cool anger and spoke the words that would seal her fate.

“Kill her.”

He was so predictable. In a V formation, the warriors came at her with deathly intent in their eyes. The first attempted to knock the sword from her hands. It might not be her sword, and she might not be the best sword fighter, but she was a damn good street fighter. Sliding on her knees, she slammed the hilt into his groin. Quickly gaining her feet, she took his head

when he crashed to his knees. As his head rolled towards the prince, the others rushed her.

“Impressive, Tuesday Grace, but I have many more warriors at my disposal, and there’s only one of you,” Lylelay said.

Severely outnumbered, her arms burning with the effort it took to swing that sword, the odds were not in her favour. Still, she held onto her sword and her dignity. *Dear Goddess. Welcome me into your arms. Welcome me home...*she prayed silently as they rushed her en masse.

Raising the sword, Tag swiped in an arc, but all she hit was air. Without realising it, she had closed her eyes. Snapping them open, she couldn’t help but grin at the sight before her.

Jaron and her uncle were ripping through the group of men. Another man Tag had seen before but couldn’t place held a dagger to the prince’s jugular. Tag didn’t know whether to cry in relief or weep for joy as she thought of the vengeance about to be meted out. She didn’t dare blink lest she’d miss the beat down. Fifteen warriors wasn’t much of a fight for her uncle. Hey, he hadn’t reigned as Elvin Warrior King for so long for nothing. His swords cut through the prince’s men like a hot knife through butter. Not once did he pause as he disposed of the many stupid men who approached him.

Jaron was in human form, but his movements and clawed hands made short work of the warriors he encountered. He slashed vital organs from bodies with a speed and viciousness that she couldn't help but be impressed by. The snow was stained red with remains. Feeling lightheaded, Tag fell to her knees and dropped the giant. In an attempt to stave off the dizziness threatening to take her into the sweet abyss of unconsciousness, she bowed her head and gulped in air. Suddenly, strong arms lifted her. She tried to fight, but she had no energy left. All she could do was look to see who held her.

Jaron.

Tag's wildly beating heart ached as he checked for injuries before pulling her against his chest. Realising how close she'd been to death, she began to shiver violently. Jaron held her so tightly that she could barely breathe, but Tag wasn't about to complain, as she needed holding. She felt someone at her back a moment before she was being plucked from Jaron's tight embrace and crushed against another wall of warm muscle. Immediately she recognized the embrace of her uncle Carlisle.

"You are safe, Tuesday Grace. Uncle Carl's got you," he whispered as she whimpered into his thick neck and held on for dear life.

Due to her uncle's massive size, she often felt like a child whenever he hugged her. Right now he wasn't hugging her so much as he was reassuring her. She felt like she had when he'd held her after she'd lost her father. Though everyone had rallied around her, it'd been her uncle Carlisle who'd stepped in and become the father figure she'd needed.

"Serafeim, take us out of here," Carlisle spoke to his friend who still held Prince Lylelay at knifepoint.

Tag didn't let go of her uncle. She simply closed her eyes as she felt the atmosphere shift. When she opened them, she was surprised to be looking into the face of her beloved mother. Her momma smoothed her hair back and smiled.

"Sleep my baby, sleep," Gaia cajoled.

Sleep began to overtake her. In the midst of succumbing to sleep, she felt her uncle hand her over to Jaron. The last thing she remembered before blackness swallowed her whole was Jaron kissing her lips.

Jaron carried Tag to a room that would dwarf most houses in the mortal realm in size and surpass them in beauty. Despite the size and beauty, however, it was the smell of peace that impressed him. Laying

an unconscious Tag on the bed, he lay down next to her and simply watched her as she slept. When she unconsciously snuggled into him, Jaron closed his eyes and held her tighter against him.

“I almost lost you,” he whispered to her, his heart beating in staccato.

“But you didn’t lose me. You saved me,” Tag said.

Jaron looked down into Tag’s face. She was still fast asleep.

“Tag?”

“Yes?”

“You can hear me?” he asked softly.

“Yes.”

Scowling, he wondered how she was able to respond to him when Gaia had bespelled her to sleep.

“The sleep is to calm her mind, not mute her heart,” Azriel’s voice floated over from the corner of the room.

Seeing the other male, Jaron growled low in his throat. He didn’t like the male being anywhere in the vicinity of Tag, much less in the same room. He was about to rise, when Azriel held up a hand to still him.

“Her clear and level head is what has kept her alive. That is why she had me bind her heart with the necklace she wears. Her mother knows she is weary,

but her heart is unbound while she slumbers,” Azriel calmly explained.

Jaron looked down at Tag before looking back at the former Archangel. Seeing Azriel’s lips stretch into that smug, superior smile, Jaron wanted to rip him to shreds. Instead, he simply growled two words. “Get out.”

Within the blink of an eye, Azriel disappeared.

“Tag?”

“*Dawg?*” Tag questioned.

He smiled hearing her call him that. “You scared me out there,” he whispered as he feathered kisses along her forehead.

“I scared *me* out there,” Tag said. “I was already praying when I thought that was the end of me.”

Jaron shuddered as he remembered the sight of his Tag facing an armed contingent of warriors, one holding a broad sword almost as big as her. He’d felt the power of the kill take up residence in his body upon seeing her in danger.

“You love me, don’t you, *dawg?*” Tag asked with a hint of pleading.

“Yes...damn you,” he snarled.

Tag simply smiled against his chin. “I love you too. Hey, if we have kids, will they be called a litter?”

Jaron chuckled at the question before brushing his lips against Tag’s.

“No, our little girls will be angels, and our sons will be hellishly protective of their little sisters.”

“In your dreams, *dawg*. My sons will be angels and your daughters will be crazy bitches. No offence,” Tag said.

Jaron couldn’t help but laugh. “No female child of my loins could be anything but an angel.”

Tag snorted rudely before smiling. Jaron cupped her face and kissed her beautiful smiling mouth. When she ran her fingers through his hair, he felt contentment seeping into his soul. *Gotcha!* his wolf yelled in triumph as he laid her back down.

Emitting a sigh, Tag entwined her legs with his. He groaned when her knee rubbed against his cock. Tag simply tightened her grip on his hair and snuggled closer. In response, he rested his forehead against hers.

“Don’t you want to know why I was banished?” she asked him suddenly.

Looking down into her face, Jaron realised he didn’t need to know. “No, I just need you to rest, *Faerie Girl*.”

Tag frowned in her sleep. “But—”

“Don’t argue with me. Just rest. We’ll talk when you’re properly awake,” Jaron said gently.

Tag sighed again. “Don’t leave me,” she said a scant moment before emitting a chorus of snores.

“Never,” he whispered against her lips. With one last kiss, he closed his eyes and fell into a light sleep, smiling over the fact that even *Faeries* snored.

“You snivelling bastard!” Gaia yelled at the prince, who was currently lying in a rather undignified heap beside the Grecian column she’d been smashing his head into for the past few minutes.

“Sister,” Carlisle admonished with a wide grin.

Gaia turned her wild eyes to look at her brother, who was a good head and shoulders taller than her own six foot four. With a frustrated sigh, she walked away from the *Faerie* prince and let Carlisle have a go at him. She was tired of beating him anyway...at least for the moment.

“Now, *boy*, my sister has lost all patience with you, and she has an Archangel just waiting to take your snot-nosed soul. Now being that I’m the calm one in the family, I’m trying to delay that bit of unpleasantness. The only hope in hell you have is for you to cough up the truth,” Carlisle reasoned.

Gaia laughed at her brother’s method. He might be speaking in a level tone, but he was holding the prince up by the neck heedless of the fact that the ass was gasping for breath. She couldn’t help but smile as

the rince's eyes rolled back in his head as his oxygen supply was cut off. Ah, her brother had a way with words. Truth be told, so did the prince, but it was difficult to decipher the gasps of desperate breaths as words.

"I'm sorry. What? I can't understand you there," Carlisle teased the *Faerie* prince moments before dropping him at his feet.

Together they watched the *Faerie* drag in deep breaths as he massaged his neck. Glancing up at Carlisle, he gasped out an explanation...like that'd save him from the pain she was going to inflict.

"My mother is afraid of Tuesday Grace."

"Tell me something I don't know, you little fucker," Gaia hurled at him as she stormed up to him. Carlisle stopped her with a gentle hand on her shoulder. Gaia tried to jerk away from her brother, but he then went in to tickle her. She quickly moved away from her brother as she hid a grin at his tactics.

"Sister, we have to let the boy talk if we're going to discover anything of use. If you keep smacking him around that's not going to happen. As much as I hate to deprive you from administering the beating he so richly deserves, we won't be able to solve this puzzle if you punch every syllable down his throat."

"You never let me do anything," she pouted.

"I'll let you beat him later, sister," he cajoled.

“Fine,” she said as she allowed Carlisle to hug her. Turning to the prince, she commanded him to talk.

Lylelay swallowed a few times as he raised his head and looked at the individuals in attendance. The hallowed hall of the Goddess of the Earth’s home reeked of ancient divinity. He knew to lie would end all that his mother held dear, yet he also knew that to tell the truth would have the same result. Damned if he did and dead if he didn’t. It wasn’t the question of if he was going to be killed; it was only who was going to have the honour. Would it be the Goddess Gaia, the Elvin Warrior King Carlisle, the Archangel Azriel or the pale black- haired man in attendance? He didn’t know the identity of the fourth being, but he knew power when he saw and felt it.

“Do not leave me waiting, *boy*. I have no patience for it,” Gaia spoke from across the room.

Lylelay sat up straight and spoke. “I was to have Tuesday Grace killed, and when the assassins failed I knew I had to do it myself.”

“Why?” the black-haired man asked quietly even as his black eyes watched his every move.

“The kingdom is the most powerful of—” he began.

“Bullshit,” Gaia snapped.

The Elvin Warrior King gave his sister a look that spoke volumes. Throwing her hands up, she turned her back to him. Lylelay couldn’t help but consider the beings he’d had killed for such an insult.

“But it is ruled by a man who will only concede the power to my mother if she keeps Tuesday Grace in the mortal realm,” he said.

There; it was out in the open now.

The goddess turned slowly to face him. Her eyes were burning with rage, but there was a curiosity in them that hadn’t been there before.

“Who is this *man*?” she asked.

She spoke softly, but he could hear the anger that bubbled beneath the words.

“I know not who he is, Goddess,” Lylelay answered honestly.

Gaia looked at Azriel, who moved forward with a fluidity of movement.

Lylelay held his head high as he once again reiterated what he knew and what he did not. “I do not know, Goddess. If I did I would tell you his name.”

Azriel stilled his movements. No one spoke.

“He’s telling the truth,” a voice cut through the prevailing silence.

Like everyone else, he turned and looked at the wolf who entered the chamber. Though the wolf strode towards the pale, black-haired male, his eyes never left his. Lylelay couldn’t help but compare the wolf with the pale black-haired male. Both males radiated great strength, but whereas the pale, black-haired male had a disturbing stillness about him, the wolf vibrated with unexpressed violence.

“What is your will, Goddess?” Azriel asked Gaia.

Sighing, Gaia rubbed her temples and turned away. All in attendance awaited her instructions.

“Keep him here. I must ensure my daughter is well. I will decide later.”

“But Goddess—” Lylelay said.

It was only after Gaia turned to look at him with hatred burning in her eyes that he realised his mistake. Raising her right hand, she formed an orb of pure white energy and hurled it at him. The energy hit him directly in the chest. He felt his whole body go numb right before his mind shut down. His last thought as he fell into the abyss of darkness was that she’d killed him. *Finally.*

“An overreaction, sister?” Carlisle asked with a grin.

Gaia returned his grin. For all of their power and age, the siblings looked like teenagers up to mischief. Jaron was once again reminded that gods and their relations never really aged.

“It was merely an energy orb. No real damage. Come now, Carlisle, you know me better than that,” Gaia said.

“Indeed I do, which is why I know the prince is going to be feeling that for a month of Sundays. While he’s struggling with the lingering pain, I’m sure he’ll stop and give thanks that you were so lenient on him,” Carlisle smart-mouthed his sister.

Gaia merely slapped her brother’s shoulder and ran off when he made to chase her.

“Gentlemen, please make yourselves at home. I must check on my daughter. I will not be long,” Gaia said.

“Anyone for a cocktail?” Azriel asked with a smirk.

Lord de Vires and Carlisle shook their heads in the negative. As usual, Azriel shrugged it off. With a wave and a smirk, he was gone.

“I hate that bastard,” Jaron muttered to himself as he sat down heavily.

“You are not alone, Jaron, Lord de Vires said with a small smile.

“What are you thinking, old friend?” Carlisle asked Lord de Vires.

“These attempts on our children’s lives are becoming too frequent, Carlisle. There’s a puppet master behind all of this. Our people cannot take much more. We need to find him or her and be quick about it.”

Carlisle looked thoughtful as he contemplated his friend’s words.

“What can we do? That *boy*”—Carlisle gestured with his head at the unconscious *Faerie* prince—“doesn’t know shit else. We know the identities of the puppets but not all who are under his influence. It could take millennia to find that information.”

It was Lord de Vires turn to contemplate the words spoken.

“Any thoughts, Jaron?” Lord de Vires asked.

“Is it correct to assume that there’s been trouble in *The Society* of late?” Jaron asked the leader of the Western Vampire Nation.

“Yes. Do you believe they are involved?”

Jaron shrugged. “It takes a lot of power to control so many. Power of that magnitude usually comes with consequences. If we find the power source,

we find the culprit,” Jaron said as he fit all the pieces together in his head.

“And how do you propose we do that, son?” Carlisle asked Jaron.

“Bring the *Otherworldly* community together. If it’s done under the guise of a celebration or conference, it might be easier to sniff out those who are not on the up and up.”

Both Lord de Vires and Carlisle nodded.

“Well hell. I don’t know why I ever doubted you, son. You’re a fine schemer,” Carlisle complemented him.

Jaron smiled, and his wolf rippled to the surface. “I prefer ‘planner’ myself, Majesty,” Jaron replied.

Carlisle laughed at his formal acknowledgement. “Son, after watching you protect my niece, you call me that bullshit again and I’ll wring your bloody neck. Now let’s start planning this party.”

Lord de Vires laughed at Carlisle’s remarks. Jaron couldn’t help the shock that crossed his face upon hearing the ancient *Vampire* laugh.

“Always out for a good time, I see,” Lord de Vires said as he looked at Carlisle.

“Can I help it if I’m desperate to see the beautiful Nafrini once more time so I can feel better about letting you have her?”

Carlisle's remark caused Lord de Vires to laugh even harder.

"In your dreams, Elf Man," Lord de Vires said.

"Watch your back, *Vamp* boy," Carlisle returned.

Gaia smoothed Tag's curls off her forehead as she held her. Watching her daughter sleep gave her a sense of peace she hadn't felt in a long time. Smiling, she couldn't help but think of the day she'd given birth to Tag. And she couldn't help but think of the Dark *Fae*-Dragon who'd fathered her. Drake was not just Tag's father; he was her one and only true love.

Drake had stood beside her as he held her hand and supplied her with a steady stream of encouraging words. His encouragement hadn't even stopped when she'd punched him for her condition. He'd simply opened his arms and encouraged her to beat him if that'd help her bear the pain. How many women were blessed with such a giving mate? Not many, she'd bet. It was in moments like these that she was reminded that she was truly alone. Gaia sighed as she continued to brush her baby's hair away from her forehead.

"He still loves you, Mama," Tag spoke softly.

Gaia looked down into her baby's wide open eyes that were exact replicas of her father's. Smiling, she kissed the top of Tag's head.

"Baby, you need to sleep—" she began.

"He is trapped in the *Between Lands*. I can release him, and that's what makes me a threat to the queen."

Gaia shook her head. "No, your father and I discussed this. You will not—" she began.

"You wouldn't be alone anymore if I did," Tag said. "And neither would Dad."

Gently holding her daughter's face within her hands and looking into gold eyes just like *his*, Gaia could feel tears filling her own eyes.

"You will not speak so, baby. You know the sacrifice if you dare to release your father. I will not have it. Your father will not have it. You will not *think* such a thing, much less attempt it. Is that understood?" Gaia commanded.

"What if we sacrificed someone else?" Tag suggested cheekily.

Gaia smiled even as the tears finally spilled from her eyes. Tag reached up and wiped her cheeks before wrapping her arms around her and hugging tightly.

Gaia held onto her daughter like she never wanted to let her go.

“You love the *shifter*,” her mother said. Yes, said. It wasn’t a question.

When she nodded, her mother continued. “He’s an interesting young male.”

Considering how her mama had treated most of her suitors, that was indeed high praise. Her mama hadn’t allowed three-quarters of the would-be suitors near the palace doors, much less within the palace walls. Then there were those unfortunate males her momma had incinerated. Of course those said suitors had been more interested in the perks that came along with having her as a mate, so she couldn’t be bothered to care too much about their demise. She had warned them about her mama.

“But?” Tag asked softly.

“There is no *but*, baby,” Gaia said with a smile.

Tag leaned her head back to look up at her mother with a smile in her eyes. Her mother simply threw back her head and laughed.

“Mama, there’s *always* a ‘but’ when it comes to males and me,” Tag said.

“You are too shrewd to be in the Mortal Realm. How have the humans survived with you in their midst?”

Tag laughed at her mother’s teasing.

“It’s not a *but* that I am about to speak; it’s a warning,” her mama said seriously.

“Tell me,” Tag said.

“A *shifter* cannot survive in the *Faerie Kingdom* or in this realm. If you choose life with him, you will forgo all of your powers, and you will not be able to return to the *Kingdom*.”

Tag tensed. “And?”

“You will never again be unable to project through time and realms,” her mama said calmly.

“Do you mean I will not be able to come home here to you again?” Tag asked as she sat up and faced her mother.

“Yes,” she answered softly.

Tag closed her eyes and inhaled deeply before shakily exhaling the breath that threatened to choke her. Unbeknownst to her, when she opened her eyes again there was a determination there.

“This shit is just too unfair! I will find a way,” Tag declared.

“I know, baby,” her mama said soothingly.

Rising, Tag got up and began to pace agitatedly.

“This family has already sacrificed too much. I’m going to find a way, Mama. If I have to tear up all of the *Faerie Kingdom*, I’m going to find a way to release Father without that kind of sacrifice.”

Gaia couldn't help but smile as she watched her daughter pace and rave. She much preferred that to the look of helplessness she'd glimpsed earlier. Though her attention was on her daughter, she sensed the *shifter* even before he came to stand in the doorway.

She liked the way Jaron Mann looked her daughter. The *shifter* wasn't under the influence of power, money or any sort of bespellment. Jaron looked at Tag with undiluted love, which was why she hadn't maimed him. She'd watched as he'd defended and protected her daughter and couldn't help but be impressed. She wasn't vain; she was simply difficult to impress. After all, she wasn't just the Goddess of the Earth. She was a mother.

Gaia gestured for him to come in and take her place on the bed. Whilst Tag continued her pacing and raving, Gaia whispered a warning to the *shifter* as she passed him.

"Azriel, Serafeim, my brother and myself are leaving for a few hours, which amounts to days in your time. Keep her happy, young *shifter*," she said before disappearing.

Tag heard her mother's whispered words. She felt more than heard her mother's swift exit. Turning to face Jaron, she felt her world tip moments before she felt herself falling. She never felt the impact of her landing, but she did feel the warmth. Opening her eyes, she saw nothing. She could hear nothing. She could feel nothing. Shit. Shit. Fuck. *Where was she?*

INTERLUDE

Bringing up the rear, Gaia watched as Serafeim and Carlisle ducked just in time to avoid the heavy onyx and silver vase that came flying at their heads. Azriel didn't bother ducking. He merely lifted his hand and stopped the vase in midair as he shared a look with the other members of their little *Otherworldly* troupe. The sounds of more somethings being smashed, combined with a female yelling, caused them to make even more haste than they already were. Hurrying around the corner, they came face-to-face with...a couple in the throes of an extremely passionate kiss. Though the couple seemed oblivious to their presence, they were quickly proven wrong.

"Hello everyone," Kanika Vadoma said as she waggled her fingers in greeting.

Nothing about her actions indicated that she was the least bit embarrassed to be discovered locked in a passionate embrace with her ever-annoying husband Invictus.

"Give us a moment," Invictus said before re-taking his wife's mouth once more.

The kiss he laid upon her was hard and hot—much like the ancient *Vampire* himself. After a long moment, the couple finally pulled apart. Invictus

seared his wife with a cocky grin. In turn, Kanika put a little extra swish in her hips before turning to greet them.

“What brings you to our humble abode, my friends?” Invictus casually asked.

Not only was Invictus the very first leader of the *Locke Brotherhood* and a highly respected and senior member of *The Society*, he was one of Serafeim’s most trusted friends. He was one of the few beings who knew that Astarla was Serafeim’s child. It was he who helped Serafeim deal with the pain of having to turn her over to someone else’s care in a bid to keep her safe from those who threatened the whole of the Western Vampire Nation.

“Actually, we need your beautiful wife’s assistance,” Carlisle said as he kissed Kanika’s cheek.

Predictably, Invictus frowned. He was possibly more jealous over his mate than Serafeim was over his mate Nafrini.

“Really? Do tell,” Invictus said.

And they did. Gaia began the story, and Serafeim took over when she became too overcome to continue. Carlisle took over from Serafeim when his anger threatened to overwhelm him. Azriel finished the damned tale when Carlisle got too worked up to continue. All the while Kanika kept a comforting arm around Gaia. Though Invictus kept his mate’s hand

within his, it was obvious that he was becoming angrier with every word that was spoken.

There were a few moments of silence when the tale was finally concluded. Finally, Kanika broke the tense silence. “My mother will need—” she began.

An ancient yet elegant couple materialised in the room before Kanika could even finish her sentence. A gasp went up from all in attendance, for it was a rare occurrence to be in the presence of the powerful couple. Paradisa Artashir was Ruler over *all* of the Magicks, and her husband, Lord Paramount Ethon Artashir, was one of the most legendary *Vampire* warlords known to the *Otherworldly* community. They both paused to kiss their daughter Kanika before addressing the room.

“So who do I get to kill?” Ruler Paradisa asked.

“Yes, who do *we* get to kill,” Lord Paramount Ethon amended as he rested his hands upon his wife’s ample hips.

Serafeim stepped forward to greet the couple. “Ruler Paradisa,” he said as he bowed over her hand and kissed it before offering his hand to Lord Paramount Ethon and addressing him. “Lord Paramount Artashir.”

Gaia had never seen Serafeim bow to anyone before (with the exception of his mate), and the sight

of such a thing took her aback. Ruler Paradisa pinched his cheek and admonished Serafeim.

“Oh, stop it, you naughty boy. Carlisle, Azriel, come and give me a kiss,” she ordered the other two males.

Taking an ear of each male, she kissed and pinched their cheeks as if they too were children, causing both powerful males to blush and giggle like little boys.

Giving Carlisle and Azriel one last squeeze, Ruler Paradisa turned to her and pulled her into her arms before squeezing tightly.

“We will solve this, my dear. We will not stop until we do. This I vow,” she whispered in her ear.

“Thank you, Ruler Paradisa,” Gaia said as tears misted her eyes.

Though she didn’t know Ruler Paradisa personally, she’d been aware of the pain she’d assuredly suffered upon losing one of her own daughters. The fact that she vowed to do all within her power to prevent her from suffering that same pain humbled her.

Ruler Paradisa kissed away her tears away. A moment later, her husband leaned in and kissed her seat before briefly hugging her. “It is as my mate says, Gaia. We will solve this.”

Nodding at the powerful couple, she allowed them to take care of her even though she was their elder. She watched from the cocoon of Ruler Paradisa's embrace as she gestured for everyone else to take a seat. Her husband refused. Instead, he stood behind her, guarding his mate from anything that would be insane enough to attempt to harm her.

"Now, give me the short version, Azriel, and make it snappy. I'm in the mood to kick someone's ass."

CHAPTER SEVEN

Jack strolled into the living room and plucked Destiny from her seat. Wrapping her legs around him, he growled when he felt her grind her lush body into his hard frame. Nibbling her neck, he watched as she waved to the five puppies, who wagged their tails and yipped as their master and her man headed to the bedroom.

“I know you’re not beckoning them, honey,” Jack said as he kicked the door shut with his boot to prevent the puppies from bum-rushing the bedroom.

“Maybe,” she said as he set her upon the bed.

He winced upon hearing the puppies yelp as they hit the door. Opening the door, he quickly checked on them. They were indignant, at least as much as dogs could be, but they were fine. Smiling, he closed the door with a little more care.

As he turned his gaze to Destiny, who was busy trying to look innocent and at anything *but* him, his smile turned into a grin. Stripping his t-shirt off his body, he moved slowly towards his mate. His hard cock got even harder upon hearing Destiny’s breathing hitch. As agitated as she might be, she was unable to take her eyes off him. He revelled in the fact that he was able to get to her.

“Jack, I thought we dealt with your *urges* this morning?” Destiny said as she scrambled to her feet and stood in the middle of their bed.

Reaching the bed, he simply kicked off his boots and pulled the tab down on the zipper of his jeans. Hearing her gasp, he knew that she’d forgotten he wasn’t wearing underwear. Fisting his thick cock, he worked his hand up and down the length, fully aware of what he was doing to her. He didn’t have to be a wolf to know she was aroused. He only had to be male.

“Honey, my *urges* for you are forever long; now come here,” he growled when he shucked out of his jeans.

He smiled when Destiny shook her head and dodged his hands. Oh, so she was in the mood to be chased. Being a wolf, he was always in the mood to chase. Jack’s canines lengthened at the prospect. Scenting her arousal, he smiled.

“Jack,” she whined as she deftly avoided his next move.

Jack simply stopped and waited as Destiny watched him from the other side of their bed.

“Honey,” he rasped even as he inhaled her heat.

“Jack, look I’ve got a lot of reading—eeck!” she squealed as he grabbed the edge of her t-shirt and ripped it from her body.

Her exposed breasts only served to bring his wolf closer to the surface.

“Dammit, man!” Destiny hissed at him.

“Yes, woman?” Jack teased as he slowly circled the bed, stroking his erection the entire time.

“You can’t keep ripping my clothes,” Destiny said, feigning anger.

Being wolf, he could smell her emotions; thus he knew the sweet-tangy smell of her arousal versus the acrid scent of her anger. Right now, she wanted him just as much as he wanted her. He appreciated the fact that her hunger was just as hearty as his. Growling low in his throat, he considered the position he’d take her in first...then all of the positions he’d take her in after that. His fantasies were interrupted by Destiny’s admonition.

“Don’t even think about it, jackass,” Destiny said as she kept backing up.

Jack smiled. If she backed up any farther, she’d be sitting on the headboard of their bed. He watched as she gave up the chase and allowed him to catch her. She was thoughtful like that.

“Why can’t I rip your clothes, honey...especially when you insist on wearing them at inappropriate moments?”

“‘Inappropriate moments?’ Jack, just because I’m fucking hot and you wanna fuck me every second

of every day doesn't make me wearing clothes inappropriate." Destiny laughed as Jack ran his canines along her collarbone.

Destiny gasped when he ripped the cotton shorts that covered her beautiful ass and tempting sex.

"You're a dirty old wolf," she teased.

"That may be, and being wolf, you know that we like to eat bad girls," he said as he stroked her ass. "I think you like tempting the wolf."

"What makes you think that?" she said as she fucked his hand with her pussy.

"The fact that you insist on tempting me. I told you what would happen if you wore those ridiculous shorts."

"What's wrong with my shorts?"

"Nothing, if you want me to fuck you where you stand. Those 'shorts' are pure temptation."

"A snowsuit is pure temptation to you," Destiny huffed.

"Only if you're wearing it, darlin'," he purred.

"Is there anything I can wear that won't get you all hot and bothered?" she asked.

Hell no, his wolf responded. Aloud he said, "I do not understand this line of conversation, Destiny. If you had a point, I must've missed it," he finished as he sank to his knees and swiped his tongue along her nether lips. Delving deeper with his tongue, he

stroked her clit and smiled around her pleasure when he felt her legs tremble in response.

“Oh shit,” Destiny purred “Sonofabitch,” she muttered when he thrust two fingers into her. He continued working her sex with his fingers and tongue until Destiny emitted his favourite song: his name on her lips singing her need.

“Oh yeah, fuck...there, baby...oh, yeah! Yes! Yes! Ohhhhhh, oh!!! FUCK!” Destiny screamed as she came apart and went limp.

“Jack, I don’t think I can stand up much longer,” she admitted.

Looking up, he grinned. Keeping his mouth attached to her clit, he continued thrusting his fingers faster and faster until he coaxed another orgasm from her.

“Oh fuck!” she yelled as she came again.

This time she did collapse, but being the wolf he was, he simply caught her in his arms as she slid down the headboard. She looked at him with eyes clouded with pleasure. Content that he’d done his job, he removed his fingers from her sex and lapped up the heavy cream coating them. Damn, he absolutely *craved* the taste of his woman. He didn’t care how many centuries they had, he knew that he’d never get enough of Destiny.

“Jack,” she whispered huskily.

Knowing exactly what she wanted, he thrust his hard, thick cock into her. Gasping, she wrapped her limbs around him and welcomed him home. He fucked her just like she demanded. Hard. Deep. Long...with multiple orgasms. And then he made love to her just like he needed to. Fully. Truly. Completely.

Ajali.

Hearing her given name, Destiny came suddenly and fully awake. Keeping her eyes shut, she scanned the room. Immediately she knew that she and Jack were the sole occupants. Releasing the breath she'd been holding, she snuggled closer to Jack, whose face buried against her back. Tuning out his snores, she sighed and closed her eyes again.

Ajali...my child.

Upon hearing the voice a second time, Destiny opened her eyes and was confronted with the vision of her mother. Flicking her eyes to the side, she discovered a hooded figure standing over her. She saw her mother and the hooded figure every night in her dreams, but this was *not* a dream—that she knew.

Ajali...help me, my child.

Before she could form a response, Destiny felt herself being pulled into a swirling vortex. She

couldn't catch her breath. When she saw her mother's eyes staring straight at her from her bodyless head, she choked on the gasp that accompanied the shock and suffocated on the scream she so desperately wanted to emit.

Find me, Ajali. Find me.

Destiny blinked and she was back in bed with Jack. Her breathing was normal, her heartbeat unchanged. Frowning, she moved out of Jack's arms. For once her movement didn't wake him. Thank goodness. Picking up Jack's t-shirt from the floor, she pulled it over her head and walked out of the bedroom. The house was dark, but being that Jack was a *shifter* and she was a *Vampire*, the darkness didn't bother them. This was a different kind of dark. It was as if the house was swallowed by the darkness. Unable to stop herself, she stepped into the main area of the house, going deeper and deeper into the blackness. She felt her mother's voice calling to her the entire time as she fell into the darkness.

Lukas growled as the insistent knocking on the bedroom door woke him. Feeling Star stir, he pressed his lips to her forehead and whispered assurances.

“Stay here, little Star. I will deal with it.”

Not even bothering to open her eyes, Star kissed his chest before snuggling deep into the covers. Reluctantly, Lukas extracted himself from his wife's warm embrace. Slipping into his robe, he tied the belt as he stepped out into the hallway to deal with the owner of the knocking hand. Any admonition that he might've given died a quick death when he saw Craven standing with a wild-eyed Jack, who was holding an unconscious Destiny in his arms. Immediately, he beckoned his best friend and mate into the bedroom.

Hurrying to his wife's side, he brushed her inky black curls off of her face and spoke. "Star, you need to wake up. Destiny needs you."

Just as he'd expected, Star immediately opened her eyes...and startled them all. There was no concern in her eyes. There was also no iris. Star's eyes were pure white.

Jamieson woke to the sounds of growling filling his ears. His first thought was to wonder why Sunny was growling. The feel of something cold against his throat interrupted his thoughts. Suddenly, he felt his brothers in the room. Immediately his eyes shot open and he came face-to-face with his mate, whose eyes were completely black. *What the hell?*

“Get up,” she ordered.

He didn’t need to ask what had happened. Sunny was once again under the control of the deadly persona. Jamieson had been sure that Tag and her sisters had dealt with this, but the razor-sharp scythe at his throat said otherwise.

Not daring to take his eyes off of his woman, he felt for his brothers. The twins were badly injured, but Josiah was barely alive. Though he willed his brother to speak via their telepathic link, no sound came. It was all he could do to keep his heart beating.

Sunny’s eyes cleared for a moment. “I can’t fight her, Jamieson,” she cried a moment before her body was once again commandeered.

Jamieson’s heart broke all over again. There was no circumstance that would allow him to harm his woman. Telling his brothers to take Josiah and get to safety, he looked deep into his woman and promised.

“I love you, Sunny.” Holding his arms wide, he sat up, allowing the blade to cut into his skin. Before the blade could make a cut, Serafeim de Vires materialised behind Sunny. Wondering exactly why the Ruler of the Western Vampire Nation was in his home, he moved so he could stop the powerful male from touching his woman.

“Sleep,” Lord de Vires spoke softly into Sunny’s ear.

The last sound of the word had barely left Lord de Vires' lips when Sunny crumpled and fell forward into his arms in a dead sleep.

"Lord de Vires—" he questioned.

Lord de Vires shook his head. The next thing he knew, they were all sitting in what looked like a Roman palace of old. A very crowded Roman palace. Jack was standing beside a sleeping Destiny. Lukas was standing beside a sleeping Star. Jaron stood beside a sleeping Tag.

All three females were laid out on heavily-cushioned beds. The fourth bed was empty.

Jamieson had no idea what the hell was going on, but it scared the shit out of him. Moving towards the empty bed, he laid Sunny down and stood beside her just like the other males did. He knew he wore the same expression of confused helplessness as his two brothers and Lukas Montague.

He was looking over at his brothers, who were being tended to when he felt the room flood with power. Turning, he watched as a veritable parade of *Otherworldly Who's Who* entered.

"What's going on?" he finally spoke. He noted that his voice was rougher than usual; then again, he was more worried than usual.

"Jamieson Mann, we are awaiting word from our contact—" Gaia spoke softly.

He swung his head around in anger. “You mean to tell me *you* of all people don’t know...*anything*?!” he growled.

A large black man who shared the goddess’s eyes and looks stepped to him. Though he was head and shoulders taller and wider than he was, Jamieson didn’t back down. His mate was lying here unconscious and hurt.

“Be careful, son. I don’t want to hurt you, but I’m not about to allow you to talk to my sister like that. Chomping at the bit isn’t going to solve a damn thing. Our contact will return in moments, so calm yourself,” he instructed with a gentle smile.

Jamieson wasn’t fooled one bit by the smile. The male had power, and he wasn’t beyond using it if forced to. Still, he wasn’t just any wolf. He was a Mann wolf, and as such he didn’t back down from shit, especially when his mate was in danger. His chest vibrating with anger, Jamieson was about to respond when his father’s voice cut through the silence.

“Jamieson, we can only wait.”

The soothing voice of his father managed to calm him, as did his mother’s embrace. He watched as his parents made their way around the room, doing their best to soothe their sons even as their hearts were breaking. He had everything to lose but his parents had so much more to lose. They stood to lose two sons

and three daughters-in-law. Truth be told, if his or his brothers' mates didn't make it, they stood to lose three more sons.

A glance around the room alerted Jamieson to the fact that no one being had a monopoly on worry. Lord de Vires and Nafrini worried over their daughter and their son-in-law; Gaia sat at Tag's feet, worrying over Tag and Jaron. They were all worried. They were all in pain. They were all equally helpless. They all had everything to lose.

Standing next to Azriel with the Sword of Justice held at his throat was not what Prince Lylelay wanted to be doing. And neither was facing his mother. Her eyes were slightly crazed as she looked at him in what could only be described as disbelief.

"You fool!" she spat. "How could you bring *him* into *my* Kingdom?!"

It wasn't as if he'd had much of a choice. Still, he pleaded with his mother with his eyes. That was all he dared move lest he risk piercing his skin. If that happened not only would he die, his soul would be cast into an abyss of nothingness, never again to be released.

“Rhiannon, you have no choice. You will tell me who is holding the souls of Astarla, Sunny, Destiny and Tuesday Grace.”

His mother bristled as Azriel first named her. His mother gave Azriel her most haughty look, but Azriel didn’t flinch. Though he couldn’t see his eyes from his position, he was sure that Azriel returned his mother’s look with one of his own. Lylelay couldn’t help but wonder if his mother was more concerned about his fate or the fate of her position within the *Kingdom*. Everything was going to hell for her...and quickly. Her tenacious hold on the *Kingdom* was slipping, her only child was being held by the Beck and Call Boy of the Goddess of Earth.

“Kill him. He is useless to me,” his mother said without any hesitation at all.

“Mother—” he began.

“Rhiannon, consider the consequences of my taking your son’s life. His soul will also be forfeit,” Azriel reminded his mother.

“I don’t need a reminder of what will happen. And I don’t need your arrogance. I’m not afraid of you, Azriel; it is he who holds the power to hurt me in ways you couldn’t even begin to imagine.”

If Azriel was surprised by his mother’s words, he didn’t show it. He, on the other hand, wasn’t just

surprised; he was devastated that his mother could simply offer up his life so easily.

“As you wish,” Azriel responded a moment before he shifted his sword.

Lylelay accepted his impending death a lot more easily than he accepted his mother’s betrayal. He loved his mother. Seeing his mother mouth a chorus of “no’s” and approach Azriel, he thought that maybe, just maybe she loved him too. Expecting to meet his death, he was surprised to discover that he was standing in Gaia’s palace.

“What do you know?” Gaia asked as he threw Lylelay away from him.

“Nothing. Rhiannon will not reveal who was behind this,” Azriel answered as he re-sheathed his sword.

Looking around the room, his gaze lingered on the beds that held the four women. As he felt the sorrow and desperation that permeated the room, for once the flirt inside him was silent.

“What the hell are we going to do now?” Gaia asked as she began to pace.

“We must think clearly, my sister,” Nafrini said softly as she embraced her dear friend Gaia.

“Who can possibly help us now? We have enough power to blast Rhiannon out of the *Faerie Kingdom* and straight to hell, but we cannot! How am I meant to think clearly, Nafrini? How? Our daughters lie on the brink of death, and we have no idea how to fight this—”

“Mama,” Tag’s voice cut through Gaia’s tirade.

All eyes turned to Tag. Though her eyes remained closed, her necklace was pulsing. Turning her head towards Jaron, she smiled in her sleep. Gaia immediately rushed to her daughter’s side.

“Tuesday Grace, come back to us, baby,” Gaia pleaded as she gently touched Tag’s cheek.

Tag gave her mother a sad smile that caused the powerful goddess to sink to her knees in pain.

“Gaia,” Nafrini sighed and ran to her.

“That’s the same smile Drake gave me before he was trapped in the *In Between* world for all of eternity. It’s a smile I never wanted to see on the faces of anyone I loved.”

“Star, Destiny and Sunny are here, Mama. We’re all here with Father.”

“Open your eyes, baby,” Gaia whispered.

Tag did as she was bid. Instead of the usual golden colour, the figures of the women who lay next to her daughter decorated her dilated pupils. The figure of a male stood behind the four women. Gaia's heart sped up at the sight of her beloved Dark *Fae*. His face was as handsome and dangerous as always. Gods, what was she to do?

Tag's voice cut through her haze. "Jaron, you have to remove my necklace. You're the only one capable of removing it."

The silence was broken by the gasps of those in attendance. Everyone knew what it would mean to remove Tag's necklace.

"No!" Gaia cried.

Jaron shook his head as he answered. "Tag, I can't—" he began.

"You must. You're the only one—" Tag started.

"What about Azriel?"

"No. He does not love me like *you* do. It must be one who loves me like no other."

Jaron continued to shake his head.

"I can do it," Gaia said softly as tears tracked down her face. Despite the strength in her voice, her eyes mirrored heartbreak.

Lifting her hand, Tag caressed her cheek. Gaia knew the gesture was meant to reassure her; instead it broke her heart that much faster, that much more

completely. Feeling Tag's resolve, she bent and kissed Tag's cheek once more. Before she could remove the necklace, Ruler Paradisa moved to her side and placed a comforting hand on her shoulder.

"Dear Gaia, this is for Jaron to do."

Despite the soothing tone, Gaia felt anything but. Shaking her head vehemently, she spoke.

"I can't let her do this, Paradisa. Is there nothing you can do?"

Her eyes so clouded with tears, Gaia had no way of knowing how much her pain affected everyone. Unable to bear it, every male except for Jaron turned away from her pain and what was about to transpire.

"Gaia, if there was anything I could do I promise I would've already done so," Ruler Paradisa said with tear-filled eyes.

"But there is nothing we can do. Remember, Tuesday Grace is *your* daughter, meaning that she is as strong as she is powerful. Her heart and soul remain untainted. Understand this, Gaia: no injustice will go unpunished."

"Mama, you can't. Please, Jaron. It will save Sunny, Star and Destiny...and my father," Tag pleaded.

“No,” Jaron bit out. He didn’t care about anyone else. He cared about Tag.

Kanika approached and situated herself beside him and placed a gentle hand on his arm. Jaron felt the zing of power from Kanika’s touch. Instinctively knowing that she was attempting to comfort him, he turned to the beautiful woman and thanked her with his eyes.

“There is no other way,” Azriel spoke.

Though he was ready to take Azriel down, the look on the Archangel’s face stopped the snarl that was bubbling in his chest. He immediately knew the situation had gone from fucked to totally fucked.

Kanika’s voice filtered through his anger and pain. “Jaron Mann, you are strong. You have protected Tuesday Grace with panache, but if you are unable to do this many people you love will be affected. Give yourself over to Tuesday Grace in a way no other male has or can,” she encouraged in a voice so like his mother’s.

“But—” he began.

Before he could get another word out, Kanika gently but firmly gripped his hand. Moments later, an image of the pain and suffering that the souls of Destiny, Sunny and Star would endure if he did not do the unthinkable was projected in his mind. No weapons or “hell no’s” hurt him nearly as much as the

“could haves” that Kanika showed him. The images literally crushed him. Feeling his face contort in pain, he wasn’t surprised to see his brothers and friends rush to his aid. Paramount Vadoma and Lord Paramount Artashir stopped them and explained.

“Jaron is being shown a vision,” Lord Paramount Ethon explained.

“We ask too much of him,” Jack said with a mixture of sorrow and anger in his voice.

“Do not fear, Alpha. He can do this,” Paramount Vadoma said.

“I could not,” Jamieson admitted.

“You young males underestimate yourselves, young *shifter*,” Lord Paramount Ethon said quietly.

“How can we be so powerful and yet so impotent?” Lukas queried.

“We do not control the Fates. We are only as powerful as the Fates allow us to be,” Lord de Vires spoke through his own pain.

“Tag—” Jaron began.

“Please, Jaron, no more waiting,” she said as she placed his hand on her necklace.

Feeling his hand shake, Jaron couldn’t tell if it was from the power emanating from the necklace or his own fear.

“Do it,” Tag whispered.

Ignoring the pain in his chest, Jaron bent and looked into Tag's eyes for what he knew to be the last time. While his actions would mean that the loves of their lives would be returned to his brothers, his friend, and Tag's mother, his choice would ultimately condemn him to an eternity of loneliness. As much as he hated this, Tag wished it with everything she had. Bending, he kissed Tag even as he pulled at the necklace.

He felt it break, and then all he felt was nothing. The metal was cold to the touch, just like his soul. Opening his eyes, Jaron found himself back in his home. Surrounded by every luxury imaginable, he wanted none of it. Not the million dollar home he sat in, not the half-million dollar acreage it sat on, and definitely not the quarter-million dollar necklace in his hand. He wanted the one thing he couldn't have...the *Faerie* who'd worn it.

His pain was interrupted by a strange sound. Blinking back tears, he didn't even bother investigating what it was. His soul knew. It was the sound of pain ripping through him, scorching his every hope, his every want, and the heart he hadn't known he had until he'd met Tag.

CAREER SHIFT

Six weeks later

The Elvin Warrior King simply looked at the stoic, yet determined *shifter*.

“You’re asking a lot of me, son,” Carlisle said quietly.

“This is what I want,” Jaron replied.

“It’s not a nice process,” Carlisle warned him. Even as he said it, he knew that Jaron had made up his mind...and he admired him for it. He’d had time to be impressed by the young wolf. In the short time he’d been acquainted with him, Carlisle had witnessed the young *shifter* fight anyone for his niece—and that included a group of *Faerie* warriors who’d been bred for battle, as well as Tag herself. As tough as the *Fae* warriors were, Carlisle knew Tag was an even harder battle. Jaron hadn’t wanted to love his niece and thus had fought his love for Tag all the way. Still as impressed as Carlisle was with the many battles Jaron had fought, all of them paled in comparison to the one he fought against himself. Jaron Mann hadn’t wanted to give into Tag’s last request, and yet he loved her so much, he did just that.

The mourning was still a living, breathing thing in Gaia’s palace. Gaia had not ventured far from her

home since Tag's selfless sacrifice. Her husband and other daughters had been by her side throughout her ordeal, but none had been able to console her.

Carlisle had been unable to do nothing more than sit and watch his sister's pain whilst feeling his own sense of loss. Drake, a male with much power including holding the Dragon throne under his guardianship, had been guilt ridden at the fact that Tag had sacrificed her life for his. And now Jaron sat before him, asking him the *almost* impossible. It was the *almost* part that worried Carlisle the most. What the *shifter* was asking had only been tried once, and it had failed. Drake and Gaia could attest to that. Yet the *shifter* sat patiently, trying his damndest to convince him to attempt such a thing.

"Carlisle, Tag is mine. She cannot come back to me, so I will go to her," Jaron said matter-of-factly.

"You are willing to give up your family and friends for my niece?"

"Yes," he answered without hesitation.

"Your Alpha is willing to let you go?"

"Yes," Jaron nodded.

"Why?"

"Because I am unwilling to accept 'no.' I gave into Tag's request, and my heart has bled every moment since then. I gave into her request, but I did not let her go. I carry her here," he said as he

thumped his heart. “My wolf cries for her every night. My soul aches for her every second. Tag is mine. I will do whatever I must to be with her...fight whomever I need to...alienate all I know, including my Alpha if it comes to that.”

How did your family feel about your decision?” he asked.

“They understand they cannot ask anything more of me.”

“Then so be it. Go now, say your goodbyes. Tomorrow you will enter the *In Between* Lands.”

Jaron stood and shook his hand. “I already said them. I am ready to enter now.”

“They should get phones installed here,” Tag said as she sat on a rickety chair she’d found in one of the many chambers of the *In Between* Lands.

“Like on that show *Prison Break*?” Azriel asked Tag as he sat on the other side of the invisible and impenetrable wall that kept Tag imprisoned.

Tag grinned at him. “Only *you* would think of that, Az.”

Azriel grinned in response. Having only brothers, he’d come to think of the young *Faerie* as a sort of kid sister.

“Of course, Princess. That’s why I was created. I think outside the universe,” he said with a sniff of feigned superiority.

Just as he’d predicted, Tag laughed out loud. “You’re a fake, Azriel. All you need is a good woman to break your ass in.”

Azriel’s shuddered in mock horror. “Such uncouth language, Princess.”

Tag responded by extending her middle finger at him. As much as he enjoyed bantering with her, he knew it had to come to an end. He’d come on business.

“What’s up, Azriel?” Tag asked him gently.

“I came to see how you fared—” he began.

When he saw Tag shake her head and give him a sad smile, his words stumbled to a halt. He was a powerful male, and yet he fumbled around as he struggled to find a way to deliver his news.

“You can just spit it out. It’s not like I can do anything about it, dude.”

Azriel felt anger well up within him. “I have looked everywhere, Princess, and yet I cannot find a way to release you. I have failed.”

“You haven’t failed anything or anyone, Az.” Tag laughed. “If the Goddess of the Earth couldn’t find a way to release her only love, I don’t expect anyone else to accomplish such a thing either.”

“I am sorry, Tag,” Azriel said softly. Tag smiled, and she felt her eyes well up *again*.

With a watery sniff, she asked, “Could you make me another necklace? You know, something that stops me from crying like a fucking baby all the damned time?” Tag asked moments before she started sobbing so hard she fell to the ground.

Azriel had only been this heartbroken on one other occasion. And he hated it now as much as he’d hated it then. Try as he did, he could not comfort her...or himself.

Fuck! Tag thought as her tears poured from her eyes like the two hundred seventy-five individual falls that made up Iguazú Falls. She couldn’t believe she was acting like such a fucking baby, but there it was. She hurt so damn bad, in so many places, in untold ways. Knowing how much her mother loved her father, she couldn’t help but marvel at her strength. How did she bear this pain?

Feeling warm arms wrap around her, Tag immediately stopped crying. Her eyes flew open and looked directly into the eyes of Prince Lylelay. Overcome with shock, she jerked away from him, ignoring his hurt look.

“What do you want?” she asked as she stepped away from him.

“Tuesday Grace,” he said her name slowly.

Her tears momentarily forgotten, she snapped at him. “What?”

“There is no reason why you should trust me—” he began.

“When did you come to that conclusion...before or after you tried to have me killed?” Tag interrupted.

“Let me explain.”

“*What* is there to explain? You are your crazy bitch of a mother’s bum boy. I got in the way of her plans and I got banished. End of story,” Tag spat.

“I had you banished for your own safety,” he said softly.

“For my own safety? You act like you gave a fucking damn about me! You tried to *kill* me, Lylelay!”

Lylelay merely nodded. Though she’d wanted him to shut the fuck up, his quiet demeanour was disturbing. Tag moved so she had her back against the invisible wall. Knowing Azriel stood mere inches away gave her a sense of safety. Though she didn’t dare take her eyes off of Lylelay, she was sure Az wore the same look of shock on his face that she had on hers.

“I have loved you all my life, Tuesday Grace.”

At that, Tag glanced at Azriel. If she was going to spend eternity in the *In Between* Lands, she sure as shit didn't want to spend it in Lylelay's company.

"Wow, if what you showed me is love, I can only be thankful you never got around to showing me anger."

Lylelay moved, and it was only then that she noticed his garb. Instead of the royal garments, Lylelay was wearing jeans and a t-shirt. Keeping a goodly distance between them, she slowly looked him over, noting the other changes. His hair was shorn

just as hers had been when she'd been banished! His eyes were still an amazing combination of blue and purple, but his skin was no longer glowing. He looked...almost...*mortal*. Oh damn.

Tag's heart began to beat against her ribs in anticipation.

"I can only beg your forgiveness, Tuesday Grace," Lylelay whispered as he stood before Tag with eyes full of grave sadness.

Dare she think his apology was real?

"It makes no difference," Tag said with a shrug.

Lylelay reached out to her, but she eluded his touch.

"Truly forgive me and you will leave this place," Lylelay revealed quietly.

Hearing his words caused her heartbeat to quadruple in speed. “Forgiveness is all it takes to get out of here? You have got to be shitting me,” Tag said in a desperate whisper. “My father was trapped here for millennia. Don’t you think he would’ve tried everything to be released?”

Prince Lylelay nodded. “Yes, he would’ve tried everything, but forgiveness was the one thing he could not do. His hatred for my mother kept him bound here.”

Looking over at Azriel, Lylelay continued. “That is also why *he* is unable to break away from his bounds.”

Azriel growled something in response.

“Your mother killed my father—” she began.

Lylelay shook his head. With a sigh he moved away from Tag. Tag was nervous...not of Lylelay, but of the discovery she knew she was on the verge of.

“My mother could never kill someone as powerful as Drake. No one could. She merely used *Faerie* magic and bound him by his emotions. *You* were more powerful, and she was afraid, for she knew you would be able to release Drake if you were within the *Kingdom*. She was going to have you killed. Knowing that Azriel would help you to remain hidden, I had you banished on false charges.”

Tag was busy trying to hold onto the thoughts that raced through her mind at Lylelay's revelation. "But you killed Jean Marc!"

Lylelay had the decency to look sheepish. Tag simply shook her head.

"He was too weak. My mother discovered who he was to you and was going to use him to kill you."

"And *that's* the reason you killed him?" Tag asked.

The prince shook his head. "Yes."

"So fucking around with my life has been like a regular occurrence for you," she said.

"If you want to see it that way...yes," Lylelay admitted.

"Well, you've hit the jackpot, and now you've got me exactly where you want me. You can fuck me up good and proper now, can't you?" Tag asked bitterly.

"How do you mean?" Lylelay asked.

"I can't fight you in here, and I'm trapped," Tag said as she slid down the wall and sat down heavily. Bringing up her knees, she rested her chin on them.

"Did you not hear what I said, Tuesday Grace?"

"Which bit? You had me banished to *save* me. You killed the first human I loved to *save* me. Yeah, I heard all of that."

Lylelay moved so that he was standing before her.

“Your forgiveness is what will set you free, Tuesday Grace.”

“I don’t believe you.”

Lylelay sighed and looked at Azriel. “Confirm my words, Angel,” Lylelay ordered.

Azriel growled a “fuck you” in response before tossing her an “I’m out.”

“Azriel would’ve found a way for Mama to release Father a long time ago. If it just took forgiveness, he would’ve been free millennia before this,” Tag said.

“Tuesday Grace, you and I both know how forgiving *both* of our parents are.”

Tag didn’t even bother responding. Instead she sighed.

“You love him,” Lylelay said softly.

“Of course I love my father,” she responded.

“Not your father. The wolf. You love him,” Lylelay said as he sat beside her.

Tag watched Lylelay’s face for a clue as to where he was going with that question. Still, she answered truthfully. “Yes.”

“More than you ever did, Jean Marc?”

“Yes.”

“You sacrificed your love for him to save those trapped here.”

“What’s your fucking point, dude?” Tag snapped.

“With great sacrifice comes pain and great reward.”

“Again not getting where you’re going with this,” Tag said.

“Your sacrifice was painful, and I’m here to ensure you reap your rewards.”

“Why?” Tag asked pointedly.

“My mother’s crazed. I’m unable to live under the rule that she has erected. I’m no longer able to live with the *Faerie* I’ve become. The time has come for you to take your rightful place in the *Kingdom*.”

“Little Tuesday,” Az’s voice spoke behind her.

Turning her head, she looked at Az. “Yeah?” she asked him without bothering to look his way or stand. It wasn’t that she didn’t want to see Az; it was that she feared she’d fall to the floor if the news was bad.

Turning, she looked and discovered Azriel’s eyes were bright with...*something*.

“He tells the truth,” Azriel disclosed.

Upon hearing those four words, Tag felt her emotions rush through her body. She felt as if her heart was about to burst out of her chest. When she looked over at Lylelay, he gave her that sad smile again.

“No one has ever been released from here,” Tag began.

“It’s hard to see clearly when everything is clouded with anger,” Lylelay said softly.

Something about the way he said those words had her looking at him...not just looking at his appearance, but really looking at him. Focusing, she noticed the resignation in his eyes and knew immediately that he'd been banished. He'd sealed his own fate. *For her?*

"Why did you do it, Lylelay?"

"I have loved you for so long, Tuesday Grace, but for just as long I knew you could never be happy with me. Rejection is difficult to swallow even for the strongest male...and I was never the strongest. I knew of no other way to show you."

"You gave up every single thing for *me*?"

I gave up everything for you the first moment I saw you...including my dignity, my honour, everything of value. After that all I had was vengeance. This punishment, my banishment...I did that for me."

"Damn," Tag whispered. "Damn," she said as tears tracked down her eyes. These tears were different from the ones she'd shed earlier. She didn't recoil when Lylelay reached out and thumbed the tears off her cheeks.

"Do not cry for me. You have shed too many tears. Forgive, Tuesday Grace, and leave this place."

Knowing forgiveness was not something that could be done by halves, she thought about whether she could do it. Lylelay had said pretty words,

convincing words but it didn't change the centuries of punishment she'd endured. It didn't erase the pain she'd experienced. It didn't mitigate the anger that'd become a living part of her.

"Forgive, Tuesday," Lylelay repeated.

But what about the injustice of it all? the still pissed-off part of her asked.

But what about everything you have waiting for you on the other side of the invisible wall? another part of her asked. *Jaron.* Her family. *Jaron.* Her friends. *Jaron.* The band. *Jaron.*

"Forgive, Tuesday," he said again. "Go now to those who love you. Go now to the one who needs you like no other," Lylelay said as he stood and pulled her up with him.

"I thank you, Prince Lylelay," Tag said, and for the first time in her life Tag bowed to him...and meant it.

Lylelay returned the gesture. "And I thank you, Queen Tuesday Grace."

Tag wanted to sound all eloquent, but she was who she was. Looking in Lylelay's eyes, she offered him her forgiveness. "It's all good."

She'd hardly gotten the words out before she felt her body being lifted by unseen forces. A moment later she was hurtling through a maze of colour .

“I love you, Tuesday Grace,” Lylelay whispered as the *Dark Forces* became solid and closed in on him. His last thought as he succumbed to the pain was of Tuesday Grace. And forgiveness.

CHAPTER NINE

“It’s not working,” Carlisle said as he finished the chant that would take Jaron to the *In Between* Lands where his woman was trapped.

“What?” Jaron asked between clenched teeth.

“The Chant is not working,” Carlisle reiterated.

Jaron ground his teeth. “How can that be? I thought you were all powerful—” he began.

“Watch your mouth, son,” Carlisle warned.

Though his frustration was palpable, Jaron shut his mouth.

“Maybe you need to click your heels together?” Destiny suggested with a giggle.

“What else can you do?” Adena asked.

“I’ve done everything!”

“Should I try it?” Drake suggested.

“Do it again,” Jaron insisted.

“Please would be nice,” Carlisle said with raised eyebrows.

“*Please*,” Jaron said, although his tone was anything but pleading.

Carlisle gave him another warning look before beginning the Chant again. Just as before, the room went completely silent as he chanted.

Closing his eyes, Jaron waited for the painful conversion that would take him to his woman. A

chorus of gasps broke the silence. Snapping open his eyes, he stared at what had to be an illusion. Tag was gliding towards him, looking more beautiful than ever. A crown of platinum flowers sat upon hair that flowed to mid-thigh. Beautiful hair, and all he could do was think about wrapping it around his fist as he loved her from behind. Her eyes sparkled with mirth, and her body showcased in a form-fitting dress sparkled with mischief.

“Close your mouth, *dawg*. You might start drooling,” Tag said as she wrapped her arms around him and kissed him like his life depended upon it. And it did.

Though he and Tag had been holed up inside his house for the past week, Jaron wasn't anywhere near ready to share her with anyone. They'd made love all over the house...and yard...and truck. Jaron couldn't keep his hands off of Tag. Or his mouth. Or his cock. And he didn't bother trying to fight it.

Though he wasn't about to let her out of his arms, he was finally ready to hear something more than just her moans and laughter. He needed to hear her say she was going to stay with him forever. Sure, there were questions about how she'd managed to escape

the *In Between* Lands, but he didn't need to know the hows or whys. He was simply thankful to the Creator that she had returned to him.

"So what now, *Faerie* Girl?" he asked her as he held her to him.

"What do you mean?" she paused in the stroking of his hair to ask.

"I can't live in *Faerieland*, and you can't live here forever," Jaron began softly.

"Oh, yeah, about that..." Tag smiled at him.

When she didn't reveal anything more, Jaron nipped at her breast.

Laughing and then sighing when he pulled her nipple into his mouth and suckled, she panted out a response. "Okay, sheesh. You wolves are always in such a damned hurry," she complained before revealing the story.

Tag landed with a heavy thump. Emitting a string of profanities, she paused to rub her side. Mumbling an after-curse, she pulled herself to her feet. She didn't know what was going on, but she wasn't happy to be anyplace other than in her wolf's arms.

"So un-*Faerie*-like," a lyrical voice interrupted her bitch-fest.

Looking around, she was surprised to find herself in the middle of *Faerie* Council. She was doubly surprised to see the queen sitting at the head of the table glaring at her. In fact, the queen was glaring so hard, Tag was surprised she didn't have a tic in her eye. Clenching her jaw, she had to remind herself that she'd forgiven. And she had, but seeing her sitting there so calmly challenged her on a spiritual level. *Think about Jaron, think about Jaron, think about Jaron*, she repeated over and over.

"Tuesday Grace, how is it that you've been released from the *In Between* Lands?" a council member inquired.

"Ask your *supposed* queen," Tag replied as she folded her arms over her chest and looked pointedly at Rhiannon.

Tag knew that the Council had taken note of her emphasis on the word "supposed." The queen certainly had. She'd ceased her glaring and was currently shifting uncomfortably on the throne.

"You believe the words of a *half* breed?" the queen sneered.

"Tuesday Grace has said nothing untoward to you, Majesty," another council member answered.

"Her simply standing here is untoward. As usual, she is in defiance of her punishment!" the queen screeched.

“And where is the Prince Royal?” Tag asked the queen.

“He was sent to the Mortal Realm, Tuesday Grace.”

“Bullshit,” Tag responded. Ignoring the medley of outrage over her language, Tag continued.

“Because Lylelay’s presence threatened her fucked-up plan to rule over both realms, she had him banished. Knowing he’d be able to find his way back from the Mortal Realm, she had banished to the *In Between* Lands, which by the way was like mistake four million,” she said as she looked directly at the queen.

Her outburst caught the attention of the Royal Guard.

“Keep your station!” the senior-ranking council member ordered the Guard. Turning back to her, he encouraged her to continue. “Go on. Tuesday Grace.”

“Prince Lylelay knew what few others knew. That is, the way to be released from that non-place,” Tag began.

It took a few minutes more, but finally, she’d revealed everything. And instead of being overcome with bitterness, she discovered she was overcome with sadness...for the separation her parents had endured, for Jean-Marc’s family, for Lylelay, whose biggest problem was having Rhiannon as a mother.

“How do you answer, Queen Rhiannon?” a council member asked.

Her face mottled with rage, her eyes burning with hatred, she hissed her response. “You should’ve stayed in the Mortal Realm where you belong!”

“For once you’re right. The Mortal Realm is where I belong. I see nothing here for me but bullshit rules that don’t appear to deliver any kind of justice to anyone but you, Rhiannon. You condemned your own flesh and blood with your thirst for power. And still I bet you thirst for more.”

“I will have absolute power—” she began.

“Not quite, Rhiannon,” Azriel’s voice sliced through the queen’s speech.

Turning, Tag couldn’t help but smile seeing Az’s familiar smirk...and the jeans and t-shirt he rocked. *Since when did wings like his go with casual wear?*

“Archangel,” the Council members gasped in unison.

“Hello all,” Azriel waved.

Hearing the collective moans from the female members, Tag simply smiled. Regardless of what he was about, Az was first and foremost a flirt.

“How dare you interrupt! This is *Faerie* business—” Rhiannon spat even as she looked wildly around her, as if searching for an escape.

“You need to cease speaking *now*, Rhiannon. Trust me, you really don’t want to piss me off,” Azriel snapped at the queen. “Well, at least any more than you already have.” Turning back to the Council, he then flashed his most charming and affable look as he spoke.

“Tuesday Grace is the rightful ruler of the *Faerie Kingdom*. Her charges were falsified by Rhiannon, whose plans would most likely have succeeded had it not been for the prince.” Azriel spoke as if he were making his closing argument in a murder trial.

“LIAR!” Rhiannon exclaimed as she rose to her feet.

“Rhiannon, be seated,” the head Councilman said quietly.

The most ancient of *Faeries*, he rarely spoke. His words caused every *Faerie* in the chamber to sit up in expectation.

“She is lying!” Rhiannon yelled.

“No, she is not. You will abdicate the throne or you will be sentenced,” he said to her before turning to the whole of the Royal Guard and relieving them of their duty.

“You cannot sit in judgment of me. I am powerful beyond measure. I have the *Source* of all that rules both Heaven and Hell—” Rhiannon began.

Her speech stumbled to a halt when a contingent of black-winged warriors arrived in the gallery and settled behind Az. She didn't know who they were, but she knew they weren't *Fae*. The sea of warriors parted and revealed a stunning Nafrini (*then again, when wasn't the goddess stunning?*), who glided towards her. Pinching her cheek, Nafrini paused and doted on her like she always did.

"How dare you intrude upon matters that do not concern you!" Rhiannon screeched at Nafrini.

Tag couldn't help but think that this would not go well for Rhiannon.

"Nafrini, *Keeper of Souls*," someone announced unnecessarily. Anyone worth their salt knew that this goddess was not just beautiful, but the judge of the *Otherworldly*.

"I await your decision, Rhiannon," Nafrini said. Though she spoke softly, her words were laced with steel.

"You have *no* right!"

Wow, Rhiannon was even crazier than Tag thought. No one talked to Nafrini like that.

"How do you plead, Rhiannon?"

"You can all go to hell! I will never willingly give up—" Rhiannon began.

A moment later, she was surrounded by the winged warriors, who looked expectedly at Nafrini.

“I do believe she refuses to abdicate,” Nafrini said before issuing judgment.

“Rhiannon, you are hereby sentenced to death.”

“No! You cannot judge me!” Rhiannon screamed as she was dragged kicking and screaming from the throne. Tired of her outbursts, Nafrini turned and bitch-slapped her into silence.

“Take her away. I will deal with her in a moment,” Nafrini instructed the warriors. Turning towards her, she spoke. “Your family and your man await your return, little Tuesday, so do not dally,” she said before shimmering out of the chamber.

As Tag was about to leave, the voice of the lead councilman stopped her departure.

“Tuesday Grace, we the Council of *Fae* would be honoured if you would take your rightful place as the queen of the *Fae*.”

Speechless, she turned to Az.

“Oh shit. I forgot something. I’ll be right back,” he said before disappearing. Before she could protest, he was back. Opening her hands, he pressed something sparkly into them. Looking down, Tag couldn’t help but laugh. It wasn’t every day that one was handed a glittery plastic wand by a former Archangel.

“You’re a crazy man!” Tag laughed as she hugged Az.

“It is your time to rule, Majesty,” Azriel said as he knelt.

Everyone in the chamber followed suit. Of course, only Az dared wink at her.

“I accept your offer...with conditions,” she said.

Jaron remained completely still as Tag finished her story. Well, as still as he could be when he had his hot-ass female straddling him. He wasn't sure how she'd gotten him on his back, and as long as she kept moving her soft body over his, he couldn't be bothered to care.

“What were the conditions?” he asked through clenched teeth when Tag tightened around him. Two could play that game. Lifting her hips, he arched into her even as he brought her down on his hard cock.

“Ah...that as the ruler of the *Kingdom* I get to appoint a...ohhhh,” Tag moaned.

Not knowing if he was hanging on the edge of heartbreak or joy, he spanked her luscious ass. He needed answers, and he needed them now.

“Ow! What'd you do that for?” Tag gasped as she turned those burning gold eyes on him.

“You were saying,” he prompted.

She went to lift her hips, but he curled his hands around her plump ass and held her still.

Realising it was he who controlled her pleasure, she gave in. “Fine,” she said as she blew her hair out of her eyes. “As the ruler of the *Kingdom*, I’ve appointed the Council to act as a *caretaker* of sorts. Being that they’re the ones who make the rules, I feel they should have to deal with them as well. As ruler, I’ll deal with anything major—and it better be major, because I’ll be busy living out my life in the Mortal Realm keeping my husband in line.”

“You want to get married?” he asked, knowing it’d piss her off.

Watching her eyes narrow, he wasn’t the least bit surprised by her words. “Dawg, you know you belong to me. Besides, how would you feel when people began to describe you as a wanton slut for me...which you are?”

Very fucking hard, he thought. “Oh, I don’t know I’m sure I could suffer through the name-calling as long as I get to continue to do this,” he said as he smacked her ass once more before arching up into her. “If you do that one more time, I’ll fucking—”

“Take it,” Jaron said as he rolled her beneath him and bit her before thrusting balls deep inside her.

“You’re supposed to ask me, dawg,” she sighed.

“I’m not asking for what’s already mine,” he said as he powered into her.

“You’d better if you plan on sleeping with both eyes closed,” she said as she thrust her hips up and met him stroke for stroke.

Jaron knew better than to laugh aloud...so he laughed inside. “Marry me, *Faerie Girl*.”

“I’ll have to think about it...ahhhhh!” Tag said as he bent and suckled her breast.

“Say ‘yes,’” he commanded as he pistoned in and out of Tag.

“I can’t fucking...Oh my...Oh shit!” Tag screeched. “Answer. Me!” Jaron panted as he continued his sensual onslaught.

“YES! YES! YES!” Tag screamed as her body shuddered beneath his. Feeling her climax, he closed his eyes and gave into his own. With a roar of triumph, he collapsed beside her. Loathe to let her go, he spread her out to his liking and nibbled on her ear.

“So we’re good?” he asked.

Looking at him with the familiar sparkle of humour in her eyes, she responded. “Yeah, *dawg*, we’re good.”

“It’s going to be a big wedding,” Jaron commented.

“Huh?” she asked.

“Our wedding is going to be huge. I’ve got a lot of people I need to show you off to,” he said.

Tag slapped a hand over his mouth. “Can we talk about this later, *dawg*?”

“What’s wrong with now?” Jaron asked.

“Because that would interfere with me fucking your brains out one more time. Now move your fine ass,” she demanded.

“Yes, Your Majesty,” he whispered before thrusting into her so hard the bed moved across the floor.

“I love you, Tuesday Grace,” he gasped as he looked into the eyes of the one female he’d had the good sense to fall in love with.

“I love you too, Jaron, even if you are a *dawg* under those expensive suits.”

Jaron couldn’t help but chuckle even as he gave into his climax. Damn, he loved this *Faerie*. Regardless of what he didn’t have, as long as he had Tag, he had everything.

CHAPTER 6

The ancient *Vampire* watched the by-play between the gathered Magicks with a smirk. If not for the weakness of his former ally, he wouldn't have to change his plans. As it was, Rhiannon's refusal to abdicate and her subsequent death sentence made cutting his losses necessary. He simply changed up his scheme. And who better to move it to than Magicks? Despite using Magick to alter his appearance, he loathed the Magicks just as he loathed everyone else. Still, being that he wanted to fit in rather than frighten three-quarters of the room, Magick was a necessary inconvenience. Dealing with the Magicks wasn't how he initially planned to go about his universal takeover, but he was nothing if not resourceful.

"Kyros," the beautiful but totally useless female greeted him.

Despite the fact that they were nothing of the sort, Esmeralda Jensen always greeted him as if they were old friends. He suffered her antics just as she suffered his. Esmeralda was the mother of the most powerful Magicks born since Ruler Paradisa Artashir. Instead of being proud of her powerful daughter and manipulating Chloe's power to her benefit, Esmeralda feared and loathed the girl...and ignored her. Stupid bitch.

Satisfied that he'd chosen the perfect night for mingling within the Magick Realm, he made small talk with Esmeralda. "You look lovely. And where is your beautiful daughter this evening?"

He watched as Esmeralda's blue eyes momentarily frosted over with hatred. Her reaction confirmed his hypothesis. She was jealous of her daughter...and fearful. And just like that, he added another layer to his scheme.

"Oh, you know how these young ones are. Chloe is out with friends tonight," she spoke the lie smoothly.

"So you are unescorted?" he asked, knowing damn well she was—not that he would've given a damn either way. Competition could easily be disposed of. Besides being a critical part in his scheme, she was an itch that he wanted to scratch. Knowing that his desire for her would give Esmeralda a false sense of control, he showed his hand.

"I am," she sighed plaintively as she watched him from beneath her eyelashes.

Watching her step into his trap, he did something he rarely did. He smiled. Esmeralda's gasp told him all he needed to know. She was his for the taking. And he would, he thought as he held out his arm for her to take.

"Then allow me to show you a good time," he said.

Slowly, he allowed his fingers to creep up the golden-hued skin. As always his touch woke her...and made her wet with desire. Hearing her sigh in contentment, he watched as she rolled over onto her back and threw her arms over her head, showing him all of her treasures.

“You have been gone for a long time, *i nesew* [my king],” the woman said as she resituated herself in the ornate four-poster bed.

“I have good reason, *i merwet* [my love],” he said as he stroked her.

“Do tell...,” she said as her eyes sparked with desire.

Thinking his clothes off, he climbed atop her, loving the way she automatically spread her legs for him. Eagerly, he dipped his head and kissed a trail from her belly to her breasts. Gently pushing her knees up to her chest, he entered her body in a single thrust. Hearing her scream her pleasure, he closed his eyes and whispered

“We are close, *i merwet*...so close now,” he said as he continued stroking into her.

Sensing her smile rather than seeing it, he gave her everything. And in return, she surrendered everything to him. That was why it was so good between them. Moments later, she threw back her head and screamed his name to the world.

“KYROS!”

“NOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!” Morgan Carson screamed so loud and so long that her throat was soon burning.

The tears coursed down her cheeks, scorching her skin as she watched her sister killed before her very eyes. The members of her “family” holding her back got deep scratches and bruises for their trouble, but they did not let her go.

Morgan was finally released as her sister’s lifeless body was suddenly dropped to the ground. Free, she ran to her sister, feeling for any spark of life that might still remain within her earthly body. Unable to find any sign, she threw her head back and wailed at the injustice.

“She knew the rules,” the deep voice said softly for her ears alone.

Turning rage-filled eyes towards the owner of the voice, she looked at the man who’d raised her and

her sister but could find no words adequate enough to say to her “father.”

“She knew the rules and she broke them all, Morgan. You know that cannot go unpunished...*she* knew that too.”

Morgan shook her head from side to side.

“You have no right to speak of rules and punishment when your own existence is a crime against nature.”

Despite her pain, her voice did not warble. Her truth came out strong. Those in attendance gasped in unison. The thick silence blanketed them. It was only interrupted by a child’s soul-tearing scream.

“AUNTY MORGAN! HELP ME!”

Morgan was on her feet before the child’s scream was finished. Rushing to her niece, she felt rage fill her body as she watched white-robed men try to pull the eight-year-old into a vehicle. Seeing the wide-eyed terror in her niece’s eyes, she breathed out her confession.

“Forgive me for all I do here this eve.”

Taking a deep breath, she turned blazing eyes on those before her before turning in a circle encompassing them all. Everyone she touched with her eyes fell dead to the ground, but she did not stop until there was complete silence. Only after she knew her niece was safe did she cease. Fatigued, she

dropped to the ground as her blood began to literally boil within her veins.

“It’s okay, Auntie Morgan...it’s okay,” her niece’s voice soothed her mind and body.

Sitting up, Morgan pulled her niece into her arms and held her tightly. Though in pain, she struggled to her feet, knowing they were living on borrowed time.

“Let’s go, baby,” Morgan said as she threw out a ball of fire that encompassed everything behind them, then walked towards the truck that had mere moments before belonged to her sister and her niece’s mother.



This concludes the fourth story in the Otherworldly series.

Thank you for reading. I hope that you enjoyed the tale as much as I did. —Jeanie

Praises, compliments, adulation and the like for
Jeanie can be left at:

ms.jeanie.johnson@gmail.com

Jeanie Johnson

Okay, what can I say about me? Hmm. I'm crazy and I smoke too much (And, yes, my momma knows that. Don't worry, she's trying to get me to quit!). My favourite beverage is cold Coke, Coke with ice, Coke in a glass, Coke in a bottle...I think y'all get the picture! I'm of the grandiose notion that world peace will only happen when women take over *all* the *top* jobs.

My little sister describes me as the hot, sexy brick sh*thouse badazz filmmaker, and you know why? Because she has great freaking taste.

My older sister describes me thusly: Jeanie is a shagalicious word slinger who will be world-ruling side-by-side with her momma. As long as her Polar Bear (*shhh it's a secret*) doesn't drink all of her Cokes, all will be well. After gifting her clan with a knee-buckling narrative or two, Jeanie intends to relax by throwing on her favourite hoodie and waiting for her momma to put her on restriction.

See people, this is the kind of praise you get when you have Yvonne as your MMFIC and Rolanda as the MNWIC. Thanks for the props, you guys!