

A muscular man with glowing eyes, shirtless, standing against a dark, textured background. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting his physique and the intensity of his gaze.

SARAHAN Publishing, Inc.

# EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

TRUE DESTINY

DANA MARIE BELL

Justice isn't blind anymore.

*True Destiny, Book 2*

Travis Yardley-Rudiger deliberately stayed away from Jamie Grimm, desperate not to pull her into the petty war of wills between him and her grandfather, Oliver Grimm. Unfortunately the reemergence of Baldur and Loki and their claiming of Jamie's sister Jordan put her squarely in Grimm's sights. Her torture at Grimm's hands left Travis determined to claim and protect the woman he's loved for years—but first he has to find a way to break the news that Travis is actually Tyr.

Jamie keeps seeing the weirdest things. Flames in her sister's eyes, for instance...even Travis's entire body glowing. Then there are the recurring nightmares she just can't shake. One thing is certain: Travis's usual standoffish attitude has done an abrupt one-eighty. He's even gone so far as to move with her into her sister's condo while she convalesces. And when he reveals who—and *what*—he is, Jamie is left to wonder what the Norse God of Justice could possibly want with a crazy redhead with severe family issues.

As far as he's concerned, it will be Travis's pleasure to show her...

Warning: This book contains explicit sex, graphic language, a real blond god and a woman with reasons to have trust issues.

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# Eye of the Beholder

*Dana Marie Bell*

## Dedication

To Mom, who actually believed me when I told her I wanted twins, and I wanted to name them Apollo and Artemis. (Of course, if I'd actually *had* twins this would be a whole different story...)

To Dad, who sat there and tried to help me come up with names that were even worse than Apollo and Artemis just to watch Mom freak. Do you think we went too far when she started hopping up and down and screaming? Or was it when the shoes started flying?

Finally, to Dusty, my one and only. Sometimes we have to realize we will never achieve certain dreams no matter how heartbreaking it may be. So stop thinking about Jessica Alba, whipped cream and rubber sheets, okay? Because you may run faster than me, but I learned my Shoe Fu from one of the best and you WILL go down.

# Prologue

*Long ago...*

Tyr stood at the edge of the battlefield, appalled by what he saw.

The war was over. The Aesir had won.

There were but six of the Vanir left. *Six*. Even Zisa—lovely, pale Zisa, Tyr’s beloved wife who had refused to raise a weapon in the hopes that things could be resolved without bloodshed—had fallen beneath Aesir blades.

Now Odin, their conqueror, was asking for an audience with the ruler of the Vanir.

Why? Why had the Aesir done this? The Vanir were peaceful, concerned only with the green, growing things, the tides, the wind and the rain and...

No. Not for that.

Not for the Dökk Alfar.

The Dökk Alfar had only begun to make weapons for those who’d chosen to fight, but it had been too little, too late. Not even the mighty spear they’d crafted for him had halted the tide of the enemy soldiers. But the potential of the Dark Ones had been there all along for any with eyes to see. It was there in the wonderful toys they wrought, the shining palaces they’d created. All of which had been destroyed by Aesir hands. The shining palaces were crumbled, the gold and silver toys destroyed. Even the land itself had broken, falling beneath the waves under the furious might of Odin and his warriors. Only Vanaheim itself still, home of the Vanir, still existed, defiled by Aesir hands.

The last of the Vanir stood on an alien shore and prepared to meet their fate.

“What shall we do?”

His eyes never left the retreating messenger, yet he answered Idunn’s question as honestly as he could. “I do not know.”

“Shall we meet with him then?”

As always, Frey’s voice was calm. He held his sister Frejya’s hand tight, calming her fears as best he could.

“We have no choice.” Njord’s deep voice rolled over Tyr filled with the chill of the deep ocean.

“No. We do not.” Heimdall’s dark hair blew across his face, his crystal eyes studying the retreating form of the messenger. “Even now, they plot something.” His right hand held his Horn, the silver nails of his left tapping against his leather pants.

Tyr nodded. “I will meet with him.” As if there was any other choice.

The Vanir might be defeated, but the remaining gods would protect what little was left of their world.

# Chapter One

## *Present Day...*

“Time to go, Lefty.” Logan Saeter, also known as the god Loki and once Travis’s greatest enemy, entered the hospital room waving Jamie’s release papers triumphantly. “Guess what, Pita? You’re finally sprung!”

“Thanks.” Travis nodded at Logan, eager to get away from the smells of sickness that had surrounded him for the last three weeks.

“About time too.” Kiran Tait, once known as Baldur and the current leader of the Aesir and Vanir, followed his lover into the hospital room, carefully watching around for any sign of trouble.

“Hey, sis, you ready to go?” Jordan Saeter-Tait, one of Travis’s top investigators, brushed by the blond Kir with a fond smile and made her way to her younger sister’s bed. The trio’s love had shocked him when he’d first heard of it, but watching them together had eased his fears for his friend and employee. Jordan glowed when she was around Kir and Logan, and he couldn’t be happier for her.

“No sign of the cops.” Val was the latest employee of Travis’s company, Guardian Investigations, and the uncle of Jeff, Jordan and Jamie. Travis wasn’t surprised he’d shown up. The man adored his nieces and nephews, and was the one who’d risked everything to cut Jamie down from Grimm’s cross.

“Have they been by today?” Jeff, Jordan’s younger brother and twin to Travis’s beloved Jamie, brought up the rear. He immediately went to his twin’s side, their hands meeting over her blanketed body. Jamie had been in the hospital for three weeks and today, finally, she was being discharged, much to the relief of her loved ones.

“Nope.” The cops hadn’t been by yet, which was a good thing. Their constant interviews had exhausted Jamie. The last thing she needed today was another question-and-answer session. How many times could you ask someone why their grandfather had tried to kill them? Did they expect to get a different answer? It wasn’t as if the events of last month weren’t still fresh in everyone’s mind, made more so by the woman lying so quietly in the hospital bed. Some of the bruising had faded, but Travis wasn’t certain she’d ever get over the emotional trauma she’d been through.

Travis had witnessed crucifixions, most recently in the Philippines. Men there subjected themselves every year to the horror of the crucifixion to prove their devotion to Jehovah and Jesus. But they only endured it for minutes at a time, and that voluntarily. Jamie had been on that cross, hanging and suffocating over and over again, for more than an hour before Val had been able to rescue her.



Grimm had made her suffering even more hideous by inflicting as much pain as possible beforehand. Grimm had beaten her, both with fists and with a blunt object, breaking one of her cheekbones and her right wrist. Travis was sure he'd used something like a baseball bat for some of the blows. He'd burned her with cigarettes, leaving permanent marks on her stomach and buttocks. He'd used electrical shocks, causing permanent nerve damage in one of her legs. She'd limp from that for the rest of her life without help from Logan. Even with Logan performing a blood bond there was only a one in three chance of it healing her. That meant she'd been tied, weak in one leg and one arm, forced to use them just to stay alive, the muscles of her diaphragm working to bring in needed air and too strained by her position to do so. She would have tried to stand, to get a breath, only to have one of the weak limbs give in. The cycle of slow suffocation would begin all over again. The only good thing about the ordeal was that Grimm had tied her to the cross rather than nailing her. At least she'd been spared one small agony, but it was scant consolation when held up against everything else he'd done to Jamie.

When Travis thought of what Grimm had done to the beautiful, vibrant woman Jamie had been, the loving, devoted granddaughter Grimm had supposedly cherished, his vision fogged. He knew his eyes were turning white even now, blinding him to the physical realities around him. Even the sight of Jamie's vibrant soul couldn't dim his rage. His fists clenched, his muscles tightening to the point of pain as he held himself still, refusing to give in to the powers that called to him. If he let those powers loose, even for a second, in the way he wanted to, he would light a beacon Grimm would not be able to ignore. As it was, the runic wards Logan had put up around Jamie's hospital room barely masked the presence of the four gods.

Part of him didn't care. He hadn't been this angry and anguished since Zisa had been killed.

He shut his eyes, muttering a mantra he'd learned from a Buddhist priest long, long ago, calming himself enough that the fog lifted. But not before he caught a glimpse of something inside Jordan that had him drawing in his breath in shock.

"Lefty? You in there?"

He opened his eyes to find Logan waving his hand in front of Travis's face. "Knock it off, hothead." He knocked Logan's hand out of the way, ignoring the other man's amused snort. *Oh, great. Something else to worry about.* He decided to keep his mouth shut since Jordan had already agreed to remain at the condo with her sister and only leave if Travis, Logan or Kir was with her. Kir would soon figure out what was happening to his woman, and then all hell was going to break loose, but Travis wasn't going to be the one to break the news.

He turned back to the bed to find that Jeff had helped Jamie sit up. Her normally bright red curls were limp and straggling around her pale black and green face. The swelling around her beautiful green eyes had finally gone down, allowing her to see the people in her room, not just hear them. He had to thank the advances in medical technology. If Grimm had done this to her even a hundred years ago Jamie wouldn't have survived it.

The wariness on her face was new. Seeing the way she flinched back from them had his vision misting over again. He turned away from the twins and faced the three people in the room who knew who, and what, he truly was, knowing he could trust them to keep Jeff and Jamie in the dark about his eyes. He slipped on the pair of sunglasses Jordan handed him, grateful for their mirrored shield.

“Is the car ready?”

“We took the Lexus.” Jordan stood guard on the left of the door, Logan on the right. Kir stood in front of him, frowning at something behind Travis. Probably something Jeff and Jamie were doing, although what that could be he didn’t know and didn’t dare turn around to find out, not with his eyes covered in white mist. That would lead to questions he just couldn’t answer, at least not here. But Jamie could barely move even now, after three weeks in the hospital. Her physical therapist had said it would be months before the pain subsided. So whatever Kir was frowning at was more likely to be Jeff’s goofing off than anything Jamie was doing.

He almost had his eyes back to normal when Jamie hissed in pain behind him. *There goes my vision again. Damn it.* At least off the influence of Grimm’s fucking apple-laden delicacies he could finally see the true souls of both Logan and Kir. He still grieved over the injustice they’d both suffered over the centuries. Hunted and hated by Vanir and Aesir alike, they’d been on the run from Grimm for centuries. Loki had been accused of the murder of Baldur and punished so grievously he still bore the psychic wounds. Grimm, declaring it just, had taken the only two of Loki’s children not born “monsters” and destroyed them, turning one into a mad wolf who tore apart his brother before his father’s eyes. Grimm had then used the entrails of the dead boy to magically bind Loki to three slabs of stone while a serpent forever dripped burning poison onto him. It had all been done to cement Grimm’s power and prevent Baldur from eventually taking over leadership of the Aesir.

Travis had every intention of helping Logan and Kir right those wrongs.

Travis nodded. “Good.” He ran his hand through his hair, his vision returning to normal. “All the paperwork is taken care of?”

Logan grinned. “Yup. And spare rooms are made up at the apartment for everyone.”

Travis grimaced, but he’d already lost this fight. Jordan, Kir and Logan had ganged up on him, insisting Jamie would be more comfortable with her sister than with him. Part of him agreed, much as it galled him to. Jeff had insisted on moving in with them as well, providing yet another buffer between his twin and their grandfather. Travis was still concerned about that. Jeff would be the only human guarding Jamie, but Jeff had put on his most stubborn expression and Travis had bowed down. Once Jeff made up his mind about something it was damn near impossible to get him to change it, and he’d made up his mind that his sister needed his protection.

Despite the fact that both Baldur and Loki had sworn themselves to her safety, Travis’s decision had also been a no-brainer. “My room too?”

“Yup. We even made sure everything was left-handed just for you.”

He rolled his eyes as Logan batted his eyelashes at him outrageously. It had taken them a bit to come to terms, but he and Logan had worked out the majority of their problems with one another, mostly at Jordan’s urging.

*Almost all.* He winced as he thought of the task he’d set himself as soon as Jamie was up to the trip.

He wasn’t going to hide what he was from her for much longer. She needed to know what they were up against, and why Grimm had targeted her. He had to see to it that she had the means to defend herself if it should ever happen again. That meant not only getting her the training he knew she desperately needed, even if the others couldn’t see it yet, but making sure she had the necessary power to back up her will.

He looked down at his palm and traced the blue veins with his eyes, wondering how she’d react when he mingled his blood with hers, and what it would ultimately do to her. Mixing blood with a god was not something to be done lightly.

Especially when it was Tyr, god of justice and former lord of the Vanir.

“Hey, pumpkin.”

Jamie smiled as much as her bruised, broken face would allow. “Hey, Uncle Val.” She sounded like she was talking through a napkin, but the doctors had assured her the last of the swelling would be completely gone soon.

Uncle Val walked past Travis to give her a gentle hug. “You ready to blow this popsicle stand?”

She closed her eyes as his warmth seeped into her cold bones. She was always cold these days, except when Travis and Uncle Val were near. They were the only ones who made her feel safe. “Sure am.”

“Good girl.” He brushed his hand through her curls, pecking her softly on the forehead. “Jordan and Jeff will help you get dressed. I’ll get the rest of these yahoos out of here. Want me to put them to work?” He grinned down at her, still gently stroking her hair the same way he had when she’d been a child.

She leaned into his touch. “Nah. Just let me get dressed so we can leave.” She smiled up at him. “The food here sucks donkey balls.”

She heard an amused snort and figured it was her brand new brother-in-law, Logan. “Don’t worry, Pita, I’ll cook as soon as we get back to our place.”

“Thanks, Logan.”

Jordan had told her some of what happened, but not all. For some reason she’d only been able to tell her in bits and pieces, when everyone else was out of the room. So Jamie knew a little of what Logan had done to buy them time to save her. What she couldn’t figure out was why he wasn’t in the hospital bed next to hers if everything Jordan had told her was true. Being beaten with Dad’s favorite walking stick *should* have left him in almost the same shape Jamie was in, but there wasn’t a mark on him. And since Jordan had

never lied to her, *something* screwy was going on. Jordan was trying to prepare her for whatever it was. It had to be something big or big sis wouldn't be dancing around it instead of telling her outright.

It probably involved every single person in the room with her, with the possible exception of Jeff. If Jeff knew something that would make Jordan this crazy he'd have told her by now. They didn't keep many secrets from each other.

"Wow. You look like hammered dog shit today." She glared up at Jeff, who grinned down her. "It's an improvement."

"I *did* have the shit hammered out of me. What's your excuse?"

Her brother leaned over and gave her a peck on the cheek. "Don't hate me because I'm beautiful."

Everyone in the room groaned and Jeff winked, completely unrepentant.

"Okay, people. You heard the lady. Everybody out." Uncle Val began shooing everyone from the room, pulling a lingering Travis out by the arm. "C'mon, boss, out you go." Out everyone went with the exception of Jordan and Jeff.

That was taking some getting used to. Grandfath... *Grimm's* security chief now working for Guardian Investigations. Grammy was probably having kittens at the thought of her hated stepson so close to her grandchildren.

But then again she had to wonder how Grammy felt about anything now. She hadn't seen fit to visit Jamie in the hospital. Maybe Grammy was under some sort of guard too, because if Grimm could do this to Jamie, he could certainly do this to Grammy. Grammy was sweet and kind, but not very strong. There would be no way she could withstand the kind of torture Grimm had put Jamie through. She hoped those Grammy loved were keeping a close eye on her.

Jamie sighed. It still didn't make any sense to her. Why had her grandfather done this? The only reason she could think of for Grimm to have done what he had was some sort of tumor, or Alzheimer's, or *something* that would alter his personality beyond all recognition. Because the man she'd grown up loving and respecting would never have done this to her if he'd still been in complete control of his senses. He'd tortured her with an almost playful ferocity, smiling as the lit cigarette burned into her hip. He'd seemed to enjoy the screams muffled by a gag that buckled at the back of her head. He'd only removed it when she'd been tied to the cross, unable to speak thanks to the broken cheek and the swelling in her face.

The agony of her broken wrist had only been matched by the one in her leg. She didn't think she'd ever forget what had happened to her, no matter how often she spoke to her therapist. Doctor Burton had told her it would probably be years, if ever, before the nightmares went away.

She tried to hide her shudder as the memories threatened to swamp her. Now that Uncle Val and Travis were gone, the cold was settling in, shivering down her spine in icy waves.

Jeff knew her too well. “It’s okay, little fox. No one’s going to hurt you. You’re safe.” He rocked her, tucking her head under his chin. Just the sound of her twin’s pet name for her helped pull her back from the dark chasm where her nightmares lived.

She opened her eyes to find Jordan standing over her, a fierce expression on her face. “No one, and I mean *no one*, is going to get through us to you. Not ever again.” Jamie could swear she saw something...*odd*, in Jordan’s eyes when she said that. Almost like flames flickering.

*Man. I have to have another nice, long talk with my therapist.* She was starting to see some really funky things these days, because just before Uncle Val dragged him out, she could have sworn Travis had been glowing.

Antonia “Toni” Mancinelli threw back the shot of whiskey, grinning at her now-retired partner when they both put their shot glasses back on the table. “Kerry is going to drive you nuts within a week, my friend.”

“Tell me about it. She’s already handed me a honey-do list as long as my arm. Then she tells me that’s just the stuff off the top of her head.” Her ex-partner grinned, waving the waitress back over. “Food?”

“Hot wings and potato salad.” She handed the menu back to the waitress. “And an iced tea.” The whiskey was their last huzzah, a final send-off for a good cop who’d never be able to touch another drop of liquor.

“Man, how can you eat those things? They burn a hole in my stomach.”

Which was why Pete was taking that early retirement and laying off the booze. Life sucked, but at least Pete seemed to be making lemonade out of his ulcerous lemon. He was already making plans to take his wife Kerry on a cruise in a few months, a surprise Toni was pretty sure Kerry already knew about. Toni hid her wince as Pete ordered the grilled chicken, hold the peppers. “Man, this reeks.”

He eyed her hot wings. “Not as much as that does.”

She smirked and took a big hot bite, moaning in exaggerated pleasure.

“I hate you so much.” Pete dug into his chicken with a grimace. “I hope the next perp you shove in the back of your car has hot dog gas.”

Toni damn near choked on her bite of potato salad. “Hot dog gas? What the fuck? That’s sick.” Geeze, just one guy who’d had too many dogs and beers at a Phillies game and you never live it down. It had taken her months to be able to eat another hot dog. She’d only managed it after Pete dared her in front of her co-workers.

Man, she was gonna miss him. She only hoped she got along as well with her new partner. At least she’d be able to visit Pete and his wife and kids. Hell, Kerry had practically claimed her as one of the

family. They'd become pretty close in the last four years, ever since she'd partnered with the veteran detective. Damn, with the new case that had landed on her desk that morning she could really use Pete's insights. A prominent businessman disappearing from his offices, his granddaughter hospitalized and claiming he was responsible? She'd shuddered when she first heard of it, but with the accusation that Oliver Grimm might be dead the case had been bumped up to Homicide.

*Yippee.* She held up her glass and clinked with Pete's. "Good luck, my friend." To us both.

He nodded solemnly. "I'm going to need it. Kerry wants me to paint the living room." He shuddered. "Lavender."

Toni smirked, letting go of work in favor of saying good-bye. "Remind me to bring the rest of the guys by for a visit, then."

He let loose a rueful chuckle. "Toni, you are such a bitch."

She shrugged and bit into another chicken wing. "Damn straight."

They were leaving the hospital today. Grimm considered taking his chances, hoping to get them all in one go, but he knew it wouldn't work. They'd deliberately timed their departure from the hospital to coincide with rush hour. There would be too many people about for him to do what he really wanted to do. Even now he knew better than to try and reveal who and what they were. There were enough people in the world that eventually one of them would figure out how to kill him, and Grimm was nothing if not attached to living.

Getting to Jamie in the hospital had proven impossible. People were in and out of her room at all hours of the night and day, checking her pulse, taking her temperature, bathing her ass, not to mention the damn wards Logan had around her room. It was enough to frustrate even a man as patient as he was. Still, at least he knew now exactly how much Jamie really meant to Tyr. The other god had barely left her side, going so far as to coaxing a nurse to have a cot brought in for him to sleep on.

He sincerely hoped Tyr's back was killing him.

Ah, well. He had a plan. One that would bring both Tyr and Vali out into the open. Once they were, they were in for a rude, deadly surprise.

He glanced at his watch, grinning. *Speaking of plans, I'm going to be late for work.* He got out of his car and headed into the building, grinning at the thought of what was in store for the fuckers who'd dared to betray him.

They might have Gungnir, but damn it, he was *still* Odin.

## Chapter Two

Travis pushed Jamie's wheelchair out of the hospital by himself, refusing all offers of help despite his handicap. He'd glared at Jeff, daring the man to say anything about it, but Jeff had merely grinned over his oblivious twin's head and backed off. No one but Travis was going to tend to her if he could help it.

Pushing the damn thing one-handed was more difficult than he'd thought it would be, but he'd learned over the long centuries to compensate for his lack of a right hand. He'd thought once or twice of getting a prosthetic but he'd become so used to doing everything without it he wasn't certain if he wanted to try and adjust to one. He made do, barely bumping her into any walls at all, using his right forearm to push and steering as best he could with his left hand.

"And they say *women* drivers are bad." Travis grinned at the mumbled words. It was so good to see Jamie's quirky sense of humor resurfacing.

Logan was waiting for them with the SUV in the front of the building, leaning against the passenger side door with a dark, brooding look. People went out of their way to move around him. Val had already left to go back to the office, unwilling to keep idle while Grimm was out and about.

"Gee, Logan, lighten up. You're scaring the straights." Jamie's still-slurred voice sent rage down his spine every time he heard it. The weary pain she spoke with was eventually going to drive him mad.

But she was alive. He had to keep telling himself that. She was *alive*. Grimm hadn't taken another one of his loves from him.

He'd never get the chance to either, if Travis had anything to say about it.

Logan snorted, a half smile gracing his lips as he stared down at his petite sister-in-law. "You ready to leave, Pita?"

"Why do you keep calling Jamie Pita?" Travis frowned at the man opening the back door.

"Because."

Kir was shaking his head as he put Jordan in the front passenger seat. Jordan, grinning, didn't protest at all.

Travis's frown turned into a glare. "Does Pita mean what I think it means?"

Jamie rolled her eyes as Travis helped her from the wheelchair. "Tell me *you* haven't thought of me as a pain in the ass sometimes."

"Yeah, I'm just honest enough to admit it." Logan put his arm around Jamie, gently assisting her into the back seat before Travis had recovered from his surprise.

Travis relaxed and walked around to the other side of the car, letting Kir hand the wheelchair back to the nurse. “Well, if anyone knows anything about pains in the ass that would be you, Logan. Hell, from what I’ve seen—and still have nightmares about, by the way—you’re a damn expert on it.”

He snickered as Logan flipped him the bird. He turned to get into the car, only to find Jeff had settled into the seat next to Jamie. He almost protested, but when he saw the relaxed look on her face he kept his mouth shut. He settled in next to Jeff, clicking his seatbelt on just as Logan started the car.

He didn’t miss the smirk on the younger man’s face, either. Jeff knew *exactly* how Travis felt about Jamie. Apparently he was planning on having a little fun with that information, but if it made Jamie trust in him Jeff could tease him to hell and back and Travis wouldn’t say a word.

Logan pulled out into the early Philly traffic, heading for the condo they’d all be sharing for the duration. He had no clue how the three of them planned on accommodating twice their number in two bedrooms. He had no doubt they’d somehow manage it, because he had no intention of leaving until Jamie wanted to. *Ah, the joys of sleeping on a futon.* He looked over Jeff’s head to the curls that haunted his nightly dreams and hid a smile. *The things I do for love.*

He sat back and thought about the first time he’d seen her. It had been like a fist to the gut. She’d come in, asked him if he was Jordy’s new boss, glared at him when he said yes, and told him his tie was crooked. Jeff had just stood there and nodded before telling him that his shirt didn’t go with his eyes.

They had been all of sixteen at the time.

He’d been fascinated by a pair of big green eyes that seemed to see right through him and a pretty, determined face in such a small body. He’d been curious to see if the twins would show signs of power. Usually the union of Aesir and human was fully human, if a bit tougher than normal, but on rare occasions an exceptional being was born. He’d told himself that was the source of his obsession with her. But part of him, even back then, had known it to be a lie. He’d avoided the Grimm household after that, disturbed on several levels by the desire to spend time with what amounted to a child.

It wasn’t until she turned nineteen and been employed at Guardian Investigations that he’d understood why none of his relationships had lasted more than three months since meeting her.

He hadn’t been the one to hire her. Her brother, apprenticing under Travis at the time, had known that Travis needed a new receptionist. Jeff simply installed her one day, much to Travis’s surprise. Her cheerful presence had filled the front hall, her gaze following him whenever he stepped foot in the building. She’d lightened the sterile front desk just by sitting there, putting clients at ease with such effortlessness he’d been stunned. He would stop at her desk and chat with her for a bit before going to his office just to see her smile, to hear her voice. Her conversation had made even the worst day seem as bright as her fiery curls.

But then she’d called in sick once, and his whole day had gone to hell in a hand basket. He’d been grumpy and out of sorts, so much so Jordan had called him on it. She’d even wondered if he’d broken up with his latest girlfriend, and if that was why he was being such a prick.



He'd promptly informed her that things were fine between him and Karen. Hell, he'd even gone home and fucked Karen just to prove to himself that he wasn't perving on a nineteen-year-old girl.

Six weeks later he'd broken up with Karen, calling himself all kinds of names as he did so. He'd then promoted Jamie to Jordan's secretary just so he wouldn't have to look at her every day.

But he had. He hadn't been able to help himself. Something about her bright smile, her incredible laugh, drew him like metal to a lodestone. He'd walked past Jordan's office, longing for something he kept telling himself he couldn't have.

Then he heard she'd broken up with her boyfriend, and the heart he thought had died with Zisa centuries ago rejoiced. He hadn't felt that way since Zisa had said yes and become his wife.

That was when he knew he loved Jamie.

He'd decided all he needed to do was wait. In a few years, he could approach her without feeling like the dirtiest old man on the planet. Travis smirked. Let Logan keep that title. He'd acted on that, taking a woman out for dinner occasionally for the sake of illusion but sleeping with none of them. Even the thought of doing so just felt...wrong. Like adultery.

Just when he couldn't stand it anymore, Grimm had pulled his alpha male bullshit, trying to get Travis to sell Guardian to him. Travis had pulled away from him, refusing point-blank any and all offers. He still didn't know where the strength to resist Grimm's compulsion had come from, but he'd heeded his internal warning bells. He'd purposefully stayed away from Jamie, and Jamie's family, knowing the tension that would build could ruin any chances he had of ever claiming Jamie as his own. He hadn't wanted Jamie caught in the crossfire between him and the Old Man.

He stared out the window at the passing houses, losing sight of them as his vision turned inward. Grimm didn't know it yet, but by laying hands on Jamie he'd started a war he had no hope of winning.

Baldur had risen.

And Grimm's Ragnarrok had begun.

Jamie limped into the condo on Travis's arm, staring around at the white on blue décor, the pale maple floors and the huge wall of windows with no drapes or shades of any kind. She had no clue what her sister saw in it. It was so...sterile, and the three lovers were anything but, yet she knew Jordan loved the look of the place. She grimaced at the thought of her sister with the two men. When Jordan decided to do something, she didn't do it half-way. She'd fallen for both the bad boy and the angel, and fallen hard. Jamie was just glad both men returned her sister's feelings, because if they hadn't, they'd have her to deal with.

Jamie winced a bit as her damaged leg wobbled under her. She squeaked as Travis picked her up, but before she could really protest he had her in Jordan's spare bedroom. He put her on top of the comforter, stroking her hair back when she gasped in pain.

"Sorry, Jamie. I'll try to be gentler next time."

Jamie nodded. She understood. No matter how she moved everything still hurt. She didn't blame Travis at all.

She blamed Grimm.

Kir deposited their luggage inside the door before pulling it closed with a smile.

"I'm going to get your pain medicine, okay?"

Before she could protest Travis was out the door, that fine, fine ass of his flexing most temptingly in his blue jeans. She closed her eyes before she made a complete fool of herself. It wasn't like he wanted that kind of attention from her, anyway. She'd seen the women he'd dated and not one of them had red hair.

She'd built so many daydreams around him it was sickening. No other man had ever come close to measuring up to him. Jamie had loved him since the first day she saw him. He'd stood there, staring at her and Jeff, his blond hair streaked by the sun instead of a salon. His neatly trimmed beard couldn't hide his full mouth or firm chin. His blue eyes had been both startled and, ultimately, full of amusement as she and Jeff told him off for stealing their big sister away from them. He'd thanked them for telling him his shirt was wrong and his tie was crooked, then sat down and asked them their opinions on what clothes he should buy. She'd been charmed at being treated like a lady by such a handsome man. She hadn't even shrieked at him once, and she'd totally planned on it the moment he put them down. But Travis never did. He treated everyone with respect, and earned that respect back tenfold.

She'd dreamed of him every night since. She'd probably dream of him until the day she died, no matter how much she might wish otherwise. But those dreams had changed recently. Now he rescued her from Grimm instead of asking her on a date.

She was pretty sure that was the only reason she was still sane.

Working for Guardian Investigations was both heaven and hell. She got to see him and talk to him every single day. That was heaven.

Hell was seeing the women he dated and knowing that there was no way she could ever measure up.

Soon after coming to work for Travis she'd seen him with his girlfriend of the time, Karen. The way he'd held her, stroking her through the thin silk blouse she'd had on, his hand drifting down to the blonde's ass, had broken her heart. The heat in his eyes when he'd looked at Karen had been intense. The friendly regard he'd turned on Jamie had been horrible. The smug, satisfied look on the blonde had been worse.

She'd gone out with her boyfriend that night, gotten tipsy and finally given him her virginity. It hadn't been bad, actually. Some of it felt pretty good. They'd gotten comfortable with one another, or so she thought.

When she'd found Tim cheating on her she hadn't been as heartbroken as she probably should have been. That was when she knew no other man would ever measure up to Travis. She'd given up looking soon after that, kicking Tim's ass to the curb, much to her father's relief. Fred Grimm had never approved of him.

“Here.”

She jumped. She must have dozed off, because Travis was standing over her with her pill and a glass of water clutched in his hand. “Mmm. Thanks.” She sat up gingerly, easing herself against the pillows. He handed her the pill and she took it, making a face as it stuck halfway down.

“Logan’s going to bring you something to eat in a few minutes. When you’re done eating I want you to get some sleep.”

She rolled her eyes at him. “Yes, Daddy.”

He shuddered. “*Please* don’t call me that.”

She shrugged and tried to smirk, knowing it looked more like a grimace but not caring. “It’s better than Pita.”

“That’s debatable.” He turned as Logan carried in a tray with a bowl of tomato soup and a grilled cheese sandwich on it and frowned. “That’s it? That’s what you’re feeding her?”

“Yes.” Logan placed the tray on her lap, winking at her.

“Hell, *I* can open a can of soup and make a grilled cheese. I thought you were actually going to *cook*.”

“Obviously your mother never made you the perfect sick foods before.” Jamie dug into the soup with gusto. The almost painful bite of the soup had her groaning in pleasure. “Oh, lord, Jordan told you?”

“Yup. Happy, Pita?”

She ate another spoonful of the sinfully spiced soup and sighed. “Practically orgasmic.” She ignored Travis’s growl and happily ate her soup, stopping every now and then to take a bite of the ultra-gooney grilled cheese.

“Are those jalapeno peppers in your soup?”

She looked up into Travis’s horrified face. “Oh yeah.”

“And grilled *pepper jack* cheese?”

She bit into the sandwich with as much gusto as her broken face would allow. “Mmm-hmm.” She licked her lips, moaning in cheesy ecstasy.

A dark flush crept up Travis’s cheeks. He cleared his throat. “Isn’t that bad for someone who’s sick? Aren’t you supposed to eat bland food?”

She looked at him blankly. “I’m already hurting. Why suffer more than I absolutely have to?” She finished her soup and handed the tray back to Logan with as sweet a smile as she could muster. “Thank you, Logan.”

He smiled down at her, his fondness for her written all over his face. “You’re welcome, Pita.”

She finished off the water and handed the empty glass to Travis, who took it with a frown. She yawned, snuggling down against the pillow, the pain pill making her sleepy again. ““Night, Travis.”

““Night, Pita.”

She smiled, her eyes closed as she began drifting off to sleep. The gentle kiss she imagined against her lips sent her into sweet dreams where Travis actually wanted a crazy, pushy redhead for his own.

Travis lifted his lips from her, shaking his head over the lingering taste of peppers. He smoothed his hand over her hair, unable to resist the way the limp curls clung to his fingers.

She needed a bath. As soon as she woke up, he'd see to it she got one. He'd have to be careful of the cast still on her wrist, but he could deal with it when the time came.

He left her to sleep, heading into the living room to find Jordan, Jeff, Logan and Kir waiting for him. "What?"

"Nothing. Just wondering when you're going to move your stuff into her bedroom." Jeff threw a piece of popcorn up into the air, catching it in his mouth. He grinned at Travis as he chewed.

Kir grinned. "Already taken care of."

Travis did his best to keep his expression serene. If he had any hope of a happy life with Jamie he'd have to make sure her twin was okay with it. "You have an objection to that?"

"Nope, but she might."

The two men stared at one another. Jeff looked relaxed, his bare feet propped up on the coffee table, a bowl of popcorn in his lap, but Travis knew better. Even at twenty-five, Jeff was one of the best operatives he had, mostly because people saw a slender, carefree guy with bright red hair and a cheery smile. What they failed to see was the ruthless hunter underneath, a warrior who felt quite capable of taking Travis on if he felt his sister was threatened.

Travis wondered if that attitude would still be there if Jeff knew who he was challenging. When it came to Jamie, he had the feeling that it might.

He could respect that. He'd still have to smack the kid down if he got in the way of Travis taking care of Jamie, but, still.

The younger man stood and stretched, putting the bowl on the coffee table. "I'm not going to wait much longer for you guys to get your collective heads out of your asses, you know." He looked around the room at the four of them, his intent stare lingering the longest on his older half-sister, Jordan. "You *are* going to tell me what the fuck is going on with the Old Man and why he turned Jamie into a piñata. Because if you don't, I'll be forced to find out on my own, and something tells me none of you would like that." He smiled sweetly, reminding Travis of Jamie. "Good night, everyone." He sauntered off toward the den with an absent wave. "I'm taking the futon, Travis."

Travis shook his head as he watched Jeff close the door behind him. "Fuck me."

"No thanks. Logan would kill me."

Travis closed his eyes against the incipient headache building behind his eyes. "Kir."

“Sorry.” The blond man sank into the seat Jeff had so recently occupied, picking up the bowl of popcorn with a sigh. “Anyone want—”

“No.”

Kir winced as all three of them shouted him down. “Okay, okay. I can see how you’d all be pizza’d out. You don’t have to shout, though.” He put the bowl down, fiddling with it absently. “He’s right.”

Travis found himself staring at Jeff’s closed door. “Yeah. He is. And don’t make the mistake of thinking that was an idle threat, either. If Jeff decides to go after Grimm it’ll get ugly fast.”

“He can’t handle what Grimm will do to him.” Jordan started pacing, a frown on that pretty face of hers. She brushed her hair behind her ear, missing the way both her men’s eyes latched onto her movements. It was obvious even to a blind man that Logan and Kir were hyper-aware of her every move. Logan sat at Kir’s feet, Kir’s hand drifting into his lover’s hair, playing with it in a way that let Travis know this was a common thing for them.

Logan rested his head against Kir’s knee, his eyes closing wearily. “We have to figure out a way to keep them safe. Grimm isn’t going to stop here. He’s going to want Gungnir back, and he won’t hesitate to harm either Jeff or Jamie to get it.”

“Ixnay on the Ungnir-Gay.” Jordan flapped her hands toward Jeff’s closed door.

Logan rolled his eyes. “Right. Imm-Gray is going to want the glowy toothpick back ASAP. Any ideas, people? Because I’m damn tired of fighting that ass wipe.”

Travis almost joined Jordan in her pacing. “I doubt he knows I’ve already handed it over to Kir. He’ll expect me to hang onto it a little tighter this time.”

“*This* time?”

The headache throbbed behind his eyes. “Yeah. *This* time.” He kept his expression closed, daring Jordan to question him further.

So, of course, she did. “Do tell.” She sat on the floor next to Logan, curling her feet under her and crossing her arms over her chest.

Travis grimaced. “What happened to Ix-nay?”

She sniffed. “Tyr, aka Tiwaz, aka Tio, aka Tyz. The meaning of the name is god. Hence, one of the names of Odin, Hangatyr, or God of the Hanged. How pleasant is that?” She made a face as Logan snorted and Kir hung his head between his hands. “You even have a day named after you. Anyway, some of the myths say you’re Odin’s son, and if that’s true, then ew, if you’re into my sister. Other myths claim you’re one of Odin’s contemporaries. The third myth says you’re older. So, which one is it?”

He stared down at her. “When did you have time for that? You’ve been in the hospital with Jamie every stinking waking moment.” He knew. He’d been there too, guarding her with his life. If Grimm had made one teeny tiny move toward the woman sleeping in the other room Travis would have killed him.

Or at least tried to. They still hadn’t figured out how he’d survived Val’s numerous fatal wounds.

She rolled her eyes. “Remember when Tweedledee and Tweedledum wouldn’t let me out of the condo so all I could do was stuff on the Internet?”

“Because, y’know, it wasn’t like you’d been *shot* or anything.”

She ignored Kir’s mumble and Logan’s glare. “That’s when I looked all that up. Now please, answer the question.”

“I’m not on trial here.” The headache was full bore now. He’d need to take something soon, then go lie down next to Jamie.

“No, Trav, you’re not. But every little bit you give us could help stop Grimm.” Her expression was pleading. “Please. For Jamie.”

“Dirty pool, Grey.”

“Tait-Saeter. Ow.” Logan rubbed his side where Jordan pinched him.

“That reminds me. You owe me a wedding. Goober.”

“Children, play nice.” Kir smiled wearily at the two. “Or I’ll break out the splintery stick.”

“We’d rather you broke out the other stick.” Logan wagged his tongue at Kir, causing Jordan to fall over with a groan.

“And on that note, I’m going to bed.” Travis turned and ran for Jamie’s bedroom, Jordan’s quiet, “coward” following him into the room.

He closed the door behind him and stared at the woman asleep on the bed. As quietly as possible he removed his clothing, all the way down to his boxers. He lifted her up with his right arm, pulling the comforter and sheets from underneath her before putting her down again. Once she was settled back down he went to the window and examined the protection runes Logan had cast. With a sigh he added his own, overlaying the fiery symbols, integrating his own magic with that of the Jotun’s. He wondered briefly how Logan would react when he saw it, but he was just too damn tired to care.

When he was finished he climbed wearily into bed and pulled the sheets over both of them. Spooning in as closely as he dared, he closed his eyes and willed the headache away. Her scent wrapped around him, soothing him, and before he knew it he’d nodded off.

Grimm stood in his old office, one hand resting on the twin raven statues, and stared at the empty case that had once held Gungnir, the Godspear. “Hugin, Munin, *komme fram*.”

The stone ravens stirred, pulling apart as feathers erupted from stone bodies. They shook themselves, their beady eyes fixed on his face.

“*Finne Tyr*.”

The ravens ghosted through the walls, their flight unhampered by the physical world around them. He ground his teeth, staring at the empty case that had once housed Gungnir, the symbol of Odin’s power and

rulership of the Aesir and Vanir. *Fuck*. If only Travis hadn't gone all stubborn on him and refused to sell Guardian Investigations, none of this would have happened. Gungnir would still be in his possession, Baldur and Loki would still be on the run and Tyr would still be firmly under his thumb. But Travis had inexplicably resisted him, and now it was going to take some serious strategy on Grimm's part to put everything back to rights. Rina still didn't understand why he'd been so insistent on acquiring Travis's business. Quite frankly, he was tired of explaining it to her. She'd just have to figure it out on her own.

Keeping Tyr busy elsewhere and out of Grimm's way had been a mistake. It had started during WWII, when Grimm had decided to help Hitler covertly. After all, the man had practically worshipped him. Sending Tyr to help the French Resistance had seemed like a stroke of genius at the time, and phones and air shipping of bottles of Tyr's favorite apple brandy had made sure that Tyr stayed mostly under his thumb. He'd thought he'd sent in a spy. Instead, he'd sent in a god damn hero.

Who knew the pain in the ass would actually help the Allies win the fucking war?

He glowered at the empty case and deliberately turned his thoughts away from Tyr and toward his son, Vali, his grandchildren's beloved Uncle Val.

*Traitorous bastard. Thought he could kill me, did he? Fucking idiot.* Frost coated his desk as he contemplated the many ways he planned on taking his revenge on Val. If Val thought his precious niece had suffered, he was in for a rude surprise.

Compared to what he would do to Val he'd been downright compassionate toward Jamie.

He booted up his computer, using the password he'd set up for just such an eventuality to get into the company's servers. He knew Frigg had already locked him out of the system, but she didn't know, *couldn't* know, about the back door log-in he'd installed.

Yup, there it was in black and white. Grimm and Sons was now run by that frigid bitch, Frederica Grimm, aka Frigg, and had been since the day after he'd taken off. He sat back with a sneer. Fucking cow. He did a quick run-down of the employees, not surprised to see Fred's pansy-assed sons Magnus and Morgan were no longer with the company. Rumor had it Tyr had taken them in as well. He wasn't surprised. Tyr's company had become something of a haven for the useless flotsam and jetsam that had flooded Grimm and Sons. Adam Grey, Jordan's father and the god known as Frey, remained, as did Frejya. Which was surprising, all things considered. He would have figured them for the first to bail out, considering how they'd stood by Tyr's side on the battlefield. Sydney Saeter and Sybil Grimm, aka Sigyn and Sif, were also still on the payroll. His son Vidarr, the god of vengeance and known to humans as Victor Kippe was also still employed at Grimm, but that was no surprise. Even without the apples he'd always been loyal to the point of idiocy. Kate Berger, the goddess Skadi who'd tied Loki to the rocks and placed the snake over his head was still loyal as well. Fred Grimm, aka Thor, was still his as well. The god of the sea, Njord, had never been a part of the company, but Grimm wasn't too worried about him. Njord, or Kye as he was now known, rarely left his seaside home. He'd have no reason to bother with Grimm's problems

unless they encroached on his domain. If they did, all hell would break loose, as Kye acknowledged neither Grimm nor Tyr as his master. As far as Grimm could tell he was still maintaining his neutrality.

Grimm's brows shot up in shock as one name he'd been certain to see was conspicuous in its absence. Niklas DeWitt, the god Heimdall and Guardian of the Bifrost Bridge, was no longer listed on the payroll. Grimm sat back, curious what could have made the Guardian quit. It was entirely possible Frigg had done something to piss the other god off, but what she could have done to anger *him* to that extent Grimm had no idea. It wasn't like Nik hung around at the office Christmas parties, but up until now he'd been completely loyal.

Perhaps that was it. With Grimm himself no longer at the helm, perhaps Nik had taken himself off the payroll? He filed it mentally away as something to look into, and dismissed the man from his thoughts.

Next up, he needed to find out what had happened to his stash of elixir. Grimm keyed up the distribution list. When he saw the numbers he nearly howled in rage.

She'd cut them off. Aesir, Vanir and Jotun, gods and giants both, she'd cut them *all* off. She'd turned around and started serving the elixir, *his* elixir, to *humans*. She was controlling the fucking *humans* with his secret weapon.

*Stupid, stupid, stupid bitch.* The walls frosted over as he stared in furious disbelief at the screen. Giving the elixir to the janitor who'd cleaned up the massive amounts of Grimm's blood had been one thing; the man wouldn't question what had appeared to be a murder in Grimm's very private basement. He also wouldn't question the devices he'd had stored in the side room where he'd had his fun with Jamie. But to give it to the stockholders? What had she hoped to gain there? The elixir wouldn't be nearly as potent in her hands as it was in his. She didn't have the ability to manipulate others that made the apples so effective in his hands. He'd waged war to get his hands on the apples once he'd found out about their unique properties. Ingested, the subject—god, Jotun or human—became highly suggestible. Combined with Odin's own talents as a god of lies, he'd had complete control over anyone who drank anything made of the apples of Idun. They were almost impossible to resist. Indeed, he'd thought them completely impossible to resist until Tyr managed to break free, denying him the sale of his company, Guardian Investigations, and control over Fred Grimm's children.

He leaned back in his chair to make room for the ravens that swooped into the room, landing exactly where they'd started from. Their feathers settled down, turning back into stone.

*"Rapport."* He rested his hand on their heads, stroking them as the information he sought played out inside his mind. Startlingly enough, they'd been unable to find Tyr.

Grimm smiled. He had an idea of what could have happened to Tyr to take him off the ravens' radar. He wove a complicated design over the raven statue, shrinking it down in size until it fit into his breast pocket. Later he'd break out the chain he used to wear them on and place them around his neck.



“Are you done?” He looked up to find Rina Southerland standing in the doorway, her pale blue eyes filled with amusement. He immediately logged out of the computer and shut it down, knowing it was time to go.

He’d been surprised when she sought him out, offering herself to him just as she always had. She’d taken him in, hidden him in a home she owned that not even Val knew about. She’d told him that she’d had other, similar homes over the years wherever they lived, just in case he needed it.

She even had a plan for regaining control of Idunn and her apples. It needed refinement, but once all of the elements were in place he’d implement it. He’d reward her later by making her his queen, the way he should have centuries ago.

She sauntered into the room and moved around his desk, her long, pale fingers stroking through his hair. “Mmm, I love your hair.” He leaned back into her, enjoying the silken slide of his hair through her fingers. The light caress of her fingernails sent shivers down his spine. “It’s so beautiful when you’re not hiding it.” Her free hand reached down and caressed his cock through his dress pants. “Of course, even covered up this is beautiful.”

He pulled her down for a brief, hard kiss. “No time, my love. We need to leave before Frigg finds us here.” He stood quickly, pulling her along behind him. He exited the office, careful to leave no trace of his visit behind. They were silent as they left the building, the security guard asleep behind his desk thanks to Rina’s magic.

“I think you could take the old cow,” Rina laughed as he pulled out of the parking lot.

His grin was savage as he entered the highway. Yes, he probably could take the old cow, but why would he want to when he had Rina?

## Chapter Three

Toni stretched in her chair, ignoring the appreciative looks of some of the men around her. Her new partner was supposed to show up any day now, but Daniel Solberg had apparently run into a hitch somewhere on the way to his desk. The captain had given him a break, something her boss never did unless it was a family emergency. But when she'd asked around, good old Danny-boy's kids were in fine health, and so was his wife. Since his parents were deceased, what would constitute an emergency?

She shrugged. The only way to get any extra time from Cap was to either drug him or brainwash him. Since neither one was likely, she had to assume that something was going on that Cap was okay with.

And if Cap was okay with it, who was she to say anything?

Finally, Detective Solberg appeared. Golden-boy pretty, with deep blue eyes, he walked with the attitude to match his looks. His eyes assessed her, a smile lighting his face that let her know he enjoyed what he saw.

Toni snorted. If he thought he'd get anywhere with her using those tricks, he had another think coming. Better men than he, and less married, had tried and had their asses handed to them. "Detective Solberg."

"Detective Mancinelli." His palm was warm and dry, his smile friendly, but something about his eyes didn't quite mesh.

She felt a shiver run down her spine. She'd seen eyes like those before. They'd been in the face of a killer. She waved him to his desk but made a mental note to keep an eye on him. "Yeah. Nice ta meetcha." She waved her hand at his desk, already knowing she was in for one hell of a time. "Let's get to work."

Jamie woke to the feel of an arm around her waist. She touched it hesitantly, unsure who was in the bed with her. It was a hairy, definitely male arm. Considering the fact that Jordan would rip the balls off her boys if they slept with anyone but her, that left Jeff and Travis as the only possibilities. The odds of it being Travis snuggled up behind her were about a gazillion to one, so that left Jeff. Only he would dare something like this, knowing almost anyone else would incur her wrath.

It had been a very long time since Jeff had slept in her bed, not since they were kids and he'd suffered from weird ass nightmares nothing could soothe. She'd often wake to find him just like this, scared out of his mind or passed out. Perhaps the kidnapping had brought back some of those night terrors, throwing him

back into childhood. Still, she couldn't let him stay here. It was just too fucking weird now that they were adults. She yawned and decided it was time to boot her twin out. She cocked her arm and slammed her elbow back.

"Ow!"

She froze. *That's not Jeff.*

"What the hell did you do that for?"

*That's Travis.*

"Jamie?"

*Why is Travis in my bed?*

"Jamie?"

Oh, fuck. She'd just hit Travis. That's what she got for not looking before hitting. Hadn't she learned anything in that self-defense class?

"Jamie."

They'd told her always to look behind you to make sure you're not beating up your grandmother. Perhaps she should have listened closer to her instructor's words.

He sighed. "Are you going to open your eyes?"

She shook her head no. She might never open them again.

She squeaked as his lips brushed the side of her neck. She could feel his beard tickling her skin. "Well, I'm hungry. I'm going to get up and kick the Three Stooges out of bed so they can feed us." She felt the mattress dip behind her as he stood. "How are you feeling today?"

Mortified. "Fine." Hell, she even *sounded* mortified. Great.

"Okay. Let me just throw some jeans on and I'll be out of your hair for a little bit."

Her eyes flew open despite her best efforts to keep them glued shut. She was just in time to see that bodacious ass clad in black silk not five feet from her nose. His strong back was bent as he put his legs into his jeans. "Gah."

He turned around so quickly she was surprised he didn't fall over. "Are you all right? I thought you said you weren't in pain." His hand cupped her cheek, his expression concerned.

She squeezed her eyes shut again, but it was too late. The sight of his unfastened jeans was permanently etched into her retinas, the thick line of his cock lovingly outlined by the black silk. "I'm good." *Hell, I'm better than good. I've now got a month's worth of fantasy material.*

"Are you sure?"

She heard his zipper catching, then the snap of his jeans. "Yup."

She thought she heard him stifle a chuckle but couldn't be sure. "I'll be back in a little bit, sweetheart. You get some more rest, okay?"

"Okay."

She waited until she heard the door to the bedroom shut before opening her eyes, staring at it in confusion.

*Sweetheart?*

Travis left the bedroom with a smirk. *Oh, yeah. She wants me. Now all I have to do is convince her she's got me.* The look of fascination when he'd turned around after practically shoving his ass in her face had been priceless.

He leaned up against the wall next to Jordan's bedroom and put his ear to the wall. He couldn't hear a sound. He gently rapped on the door. "Guys? I'm going into the kitchen to make breakfast."

He counted under his breath. "Five, four, three, two..."

Someone started moving in the other room. With a quickly smothered grin he headed for the kitchen. He was just laying the frying pan on the stove when a hand reached out and snatched it.

"Give me that."

He turned to find a rumpled Logan, in blue jeans and a scowl, holding the pan.

"Move, Lefty."

He moved. "What's for breakfast, hothead? Habanero French toast?"

Logan glowered at him as he got out the eggs and bread. "Ha. Ha."

Travis decided to take pity on him and start the coffee. "What did you three decide last night? Don't tell me which one got to be on top, because I *really* don't want to know."

Logan's leer was cheerful as he sniffed at the coffee. "We're going to do to Jamie and Jeff what we did to Jordan."

Travis stopped and glared at Logan. He could feel the mist trying to obscure his vision.

"Not that. Damn, and they call *me* perv. I meant we're going to prove a few things the hard way."

Travis flushed. He wasn't used to this caveman feeling where a woman was concerned.

"Coffee?" Jordan stumbled into the room, yawning so wide he was surprised her brains didn't spill out of her mouth.

"Morning." He hid his smile behind his mug. Without missing a beat, Logan handed her a mug he'd placed on the counter. She shuffled past, yawning again, and filled the mug from the still percolating pot. She had barely stopped to get dressed, merely throwing on one of her mens' T-shirts and a pair of boxers. Travis could see her breasts swinging freely beneath the shirt.

Not that he was looking or anything.

Okay, yeah, he was. He wasn't dead, after all, just in love, and Jordan had a nice, perky pair.

"Morning, Jordan." Travis stepped aside, giving her room to prop up next to the coffee pot.

"Morning, baby." Logan moved past her to grab his own mug, planting an absent kiss on the top of her head as he did so.

“Are we having French toast?” Kir bopped into the room, that ever-present grin on his lips. His blond hair was pulled back in a ponytail. He’d decided to dress all in black today, with black jeans and a muscle shirt.

Travis watched as Kir and Logan greeted one another with a tender kiss. Part of him was astonished at how well the two men got along. Of all the Aesir, he would have thought Baldur and Loki would have the absolute least in common with each other.

Instead, they shared a love so pure it was dazzling.

Jordan watched the exchange as well, a soft smile flirting with her mouth. The two men turned toward her, pulling her into their embrace, and suddenly Travis felt like a voyeur.

He quietly left the room, hoping to give the three lovers some privacy, and settled in on the couch in the spacious living room. He put his mug down on the coffee table and dug up the remote for the big screen TV Kir had recently installed.

“Oh Jesus God, my eyes. I think I’ll go out for breakfast. And use some Lysol, lots and *lots* of Lysol, when you clean that counter, okay?” Travis turned to find Jeff, a disgusted look on his face, stomping out of the kitchen. Kir’s deep throated laughter followed him. “Yuk it up, dickwad, but people have to prepare food in there. The last thing I want to taste is food à la ass.”

There was a thump from the kitchen as Kir’s laughter turned breathless. Travis figured he’d collapsed again from laughter.

“Um.” Jordan stood in the doorway, looking deliciously disheveled, a wild look on her face. “Bring back donuts?”

Jeff glared at her. “I am not bringing home anything that involves holes. God knows what those pervs would do with it.” He shrugged into his jacket, the disgust still on his face, but Travis could see the laughter trying to break through. Thank you, Jeff. Laughter was much needed around here right now, and bless Jeff for providing it.

“Oh, God.” Jordan hid her face in her hands. Logan’s deep voice wafted from the kitchen. “Breathe, Kir. C’m on, blondie.”

“What the hell is going on out here?” Travis turned to find Jamie standing in her bedroom door. “Are they having sex in the kitchen again?”

Jordan fled, heading back into the kitchen, a horrified look on her bright red face.

Jeff just stared at his sister. “What do you mean *again*?”

“Oh God.” Jordan’s muffled voice was nearly drowned out by Kir’s renewed laughter.

Jamie rolled her eyes. “Oh, please, like you’ve never had sex in a kitchen before.”

“I am not discussing sex with my sister.”

“You were discussing it with Jordan. Hell, from the sound of things they practically gave you a freakin’ tutorial.”

“Oh *God*.”

“It’s a little late to be embarrassed now, perv.” Jeff yelled toward the kitchen. “And you!” He pointed at Jamie, shaking his finger at her. “I am not discussing sex with you.”

“Oh, please. You’re just pissed because you ain’t gettin’ any.” Not even the swelling of her face could dim the South Philly accent or attitude she was throwing.

Travis sank down on the sofa, covering his mouth with his hand. Too much more and he’d be joining Kir in a heap on the floor.

Jeff threw that attitude right back at his twin. “Oh, yeah? When was the last time *you* got some?”

All traces of amusement disappeared under Jeff’s teasing question. Jamie wasn’t seeing anyone that Travis was aware of, but that didn’t mean she hadn’t gone out and found someone to fool around with.

Jamie’s smirk had Travis damn near growling in a caveman-like display. “More recently than you, I bet.”

Travis’s hand clenched. *What?* He sat up and stared at the woman who was currently glaring at her twin. His eyes narrowed as a flush crept up Jamie’s cheeks.

“The closest you’ve come is Vincente.” Jeff batted his eyelashes at Jamie outrageously. “Oh, *Vincente*.”

Travis’s jaw clenched. Who the fuck was Vincente?

Jamie gasped, furious. “You leave Vincente alone.”

Whoever he was, he needed his ass kicked.

“It’s those gold lamé briefs. They get you every time.”

Travis winced. No fucking way. He was not shoving his ass into gold lamé briefs. Even for Jamie. Hell, he didn’t even do that in the seventies.

“Oh, fuck off, Jeff.” Jamie flipped her brother the bird before limping back into the bedroom, the door slamming shut behind her.

“On that note...” Jeff cupped his hands around his mouth and yelled, “Hey, pervs! I’m heading out. I’ll bring back some non-ass-tastic food, okay?”

“Oh, God.” Jordan’s mortified whimper had Travis almost smiling again, but the thought of fuckhead Vincente kept it from materializing.

“You keep praying to me, baby, eventually I’m going to answer.”

Jeff rolled his eyes at the sound of Logan’s voice, but he was smiling as he headed out the door.

Travis stared at Jamie’s closed door, one thought running through his mind.

Who the *fuck* was Vincente?

## Chapter Four

Toni studied Solberg closely. Something just wasn't sitting right with her, and it started and ended with her new partner. "Where the hell did this information come from?"

"Anonymous tip, but the man hasn't been seen in over a month." Solberg shrugged. "It's worth a look."

She tapped her finger against her mouth. Maybe it was just her instinctive dislike of the guy that was making her dislike his tip. "What's your gut say?"

"It's legit. We've had more than one tip. It's not like we're going on one phone call here."

She nodded slowly. If he was on the up-and-up then it was worth checking it out. "Okay. Research the company, see if anything's changed there. I'll check out the family angle."

"You know the granddaughter was tortured by Mr. Grimm, right?"

"I know. It's in the file." The supposed vic was a sicko whack-job, but whether he deserved what he'd gotten or not, whoever had done him should have left him to law enforcement.

"Yeah." Solberg took a big bite of his Whopper. "Checked that angle out first, thinking it might be a revenge thing."

Ick. She hated it when guys talked with their mouths full. Like she wanted to see their chewed food. Blech. "I'll have to check out the medical records." She bit into an onion ring, making sure to swallow before continuing her thought. "That makes the wife a much more viable suspect. The father of Ms. Grimm too." She flipped through her notes. "Fred."

He nodded, pointing to her list with one of his French fries. "I think we need to check them *all* out."

"Okay. You've obviously got the family and friends covered. I'll deal with the business angle."

"Not a problem." His false grin was seriously beginning to get on her nerves.

She bit into another onion ring and studied his smug features. Every one of her cop senses was tingling, but she couldn't put her finger on what the hell was wrong. It was driving her fucking nuts. She couldn't shake the feeling that some of that wrongness was now directed at her.

*What are you hiding from me?*

Travis sat in the back of Logan's SUV and wondered how to bring up what he was sure would be a painful subject. He'd managed to keep Jamie and Jeff from questioning him further, a difficult job

considering their cramped quarters and Jeff's stubborn refusal to allow a subject to die a graceful death. When he was ready to tell his story he only wanted to do it once, and while both Jamie and Jeff had earned the right to sit in on that discussion he needed everyone there for it. He'd managed to avoid the topic for four days now, but he was rapidly running out of time.

Morgan and Magnus Grimm—the twin half-brothers of Jamie, Jeff and Jordan—and Val had just returned from a job Travis had sent them on. The Grimms were working cases to pick up the slack left by Travis, Jeff and Jordan not being in the office. Considering everything that had happened they'd been more than happy to put in some overtime for him while he made sure their family was safe. Now that the case they'd been gone on was solved to everyone's satisfaction the men were back, and it was time to come clean to all of them. They were planning on meeting for lunch at the Tait-Saeter condo, something Travis was looking forward to with equal amounts of dread and longing. Finally he'd be able to claim the woman who'd stolen his heart, no barriers or lies between them. He only hoped she could handle what he had to say.

Logan got lucky and managed to find a parking spot just shy of the corner of Ninth Street and Passyunk Avenue. They stepped out of the Lexus and breathed deep, inhaling the scents of the best cheesesteaks in the city.

"Pat's," Logan sighed, heading for his favorite eatery.

"Geno's, you heathen." Kir planted both feet firmly on the pavement and refused to move, no matter how hard Logan tugged on his arm.

Logan scowled. "Do you want to wait in the car while I get the food, or do you want to come with me?"

"I'll come with you as far as Geno's window."

Travis, watching the frown growing on Jordan's face, waited for the inevitable explosion. It wasn't long in coming.

"Oh, my God. Sometimes you two are friggin' morons." Jordan stepped out of the back seat of the SUV, looking tired and cranky. The Philly accent was strong, whether from aggravation or exhaustion Travis couldn't tell. She planted her hands on her hips and stared both of her lovers down, bristling with bad temper. "You—" She pointed at Logan, "—go to Pats. You—" She pointed at Travis, startling him. "—Go to Geno's. Jeff, Morgan and Magnus and I'll take one wit'. Jamie, Kir and everyone else will have one wit'out, and the Wonder Twins want peppers. Oh, and Uncle Val likes provolone."

"Wonder Twins?" Travis nearly choked trying not to laugh. It was the first time he'd heard Jordan refer to Jeff and Jamie as the Wonder Twins. From the look on her face if he did laugh she'd inflict major bodily harm on his person.

She ignored him. "Each of you get one for each of us, as well as yourselves. We'll have a steak-off. You—" She pointed at a surprised Kir, "—get your ass back in the truck and guard mine so Logan doesn't



have an aneurysm. Now move. I don't like cold cheesesteaks." She hurled herself back into the SUV and sat with her arms crossed, glaring out the front window.

The men stared at one another and shrugged. Logan and Travis headed for Pat's while Kir settled into the back seat with Jordan, snuggling her close and kissing the side of her neck. They'd hit Geno's on the way back to the car.

"Who decided the little dictator should come with us again?" Logan shoved his hands into his back pockets, looking bored. Travis wasn't fooled, though. Logan was on point, wary of every person who walked by the SUV. He kept an eye on it at all times, his eyes moving between the customers, the car and any possible threats.

"Jamie." She'd sent them on this food expedition as a way to distract Jordan, who'd been hovering over her like a mother hen and snapping at anyone and everyone who got within five feet of Jamie. The look of relief on Jamie's face as Travis had dragged Jordan out of the house was worth the grumpiness Jordan was flinging around.

Jeff was also at the powerfully warded condo, keeping watch on his twin. The condo was so heavily guarded now he couldn't even think how Grimm could possibly get inside. "She said she wanted someone along to supervise us." Travis barely refrained from rolling his eyes. Jordan could barely keep awake. Right now, the only thing she was capable of supervising were her own eyelids. "By the way, why couldn't we get cheesesteaks from somewhere closer to us?" He stepped up to the window and placed their order, letting Logan remain on guard.

Logan stared at him like he'd grown another head. "There are other cheesesteak places? Where?"

The man behind the counter laughed as he handed them their steaks. "Exactly. Swear to God, ain't nobody in the damn city makes cheesesteaks like us."

"Amen," Logan laughed, winking at Travis as they made their way back across the street. They stood in line, got the second set of steaks, and headed back to the SUV.

"Finally." Jordan pouted, right up until Logan shoved the bag of food into her hands. She settled back down with a contented sigh, sniffing the bags occasionally to get a whiff.

Travis reached for the bags, only wanting to hold them so she could catch a nap, but she growled and clutched them to her chest. With a laugh he held up his hand. "Right, do not get between the pregnant lady and the food."

When the three of them stared at him, shocked speechless, he realized exactly what he'd said. *Crap*. "Um, what I meant was—"

"We're pregnant?" Kir's hand immediately went to Jordan's stomach, rubbing protectively over where the baby was. His eyes turned to spring skies instantly, white clouds drifting lazily across brilliant blue. "He's right. We're pregnant, Logan. Two weeks along."

Logan took a deep breath, his eyes riveted to Jordan's stomach. His hands clenched on the leather seats as he gulped. "Holy fuck."

*Exactly.* What had they expected with a fertility god? How Logan hadn't wound up pregnant over the years was still a mystery to Travis, as Logan, an expert shapeshifter, hadn't only been in male form over the centuries. Travis cleared his throat. "Maybe we should get her home." He glanced over at Jordan to see a dazed, terrified look in her eyes. "Yeah. That might be good."

"Twins." Kir's voice deepened as Baldur roused, the feel of his child under his palm making the fertility god smile. "I can feel them. One born of me, one born of you."

Travis smiled. He wondered if he and Jamie would eventually have twins. From the look of things, if he ever got her into his bed and his life, the odds were good he'd have to think of two baby names instead of one since Odin's line seemed to be chock full of them.

The two men looked at each other, hope and fear warring with the shock on both their faces.

Logan turned to Jordan. "You're out of the fight."

That got a reaction out of Jordan. "Logan—"

*"I am not losing another child to Grimm!"*

Travis shut his eyes, but the overwhelming scent of burning leather nearly choked him. He opened the passenger side window to let some fresh air in and hopefully calm Logan down.

He turned back to find both Kir and Jordan had hold of Logan and were stroking him. Logan was shaking like a leaf.

Travis got out of the car and walked around to the driver's side. He pulled open the door. "Out." He tugged until a wild-eyed Logan stood, shoving the other man into the back seat with Kir and Jordan. "Keys."

They were handed to him by Kir with a nod of thanks. Travis watched as the three curled around each other in a big knot with Logan tucked in the middle. He shut the back door and climbed into the driver's side. He pulled out his cell phone and called Magnus, then Morgan. "Change of plans. Meet me at hothead's, fifteen minutes." He shut the phone and dialed Val, giving him the same message before pulling out into traffic.

"Don't call either of my fathers."

He glanced in the rearview mirror to see Jordan stroking Logan's hair. Kir was soothing Logan, stroking his back. After the way Fred Grimm and Adam Grey had tortured Logan, Travis wasn't surprised she still wasn't speaking to them. He nodded once and turned back to the road.

It was time to set a few things straight. Time to help Logan release his living children from Grimm's bondage.

“How did you know?” Kir’s eyes were still that eerie spring day, inhuman and beautiful and staring at him with a mixture of confusion and determination. “I knew something was different, but I didn’t know what. And I’m a God of Spring, in charge of fertility.”

He grimaced as he turned toward Rittenhouse Square. “I promise I’ll explain after lunch. I only want to tell it once.”

Travis ignored Kir’s long, thoughtful look, and hoped the man would be able to handle the truth.

## Chapter Five

Grimm walked into the police station, smiling and waving to his co-workers. Rina had laughed her ass off when he'd first explained this part of the scheme, loving the simplicity of what he had in mind. She'd been extremely useful in hiding Solberg's body, freezing it solid, then watching as he shattered it into a million pieces. She'd swept up the debris and dropped it into a nearby lake, claiming the fish would appreciate the snack. She was certain that Travis and Val would be toast once he got a hold of them. Her faith in him was a hell of a turn-on, almost as much as her viciousness. "Did we get anything back on those forensics yet?"

Detective Mancinelli nodded. Her cold hazel eyes held a hint of the hunt, that lure that pulled people into police work and kept them there. "You've got good instincts, Solberg." She rifled through some papers, stopping when she reached the one she wanted. "Seems the Luminol test showed large amounts of blood on that fun-room floor." She shook her head. "What the fuck did they do to that man? There was spray pattern all over the fucking place. Just from the way the drops fell, it looks like he was stabbed and slashed repeatedly."

He hid his triumphant grin, plastering a look of intense concentration on his face. "Has his wife reported him missing yet?" *Thank you, Rina, for calling in the missing person report.* Without that even he would have had a hard time convincing the police to investigate his murder.

"No, but the bitch took over the company not four weeks ago. Man, her lawyer was pissed when we called with that warrant." She closed the papers, her expression hard. "I wanna talk to her, find out where she thinks the darling hubby's at." She smirked. "How much you wanna bet she gives us some song and dance about him bein' off with his mistress? 'Oh, Officer, boo-hoo, he left me, now I get to live off all this money and fuck my boy-toy into next week. Whatevah shall I do?' "

The amused cynicism in the detective's voice as she batted her lashes at him had him laughing out loud. Oh, she was going to be a pleasure to tame. Too bad she seemed resistant to his persuasive powers. He sighed. If he could just get into her head, he'd have even more pleasant diversions to look forward to than watching one hot, dedicated cop take down the banes of his existence. He might even be able to explore whatever it was in her ancestry that gave her the ability to resist him.

Snapping fingers in front of his face brought him back to the present. "You payin' attention, Danny-boy?" He looked up to find her staring at him in amused disdain. "'Cause my eyes are up here." She pointed to her face with the sheaf of papers, before shaking her head and slapping them against his chest.

He caught them on pure reflex as she turned and walked away from him. “Want to work on gettin’ the warrant for poor old Mrs. Grimm’s place?”

“I don’t know. I’m leaning more toward the son and his friend, Travis.” She stopped, turning to frown at him. “Rumor has it the old man had a fight with both of them not long before he disappeared.” A couple of other phone calls had made sure she heard those rumors too. “There’s no indication that Mrs. Grimm was anything other than happy with Mr. Grimm.”

She rolled her eyes. “Tell you what, get search warrants for all three places.” She turned and headed back for their shared desk, her hips swaying enticingly.

“Sure, no problem.” He smirked. Damn, he liked watching her walk away. When all of this was over, he’d have to make sure to enjoy the good detective for a while. From the gleam in Rina’s eyes the first time she caught sight of Detective Mancinelli he didn’t think she’d object to a little fun herself.

He sat at his desk and dialed the phone. “Hello, Judge Foster? I need to discuss some search warrants with you.” He smiled, infusing his voice with just enough power to get exactly what he wanted. He’d already gotten the judge to issue the warrant for Grimm and Sons. This, with actual evidence, would be a piece of cake.

Jamie grinned when her brothers Magnus and Morgan showed up at the condo for lunch, sniffing the air appreciatively.

*Ah, the lure of the Philly cheesesteak.* She bit into her sandwich, slapping Jeff’s hand away when he reached for her hot peppers. “Get your own,” she mumbled around a bite of gooey, cheesy goodness.

Magnus just shook his head at her as he settled on the floor in front of the coffee table. Her love of hot peppers was something of a legend in the family, as was Jeff’s attempts to steal them. He popped the tab on a can of soda and took a healthy drink before unwrapping his sandwich. “How’re you feeling, munchkin?”

“Like I was run over by a truck.”

Magnus winced, unable to keep from visibly tracing her bruises.

“I don’t blame you, Mag.”

“Don’t matter. He blames him.” Morgan sat next to his twin and unrolled his sandwich. “Hell, I blame me too.”

“The only one to blame is Grimm, and you know it.” Travis sat next to her on the sofa, his can of soda right next to hers. He had a bowl of chips cradled in his right arm. He waved away her attempt to take it from him, placing it between them after he’d set his soda down. She’d never had the chance to watch him so closely before. Seeing how he handled his lack of a right hand had been something of an eye-opener. Things she took for granted, like holding her phone and texting her friends at the same time, Travis had to find work-arounds for. But not once had she ever heard him complain or seen him act uncomfortable. More

than once her fingers had twitched, wanting to help him button his shirt, but she'd held back. He didn't need her help, and frankly she didn't have the right to touch him that way.

"Here." A hand reached around and gave Travis his sandwich.

"Thanks, Jeff."

Her twin slid onto the third spot on the sofa next to Travis. "Welcome." He bit into his sandwich with a happy moan. "Mmm. Geno's."

"Heathen," Magnus coughed.

"Pagan."

"Children." Kir joined the brothers on the floor. "Play nice."

"Or what?" Morgan asked, balling up and tossing his empty wrapper at Jeff.

"Or Logan will keep all the cheesecake for himself." Logan helped Jordan into the chair, handing her a soda and a sandwich before heading off into the kitchen again.

Jeff frowned. "Since when do you drink Sprite, Jordy?"

"Since today." She took a sip and made a face. "Blech."

"Gimme, I'll drink it." Jamie stood to take the can of soda from her sister.

Travis pulled her gently back down. "Let her be."

What the hell? "I was just gonna switch drinks."

"Sit." Travis's eyes narrowed, but something about his expression was off. He was hiding something from her, and she didn't like it one little bit.

"Woof." Jamie matched Travis's glare, but it was hard. At least most of the swelling was finally gone, so glaring at him was no longer painful. Of course, now she looked like a goth Rainbow Bright, all greens and purples in unattractive places.

He sighed. "Trust me. Don't switch drinks."

"Why not?"

"Yeah, why not?" Jordan stood, but got put back in her seat by Logan, who sat on the arm of her chair.

Logan stared down at Jordan, a frown on his face. "Do you want me to tell them why not, or would you rather tell them?"

Jeff was watching them, speculation in his eyes. "You're pregnant."

All sound ceased as Jamie and her brothers stared at Jordan.

Jordan rolled her eyes, and pandemonium erupted. It was so loud Jamie barely heard the doorbell ring.

"I'll get it. Stay put." Travis got up and answered the door, letting Uncle Val into the condo.

*Seriously, what do these guys eat? 'Cause I want me some.* It suddenly shocked her how good the men in her family looked. Uncle Val could have been a model. Admittedly, he'd be selling guns or motorcycles, but still. M'row. She bit down on her cheesesteak with a grimace. *And ew for thinking that.*

Uncle Val had to be in his mid to late forties by now. Instead, he looked like a man in his late twenties or early thirties.

She frowned. *Come to think of it, how old is Travis?* He had barely changed at all since the first time she saw him nine years ago.

She blinked. How the fuck old were Magnus and Morgan, for that matter? She stared at her brothers, visions of vampires running through her head. They hadn't aged, either.

Not one. Damn. Day.

She swallowed hard, the steak nearly choking her. *Oh hell.*

She looked over at Jeff, who was frowning at her. *What?* he mouthed.

She turned back to Magnus and Morgan, watching them devour their second set of steaks. Okay, maybe werewolves? How long does the furry set live for, anyway? Her big brothers were serious carnivores.

"Hey, pumpkin." Uncle Val leaned down to give her a hug, and she winced. "Did I hurt you?"

The genuine concern on his face helped ease some of her fears, but not all of them. Couldn't vampires hypnotize people with their eyes? "Um, no."

Those icy eyes of his narrowed. "What's wrong?"

She bit her lip, wondering how to head him off. Uncle Val was like a bulldog when he thought something was wrong with any of his nieces or nephews. "Nothing."

He studied her intently, joined by Travis. The two men looked like they were trying to see inside her soul.

Are two vamps stronger than one vamp? She didn't know, but she wasn't eager to find out. She squeezed her eyes shut. It was a stupid gesture, she knew that, but it wasn't like she could go running down the hall for the elevator and freedom.

"What the fuck is wrong with you? Someone slip magic mushrooms onto your sandwich?"

She opened her eyes to see Jeff frowning at her curiously. "Nothing. Nothing's wrong." She gave him a weak, sickly grin, signaling with her hands that he should drop it.

"It's finally worn off." She looked over to find Travis grimacing and exchanging a loaded glance with Uncle Val.

"We knew it would." Uncle Val picked up a sandwich, but the easy expression he'd walked in with had turned hard. It was his game face, the one he showed when he was about to get down to business. On anyone else that expression would have terrified her. But this was Uncle Val, who wouldn't harm a hair on her head.

Would he?

"We knew *what* would?" Jeff stood off and faced his uncle and friend, his hands clenched at his sides. He'd angled his body between hers and theirs, protecting her, his expression fierce.

Travis held up his hand. "Down, boy."

Jeff held up his hands, but she could tell her twin had hit the limit of his patience by the way his whole body tensed up. He was about two seconds away from losing it. "Look, nice as it is to know, you didn't call a family meeting to tell us my sister is pregnant. So what's up, and how does it affect Jamie?"

"The last person on the face of the earth I would ever hurt is your sister, and you know that." Travis gestured back towards the sofa. "Sit down, Jeff. I promise, we'll explain everything."

"Wait. Jordan's pregnant?" Uncle Val turned with a happy smile to hug Jordan, ignoring the way Logan scowled at him. She knew the two of them had some issues with each other in the past, but she thought they'd been resolved.

Jeff ignored Val, his focus on Travis. "Everything?"

Travis nodded. "I give you my solemn oath that any question you or Jamie asks me within the next hour I will do my best to answer honestly."

Logan gasped. Kir looked shocked. Magnus and Morgan winced.

And Jordan nodded.

*That* was the reaction Jamie was most interested in. Jordan was calm, her hand firmly clasped in Logan's, Kir scooting back to rest his head against Logan's knee. Whatever it was, Jordan wasn't concerned at all.

Logan snorted and looked down at Kir. "Think they're done enough for plan A-1?"

"*What the fuck is going on?*" Jeff's roar got everyone's attention. "My grandfather is suddenly a psychopath, my uncle, who used to kiss said psychopath's ass, is now my co-worker, my sister has gotten knocked up by two guys, my other sister got nearly beat to death, my boss is acting...okay, he's the only one of you freaks acting normal." Jeff huffed out a breath and glared at them all before wearily rubbing his eyes. "He's always been a secretive son of a bitch. My big brothers are *not* beating the shit out of the perverts for knocking up Jordan." He scrubbed his hand through his hair, frustration practically vibrating off of him. "When did I ride the Wacky train to Dysfunction Junction?"

She couldn't help it. She started giggling. She'd watched the frustration ratcheting up inside her twin with each day she spent in the hospital and knew it was only a matter of time before that hidden temper of his flared up. Jeff *hated* being kept in the dark more than anything. It was why he'd decided to become a PI like Jordan and Travis.

"You haven't." There was a strange timbre to Travis's voice, a deep, almost echoing quality that stopped her giggles. Travis had his eyes closed, his head tilted back, as if he was listening to something that only he could hear. "You've asked me what the fuck is going on. Old Man Grimm will stop at nothing to kill Kir and Logan, including harming you, your sisters, your brothers and anyone else who stands in his way."

"Why?"



“For rule of the Aesir and the Vanir, and for prophecy.”

Jamie blinked. “Wait. Aren’t the Aesir the Norse gods?” She was half-Norwegian. Her father had practically spoon-fed her stories of the might of Thor, Odin and the Aesir.

“Yes.”

That deep timbre to his voice was beginning to send shivers down her spine. She leaned forward. “Okay, why would my crazy grandfather think he needs to rule a bunch of myths?”

“They aren’t myth, and he *was* their ruler, up until recently.”

“So, basically, you’re telling me that Odin tried to kill me.”

“No.”

She sagged in relief.

“His plan was to torture you in order to lure Logan, Kir and Jordan to him. I have no idea whether or not he planned on you dying.”

Oh. Well then. That made it so much better.

“Toot toot! All aboard the cuckoo train!” Jeff pumped his arm in the air like he was pulling on a train whistle. “Next stop: Asgard.”

Travis bit his lip, obviously stifling laughter, but was silent.

Jamie ignored her insane twin and turned her attention back to Travis. “My grandfather is Odin?”

“Yes.”

“My father is?”

“Thor.”

Jeff busted out laughing. “You’re fucking kidding me, right?”

“No.”

“So who’s Jordan’s father? Tyr?” Jamie and Jeff had the same mother as Jordan, but Jordan’s father was Adam Grey. Or at least that’s what they’d been told. Travis made a face. “Hell, no.”

“Oh, well that’s good.”

“Her father is really Adam Grey, but he’s also known as Frey.”

“Yeah, right. You’re missing a hand. Does that make *you* Tyr?”

“Yes.”

Jeff growled and turned. He grabbed Jamie’s hand and pulled her from the couch, ignoring her painful moan. “That’s it. I’m done. We’re leaving.”

A deep, multi-choral voice sounded from behind them. It was Travis, but echoed and magnified to be nearly unbearable. “Let her go, Jeff.”

Jamie looked back and gasped. Travis was *glowing*. Not turn-the-lights-out-and-you-can-barely-see-by-it type glowing, either. She could hardly make out his features in the painfully blinding light he exuded.

She pulled free of Jeff's hold and waved her hands in front of her in an instinctive pattern, willing the light to die down a little. To her utter shock Travis's glow dimmed.

"Holy fuck. Where'd you learn to do that?" The stunned look on Logan's face would have been priceless at any other time.

"Learn what?"

Travis smiled and opened his eyes. They were completely white, the blue she'd come to know and love completely covered over. They glowed with the same intensity as his body had earlier, making it nearly impossible to stare into them. "It is instinctive to you. You are your father's daughter."

"Her father isn't Jotun."

Travis smiled enigmatically. "Ask your questions, Jamie."

*Where do I start?* "What's a Jotun?"

"Mistakenly called giants by humans, they are a race of elementals that existed in this world long before humans walked it. Fire, Ice, Light and Dark, they assisted in the creation of mankind and crafted some of the greatest artifacts ever wielded by the gods."

"Light and Dark?"

Travis ignored Logan's question. It was as if... "Light and Dark?"

"The Jotuns of Light and Dark you know as Alfar and Dvergar, or Lios Alfar and Dökk Alfar."

"Light elves and dark elves?"

He ignored Jordan's question, his unseeing gaze focused on Jamie.

She stepped closer to him, fascinated now that her eyes weren't watering. It was as if he couldn't even hear anyone other than her and Jeff. "Light elves and dark elves?"

"That is one way they are described." His hand reached out and cupped her cheek, his thumb stroking the cheekbone in a soft caress. His gaze was still directed over her head, but the expression on his face was one of fierce tenderness.

*He can't really see me.* "Are you really Tyr?"

Travis nodded once. "Yes."

She went with her gut. "You're Lios Alfar, aren't you?"

He closed his eyes briefly. "Yes, and no."

"What does that mean?"

"I was the leader of the Vanir, who were once the gods of the Jotun."

"Whoa." Magnus was watching them with a dazed expression. Morgan didn't look much better. Logan looked positively sick. "Guess he's not related to the Old Man, then."

"Jamie." Travis's hand moved and buried itself in her hair, his voice still otherworldly but full of yearning. His head tilted down, his broad, powerful shoulders moving over her protectively. The stroke of

his fingers against her scalp was intoxicating. She closed her eyes, unconsciously leaning into him, jumping slightly when their bodies touched.

“Is Ragnarrok coming?”

Ragnarrok was the end of the world and the beginning of paradise, at least in Norse mythology. Jamie didn’t know much about it other than most of the gods died and Baldur wound up ruling paradise, something that would please her sister but scared Jamie to death. Jamie started as Jeff asked his question, the seriousness of his voice registering. Travis stiffened against her.

“Yes, and no.”

“Explain it.” Jeff’s voice was hard.

Travis tilted his head, frowning.

Jamie pulled back slightly, surprised when Travis’s hand tightened in her hair. She eased back into his hold and his fingers relaxed. “What did you mean when you said yes and no?”

“The Ragnarrok you’ve heard of is part fiction, part fact. This is the prophecy most people know:

*“High blows Heimdallr, the horn is aloft.*

*Odin communes with Mimir’s head.*

*Trembles Yggdrasill’s towering Ash.*

*The old tree wails when the Ettin is loosed.*

*“What of the Aesir? What of the Elf-folk?*

*All Jötunheim echoes, the Aesir are at council.*

*The dwarves are groaning before their stone doors,*

*Wise in rock-walls; wit ye yet, or what?*

*“Hrymr sails from the east, the sea floods onward.*

*The monstrous Beast twists in mighty wrath.*

*The Snake beats the waves, the Eagle is screaming.*

*The gold-neb tears corpses, Naglfar is loosed.*

*“From the east sails the keel; come now Múspell’s folk*

*Over the sea-waves, and Loki steereth.*

*There are the warlocks all with the Wolf,*

*With them is the brother of Býleistr faring.*

*“Surtr fares from southward with switch-eating flame.*

*On his sword shimmers the sun of the war-gods.  
The rocks are falling, and fiends are reeling,  
Heroes tread Hel-way, heaven is cloven.*

*“Then to the Goddess a second grief cometh,  
When Odin fares to fight with the Wolf,  
And Beli’s slayer, the bright god, with Surtr.  
There must fall Frigg’s beloved.*

*“Odin’s son goeth to strife with the Wolf,  
Vidarr, speeding to meet the slaughter-beast.  
The sword in his hand to the heart he thrusteth  
Of the fiend’s offspring; avenged is his Father.*

*“Now goeth Hlödyn’s glorious son  
Not in flight from the Serpent, of fear unheeding.  
All the earth’s offspring must empty the homesteads,  
When furiously smiteth Midgard’s defender.*

*“The sun shall be darkened, earth sinks in the sea,—  
Glide from the heaven the glittering stars.  
Smoke-reek rages and reddening fire:  
The high heat licks against heaven itself.”*

“Or so says the Poetic Edda. I’m not certain how much is fact, and how much fiction. What I do know is, Odin was terrified enough to have Fenris and Loki chained, Hel banished, Jörmungandr tossed into the sea, and Baldur killed. None of the living Vanir or Aesir know the truth of the prophecy, as it was Odin who delivered it to us.”

“Wait a minute.” Jeff stepped up next to Travis, his gaze locked on the man’s face. “Wouldn’t killing Baldur be like one of those self-fulfilling prophecies? If one of the signs of Ragnarrok is Baldur’s death, what does killing him accomplish other than to start the whole thing?”

“Baldur and Hodr are meant to rule, with Baldur ascendant, over the remaining Aesir. If Baldur is to rule, that means that Odin is dead. All of the gods loved Baldur, much more so than Odin. So he came up with a plan whereby Baldur would die. How he planned on keeping him from returning, I do not know. It is possible part of the true prophecy was Baldur’s death, but with a different ending.”

“So you think he was motivated by fear and jealousy?”

“I believe so. He might have thought he could stop Ragnarrok and maintain his place.”

“Wait.” Jeff shook his head quickly, like he was shaking something off. “Weren’t you there when Loki supposedly killed Baldur? I mean, you’re the God of Justice, right? If everything you’re telling us is true, then isn’t that the ultimate injustice?”

Travis winced, regret lining his face. “He’d sent me away on what turned out to be a fool’s errand. I’d been sent to speak with Njord, to see if he’d join us in some silly celebration I don’t even remember now. Of course he chose not to attend, and everything was over and done with by the time I got back. I...” Travis bit his lip. “I wanted to speak to Loki, to find out why he’d done what he’d done, but Odin convinced me not to.”

“You mean he plied you with apple wine and whispered sweet nothings in your ear.” Logan huffed out a breath. “Thanks for the thought, though.”

Travis ignored him.

Jamie felt a tug on her arm. She turned to find Jordan by her side, a worried frown on her face. “Ask him what the true prophecy is.”

“Why?”

“Because if this whole thing is true, Logan dies.”

“Why would Logan die?”

“Because he’s Loki.”

Her head whipped up to stare at Travis. “What?”

Jeff snorted out a laugh. “This keeps getting better and better. Who are Magnus and Morgan?”

Their brothers looked at Jeff in horror.

“Magni and Modi, the sons of Thor and the Jotun Járnsaxa, meant to carry Mjölnir after their father dies at Ragnarrok.”

“So they knew all of this, all along?” Jeff was glaring at them.

“Yes and no. Odin used the power of the apples of Idunn to blanket their minds, as he did with all of the Aesir and their living children.”

“Can you tone it down, glowbug? You’re giving me a headache.” Jeff rubbed his eyes wearily.

“Yes.” Travis’s glow dimmed even further, his features once more clear. “Better?”

“Yeah, thanks.”

Jamie was still reeling, but she had to know. “I thought the apples granted immortality?”

“No. I believe Kir and Logan were the first to deduce that they did not, as they were cut off from the source of the apples.”

“Actually, I knew first.” Val stood. “Before you ask, I’m Vali, the slayer of Hodr and the son of Odin and the Jotun Rindr.”

Jamie sighed and rubbed her eyes. "I'm getting a headache."

Travis's eyes immediately cleared, the gorgeous blue returning, his glow dying away completely. "You need to lie down. This is a lot to absorb in a small amount of time, and you're still recuperating." His voice had lost most of the echo, going back to the same old Travis she thought she'd known.

He bent to pick her up, but she stepped away from him. She ignored his fierce frown at her withdrawal. "No. We need to finish this. I need to know why."

"Why what, sweetheart?"

She ignored the endearment and focused on the facts. "Why did my grandfather torture me? Who are Logan and Kir? Loki and Baldur, right? And why wasn't I told any of this?"

"Jordan didn't know either, not until Logan and Kir revealed themselves to her in her office."

"Why?"

"They needed help proving that Grimm had been lying to the Aesir and Vanir for centuries, and they wanted Jordan to be the one providing it."

"Because she's a good detective?"

"Because she's the daughter of Frey, the step-granddaughter of Grimm and has the reputation of a woman of honor." Kir stood, tugging on a chain around his neck. He pulled and twisted, and suddenly a six foot spear, complete with glowing tip, rested in his hand. Suddenly he seemed much, much more than the easy-going man she'd known. He radiated a confidence and power that called to her on a level she'd never felt before. If *this* Kir asked her to jump off a bridge she'd seriously consider it. "Gungnir, the Godsphear, the prize Odin covets above all others. Now that I possess it, I am ruler of the Aesir and Vanir."

"Then where are the other gods? Man, I can't believe I'm asking that." Jamie collapsed suddenly, her bad leg giving out on her.

Travis caught her. How he moved that fast she had no idea. "Careful, sweetheart." He settled her on the chaise, putting her feet up and a cushion behind her head. He then settled in next to her, warning Jeff off with a hot look, and claimed her hand. His other arm went behind her head, encasing her in his warmth. She tried to ignore the stump where his hand should have been. She'd always believed he'd lost it in an accident. Instead, he'd lost it in the jaws of a giant wolf centuries ago.

*Centuries.* How the hell was she supposed to wrap her brain around *centuries*?

"Some have remained loyal to Grimm, others to Frigg. Njord has stayed in the sea, as expected."

She eyed Val wearily as he sat on the sofa in the spot she'd vacated to go to Travis. *Tyr. His name is Tyr. He's a freaking god.* "Okay, who's Frigg?"

"Grandmother." Jeff sat down on the floor and ruffled his hands through his hair, making it stand on end. "Frigg is Frederica, Odin's wife and co-ruler of the gods."

"Ex co-ruler now." Logan was watching them warily, like he didn't know which way they'd jump next.

Travis nodded. "Yes."

"Sydney Saeter?" Jeff glanced at Logan. "Sigyn, right? Your ex-wife? The one who held the bowl and caught the acid the snake dripped on you when you were chained to the mountain for killing Baldur?" Jeff blinked, his gaze darting to Kir as if just making that connection.

Logan nodded. "Sigyn"

"Sybil Donnar?"

"Sif, your father's ex-wife and the goddess of marriage, of all things." Logan settled down into the chair Jordan had been sitting in, pulling his wife onto his lap in the process. He started ticking on his fingers. "Frey is Adam Grey, Thor is Fred Grimm, Frieda Grey is Freyja. Who am I missing?"

"Quite a few, but that will do." Travis rubbed Jamie's hand absently, his gaze focused inward. "We have other things to worry about now that the truth is out."

"Like?" Jamie tried to ignore the liquid heat in her belly, but Travis wasn't helping.

"Like how Grimm lived through the fatal wounds Val gave him, and what he's got planned next."

"Oh. That."

"And how to free Hel, Fenris and Jörmungandr."

"What?"

"No way!"

Magnus and Morgan leapt to their feet, their outrage clear in their voices and faces.

Travis looked at them and sighed. "You two are fated to wield Mjölner after your father passes. Which means you both survive Ragnarrok. In this, you're on Baldur's side. Right?"

They stared at one another before nodding briefly, reluctantly. Jamie shuddered at the thought of her big, gruff father dying. He might be under Grimm's thumb but he'd done nothing but love his children. She frowned again. At least as far as she knew. Did Mom know all of this?

"Knowing that Odin is the bad guy, and has been from the beginning..."

"That doesn't necessarily mean that Loki's children will automatically be good guys." Jeff bit his lip. Jamie knew her brother was working *something* out in his mind, but she couldn't tell what it was. "They were imprisoned for a reason."

"That reason was prophecy. Especially in Fenris's case." Travis stared at Logan, sorrow chasing across his face. "Trust me, I know."

Jamie saw the look Travis and Logan exchanged, and it was not good. "Then we free them." Everyone turned to her. "I know what it's like to be tortured by Grimm." She stared at Magnus and Morgan willing them to understand what she was saying. "How do we know he's left them alone all this time?"

"He's left Hel alone. Even *he* doesn't dare piss off my daughter." Logan shook his head. "As for my sons, he's already proven what he's capable of there." His hand moved over Jordan's stomach. "I want this

finished before Jordan gives birth.” His fingers curled, making a fist. Flame danced in his eyes. “I won’t lose another child.”

“You won’t. Not if I can help it.”

Jamie smiled at the determination in Travis’s voice. “Count me in too.”

She listened to the inevitable protests. Oddly enough, Travis wasn’t one of the protestors. Neither was Jeff. “I mean it. You are *not* leaving me out of this.”

Travis’s voice was the only calm one. “Fine. But there will be some ground rules. Understand?”

She looked up at Travis and nodded. She wanted to help, but she wasn’t stupid. She wasn’t a god like the others. She was just...Jamie.

“I’m in too, don’t fight me on it, you won’t win, fuck off if you even bother trying.” Jeff stood. “I need beer.” He headed into the kitchen. Everyone could hear him rattling around in the refrigerator. “Jesus, Logan, can’t you buy decent beer? This stuff is goat piss.”

“Then don’t drink it, asshole.” Logan gently pushed Jordan off his lap and went into the kitchen, grumbling about pushy dickheads who were too cheap to buy their own beer.

“And that concludes the mythology portion of tonight’s entertainment.” Jordan grabbed the remote and turned the TV on. “Who wants to watch football?”

“Ugh.” Jamie nudged Travis until he stood. “I’ll be in the den surfing the internet.”

“What for?”

She lied. “I need to check my e-mail.”

She ignored Travis’s narrow-eyed stare as she hobbled into the den. She shut the door gently behind her and booted up the computer. *Smooth move, James, lying to a god of Justice.* Hopefully he’d take the hint and let her be to process everything. Not that she had any intention of thinking about anything to do with the mess her family was currently in. No, sirree.

Time for a little R and R. She typed in her favorite URL and booted up her program, making sure the sound was low enough that none of the others would be able to hear it. She waited until the cheers of the game filtered through the doorway before starting, and was soon engrossed by what she saw.

Jordan was going to kill her if she checked her browser history. But what the fuck. After that little family purge, Jamie could use a little normal.

Whatever *that* was.



## Chapter Six

Travis stared at the closed office door and wondered what Jamie was lying about. He knew every expression on that beautiful face of hers, including the one she used when trying to snow him. He'd seen it most often when she'd been dating that cheating jerk ex-boyfriend and trying to make it seem like everything was fine between them. He still had the occasional urge to go find the guy and put the fear of god into him.

"Vincente." Jeff chuckled, picked up a handful of chips and crammed them in his mouth. Travis wasn't fooled for a moment. The absent look on Jeff's face let him know the other man was still processing everything he'd learned.

"Yup."

"Uh-huh."

Magnus and Morgan groaned in utter disgust and headed for the kitchen, possibly for their own beers. Val just watched the football game, used to ignoring the antics of his nieces and nephews.

Travis felt a growl trying to crawl out of his throat and ruthlessly swallowed it. "Who's Vincente?"

They broke down in laughter. "Vincente is...something." Jordan shook her head, a big grin on her face.

"Sensational," Jeff drawled.

"Dashing." Jordan put the back of her hand dramatically to her forehead.

"Breathtaking. A total Spanish hottie." Jeff shivered dramatically, fanning himself with his hand.

"Oh. Right. Dead." Travis stood up, ignoring the howls of laughter from the Dork Squad. He moved quietly to the door, pushing it open slowly.

She was hunched over the keyboard, staring intently at the monitor. A flush colored her cheeks, her breath moving rapidly in her chest. She licked her lips and sighed.

*Oh, so dead.* He glared and moved behind her, intent on seeing what she was watching. Was she talking to Vincente via webcam? He looked at the top of the monitor, and sure enough, Logan and Kir had one hooked up.

He stopped, stunned, as the action on the screen registered.

A dark haired man sporting a mullet was seducing a poofed-out brunette. "Oh, Vincente, kiss me again. Roberto cannot hold a candle to you, my love."

“My darling Miranda. How I wish that we could be one.” The mullet-haired man dipped the woman and kissed her deeply. Behind them, a large, ornately carved wooden door opened silently.

“Vincente! How could you? And with *my sister!*”

The pair in the clinch stopped and gasped. “Sylvia!”

*It’s a dubbed soap opera. From what, the eighties?*

He almost laughed out loud, only stopping himself when he heard Jamie growl softly. “Don’t touch him, you skank.”

He bit his lip at the fierce little whisper, almost losing it when she gasped in outrage as the blonde Sylvia slapped Vincente. “Oh, you bitch. To think I *liked* you.”

He leaned back against the wall, crossing his arms over his chest, and settled down to watch her watch her soap. The way she nibbled at her finger during the confrontation between the three antagonists, the little sob of fear when Sylvia pulled out a gun, the “Yes!” she hissed when Vincente wrestled it away, just endeared her to him more.

She was just so...*passionate* about everything she put her heart into, even something as silly as an old dubbed soap opera. He couldn’t wait to feel all of that passion surrounding him, smothering him in wet, hot heat. The thought of how she would react under his hand, his mouth, his beard tickling her skin and leaving marks behind, had him rock hard in no time.

He was indulging in a little fantasy where he got to feel her pink lips wrapped around his cock when she squeaked. He focused on her face, curious why she was staring at him in horror.

“What?”

“How long have you been standing there?”

“Since Sylvia found out Vincente was cheating on her with Miranda. Why?”

“You didn’t run screaming from the room.”

“Why would I?”

“So you just stood there and, what, watched?”

He grinned and nodded.

“Really.” She stared at him skeptically, her arms crossing over her chest.

He pulled away from the wall, leaning over her chair until his lips were mere inches from hers. “I didn’t say *what* I was watching, did I?”

“Trav—”

He didn’t give her a chance to finish whatever it was she’d been about to say. He’d waited far too long for this moment. He took her lips, his hand going to the back of her head and tangling in her wild curls. He stroked her nape gently, loving the feel of her silky hair sliding through his fingers. He licked at those strawberry-tinted lips, silently begging her to let him in.

After a brief hesitation her lips parted and she began to kiss him back with a shy uncertainty that tugged at him. The urge to plunder her mouth, to taste her sweetness until she was moaning beneath him, nearly overtook him.

He controlled his first impulse and kept the kiss soft for her. He wanted it to be everything she deserved in a first kiss between them. The ravening conqueror he was would just have to wait until she was ready for him.

Before too long he was lost in her taste. He could stand there and kiss her for hours and hours, never losing complete touch with those incredibly sweet lips of hers. She was trembling under his palm, her hands inching their way up his arms to his shoulders, her fingers clenching the soft fabric of his shirt. She tried to deepen the kiss and he let her, reveling in the feel of her tongue stroking his. The cast on her wrist reminded him that now wasn't the time to take this too far. She was too injured to take this much further, but he wanted to. Oh, how he wanted to. His dick was a throbbing pain behind his jeans, made even worse when one of her hands left his shoulder to cup him.

He wanted to thrust into her palm, take what she was offering him, but he couldn't. Inside he growled, wanting to paint the walls red with the blood of the man who'd taken his woman and injured her to the point where Travis couldn't even take such a simple pleasure without risking her.

He pulled his hand from her hair and clasped her wrist, pulling it away from his body, trying to hide his reaction. "No, sweetheart, not yet."

She mewled, pouting up at him. Her expressive face was filled with dazed desire, and he found he couldn't stop himself. He took her mouth again, this time allowing himself to plunder her sweetness.

After all, this was their second kiss.

The door to the office slammed open. "Norns!" Jeff yelled.

Travis stood, his powers seeping out at the threat. He positioned himself between Jamie and the door. "Where?"

"Gah! My eyes!" Jeff slapped his hand over his eyes, protecting them from Travis's glow. "God damn it, Travis."

Travis sheepishly harnessed his powers. He couldn't remember the last time he'd lost control like that. "Sorry."

"Knock next time." He turned to find Jamie scowling at her twin, her face flushed, her lips swollen from their kisses.

Jeff put his hands on his hips and glared right back at her. "Y'know, I've been here four days and already I'm fed up with Casa de Luuv. You have a bedroom; *use it*."

Jamie turned as red as her hair. "Dickhead."

"As I was saying. Since everyone else's brains seem to have taken up permanent residence in their crotches, I've been doing the thinking."

“Oh, that’s where that burning rubber smell came from.”

Jeff just stared at Jamie until she sniffed and turned away. “If anyone will know the truth of the prophecy, won’t it be the Norns?”

Travis blinked. “Fuck. Why didn’t I think of that?”

Jeff pointed. “Brain. Crotch.” He threw up his hands in a *see?* gesture.

Travis growled.

Jamie rolled her eyes. She so did not need the two of them turning into cavemen right now. “What the hell are Norns?”

“Like the three Fates of Greek mythology, the Norns who sit at the base of Yggdrasil are said to hold sway over the fates of men. Verdandi, Skuld and Urd might be able to tell us what is about to happen, but they’ve been known to exact a terrible price for their knowledge.” Travis stroked his beard while he thought. “Let me talk to the others, see who’s willing to take on the trip.”

“Why not you?”

He looked down at Jamie and smiled. “I have more important things to take on.”

“On that note, I cordially invite you to leave my bedroom and go to your own.” Jeff opened the door and bowed. “Feel free to leave Vincente on the screen while you’re at it.”

Jamie leaned forward and hugged the screen, wincing a little as she did so. “Mine!”

“Nope.” Travis scooped her out of the chair, ignoring her outraged squawk. He carried her out the door, winking at Jeff as he did so. “Mine.”

Jamie stared up at the bearded face above her. “Travis, *what the hell is going on?*” She could hear her voice rising on each word and knew she was this close to shrieking.

He smiled that lopsided smile of his. “What do you mean?”

The smug male look on his face had her growling. “You know exactly what I mean. Calling me sweetheart. Checking up on me when I went into the office. Sucky-face. The caveman routine. But most especially the sucky-face.”

“Oh. That.”

“Yes, that.”

He placed her on the bed, settling her against the pillows. Then he began tugging on her T-shirt. “Well, that was me staking my claim.”

She grabbed the hem of her shirt and hung on for dear life. If she’d had both hands she might even have managed to stop him. As it was the shirt was soon on the floor. She crossed her arms over her chest, determined to keep her bra and her dignity. “How romantic. Where were you planning on planting your flag?”

The hot look he shot her had her gulping. “Where do you think I should plant it?”

She crossed her legs, smiling when he laughed. She placed her hand against his chest when he began tugging on her pants. He stopped instantly when she winced. “Travis?”

“Hmm?” He pulled her other hand away from her chest, pouting when she covered herself again with her free hand.

“Before we get to the naked, don’t you think we should talk?”

He stared at her blankly, his pupils dilating. She could actually see the white mist creeping across the blue.

She smacked him in the side of the head with one of those weird oblong pillows people liked to put on their bed for decoration but never actually used other than to bop other people upside the head.

The white receded. Unfortunately—*fortunately* her traitorous body whispered—that left him free to unsnap the front clasp of her bra. “*Travis.*”

“Talk is overrated.” He gave her his best innocent look, snickering when she rolled her eyes. “Okay. I was only planning on getting you into your nightgown. Trust me, you’re not up for what I have in mind.”

“Suuure you were.”

He reached beneath her pillow and pulled out a blue silky nightgown. She didn’t recognize it. “For you.”

She took the nightgown, stunned that he would get her such a gift. Then she saw the tag.

“*Vera Wang?*”

“You like it?”

She looked up into his hopeful face. “It’s sheer.”

“I know.”

She thumped him on the thigh. “*Travis.*”

“Fine.” He got her plain cotton nightgown out of her dresser drawer. “Here.”

He sounded so put-upon she nearly giggled. She’d done entirely too much of that recently. It made her sound like a chipmunk on speed. “Turn around.”

“Do I have to?”

She stifled the urge to shake her head. *The Norse God of Justice is pouting in my bedroom.* “It’s either that or you can leave.”

He pressed a quick, hard kiss to her lips. “You drive a hard bargain.” He turned his back on her, his hand on his hip.

“No peeking.”

His shoulders shook.

She got out of her clothes as quickly as she could with a broken wrist and a bum leg. She threw on the nightgown, grumbling when she got tangled up in it. Her head popped out of the top to find Travis, his back still turned toward her, but his head turned toward...

“That’s cheating.”

“I did not once turn around to look at you.”

“You didn’t tell me you could see me in the mirror.”

“You told me not to peek. You said nothing about watching what I could already see.” He pulled his shirt over his head, the smooth muscles of his back rippling beneath her fascinated gaze. He turned around, giving her a view of mouth-watering chest, and undid his jeans, sliding them to the floor, exposing his blue silk boxers. He picked up his clothes and carried them to the chair in the corner, throwing them over the arm before turning back to the bed. “Comfortable?”

With wet panties? Not really. She crawled under the covers, his near-nudity almost distracting her from the pain of her movements.

He went to the other side of the bed, settling in next to her.

“What are you doing?”

He looked at her like she’d lost her mind. “Going to bed.”

She had the feeling that if she tried to kick him out she’d have an argument on her hands. And, really, did she *want* to kick him out? She eyed his powerful shoulders. *Could* she kick him out? The man was a *god*. Was he into the whole divine retribution thing? She said nothing as he pulled the covers up, but she could feel him watching her. He propped the pillows behind his head, sitting up partially. “Okay. Talk.”

Now that he was staring at her, ready to answer her questions, she had no idea where to start.

He smiled. “Yes, I’m really Tyr. Over a millennium ago, Odin declared war on the Vanir. I thought at the time that what he was after were the skills of the Dökk Alfar, but what he was really after was Idunn and her apples. If I’d known then what I know now, Odin and his Aesir would never have laid a single hand on them. I would have burned them to the ground myself.”

“What do the apples do? I mean, why are they so important to him?” She rolled over, resting her head on her arm, watching him.

“The apples make even the gods susceptible to suggestion. Combined with Odin’s own ability to confuse the mind, they made him nearly irresistible. He used them to control the remaining Vanir, the Lios and Dökk Alfar and the Aesir. He had us all convinced that Idunn’s apples were necessary to our immortality. I knew better, deep down, but I couldn’t break the hold Grimm had on me. None of us could.”

“Not until that huge fight the two of you had.”

He nodded. “No way was I selling Guardian Investigations to him.” He frowned, then shook his head. “I’m not even sure why I was resistant to him, but I avoided him after that, even going so far as to ignore his calls. If I hadn’t, odds are good that when I saw Logan and Kir again, I would have tried to kill them both.”

She bit her lip, thinking about everything she’d learned. “Why did you kiss me?”

He leaned over her, brushing his lips against hers. She had the urge to cup his cheek and rub her palm over his whiskers. "If it hadn't been for my fight with Grimm I would have come after you a lot sooner."

He was so close she could see the specks of gold in his blue eyes. "Travis, what the hell are you talking about?" She frowned, confused. "Or should I call you Tyr?"

"Travis. At least for now."

"Oh. Planning on a name change soon?"

"At some point Travis Yardley-Rudiger will die, and I'll become someone else."

"You'll come up with a different name, right? Oh! How about Timothy, um, Inigo Walter, uh," she counted off on her fingers, trying to remember all the letters "Anson Zebediah?" She grinned up at him.

A slow grin took over Travis's face. "That's worse than what I've got now."

"Really, brain surgeon? Who came up with it?"

He crossed his eyes and raspberried her. She laughed. It was weird, but he was still Travis, even after everything he'd told her and shown her. Knowing that he was pretty much the same man she'd always known helped relax some of the tension that had been tightening her shoulders and back.

Even so, it wasn't her fault if the laughter had a slightly hysterical edge to it, was it?

"Now what are you doing?" She watched in fascination as he reached under the sheet and pulled off his boxers. He managed to do it without flashing her too, something she wasn't sure she was all that happy about.

"Getting ready to go to sleep."

She stared at him. "I thought that was what you were doing when you took your clothes off and made yourself comfortable in my bed."

"I sleep naked."

*Ho, Daddy.* "Not in my bed." She knew it was panic speaking, but still.

"You'd be more comfortable naked too, you know."

Her inner slut was nodding, *yes yes yes!* But common sense was shouting, *hell, no!* "I'd be more comfortable with your clothes back on."

He settled down, lying next to her with a smirk. "I promise to peek if you promise to peek."

"Shouldn't that be not peek?"

"Where's the fun in that?"

"Travis." She glared at him, wanting him to be serious for just a moment.

He snickered. "Go to sleep, sweetheart. You need your rest." He settled in, pulling the sheet up to mid-chest before reaching for her. She allowed him to pull her close into his body, too stunned to protest. Her fingers twitched as she resisted the urge to send them walkabout on the incredible landscape hidden by one thin piece of cotton. He settled her head on his shoulder, his arm wrapping around her, his hand resting

on the curve of her ass. Without thinking she curled her leg, covering his thigh. She shivered at the warmth of his bare skin.

“Comfy?”

His voice sounded strangled. She frowned, adjusting her leg slightly when it pained her. He groaned and tightened his hand on her ass. She looked up into his face.

The heat in his gaze threatened to burn her. He propped himself up, rolling her over in the process, and proceeded to take her mouth in a kiss so fierce their teeth clashed.

She moaned when his hand stroked her side, taking her breast, weighing it in his palm before his thumb stroked over the aching tip. She arched up against him only to pull away, gasping. Pain wracked her body and she gritted her teeth. Every muscle in her abused back had begun to spasm all at once and the agony was blinding.

“Logan!” Travis’s shout echoed off the walls, sounding like it came from everywhere at once.

“Shit! What?” Logan threw the door open and rushed to her side. “What did you do to her?”

Travis scowled at Logan. “I moved.”

“Maybe you should go back to sleeping on the couch.”

Travis snarled, “Fuck no.”

“Boys.” The two men turned to her. “Ow.” She really wanted to be a man about it, but the pain was excruciating. She couldn’t stop the tears that dripped down her cheeks.

“Sweetheart.” Travis stroked her hair back from her forehead. “Do you need to go to the hospital?”

“Fuck that.” Logan left the room, returning swiftly with a knife. “Give me your hand.”

“What?” She stared at the knife in his hands, wondering what he had planned. Cutting off a finger? Give her some other pain to focus on, perhaps?

Maybe he was just really crazy.

“Are you sure about this?”

Logan was staring at her, ignoring Travis. “Trust me, Pita. Give me your hand.”

Travis sat up, balancing on his stump. He grimaced when she groaned as even that careful movement jostled her. “If we’re doing this I’m going first. No argument.” He held up his hand, not even wincing when Logan sliced his palm.

“Now you.” Logan took her hand, ignoring her feeble attempts to pull free. He sliced her palm. The pain was minor compared to the one in her back and leg.

Logan took her hand and placed it in Travis’s, palm to palm, wound to wound.

The pain receded as warmth raced up her arm from her palm, straight into her chest. She felt filled with light, glowing inside, surrounded, protected by the light in a way she’d never before experienced. The glow suffused her skin, embracing her in its warmth, wrapping her in a cocoon of comfort and strength. It



was the same sensation she got when Travis pulled her into his arms; warmth, comfort and that little tingle of awareness only he gave her, amplified. It was like she was breathing his living light.

She opened dazed eyes to find Travis, softly glowing, staring down at her. “Now Logan.”

She frowned. If Tyr felt like that, what would Loki feel like?

Before she could say no, Logan slapped his bloody palm to hers.

Travis watched as Logan shared blood with Jamie, bonding them for all eternity. She’d already received his gift. Her skin and hair glowed from it with a shine no beautician could imitate, her innate power amplified by his unbreakable connection to her. *I have to see about finding a mage willing to train her.* From that little display when she’d dimmed his light he knew she was one of those rare instinctive human mages. He had no idea how his and Logan’s powers would react with hers, but—

She gasped, her back arching impossibly high off the bed, her body going into intense convulsions as Logan’s blood coursed through her veins. That pale light that infused her skin turned bright red. “What’s happening?”

Logan backed off, shaking his head. His expression was horrified. “I don’t know.”

*Please don’t let it be the power mix.* He’d heard of reactions like this where the bonded had wound up dead due to some sort of psychic shock. It was so rare that it was practically myth. He couldn’t lose her now. Not now, not ever.

Her face was set in a rictus of pain, her entire body thrashing from side to side, her heels drumming against the bedding. He quickly grabbed a pen from the side of the bed, holding her tongue with it as she continued to convulse, worried sick that she’d swallow it or, hell, bite it off.

“Kir!” Logan raced for the bedroom door, nearly colliding with Jordan and Jeff. “*Kir!*”

The desperation in Logan’s voice frightened Travis almost as much as Jamie’s whitening skin. Even her light was beginning to dim. “God damn it, Logan, what the fuck is going on?”

“I don’t know.” Logan shouted back, moving out of the way for Kir. Kir held Gungnir in his hand, and his eyes had taken on their inhuman aspect. Outside the bedroom window, lightning flashed, followed swiftly by thunder.

“Holy fuck.”

Travis looked over to find Jeff staring at Kir. Kir’s hair was moving in an unseen breeze. He glowed with a faint green light, like sunlight through leaves. A spring storm flashed across his eyes, blues and whites being rapidly swallowed by grays and blacks. He laid his hand on Jamie’s forehead, his own creasing as his eyes closed.

Jamie gasped, settling down against the bed, her eyes unseeing as she stared up at the ceiling.

The silence was deafening, broken only by the sound of the rain. His heart pounded with terror. “Jamie?”

“Too much, too soon.” Kir’s voice was deep, reverberating through their chests with an undeniable power. “Travis and then Logan, one after the other. It was too much for her body to handle.”

*No.* Travis pulled her out from under Kir’s hand, cradling her unresponsive body to his chest. *No.* He buried his face in her neck.

He didn’t even realize he was shaking his head until he felt Jordan touch him. “It’s okay, Trav. Look, she’s breathing.”

He looked, blinking rapidly to clear the tears he hadn’t even known were there.

She *was* breathing.

“It didn’t hurt me when you and Logan did this. Why did it hurt Jamie?” Jordan was being held in Kir’s arms. Baldur was once more sleeping. Kir looked like his normal self, though still slightly worried. Gungnir was secure on the chain around his neck.

“We did it days apart, remember? Besides, I don’t think anyone expected *this* reaction. This wasn’t exactly a common occurrence way back when.” Logan flopped down onto the bed with a relieved sigh. “She’ll be all right.”

Travis studied the woman in his arms. Her eyes were closed, her breathing normal. She was sleeping, her features peaceful. There was even a slight smile on her face, a face now almost completely free of bruises.

He pressed a kiss to her lips, laying her down on the bed as gently as he could.

“Take her cast off.”

Jeff frowned at Kir. “Why would we do that?”

Kir smiled softly. “She doesn’t need it anymore.” He pulled Logan to his feet, took Jordan by the arm, and tugged his lovers out of the bedroom.

“Can I change my mind and take the blue pill instead?” Jeff shook his head. “What the hell just happened?”

“I’m not sure.” He checked every inch of her body he could see, the smile growing and growing until he was grinning like a loon.

It had worked. Logan’s crazy gamble had paid off. She’d gotten Logan’s ability to heal.

“Where are her bruises and scars?”

“Gone.” He picked up her hand, staring at the cast on her wrist. “Get me a pair of scissors or a knife or something, will you?”

“Yeah, sure.” The frightened awe in Jeff’s voice barely registered. He came back with the scissors, and together they got the cast off Jamie’s wrist. She barely twitched.

Travis put the scissors on the nightstand and shooed Jeff away. “Go on back to bed. Everything is going to be fine now.”

Jeff nodded, averting his gaze, but not before Travis saw the other man's lips curling into a grin. "Night, Trav." Just before he closed the door, he leaned back in. "Nice ass, boss." He shut the door before Travis could respond. Travis could hear Jeff's laughter moving down the hallway.

He looked down, groaning as he saw his ass hanging out of the sheets. He covered himself up, pulled Jamie into his arms, and buried his face in her curls.

It took him a long time to fall asleep, the memory of her convulsions haunting him. Thankfully when he did it was dreamless.

Grimm stared in satisfaction at Tyr's house. He sat in Rina's car, his eyes glued to the house. Rina's blonde head bobbed in his lap, almost distracting him from the task at hand. He had to admit, she was a world-class cocksucker. He hadn't yet found anyone else who equaled her, though some came close. He clenched his fist in her hair, slowing her movements, hissing as she laved the head with her tongue. He wanted to savor this moment. It was such a small thing, compared to what he wanted to do, but it was the first step in their plan to regain Gungnir.

Tyr would hardly be able to ignore *this*. He would be forced out of hiding to deal with the damage, and when he did, Grimm would have him.

Grimm could feel his balls tightening, his muscles clenching off and on as Rina's talented tongue edged him closer to orgasm. He laughed as his orgasm raced through him, erupting out of his cock and into his lover's willing mouth.

He sighed in satisfaction as the last of his come was sucked out of him by Rina's warm mouth. In the distance, the windows of Tyr's house were an inch thick in ice, glittering beautifully in the streetlights. He could just barely hear the first of the pipes bursting inside.

Rina lifted her head from his lap and nibbled gently on his neck. She practically purred against him.

"Nicely done, my dear." He nipped her ear, savoring her shudder. "I must say it was a pleasurable addition to such a simple spell."

He could feel her smile against his neck. "I live to please."

The strange thing was she was telling the truth. Grimm hadn't fed an apple to Rina in over a month. Any effects they might have had over her were gone. Instead of diminishing her passion for him, she'd become even more devoted to him.

She'd even come up with a way to pay Val back. Her errant son was in for a world of hurt when his pissed-off mother got a hold of him.

Grimm pulled Rina off his neck. "Time to go."

"And then time to come?"

He enjoyed the sexy smirk on Rina's face as she caressed his spent cock. "Anything for you, my sweet." He put the car into gear and pulled away from Tyr's house, uncaring that his cock was still exposed. After all, if he got stopped, he was confident he could talk himself out of a ticket.

## Chapter Seven

Toni Mancinelli sat eating a pint of Chunky Monkey and watching Project Runway reruns on Bravo, but she was having a hard time rooting for her favorite designer. Her mind kept returning to the Grimm case.

*Why is this not meshing for me?* Something about the way Danny had presented the evidence just didn't sit right with her, and she couldn't put her finger on why. The DA loved it, Cap loved it, the judges loved it. Hell, at first even *she* had loved it.

But the more she studied it the more she didn't trust it. Every instinct she had said she was being snowed, and by an expert. She planned on keeping a closer eye on Danny-boy from now on.

Still, if anyone could fuck around with cops it would be Travis Yardley-Rudiger. He'd worked with them often enough to know how they thought. Planting evidence at a scene would be no big deal. She'd just have to see what the test results came back with. If they confirmed what Danny had told her, good enough.

If they didn't, there would be hell to pay.

She took another bite of ice cream, rolling her eyes and muttering under her breath as Sissybear was once again robbed of his time in Bryant Park. All because of some human hair?

*Puh-lease. Grow a pair, people. I still want that retro jacket.*

Jamie stretched, smiling in the early morning light. "Mmm." Every muscle felt loose and liquid, just the way she liked it. She was warm and cozy, and best of all, no alarm clock was going off. *Must be Sunday. I love Sundays.* She yawned, opening her eyes.

She frowned. She didn't recognize the room she was in at first, but then memory came back in a horrifying rush. She rubbed her eyes with her hands, trying to take in everything that had happened last night.

"Morning."

She stifled a shriek. "Good morning, Travis."

"You forgot I was here, didn't you?"

She peeked from between her fingers. "I knew."

"Uh-huh."

She sniffed. "Is Logan making breakfast?"

"Nice subject change, and yes, I think he is."

She stuck her tongue out.

He laughed, pulling her into his arms. "Can I have a good morning kiss?"

"Ew."

One dark blond brow rose in disbelief. "Ew. I ask for a kiss and get an ew?"

She wrinkled her nose at him. "Morning breath."

"Your breath smells f...hell, woman, what crawled into your mouth and died?" He laughed as she began beating him with a pillow. "Uncle! Uncle!"

"Hah. Big bad warrior dude felled by tiny female with a pillow. Take that, sexism!"

"Don't forget the hideous breath weapon you wield." Travis laughed again and hid behind his arms when she raised the pillow, snarling at him.

"That's better." She lowered the pillow, settling back against his thighs. His erection throbbed between her thighs.

*Wait. When did I crawl into his lap?* She looked down at him, startled. Her legs were curled up on either side of his hips. She raised and lowered herself carefully, her movements becoming bouncier as she realized there was no pain. She scrambled for the edge of the nightgown, pulling it up to reveal a perfectly smooth stomach. She touched, unable to believe her eyes. "The scars are gone." She looked down at him, knowing she was grinning like a loon. "My scars are gone!"

He nodded, his smile growing as his hand joined hers on her stomach. His touch was warm and soothing.

"Did you do this?"

He shook his head. "That's one of Logan's powers."

"How pissed do you think Jordan's going to be when I offer myself up as his love slave?"

She was on her back so fast her head was spinning. "Care to repeat that?" Travis lowered his body against hers, his hips pinning hers to the bed.

"Breath of death, remember?" She grinned weakly. She blew at him, laughing reluctantly when he gagged and fell off her, curling up on his side. His hand was at his throat as he gasped for air.

She got out of bed with a sniff.

"Aw, c'mon. Come back to bed? Please? Just keep your face away from mine and everything will be fine."

She slammed the bathroom door shut, ignoring his renewed laughter.

He came in just as she finished brushing her teeth. "Are you done yet?"

She turned off the water. "Mostly. I still need to brush my hair, wash my face, put on my makeup, what are you doing?" She watched as, naked, he bent over the tub.

"You ask me that a lot. Have you noticed that?"

Dear God, he had the most incredible ass. He turned on the water before turning to the toilet. “I gather you want a shower?”

He lifted the seat. “Yeah, don’t you? Where are you going?”

She ignored the sounds of him relieving himself and left the bathroom. She’d just go ahead and get dressed while he did his, um, morning stuff.

She pulled the nightgown over her head and tossed it on the bed. She leaned down and pulled her panties off, adding them to the growing pile of dirty laundry. She’d need to get to that sooner rather than later. Relying on the men to take care of things was getting old, even if Kir was a fairly decent housekeeper.

She missed her apartment, more than she’d thought she would. The freedom to do whatever she wanted, whenever she wanted was something she’d cherished after living with her overbearing father. But she had the feeling that freedom was a long way off for her now. Until Grimm was stopped permanently none of the men were going to be willing to let her out of their sight.

“Damn.”

Especially Travis. She didn’t turn around. Even though he’d seen her naked breasts in the mirror last night she hadn’t been aware of it until after the fact. Add in that this time she was not only completely naked but *bent over* and he had to be getting an eyeful. Turning around now felt tantamount to giving him permission. “I thought you were going to take a shower?” *Because I planned to have clothing on the next time I saw you.*

“Huh?”

She looked over her shoulder to find his gaze glued to her ass. She slapped her hands over the globes, horrified. “*Travis.* I thought you were a gentleman.”

He sighed happily and walked forward, his arms reaching for her. “Someone lied to you, then.”

She squeaked and dove for the bed, determined to preserve what was left of her dignity.

She didn’t make it. She found herself over his shoulder in a fireman’s carry. “Shower time.”

He stroked her side with his cheek, the gesture loving and sweet. His beard tickled her side, making her want to squirm. “I didn’t say I wanted a shower, and I especially didn’t say I wanted a shower with you.”

He put her directly under the spray, grinning when she sputtered. “You’ll feel a great deal better once you’re clean.” He picked up a bottle of shampoo, pouring some directly onto her head. “Ready?”

One of her hands flew to her breasts, the other to her pussy, covering them from his heated gaze. “For what?”

He began washing her hair, his left hand massaging her scalp. His right arm was around her waist, pulling her in tight to his body and out of the spray. If he’d had a right hand she bet it would be stroking her butt.

"I can wash my own hair." She could hear the huskiness in her voice and knew he could too. It might have had something to do with the heated iron bar digging into the back of her arm. She risked a quick peek down to find the head of his penis practically against her belly button. She lifted her head quickly to find a satisfied male smirk on his face.

"I know." He dipped her back, rinsing the soap from her hair. When it was gone he leaned in for a nipping kiss to her neck before standing her back up. "Now for the rest of you."

He soaped up a washcloth, running it over her body with intense focus. He didn't miss a single square inch of her skin. She struggled a bit when he began washing her pussy, but the attempt was half-hearted at best. After all, this *had* to be a dream. Naked and wet in the shower with Travis, watching his hard, wet cock bounce around and knowing that all she had to do was reach out and touch it?

Oh yeah. She'd dreamt this before. It usually had a really good ending too.

*But, just to make sure...* She reached around and pinched her ass, jumping when it hurt.

"Hold still, sweetheart."

Okay. Not a dream. She pulled back some more, ignoring the throbbing protest in her clit. "Travis?"

"Hmm?"

The heat in his gaze nearly scorched her skin. She threw up her hands, holding him off, trying to shake the sensual spell he seemed to have cast over her. Unfortunately that put her, sputtering, right under the spray.

His lips curled slowly, amusement replacing the sexual awareness. "I swear you're a disaster waiting to happen." He grabbed her wrist and pulled her out from under the water. "Talk, then sex?"

"Breakfast!" she practically shouted in his face. *What the fuck am I doing? I'm turning down actual, real-life sex with Travis.* From the feel of things it was gonna beat the dreams all hollow. She put the back of her hand to her forehead. *Nope, not feverish. Just insane.* But she just couldn't shake the feeling that everything was happening so damn fast, just rushing up on her and sweeping her along. She didn't like the feeling one damn bit. Still. Wet, naked shower with Travis. Wet, naked, *willing* Travis.

She batted at his hand when it reached for her breast. *Yup. I'm insane.*

He eased back and kept the rest of the shower as platonic as possible between two naked people who, judging by the size of the erection he was sporting and how wet her pussy was, wanted each other. She found herself watching his cock as it bobbed, water dripping off of it like a fountain. She was fascinated by the way he washed the chiseled abs right above it. She could feel her eyes glazing over as he stroked it with the washcloth, scrubbing his balls, then stroking down muscled thighs she was dying to sink her nails into. He then returned the washcloth to his furred chest and she damn near whimpered.

She looked up from his cock to find him staring at her with so much male smugness she wanted to reach out and smack him one. That was when she knew he'd washed himself that way deliberately.



She crossed her arms, making sure to pillow her breasts on them, leaning back against the tile wall. She crossed her legs, her brows rising in challenge. *C'mon, big boy. You can do better than that.*

His grin was smug, his hand continuing its slow caress of his chest. When he turned around and began soaping that hot, tight ass of his she nearly groaned out loud.

*Payback.* She hoped she could pull this off. "You done yet?"

The washcloth paused. He shot her a look over his shoulder. The hot look was giving way to one of speculation. "Not yet."

"Mmm." She yawned, not quite sure where all this courage was coming from. "Well, I'm done, and I'm hungry." She stepped out of the shower and grabbed a towel. "Meet you out front."

She didn't hear him moving as she stepped out of the bathroom. Once out, she bowed her head, fanning herself. If she'd stayed in there any longer she would have spontaneously combusted.

She'd never dressed so quickly in her life. Hoping she just hadn't royally screwed things up with Travis, she made it out of the bedroom before he left the shower. She knew she'd just given the guy mixed signals, but he'd gone from completely ignoring her to naked shower games in the space of a few days. She was a little confused by his rapid turn-around. Besides, the man was a freakin' *god*. That was still wiggling her out a *lot*.

She was glad to see her twin waiting for her just outside her bedroom door. He always knew when she had something she needed to talk about. "Hey, little fox." He took her by the arm and pulled her into the den, closing and locking the door. He handed her a plate of bacon, eggs and toast and sat her at the desk. "So what's it like to be loved by a god?"

And that summed it up, right there. Two words she was having a problem equating Travis with.

*Love and god.*

She buried her face in her arms. "What if it's just pity?"

Jeff chuckled. "Oh, hell no, it's not pity. Trust me."

She peeked at him from under her arm. "Last time I checked Travis was into busty blondes who think a fjord is a kick-ass truck."

Jeff nodded, running a wide toothed comb through her curls, getting the tangles out of her wet hair. The sensation of the comb had always soothed her. It had become something of a ritual between them. Others might think it odd, or think it had something to do with Jeff's being gay, but the reality was it helped them both. She just told people it was a twin thing, because she didn't quite understand it herself. "True, but you didn't see him in the hospital. The whole time you were there, when you were unconscious, when the doctors told us you might not walk again. He was..." The comb paused as Jeff shook his head. "I can't even describe it. He never left your side, Jamie. He just sat there, holding your hand, staring at you. You could tell when he was thinking of you, because he'd have such a look of pain on his face it almost made

me cry. I caught him once, just stroking your hair, and I did cry, just from the look on that man's face. You could also tell when he was thinking of Grimm."

"How?"

She lifted her head in time to see Jeff grimace. The comb started stroking through her hair once more. "Let's just say that if Travis ever looked at me like that, I'd find the deepest, darkest hole I could find, plant my headstone behind it and dive in. Then I would sit there and pray for someone to come and fill in the hole."

Travis got dressed as quickly as he could, but he wasn't fast enough. She'd disappeared into the den with her twin, and the locked door told its own tale. He huffed out a frustrated breath and was headed for the kitchen and breakfast when his cell phone rang. "Hello?"

"Travis?"

He held the phone between his shoulder and his ear and grabbed a coffee mug, placing it next to the pot. "Yeah, Morgan?" He heard the sound of the den's door opening and peeked into the living room. Jamie and Jeff were still murmuring to one another as they took seats on the sofa.

"I just went by your house, and..."

"And what?" He stared at Jamie, only paying half attention to what his operative was telling him. He was still confused as hell over what had happened in the bathroom and he didn't like it one little bit.

"It looks like someone put a hose in every room and turned them on."

Jamie sat with her head close to her twin's, whispering back and forth. He would give anything to know what was going on in her head. That little scene in the shower that morning had left him hard as a rock and stunned out of his mind. She was avoiding him. *Damn. I think I fucked up.* He'd pushed too hard too soon, and now she was running from him.

"Hello? Are you listening, or are you mooning over my sister again?" Morgan's voice crackled with annoyance.

*That* got his attention. "What did you say about my house?"

"Water. Damage. Hope you have insurance."

He frowned, his attention finally diverted from Jamie and Jeff. "Water damage?"

"I went to your place to deliver the papers on the Solberg case, remember? You were supposed to meet me there this afternoon."

*The cop, right.* They'd only gotten the case a week after Jamie had entered the hospital. The wife was firmly convinced he'd left her for another woman, and wanted solid proof before she filed for divorce. From everything Morgan and Magnus had been able to gather, she was right. Magnus said he'd taken pictures of the man fucking an unknown blonde woman and had, in fact, moved in with her.

"Anyway, I arrive, open the door, a metric ton of water sloshes out and you owe me new shoes."

“Fuck.” This day just kept getting better and better.

“It looks like every pipe in your house burst all at once. Freakiest thing I’ve ever seen. Water spraying everywhere, and the worst part? All your wards are blown.”

“I do not need this shit right now.” He rubbed his eyes tiredly, wondering how the fuck Grimm had gotten through his wards to wreak his damage.

“Yeah. Listen, you might wanna come over here, take a look around. Trust me, you’re not gonna believe it until you see it. Don’t worry, I turned the water main off. By the way, your carpet was apparently filthy. Have you never heard of Rug Doctor? You owe me new jeans too.”

“I’ll be there as soon as I can.” He hung up the phone, his gaze tracing the back of Jamie’s head lovingly. “Jamie, I have to head out for a little while. I have a small problem I need to take care of.”

She turned. Those eyes of hers seemed to see right through to the heart of him. “Grimm?”

He nodded. “Seems the Old Man did something to the pipes in my house. The entire place is flooded, and from what Morgan said the damage is pretty bad.”

“It’s a set-up.”

He nodded. “I know.” He turned. “Logan—”

“No.” Jeff stood and stretched. “I’ll go.”

Travis didn’t miss the relief on Jordan’s face, or the annoyance on Logan’s. He nodded anyway. “Let’s go.” He walked over to Jamie and leaned over her, balancing on the stump of his right arm. Taking her face in his hand he leaned down, kissing her with all of the pent-up passion she’d left him with in the bathroom. By the time he was done they were both breathing hard and her eyes were once more glazed over. “Be good.” He kissed the tip of her nose before walking away. It took every ounce of his self-discipline not to limp from the hard-on he was sporting.

A man had his pride, after all.

Logan stared thoughtfully at the closed door to the condo. “Y’know, I have something I need to take care of. Why don’t you guys order in enough pizza for the whole gang? I’ll call the M and M’s and Vlad the Impaler. Make sure you get extra hemoglobin, ok?” Logan sauntered off into the den, shutting the door behind him.

“Vlad the Impaler?” Jamie snickered, wide eyed, as Kir frowned after Logan.

“He never asks to order in pizza.” Kir got up and followed Logan from the room, leaving the girls alone on the chaise.

Jordan quickly dialed the pizza place, ordering enough to feed an army. Jordan and Kir shared the same unhealthy pizza obsession, so Jamie wasn’t too surprised.

Jordan turned the television on, but kept the volume low. She switched it to Lifetime. She raised her voice slightly, glancing at the door to the den. "How about a good victim of the week movie while we wait?"

Two male groans of disgust sounded from the den.

"Good. That should keep them out for a bit." Jordan scooted closer to Jamie, a big grin on her face. "So. Travis. Is he as good with his tongue as I think he is?" She waggled her eyebrows, giggling when Jamie smacked her on the arm. "C'mon, sister to sister. Is he, y'know, enough to keep you satisfied?"

From the way Jordan held her hands apart Jamie had no problem figuring out what she meant. "Jordan!"

"What?"

"Logan is a bad influence on you."

"Is Travis a bad influence on you?"

"I turned him down."

Jordan stared at her blankly.

"Seriously. I totally panicked. I said no."

"Did the word no leave your lips at any time?"

She thought back. "Um, no, not actually."

"Good. Because I'd have to smack you silly if it had."

"But I didn't say yes, either." Jamie groaned and put her head on her big sister's shoulder. "What am I doing?"

Jordan didn't even hesitate, her arms wrapping around Jamie's shoulders in a big hug. "You're claiming the man you've been in love with since you were sixteen, that's what you're doing."

"But does he really want to be claimed?"

Jordan smacked her on top of her head.

"Ow."

"That's what you get for being stupid."

"He never seemed interested before."

"Well, he sure as hell is interested now."

"And in the future?" Jamie cuddled in closer to her sister's warmth and wished, not for the first time, that she could contact their mom. She didn't even know if their mother knew who their father was, or anything that had happened to them. She hadn't shown up at the hospital, nor had she tried to contact any of them since before Grimm attacked her. It was odd, because their family was usually pretty close. Maybe whatever power Grimm had used to sway the Aesir had been used on their mother? "How do I know he doesn't just feel sorry for me?"

Jordan smacked her on top of her head again.

“Ow.”

“I tell people my momma didn’t raise any stupid children. Stop trying to make a liar outta me.”

Jamie bit her lip, barely holding back her grin. “So you think he’s really into me?” She grabbed Jordan’s hand before she could smack her again. “A simple yes would do.”

“Yes. Duh.” Jordan sighed. “The last time I saw a man look at a woman the way Travis looks at you, I found myself secretly married.”

Jamie gulped. “How do you deal with...you know.”

“What, loving two men?”

“No. Two gods.”

Jordan sat her up. “Is *that* what’s holding you back?”

Jamie nodded. “He’s a *god*, Jordan. He’s been alive for, what, thousands of years? How many women has he loved? How long will he live? Will he even remember me when I’m gone?” She frowned. “Why hasn’t he dated a redhead before now?”

Jordan held up Jamie’s hand. There wasn’t even a scar visible from where Logan had cut her the night before. “First off, how do you know he hasn’t dated any redheads? He’s, what, umpty-bazillion years old? I’d think by now he’d have hit on all the hair colors. Second, you’ve shared blood with two gods, not just one. I can tell already that you’ve got Logan’s ability to heal, you lucky bitch. You’ve probably gotten immortality from Travis.”

“I have?”

Jordan shrugged. “That’s what I got from bonding with Kir.”

“Yeah, but Kir is Aesir. Travis is Vanir. What if it doesn’t work the same way?”

Jordan opened her mouth, then closed it, her expression thoughtful. “You know, I don’t know how that would work.” She took Jamie’s hand and smiled. “But if it came down to it, I’m positive Kir would figure out a way to share blood with you, or Morgan, Magnus or Uncle Val, for that matter.”

“Yup, I would.” Jamie turned just as Kir pecked the top of her head. “Just as Logan and I plan on sharing with Jeff.” He plopped down at Jordan’s feet, his blond head resting against Jordan’s knee. “No way is Jordan going to go without her family. Not if we can help it.” He smiled up at Jordan as she caressed his hair. “Did you order any sodas with the pizza?”

Jordan just shook her head as the ruler of the gods pouted over the fact that she’d forgotten his cherry Pepsi.

“Wait. Why would I have to share blood with so many people? Isn’t it, like, unhygienic?”

Kir grinned. “Logan’s not really a god.”

Jamie blinked. “That cleared things right up.”

Jordan bopped her on the head again. “What he means is, Logan, as a Jotun, can give you the ability to use fire magic, or his expanded healing, but he *can’t* give you immortality. Kir can, because he’s Aesir.”

“So what did Travis give me?”

Kir’s lips opened, but a confused look crossed his face. “Huh. I have no idea. I don’t think he’s shared blood with anyone else before.”

Jamie couldn’t help the satisfied smirk that crossed her face. Take that, blonde bimbos of the world!

They sat quietly for a few moments, watching some woman on the screen try to explain to her friend why she thought her husband was up to no good. When the lights turned out at the end of the scene, Jamie was reminded of what she’d done the day before. “Something else has been bothering me too.”

“What would that be?” Jordan was playing with strands of Kir’s hair, her expression thoughtful. She didn’t even protest when Kir changed the channel.

“Dimming Travis’s light.”

Jordan’s fingers paused. Jamie looked down at Kir to find him studying her with an intensity that made her squirm.

“Look, several of you guys appeared a little freaked by that.” Jamie stared down at her hands. “What did I do and how did I do it?”

“You’re a mage.” She turned as Logan settled on the ottoman in front of her, his hands clasped between his knees. He too was studying her intently.

“Mage. Harry Potter woo-woo mage?” She wiggled her fingers at Logan.

Logan snorted. “Not quite, Pita. And, seriously, now you’re more god than mage anyway.”

Jamie choked on spit. “G-God?”

Logan was grinning. “There are five types of magic in the world, and several of them are intertwined. The ones you need to be worried about now are elemental, divine and runic.”

“What are the other two?”

“Decisive and petition.”

“Um. Okay.” She hoped she didn’t look as lost as she felt.

Logan reached up and tapped her nose. “You *were* a decisive mage. Now you’re a divine mage.”

Jordan was practically bouncing. “Like me?”

Logan shook his head. “Remember how I said that magic was intertwined?”

“Yes?”

“Your magic is much more elemental than Jamie’s.”

“Oh.” Jordan looked disappointed for some bizarre reason. Jamie didn’t understand why.

*Wait a minute.* Jamie bit her lip. “So Jordan’s eyes really *did* have flames in them at the hospital?”

Logan glared at Jordan. “You have got to learn to control that.”

“Bite me, Logan.”

He smirked. “Later, dear.”

Jamie was beginning to see why Jeff was fed up with Casa de Luuv. “So what am I again? Exactly?”

“You were decisive.” He stared at her for a moment as if he were sizing her up. “Okay. The two magics that are most alike are divine and decisive. A decisive mage works his magic by forcing his will on the world around him, but he’s limited by his humanity. Whereas a god...” Logan shrugged.

“A god is limited only by their own innate goodness. So how come none of you have, I dunno, flooded the world or something?”

Logan stared at her in exaggerated horror. “Are you kidding? This is where I keep all my stuff.”

Kir smacked Logan on the knee. “There are limits to what even we can do. You’ve heard of the great flood, right? Every religion has an account of the world being covered in water.”

“I may have heard a story or two, yes.” Was he about to tell her that really happened?

“The god who actually started that flood?”

She narrowed her eyes at him, wondering where he was going with this.

“Gone. He lost his temper, let loose the waves and...poof. Disappeared. He poured too much of himself into it. We still don’t know if what he did was deliberate or if it simply got away from him and sucked him in after.”

Jamie shuddered. “So if Logan were to attempt to cover the world in fire...”

Kir nodded. “He could do it, but he’d *become* the fire. When it finally died out...” Kir shuddered, his hand burrowing into Logan’s hair.

She winced. “Ouch.”

Logan leaned back into his lover’s touch, but his expression was stern. “Quickly class: don’t try to cover the world in whatever your divine power turns out to be, *do* try and figure out what you can and can’t do, and do it behind wards.”

“Why, and what, are wards?” Her head was beginning to spin.

From the sympathetic look on Jordan’s face she figured her sister had already gotten a lecture similar to this. She proved it by answering Jamie’s question. “Runic magic that can be used to hide our signature, dampen our signal if you will. We sound like normal mages when we use our abilities behind wards.” Jordan frowned down at Logan. “Wait a moment. When you did the thing with Dick Head and changed my paperwork to Saeter, you weren’t behind wards.”

“Wasn’t I?” He grinned.

“*Logan.*”

Kir laughed at Jordan’s scowl. “He wears a specially made piece of jewelry that acts as a portable ward. It’s good for short bursts of magic, but anything prolonged would fry it so he doesn’t use it very often.”

“Oh.” Jordan stared at Logan intently. A small smile formed. “Clever.”

Now that Jamie looked, she thought she could detect it too. There was a faint red haze around... “Your nose ring.”

He grinned and clapped his hands. "And thus ends today's lesson." He stood. "Now if you'll excuse me I have some things to take care of." He tugged Kir to his feet. "C'mon, blondie, you can give me a hand." He leaned down and kissed Jordan. "Keep an eye on Jamie while she practices, okay?"

"Got it."

"Don't step in the way of anything that flies out of her hands."

"Mmm-hmm."

"Oh, and if beams shoot out of her eyes—"

"Duck behind the couch. Got it already."

Jamie put her hands on her hips and glared at the two men walking toward the den. "Is she here to watch or be target practice?"

Her only answer was Logan's amused snort.



## Chapter Eight

Travis stared at the devastation of his house. He shook his head as he squished over soaked carpet. The window panes had cracked, letting him know how Grimm had burst the pipes. He'd thrown so much frost into the room that the glass had broken under the pressure.

*Fucking Rina.* All of Travis's wards were down, unable to hold up to the combined magical might of the Jotun and the Aesir. He'd learned from Val that Grimm had shared blood with the frost giant female and gained her abilities over ice magic. Seeing the proof of it in his home was devastating. He'd loved this house, dreamed of some day bringing Jamie here to live in peace.

It was just one more thing the Old Man would pay for.

Morgan, wearing rain boots, followed behind him, his disgust plain to see. "Told you it was bad." Jeff and Magnus could be heard sliding on the once pristine tile floor of his kitchen. The natural slate had cost him a bundle too.

Travis nodded, wondering if there was anything left in the house worth salvaging.

"Knock knock."

Travis turned to find a woman standing in the doorway. She had long dark hair pulled back in a ponytail. Bright hazel eyes watched them with thinly veiled suspicion.

Travis held up his hand. "It's my house."

She smiled, an expression full of cynical amusement. "Travis Yardley-Rudiger?"

"Yes?"

She held up a badge. "Detective Antonia Mancinelli, Homicide. I have a warrant to search these premises."

He frowned. "A warrant?"

"Yes, sir." She stepped gingerly into the house, making a face as her sensible shoes squished on the soaking carpet. "Yeah. You need to step outside, both of you, and let my people do their job." She shook her head as the techs pushed their way into the house. "What the hell happened in here?"

"Burst pipe." He ignored her dubious look and focused on why she was there. "Can I ask what this is in relation to?" Although he had a pretty good idea.

"The murder of Oliver Grimm."

Travis almost growled, but the detective was watching him closely. “Murder? I thought he simply left.” Out of the corner of his eye he saw Magnus and Jeff walk cautiously into the room, their eyes glued to the detective in the doorway.

She smiled, a gotcha expression if he ever saw one. “Step outside please, Mr. Rudiger.”

Jeff stepped forward. “Let me see the warrant.”

She raised her brows. “You are?”

“Jeff Grimm.” He waved. “Those two bookends are Morgan and Magnus Grimm, my brothers.”

When the detective held out the warrant all of them studied it. It was legit, which didn’t leave Travis much choice. Travis exited his house with a grimace as a team of techs rushed past him. He wasn’t certain what they hoped to find in the waterlogged mess, but he wasn’t too concerned considering there was nothing there. He avoided the brothers as they stood near the entrance of his house, watching the technicians and cops with suspicion and concern. Instead he waited near his car and answered questions put to him by a detective he’d had dealings with in the past. The man was all business, though, asking his questions with no sign that they’d helped each other on several occasions.

He frowned when he saw Detective Mancinelli exiting the house with a smile. She was chatting with one of the other detectives who held several evidence bags in his gloved hands and looked like he’d found the lost city of gold. She sauntered over to where Travis was answering questions. “I need an address where I can reach you.”

He rattled off, again, Logan, Jordan and Kir’s address and gave the cops his cell phone number.

She closed her notebook with a snap and a smile. “Thank you for your time, Mr. Rudiger.” She turned to leave. “Oh, by the way? Don’t leave town.”

“I hadn’t planned on leaving town for a few weeks.”

“Oh, really?” She turned back. “Where were you thinking of going?”

No way was he planning on telling her that he was going out of the country to set a werewolf free. “I’m planning on asking my girlfriend to marry me. I wanted to take her to Vegas, possibly elsewhere for a honeymoon.”

“Who’s the girlfriend?”

He wouldn’t bother trying to hide it. If she didn’t know already she’d soon find out. “Jamie Grimm.”

She raised both her eyebrows. “Jamie Grimm?”

He nodded grimly. If the detective tried to mess with his woman, she would be in for a world of hurt.

Something of what he was thinking must have shown in his eyes, because hers narrowed. “I’d like to speak with her.” She checked her notebook. “She’s staying with her sister, Mrs. Saeter, right?” She looked up at him. “Same address as you?”

Again he nodded. *Shit*. If the detective got one look at Jamie she’d know something weird was going on. How would they explain the healed wounds?

She turned. "I'll be in touch, Mr. Rudiger."

*I'm sure you will, Detective.*

He watched as all of the cops pulled away, but not before putting crime scene tape over his front door.

Great. Just great. Now his house got to become a breeding ground for mosquitoes. Thanks to that tape he couldn't even call in a crew to clean the damage up. It would sit, moldering, until the cops were done their investigation. By the time they let him back in the house would probably be unsalvageable.

"Well. That sucked big hairy moose balls." Travis sighed as the brothers joined him, Jeff leading the way. "They wanted to know why Morgan and Magnus were working for you instead of Grammy. She practically accused them of helping you kill Grimm." The men exchanged a look. "Now what, boss?"

"We go home." He got into his car and hoped Jeff wasn't in a chatty mood. Jeff climbed in and, seeming to sense his mood, kept quiet all the way back to the condo.

He hoped that Jamie was in a more receptive frame of mind when he got to her. He needed her after this shitty day, even if all she allowed him was a hug.

Toni drove away from Travis Yardley-Rudiger's house. *What the hell happened to that man's house?* The water damage had been extensive. As near as she could tell, several pipes had burst, flooding the house with water and eliminating almost any forensic evidence. They'd gotten carpet fibers, hair from his hairbrush for DNA to cross-check against what they'd found at the murder site, but that was it.

It was as if the man knew he was under investigation and had somehow rigged his pipes to blow. But how? They'd found no signs of explosion, and she'd brought in a bomb expert just to be sure. It looked like the pipes had frozen, then burst. Which was impossible, considering it was friggin' June and a steamy eighty degrees.

It was one hell of a puzzle, and one she had every intention of solving.

She swung by Pete's place, hoping he'd be able to give her some insights into what was going on. An hour later she was still confused. Pete hadn't been able to tell her much of anything. She'd done something she swore she'd never do. She'd told Pete details of the Grimm murder that were supposed to remain confidential.

If she couldn't trust Pete, she didn't know who she could trust.

Still, Pete had read her the riot act before buckling down and going over the evidence with her. He'd promised that if he thought of anything he'd contact her, but she didn't hold out any hope.

She swung off by the market on her way back to her house. She'd finished off the Chunky Monkey the night before and she had the feeling that she'd need more.

Besides, tonight was the Top Chef marathon.

Jamie jumped as the front door of the condo slammed shut. Travis stomped in, ignoring everyone in the living room as he headed for the kitchen. She heard the fridge open and some glass bottles banging together. She bit her lip, looking around the room at her family, wondering what had driven Travis to head straight for the beer.

He flopped down on the sofa next to her, beer in hand. His head dropped onto the back of the sofa, his arm going around her shoulders. "God, what a shitty day."

"What happened to your house?"

"Grimm. He froze all of the water in the pipes until they burst. Water all over everything, ankle deep before Morgan opened the front door and let it all out. Morgan shut the main off, but the damage was already done." He took a deep pull on the beer bottle, his throat working as he swallowed. Jamie cuddled up against him, stroking his chest, trying to soothe him. The stress in his voice was hard to bear. "That's not all." He sat up, pulling her even closer. "The cops came with a warrant to search my house."

"Why?"

"They were looking for evidence in the murder of Oliver Grimm."

"What?" Jamie sat up, pushing against Travis's hold. "What would make them think *you* murdered Grimm?"

He shared a look with Logan that she didn't like. "Grimm will make it look like we killed him."

Logan nodded. "Damage control?"

"Not sure. We don't have a clue where he is. If we did, things would be different."

"Hugin and Munin give him an edge we just don't have."

The names sounded vaguely familiar. Where had she heard them before? "Who are Hugin and Munin?"

Travis smiled down at her, but it was grim. "Thought and Memory."

Of course. Her father had told her tales of Odin's constant companions. "The ravens?"

"They're actually an item created for Grimm by the Dökk Alfar before the war broke out."

"The statues on his desk?" Jamie remembered seeing Grimm stroking the paired raven statues that sat on his desk in his office. She also remembered playing dolls at his feet while he wheeled and dealt on the phone above her. She shook the memory off. "They're his ravens?"

"Yes. He has complete control over them. No one else *can* control them. They were created *just* for him."

"So going and taking them wouldn't do us much good, would it?"

"It's not a bad idea. If he doesn't have access to them, he's weakened even further."

"I'm sure he's managed to get the ravens by now. If he hasn't he's a lot stupider than I thought."

She sighed. "He's got them."

A knock sounded on the door just as Travis nodded. Magnus went and let Uncle Val in.

“Guess what?” He headed right into the kitchen, grabbing a beer.

“The police had a warrant to search your house for evidence in the murder of Oliver Grimm?”

Val stopped. “You too?”

“Yup.”

“Well. Isn’t that special.” He threw himself on the other side of Jamie. “Hey, pumpkin.” He kissed the top of her forehead before bringing the beer bottle to his lips. Halfway there, it paused. “Jamie?”

“Hmm?”

“Where’s your cast?”

“Gone.” She held up her wrist, twisting it back and forth to show that she was perfectly healed. “Don’t need it.”

He studied her face, visually tracing where all her bruises and scars had been. He opened his mouth to say something, but couldn’t. He put the bottle carefully down, stood, walked over to Logan, and took the surprised man into his arms. “Thank you.”

Logan looked stunned. He returned the embrace slowly. “Ah. You’re welcome.”

Val pounded Logan on the back. He let go of Logan with a big, happy grin and sat back down next to Jamie. “You look beautiful, pumpkin.”

She pouted at him. “Don’t I always?”

“Seeing you without all those bruises makes you extra beautiful today.” His eyes narrowed as he studied her features, the grin dimming a bit. “Who else did you share blood with? Travis?”

She nodded.

Val looked at Travis. “Thank you.”

Travis’s arm tightened around her shoulders, pulling her in even tighter to his chest. “Don’t thank me. We nearly lost her last night.”

“What happened?” They filled Val in on what had occurred, ending with Baldur’s appearance. He scrubbed his face with his hands when they were done. “Well, hell. At least you’re all right.”

They ate the pizza Jordan had ordered. “So, what’s next?”

“Contact Nik?”

“We haven’t seen Nik since...when was it, Logan?” Kir leaned over and handed Logan another beer, stealing a bite of the redhead’s pizza in the process.

“Paris, eighteen fifty-seven, I think.” Logan in turn stole Kir’s entire slice of pizza, earning himself a glare. With a smirk he bit down, taking a huge chunk before handing it back. “And I never did understand why he didn’t turn us in.”

“Speaking of which, anyone know which side he’s going to come down on?” Travis leaned forward, snagging the last piece out of the box before Morgan got hold of it. He held it to Jamie’s lips, his eyes lighting with satisfaction when she took a dainty bite.

“Who knows? Nik is a secretive son of a bitch.”

“Nik as in Niklas DeWitt?” Jeff rolled his eyes. “Let me guess, he’s one of you guys.”

Jamie shivered. Niklas DeWitt was one of the few people in the world who gave her the heebie-jeebies. It was those strange silver eyes of his. He had the look of a man who’d seen it all, and his flat silver eyes reflected that. The one time she’d met him she’d practically peed her pants in fright. He’d stared hard at her long and hard before he’d smiled the coldest smile she’d ever seen and headed for Travis’s office. Luckily she’d been gone to lunch when he left and she hadn’t seen him since.

Travis nodded. “He’s Heimdall, Guardian of the Bifrost Bridge that connects this plane of existence to Asgard.”

Oh. Well, that explained that. She rubbed her forehead, a slight headache building behind her eyes. Heimdall was the god who never slept. It was said he saw everything that happened in all of the nine realms. *Wonder what he saw when he looked at me.* “So if he helps us, we’d have the same advantage Grimm has?”

“Not quite. Nik can be blocked with magic. It’s harder to block the ravens.” Travis stroked her forehead. “Headache?”

“A little.” She looked up at him to find the beginnings of a worried frown on his face. She didn’t want to tell him yet that the majority of the headache was from practicing magic, of all things, while he’d been dealing with the cops. Besides, she owed Jordan a new vase and she really didn’t feel like getting into it again with her sister. “I’ll be all right.” She let a small grin grace her lips. “That which does not kill me merely pisses me off.”

The amused snort from Logan was ignored by Travis. “You sure?” She nodded, to his obvious relief. “Okay. But we’re heading to bed soon, understand?”

She bit her lip, uncertain of what that was going to entail. If Travis made another move on her she knew now what her answer would be, but would he make that move after the way she’d acted earlier? She’d been a total spaz, and she wouldn’t blame him a bit if he pulled back a little. “Okay.”

The heat that filled his expression was tamped back down when Jeff threw a wadded up napkin at them. Jamie glared at her brother. “Don’t you have a date, or a case to work on, or something?”

Jeff grinned. “Nope. My boss gave me the month off, and frankly *some* of us have been too busy to chase tail.”

Travis flipped him the bird.

“Besides, who else do you trust to hunt down Nik?”

“No.”

“Uh-uh.”

Jeff stared, startled, at Logan and Kir. “Why not?”

“Because Nik can’t be found unless he wants to be found. Besides, you can’t go where Nik is likely to go.”

“Where? Siberia?”

“Try Alfheim or Vanaheim. Or even Asgard. While Jordan and Jamie can go there now thanks to their blood bonds, you can’t.”

Jeff flopped back on the sofa. “You people suck.”

Jamie grinned at her twin. “Bored?”

“Titless.” He sat up. “Give me *something* to do? Anything.”

Travis focused on Jeff. “I have an idea, but I’m not quite certain if you’re up for it.”

Jamie’s eyes flew to Travis’s face. He’d sounded weird. “What idea?”

Travis darted a quick glance at Logan. “I want to be the one who frees Fenris.”

Logan’s quickly indrawn breath could be easily heard. “What if he tries to kill you?”

Jamie tensed. “Yeah, what if he tries to kill you?” Because she’d have a new fur coat if the wolf laid one paw on *her* man.

“I’m taking Jeff and Jamie with me, but first I have to deal with Grimm’s little game.”

He acted as if they hadn’t said a thing. Wasn’t Tyr the one who’d betrayed Fenris, chaining him down before the wolf was impaled through the jaws on a sword? Jamie very much doubted Fenris would be in a forgiving mood, apple explanation or not, despite having taken Travis’s hand in payment.

“I’m in.”

Jamie swung her head toward Jeff, startled by the eager look on his face. “What?”

He leaned forward. “Bored. Titless.”

She leaned forward too. “Dog. Kibble.”

Travis ignored them both. “I want volunteers to go speak to the Norns.”

Magnus and Morgan raised their hands. “We’ll do that,” Morgan said.

“Logan, Jordan and I will go speak to Hel.” Kir placed his hand over Logan’s open mouth. “If she’s not safe with us, she’s certainly going to be safe in Helheim. And you know your daughter has to meet her.”

Logan frowned but kept his protest between his teeth.

Magnus sighed. “What about Jormungandr?” Apparently her brother wasn’t quite over his objections to freeing Logan’s children, but he was going along with the majority.

Travis scratched his chin thoughtfully. “I’ll get in touch with Kye.” Travis smiled ruefully at Jamie’s confused look. “Sorry. Kye is Njord, god of the sea. Maybe he can find him.”

Logan nodded. “Good idea.”

"You're determined to do this?" Jamie asked her twin. Hell, she could practically feel the excited energy vibrating off of him. It was the same way he got when he got a really juicy case to work on. Once he was on the hunt there was no pulling him back from it.

He growled and took everyone's empty plates and glasses, and she knew the fight was over.

*Looks like I'm going to Norway.* She leaned back into Travis with a new worry. How were they supposed to survive the ultimate pissed-off werewolf?

"Time for bed, sweetheart." Travis held out his hand, gratified beyond belief when Jamie took it.

"Wait, I have something for you." Logan dashed off to the spare bedroom and came back with, of all things, their luggage. "Here."

Travis looked at it. "You're kicking us out?"

"Damn skippy." He dug into his pocket and pulled out a set of keys. "Pick a condo, any condo."

"Logan." Jordan barked at her husband, looking mortified.

"What?"

"You can't kick them out!"

"Why not? I'm kicking everyone out. It's not like I'm singling them out."

"Where are they going?"

*Good question.*

"They're staying on this floor, but, babe, this place is too small for *all* of us. If it makes you feel better, I got the M and M's and Jeff a place here too."

"Is that what you were working on all afternoon?" Jamie was smiling as she took one of the keys Logan held out.

"Hell, yes. I love you guys, but I'm tired of people walking in on my naked time. I sure as hell don't want to walk in on your naked time."

Jeff reached out and snagged one of the keys. "And I'm getting tired of seeing your naked time." He looked up, his expression serious. "Is the entire floor safe?"

Logan nodded. "Saw to it while we were waiting for the pizza."

"I'll reinforce it in the morning." Two elements would be stronger than one, and Travis and Logan, thank goodness, weren't opposing elements. If Logan had been a frost Jotun rather than fire, they might have had issues when they tried to twine their magic together.

"What happened to the neighbors?" Jamie returned to his side, standing close to him. Once again he put his arm around her, his cock twitching as she snuggled in close to him. If he was reading the signals right whatever bug had been up her butt earlier today was mostly gone now.



“Oh, they’re all still in the building, just in different, previously empty condos. Let me tell you, I’m pooped from changing all that paperwork and all those memories.” Logan snorted. “All except Dick Head’s personal log, that is.” He snickered when Jordan smacked his arm.

“Who’s dickhead?” Jamie was laughing, her arm was wrapping around his waist. Suddenly he really couldn’t give a crap what Logan had done to get them the condos, he was just grateful no one would be walking in on *his* naked time.

“The building manager. He’s a little, um, uptight. He and Logan have clashed before.” Kir handed a key to Morgan and Magnus and another key to Val. He looked down at the key in his hand, grinning when he saw the Tiwaz rune etched on it.

Morgan held up their key. It had a cartoon peanut M and M etched onto it, complete with legs, arms and eyes. Magnus had a matching one with a plain M and M. “Very funny, asshole.”

“I thought so.” Logan smirked as everyone laughed.

Travis was startled to see the wolf’s head etched into Jeff’s key, and could tell that Jeff was too. Neither one of them said anything, however, as Jeff pocketed the key and grabbed his bag.

“Which one are we in?” Magnus was already heading for the door, key and luggage in hand.

“Pick one. The keys will turn into what you need and then they’ll stay that way, so don’t change your mind.”

“Oh, cool.” Jamie grinned up at him. “Ready to go?”

Travis’s dick throbbed behind his jeans as her breasts rubbed against his side. “Hell yeah.” He was planning on picking the first door they came to. The sooner he got her alone the sooner he could get her naked.

“Who are the extra keys for?”

He looked at the keys still held in Kir’s hand. Jeff had a good question.

Kir looked down at the keys in his hand. When he looked back up, his pupils were white. “I don’t know yet.”

“Ookay. Outta here.” Jeff hugged Jordan and Jamie, waved bye to the others, grabbed his duffel bag and headed out the door. “Later, weirdos.” He didn’t bother shutting the door behind him.

“And on that note...” Morgan grabbed his bag and walked toward the door. His brother was long gone. “Thanks, Logan.” Morgan turned back briefly. “Tomorrow night, our place? No sense in making Kir clean up two nights in a row.”

“Works for us.” Kir smiled and waved the men out the door. “Night, guys.”

“Go. Leave. My clothes are coming off in two seconds. One.” Logan crossed his arms and glared at Travis and Jamie, his lips twitching as his two lovers groaned.

Jamie grabbed Travis's arm and began running for the front door, laughing as their bags landed at their feet. The door to the Tait-Saeter condo shut with a snap on the word "Two." laughter sounding through the door until it was abruptly cut off.

"C'mon, let's find out where we're staying." Travis tried to pick up all of the suitcases but Jamie was having none of it. She grabbed three pieces all by herself, leaving him with the last, and heaviest, bag.

In the end they didn't get the first door. They were about five doors down from the Tait-Saeters', which bothered him not one little bit. He followed his woman into the living room, enjoying her gasp of pleasure as she took in the warm, romantic feel of the decor. He could feel the lingering traces of the spell Logan had placed on the door washing over the rooms, acknowledging the new owners and setting the fire jotun's wards in place.

"Can you feel that? What is that?"

He looked at her, noticing her confused expression. "Protection spells, wards meant to keep Grimm out." As soon as he had a chance he'd add in his own protections, putting Jamie behind a double barrier.

He still had to explain to her how she could sense what was going on.

"So why do they do that bright light thingy whenever...I...Oh my god."

She was looking toward the living room, a dreamy look on her face. Taking his eyes off her he got his first real look at his new home. The condo was done in warm, rich tones and dark woods with bright pops of color here and there that spoke of a vibrant personality. A turquoise-colored, overstuffed chaise was positioned to enjoy the wall to wall windows, a reading lamp strategically placed nearby. The traditional sofa was a soft tan color with high, rolled arms and a loose pillow back. It had more of the turquoise color on it in the form of throw pillows. The dark wood coffee table and end tables matched the intricately carved wooden legs of the sofa. The hardwood floors were dark oak, giving the place a timeless feel. The dining set was in the same dark wood, with chairs upholstered in the same fabric as the sofa. Wine cooled in an iced bucket next to the dining table, which had been set for two. The brightly colored dishes popped against the plain placemats.

He watched indulgently as she drifted into the kitchen, her groan of pleasure rekindling his interest. He wanted her to make that sound while he was buried so far inside her she'd be able to taste him in the back of her throat. He wished it was his skin those delicate fingers trailed over rather than the granite countertops, that soft sigh of pleasure something he'd teased from her throat. As soon as he got her attention he planned on doing just that.

"Wow."

He came back through his lust-induced fog to find she'd moved into the master bedroom. Leaving the luggage where it was he followed.

She had her hands over her mouth, her wide eyes taking in the bedroom. The walls were that turquoise color she seemed to love so much. The bed, a large, dark canopy bed with an ornately carved

headboard, dominated the room. Soft drapery hung from the canopy, turquoise, tan and black blending together in a surprising harmony. The bedding was rich, brocaded silk in a creamy color that toned the rest of the bedding down a notch.

“You like it?”

Her eyes were wide with wonder. “It’s everything I ever dreamed of.”

Right then and there he determined that he would never, ever complain no matter how she wanted to decorate. It was worth it just to see that look on her face.

He reached for her, pulling her into his arms and pillowing her head against his chest. She settled in with a sigh, her arms wrapping around his waist.

“I might never leave here.”

*That would be good. At least I know she’d be safe.* Not that he actually believed it. Jamie was too vibrant, too alive to remain cooped up for long. He’d already seen the signs of restlessness in her, which was one of the reasons she and Jeff would be going with him to free Fenris. He had no idea what the Wonder Twins would get up to if he left them behind. He smiled. Jordan was getting to him if he was thinking of them by her nickname for them. “Yeah, it’s a nice place.” Not as nice as his had been, but if it made her happy then that was all that mattered.

“No.” She leaned back in his arms, her expression filled with wary hope. “I mean, *here*.” She tightened her arms around him, making her meaning clear.

“Are you sure?” Because if she teased him again his cock was going to rebel and just jump right off his damn body. Hell, she’d probably be able to put a leash on it and take it for walks.

“Are *you* sure?” She bit her lip, sighing when he leaned down and brushed a soft kiss over the tiny hurt. “I’ve seen your girlfriends, remember, so no lying. Not a one of them was the cute brainy type with wildly curly hair and extra personality.”

The fierce look on her face hid the uncertainty he could still hear in her voice. “Would you believe me if I told you they were all practice while I waited for you?”

She leaned back in his arms and waved her hand, making a face. “What is that smell?” She sniffed, ignoring the grin slowly taking over his face. “Phew, that bullshit is nasty.”

God, he loved this woman. “I’ll take that as a no.”

The half-amused, half-aggravated look was one he knew well. She usually wore it when she felt someone had said something extraordinarily stupid. She’d given him the same look when she’d been sixteen and unwittingly won his heart.

He pulled her in closer. “Okay, how about I’m not a perv who’s into little girls. And not one word about Vikings and fourteen-year-olds, got it?” When she shuddered he added, “Back then you lived to be maybe thirty. Marrying at fourteen was normal.”

She coughed, “jailbait” into her hand.

He began slowly walking her back toward the bed, unable to keep the big grin off his face. He felt like he was glowing with happiness. He looked at his arm. *I am glowing with happiness.* “You are *so* weird.”

“*I’m* weird? I’m not the umpty-bazillion-year-old god here.”

He paused, the grin—and the glow—fading. He knew now what the real problem she was having was. “How much does that bother you?”

She blew her hair off her forehead, ignoring it when it landed right back where it had been. “Tyr? You’re older than my *grandfather*.”

He sighed, secretly delighted when she used his *real* name. “Right.” He absently stroked her back, trying to figure out how to get around this admittedly large stumbling block. “But I’m not a psychopathic asshat.”

Humor flashed briefly across her face before irritation settled back in. “I’ve seen the goddesses you, ahem, date.”

The way her nose wrinkled as she made little quotation marks with her fingers was so cute he just had to kiss the tip of her nose. “I haven’t slept with a goddess in over fifteen years.”

Her eyes narrowed. “Fine. I’ve seen the Barbie dolls you’ve slept with.”

“I never slept with a plastic woman.”

“Boobs are supposed to move. Many a silicone chip gave its life so that Cindy What’s-Her-Face could have double D’s.”

His hand went from absent to firm, sliding down to her ass. He petted it, loving the feel of the firm globes.

“Travis.”

“Hmm?”

The irritation was slowly giving way to humor. “Barbie dolls.”

He blinked, his gaze narrowing in to the soft cleavage revealed by the soft green shirt she was wearing. “What were we talking about?”

“Sex.”

*I can get behind that.*

“With other, blonder women.”

*Or not.* “I’m sorry, honey, but I have no intention of sharing you with anyone, male *or* female.” Because if anyone besides him touched her that way he’d be forced to kill. His vision began to mist over at the thought of what her ex might have touched, might have tasted. He’d wasted so many years. Right now he couldn’t even remember why he’d waited.

“Tyr. Sex.”

His vision miraculously cleared. “Yes. Tyr. Sex.” His mouth homed in on the side of her neck, biting, licking and sucking until a huge, dark hickey appeared and her breath came in deep pants.

“Oh god.”

“Mmm-hmm.” He nibbled his way up her neck to her ear, drawing the lobe between his teeth and worrying it gently.

“But—”

“Let me love you.”

*Let me love you.* If only he knew. She was dying inside for him to love her just as much as she loved him.

No matter what, she *did* love him. Ancient Norse God of Justice or three-eyed purple alien, she loved him. So she didn't fight him when he pulled her shirt slowly up and off of her. She didn't protest when his hand slid down her torso, cupping her breast and thumbing her nipple until it throbbed with want. She didn't utter a single word when her bra was removed. After all, she'd already decided to give herself to him, nerves be damned.

She undid the button and zipper of her own pants, watching the mist creep across his eyes as she did so. It was strangely exciting to watch, to know that *she* was the one who made him lose control like that. She licked her lips and the mist covered half his iris, the white slowly bleeding into the blue, his jaw clenching.

He bent down to lick her nipple, drawing it slowly into the warm, moist heat of his mouth. She arched back, trusting he would keep her from falling.

With a wild groan he moved again, pushing her back onto the bed. “I waited so long for you.” His shirt was quickly removed, his heavy lidded gaze never leaving her naked breasts. “I almost lost you.” His shoes, socks and pants came off next, a ragged moan escaping him as she slipped her fingers under the edge of her jeans. The blue of his eyes was almost gone. When she actually started to stroke herself he shuddered. “Fuck, Jamie.”

“Yes. Fuck Jamie.”

That did it. The blue of his eyes were completely gone, his skin taking on a luminescent shimmer as he reached for her jeans, tugging them and her shoes off. He rested his hand atop hers, silently encouraging her to continue, learning the rhythm she used to pleasure herself. He smiled as he dipped his fingers inside her pussy, slowly fucking her with them as she stroked her clit.

He leaned down and took her nipple into his mouth, balancing himself on his right arm, his hand smearing her juices around her asshole. “Tyr.”

He shuddered. “Not yet. Some day, when I've made you ready, but not yet.” One finger dipped in, the burning sensation making her gasp. At the same time he took her other nipple, the blooming pleasure making her arch into his mouth. He nuzzled her neck, nipping and licking and sucking, his fingers moving back to her pussy and slamming in. “You smell so good.”

She was thrusting now, meeting him stroke for stroke. “Oh god.”

“Close?”

“Oh god.” She could feel it blossoming in her lower belly, tingling in her fingers and toes. She was so damn close she could taste it. Her fingers moved faster on her clit, doing everything she could to make herself come.

He stood up, surprising her. He knelt between her spread knees, his tongue darting out to stroke her clit right alongside her fingers, and that was it, that was all she wrote as her orgasm broke over her in dark waves.

When she opened her eyes he was once again standing, staring down at her out of sightless eyes, the fingers he’d fucked her with being slowly sucked clean. A spasm raced through her pussy at the sight of the bliss on his face.

“You taste good too.” His grin was feral as he repositioned her on the bed, head on the pillows, legs spread wide. “I wonder how you feel.”

She expected him to slide into her, his hot cock ramming home, but she was wrong. Oh so wrong.

He began a slow, torturous exploration of her body that left her panting, breathless and wanting. He fanned his fingers over her quivering stomach. He glided down her arms, tickling the tips her fingers. Her feet were gently massaged. Up one leg and then down the other, never once touching her drenched pussy.

“Roll over.”

She blinked. *He can still speak English?* But she rolled over, not even thinking about the view of her ass he was getting.

She needn’t have worried. He sighed happily as his fingers traced the soft globes. “You have the *best* ass.” She giggled as he leaned down on his arm, nipping with his teeth, his beard tickling her just enough to make her shiver. “Does that tickle?”

“When do I get to play?” She was dying to get her hands on him.

He draped himself over her, pressing her down into the mattress. His cock nudged at the lips of her pussy. “After I prove to you that you’re the only goddess I want to fuck.”

*Goddess? Wait. Didn’t Logan say something about—?*

But he did it again, he shut her brain down just like that. All it took was him sliding home inside her, his hard body still holding hers down. God, his cock felt *so* good, hard, warm and throbbing.

He began a slow, torturous fuck, his hips moving as if he had all the time in the world. He would draw it out, letting her feel every ridge, every vein before gliding back in, the tip of his cock just nudging her cervix. “You like this? You like feeling me all over you, inside you, part of you?”

“Fuck yes.”

His beard stroked her cheek. He turned his head, his teeth nipping her shoulder. “Want more?”

She reached behind her and dug her fingers into his hair, pulling it hard to let him know she meant business. “Make me come.”

He grinned again, an animalistic growl pouring from his throat as he began shafting her in smooth, hard strokes. His hand burrowed beneath her, his fingers finding her clit and stroking it just the right way.

She tried to buck back into him but his body held her down. All she could do was accept what he gave her. “Let me fuck you back.”

“Later.”

He sped up, damn near pistoning into her now. She wanted to come so badly she was groaning under him. The sensations were almost too much. “Tyr.”

“Yes. Come, Jamie.”

She tightened the walls of her pussy, intent on taking him with her.

His rhythm stuttered, the smoothness gone as he fucked her wildly. “Gonna. Jamie.”

His breathless cries were music to her ears. Then his fingers pinched her clit, stroking her hard, and all she could see were stars dancing behind her eyes as she came so hard she couldn’t even draw breath.

He was right behind her, gasping out his own release, his light bathing them both until she could no longer see, only feel him above her, his body bowed as he spilled himself inside her.

He collapsed next to her, his light dimming, the white mist slowly bleeding away until sleepy blue eyes smiled at her. “Love you.”

She breathed a silent *thank you* as he kissed her gently. *He loves me*. She made sure to mouth the words back, knowing she’d given a piece of her soul into his keeping.

## Chapter Nine

She was in bed with a naked Travis. He'd told her he loved her.

And he was snoring.

She tried to hold back the giggles as the God of Justice put freight trains to shame next to her. He shifted slightly and she lost any and all urges to giggle.

He was rock hard, that thick, long shaft leaving a wet trail just below his belly button. From the look on his face it was one hell of a dream.

*He'd better be dreaming of me.*

She smirked and slid out of bed as quietly as possible. She brushed her teeth and went to the bathroom, careful to make sure the door was closed while she did it. For what she had in mind she didn't want him awake.

She peeked out of the bedroom door and sighed. *Still asleep.* She tiptoed across the carpet, sliding back into bed as gently as she could. *Good. Now, my turn.*

She started by slowly teasing her fingers down his chest. He had a nice chest, lightly sprinkled with dark blond hairs, just enough to tickle the tips of her fingers. She plucked at one brown nipple, jerking back when he shifted and moaned softly.

She waited until he'd settled back down before continuing her explorations. Long, strong legs tapered to large feet. She leaned down and licked the inside of his calf, her eyes glued to his face to watch for signs of wakefulness. His brow furrowed, but he remained still, his expression slowly smoothing back into sleep.

When she licked the inside of his other thigh he hissed, his legs spreading.

Very carefully she grasped his shaft in her hand. *Mmm. Breakfast.* Stifling another giggle at the thought of sausages—"I'm gonna be a good girl and clean off my plate"—she bent her head to his heavy ball sac. She darted out her tongue, tracing the wrinkled skin before moving to the joint between his thigh and his dick. She gave him a good, long lick there, earning a whimper and another restless movement. A drop of pre-come glistened at the head of his dick, and she desperately wanted to taste it.

*Not yet.* He'd done his best to drive her insane last night, but this morning was all for him. She leaned over and sampled the other side between his thigh and his dick before pulling his balls into her mouth. She tongued them both, letting them roll around in her mouth before letting them go with gentle suction.



She was startled when his hand landed on hers. “Like this,” he muttered breathlessly. He showed her what he liked, stroking her hand up and down his shaft, twisting it slightly. The look of painful bliss on his face was incredible.

She drew his balls back into her mouth and he moaned, thrusting up against her chin. “Want my mouth?”

His answer was to sit up against the headboard, grab the back of her head and guide her mouth to the crown of his cock. She didn’t mind at all, since that was her ultimate goal, to make him want so badly that he took what he wanted. She grinned as she sipped at the tip of his dick, sucking that drop of pre-come into her mouth and savoring it.

“Yes, suck it, Jamie.”

Boy, was he in for a surprise. Something she’d learned to do, and do very well too, was suck cock. Her ex had *loved* to have her go down on him, and she’d loved doing it. She knew it wasn’t something every woman got into it, but she got off on the way it made her partner feel. The sense that she held his pleasure in her hands and mouth was an aphrodisiac to her.

But Travis... *Holy fuck*. Travis tasted like heaven. Salty sweet and oh so good. She took him as deep as she could, her nose touching his curls on the third stroke. Before long her lips were wrapped around the base of his cock. His gasps of pleasure were music to her ears.

“I do *not* want to know where you learned that.”

The possessive growl in his voice, the way his hand curled into her hair, had her damn near purring. She began to bob up and down, taking him into her, stroking the underside of his shaft with her tongue. He guided her with his hand, watching her, that white mist once more slowly taking over the blue until he closed his eyes and tilted his head back.

When his hips began to move, when he began fucking into her mouth she slowed down, allowing him to set the pace. She wanted to taste him, wanted him to coat the back of her throat. She needed to know that she was the one who’d brought him that pleasure.

He was moaning now, soft words in Norwegian and something else, something lyrical and beautiful. She caught the words “beautiful” and “suck it”, but the best one was “mine” just before he gasped and came. She took as much as she could but it had been a while and some got away from her to dribble down his shaft.

His hand tightened in her hair, pulling her up his body so that he could kiss her hungrily. He tilted her back, laying her down on the bed, his mouth never leaving hers until she was settled, her legs spread wide by his hips.

He pulled back from her mouth and began kissing his way down her body, stopping long enough at each breast to pay homage to her nipples. By the time he was done sucking and playing with them she was whimpering, begging him to fuck her.

He shook his head, teasing her stomach with his beard. "I haven't had *my* breakfast yet."

With that he fastened his mouth on her pussy and began eating her with a single-minded intensity that had her fucking his face in no time. The sensations skyrocketing through her until her back arched and she came with a keening cry.

He rolled them over again, his cock rock hard once more. He held her boneless, satisfied body in his arms and slid his cock into her still quivering pussy, ramming into her over and over again in a primal mating she'd never experienced before.

She pushed back, her hands on his shoulders. Her body took over and she began to ride him, sliding up and down on his cock. The curls at the base of his cock brushed her clit over and over as she fucked him, her sensitive nipples dragging through the hairs on his chest until they were painfully sensitive.

"That's it, Jamie. Ride me, take me." His hands guided her, held her up, but she barely felt it as he fucked her hard. And she fucked him just as hard, the wet sound of their bodies slapping together testament to the fact that she was claiming him just as thoroughly as he had claimed her.

He was muttering again, part English, part Norwegian, part that lyrical language and she knew he was close. She tightened her muscles around his shaft, crying out his true name just as he began stroking her clit with his thumb.

She came first, screeching, back arched, blinded by the fury of her orgasm as it washed over her. His cry quickly followed hers, his hand leaving her pussy and holding her hip as he emptied into her once more.

She collapsed on top of him, his cock still twitching inside her. "Good morning," she slurred.

His shoulders shook. "Very much so." He kissed the top of her head and cuddled her close, remaining inside her until his shaft had completely softened.

She loved that just as much as she'd loved the hot, hard sex.

Hell, she just loved *him*.

Grimm stared at Detective Mancinelli, delight dancing in his veins. He had arrest warrants for both Val Grimm and Travis Yardley-Rudiger in his hands. Once he had them both behind bars he'd be able to set in motion the little accident he'd arranged for them both. He had everything planned.

Now he just had to implement it.

"When do you plan on serving those?" The suspicion highlighting her face only made her more beautiful to him. He had plans to see much more than suspicion there.

Fear and awe would be a good start.

"Today." Grimm sighed. Soon... Soon everything would be back the way it should be. With a few additions, of course. But first things first. He eyed the detective. He had to eliminate the threat of Tyr and Vali. He needed Gungnir. He had to regain control of Idunn and her apples.

He had to see to it that this time Baldur truly died. Too bad guns couldn't fire mistletoe bullets. Wooden bullets basically ignited as they left the barrel of the gun, exploding into tiny shards, making them great for movies but lousy for killing people. He knew, he'd tried it. Petrified mistletoe didn't work, either. It bounced off his pain-in-the-ass son's hide just like everything else, because it was no longer mistletoe. Finding ways around that damn protection Frigg had wrapped around Baldur had become a full-time hobby. He'd even gone so far as to wonder what would happen if he shot the bastard into space. Had she gotten a god-damn promise not to hurt Baldur from *vacuum*?

"Danny-boy."

He blinked, irritated as once again she snapped her fingers in his face. The urge to truly try and force his will on her was so strong he nearly gave into it.

*Not yet.* He tamped it down, not surprised to see the startled look on her face. He smiled, allowing some of his will to slip its leash. "Sorry, long night. Are you in on the take-down or not?" He couldn't wait to see the look on Tyr's face when he and Vali got arrested for the murder of Oliver Grimm. And when they ran the DNA tests and proved that both Tyr and Vali had been there?

Priceless. They couldn't have made his job any easier if they'd tried.

"I wouldn't dream of missing it."

"Good."

"Has any of the testing come back on the crime scene evidence?"

"Not just yet, but the lab promised today." He hadn't needed the results to get the warrant. If Toni wasn't so resistant he'd lie to her to get her to believe him.

*Hmm. She could be the one person capable of screwing up my plans.* He'd have to think about that, maybe come up with a way to neutralize her and make it look like Val had done it. They were more likely to find Val had committed his murder rather than Tyr, so why not pin one more on him? Pity, though. He had visions of enjoying himself between the good detective's thighs.

It had been a while since someone had fought him the way she did. It was a hell of a turn on.

She was looking at him oddly. "Shouldn't you have waited for those results? How did you get a warrant without them?"

He shrugged. "The DA felt there was sufficient evidence for an arrest, and the judge agreed."

She shook her head. "The DA doesn't usually jump the gun like that."

"What can I say? Prominent businessman, rich family, maybe the wife is putting pressure on them. Who knows?"

"Mancinelli."

Toni turned at the sound of her name, that long dark hair swinging. Grimm wanted to reach out and touch it, see if it was as soft as it looked. "Yeah?"

"Captain wants to see you and Solberg."

“Yeah, we’ll be there in a sec.” She turned to Grimm and made a face. “Probably about the arrest.”

“Yeah, probably.” Grimm followed Mancinelli into the captain’s office, prepared to dazzle his boss with bullshit. He couldn’t afford any serious mistakes at this point.

Once Tyr and Vali were behind bars, his plan could go into action. When he had Gungnir, everything else would fall into the palm of his hand.

Travis was feeling extraordinarily good today. He’d thrown on a pair of pants, intent on making Jamie, who was still sleeping, breakfast in bed. He wasn’t a gourmet cook like Logan, but he knew how to make a mean French toast and fresh fruit breakfast. He gathered the bread, eggs, cinnamon and milk and put the frying pan down on the burner. Next he wanted to slice the fresh strawberries he’d put in a bowl earlier. He turned around to grab a bowl of fruit off the counter and saw her standing there, clad in nothing but that see through Vera Wang nightgown.

“I’m hungry.”

He actually gulped. Here he was, over a thousand years old, and he was gulping over the sight of a woman in a sheer nightgown.

*Not a woman. My woman.*

“So am I.” The bowl of fruit went back on the counter. The nightgown hit the floor. He had her spread out on the kitchen table before she could blink, feasting on the most delicious pussy it had ever been his privilege to taste. He held her hips down and took her clit into his mouth, sucking it in, sipping at the folds, drawing her essence inside him. He’d never be able to get enough of her taste. Each of her moans, every one of her sighs belonged to him now. He took great pleasure in drawing them out.

She shuddered below him, moaning, letting him know in the sweetest way that she’d come. With one last, loving lick he stood. He undid his jeans and slid his cock in the only place it ever wanted to be again, fucking her on the kitchen table and mentally thanking Logan for getting nice, sturdy wood.

He took his time, moving slowly at first so that she’d be able to catch up to him. And, really, after the sex they’d had yesterday he had no problem taking it slowly this time. She’d practically drained him dry with her mouth, then ridden him so beautifully his head damn near exploded along with his balls.

His thumb began a lazy stroking of her clit. Her legs wrapped around his waist, her heels digging into the small of his back. Her hands dug into his shoulders and pulled him down to her. He allowed it, seeing the heat slowly building in her eyes.

She offered him her breasts, and the world began to fade at the edges. All of her inner beauty opened before his eyes, her light shining from within nearly blinding him. He could see all of it now, every damn inch of her displayed before him. Her strength, her courage, her devotion to those she loved shone forth like a beacon to him. All of her, even the tiny, dark corners of her soul, was precious to him.

*She's so beautiful.* Her strength humbled him, her courage dazzled him, and her love?

Her love made him whole again.

He could feel his orgasm creeping up on him and desperately tried to hold it off, but he could sense the beginnings of hers and it damn near threw him over the edge. Determined to send her over first he balanced on his right arm and took her nipple between his teeth. He tugged at it the same time he strummed her clit with his fingers, throwing her into another orgasm. Her gasped shriek was music to his ears, her pussy spasming around his cock like a vise, pulling him into his own orgasm. He drained himself into her, wanting so much to be a part of her forever.

"Y'know," she panted beneath him, her South Philly accent thickened and slurred, "donuts are my usual breakfast, but I could learn to live with this."

He threw his head back and laughed.

"Okay, people. Gary, you and Paul are serving the warrant on Val Grimm. Danny and I are taking on Yardley-Rudiger. Any questions?" Toni looked at the men heading into the condominium complex just outside Rittenhouse Square. To a man they looked grimly determined.

She still couldn't believe she was serving a warrant on so little evidence. She'd never had to deal with something like this before, but the judge had signed off on it, the captain had organized it, so here she was. She just hoped they weren't making a huge mistake.

Danny seemed oddly excited, but some guys got like that. The thrill of the takedown was the best high ever. Hell, she'd probably be feeling something similar herself if her instincts weren't screaming at her that she was doing the wrong thing, that they had the wrong men.

The fact that the blood and fiber work still hadn't come by the time they left the precinct this afternoon was going to cause problems. Their defense attorney was going to be able to get them off on that alone. But trying to point that out privately to the captain and the DA had been an exercise in futility.

Feh. She hated when a case went south because some gung-ho asshole bureaucrat was screaming for closure and forced the hands of the cops. It was frustrating as hell.

Here's hoping Danny's proof is waiting once we get these guys in lock-up. Because if anything went wrong she had the feeling it wouldn't be Danny's ass on the line.

Jamie pulled her shirt down over her sore breasts, actually grateful Travis was working on the computer. The man had an unhealthy fascination with her nipples that had left them a little bit sore, too tender to wear a bra. She was going to have to have a little talk with him about that. Later. As it was, the cotton of her T-shirt was rubbing against them, making them perk up.

*Hmm. Maybe I'd better put a bra on.* If Travis saw nipple boners he'd be on her in a flash, her pants would be down around her ankles and her body would be singing the Hallelujah Chorus before she could blink. *Did anyone pack my padded bras?*

She was digging through her underwear when the doorbell rang. Crap. Her relatives did not get to see her all perky. She thrust her arms through the bra, closing it quickly. She tugged on her T-shirt and darted for the door.

"...under arrest for the murder of Oliver Grimm."

Jamie's jaw dropped open. Travis was being handcuffed by some woman wearing a badge at her hip, the one going around his right wrist tight enough to keep him from wiggling his arm free. Behind her was another man, a dark smirk on his face that made her want to hit him. Something about that man, the way he stood maybe, seemed awfully familiar.

Travis stood docilely while the woman finished snapping the handcuffs closed. He looked at Jamie, and that was when she saw how truly angry he was. "Go to Logan's."

She nodded. He didn't have to say a word. If anyone could get him out of this it would be the Trickster.

"Ms. Grimm?"

She turned to the woman, stepping further out into the light. "Yes."

The woman's brows rose, surprise and suspicion all over her features. "You look remarkably well for someone who was tortured a month ago."

Jamie raised her chin and glared. "I heal quickly."

"Apparently." The woman pulled Travis toward the door, ignoring Jamie's hiss of protest.

"Listen to me! Travis didn't do it."

The policewoman turned. "Have that much faith in him, do you?"

Jamie nodded. "I do."

The woman returned Jamie's narrow eyed stare, her expression searching.

"Mancinelli, we have to get him down to the squad car. The others are arresting Mr. Grimm right now." A gloating expression quickly passed over the male detective's face, taking his handsome features and making them ugly.

*Where have I seen that look before?*

"Uncle Val?" Better and better. Fuck. "Why would you arrest my uncle?"

"For the same reason I'm arresting lover-boy. Murder."

"They didn't murder Oliver Grimm."

"Then who did?" All of a sudden the detective was in her face, practically nose to nose. "If you know something about this and are hiding it I will have your ass in jail so fast your dust won't have time to settle."

“Leave her alone.”

Jamie could hear that odd echo in Travis’s voice and knew she had to distract the detectives. “What’s going to happen to Travis?”

“Mr. Rudiger will be taken downtown, processed, read his rights and interrogated.”

“When will bail be set?”

The detective smiled grimly. “That depends on the judge.” Detective Mancinelli backed away. “Remember what I said. Accessory to murder, Ms. Grimm.”

“Have you looked at my fucking hospital records, *Detective Mancinelli*? I couldn’t have swatted a fly, let alone killed a man.”

“I know how to do my job.” The cop was glaring at her again, but there was something about the look on her face, like she was waiting for something to happen but wasn’t quite sure what that something would be.

*Bring it, bitch.* “Could have fooled me.”

The male detective started toward her, a second set of cuffs in his hand.

“Solberg, play with the girl later. We have to get the perps downtown.”

With one final glare the detective joined his partner by the door. “I hope you can sleep at night, Ms. Grimm.”

“I won’t. Not until Travis is brought home to me.”

With one final, inscrutable look the female detective was gone, Travis right beside her.

“Good night, Jamie.” The male detective left with a soft smile, closing the door quietly behind them.

Jamie felt all of the blood rush out of her head, her heart pounding in terror. She grabbed her shoes and her keys and ran for Jordan’s condo. She pounded on the door, screaming to wake the dead.

“What?” The door was pulled open by an angry looking Logan. Actual flames danced around his hands, his eyes burning, literally burning, down at her.

“They’ve arrested Travis and Uncle Val.”

Logan blinked, his flames dousing. “What?”

“The. Police. Arrested. TRAVIS!”

Logan’s eyes crossed as she shrieked. “Down, Pita.” He pulled her into the condo. “Dampen the light, will you?”

“What?” She turned toward the light switches.

“Not them. You.”

That was when she realized she was glowing. She drew in a deep, terrified breath. “*JORDAN!*”

Jordan and Kir came running out of the den, both of them looking frantic. “What?” Jordan stared at Jamie, her mouth dropping open. “Holy fuck.”

“Apparently.” Jamie held out her still glowing hands. “What’s happening?”

Kir and Logan exchanged one of their enigmatic looks. She *really* wanted to slap them upside the head until they told her what they were thinking. “Boys.”

“Tyr is Lios Alfar, remember?”

“And?”

Logan drew closer to his two lovers. “We think maybe you need to learn to control your temper.”

“What do you mean? Travis doesn’t glow only when he’s pissed.”

“Think about it, Jamie. The first time he glowed in front of you was because he knew you were hurt.”

Logan grinned. “Trust me when I say I know when Travis glows. I’ve seen him pissed off at me plenty of times.”

“I am *not* pissed.”

Jordan coughed and turned away.

“Okay, maybe a little.” She ran her fingers through her hair. “Mostly I’m scared.”

“Why?”

“Because I think one of the detectives who arrested him was Grimm.”

Travis sat in the chair, waiting for the cops to join him. He’d been fingerprinted, his picture taken, his clothes removed and processed, and his body cavities searched.

Yeah, *that* had been enjoyable. Not. Now he got to sit here in a lovely orange jumper and stare at the cheap acoustic tile ceiling while someone watched him through video cameras to see if he was acting guilty.

The door opened and the female detective walked in holding a file folder. Her expression was cold and closed as she took a seat behind the utilitarian desk. She opened the file, stared at something, and leaned back in her chair.

“So.”

Travis remained quiet.

“Interesting test results.”

He stared at Detective Mancinelli, keeping his expression blank. He was curious himself what the tests would show, but refused to give her that satisfaction. Some day he might be forced to work with her so antagonizing her wasn’t a good idea.

He was glad Jamie hadn’t managed to piss off the detective. It was nice to know his woman would stand up for him, but if she got her pretty ass arrested he was going to be annoyed.

“The lab tells me that your DNA isn’t human.”

*Uh-oh.*



"In fact, they tell me that they haven't seen anything like it. Ever." Her gaze bore into him, trying to see through him. "Why is that?"

"Your lab fucked up?"

She took a deep breath. "Three times?"

He frowned.

"It seems Mr. Grimm also was not human."

He snorted. "I could have told you Val wasn't human. Hell, I'm not sure he hits ape some days."

"Not Val Grimm. I mean, him too, but also Oliver Grimm." She leaned across the desk, her eyes diamond bright. "Explain to me how I have three non-humans, one dead, two living, in this file folder."

"You're really good at Origami."

Her hand slammed down on the table. "Mr. Rudiger."

"Yardley-Rudiger."

She sighed. "You're going to be a hard-ass about this, aren't you?"

"It's hardly my fault if your lab screwed up."

"Then you don't have a problem giving us a blood sample?"

*As long as Jamie has gotten to Logan, no.* "Not a—"

There was a knock on the door just as Detective Mancinelli stood. She opened the door, frowning at the man on the other side.

Shock raced through Travis's system. *What the hell?*

"Detective, I believe you're questioning my client."

What was Nik doing here?

"Who the hell are you?"

Nik held out his hand, those strange silver eyes of his flashing. "Niklas DeWitt, Mr. Yardley-Rudiger's attorney."

Travis stood. "Glad Jamie got a hold of you."

Nik's lips quirked. "She's quite...vocal."

Travis bit his lip. "Having a fit, is she?"

"You could say that." Nik's expression turned dreamy, but Travis knew he was anything but. "I bet right now she's giving Logan and Kir a hard time."

"That's my Jamie."

"Ugh. Can we end the love fest?" The detective looked disgruntled. "You promised a blood sample before your lawyer showed."

"He's not giving it. You already have a sample. Use that."

She growled at Nik, earning a glare from the other man. "The samples showed Mr. Rudiger isn't human."

"It's not Mr. Yardley-Rudiger's problem if your lab is full of incompetents." He took Travis's arm and guided him from the room. "Bail has been posted."

"I can get a court order... Hey!" Nik led him from the room into the hallway, the detective following them. "How can bail be posted? It hasn't been set yet."

He smiled and handed her some papers. "I think you'll find that Judge Crosby disagrees with you."

He could actually hear Mancinelli's teeth grinding together.

"I'll also be representing Mr. Grimm." Nik handed her another set of papers. "Please see to it that he's brought to me." Nik turned his back on the detective with a sniff. "We'll have you out of here momentarily."

She handed Val's bail papers to a hovering officer and waved him down the hall. "We have reason to believe your client killed a man."

Nik turned back and just stared down at Mancinelli, those cold eyes of his sending chills down Travis's spine.

"Nice to know a real shark is representing him."

Nik glared. Mancinelli smirked. Travis was impressed. It took a lot to get a rise out of Nik these days, but somehow the good detective seemed to do it without even trying.

"I didn't kill Oliver Grimm. How many times do I have to say it? *I didn't kill him.*"

"Then how do you explain your hair and carpet fibers at a scene where someone had obviously cleaned up a large amount of the man's blood?"

"First off, how do you know it was *his* blood? You had his DNA on file?" Nik folded his arms across his chest.

"Mrs. Grimm was able to supply us with a sample. It matched that recovered from the floor of that fucking fun house."

Nik nodded. "I've seen the timeline you have for the murder. How do you account for the fact that Val Grimm was seen at the hospital, admitting Ms. Grimm, who'd been tortured right around the supposed time of death?"

Mancinelli blinked. "We believe the time of death was some time *before* Ms. Grimm was admitted."

"How do you account for the technician's report that Val Grimm was at the hospital at the exact time Mr. Grimm was allegedly killed?"

"My partner and I believe he was incorrect. We're in the process of verifying that now. Besides, his partner, Mr. Rudiger, was *not* at the hospital making sure his sweet fiancée was all right, was he?"

"Ah. Tell me, did you find Ms. Grimm's blood there?"

"Yes."

"did you ever speak to Ms. Grimm about her ordeal?" His statement made it clear he already knew the answer.

"I've read the report."

"Do you know what Mr. Oliver Grimm is accused of?"

"I'm well aware of it. Are you saying your defense will be that Oliver Grimm staged his own death?"

"Not at all."

"Because no one could lose that amount of blood and live."

"Of course not."

"Evidence was found at the scene that points directly at Mr. Rudiger and Mr. Grimm."

"But Mr. Grimm worked there as head of security, so how can you prove that his fibers weren't there long before the crime was committed? There was a long-standing association between Guardian Investigations and Grimm and Sons. Three of Oliver Grimm's grandchildren work for Mr. Yardley-Rudiger."

"It also means that, as head of security, Val Grimm was probably well aware of the fun house. With their hair and fiber all over the place? Mr. Rudiger must have known too." She ran her fingers through her hair. "Frankly, if someone had done that to my niece I might have done far worse than stab him multiple times. I *know* why he felt he had to do it. But I believe he needs to stand up and take responsibility for murdering his own father."

"Oh, believe me. The man who murdered Oliver Grimm will pay."

Her expression blanked. "Do tell."

Nik merely smiled and leaned down. He whispered something in Mancinelli's ear that had her eyes going wide.

"You're freakin' kidding me, right?"

Nik shook his head.

"You better not be pulling my leg."

Nik looked at something over her shoulder as he replied, "Trust me, it will be worth it."

Travis saw the male detective, Solberg, leading Val toward their group. He looked terribly angry. "How could they have made bail this quickly? They haven't even been in the fucking jail yet."

Mancinelli waved at Nik. "Ask him."

Solberg paled when he saw Nik, then turned back to Mancinelli. "All the paperwork is in order?"

"Yup." Unspoken was *unfortunately*. They could all hear it in her voice.

Nik took hold of Travis's arm. "Are you two ready to leave?"

"More than," Val growled.

Mancinelli put a hand on Travis's arm as he tried to move past her. "You're still under arrest." She let go. "And I'm watching."

They followed Nik out of the police building, but Travis knew it wasn't over. Not by a long shot.

Grimm watched as Heimdall took Tyr and Vali out of the police station. He could barely contain his fury at the sight.

Beside him, Mancinelli shivered. "Is something wrong with the air conditioner?"

How could it have gone so wrong? Who could have expected Nik to show up and take custody of Tyr and Vali? "I have to go."

Mancinelli turned back to him. "We have to figure out how they managed to get Judge Crosby to post bail. There wasn't a hearing or anything."

He barely heard her. He was practically trembling with rage. Frost began to coat everything around him. "I have to go, Mancinelli."

She gasped, and he wondered what had made her do that. Not that it mattered anymore. He'd soon be back, erasing this incident in the minds of all those who'd witnessed it.

Since he couldn't erase his partner's mind, he'd erase her life.

Grimm strode out of the building, his mind whirling. As he climbed into Solberg's car, he knew what he had to do.

There was only one way to get Tyr and Vali out in the open now. And he would take great delight in implementing it.

## Chapter Ten

“He will *kill them*. Don’t you get that?” Jamie paced back and forth, trying to get through to her brothers-in-law. “We have to save them!”

“I agree with Jamie. We need to move.” Jeff had his arms crossed, watching her pace back and forth. “Let me go get my stack of dynamite and we’ll be all set.”

Jamie flipped him the bird.

“C’mon, it’ll be fun. Just like a Bugs Bunny cartoon.”

Jamie rolled her eyes and did her best to ignore Jeff. “Are you sure that Nik will get them out of jail?”

Kir shrugged absently, his expression intent as he stared at his laptop. “He said he would, and so far Nik has never failed at what he set his mind to. If anyone other than Logan can do it, it would be Nik.”

“I’m going to change the lab reports so that the evidence points elsewhere.” Logan ran his fingers through his hair. “I’m just not sure who to point the finger at.”

“What about Grimm? Can’t we make it look like he staged the whole thing?”

“There was an awful lot of blood.” Jordan tugged at her earring. “I’m not sure we’d be able to pull that off.”

The doorbell rang, and Jamie raced toward it. She flung it open, ignoring the warning shouts of both Kir and Logan.

“Travis!” She flung herself into his arms, holding him tight. God, it was good to see he was all right.

“I need to show you something.”

“I bet you do,” Kir muttered, laughing when Jordan smacked him upside the head.

“All right. Let me get my keys.” She grabbed them off the side table and, taking Travis’s hand, waved goodbye to her family. “See you tomorrow.”

She walked out with Travis to a chorus of goodbyes, her heart skipping happily as she strode next to her man.

He led her to the elevators and she frowned. “Where are we going?”

“It’s a surprise.”

She stepped into the elevator. “I thought we weren’t supposed to leave the building.”

The doors shut.

“Travis?”

She shrieked. The man whose hand she was holding was a stranger. He held something up against her neck. *Taser!* “Surprise.”

Excruciating pain. Everything went dark.

“What do you mean she left with *me*?”

Logan shared a look with Kir while a terrified Jordan looked on. “Grimm.”

Jeff was already on his way out the door. The expression on his face was one that Travis had never before seen. “Jeff.”

The other man barely broke stride. “Don’t say it.”

“We don’t know where he took her.”

Nik’s expression was dreamy. Heimdall was seeing somewhere else. “The torture chamber.

Val grimaced. “Where else?”

Travis nodded, his heart in his throat. “He wants us to find her.”

“And we’ll give him what he wants if it means saving Jamie.” Jeff’s hands were clenched at his sides, but his face was almost serene.

“Or so he thinks.”

Jeff didn’t answer. He didn’t have to.

Travis strode through the doors, the others on his heels.

“Get Magnus and Morgan here, Jordan. I don’t want you unprotected.”

“Fuck no, Logan. I’m going too.”

Logan grabbed her by the arms, sat her in a chair at the dinette set and waved his arms, drawing runes in the air.

Jordan gasped as two bands of fiery light wrapped around her wrists and two more wrapped around her ankles. She glared up at Logan.

“I will not lose you or our children.” He placed a swift kiss on her lips. “Please trust me. I swear I’ll save Jamie.”

Jordan stilled. “Like you did last time.”

Thunder sounded. Rain poured down the window. Kir fingered the necklace Gungnir hung from, the pupils of his eyes turning white as snow. “Not like last time.”

Morgan and Magnus raced into the room, looking disheveled. “What’s going on?”

“Grimm has Jamie. Stay with Jordan, make sure she’s safe.”

The twin brothers nodded at Travis, moving toward their sister. “We’ll take care of her, hothead.” Morgan slapped Logan on the shoulder. “Go save our sister.”

Logan gave Jordan one last, hard kiss before striding toward the door.

"I love you." Travis turned to see Jordan glaring at Logan. "But I'm still kicking your ass for this when you get home."

Logan snorted, blew her a kiss and walked out the door. Kir, smiling but shaking his head, followed, Travis and Jeff right on their heels.

The elevator was cramped, but not one of them chose to get out. Logan cuddled back into Kir, seemingly content, but the heat in the elevator was rising steadily.

The doors opened silently and the men headed out. Travis headed straight for Logan's SUV. They all climbed in and Logan took off, heading straight for Grimm's old stomping grounds: Grimm and Sons.

"We're being followed."

Travis turned in his seat to look at Nik. Nik was smiling one of his enigmatic smiles. "Who?"

"Detective Mancinelli."

"Want me to lose her?" Logan jiggled the steering wheel.

Travis frowned. "No. Let her follow."

Nik's eyebrow quirked, but that was the only sign of an expression on his otherwise blank face.

Kir, on the other hand, was looking at Travis like he'd lost his mind. "Why?"

Travis turned around. "Don't ask me why, but something tells me she's going to be part of this."

"The part that wants to save Jamie or the part that's the God of Justice?"

Travis thought about that for a few seconds. "Yes."

Kir shrugged. "Okay."

What the hell are they up to? She'd been following them since Danny's little meltdown in the precinct, curious to find out what the fuck was going on. Nik's little whisper in her ear insured it. *"You know something isn't right. Follow me. You know you want to."*

But it wasn't just DeWitt's little whisper that had her following them. No sirree. It was Danny-boy who'd set her on the path to stalkerhood. No way had she seen what she thought she saw. Not only did Danny somehow know the lawyer, a man she'd never seen around the precinct, but he'd reacted all out of proportion to bail being posted. His face had been filled with rage, his body practically trembling with it. She'd been close enough to see it.

The temperature dropping the madder Danny got? That was just plain freaky.

Was it a conspiracy? Where all of these people involved? And how did DeWitt fit in? He wasn't related to the Grimms. Was he? She snarled. Something about DeWitt really got under her skin. She'd love to find something on the cold bastard. Was he involved in Oliver Grimm's murder? What did he know that she didn't?

Well, she intended to find out.

They pulled up outside the office building. The men exchanged silent glances and, as one, headed for the front door.

Circumventing the security measures was easy for Logan. A little hand waving, a few muttered phrases and the red glowing light glinted green. Travis resolved to see to it that his own security became Jotun proof. Who knew what tricks Grimm had up his sleeve thanks to his blood bond with Rina? Nik nodded and went in first, nonchalantly looking around. The others swiftly followed.

“So, Detective. What are you hoping to find?” The others stopped at the sound of Nik’s voice.

“Besides your asses in jail for breaking and entering?”

Jeff strode over to the detective. “I don’t have time for this. That fucktard has my sister in his sick little room again, and I’m going to get her out no matter what it takes. Stay out of my way or I *will* run you over to get to her.”

“Your license will probably be revoked when they find out about this little stunt.” She blew out her breath. “What makes you think your sister is here?”

Nik grinned. “She’s here.”

She rolled her eyes. “I wasn’t asking you, Mr. DeWitt.”

“We can prove it.” Logan walked over to one of the offices. Muttering and waving his hands he unlocked the door and threw it open. “Step into my office, Detective.”

Her eyes were big as saucers. “How did you—?”

Jeff rolled his eyes. “Lady, welcome to Dysfunction Junction.”

Val grunted and gestured toward the door they’d all just come through. “Hold on a second, Jeff. We need to check something out.”

Jeff nodded and followed Val toward the front door. Travis shook his head, wondering what the two of them were up to.

By the time he got into the office Logan had the computer up and running and the camera in the torture chamber turned on.

What he saw on the screen turned his world white.

“Don’t you have anything to say to me?”

Jamie tilted her head, desperately trying to throttle back the choking fear. “Die, dickhead, die?” She screamed as he touched the jumpers to her skin, burning electricity coursing through her once again.

She’d woken naked and strapped to the cross. A car battery sat beside her, the jumper cables lying beside it. Various bats, whips and knives lay on a table. Surgical instruments gleamed in the low light.

Dear old Granddad had been right there, smiling.

*Joy.* She swallowed the panic as the nightmares threatened to overcome her once again. She had to hold on. Travis was coming for her.



"Sharing blood with Loki has made you more durable." Grimm smiled. "This should be fun."

"Speak for yourself."

"I had originally planned on killing you and leaving your body to rot."

"Swell." She gritted her teeth against the tears as he picked up a bat. She knew what he could do with that. What he *would* do with that.

"But, you know what?"

She was almost afraid to ask. The heated look on his face had her swallowing in sick fear. "What?"

One hand reached out and squeezed her breast. "I really didn't get a chance to truly enjoy you the last time I had you here." He smiled when she sobbed. "I'll have to make sure to rectify that error." He took a step back, picking up the baseball bat. "But first..." The *crack* of the bat as it broke her thigh was loud, but not as loud as her screams.

He began systematically beating her, the swings almost impersonal. He did it in eerie silence, her cries his only accompaniment.

She hung, limp, damp and exhausted, pain her only constant.

"Hmm. I wonder where loverboy is."

She opened one eye, the other long since swollen shut. She couldn't answer him. Her jaw was broken.

"Maybe he knows you're not worth it."

She lifted her head, pain throbbing in time to her heartbeat. "Worf it."

He looked pleasantly surprised. "Yes, Jamie." He leaned in close, a knife in his hands. "You aren't worth it." He plunged that knife into her, right above her heart. Blood spurted down her skin as he pulled it back out. "Good. I got an artery."

She sobbed.

"Where's dear old Uncle Val? Do you think *he'll* save you?" Grimm shook his head sadly. "He's been too much of a pussy to fight me head on so far. What makes you think this would be any different?"

"The fact that I'm right behind you, dickhead?"

Jamie saw Uncle Val leaning against the wall. His face was cold as he stared at Grimm. For the first time, he looked like a killer to her.

*Thank God.*

"Val, you worthless piece of shit." The scary cheer in Grimm's voice belied the wary look on his face.

"Surprise."

"How did you enjoy your evening in jail, son?"

Uncle Val smiled. "They're coming for you. Can't you feel it?"

"Warning your old man away? How...unexpectedly loyal."

Uncle Val chuckled darkly. "Oh please. Kir is going to spit your black heart on Gungnir and roast it over a campfire."

Grimm threw his head back and laughed. “You think *Gungnir* can kill me? Is *that* what you’re counting on?”

Jamie saw the flicker of fear on Uncle Val’s face before it was quickly wiped away.

“Shh.” Jamie felt something tugging on her bonds, but her eyes were too swollen, her head too painful to move and see what it was. But the voice was familiar.

*Jeff? How did he get in here?*

“You’re an idiot, *Dad*.” Uncle Val shook his head. “You took Tyr’s woman. Tortured her again. You think he’s going to let you live?”

Grimm smiled.

“You’ve been hanging around Kir too much recently. You’re starting to sound like him. Chock full of useless optimism.” Grimm tapped the bloody bat against his calf.

Jamie lifted her head, hoping to see Travis somewhere, *anywhere*. Her bruises and broken bones were beginning to mend.

Jeff got one hand free. She turned and saw him wink at her as he started on the next one. She left that arm where it was, hoping that if Grimm turned he would only see her where he’d left her.

She caught the glint of something in Grimm’s hand. *Oh fuck, the knife!*

She flung her hand untied hand out just as Grimm threw it at Uncle Val, her will pushing beyond her fingertips, finding the knife, deflecting it. It landed with a dull clatter on the concrete floor.

Uncle Val looked at her, astonishment on his face.

She felt rather astonished herself.

Grimm turned to her, his face mottled with rage. Frost began to form on all of the surfaces of the room. “Stupid bitch.”

She looked him up and down, a strange elation filling her. She felt stronger, her wounds healing faster. She wanted to say something like, *Try it again, dickhead*, but her jaw still wasn’t working right. She settled for a glare instead.

Grimm lunged for her, but she was ready. She flung her arm out and Grimm flew across the room, landing against the wall with a sickening thud.

Her other hand came free and she grabbed for the arm of the cross. With her feet still tied she had no balance.

So she stared at the frost coated knife on the floor. She held out her hand, willing the knife up. It moved, twitching, before practically embedding itself in the ceiling. With a sigh and a thought she yanked it free, wincing as it hit the floor.

“I think you need a little more practice, pumpkin.”

She grinned at Uncle Val, who was watching her with pride. “This is *so* cool,” she slurred, grateful she could talk again.

She glanced at where Grimm was. Terror raced through her skin. He was gone. So was the knife. Uncle Val groaned. "Fuck. Not again."

Travis whirled, blocking the thrust of Grimm's knife with his right arm, ignoring the shallow slice of the blade along his skin. Behind him he could hear Logan trying to line up for a shot at Grimm, his fire heating the room behind Travis. The glimmer of the light of new green leaves also let him know that Baldur had risen, ready to fight his father if Tyr should fall. Travis just wished he'd thought to arm himself before rushing out after Jamie.

"Stupid move, taking Jamie, Old Man."

"You gave Gungnir to Kir already? I thought you'd make sure you weren't making yet another mistake, Tyr."

He merely grinned. "It's time for you to face Justice, asshole."

He dodged yet another swipe of Grimm's knife. The former lord of the Aesir might have been sitting behind a desk for the last fifty years but he was *still* a warrior god. Travis knew he wouldn't be able to hold the other man off for long. He needed a distraction so that he could try and force Grimm to face what he'd done. The blackness in the Old Man's soul was nearly the only color left. Even a hundred years ago his soul hadn't been *this* dark.

What the hell else had Grimm been up to?

He began maneuvering backwards. If he could get Grimm positioned just right Kir would be able to finish him off. It was a slim hope, considering how the bastard had survived Val's attack, but it was the only one he had at the moment. He had to keep Grimm busy until Jeff and Val could get Jamie safely out of the building.

They were in the corridor outside Grimm's chamber. He could hear Val, Jamie and Jeff inside. The fact that the two men had gone after Grimm alone was nearly enough to earn them his wrath. The fact that they'd distracted him long enough for Jamie to begin healing had stayed his hand.

"Tyr."

He shuddered as Jamie's sweet voice flowed over him. She stepped up behind Grimm, the shining truth of her soul a gentle balm to his sight. "Jamie."

Grimm whirled, intent on capturing Jamie. Travis reached for them, knowing he'd be too late, and that some wounds not even Logan could heal from.

Jamie flung out a hand and Grimm went sailing down the hall to land at Detective Mancinelli's feet. Travis turned to follow him, knowing he couldn't leave Grimm near an innocent.

But he was too late. Grimm stood, faster than expected, and was on Mancinelli before she could blink. He had an arm wrapped around her waist, his hand roughly cupping her chin. The blade of a knife rested against her throat. "One move and she's dead."

Travis saw the fluctuations in Mancinelli's soul, saw the terror and disbelief flashing as Grimm morphed once more into her partner.

"Hey, Mancinelli. Miss me?"

"Fucker." The detective held her own in the face of the seemingly impossible.

Grimm licked her cheek. "Not yet, sweetheart. But soon."

Nik stood stock still and watched, his face inscrutable. But Travis saw the other god's soul and knew he was torn. Something held him back from helping the detective, but Travis couldn't tell what it was.

Logan and Kir were sneaking up on Grimm from behind, trapping him in the corridor. It was only a matter of time before it was all over. If they could just get the woman away from the mad god they'd be able to attack.

"Piece of cake," Jamie muttered next to him. She was limping, favoring her right side. He couldn't see her face, but he knew she hurt.

She held out her hand, palm up. The knife in Grimm's hand wobbled as he fought the pull.

"Stop it, you stupid bitch."

The knife snapped back, slicing into Detective Mancinelli's throat. Jamie screamed as the blade bit into the woman's neck. With an aggravated hiss Grimm dropped the detective. "We're not done yet."

With a pop of displaced air he was gone. Just like that.

Travis looked frantically but could find no sign of Grimm's soul. The man was well and truly gone. "*Fuck!* How the hell does he keep *doing* that?"

"Amen," Jamie breathed, leaning up against him wearily. He looked down at her, not surprised to find she was crying. "Oh god. I think I killed her."

Immediately Travis dampened his light, his eyes returning to normal as he took in the condition of his woman. She was wounded, but she was healing before his eyes. "You didn't kill her. Grimm did."

"C'mon, c'mon." Travis turned to find Logan crouched over Mancinelli. Her blood was rapidly soaking the floor beneath her. Nik was standing over him, his fists clenched at his sides, his silver eyes glued to the woman rapidly bleeding out under Logan's hands. "Work, damn it. Work."

Travis ran over to find Logan holding his palm over the wound in the detective's throat. Her wide eyes stared up at him as she struggled for breath.

And then she stopped struggling.

Logan sat back with a weary sigh. "Where's Grimm?"

"And he just disappeared?" Jordan was fiddling with her earring again. Never a good sign in her older sister. Jordan was still pissed as hell at being left behind, but she'd set that aside once she heard what Grimm had done.

"I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes." Travis was stroking his hand up and down Jamie's arm. He hadn't let go of her since she'd leaned against him in the hallway at Grimm and Sons, sobbing over having killed a woman.

She was still freaked out over what had happened. Everything was going to be just a little bit different now. She had no idea how those changes would affect her family.

"It's time for me to go." Nik stood, his expression tight. "There are other things that require my attention."

Travis nodded while Uncle Val shook the other man's hand. "Thanks, Nik."

Nik smiled that cold, cynical smile of his. "Not a problem." He walked over to Detective Mancinelli and cupped her chin in his hand. "Stay out of trouble."

"Excuse me?" The detective's hair was still damp from the shower they'd convinced her to take. She was bundled up in Jordan's robe, her clothes currently in the wash. Jamie wasn't sure if all of the blood would come out.

"You're playing in the big leagues now, little girl." The smile left his face, his expression becoming intent. "Stay out of trouble."

She gave him the finger.

Amusement crossed his face before he stood up. "Right." He shook his head. "I'll make sure to keep my eye on you then."

Jamie choked. The *last* person in the world she wanted watching her was Heimdall. He was...creepy.

"Just what every girl wants. Their very own supernatural stalker." Mancinelli was rubbing at her throat again, but she didn't seem to realize it. Not even a scar remained. Like Jamie, she'd gotten Logan's ability to heal. What that meant for the detective Jamie didn't know, but from the way Nik had watched her the entire time she'd been with them she bet they hadn't seen the last of her.

Nik sighed. "Tyr. Make sure she doesn't get her ass killed."

Mancinelli's brows rose. "Again, you mean?"

Nik returned her look. "You didn't die. And have you ever heard of the words thank you?"

Everyone ignored the detective's growl.

Travis's hand drifted down to Jamie's ass. "Where are you off to?"

Nik tsk'd. "Sorry, need to know."

"I don't need to know?"

Nik grinned. "You're not the leader of the Vanir anymore, remember?"

"Are you going to give Kir your allegiance?" The sudden tension in Travis's shoulders worried her.

Nik waved on his way out the front door. "It's been nice talking to you all." He sent Mancinelli one last warning look before walking out, closing the door gently behind him.

As soon as the door clicked shut the detective was on her feet. “Will someone please explain to me what the *hell* is going on? Why am I not dead? Who *are* you people?”

Travis tugged on Jamie. She was more than willing to go along with him. “I think that’s our cue to go. We’ve been over this before.”

Logan groaned. “Oh no, Lefty. You’re not leaving me alone to explain *this* one.”

“Sorry, hothead. I have to make sure all of Jamie’s new bruises are gone.” Travis grabbed her hand and began dragging her behind him.

Logan snorted, but he didn’t try to stop them as they headed for the front door. “I’m sure you do.”

Jordan took a deep breath. “Okay. It all started when Kir and Logan walked into my office...”

Jamie shut the door and let Travis tug her back to their condo.

Toni Mancinelli grimaced as her boss gave her hell. Not only was her new partner missing, but the labs had concluded that Grimm’s blood was, in fact, pig blood and that Travis and Val had never even been *in* the fun room, let alone killed anyone there. The only one whose blood still existed on the scene was Jamie’s. The samples had somehow been compromised, because the tests had come back that something else had been on that cross two days ago, not Jamie Grimm.

Jamie Grimm had agreed with the test results, claiming she’d been in her condo making love with her fiancé all night, just grateful to have him back in their new home.

If she thought about how the group of freaks had managed that she’d probably go insane. How in fuck was she supposed to explain to her boss that good old Danny-boy actually *was* Oliver Grimm, aka *Odin*?

*Yeah. Pension plan, meet shredder.* That was if she was lucky. If she was unlucky they’d desk her ass and psych her out of her detective’s shield. Either way she’d never work in law enforcement again.

So the lunatics were safe. For now.

She tried to focus on the window behind her boss. Rain poured down, darkening the sky. She couldn’t help but wonder if Kir was pissed off, or if this was a natural storm. And then she saw them. They’d haunted her dreams. Stunning silver eyes that seemed to be everywhere she went.

*Niklas DeWitt, aka Heimdall. Gee, I sure know how to pick ’em.* She dreamt of him nightly. When she was awake she would swear she saw him around corners, or in the mirror behind...her...

She whipped around, but he wasn’t there. Just the reflection of those eyes in the window.

“Mancinelli. Am I boring you?”

*Yup, supernatural stalker alert.* She shook her head. “No, sir.”

“Good. Then I expect you to...”

She did her best to pay attention to what her boss was saying, right up until DeWitt winked at her. Then she had to bite back the screams.

Grimm shrieked at the top of his lungs. Again they'd eluded him, but damn it, this time it was his own fault. He'd allowed his temper to get the better of him, and so *allowed* them to get the better of him.

No more. Rina stood behind him, her blonde hair whipping in the wind, watching over him. Guarding his back. In her hand was a deadly combination of rifle and bayonet.

The bayonet she'd crafted was of mistletoe.

He panted, his fury finally fading. He looked around at the carnage he'd wrought. Ice, an inch thick, covered every surface visible in the park.

In his stupidity he'd allowed them to know that Gungnir couldn't hurt him. Now they'd be on the hunt for something that could.

He'd be ready for them.

"They're going to go for Fenris."

He turned, staring at his lover. "Fenris?" He thought of the prophecy. "Fuck." He headed back toward the car, pleased beyond measure when she stepped beside and slightly behind him, the gun cradled professionally in her arms. He climbed in, watching as she got straight into the passenger side. She knew he always preferred to drive, even when his life was endangered.

"My love, how would you like a trip to Norway?"

She held up her cell phone. "Sleipnir is ready, our passports in order. We have just enough time to pack."

*I think I might actually love this woman.* "Remind me to thank you properly somewhere over Edinburgh."

Rina grinned and blew him a kiss.

## Epilogue

Jeff was ready to collapse. It had taken them days to get here. He was tired, filthy and desperately in need of a caramel mocha frappuccino.

If the two lovebirds didn't stop playing snuggle-bunny in front of him he was going to puke.

But damn it, they were here. In Norway, land of his ancestors, freeing a creature of myth and legend he prayed would kill his grandfather before he could hurt anyone else in Jeff's family ever again.

According to Travis, Old Man Grimm was right on their tails, no pun intended. The only thing that had saved them from facing him yet had been the necklaces Logan had given them. They'd masked their presence from his insane grandfather. Whatever else Logan had done to delay the Old Man's progress Jeff didn't want to know. Let his brother-in-law play around with the woo-woo stuff. Jeff was a lot more straight-forward.

He just wanted to kill the bastard and end this nightmare.

They'd found the cave where the wolf was bound, freed him, and now... now he was practically humping Jeff's leg. In fact, the only one of the three of them he'd allowed near him was Jeff. Jeff had pulled the sword from the wolf's jaws, muttering quietly the whole while about snot and drool, but damn if the whimpers the creature had issued at the sound of his voice hadn't touched his heart.

Jeff watched as the wolf—Fenris, let's be honest here—growled at Travis. Blood still dripped from its jaws where the sword had been.

Travis, his eyes wide, pushed Jamie behind him. "Could you repeat *exactly* what you said to him?"

Jeff tried to move around Fenris to get back to Travis and his sister. The wolf responded by backing into him, pushing him further into the cave and away from Travis. "*Jeg er din forlovede , behage spiser ikke meg. Og spiser ikke Tyr , den ville ergre din ny moder.*"

Travis coughed back a laugh. "I thought you spoke some Norwegian."

"Bits and pieces only." His eyes narrowed. He knew the word for mother, *moder*, and eat me, *spiser meg*. What else had he said? "What did my dickhead brother-in-law teach me to say?"

"Roughly? I'm your mate, please don't eat me. And don't eat Tyr, it will piss off your new mother."

Jeff blinked as Fenris rubbed against his thigh, nearly knocking him on his ass. The wolf's fur was matted with dirt, blood and debris, and he smelled to high heaven. Now, damn it, so did his jeans. Jeff gritted his teeth and prayed his fear and anger didn't show. "Remind me to thank him when I get home."

*Wait.*



“New *mother?*” Jeff threw back his head and laughed. Jordan was going to have a field day with that. “Never mind. I won’t have to do a thing.”

It was great. Right up until the longest, wettest dog tongue he’d ever had the displeasure to see swiped a long wet line up his cheek.

*Blech. Why oh why does this shit keep happening to me?* He lifted his shirt to wipe away the slime.

“*Meget pen.*” A rough hand petted his stomach.

Jeff jerked back and pulled his shirt down. Before him, crouched on his haunches, was a hot, naked, extremely dirty and smelly man. “Travis? What did he just say?”

“That you’re very pretty.”

Oh. Shit. What had Logan gotten him into?

That man stood and grabbed Jeff’s hand. Dark, feral brown eyes bore into him. “*Mine.*”

Jeff gulped. *Goodbye Dysfunction Junction. You will be sorely missed.*

## About the Author

Dana Marie Bell wrote her first short story when she was thirteen years old. She attended the High School for Creative and Performing Arts for creative writing, where freedom of expression was the order of the day. When her parents moved out of the city and placed her in a Catholic high school for her senior year, she tried desperately to get away, but the nuns held fast, and she graduated with honors despite herself.

Dana has lived primarily in the Northeast (Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware, to be precise), with a brief stint on the US Virgin Island of St. Croix. She lives with her soul mate and husband Dusty, their two maniacal children, an evil, ice-cream stealing cat and a bull terrier that thinks it's a Pekinese.

You can learn more about Dana at: [www.danamariebell.com](http://www.danamariebell.com)

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*The Gray Court*  
Noble Blood

*To hold onto his love, he must release his beast.*

## Bear Necessities

© 2010 Dana Marie Bell

### *Halle Shifters, Book 1*

Once a Bear sets his mind on a mission, it's best to stay out of his way. Alexander "Bunny" Bunsun is that Bear. Something's not right with his cousin Chloe, and he's come to Halle, PA, to sort it out, turn his Harley around and head home to Oregon. Until an enticing scent lures him into the local tattoo shop.

There she is. An inked, Southern-drawled she-Wolf with lime-green hair. His perfect mate.

Tabitha Garwood's rotten day just got worse. Her Outcast status makes her a target for harassment with alarming regularity. And now, in the middle of a root touch-up, looking like a half-melted Skittle, she's met her destined mate. The only upside? She finally has a protector in the form of a huge, tattooed, shaved-head Bear who vibrates with carefully restrained power.

When Chloe is left for dead and Tabby is threatened, only Alex can keep his growing family safe. Giving Tabby the loving home she needs, though, could come at a price—Alex must give up the control he's worked a lifetime to attain.

Which means someone could die at the hands—and claws—of his beast.

*Warning: This novel contains explicit sex, graphic language, a hunky Bear named Bunny and... Yes. I said a Bear named Bunny. I don't know about you but I'm not brave enough to make fun of it.*

*Enjoy the following excerpt for Bear Necessities:*

"Ohmigod, ohmigod." Tabby pulled her hair, staring into her closet. It was six forty-five and her mate would be here any minute, she didn't know his name and she had nothing to wear.

"Little black dress." Cyn stuck her head in Tabby's bedroom, grinning at the pile of clothing around Tabby's feet. "Can't go wrong with a little black dress."

"Guh." The panic was threatening to tear Tabby apart. She stared at the three black dresses hanging in her closet, her hand moving between them like a demented butterfly.

Glory's head peeked in from the other side of the doorway. "The sleeveless one."

"Uh?" She held up her sleeveless black dress, the one with the red belt and matching shoes.

Two heads bobbed in agreement.

Tabby stripped, more than used to being naked in front of her roommates. Hell, when she'd first moved in with them, they'd been shocked at how easy she felt being nude. Glory had actually asked her if she was gay and trying to tempt them to "the dark side". She'd giggled and said that she might be susceptible to temptation if the dark side had chocolate. Tabby had just shaken her head and put some clothes on. She'd spent so long as a Wolf, she'd forgotten some of the basic parts of being human, like

pants. The first time she'd used a toilet after so many years had been an interesting experience, something Mrs. Anderson still chuckled about.

When Cyn and Glory had found out what she was, they'd freaked a little. They hadn't accepted her immediately. In fact, there'd been another girl, Brit, who'd worked at Living Art. Brit had left, refusing to believe what she'd seen the night Tabby, drunk off her ass for the first time in her life, let her Wolf loose in the middle of the apartment. She'd gone so far as to quit her job when Glory and Cyn refused to fire her or kick her out of their apartment. But Glory and Cyn, after the initial shock had passed (and after, they claimed, they wiped up the dog drool), had accepted her without reservations. Hell, they'd mocked her once the hangover had passed. There was still a huge bag of Kibbles N' Bits in the pantry the bitches refused to throw away "just in case".

If she thought they'd take it, she'd make them Pack in a heartbeat. She missed having that connection, the knowledge that there were others for her to rely on without a shadow of a doubt. Part of her wondered if her dipshit ex had ever told his father the truth, or if he'd shrugged and let it go. Let her go.

Tabby shook her head and reached for her hairbrush, smoothing down her hair. That didn't matter now. Her mate would be here any minute. She slicked on some berry gloss and stared at herself in the mirror. Then she stuck out her tongue and made a face. She was so nervous, her Wolf was whining. She slipped her feet into the red high heels, grabbed her favorite purse and headed for the living room. "Well?"

Cyn circled her finger. "Twirl."

Tabby twirled.

Glory wolf-whistled. "See you at work tomorrow."

Cyn snickered and threw a bunch of condoms at her. "You'll need these."

Tabby swallowed. "I'm gonna throw up." Nausea roiled in her belly. She bent and picked up the condoms just as the doorbell rang.

Glory had the door open before Tabby could hide the packets. "C'mon in!"

In stepped the hottie from the store. He wore a green shirt that really emphasized his hazel eyes, dark wash jeans that looked painted onto his thighs and thick-soled black boots. Now that she was upright, she could see how tall he was. He towered over her, the top of her head barely reaching his upper lip, even in her four-inch heels. She'd hit his chin in her bare feet. His bald head gleamed, his jaw clean-shaven. She could see the tattoo that circled his biceps and her fingers itched to trace the design. In his hand, he held a daffodil.

My favorite flower. How did he know? Tabby smiled, knowing her mouth was trembling. She couldn't remember the last time someone had given her flowers. "For me?"

He held it out, a smile on his full lips. "Hello, Tabby."

"Thank you." She reached for the daffodil.

He coughed. "I'll take those." He reached over and removed the condoms from her hand, grinning at her embarrassed squawk. "It's okay, honey. I'm just glad one of us is, um, prepared." He eyed the condoms. "Very prepared." He unrolled them, one eyebrow rising in disbelief. "And optimistic."

Glory was practically doubled over with laughter. Tabby's face was beet red. She snatched the condoms back with her free hand, snarling as one got left behind in his big paw. She could hear Cyn snuffling and snorting behind her and just knew they were practically choking on their laughter.

She turned to her two roommates with a smile. "Don't make me forget I'm housebroken." They stopped, but from the way they were clinging together, Tabby figured it was only a matter of time before one of them broke again. She turned back to her new mate. "And you, whose name I don't even know." She smiled at Mr. Chocolate. "Thank you for the flower. My name's Tabitha Garwood."

Mr. Sin held out his paw, the condom miraculously gone. "Bunny." She wondered if he'd dropped it or shoved it into his pocket for later.

Wait. "Bunny," she repeated carefully.

"Alexander Bunsun, but everyone calls me Bunny." He grinned.

She sniffed. Nope, his scent is definitely Bear.

"Are you laughing at my name?" Bunny's hands went to his hips, but she could tell he wasn't pissed by the way his lips quirked up.

She blinked. "Yes."

He coughed, but she could tell he was trying not to laugh. "Dinner?" He held out his arm.

She gave him her sweetest smile and took it. "Yes."

"Hold on." Glory stopped them by placing her hand on Bunny's arm, her expression worried. For all that Glory liked to flirt like mad, when it came down to actual dating she could be a real worrywart.

Bunny chuckled her under the chin. "I'll take care of her. My word on it."

Glory studied him, and Bunny stood still, allowing her intense scrutiny. Glory relaxed and nodded, looking relieved. Tabby wasn't sure she felt the same.

*Cupid: The ultimate god of love? Or the ultimate cad?*

## Utter Cupidity

© 2008 Toni Meilleur

Cupid's philandering and partying has finally caught up with him, giving the Olympian Council the opening they've been waiting for to make the irresponsible god prove he's still competent in his job. For his punishment, the Council gives Cupid one straightforward assignment—to get a mortal to marry him. In one month.

There are only three rules to this deceptively simple task. Rule #1: The Council chooses the woman. Rule #2: He cannot use any of his natural abilities as a god to seduce her. And the hardest one of them all, Rule #3: He cannot lie to her.

When Brea Saunders is forced to work with a cocky-but-gorgeous art dealer, she can't get away from the silver-tongued charmer fast enough. No matter how hard he tries, she's determined never to give her heart to any man, ever again.

It will take all Cupid's cunning and natural seduction to get the quick-tempered, man-hating, celibate beauty to fall for his charms in so short a time.

If he fails? He will be stripped of his powers—and his immortality.

*Warning: This title contains the following: explicit sex, graphic language.*

*Enjoy the following excerpt for Utter Cupidity:*

"This isn't about just sex between you and me, Brea. I need to show you that." He grabbed the end of the belt of her robe and pulled it slowly, giving Brea time to protest. She kept her eyes glued to the ties coming undone. When the tie was undone he parted the robe, displaying her body for his viewing feast.

Brea blushed as if she were some sort of virgin. But she knew him. Her body remembered Jordan well, and reacted strongly. He mimicked her behavior and slid the robe off her slender shoulders, until she stood naked before him. His eyes missed nothing.

"Before, when you and I were together I didn't get a chance to just savor your beauty. Please, allow me," he said low, staring at her.

His eyes took in everything, the soft swell of her stomach, to the well-toned legs. Her nipples were already peaked from his stare alone. He walked around her, quite comfortable in his nakedness. He ran gentle fingers across the firm swelling of her plump backside. "Your beauty is like insanity, driving men to desperate measures just to be with you," he seemed to say to himself as he made his way back where he'd started.

"And you, Jordan?" Brea found her boldness returning at his words.

"That's easy. I was lost the moment I set eyes on you," he said frankly.

“You stand there and look at me as if you want to throw me down and devour me. Yet you say no sex tonight. What else is there?” she queried.

Brea had no idea she was with the god of desire. The one being in the world who knew everything about physical pleasure. For not only did he inspire desire, he *was* desire incarnate. She was now on his playground. Cupid grinned at her, his smile alone made her realize that there was so much about him that she didn't know. He was the mold that bad boys were made from.

He pushed her back until she fell across the bed. “Better question, can you handle the ‘what else’?”



*He'll stop at nothing to claim her... If she doesn't kill him first.*

## Primal Attraction

© 2010 Sydney Somers

*Pendragon Gargoyles, Book 2*

A lethal huntress, Sorcha lives to track and eliminate rogue immortals—until her latest assignment turns out to be a sexy, gargoyle shape-shifter. From the start she's shaken by the lust his touch awakens inside her. Not only that, but the cat is convinced she's his mate, and for the first time, she's unable to kill her target.

Still mourning the loss of his mate, Cale is stunned to find Sorcha alive. Yet the woman he aches to possess doesn't recognize him and is after the only thing that will save his brother—a mystical weapon that will lead to Excalibur.

Determined to protect his family and reclaim his mate, Cale ruthlessly takes advantage of Sorcha's one weakness—her desire for him. Desire that could unlock their past...or cause him to lose her all over again.

*Warning: Featuring a sarcastic, ass-kicking heroine going toe-to-toe with the stubborn shifter who's dead set on reclaiming his mate. Also contains graphic violence, death-threat foreplay and scorching sex that will make you roll over and purr.*

*Enjoy the following excerpt for Primal Attraction:*

Sorcha arched a brow, her pointed gaze slipping past him to the stack of towels folded neatly on the shelf.

He shook his head, too content with thinking about stripping her down and getting her wet—without or without using the shower—to move.

She simply shrugged when he didn't reach for a towel to cover up. He wanted her to look, wanted her to know exactly what being this close to her did to him. Most of all, he wanted to see the rise of color in her cheeks as her own arousal increased.

She crossed her arms, and he'd bet Pendragon's that it was to hide how hard her nipples were. "It's sunrise."

"And?"

"Shouldn't you be a few tons heavier by now?"

"No."

Her brow furrowed. "You're a gargoyle. All you cats, wolves and dragons turn to stone during the day. Part of Rhiannon's punishment for letting the big guy down."

“Rhiannon punished every immortal involved in the fight for Camelot. Not just the gargoyles.” The wraith Cale always believed had killed Sorcha had once been a Knight of the Round Table. Not even those most loyal to Arthur had escaped Rhiannon’s fury after her son’s defeat.

“That still doesn’t explain why you’re not hanging off the edge of a roof somewhere looking all gothic and toothy.”

“Unless severely wounded, mated gargoyles can control the shift to stone.”

It took a few seconds for her to catch on. “I am *not* your...” she broke off, scowling.

“Mate?” he provided. “Is that what you’re trying *not* to say?” He closed the distance between them, careful not to move too quickly.

She looked more bored than threatened by his proximity but for the faint hitch of her breath when his thigh bumped her knees. Innocent enough, the brush of skin against skin twisted his insides up.

Holding her gaze, he leaned in and breathed deep, letting her scent wrap around him.

“Contrary to what you might have heard, I’m not big into sniffing.”

Cale grinned. Whatever had happened since he’d lost her, it hadn’t changed her sarcastic nature. Since she didn’t push him back or ease away from him, he decided to push a little harder. Whatever it took to help her remember.

He wrapped the ends of her hair around his finger. It wasn’t enough to satisfy the cat’s need to touch her, and it certainly wasn’t enough to satisfy the man’s need to piece together how she’d come back to him, but it was something.

She glanced at the strands coiled around his thumb. “Are you trying to groom me?”

“Trying to kiss you actually, just working up the nerve.” He waited for her to tell him to back off, and when she remained silent, he nuzzled her hair. “You’re not armed, are you?”

“Worried my sword is bigger than yours, tiger?”

He laughed, the sound of it taking him by surprise. How long had it been since he’d had a reason to really laugh? Too long. “Isn’t there a saying that size doesn’t matter?”

“That’s just what human women say to men with fragile egos.”

“Do you have a comeback for everything, mate?”

Sorcha tensed, leaned away from him. Her eyes searched his. “Don’t look at me like that. I’m not the one you lost. I’m not *her*.”

“You’re not you?”

“I don’t know why you think...” Her voice trailed off as she stared at his chest. Her fingers curled around the pendant he wore. “Where did you get this?”

He glimpsed uncertainty in her eyes for the first time, and some of the pressure on his chest started to ease. “You gave it to me.”

She shook her head.

“It was—”

“My brother’s,” she finished. She turned it over in her hand, tracing the fine lines carved into the back of the stone.

The more she tugged the chain to get a better look, the closer he came to her mouth. It took much too long for her to notice.

She raised her head in small degrees, as though she knew exactly how close his mouth was. Her bottom lip whispered across his, and his eyes slammed shut. He tightened his finger around her hair, grappling for control, and failing. She’d never been intimidated by him before, but he couldn’t tamp down the fear he’d chase her off if he pressed her back against the mirror and took her mouth the way he needed to.

*Screw it.*

Sinking one hand into her hair, he slanted his mouth across hers, skipping slow and soft and jumping right into hard and hungry.

One of them groaned and then something smashed to the floor. He was too busy pushing deeper between her lips to care. Sweet and damp, her tongue slipped across his, and then she was sucking his bottom lip.

*Sweet Avalon.*

She leaned back, her hold on the pendant dragging him closer. And when she wrapped her legs around him, fitting him snug between her legs, his cock pressed against her sex.

All coherent thought evaporated with a single rock of her hips.

“Again,” he growled, flattening his hand on the mirror behind her for leverage.

Sorcha smiled against his mouth. “Been awhile, huh?” She didn’t give him time to answer, or even *think* of one. Her hand slid down his chest. One lone finger traced a snaking path to his groin.

“What happened to trying to kill me, huntress?” He intentionally emphasized the last word. As much as he wanted to think she’d come here because of him, because she felt their bond even if she didn’t remember him, he knew better. She’d come for the dagger.

He had no problem using that to keep her close. After spending the last eighty years without her, he’d do anything to hold on to her. Anything but give her the dagger. Not until he figured out how to use it to free his brother first, and not until she remembered their past.

“There’s more than one way to take a man out at the knees.”

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