

# Noble Romance Publishing, LLC



Kiss and Spell ISBN 978-1-60592-018-4 ALL RIGHTS RESERVED Kiss and Spell Copyright 2009 Kris Eton Cover Art by Bree Bridges

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#### **Book Blurb**

Marissa Glenn is a witch with one amazing power. She can make men fall in love with just a kiss. But Marissa sees her magical gift as a curse. After years of using men merely for sexual fulfillment, she wants a man to call her own. A challenge from a rival witch is just the motivation she needs to fall in love for real this time.

Months after his fiancee cheated on him, Justin Heller still nurses a broken heart. When bar regular Marissa puts her moves on him, he thinks she's nothing but trouble. He knows her M.O., a different man every night, and he's not interested in being one more conquest.

Marissa is determined to convince Justin she's more than just a pretty face. But who knew falling in love without any magic would be this hard?

## **Chapter One**

Marissa slipped the key into the handcuffs, but didn't turn it. She'd let someone else have the pleasure. Joseph, her conquest from last night, was just as fine as when she'd first spied him at the Three Crowns Pub. Tall and lean, he had a tribal tattoo around one massive bicep. With his eyes closed, she couldn't remember if they were blue or brown. He'd passed out long ago after hours of lovemaking.

Well, maybe that's not what he'd call it.

Sex then. Hot, nasty sex. Stuff she'd never be able to tell anyone she craved.

Thank God she didn't have to.

She tossed a blanket over his sculpted, naked body. A shame to cover up such perfection, but over the years, she'd grown a bit sorry for what she'd done to the men she lured into bed with her.

Lured.

That made it sound so above board. But Marissa knew the truth. The men never came with her willingly. Not really.

She slipped into her tight black dress and put on her heels. There wasn't much time before dawn, and she wanted to be long gone before then.

The cheap motel room smelled of stale cigarettes and sex. This was what her life had been reduced to. This is what she'd done to herself. How low she'd come.

She raked her fingers through her hair and avoided the mirror across from the bed. Her dark eyeliner was likely smeared, her eyes bleary. She hadn't slept well. She'd curled up next to Joseph, but she knew from experience not to uncuff him before dawn, and he'd ended up being more of a solid thing against her side than a comforting presence.

As she headed for the door, she kicked a ball of wadded up paper.

She bent down to pick it up and unfolded it.

The tattoo.

Sketched on the crinkled up paper was a crude drawing of a woman's face—supposedly hers—with the lettering MARISSA across the bottom. Last night, Joseph had declared he'd get a new tattoo. One with her likeness and name.

That had been a first.

Usually her conquests just begged her for sex and maybe asked for her phone number.

She dropped the paper in the wastebasket.

This one had gone too far. Maybe that's why she felt less-than-satisfied. Why she was just as empty this morning as she had been when she walked in the door of the pub last night. She was sexually sated.

Joseph's dick had made sure of that. But the rest of her felt so . . . alone.

Behind her, Joseph sighed. The metal handcuffs clinked together. Time to go.

The sun shone a brilliant orange as it rose above the Santa Cruz Mountains. Marrisa squinted. She'd dallied too long. In a few minutes, he'd be awake and confused. As she rushed to her car, she dialed the front desk on her cell phone.

"The Gulls Motel."

"Hi there; I need you to do a favor for me." Marissa started up the engine and kept her eyes focused on the room she'd just left.

"Excuse me?"

"Room 124. There's a man in cuffs. I've left the key. Could you just unlock him?" The time it took for the desk clerk to get his butt off his chair and make his way to the last room on the first floor would give her the chance she needed to get the hell out of there.

"Did you say handcuffs? Who is this?"

Marissa hung up the phone and zoomed out of the parking lot

toward home. Out of nowhere she started to cry. Tears formed and fell in big droplets into her lap. *This is not what life was supposed to be.* This big, empty string of nameless conquests. One body after another.

Sure, when she used her magical kiss to put them under her spell, it was intoxicating. The way those men fell all over her. Begged to touch her, kiss her, fuck her. Do whatever she wanted. Anything and everything to make her happy. And in the middle of it all, while she rode some man's cock for the hundredth time, it used to be easy to fool herself. It was all about the sex. The feel of a man's dick inside her. The hot, hard heat of him and how quickly he could get her off. Did it really matter how he'd gotten there? How she'd managed to make him fall for her?

She shifted into third gear.

Yes, it did.

\* \* \* \* \*

Justin Heller locked up the Three Crowns Pub. The first flicker of sunlight reflected off the plate glass window and into his eyes. That was the last time he'd fill in for Danny, the janitor. Working as a bouncer wasn't a very taxing job, until some drunk idiot decided to do something stupid. Luckily, the pub was a pretty low-key place. It was a stress-free job, but the extra money he made cleaning up the joint whenever Danny didn't show just wasn't worth the added time and hassle.

Stale beer all over the dance floor. Piss everywhere but in the urinals.

Thank God he only had to walk the three blocks home. Downtown Santa Cruz wasn't much, but it had character. After the earthquake years ago, they'd rebuilt the city center to look much like it had before. Old fashioned storefronts. Classic mission architecture. He loved the area and was glad he'd found an apartment he could afford.

A car beeped behind him.

He turned to look.

"Hey, Justin, need a ride?"

He recognized Marissa—a pub regular—right away.

She was the most beautiful woman he'd ever seen. Long, dark brown hair. Shocking gray-green eyes. A wide, sexy mouth.

But she was exactly what he didn't need. What he'd never need.

"I'm just three blocks up. I think I can manage." He tucked his hands in his pockets and headed down the street.

Marissa's car crept forward. "It's no trouble. Really."

He paused. This woman was nothing *but* trouble. He'd seen her several nights a week, picking up men, never leaving with the same one twice. And there was something odd about the guys she did end up with. They never seemed to remember they'd left with her the night before, or that they'd even met the brunette beauty.

He faced her. "What are you doing up this early, anyway?" Then he got a better look at her. Smudged lipstick. Tousled hair. She had the look of a well-fucked woman. "Oh."

"Get in. I want some company." She popped open the passenger's side door.

Justin hesitated. They had a friendly thing going. The usual "hey, how are you doing?" when she walked in the door. Maybe a few jokes later in the night. She'd even bought him a drink once or twice. She was smart, funny, and oh-so-dangerous.

"Come on. I won't bite." She smiled, and her whole face lit up.

She had to know what a gorgeous smile she had. "Fine, if it will make you happy." They'd built a rapport over the last six months. He was wary of her intentions, but he had to admit, he enjoyed talking with Marissa. What would be the harm in driving with her for a few blocks and taking a load off his aching feet?

He climbed into her car and pulled the door closed. "I'm down here

on Walnut." He pointed up the street toward the intersection where he wanted her to turn.

"Can I buy you some coffee?"

"I thought you just wanted to drop me at home." It was strange seeing Marissa in any setting outside of the pub. He was used to having her slink in late at night wearing some kind of sexy outfit, much like the tight little number she wore now that hugged her breasts like a second skin. Strike that. He would not think about Marissa's breasts or any other part of her anatomy. He wasn't like those other guys who fawned all over her, waiting for her to choose which one to be with next.

"Coffee first. Then home." Her smile widened. Could it be she'd caught him checking her out? "Looks like you could use some."

Although wary of her and her smile, he did think a cup of coffee sounded like a good idea. "Fine. Coffee." It would at least get the stink of the bar out of his nose.

She pulled into a parallel parking spot. This early, the streets were basically empty. Not many people got up at the crack of dawn for coffee on a Sunday morning.

Inside the cafe, she bought them each a large mug of coffee. Justin caught himself staring at her profile, drinking in her beauty, and gave himself a mental shake. He was *not* interested in getting tangled up with a woman like Marissa. Why did he ever agree to a ride or a cup of coffee? He downed the hot beverage as quickly as he could.

"Whoa, slow down. You're going to burn your tongue." She reached out to still his hand.

Her touch burned him. He yanked away and sloshed hot coffee all over the table. "Dammit." He set the mug down and grabbed some napkins. "Look, I should really get going. It was nice of you to offer to drive me home and buy the coffee, but really, I just want to get some sleep. You understand."

"What did I do wrong?" Her liquid gray-green eyes drew him in. He could see pain there, which surprised him.

"Nothing." He watched her lips stretch into a tight line and felt a pang of regret. "I'm just tired. Not in the mood for socializing."

"Oh." She grabbed at his hands and pulled him toward her. "Can I just tell you something? A secret?" She drew him closer.

Her grip was like iron, but her gaze drew him in. He could get lost in those eyes. "I guess."

When their faces were inches apart and he thought that wide, sexy mouth might close in on his, she let him go. "Never mind. You're right. You need to get out of here."

He sat back in his chair, confused. What just happened here? He shook his head to clear it. He looked down at the coffee still splashed across the table. "Yes, I do need to go."

"Leave it. I'll clean it up. See you around." Her voice, which just moments before had been seductive, had turned cold and sterile. Like she'd shut off a switch inside.

He got up from the table. "Yeah, I'll see you."

As he walked down the street toward home, he wondered about Marissa and the secret she'd wanted to share. What had made her change her mind? He shivered. Even though the morning sun warmed his shoulders, a cool chill followed him. An odd feeling that he'd just escaped something. A few moments later, the feeling was gone.

## **Chapter Two**

God, that was close.

Marissa sat in the coffee house, trembling. She'd never had to rein in her power before. Usually, if she felt like having a man, she kissed him and that was that. Difficulties over. Problem solved. Her magic kiss

wrapped him up in a fog of lust and dutiful obedience.

But Justin was different. She liked him. *Really* liked him. He was handsome in all the right ways—tall, blue-eyed, sandy brown hair that dropped down over one eye just so, and a big, powerful body. But her attraction to him hinged on more than just the physical.

When she saw him walking down the street, her low spirits lifted. He was smart, fun to flirt with, and for some reason, she'd decided he was off limits. Maybe because she liked him a little too much. Maybe because she felt a little thrill inside whenever she managed to get him to laugh or smile or pay even the slightest bit of attention to her.

There was something to be said for the man she couldn't have. The man she didn't allow herself to have.

Over the years, she'd made rules for herself. Rules that helped her foster friendships she'd otherwise never have. There were men she seduced and men who were her friends, only. She could never have a long-term sexual relationship. Well, never anything that lasted beyond one night, anyway.

Up until now, she'd had no trouble resisting using her power on Justin. But this morning the power of the kiss had become too much for her. She wanted to indulge. She wanted to know what he would be like at her mercy. That hard, handsome body writhing under her touch. Him calling out her name as he came in her mouth. But then last night's guilt flooded back. She was sick of that Marissa. The Marissa who used and abused men.

She needed to get home. Back to the safety of her house in the hills, where she could wrap up in a quilt and crash on her couch. Sleep until noon and put last night behind her.

The minute she unlocked her front door, she sensed something was wrong. The presence of another witch. A powerful witch. Much more

powerful than she. As she pushed the door open, her muscles tensed. Witches tended to live very separate lives. Hermit-like. A coven of witches would draw too much attention, make things dangerous.

Mink, her cat, was nowhere to be seen. And that cat usually rubbed all over her the minute she walked through the door.

"Marissa, dear, I've been waiting for you." A familiar voice called to her from her living room beyond the short entryway. "I hope you don't mind that I made myself at home."

Marissa stepped into the living room to see Demetria Rostov, her gray hair wild around two dark eyes and a thin red mouth, tilted back in her recliner chair, a cup of steaming something in her hands. "What are you doing here?" she asked with suspicion. "I thought I told you to stay far, far away from me. I don't have anything I want to trade with you. Especially today."

No one knew how old Demetria was; she came and went like the fog that infiltrated the northern California coast in the summer. Here one day, gone the next. Always looking for something new to amuse her. Always wanting to play games, make bets, trade powers. Demetria hadn't troubled Marissa in years, and she'd hoped the older witch had either died or moved on to new hunting grounds. Demetria couldn't just live a normal lifestyle and blend in. She always had to play the part of a witch. Dressing in black, keeping her hair wild, using her magic whenever she could get away with it.

"Is that any way to greet an old friend?" Demetria set her cup on the table next to the recliner. "I've come a long way to meet with you." She tented her fingers on her stomach.

Marissa dropped her purse on the kitchen counter and snapped her fingers. A mug of coffee appeared in a shower of sparks. Clearly, she could forget about taking a nap. She'd be lucky if she could convince Demetria to leave before the sun set. "Is that so?" Demetria sniffed the air. "You have the scent of man on you, and sex."

Her back to the ancient witch, Marissa's cheeks heated in embarrassment. "I don't see how that is any of your business." She flicked her fingers, and the dishwasher magically unloaded itself. She hoped the distraction would show the old bat she didn't care what she had to say.

"Have you tired yet of your kiss, my dear?

If Demetria only knew. Her magical gift was a curse. That's how she saw it now. But Demetria was all about tricks, so Marissa kept silent.

"I might have a way for you to be rid of it, if you wish."

Marissa hesitated. A clean spatula flew into an open drawer. Be rid of it? "What do you mean?" She heard the creak of the recliner as Demetria got up.

"Ah, I thought that might interest you."

Mink appeared from the laundry room, her whiskers twitching, her tail snaking back and forth. When Demetria came closer, the orange cat ducked back inside, most likely to hide behind the dryer. Even the cat didn't trust this witch. Marissa faced her. "I don't know what kind of trick you have up your sleeve, but . . . ."

Demetria leaned against the counter. "It's a bet I'm offering."

"A bet?" Marissa's mind slowed to a crawl as she mulled over Demetria's words. All the tricks and schemes she thought Demetria might have planned for her, and she wanted to make a bet? A wager between witches was serious business. Signed in blood. A pact that couldn't be broken.

"Yes, I have an offer for you. Something I think you'll be interested in." The older witch set her empty tea cup on the counter.

"I'm listening."

"My challenge is this: Make a man fall in love with you without using your magic kiss. If you succeed, you can keep your power and the man, permanently. If you fail, you give your power to me. Forever." Her thin lips curled into a smile. A wicked smile. A smile that shouldn't be trusted.

But what she was offering was so tempting . . . it was just what Marissa had been wishing for not five minutes ago, out in her car. An end to the curse of the magic kiss. A way to find love. *Real* love. Not meaningless nights of sex with one man after another. Her mind flitted to Justin. She could have him. She could really, truly have him. "How long will I have?"

"A week."

How hard could it be to make Justin fall in love? She saw humans falling in love all the time. A little flirting, a little talking, and he'd be hers, right? "I'll do it."

Demetria's smile grew even wider. "Smart choice, my dear. A magical gift like that is a burden. I understand."

Marissa barely heard Demetria's words. She couldn't care less what the old hag had to say. This was a way out.

Demetria snapped her fingers, and a parchment materialized out of thin air. Without reading over the details, Marissa signed the document, using her own bright red blood. Demetria signed, as well, and then a shower of bright blue sparks exploded from the paper. It curled up on its own, and a black wax seal appeared. If someone cheated or broke the bet, the other party would win. It was sealed. It was real. No backing out now. No changing her mind.

"The first touch of your lips against any man's mouth, and the bet is over. If you reveal anything about the bet, it's over. You understand?" Demetria tucked the rolled and sealed parchment into her belt. "Your power will be mine, and the man will be lost to you."

Marissa touched her fingers to her lips. The power was still there with her. It suddenly dawned on her how difficult this challenge would actually be. She'd always used her kiss as a way to seduce, a way to trick, a way to get what she wanted. But now she'd have to try something new. Although she was confident she could succeed, a small bit of doubt crept into her heart. She pushed all negative thoughts away.

"I hope you're ready to lose, Demetria." She thought of Justin and his dimpled smile. He'd always kept his distance from her, but she'd done the same. Time to rectify that little problem. She shouldn't have any trouble getting him to fall in love with her. She was Marissa, after all. Her beauty drew the men in first, before the kiss took hold. And this time would be no different. She'd turn on the charm, lay it on thick, and he'd be falling all over himself to get close to her. Wouldn't he?

Demetria's laughter cut into her thoughts. The witch hovered above the ground, and her body started to spin. Faster and faster. She whirled so quickly, she soon became a blur of black and gray. A moment later, she disappeared completely.

For the first time in years, Marissa's heart felt lighter than air.

Free. She'd tried a few times in her younger years to attract men without her magical kiss, just to shake things up a bit. She'd see how far she could take it before she had to enchant them. Mostly it was because of her aggressive sex needs. She liked it rough, hard even. Pain mixed with pleasure. Men usually wanted to be the ones in charge in the bedroom. Fucking a woman who did what she was told. Those were the kind she loved to target. Turn the tables on them and control them. The only sad thing was, they never remembered it in the morning. How they'd begged for her to let them climax, or touch her, or lick her.

She searched her memory for tricks that had worked in the past, but it was all very fuzzy. There'd been many, many men in her life since then. Justin didn't work Sundays or Mondays, so she'd have a couple days to plan her strategy. Before she fell asleep on her couch that morning, her mind drifted to a fantasy. What it would be like to have Justin willingly fuck her brains out. What it would be like to have his hard, muscled body trembling for her . . . and when morning came, he'd remember it all. Each moment of passion. Each touch.

He would belong to her, completely and without magic.

# **Chapter Three**

Justin stood just inside the pub and kept an eye on the growing crowd inside. Since Santa Cruz was a college town, even Tuesday nights were party nights. Tonight, the bar was filled with young men and women, who'd come to listen to a popular Celtic rock band. A hard, rhythmic drumbeat filled the room. Justin grimaced. He needed to remember to buy some earplugs before this place made him deaf.

John, his fellow bouncer, jabbed him in the ribs and pointed, a smile on his face. "Looks who's back. The Siren."

Justin turned away from the crowd and the band and caught sight of Marissa just as she entered the pub. He and John hadn't nicknamed her the Siren for nothing. Like the Greek myth, Marissa lured men to their doom. In the story, the siren lured men to their deaths. But this one just lured them into bed and then left them with no memory of what had happened.

Even with that knowledge, Justin had a hard time not staring. She wore a sexy silver halter dress that flowed loose around her long, beautiful legs and had a deep V, which showed off her cleavage. A star pendant hung between her breasts, drawing attention to the amount of flesh she had chosen to display that evening. Lots.

Goddamn that woman knew how to get every man's eye on her.

His dick jumped in his pants. His willpower was no match for his hormones. She was more than beautiful tonight. She was stunning. And dangerous.

She slinked up to him, her obviously unfettered breasts bouncing enticingly. She'd painted her eyes with dark makeup, which emphasized their cool gray-green shade.

He expected her to greet him, maybe ask him a friendly question or two, and then she'd move on to the bar where she'd pick out the lucky guy who got to see her out of the dress.

For a moment, just a quick, odd moment, he wished he could see Marissa naked. Those long, long legs spread for him.

He shook his head to get rid of the image. This was Marissa Glenn. The Siren. The man-eater who loved them and left them like Jana, his faithless fiancée. A trick he knew too well. A sexy smile, a reassurance that he was the only man for her, and then on to the next willing partner. He gritted his teeth at the memory of Jana's betrayal.

"How've you been, Justin?" Marissa stood just a hair too close. Her citrus perfume wafted toward him, and she placed a hand on his arm.

He stared at her manicured nails. His gaze slid up to her face.

Marissa gave him a slow smile and her eyes burned green fire. He cleared his throat. "Fine." He couldn't seem to find any words when she looked at him like that.

"I thought I might hang out with you two for awhile, until the crowd dies down some. Is that okay?" There was a table next to them and a couple of stools. No one ever wanted to sit this close to the entrance, so he and John kept bottles of water and a bowl of peanuts handy. She hopped up on a stool and crossed her lean, lovely legs. Her skirt rode up her thighs.

Justin snapped his gaze back up toward the crowd. He wasn't going to fall for her game. He'd watched her enough times to know

exactly what she was up to.

"Go for it," John said. "We could use the company."

Justin wanted to kill his co-worker. First, there'd been Sunday morning's weird cup of coffee, and now this. Marissa was clearly up to something. But why? He thought they had an easy friendship going. She did her thing with the men at the pub. He stayed out of it. They shared a few jokes, a drink or two. All light, easy fun. The kind of relationship he could handle with a woman. Platonic. With distinct lines neither of them had ever tried to cross . . . until now.

Well, if she wanted to play a game, he'd take it right to her. "So, which one's it going to be tonight? The black guy in the football jersey standing at the end of the bar, or Mr. Motorcycle Gang with all the tattoos over there?"

John raised his brows.

"Excuse me?" Marissa shifted in her seat. He thought she couldn't get any sexier, but he was wrong. The minute she got her dander up, she went a few steps higher on the hot ladder. Her eyes snapped, her curvy body tensed, her wide, pretty mouth screwed up in a pout.

"You heard me. Which one of those two guys are you going to pick tonight?" He smiled. "Come on, we've seen you in here, what, three or four days a week for months. Always the same routine. Never the same guy twice."

She blushed. The sexy, gorgeous siren actually blushed. For one split second he thought maybe he'd misjudged her somehow.

Misunderstood her actions.

"You've been watching me?"

"Hard to keep my eyes off someone as beautiful as you, sugar."

"Would you believe me if I told you all of those other men were just for practice?"

"Are you training for the Olympics? Because I've never seen an

athlete more dedicated than you."

"Am I supposed to take that as a compliment or an insult?"

"Both." Now he felt comfortable again. She'd dialed down the overt sexuality she'd walked in with and had become just Marissa again. Yes, she was still beautiful, but now he'd brought her back down to earth. She was just as vulnerable as he. "So, which one is it?"

She didn't even look toward the bar. She kept her gaze entirely focused on him. He shifted from one foot to the other. A bead of sweat slid into his collar.

"Neither. I've found the one I want tonight."

John gave a low whistle. "Think I'll go get us a couple more bottles of water." He stepped between them and headed for the bar.

Justin watched John disappear into the crowd. "You're joking." "I'm serious. You. Me. Tonight."

The band's pounding drums grew louder and louder. The bartender flipped on the ceiling fans as the heat grew in the crowded room.

Justin couldn't think straight.

There was a popping noise. Then another. The crowd jumped. The loud conversations broke up into gasps and squeals.

One more pop, and the pub was plunged into darkness.

A woman screamed.

Justin couldn't see his hand in front of his face. He reached for the flashlight he'd left on Marissa's table. His hand touched something soft and warm. "Oh, sorry." He pulled his hand back.

Behind him, the crowd rushed past into the pitch-black night. The streetlights that normally illuminated the parking lot were out.

A hand clutched his.

*Marissa.* He could smell her. In the next moment, her soft body pressed up against him.

Driven by purely masculine impulses, he pulled her against him and curved an arm around her waist, protecting her from the dozens of frightened pub patrons fleeing out the door.

The feel of her rounded backside up against his groin lit a fire inside him. One fueled solely by instinct and hormones. Any man would react the same way. He fought against it, willing his cock to stand down.

For a woman who'd seemed hell-bent on seducing him this evening, she was surprisingly quiet and meek in his arms.

"I can't see." Her voice was a squeak amidst the chaos surrounding them.

He leaned down and whispered in her ear. "It's okay. Most of them are outside now. A transformer must've blown or something. The lights are out on the street, too." Did it mean anything that he found her scent intoxicating? The orange blossom sweetness filled his nose. He wanted to lean in closer, tickle her neck with his lips, dip his hand inside her dress and . . . .

"Stay with me." Her hand clamped down on his.

Beneath the silky fabric of her skimpy dress, there was a warm, live woman. If he moved his hand just to the left, he could touch her hipbone. Is this how she did it? Is this how she lured men to her? With her softness? With her delicious, sweet scent? Even blindfolded, a man would know she was beautiful, just by those two things alone.

For a moment, he understood how they could fall for her. How they could want to bury themselves between her thighs. Get a taste of that sweetness. Know what it was like, even for one night, to have something that tender, that delicious, that lovely all to themselves.

The room was quiet now. Everyone had left. Even John, the bartender, and the manager had made their way outside.

The room was so dark no one had noticed the two of them, flush against the wall, holding each other.

He couldn't seem to let her go.

The manager leaned into the open door. "Is anyone inside?"

Justin opened his mouth to speak, but Marissa pressed her fingers to his mouth. A quiet entreaty for them to remain in the dark, empty bar just a little bit longer.

The lock clicked as the manager shut everything down for the night, locking them inside.

## **Chapter Four**

The dark was like a living entity that insulated them from the outside world. He rubbed her abdomen in slow circles, a move he hadn't used in months. Not since he broke it off with Jana. It was an automatic move. A move that gave her the impression he wanted more. But he just couldn't stop. His mind told him this was wrong. That Marissa was no good. But his body said the exact opposite.

She made a low sound of satisfaction and arched her buttocks into him.

He settled his other arm under her breasts, his fingers touching the curved underside of one of them. Her nipple was only inches away from his fingertips, probably a tight bud under the silken softness of her dress. He ached to touch it. His dick pressed painfully against the zipper of his jeans.

God, but this was wrong. This was Marissa the Siren. The woman who stepped out with so many guys, he'd lost count. He didn't matter to her; no doubt, she saw him as just one more in a long line of conquests.

She turned and in a flash pinned his arms against the wall.

He laughed and moved to break free, but she was much stronger than she looked.

"Don't play a game you don't mean to finish." Her voice was sexy

and low. "I don't like being teased."

As his eyes adjusted to the dark, he became fully aware of how close she was to him. The outline of her naked shoulders and the edge of her jaw were visible in the faint moonlight streaming in through the windows.

"I'm not playing any game." He tried again to break free. How could someone so slight, so feminine, be so damn strong?

She let go of one of his arms and squeezed his dick through his jeans. He gasped at the intimacy.

"You're the one who started it," she said, and her grip on his cock grew tighter, almost painful.

"Jesus." Raw emotions surfaced. Fresh wounds. The last time he'd been intimate with a woman, he thought he'd been in love. But Marissa's hard, grasping hand had nothing to do with love, and everything to do with lust. Pure, mindless lust.

She unzipped his fly, and when she touched his naked cock his mind narrowed down to one thing: sex.

He leaned down, knowing her mouth was close to his. He wanted to know what those lips felt like against his. He imagined them to be pillowy-soft. His free hand snaked behind her neck, and he pulled at her hair.

"Let go." Marissa stilled her hand and released his cock. "Only touch me when I order you to. Never before."

His cock throbbed. His balls were so tight, they hurt. He needed her hand on his dick. He needed what she could give him. It had been too long. He had been too lonely. Whatever she wanted. However she wanted. He'd do it. What would it matter if he just gave in this once?

He released her and dropped his hands to his sides.

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#### Kiss and Spell

Marissa fisted his erection once more. God, he was thick and heavy. Powerful. And she had him obeying her. Without any magic. With just her hand. She had control of him so easily. Maybe this bet would be easier to win than she thought. She thumbed the tip, and he shivered.

Not unlike the men she'd had under her spell.

But what would he think of her needs? Would he panic and run? She let go of his cock and unbuttoned his shirt.

"Christ." When both of his arms were free, he let them fall at his sides again. "Don't do this. I can't . . . . " His hand touched her thigh and slid up under her hem. "I have to touch you."

She pushed him away. "I make the rules. You obey." This wasn't how it worked. She told the man to touch her, he touched her. She told the man to kiss her, he kissed her. She told the man to fuck her, he fucked her. Men she hadn't enchanted with her kiss were obviously more difficult to keep in line. Anxious. Needy.

She spread her hands over his muscular chest. He curved his body away from her. "I've got to . . . I need to . . . fuck." He grabbed for her, cupped her face, and pulled her toward his mouth.

"No." She slapped him hard across the cheek. "No kissing."

"Damn, woman, what do you want from me?"

She had to keep him under her control, and if she couldn't do it with words, well, she'd have to improvise. "Come with me." She grabbed him by the hand and pulled him toward the bar, where the shadows were thicker, the darkness more complete.

"What are you doing?" He tried to pull away, but her grasp was firm.

"My game, my rules. Get up on the bar."

"What?"

"Lay down on the bar."

"You've got to be joking."

Oh dear God this was hard.

She latched onto his cock, still free of his jeans, and stroked it.
"No, I am not."

He grunted and grabbed her by the shoulders. "Have you ever heard of blue balls?"

"Get on the bar. Then we'll see what I can do for your . . . condition."

"This is insane," he muttered, but made his way to the bar. "What the fuck am I doing?"

"I don't think you'll regret your choice in about five minutes."

He climbed on the wooden bar and lay flat on his back. "Okay, now what?"

From her purse she pulled four men's ties. Knowing she couldn't use magic this time, she'd come prepared.

He eyed the ties. "Are you serious?"

She looped one end around his left wrist and then tied the other end tight to the barstool that was bolted to the floor. "As serious as a heart attack." She then did the same to his left ankle, tying it to another bar stool. "If you want me to stop, I'll stop. Everything." She knew he wouldn't say no. His dick was so hard, the only thing that would give him some relief was a good old-fashioned fucking.

He said nothing.

She took his silence as a sign that he agreed to the arrangement and slid across the bar on her ass, her dress riding high to expose the plain white panties she wore underneath. Damp white panties. Just thinking about how she'd torture him was getting her wetter by the minute.

She took another tie and secured his right hand to the mini-fridge handle under the counter. The fourth and final tie she secured to his right ankle and tied it to the handle on the beer keg.

"I must be fucking insane," Justin muttered.

"No, just horny." She checked all the ties to make sure they were tight. She climbed up on the bar, this time kneeling over his stomach, one knee on either side of his body. She rested her ass on his groin, trapped his hard cock between her legs. The thick length pressed against her panty-covered clit. She rocked back and forth, feeling his hardness against her most sensitive part.

Then, it dawned on her. When this was all over, when they both had come, hopefully more than once, and the night was over, he'd remember. He'd remember everything. For a second she hesitated. What would he think of her? He had to fall in love with her, not just fuck her. What if her demands freaked him out?

She looked down at her captive. The lights snapped on.

There, in the dim glow of the canned lights above the bar, she was face to face with a man she'd dreamed about having. He wasn't just some warm, fuckable body. He talked to her like a human being. And she'd sensed the hurt within him, some past injury that kept him from getting too close, even when she flirted with him. He was always a gentleman. Until tonight.

"The power's back on," he said, his voice strained. His hips bucked up off the bar.

"So?"

"Aren't you worried someone will see us?" The pub lighting was dim, but there was a large, plate glass window that faced Main Street. He strained against the ties holding him down.

With deliberate movements, she undid her halter. The shimmery fabric pooled around her waist. "Let them look."

"Holy fuck." Although the lights shone directly in his eyes, his pupils were huge. His gaze focused squarely on her naked breasts.

She shook out her hair, her breasts jiggling from the movement. She cupped them and rubbed her thumbs over her nipples. They hardened into dark pink points. "Do you want me, Justin?" She pushed down, forcing his dick between her pussy lips. God, he was so hard.

He struggled against the restraints, raising his body a few inches off the bar, his fingers curved into claws. "Shit." He fell back and tipped his head back. "This is fucking insane."

She stood, her head almost touching the ceiling. Her pussy throbbed. Quickly, she stepped out of her panties and let the dress fall to her ankles. She kicked it to the floor. She stood above him, completely naked. Her cunt spread and open to his gaze. Filled with desire, and a heady sense of power, she stared into his eyes. She couldn't wait to make him beg for her to fuck him. And his desire for her wouldn't be spell-induced, but rather based purely on his need for her.

"You will do something for me, and then I will do something for you."

He licked his lips, and his gaze roved over her. Chills ran down her spine. "What do you want me to do?"

She knelt back down, but this time over his chest, her spread cunt lips mere inches from his chin. "Eat my pussy. Make me come with your mouth, Justin."

He groaned and bucked up again, but his bonds held firm. "I need to touch you. Untie me, and let me touch you. I'll lick you better than any of those other men you've had." His words were fevered, but she knew better than to trust a man in this state of need. Without the spell, he didn't have to obey her. Without the spell, he could walk right out of here. No, he needed to stay right where he was.

She rose up, moved forward, and centered her split seam over his mouth. "Eat my pussy."

## **Chapter Five**

Justin's breath buffeted her sensitive folds, and Marissa shivered. She could hardly wait to feel his tongue on her.

She lowered herself slowly, centimeters at a time. His teeth nibbled at the edges of her cunt lips. She moved lower. His tongue pushed deep into her. "Aaaaah." The touch of his soft, wet his tongue against her puffy flesh made her fly apart. She kept her body raised just enough so he could reach her pussy. Her thighs trembled.

With velvety licks he tortured her labia and clit, making sounds of satisfaction deep in his throat. When he dipped the tip of his tongue into her vagina, the sparks radiated outward. "Oh God, that feels good."

His licking intensified. The cords in his wrists strained as he pulled against his restraints. His tongue ran around and around her clitoris. She wanted him to go on and on. Never stop. Just keep torturing her clit like that. She could hold back her orgasm, wait even longer for blessed release, if only he'd just keep licking her like that.

She focused on the lapping sound of his tongue, her own groans and cries made nearly inaudible by the rush of blood in her ears. Lap, lap, lap. Yes, yes, yes.

Her thighs were frozen in place, and her entire being centered on that small bud of hard flesh hidden beneath her folds. He drew his tongue across it one last time, and she exploded. She gritted her teeth and moved against his tongue, making him press hard against her clit. The orgasm was tight, tight, tight. Centered in her cunt, and then exploding outward in shifting waves. She shuddered.

Justin continued to lick her and moan into her hot, wet flesh. The echoes of her orgasm continued for several seconds.

\* \* \* \* \*

Abruptly, she sat up. Justin aimed his gaze at her pussy. It was wet and ready for him. His dick ached. He couldn't wait much longer. "Let me touch you, Marissa. Untie me." He tried to break loose, but his restraints were tight. "God!" He growled in frustration. Her pussy had tasted musky and sweet, and the flavor lingered on his tongue. He wanted more, wanted to split her in half and pound into her. No mercy. Just hard, hard fucking until they both were spent.

This is how she worked her magic. How she brought men to their knees.

Those ripe, round tits. The legs that went on and on. A sweet, pink cunt. All of it. He wanted it all. What happened in the morning, he didn't care.

She cupped her breasts again. Thumbs tweaking her nipples. She cooed in pleasure, still riding out the orgasm.

God, she was gorgeous.

"Let me fuck you, Marissa."

She splayed her hands on either side of his head. "Oh, no." She clucked her tongue. "Let me fuck *you*." She scooted back, leaving a trail of slick wetness down his chest. Her wetness. Her desire for him. "Would you like that?"

He wanted so badly to sink his fingers into her hips, force her cunt onto his cock. "God, yes."

She sat on his thighs now, his dick at her mercy. She palmed it, and he grunted. "Hmm, nice and hard." Her hot hand was almost more than he could bear. "How good that will feel, but first, we have to be smart." She held up a condom. Where did that come from? His mind had not been on protection of any kind.

She tore open the package and rolled the condom down over his cock. His balls were painfully tight. One sudden move and he might

ejaculate all over the bar.

"There. Ready to go." She lifted up, lined up her cunt with his dick then sank down.

Heat and pressure surrounded his penis. Blessed, blessed pressure. God, her body gripped him like a vise. A sweet, wet vise. He pumped upward. It felt so good to finally move. To have some sort of control over what happened to his body.

"Slow down, tiger." She stilled, not allowing him any room to thrust.

He let out a breath. She was going to be the death of him.

She began slow, circular movements with her hips, grinding her cunt into him. The pull of her pussy was heavenly. Tight, yet soft. He pumped slowly this time, hoping to please her. Hoping she'd keep going and not leave him frustrated.

"That's it. Slow, slow, slow. I want to feel everything. Mmm." She rested her hands on the bar and rotated faster. His cock drove deep inside her.

God, he wanted to grab her around the waist and flip her underneath him. Drive into her like a piston. Lose himself in her body. He struggled again at the ties. "Please let me touch you."

She smiled and rolled her body forward. She continued to move up and down, but now her face was over his, her hair hanging down, her tits inches from his chest. He thought she would kiss him then. She lowered her mouth to his. He moistened his lips. At the last minute she planted a kiss on his cheek. "Why don't *I* touch *you*?" She rubbed her tits across his chest, the hard points of her nipples exciting him more. She followed that with a line of soft kisses down his neck. All the while gyrating her hips and continuing the slide of his dick inside her.

He needed everything to be harder and faster. "I'm begging you, Marissa, I can't do much more of this. I've got to . . . I need to . . . . " He

pulled hard at his restraints. Miraculously, his right arm came free. He wasted no time wrapping it around her waist to force her to move more rapidly.

The game must've been over at that point, because she didn't even seem to notice he'd touched her. She pressed back against him, driving his cock deeper inside. Her tight walls clamped down, and he grunted at the perfect pleasure of it.

Yes, yes, yes.

Above him, her tits swung in his face. He took his hand from her waist and curved it around one sweet breast. Incredible. Soft flesh with a puckered nipple. He stroked his thumb across it. Marissa cried out and arched her back. He did that to her. *He* made her cry in desire. No one else.

He lifted his hips off the bar to delve deeper into her cunt. His fingers clamped down on her tit, squeezing it.

Marissa screamed her release, long and loud. He followed seconds later. An enormous burst from his balls to his penis. Release. Beautiful, wonderful sexual release. He groaned at the intense pleasure.

She fell on top of him, breathing hard. Her hair covered most of her face. With his free hand he swept away the dark strands and touched his fingers to her lips. He wanted to feel that soft mouth against his. A final sign he'd conquered her in some way. But the minute he turned his head to seek out her mouth, she pulled away.

"I have to get dressed. You can untie yourself."

He crinkled his brow. "What?" It was over. Just like that?

She'd already jumped to the floor and slipped back into her dress. "How do I get out of here?"

He untied his other hand. "You should be able to get out the back." He was still in shock. So he was just like all the other men. He thought back to earlier in the evening. She'd never had a chance to slip him any

drug. She didn't try to knock him out. So how was it that all the other men she'd been with in the past seemed to not even remember her?

Marissa was not a woman who'd be easy to forget.

"Thanks." She disappeared from view, heading toward the storage room and the back exit.

"Wait!" He worked at the ties on his ankles, but by the time he was free, she was long gone.

# Chapter Six

Marissa ran out the back door of the pub. Holy shit. What did she just do?

Justin wasn't one of her entranced bed partners. He was fully aware. Completely capable of remembering every last dirty detail of their encounter.

Carrying her shoes, she jogged barefoot across the parking lot to her car. He'd touched her. He'd almost kissed her. That wasn't how it was supposed to happen. She'd planned to seduce him, show him her kinder, gentler side. Show him she could be loving and sweet. Isn't that what most men wanted?

But the minute she'd felt his hard-on against her back, she'd thrown that plan out the window.

All she knew was hard, rough, and dirty. And now that's all he thought she was.

God, he'd been so thick inside her.

Her pussy clenched at the memory.

Knowing that he'd found her attractive and desirable without any spell surprised her.

Sure, she considered herself attractive. But there was a lot more to her than a pretty face. An insatiable need to dominate her sex partners, being one.

God, he'd never talk to her again.

She knew what Justin and John thought of her. Before, it didn't matter to her because the kiss was her curse. She'd accepted that as her life. To never find just one man. To never fall in love or be in love. And so she'd shut down that part of her. Made sex all about the physical act.

When Justin had looked her in the eye as she straddled him, his dick buried in her cunt, she saw something more. Not just a blank stare of enchantment. Emotions had passed between them. In the end, it had been less about the release and more about the connection.

She unlocked her car and sat inside it for a moment.

Once Justin had untied himself and had a chance to think it over, he'd see she was all wrong for him. Justin wasn't the type to be forced into sexual submission and like it. How many times had he begged to touch her? Begged her to allow him take control?

She was the experiment gone wrong. A road he wouldn't want to go down again. She was sure of it.

\* \* \* \* \*

Justin awoke with the mid-day sun bright in his eyes. He rubbed a hand over his face.

Shit.

Last night. Marissa.

He remembered everything. Every last hot, erotic detail.

Whatever she usually did to the men she slept with hadn't worked on him.

Other men. That nailed him in the gut. No matter how much they'd shared last night, how deep they'd gone, the encounter hadn't been special to her. Why did he let things get that far when he knew what kind

of woman she was?

But he knew the answer to that question.

A man could only take so much teasing and touching before he really did think with his dick.

And God, her touching had been electric.

He'd never experienced such intimate, intense sex.

He lifted the sheets and peered down at himself.

Clearly, one part of him was ready for a second round.

Fuck.

He rolled out of bed and headed for the bathroom. As he relieved himself, he heard the phone ring out in the kitchen. He wondered if it was Marissa. His mind flashed to scenes of last night. Her body above his. Each curve perfectly formed. Maybe a little heavy in the hip, but he liked it a little heavier there. The animalistic power in her as she controlled his every move. He never thought that was something he would go for, but with Marissa it seemed right.

He thought of Jana, his ex. Pedestrian sex by comparison. He never knew it could be so intense. Where he lost all reason.

When he picked up the phone later, he saw that it hadn't been Marissa who'd called after all. It had been the bar manager, wondering about last night. Since Justin lived in the same neighborhood, he wanted to know if the power had ever come back on.

Disappointment knifed through him.

He needed to talk to Marissa. Ask her why he was different from all of her other conquests. Why did he remember everything?

He pulled on a pair of black jeans and a t-shirt. He had no idea where she lived, but he did know that she liked that coffee house down from the pub where she'd bought him a cup of joe. He'd seen her in there before.

It was worth a shot.

\* \* \* \* \*

The hot, bitter coffee complimented the sweet muffin perfectly. Although past noon, Marissa had only recently awakened. Living as a witch she had no need of a nine-to-five job. Important things like a house, food, and clothing could be produced in a matter of moments with a magical spell. But the coffee never tasted this good when she made it appear with magic.

As her cover story, she pretended to be in sales. That allowed her to travel without question. To be gone from the neighborhood for days at a time when ceremonies were in order or she needed to attend the rare coven meeting.

Witches preferred a solitary lifestyle. At least, that's what Marissa had been raised to believe by her mother. And she'd stuck with that truth. Using her magical kiss for sexual satisfaction, just like her mother had. In fact, that was how she'd been conceived. A very well-timed and pre-planned seduction with a prime male specimen. Poof! Nine months later, Marissa came into the world.

Not once did she remember her mother looking for more than a faceless sex partner. That's all humans were good for. A good fuck every now and then. Her mother took her satisfaction when necessary, as did Marissa. But for her, the arrangement had grown less than satisfactory.

If witches were meant to be alone, then why did she feel the pull to find a more permanent relationship?

"Marissa," a familiar voice rumbled behind her.

What was Justin doing here? How did he find her? She held her breath. In a matter of moments he would come into view. And what emotions would she see in his expression? Disgust? Hatred? Butterflies mounted an attack on her insides. Since accepting the bet, this was the

first time she regretted her decision. She gripped her coffee cup as if it were a life raft.

Justin slid into the seat across from her. The muscles rippled under his t-shirt as he reached for the sugar packets. "Is it okay if I join you?" He, too, had a cup of coffee, but he'd chosen a donut as a companion for it.

"I . . . I guess so." Where did her usual over-confidence go? Incredibly, she felt the burn of a blush creep into her cheeks. She never blushed.

He shook two packets of sugar, tore them open, and dumped them into his coffee. "Why did you run away last night?"

Memories of riding his cock filled her brain. The hot, thick slide of him. She blinked and bit her lip. "What do you want me to say? It was nice."

He quirked a brow. "It was nice?" He stretched back and settled his arms on the edge of the booth seat. "Yikes, you sure know how to bring a guy down." His gaze sought out hers. "I would say it was a little more than 'nice,' but what do I know? Clearly, I'm not the first guy you've done that to."

Lord, he just really laid it all out on the table, didn't he? Got right to the core of it. "I've never tied anyone down to a bar before, if that's what you're getting at."

He smiled, and his eyes grew dark. "That was a first for me, too." He cleared his throat. "Look, I know your game. John and I have been watching you for months. You take a different guy home every night. But the thing is, Marissa . . . . " He let out a breath. "The thing is, when I see those guys the next day or even the day after, they don't remember you. They act as if they've never seen you before. I don't know what you're doing to them . . . drugs, or what . . . but why can I remember everything?" He ran his tongue along the edge of his teeth and waited for

her answer.

Marissa flashed back to last night, an image of him with his tongue in her pussy filling her mind. The look on his face when she'd straddled him. He was right, he remembered it all, and here he was, not frightened of her, not afraid of what they'd done together. But asking her why he was different. Her shame at the demands she'd made of him came bubbling to the surface. Her fears of rejection. Her confusion about what loving someone really meant. It wasn't just sex, it was something more. And how did she move from great sex to great relationship? She had no idea.

It would be so much easier to just give up. Deal with what she understood. Kiss Justin right here, right now and have him one last time before she'd have to give him up permanently. She could return to the solitary witch life she knew and not have to deal with these complications of feelings and emotions. Yearning for something she couldn't have.

"Do you want to know?" She leaned forward. "Do you really want to know why, Justin?" She tucked her knees under her so she could stretch farther across the table. She focused her gaze on his mouth. Kissing him would be so easy. So simple.

Justin's brow wrinkled, but he also leaned forward.

"A little closer." She could feel his warm breath on her face. "I want to tell you a secret."

"A secret?"

She closed her eyes, intending to kiss that sexy mouth of his. To silence him. To keep him in the dark just like all the others. "I can't," she whispered, and pulled back, but Justin caught her chin in his hands.

"Why won't you kiss me?"

"I can't." She blinked. "You don't understand." Tears welled in the corners of her eyes.

"Don't cry. Please don't." He moved to kiss her.

Marissa broke free of his grasp and reared back. This was no good. She had to get out of here before everything fell apart. She grabbed her purse and scooted out of the booth.

"Marissa, wait!"

She knew he was right behind her. She knew he'd catch up to her easily. But she couldn't let that happen. She was too vulnerable right now. He might win her over, she might kiss him, and then he would be lost to her forever. She bolted out the door, ran down the street and darted down the first alleyway she saw.

"Marissa!"

Once out of his sight, she drew on her powers to turn herself invisible and crouched behind a dumpster. She felt terrible at the deceit, but until she could get her bearings and figure out how to move forward, she was saving them both from failure.

Justin appeared at the mouth of the alley. "Marissa, where are you? I just wanted to talk. Marissa?" He stood there, the midday sun beating down on him from a cloudless sky.

She wanted to call out to him, reveal herself. But when his expression shifted from anxiousness to defeat, she knew it would be best to leave him alone. There had to be a better way to approach this. Instead of baby steps, she took one huge leap last night. It was too much, too fast. Now she understood. In order to make him love her, there had to be more than sex. She couldn't just win him over with her body; she had to make him see her soul. Deeper than she'd ever allowed anyone else in.

After a moment, Justin turned and left. Marissa sighed and got to her feet. She needed to go back to square one, think up a plan, and stick to it.

#### Kris Eton

## **Chapter Seven**

"Marissa, there you are!" Her mother sat in the same recliner chair Demetria had occupied the other day.

"Shit," Marissa muttered to herself. After doing the old disappearing act on Justin, she had wanted to mope in her house for the rest of the day, maybe eat a pint of ice cream, and form a new plan of attack. The games she was used to playing with men were not going to win her the love she craved.

Astrid Glenn stood, her back straight as a broom handle, and reached for her only child. "Come, give me a hug. It's been a long time, my darling."

Marissa stood her ground. "What are you doing here?" Mink rubbed against her legs and meowed a greeting. She leaned down to stroke her.

Astrid pouted. "Is that any way to greet your mother?" She dropped her arms, obviously realizing there'd be no embrace.

"Since when did you want to be my mother?" Marissa picked up Mink and set her on her favorite spot on the sofa. "I seem to recall turning eighteen, showing up at our house after school, and finding you gone." Marissa had tried to banish that memory for years. "I took that as a hint you were done with all the mother crap. When did you change your mind?"

Her mother blew a strand of dark brown hair out of her eyes. "Oh, fine. I should've known I couldn't fool you." The straight back remained, but the singsong, motherly voice switched to the one Marissa remembered, crisp and commanding. "Why in heaven's name did you make that bet with Demetria?"

Oh Lord. The news was out. She'd hoped the details of her bet might stay underground for just a few more days, until she could secure what she wanted and be sure no one else had any say in how she lived her life. "I'm done with this, mother." She walked past her and dumped her purse on the barstool near the kitchen. She opened the freezer and pulled out the pint of ice cream she'd conjured there when she was out in the driveway just minutes earlier. She needed the mint chocolate chip even more now.

"Done with what?"

"That curse you gave me." She dug a spoon out of a drawer and scooped out a chunk of ice cream. "I never wanted it. I don't know why you thought it would be a good gift."

"The kiss? You're giving away your magical kiss?" With hands on her hips, she marched over to her daughter and wagged a finger in her face. "Who told you you could just give that away? Who gave you the right? And to Demetria? You've got to be joking."

Marissa turned her back on her mother's angry face. "I'm not like you, mother. I actually want to fall in love."

"Want to fall in love?" Astrid repeated, as if Marissa had just told her she wanted to plunge herself into a vat of boiling oil. "Who gave you that crazy notion?"

"No one." She took another spoonful of ice cream. Looked like she'd definitely need the whole pint. "This was my idea."

"So, you sought out Demetria and came up with the bet?"

"Well, no . . . ." Marissa's stomach dropped.

"How could you be so stupid? If you didn't want your gift, why didn't you come to me? I could've gotten rid of it for you."

"What?" Marissa couldn't believe what her mother was telling her. All along, all these years, and she could've been free of her kiss? "Why didn't you tell me?"

Astrid shrugged. "I never thought a daughter of mine would ever consider something so stupid. But it's too late anyway. You're caught up

in this bet. My powers mean nothing now. How could you trust that witch with your gift?"

Marissa faced her mother. "My gift? It's a curse. You forced that potion on me when I was a child . . . I had no idea what it meant."

"That potion has run in our family for years. It's a thousand-yearold secret. You were privileged to . . . I can't believe you would . . . . " Her mother clamped her lips together and narrowed her eyes. "Damn it, Marissa. What did you think you were doing?"

Marissa placed the half-empty ice cream carton on the counter.

Nausea set in. "Living. For once in my life I decided to live."

"What do you call this?" Her mother gestured at the cozy cottage, at the nice furniture, the high-end television, the travertine tile on the kitchen floor. Her gesture was so forceful a jeweled bracelet flew from her arm and skittered across the floor. "You have more because of your witch powers than most. Dammit, where did my bracelet go?" She made a cursory check of the kitchen floor, but Marissa wouldn't let her mother distract her from the topic at hand.

"I'm not giving up everything, mother, just this one thing. I'm not like you; I don't want to be alone."

"Witches always live alone." Astrid, giving up her search, rested her elbows on the counter. "Except for the years I spent raising you, but that's expected. Witches aren't meant to be part of this world, the human world. Not in a meaningful way. And you wanting to find love with a regular human . . . well, it just won't work."

Marissa thought of Justin with his ocean-blue eyes, his sinful body of hard muscle, and his quiet intelligence. She wanted him. She didn't care if it wasn't supposed to work. She had to have him. Every little conversation they'd had, each laugh they'd shared . . . she remembered them all. Secretly, she'd always wanted to believe they could somehow have more than what she thought possible. The curse of her kiss had

kept them apart. She didn't want him to be just another man under her spell who'd forget her quickly. No, she needed more. For some damned reason she needed more. "It will work. I love him."

"You love him?" Astrid scoffed and shook her head. "Oh my dear, you will soon see that love is impossible for witches. The best you could hope for is a daughter to love you. Why do you think I decided to bring you into this world?"

"I've been wondering that my whole life." They'd never had a very close relationship. It was similar to a teacher instructing a student. A witch passing along her knowledge to her successor.

"It's too late to renege on the contract you signed with Demetria. I understand that. Heaven knows, if you'd only asked me for some advice on the matter before you signed it . . . ."

"Yes, it is too late. So why are you here?" Marissa put the lid back on the ice cream and made it vanish back into the freezer. She blew away the sparkly dust that remained. The sparkly dust always made her sneeze.

"Why, my dear, I'm here to help you catch that man you have your eye on."

"What?"

"Well, isn't that the agreement? Win the bet and you keep your power?"

"And the man. I also get to keep the man."

Astrid rolled her eyes. "Yes, yes, you keep the stupid human. Now, if you grow tired of him I think I have just the right potion . . . ." Astrid conjured up her thick, black book of ancient family spells. It floated in the air between them and the pages flipped themselves.

"I won't grow tired of him." She hadn't thought past the 'falling in love' part. And at this moment, the future really didn't matter. All of her focus was on winning him. "So you say you're here to help me?"

#### Kris Eton

"Yes." Her mother made the book of spells disappear.

Marissa had been looking forward to the day her mother deemed her an advanced enough witch to share some of the secrets in the family spell book. But it looked like today would not be it.

"Come," her mother said. "Sit with me in the living room, and I'll give you some advice on the matter."

"Like you know anything about getting a man to honestly, truly fall in love with you?"

Astrid took a seat in the recliner again. "I may have given you the magical kiss when you were a child, but my mother didn't gift me with it until my eighteenth birthday. So trust me, I know how to catch a man without the kiss."

This new bit of history interested Marissa. Her mother once had to work for a man's affections? Fascinating. She never thought she'd say the words, but suddenly they were coming out of her mouth. "Could you please help me, mother?"

\* \* \* \* \*

After conjuring some tea, they got to work.

Astrid added milk to her cup. "See, the problem is, you went right to the sex."

Marissa tried not to blush at the comment. "I thought men liked sex?"

"Oh, they do, but it's not the way to their hearts. You have to show that you are more than just a body. Any woman can satisfy a man's baser needs, but you have to show him that you have a mind that he finds attractive, too."

"Men care about my mind?" This was a small revelation to her.

Never having had to work for men's attentions and knowing it wouldn't

last beyond one night, she'd never really even bothered observing other couples and how they interacted. She'd always assumed there were mating rituals of one kind or another.

"The good ones do." Her mother stirred her coffee and tapped the spoon on the edge of the cup. "You need to ask him out on a date."

"What kind of date?"

"Any kind . . . dinner, a movie, something that shows you're interested in getting to know him. Didn't you say his fiancée dumped him not too long ago?"

Marissa repeated what John had told her on one of Justin's days off. "She cheated on him with some other guy only a few months before their wedding. A friend of his, I think." It was hard to imagine any woman leaving Justin for another guy. Justin was perfect in every way as far as she could see.

"So he's fragile."

She laughed. "He's not fragile." He was powerful. She remembered the way he'd strained at the ties, his arms tensed.

"Emotionally fragile. He needs to trust that your feelings for him are real. That he won't get hurt again."

She thought of earlier today when he'd shown up at her favorite coffee place wanting to talk. Was that what he was trying to do? Feel her out to see where he stood with her? "Fuck."

"Excuse me?"

"I think I may have screwed up already." Her blood ran cold at the idea that she in any way reminded Justin of his ex.

Her mother touched her hand. "You can do this, Marissa. No daughter of mine can lose a bet to Demetria."

Although her mother clearly had her own reasons for giving her this help, Marissa was grateful for some guidance on a topic she knew nothing about. Sex she had down pat. But the rest of this courting stuff, it was a mystery to her. They made plans for what she should do the next day, and by the time her mother disappeared, she already felt better about her chances of winning Justin.

# **Chapter Eight**

Justin tossed his leather jacket on the table near the pub entrance and nodded at John. "Hey, how's it going?"

His co-worker sipped a bottle of water. "She's been waiting for you, you know." He tipped his head toward the bar.

Justin's breath caught in his throat. He thought after yesterday he'd gotten the message. Marissa wasn't interested. He was just another one of her flings. But there she sat at the end of the bar, and she looked different.

He hesitated. When she curled a finger at him, however, beckoning him over, he headed toward her. This should be interesting.

"I was wondering when you'd get here." Her voice was as smooth as a fifty-year-old scotch.

"My shift starts at seven." Now he knew what was different about her; she wore jeans, a tank top, and no make up. She always showed up at the pub dressed to the nines. This Marissa he'd never seen before. "What's up?" He almost kicked himself for the off-handed question. They'd had hot, passionate sex on this very bar, and all he could come up with was 'what's up'?

"I think we got off on the wrong foot." She smiled shyly. She was vulnerable tonight. Without all the make up and the sexy clothes, she looked like a woman who could get hurt easily. "I wanted to . . . that is, I was wondering if you wanted to go out with me sometime? A real date."

"A date."

"Yes." She took a sip of what looked like club soda. "You mentioned

the other men . . . I'm done with that. That's not me anymore."

His thoughts drifted to the memory of her naked body poised over his. Her red-stained mouth slack as she came. He hoped she wasn't completely done with that Marissa. "So you're asking me out on a date?"

"Why are you making this so hard?" She pressed her lips together.

"I'm sorry." He couldn't help but smile. "It's been a long time since a woman asked me out, I guess. I hope you didn't think that, well, that the other night was all I wanted. That's why I wanted to find you yesterday. I'm sorry I ambushed you like that."

Her face relaxed. He'd freed her somehow with his words, he could tell.

"I just wanted us to get off on the right foot," she said, "and I think I went a little overboard. Gave you the wrong impression."

"Oh, trust me; it was a very right impression. But I'd be honored to be your date for an evening. When?"

"Friday. I thought we could go to dinner. Maybe take a walk on the beach?"

"Okay. That sounds nice." Without thinking, he reached out to tuck a strand of hair behind her ear. He swept his finger around the shell of her ear.

She ducked her head at the touch.

He pulled his hand away. "And we'll take it slow this time."

She tipped her face up, her gray-green eyes bright even in the dim lighting. "Yes, slow."

He nodded. "Well, I've got to get back to my post. The manager doesn't pay me to talk to pretty girls all night."

She smiled sweetly, looking so vulnerable at that moment—the polar opposite of the Marissa he'd met the other night. She was full of mysteries. Mysteries he'd like to untangle. And apparently on Friday night, he'd been given the chance to do just that.

\* \* \* \* \*

Marissa's laughter made Justin's cock twitch. It was throaty and sexy and reminded him of the noises she'd made when she climaxed. He shifted in his chair. She'd chosen a seafood restaurant, and over drinks before dinner they'd tackled the easy parts of getting to know each other's simple likes and dislikes, favorite movies, a few childhood memories. Now, in the dark intimacy of the candlelit dining room, he wanted to focus on getting to know her on a deeper level, but his body betrayed him every step of the way. He finished his story, "After that, I never skateboarded again."

She took a sip of her white wine, her full lips caressing the edge of her glass. "One fall off a railing, and you quit?"

"I had to wear an ice pack in my shorts for two days." He could watch her all night. The way the candlelight played in her eyes, the strand of hair that fell across her cheek, the elegant fingers curled around her wine glass. He just couldn't seem to get enough. "So tell me something about you. That was my most embarrassing story. What's yours?"

Marissa leaned back in her chair and took another sip of wine. "I can't swim."

"That's not an embarrassing story. Come on, you promised to share." The waiter brought their main courses, and he dug into his salmon, waiting for her to elaborate.

She sighed. "My mother took me to the beach when I was fourteen." Her voice was barely audible above the noise from the other diners. "We were exploring the tide pools down near Monterey. She was teaching me about . . . well, she was showing me things. A school bus full of kids from the high school showed up. Some science thing. I

slipped on a rock, fell into one of the deeper pools, right in front of this group of guys." She picked at her plate of food. "I panicked. A teacher from the group pulled me out. The end."

Unlike his embarrassing story, which he'd told for laughs, hers made him wince. "That's awful. I'm so sorry." It was hard to imagine beautiful, confident Marissa as an awkward teen.

"I didn't really have any friends growing up. It was just me and my mom." She shrugged. "She reminded me the incident was my own fault for getting too close to the edge. She was right."

He nodded, but inside he hurt for her. Her childhood sounded rather lonely. "Well, I promise I will never let you get too close to the edge, okay?"

She looked up at him. Tonight he could read her face like an open book. The mask of brittle tough beauty she usually wore at the pub was missing. He smiled inwardly at the thought he'd managed to reveal a little more of the real Marissa Glenn tonight. Jana had been such a different kind of woman. Loud, a bit too concerned about keeping attention on herself, and, ultimately, a liar. But he didn't want memories of his ex to spoil the evening. "So how's your food?" He gestured at her plate of shellfish.

"Delicious. I don't eat out very often. I'd forgotten what I'm missing." She picked out a juicy mussel and popped it in her mouth.

There was a pull deep inside his chest as he watched her. An ache for a closeness between a man and woman that he'd been missing all these months. "Me, too." He settled a hand on her knee under the table.

At the intimate touch, her gaze shifted from sweetness and light to dark and sexy. He'd hit a switch. His heart sped up in response. Although he'd meant to keep this date all about talking and getting to know Marissa, that look in her eye sent the evening in another direction. He crept his hand up under the hem of her skirt.

"I think I'm done." She set her fork on her plate.

His fingers brushed the edge of her panties. He wanted to pleasure her. Let her know that her loneliness could be over if she would just trust him with her heart and her secrets. "I'm not quite finished," he said, his words laden with meaning. Her breasts rose and fell.

"Oh?" Her voice was breathy.

He slipped a finger under the silky material. "I just want one more taste." He spread her cunt lips and tickled her clit with the lightest of touches. Would she let him do this to her . . . here? Now? How much trust would she give him?

Marissa shifted forward slightly to give him better access and clutched her napkin tightly. She wet her lips.

"Are you done, madam?" Their waiter appeared, oblivious to the torture Justin performed under the table.

"Mmm," she moaned. "Yes, yes, I'm finished." She gripped the table's edge.

The waiter raised his eyebrows, but swept up both plates. "Dessert?"

Encouraged by her reaction, Justin circled the hardening bud of her clit. The softness and wetness he found between her legs made his dick rock hard. "I think we'll just have dessert at home tonight, don't you think, sweetheart?"

Marissa nodded, and under the table, spread her legs wider.

Her willingness to let him touch her so intimately turned the flame inside him a little bit higher. He dipped his finger into her opening.

Her breath caught in her throat.

With a slight bit of pressure, he was knuckle-deep. Her inner muscles gripped him. God, she was sweet. "Can you bring us the check?" He could hear the unsteadiness in his own voice. He'd have to stop soon, or he wouldn't be able to walk out of here.

Marissa's hand joined his. When he tried to pull away from her pussy, she held him there.

The waiter nodded and left.

"Don't stop, Justin. That feels so good." She forced his finger deeper inside her and sighed.

He stroked her and her juices coated his hand. He had to stop.

"Let's go back to my place." To make her come in the middle of a crowded restaurant would be a bad idea.

"Wait, wait . . . ." She pressed him harder into her pussy. Her thighs trembled.

Sweat beaded on his brow. They were seated only a few feet away from another couple who were deeply engaged in conversation. Behind him sat a rowdy group of four women. They would know. If anyone looked at Marissa's face right now they would know. Her eyelids were half closed, her breathing came in short gasps. "Marissa . . . ."

"Oh, God," she whispered. Her delicate brow wrinkled, her top teeth bit down on her lower lip.

The tight warmth around his finger was intoxicating. Even though he knew he should stop, the need to give her pleasure this way was too great. He sped up the motions of his hand. Slick, wet sounds reached his ears. His finger penetrated easily now, lubricated with her moisture. His arm jostled the table. The man seated across from them glanced from the jiggling table to Marissa's face. When he shifted his gaze from Marissa to his dinner partner, Justin knew the man realized what was going on beneath their table. Shit.

But she was so wet, he wanted to keep his finger seated inside her. Across the dining room, their waiter moved toward them.

"Come on, baby," he whispered, giving her quiet encouragement.

He slowed his strokes and made them deeper instead. His cock pressed
painfully against the seam of his pants. What he wouldn't give to be able

#### Kris Eton

to strip down right now and fuck her senseless.

She began to pant. He knew she was close. God, he hoped she could hold in her screams.

"Your check, sir." The waiter set the bill down on the shivering table.

"Yes!" Marissa cried out. Her eyes flew open. She let out a whoosh of air. Underneath the table, she let go of his hand.

The waiter stared at her, as did the man at the other table.

Justin picked up the check. "I'll get this one."

Marissa was too lost to protest.

"We hope you come again soon," the waiter said. He gave one last look at Marissa, who had sunk back against her chair.

"So do I," Justin said gazing directly into Marissa's eyes. She blushed.

\* \* \* \* \*

Demetria turned away from her crystal ball. Some might consider spying on the competition cheating, but if no one knew about it, was it really cheating? She cackled to herself.

Damn that Marissa! If Demetria let this go on much longer, she was sure that Marissa would win, and she couldn't let that happen.

Demetria did not lose bets.

She followed the winding staircase down from her Divining Room into her bedroom below. All the while her thoughts turned over in her head. She flicked her fingers and a bright red dress appeared. Low-cut, short skirt. Definitely something Marissa would wear when on the prowl. It had been awhile since Demetria tried something like this. It would take work at her age, and only last a little while, but a little while was all she needed.

Tomorrow night she would put her plan into action. She grabbed the dress and hung it up in her closet, eager to try out her scheme. She'd have the magical kiss soon, and her age would no longer matter. She could have her choice of men night after night. Do anything to them she wished. Oh, how stupid Marissa was for giving up such a wonderful gift.

# **Chapter Nine**

Marissa leaned against the wall outside Justin's apartment as he fiddled with his keys. She couldn't believe the ease with which she opened up at dinner. Revealing her most embarrassing moment, telling things about herself she'd never shared with anyone. Is this what dating a man was supposed to be like? Sharing intimate details of her life and exposing them for his acceptance or rejection? No wonder her mother thought she was crazy for wanting to give up her kiss.

She glanced over at him as he slid the key into the lock. He'd been kind and caring after she told her tide pool story. She'd left out the reason her mother had taken her to the tide pools in the first place—to gather a jellyfish and a certain variety of seaweed for a spell they were going to place on their neighbor—but those details didn't matter. The basics of the event were there.

The plan for this evening had not included sex. At least, this is what her mother had explained. She needed to build trust with Justin. Prove to him that she was interested in more than sex, more than one night. But after the unexpected event in the restaurant . . . .

Never before did a man act on his own instincts when he was with her. To give in to Justin's hand between her legs had been . . . delightful. Who cared what her mother thought she should or shouldn't do to make this man fall in love with her? He'd acted purely out of his own desire for her. No magic involved. And now he'd led her back to his apartment. Not

some seedy motel on the edge of town or under the boardwalk or out in the woods—all regular locations for Marissa's sex games. He was letting her in to a very personal part of his life. Sharing it with her. This must be a step toward love, right?

Justin turned the doorknob. "Ladies first." He reached inside to flip on the lights.

She'd let him have his fun; now it was her turn. She entered his apartment and as she slipped out of her coat told him, "Strip and wait for me on the bed." This time she took a pair of handcuffs out of her purse.

Any fears she'd been holding onto about his acceptance of her sexual proclivities disappeared when he looked from the handcuffs to her face and began to strip. She took a seat on his couch and watched his performance. First, he loosened his tie and unbuttoned his shirt. His hair fell across his forehead. The buckle on his belt was next.

She crossed her legs and held the handcuffs with one finger. A tease for what he could expect in the bedroom.

He kicked off his shoes, pulled off his socks, and stripped off his shirt. The sculpted planes of muscle caught her attention. She couldn't wait to slide her hands over his body. He smiled slowly. He must be able to see the desire in her. Written all over her face.

When he unzipped his pants, the bulge he'd been hiding was revealed. The same hardness that had plowed into her the other night would soon be hers again. Her pussy throbbed, and she crossed her legs tighter. He caught the movement, and his eyes darkened. He kicked his pants aside and shucked off his boxer briefs to reveal that his penis was erect and ready for her. So, so ready.

She licked her lips. Having a second go around with a man was something she'd never thought would happen. And she'd especially not imagined having a second chance with Justin after he'd found out how she liked to dominate. But there he was, rock-hard and obviously eager

for her. She imagined what he must taste like. Delicious, she was sure.

"Good. Now go lay down on the bed. Arms above your head." She stayed seated and drank in the sight of his gorgeous naked body—powerful shoulders, a sheen of sweat on his chest, the proud and slightly curved jut of his erection.

"All right." He stroked himself a few times and headed toward the bedroom down the hall. His ass was just as tight and tempting as the rest of him.

Once he was out of her sight, she undressed. But she made sure to leave on her demi-bra and panties. He had to work for his reward . . . at least a little bit. She smiled, grabbed the handcuffs, and walked down the hall.

\* \* \* \* \*

This was a first. Lying naked on his bed waiting for a woman to handcuff him. He never would have considered this with Jana. But he saw how Marissa's pupils dilated when he followed her orders. How much pleasure she took in taking control. He knew it would be worth it. Just like the other night, when he thought he couldn't hold on any longer, she'd known how to control him, make the sex that much better. The tingling of his balls, the ache in his dick. All too familiar. And he knew it wouldn't be quick. No, she'd take her time with him. Torture him in some new, incredibly hot way that would have him writhing in need for her.

Her shadowy figure appeared in the doorway. She wore only a black bra and panties, her breasts pushed up high, the shadow of her areolas visible above the low-cut bra.

Her gaze swept over him. "Nicely done. You shall be rewarded for your obedience." Leaning over him, she looped the handcuffs through the headboard railing and snapped them shut around his wrists. Her orange

blossom scent wrapped around him. He stared up at the two perfect scoops of her tits encased in the black demi-bra, the lean yet shapely torso. If she'd come a few inches closer, he could kiss that soft, honey flesh.

"You're beautiful, Marissa." He rested his head back on the pillow, his arms suspended above him. It was slightly uncomfortable to be restrained in this way, but he could manage it for the moment.

She stepped back from the bed, held a finger to her luscious lips, and said, "Shhh. No words, lover." In her hand she held a long feather. He hadn't noticed that earlier. From her safe distance she touched the feather to his chest, drawing lazy circles around each of his flat nipples. "I want you to lie still and to not make a sound. Can you do that?"

He shivered. The feather tickled down his midsection, and his dick jumped at the sensation. "Yes." The word came out strangled.

But surprisingly he trusted her. Trusted that she would know when it was more than he could handle. Like the other night. Why was it so easy to trust this woman when they were in bed together, but so difficult once they parted?

The feather swirled near his groin.

"Fuck."

"Silence, Justin." It swished across his thighs and up and down his erection.

The lightest of touches. Ending at the very tip of his cock.

Oh God.

He grunted.

"Should I lick you here?" She swept the tip of the feather back and forth across the head. "Or here?" The feather moved down the underside of his dick to his aching balls.

His whole body went rigid. His wrists strained in their shackles. It was unholy pleasure. Too, too good. He closed his eyes and focused his

concentration. He didn't want to come like this. Not yet.

"Enough." The feather fell away. "Open your eyes."

He did as she ordered.

"Now," she said as she climbed on the bed. "I'm going to kiss you . . . . . "

He tipped his head toward her. He'd been waiting to kiss her, needing to kiss her. They'd been intimate, but yet they'd shared not a single kiss.

"Uh, uh, uh." She pressed a finger to his lips. "I'm going to kiss you all down your body and then suck you until you come."

His eyelids fluttered. How could he hold back? How could he keep from exploding the minute her mouth moved too close to the part of him that ached so terribly?

She planted herself on all fours above him, leaned down and kissed him on the side of his neck. Her sweet scent drifted into his nose, and he found himself tilting his head back to give her better access. Her lips were like two butterflies darting and circling, always with light touches. Down his neck, across his chest, and then licking carefully around each nipple. His dick throbbed for release, and it seemed as if she was only just beginning her kiss torture. But she'd told him she would take him into her mouth. He knew she would keep her promise, so he could hold on a little longer. Wait it out as she progressed from his chest, down his stomach, into the dip of his navel. All the while kissing so lightly that he could cry at the feel of it.

When she reached the lower part of his abdomen right above his pubic hair, he sucked in his stomach, tried to find some control over his raging desire.

Abruptly, she sat up.

He let out the breath he'd been holding and stared up at her. She repositioned herself lower on the bed, between his legs. Then, she bent over his erection, her hair tickling his thighs, and kissed him from the base of his cock to the tip.

"Ah, God," he couldn't help saying when she kissed his cock head and then licked a drip of pre-cum. His buttocks clenched, and his hips rose.

She stopped and pulled her hair back with one hand. Her lips curved into an 'O,' and she sucked him into her mouth.

Hot, wet suction down the length of his cock. "Jesus, Marissa." He pulled again at the handcuffs. The metal edges cut into his skin, but the pain kept him balanced, allowed him a miniscule amount of control over his desire. Her tongue toyed with his cock, swirling down the length of it. He wanted to hold on for as long as possible. She put pressure on him with those beautiful lips, and his body flexed upward. She stilled him with her hands, pressed down on his thighs, and sped up her sucking and licking.

The tingling in his balls grew unbearable. He knew he would come soon. She encouraged him with her mouth and tongue, giving him the right amount of pressure to help him build to a climax. One last deep plunge into her mouth, and he let go. Jets of ejaculate rushed out of him. His legs were rigid, all sensation centered on his groin.

Marissa swallowed every last drop of cum, licking him clean once he was done. She was amazing. She was gorgeous. He wanted her to be his and no one else's.

"Uncuff me," he whispered, desperate to hold her. To feel her naked skin under his hands. To remove what was left of her clothing and give her the same treatment she'd given him.

"No."

The euphoric haze disappeared. "I want to touch you. Don't run away again, Marissa."

She sat down on the edge of the bed and covered her face with her

### Kiss and Spell

hands. "This isn't what I wanted to happen . . . . "

Oh shit. "I thought . . . back at the restaurant, I'm sorry if I overstepped. I just couldn't help it, and you seemed to be enjoying it."

"It shouldn't be about sex." She uncovered her face, but stared at the wall rather than at him, her profile a study in curves and shadows.

"But I just couldn't stop myself."

"It shouldn't?"

"No, this was supposed to be a regular date. We were supposed to talk."

He smiled. She was only worried about what he thought of her. "We did talk."

"Only talk. No sex." She sounded so forlorn. Like a small child who'd broken a favorite toy.

"So, we had sex. I thought you enjoyed it. I know I did." He attempted to lighten the mood, but his smile of satisfaction didn't seem to be winning her over.

She stood and paced the room. "So what do we do now?" "Um, maybe you could uncuff me?"

Without looking at him, she reached out a hand, sparks flew out of her palm, and the handcuffs fell away. He laid there for a moment. "What the hell just happened? What in holy fuck did you just do?" He scrambled out of the bed and eyed the handcuffs, half-expecting them to explode.

Marissa stopped mid-step. "Shit." She slid her gaze toward him. "I undid the handcuffs . . . . " Her voice was a squeak.

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"I saw . . . you did something . . . ."
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"Justin, let me explain . . . . "

"Who are you?" He suddenly felt very vulnerable and very naked.

"What are you?" He grabbed a pair of pajama pants off the floor and whipped them on. His mind was a whirlwind of confusion. But the

strange affect she'd had on other men in the past now began to make some sense.

"I did this for you. I did all of this for you." Tears fell from her eyes.
"I never thought I could have love, Justin. But when I found out I could,
that I could have a chance . . . I couldn't help myself. You were always
there in the back of my mind. I stayed away from you on purpose, don't
you see?" She took a step toward him.

She was talking in riddles. What in the hell was happening here? He put up a hand. "Don't come any closer."

The hurt look on her face stabbed him like a knife through the chest.

"It's just me, Justin. I swear I'd never hurt you."

He couldn't keep up. Just a few minutes ago she'd had him at her mercy. She could've done anything to him, and she chose to give him a blow job. The best blow job of his life. What was she up to? "What do you want from me?"

Her face was red. "All I've ever wanted was you, Justin. Please don't be afraid."

"You need to go. I need to . . . think." He thought he'd found a woman he could allow into his life, into his heart. Someone special. Someone different. Sure, she had a messy past, but who didn't? But this . . . magic or bizarre shit . . . it was too much.

"Don't make me leave. I want to stay." She was crying now. The sobbing sounds cut him to the quick. She had been so beautiful and sweet. He didn't want to cause her pain, but he was afraid. Goddammit, he couldn't help it . . . he was afraid of her.

She must've seen something in his eyes then. His fear. Without another word, she left the bedroom and disappeared down the hall.

His heartbeat slowed. The fight-or-flight response that had taken over his mind settled. Sure, her trick scared him. Sure, he was freaked

out. But she was Marissa. The caring, sexy, clever woman who'd somehow managed to sneak into his heart in the last few days. And was he going to let that woman walk out his door?

"Marissa, wait!" He rushed out of the room, but he was too late. A shower of sparks erupted from his living room. When he entered, she was gone. Her clothes, her purse. Everything. Gone.

A few sparks drifted down from the ceiling. He sneezed.

"Marissa," he said out loud to the empty room. "I'm sorry."

# Chapter Ten

Once the sun had gone down the next day, Demetria put her plan into action.

A row of jars and bottles covered her vanity. She looked through them and found the one she was looking for. Sitting down in front of the mirror, she opened the jar of azure cream, slathered some on her face, and chanted the words she'd almost forgotten. Her wrinkles tightened into smooth, perfect skin. A blue glowing haze surrounded her whole body, and she felt the transformation process continue from her head all the way to her toes.

After a few seconds the haze disappeared. Demetria looked at herself in the mirror and smiled a slow, satisfied smile. "Not bad." There, reflected back at her, was a pretty good copy of Marissa. Her eyes were the wrong color, but from a distance Justin wouldn't be able to tell.

She took off her loose-fitting black dress and slipped into the skintight red one she'd conjured yesterday. Too bad the cream was only temporary. It'd be nice to have a body like this again. She smoothed her hands down over her shapely hips.

"Ready or not, Justin, here I come." She laughed and snapped her fingers. In a flash, she was gone.

\* \* \* \* \*

Justin leaned back against a barstool near the entrance to the pub. He'd looked for Marissa all day today, but she was nowhere to be found. He kicked himself for not getting at least a phone number from her. He had no idea where she lived, where she worked. He only knew the location of a few of her favorite haunts in downtown Santa Cruz, and none of them had panned out.

John was smart enough not to ask him anything. They'd carded pub goers in almost complete silence.

"Hey, I gotta take a leak," Justin told his co-worker. "I'll be right back."

"No problem." John turned to handle a large crowd of college students who'd entered the bar all at once.

Justin made his way to the bathrooms at the back of the pub, skirting around a cluster of women in their forties celebrating someone's engagement. A pretty typical Thursday night.

When he finished using the restroom, he headed back out to his post. But someone sitting at the bar caught his eye. A pair of long, sexy legs, a red dress that hugged the curves of a very familiar body. Even from behind he could recognize Marissa. His heart swelled. He headed toward her. She must be there to talk to him. Now he could ask her all the questions he'd thought of last night after she'd left. After he'd decided to listen to what she had to say. Her explanation. But when he was just a few feet away from her she turned. A buff black guy in a tank top had a hand on her knee. She leaned in toward him to whisper something in his ear, and the man's hand slid up under her skirt.

A seething cold ran through his gut. He stood rooted to the spot, unable to believe what he was seeing.

Marissa cupped the man's chin in her hand and pressed her lips against his. The man's hand clamped onto her thigh.

Justin clenched his fists. He wanted to pound the other man into the floor. Turn him into a bloodied mess. All the old feelings came back. The day he'd caught Jana with that jackass, Tom, in his bed. And now it was happening again. He tried to take a step forward, the tension rising, his anger boiling over.

Their kiss deepened. Marissa shifted her head, her hair spilling over one shoulder.

Even though anger and hurt raged through him, he couldn't move. He couldn't fucking move. Because it was Marissa who deserved all his anger, not this guy at the bar. He was nobody. Another guy for Marissa to lure into her web. She was no good. She'd used him for her own sick games.

Their kiss ended, and Marissa stood up. The man seemed unwilling to leave his spot and pointed at his drink. She tugged at him.

"Give me a sec, baby."

"Let's get out of here," she said.

Justin stepped back, not wanting her to see him, knowing that hurt would be etched all over his face, and she would win. He ducked his head and disappeared into the crowd of women he'd passed by earlier. From a safer distance, he watched them. The black guy finished his drink. Marissa stood there, waiting. He finally got up, threw a few bills on the bar, and grabbed Marissa by the arm, leading her toward the front door.

She followed him into the night.

John, who saw the pair pass by, turned to scan the pub. His gaze caught Justin's. They exchanged a look. John understood. The anger that had been roiling through Justin dissipated quickly, leaving behind only a heavy weight on his heart. She was gone, and he was alone and

hurt once more. Something he'd never wanted to experience again.

Someone tugged on his arm. "Can you kiss me?"

"What?" He shifted his gaze from John to the forty-something woman next to him.

"I have to kiss a stranger, and then you have to sign my card." She held up an index card. All the women in her group laughed uproariously.

"I'm the bride-to-be. Give a girl a break."

The smell of her breath told him she'd had enough liquid courage for the night. "I'll sign the card without the kiss." He held out his hand for her pen.

Before he could put up any kind of defense, the drunken bride-to-be launched herself at him and planted a wet, sloppy kiss right on his mouth. When she finished, he tried to play along. He smiled and signed her card. He let the group of women fawn over him and draw him into their little party. And, even though he was strictly not allowed to drink during work hours, he let them buy him a few shots of tequila, which he quickly downed.

The haze of the alcohol numbed him from the pain and hurt. He was barely aware of the giggling crowd of women who surrounded him, danced with him, pulled him into their group.

He had another shot in his hand when John approached him and clamped down on his wrist. "You don't want to do that, man. Why don't you just go home? Frank is here; he can take your post for the rest of the night."

Justin wrenched out of John's grasp and tequila sloshed out of the shot glass. "I'm done with 'em, John. Women? Fuck 'em."

"I know." His friend led him toward the storage room. "You sit tight in here. I'll call a cab."

Justin sat heavily on the cold tile next to boxes of liquor. "They're all liars."

"Not all of them," his friend said as he walked back into the pub.

While Justin waited for the cab, he thought over what had just transpired back at the bar. His heart sunk further.

# Chapter Eleven

Marissa clasped the necklace around her neck and adjusted her cashmere sweater. She wanted to look her best. She'd been keeping to herself for the last day or so, thinking things over. Okay, so she'd made a huge mistake using magic. What an idiot! She was so used to having men under her spell, knowing they'd lose all memory of her by morning. It had been an automatic reaction. A very stupid reaction. Although she hadn't told him she was a witch, her actions might have compromised her chances at winning the bet.

The idea of losing Justin forever chilled her to the core. She had to find him and give him some logical explanation that would stick to salvage her end of the bargain. Give him something to latch onto that made sense, and he would forget about what he'd seen last night. They could chalk it up to too much wine and be done with it.

Mink rubbed against her leg.

Marissa picked up her cat and held her close. "You aren't afraid of my powers, are you honey?" She kissed Mink on top of her furry little head.

She headed out the door a mass of nerves. Only a few more days remained before the bet was over. She couldn't screw this up now, not when she was so close.

\* \* \* \* \*

"What do you mean, he's not working tonight?" Marissa stood right

inside the pub's entrance, hands on her hips. John shrugged. He hadn't looked pleased to see her when she walked through the entrance. "Do you know where I can find him?" Her stomach dropped at the thought that Demetria might have found out about her magic display last night.

John scratched the back of his neck, his discomfort obvious. "He went out of town." A couple walked in the door. He stamped their hands after they showed him their IDs. "Look, I'm kinda busy here. Justin's back-up didn't show, so I've got to work the door by myself tonight."

Marissa persisted, blocking people from coming into the pub.

"Where did he go?" So perhaps Demetria didn't find out about last night.

The bet was still on.

John chewed on his lower lip.

"Please," she said. "I have to explain something to him. I want to tell him in person. It's very important."

"Look, I'll tell you right now, he doesn't want to see you."

God, she really had scared him the other night. "John, please . . . . "

The clamoring of the small crowd that had gathered behind her must have gotten to him. He took a napkin and wrote something on the back of it. "He went up to Clear Lake. Here's where he likes to camp." He handed it to her. "Fuck, he's going to kill me for this."

She kissed John on the cheek, her spirits lifted. "Thanks, John. You won't regret it."

"I doubt that very much." He waved the crowd toward him and began rapidly checking IDs and stamping hands.

Marissa pushed through the throng of people and back out into the night. Clear Lake was quite a distance away. Typically, she would have transported herself there with a snap of her fingers, but she couldn't risk Justin finding out she was a witch, or it would all be over. No, she needed to do this the right way. It was a four hour drive to Clear Lake from Santa Cruz. Better to wait until morning, drive up, beg him to listen, and lay her heart out there. Whether or not he chose to stomp on it would be up to him once he heard her out. It was the best she could do. Time was running out.

# **Chapter Twelve**

The fire crackled as Justin cooked his eggs. It'd been a long time since he'd gone fishing up at the lake. The bass were really biting this time of year, and he couldn't wait to get out on the boat he'd rented yesterday. It wasn't a big one, but it was enough for a one-man fishing trip. He had his lures and rods in the back of his truck, and a cooler full of beer, water, and ham sandwiches.

This is what his life should be like. Having a job that paid the bills, hanging out with the two or three guy friends he had, and absolutely no women. Ever. They screwed up everything.

His coffeepot boiled over. He swore and dropped the pan of eggs onto the grill. Using the edge of his plaid shirt, he gripped the metal handle of the camp coffeepot and poured himself a cup. Then, he finished cooking his eggs.

Yeah, this was the life.

He ate his breakfast in four or five bites, finished up his coffee, and packed up his boat. Jana had always hated fishing. She found it boring. Would Marissa enjoy an afternoon on the lake with him? He shook his head, banishing the thought. No more Marissa. No more women. Ever.

When he started the motor and sped off across the lake he took in the early morning mists rising off the lake's surface and the way the sunrise hit the Klamath Mountains in the distance. The conditions were perfect for a good day of fishing, but for some reason his eagerness to get out the lake had waned.

#### Kris Eton

Last night, alone in the tent, he'd had several hours to contemplate life without Marissa by his side. Life without any woman, for that matter. His pain at Marissa's betrayal eventually subsided into sorrow and regret. She'd reached out to him that night in his apartment, and he showed her his fear. It wasn't an excuse for the way she treated him the next night, but at least it was a reason he could grab onto.

All this relationship shit was too much work. It exhausted him. Better to drink a beer and try out the new lures he'd bought.

He guided his boat to a part of the lake known for waterlogged timber and rocks, which made for good hiding places for the elusive bass he sought. He cocked back his arm and sent his lure sailing over a rock and into a patch of calm water between two half-sunken timbers.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Excuse me, sir." Marissa waved her arms at a man backing his boat into Clear Lake. "Can you help me?"

The older man set the brake on his truck and rolled his window down the rest of the way. "What's the problem, young lady?"

"I just missed a friend." She pointed out at the small metal boat speeding away. "Can you tell me where I might be able to rent a boat?"

"Over yonder." The man nodded down the road. "The State Park rents 'em by the hour."

Marissa smiled. "Thanks!" She took off running down the gravel road. If she didn't act quickly, she'd lose Justin out on that big expanse of blue water. She'd thought for sure she'd gotten there early enough to track him down, but she'd found his campsite a few minutes too late. The campfire was still smoldering when she'd pulled up.

Oh, how she wished she could use her magic right now and whisk herself out to his boat. But there were too many people around, and

there was still the thought that she'd blow the bet or scare him with her magic. So she'd have to go the human route: rent a boat, follow him, and give him a believable explanation for her actions the other night.

A few minutes later, Marissa directed her blue-and-white swan paddleboat to follow Justin. It had been the only option at the rental place. Ridiculous looking, but it worked.

Justin was now little more than a silver blip on the horizon.

Her legs already burned. At this rate, she'd be pedaling all day to catch up with him. She pumped her legs, and water churned underneath her feet. For a moment she panicked. Only a few inches of hard plastic lay between her and the depths of Clear Lake.

"Get a grip, Marissa."

She pedaled harder and focused her attention on the beauty around her . . . the distant mountains, the pine trees that ringed the edges of the lake, the gentle lap-lap of the water against the sides of her sturdy little boat. She'd be caught up in no time.

### Chapter Thirteen

Justin hauled in his third bass of the day. The limit was ten, which meant he could stay out on the lake for the rest of the morning. His mind focused on one thing: fishing. It was good to be focused. Good to think only about his line, his lure, and the best place to put them in the water.

He looked up. The sun still rode low in the sky. Midday was several hours away and with the clouds drifting in from the mountains, the conditions were near perfect to catch a big one. He switched out lures, picked a spot near a particularly large, sunken tree limb, and . . . .

"Justin!"

The woman's shout shattered his concentration. He let loose of his

line, and it sailed too close to the limb, snagging on a branch which stuck out above the surface. "Shit." He glared across the blue-green water at the plastic monstrosity coming toward him.

"Justin, I need to talk to you."

"Marissa?" He curved a hand over his eyes, but all he could make out was a dark shape inside a blue-and-white plastic swan as big as a compact car. "Jesus, what in the hell . . . ?" How did she find him here? This was supposed to be his no-women weekend. As she approached, there was an instant heaviness in his groin. Godamn his cock for not remembering that.

The paddleboat kicked up foam and water. She attempted to steer the unwieldy vessel with the bicycle handles that served as a steering device, but ending up ramming the back of his boat. The water didn't quite muffle the sickening crunch. "John told me where you'd be, and I had to talk to you . . . . "

"Go back, Marissa. I don't know why you wasted your time finding me. Am I really so much better than Mr. Tank Top? There're plenty of guys back at the pub. You don't need me." He jerked on his fishing rod to dislodge the lure stuck in the branch.

"Mr. Tank Top? What are you talking about?" She gripped the edge of his boat to keep hers from drifting away. "I wanted to explain . . . ."

"You don't need to explain." He tugged harder. "I get it. I knew what you were before we ever got together. I knew it wouldn't last. It was my own fault."

"You knew what I was? What was that, exactly?" Her voice had gone from sweet and pleading to annoyed in a flash. She leaned out of her boat, gripping the slippery edge of his metal boat with one hand. A pretty brave stance for someone who couldn't swim.

A speedboat flew by just yards away. A huge wake rolled in their direction. Before he could put down his rod and reach out for her,

Marissa was flung off her paddleboat and into the murky lake. Justin dove in after her. In a matter of moments he'd wrapped one arm around her waist and tugged her above the surface. She sputtered, water exploding out of her mouth.

"Are you all right?" Justin treaded water, making sure he had a tight grip on her.

The minute her head was above water, she flailed and twisted. She gasped to catch her breath.

He held her fast, and he kicked back toward his boat. The paddleboat had drifted away. Too far for him to reach at this point. He helped her to the side of his boat, where she clung to it silently, her hair a tangled mess around her head. Holding onto the boat's edge calmed her. He scrambled back into it and reached over the side to help her in.

"Grab my hands, and I'm going to pull."

She nodded, her face pale.

He pulled as hard as he could, but the boat tipped precariously in her direction and he stopped. His vessel was too small for that kind of maneuvering. But he saw the fear in her eyes. The abject terror. She breathed shallowly, and her face was white. Regardless of the instability, he had to try once more. He moved his cooler to the opposite side of the boat, hoping for a more even weight distribution. On his knees this time, he grabbed her under her arms and pulled with all his strength.

He managed to get her up over the side, but the extra weight made the boat dip so low that it took on water quickly. Marissa scrambled out of his grasp, but the boat tilted wildly. Before he could tell her to sit still, the tiny watercraft flipped over and dumped them both back into the lake.

She flailed wildly. He swam with a sure stroke toward her and locked his arm around her. Once she realized she wasn't going to go under, she relaxed, but he could feel her shivering in his arms.

There was no way he could flip over his boat and hold onto her at the same time. "I'm going to get us over to that island." He kicked in the direction of a small piece of sand and trees about fifty yards away. As he paddled them toward shore, he looked back at the small metal boat, upside down with the cooler bobbing next to it.

Marissa went limp, her body drifting with his strokes, floating on the surface of the lake. Although it was difficult to swim with her extra weight, he managed to get them to the island in record time.

As soon as his feet hit bottom he let go of her. "You can stand now."

Marissa stood in the waist-high water. Her clothes clung to her like plastic wrap, tight and revealing. And although he'd sworn off women, especially *this* woman, his damned body couldn't help but react to the puckered nipples so obvious beneath the wet fabric, and the full curves of her breasts and hips. He turned away before he did something stupid.

"Thank you." Her voice was a bare peep over the sound of waves lapping the shoreline.

"I hope you've got cash on you because you owe me for the boat . . . ." The cooler floated past, its lid open. One soggy sandwich trailed behind. "And my lunch."

### Chapter Fourteen

Marissa waded out of the cold lake water. If she'd been alone, she could've saved herself with magic, but that was the one thing she had to avoid. His anger was palpable. He'd rescued her, sure, but he seemed to be anything but happy about it.

Anger.

That was an odd reaction.

She thought he would be fearful of her, not angry. Her mistaken

display of magic was what sent him running, right?

Water dripped from her jeans. The fabric clung to her, making it difficult to walk. Sand coated her bare feet. Somewhere in the lake she'd lost her shoes. To add insult to injury, the sun disappeared behind a thick band of clouds, and she shivered at the loss of heat.

Justin had grabbed the cooler and was using it as a bench, watching her. Even though she knew he was upset with her, when his gaze settled on her all she could think about was his naked body handcuffed to his bed, his penis erect under her ministrations. Her already hard nipples tightened further, two knobby points of desire.

"What did you mean back there?" Since he clearly didn't want to share his bench with her, she found a rock and perched on it. "You said that you 'knew what I was' when we met." She combed her wet hair with her fingers.

His gaze met hers. Dark and pained. "I knew you had other . . . men . . . in your life before me. Quite a few, in fact."

Her face heated. Never had she been more embarrassed about her behavior. But it had never mattered before. She'd never cared what anyone thought of her. But she did care what this human thought. This man. "I'm done with that part of my life. I told you that . . . I thought you understood."

"You didn't look so 'done' with that Thursday night." He scratched a brow and waited for her reply.

Thursday? She'd been miserable at home Thursday, thinking she'd ruined everything with him. "Okay, why don't you spit it out? I don't know what you're talking about. If you're accusing me of something, just tell me."

His gaze shifted to focus on the lake. "I saw you with another man at the pub on Thursday. He kissed you. You left with him."

Confusion flooded her brain. "What?"

#### Kris Eton

His brow furrowed. "Are you telling me you don't remember that?" "I was home on Thursday night . . . ." But her mind explored the

possibilities. "Are you sure it was me?"

He gave a dark laugh. "Oh, yes, it was you. The tight red dress, the long dark hair, the smile . . . ." His gaze flickered over her.

"Did you talk to me? Look me in the eye?" Her theory was growing more solid by the second. He seemed so sure, and she'd heard rumors of a certain witch with a certain magical cream.

He picked up a rock and chucked it into the water. "You were a little too busy to talk with me." The disgust in his voice chilled her.

"She cheated."

"What?"

When the idea came to her, a weight lifted off her chest. She didn't have to live up to the terms of her bet if Demetria cheated. It wasn't too late to come clean and still keep Justin. "That wasn't me, Justin, I swear to you."

He tossed another rock. "Uh-huh. Right."

She crossed the sandy divide between them and knelt down. "You need to listen to me. That night in your apartment . . . when I uncuffed you . . . ."

He stared down at her, the fear returning to his eyes.

"Please." She clasped his hand in hers. "Hear me out. I've never shared this with anyone." She took a breath. "I'm a witch."

He blew air out of his nose and quirked a smile. "Yeah, right."

"You saw it that night—the sparks, the handcuffs coming unlocked, and then when I disappeared. In your heart, you know it's true."

Slowly, he shook his head and pulled out of her hold. "No."

"The reason you'd seen me with those men was because of a spell my mother cursed me with many years ago. When I was too small to make up my own mind. I have a magical kiss . . . . "

"You've got to be joking." Justin got up from the cooler and backed away from her. "This is how you explain everything? You're a witch? And you have a magic kiss. God, you're just as bad as Jana. No, you're worse."

Marissa cringed at the comparison.

"At least Jana never hesitated to admit she'd cheated on me when I caught her in the act."

"Justin. I swear to you this is the truth. I'm a witch; I made a bet with another witch that I could make a man fall in love with me, without using my kiss. And I chose you, Justin. I chose you."

He kept shaking his head.

"I couldn't tell you any of this, or I'd lose the bet. I'd lose you forever. Don't you see? Demetria cheated. She was the one you saw at the bar, not me. Think about it."

"I did think about it. I saw you. It was you."

"Did you look her in the eyes? Just tell me if you did that much."

"I didn't want to. Jesus, Marissa, why did you do it? Am I not good enough for you? Did I not satisfy you?"

Tears pricked her eyes. Demetria had shattered what little trust they'd built between them. Ruined everything. "All I ever wanted was you." She shivered. The wind had picked up, and the sun was still behind the clouds. Her wet clothes and hair clung to her. "I'll prove it to you."

He stopped throwing rocks and faced her. "How are you going to —?"

Marissa flicked her fingers at a pile of dry driftwood along the shoreline. Sparks exploded around the wood, and the whole pile rose into the air. Another flick, and the wood organized itself in a neat stack. She swirled her finger around in the air, aimed, and flung a red, sparkling

flame into the dry material. A fire blazed up instantly.

They both sneezed.

"Dammit, I hate that." She rubbed at her ticklish nose and stepped up to the fire. "See? I'm a witch." The little bit of heat coming from the fire didn't help to warm her much, but it was better than nothing. "And I swear to you that was Demetria. She doesn't have my magical kiss, so there was no way she had control of the man you saw her with. Did he follow her right out the door?"

Justin seemed too stunned to speak. He stared at the fire and stepped up next to her. "You did that, right? I just saw you make the wood fly though the air . . . and your finger with the fire . . . . Hot damn, you *are* a witch." He grabbed her by the arms and turned her toward him. "Is that why you haven't kissed me? Is that why they don't remember you afterward?" His hands on her body warmed her. His touch was like lightning on her skin. He must've felt it, too, because he quickly let her go.

She nodded. A strand of drying hair blew across her face. He reached out and brushed it away.

"You know that wasn't me in the bar. Deep down, you know it."

His hand trailed from her hair to her cheek. "I want to believe it,

Marissa." Her lips trembled, and he brushed his thumb across them.

"Then believe," she said. "I want to be with you, and no one else. I love you, Justin. Don't you see I'd give everything up for you?"

His face softened, and his eyes grew warm. He scanned her face, as if searching for something. He cupped her chin and drew her toward him. "I really want to kiss you right now." His mouth hovered above hers, his breath hot on her cheek.

"I know," she whispered. The warmth of his body radiated toward her. Her hips moved forward. He snaked an arm around her waist and pulled her up against him. "But there are better things than kissing." She rubbed a hand across the bulge in his pants.

He groaned. "God, Marissa, I wish we were back at my place." Burying his face in her hair, he moved his hand to cup her ass and press her against his erection. "I'd fuck you so hard."

"Why do we have to wait?" She unzipped his pants, the wet material making it difficult.

"It's broad daylight, for one." He grunted when she touched the ridge of his penis through his boxers. "And I don't have any protection." A speedboat zoomed past, reminding them both of how exposed they were.

"You forgot; I'm a witch." She snapped her fingers, and dozens of condoms rained down on them in a shower of sparks.

He raised an eyebrow. "Well, that comes in handy."

She smiled at him. "Yes, it does." She ran her knuckles over his erection. He shuddered and dug his fingers into her hips. "We can take care of the other problem, too." She snapped her fingers again, and a tall canopy tent surrounded them. A pile of soft blankets and pillows covered the beach under their feet.

His mouth curved in a sideways smile, which deepened his dimples. "So, if you can make things appear, can you make them disappear as well?"

She frowned. "Such as?"

He tugged at her wet jeans.

"Ah." She laughed. "As a matter of fact . . . ." She snapped her fingers again, and both of them were naked. His cock pressed against her stomach.

"Perfect." He palmed her tits, shaping and reshaping them, rubbing his thumbs over her hardening nipples. He leaned down and sucked one into his mouth, nibbling at the tender flesh.

A flood of heat swept through her. Without much thought, she

threaded her fingers through his hair and pushed him harder against her breast. He massaged it gently as he worked on the nipple. This time, she wanted him to explore her without any orders. She gladly gave over control to Justin without any worries or fears. While he sucked her tit, he touched her between the legs. Two fingers parting her labia, stroking the wet flesh he found there.

She spread her legs apart to give him more access, and the waves of sensation across her pussy kept her quiet. He found her moist center, and dipped a finger inside. The touch made her jump. Intense pleasure rocketed through her. The rough penetration took her higher and higher. He switched his attention to her other breast, this time sucking harder, taking the whole areola in his mouth.

She moved her hands to his shoulders. She was losing stability as her legs spread even wider.

Without warning, he stopped everything, spun her around, and urged her to her knees. "Get on your hands and knees for me, Marissa."

She'd never taken orders from a man before. All along, she'd thought she liked to be the one in charge. The one who controlled everything. But she'd never really had the chance to experiment since her sex partners had all been under a spell.

But there on the pile of soft blankets, the idea of Justin fucking her from behind made her blood run hot. She did as he ordered, leaning forward on her forearms to give him better access.

"That's it, baby." He knelt behind her and rubbed a hand across her ass. "God, you are so beautiful like that. Your pussy is so juicy and sweet, Marissa." His hard cock rubbed across her exposed labia.

A jolt of desire made her moan. "God, I need you inside me, Justin."

The sound of a tearing condom wrapper let her know release was coming soon. Moisture seeped out of her in anticipation of sex.

"I love looking at you this way." He spread her labia with his fingers. Cool air hit sensitized flesh. "Should I fuck you here?" His finger penetrated her.

She curved her back at the invasion and moaned. "Yes. Please."

He added a second finger to her wet hole and stroked slowly. "Is this what you want, Marissa?" He leaned over her and whispered in her ear as he continued the assault on her cunt.

Each stroke of his fingers took her higher. "I want your cock in me, Justin. Please."

He grabbed her hair and pulled her head back. "Get ready, Marissa. I'm going to fuck you so hard." In a flash he'd wrapped his other arm around her waist and plunged his dick into her.

The quick penetration caught her off guard, and she cried out as he filled her. Hard. Deep. Her buttocks pushed back against him as he fucked her. The slap of flesh against her ass and the wet sucking sounds of sex filled the tiny tent. She spread her knees as far as she could, drawing him deeper inside.

He tugged on her hair, and the pain in her scalp took her higher. She liked it. Loved it. The savage thrusts drew more wetness out of her. Her breasts ached, her clit swelled. Her vaginal muscles clenched around him, building toward orgasm. The tightness only caused him to fuck her harder.

"Jesus, Marissa." His arm tightened around her waist. "God, I'm going to come."

She thrust back against him as hard as she could, wanting him to be deep inside her when he ejaculated.

He cried out, let go of her hair, and grabbed onto her breast instead. Squeezed the soft flesh. He stuffed his dick inside her one last time and climaxed. His body collapsed on top of her, and he stroked her breast. "Thank you."

He rolled off her and lay face up on the blankets. Marissa hadn't reached her own peak. Still on hands and knees, she reached between her legs and rubbed at her clit. She was so close and only a few strokes should push her over the edge. She circled her finger around and around the wet nub of flesh.

Justin, watching her, reached out to massage her breast and thumb her nipple. "Come on, baby. That's it."

But Marissa needed something more. She stopped touching herself, snapped her fingers, and a dildo fell onto the blankets in an explosion of sparks.

Panting, she looked over at Justin. Their gazes met. He quirked a brow, and without saying a word, he picked up the dildo and slipped it into her wet opening.

"Oh, God!" The hard, thick dildo violated her cunt.

"You are beautiful, Marissa," Justin said, taking care to slide the dildo all the way inside of her. "I especially love this pussy of yours."

"Faster, Justin, faster." She massaged her clitoris again, and she could feel the orgasm coming. The sure, quick strokes of the dildo plus the whispers of encouragement from Justin took her over the edge. A hot rush of release ran through her. Justin thrust the dildo to milk more out of her. A second orgasm followed quickly behind the first, stealing her breath. A deeper one. More satisfying. She grunted, pulled her fingers away from her overly sensitized flesh, and fisted the blankets in her hands as the orgasm rippled through her.

When she was finished, Justin pulled her to him, his arm tight and possessive around her waist. As they drifted off to sleep, he whispered in her ear, "I love you, Marissa Glenn the Witch. I love you."

# Chapter Fifteen

Hours later, Marissa awoke in Justin's arms, the canopy of the tent protecting them from the cold wind that had picked up outside. She smiled. Things would be so much easier now. He knew about her powers, but wasn't afraid. He trusted her.

"Now what?" a sleepy Justin said, his eyes still closed.

She brushed his hair back and traced a finger from his forehead, down his nose, to his lips. "I want to kiss you."

His eyes flew open. "But the magic—"

She pressed her finger to his mouth. "Shh, it's okay. Demetria broke the bet when she disguised herself as me. She cheated. The bet's off."

"Are you sure?"

"Demetria had already broken the rules before I came out here to find you." But as her thoughts took her farther down this line of thinking, she realized something. Something awful. "Which means I win . . . and I keep this stupid kissing curse." She sat up, the blanket covering them both slipped away from her body.

Justin raised a lazy hand to her breast and coaxed her nipple into a tight bud. He flipped onto his side to put his full focus on her nakedness. "I love touching you like this."

She looked down at him as he worshipped her breast. His fingers were light on her sensitized flesh. She wanted him again. Right now. "Justin, we can't." She groaned and rolled out of the bed of blankets.

Justin fell back onto the pillows. "Why not?"

"I want to be done with this. I want to be able to kiss you and not worry about putting you under some spell. If we're going to be together, don't you want that, too?" She conjured up dry clothes for both of them. Sparks flew. They both sneezed.

"See? Sometimes it must be pretty nice to have all that magic at your fingertips." Justin crawled up behind her and snatched up the pair

of jeans she'd created from thin air. "Although I kinda wish you'd stay just like this." He pinched one naked ass cheek and then slapped her playfully.

"Justin!" She giggled and turned away from him, backing to the far side of the tent, using the clean clothes as a shield.

He dropped the pants and chased after her. Marissa admired his long, lean shanks, bunched muscles beneath tanned skin, and his semi-erect penis. She could hardly believe he was hers. He told her he loved her! Those very words had come out of his mouth. She hadn't imagined it. She hadn't forced him to say it with magic. He'd willingly confessed his love for her.

When he caught up to her against the heavy canvas of the tent, she stopped breathing for a moment. There was a look in his eye. Something she'd never seen in the eyes of any of her one-night lovers. Something tender, something warm. Words caught in her throat. Her mind stopped working. She could only think of one thing: Justin.

His arms snaked around her and pulled her close. Their naked bodies slid against each other, the tender, swollen tips of her nipples raking across his chest. His full erection prodded against her stomach. And his mouth. That beautiful sexy mouth. How much she wanted to kiss him then. Taste him. Shape her lips to his and explore the warm moist depths inside.

"Don't ever leave me, Marissa." The warmth in his eyes was also tinged with worry and hurt.

"Never." She hugged him close and laid her head on his shoulder.
"I'd never hurt you like that, Justin."

And even though the words had not been spoken, she could feel his body shudder underneath her hands. A last release of the pain another woman had caused months ago. A giving in to the emptiness he'd felt inside. "I know," he whispered into her hair. "I know."

\* \* \* \* \*

With her magic, she righted Justin's boat, which was drifting a dozen yards offshore. The paddleboat was nowhere to be seen. Guess she wasn't getting her deposit back. They'd resisted the urge to jump back into bed together and had swiftly dressed. Marissa made their love tent and all its trappings disappear just as easily as she'd made it all appear.

She had a plan, of sorts. First, she'd need to confront Demetria about the bet. Justin was hers, but so was the damned kiss curse. But Justin was the more important part. She wanted to make sure Demetria admitted to the loss. She didn't want any loose ends to worry about. And then she'd have to go about finding her mother. Astrid had mentioned a cure to Marissa's problems. A family spell. If only she'd known about it before she set up the bet with Demetria. But now that she'd won, it was just a matter of getting contacting her mother and asking for her help—if she was still willing.

"So how do you get in touch with this Demetria?" Justin adjusted the rudder to guide them toward the boat ramp at the far end of the lake.

"The bet requires her to appear at my place."

"Requires her?"

"Trust me. She can't avoid the consequences of the bet. I don't know why she risked cheating when she knew what would happen. Maybe she thought we'd never talk, and I'd never find out the truth?"

"She must really want your power."

"I guess." Marissa shrugged. "But if she knew what it was really like, she'd change her mind." She looked out over the shining surface of Clear Lake. The clouds had drifted east, and the sun shone brightly once more, though it rode much lower in the sky than when she'd first arrived.

"Don't worry. We'll be back in Santa Cruz soon." He'd read her

mind. The worry must be written all over her face.

She wouldn't feel relief until she knew for sure the magical kiss was gone.

\* \* \* \* \*

Her house was quiet. Too quiet.

Mink meowed and appeared out of the shadows.

"Demetria was here," Marissa said.

"The cat told you that?"

She glanced over her shoulder at him, her lips quirked in a smile. "Um, no, the parchment on the coffee table told me that." She pointed at the sealed and rolled parchment in the other room. The same paper she and Demetria had signed in blood. "She acknowledged my win."

She picked up the parchment, broke the seal, and unrolled it. "I just need to burn it, and the terms of the bet will be ended." She flung a shot of sparks into her fireplace, and a fire roared to life.

Justin was close behind her. "I still can't get used to that."

"You will." She tossed the parchment into the fire and watched it burn. No one could take Justin away from her now. That part of the bet was over.

Justin settled an arm around her shoulders and squeezed. "Now we just need to find your mother."

He made it sound so easy. Her mother had been able to find her because she'd kept the same address for years. She wasn't the type of witch who liked to roam. Her home was comfortable, she liked Santa Cruz, and once she'd befriended Justin she really had no desire to move. But her mother was a will-o-the-wisp. Here one day, gone the next. Marissa's childhood had been a succession of moves from one end of the world to the other.

"It might not be that simple." She sighed and sat down on the edge of the raised hearth.

Justin joined her there. "I thought you said she had a cure. A spell in some book that would work." He caressed her hand, sending chills up her arm.

"She does, but I don't know how to find her."

Mink jumped up into her lap and meowed.

"Later, little kitty. I'll feed you later." She gently pushed Mink off her lap, but the cat leapt right back. "What?" Marissa made eye contact with the feline. Mink meowed again, jumped to the floor, and trotted into the laundry room off the kitchen. Marissa stood.

"What's up with your cat?" Justin asked.

"I'm not sure." She entered the kitchen. "Mink? Where are you, honey?"

The cat scampered out of the laundry room and dropped a bracelet at her feet.

"My mother's bracelet! I forgot she dropped it when she was here."

Justin joined her in the kitchen. "Is that good?"

She whirled around and faced him, clutching the bracelet in her hand. "That's very good. I can use a personal object to make her appear." Without hesitating, she closed her eyes and chanted. Golden sparks erupted from her hand, filling the kitchen with their bright light.

Justin stepped back.

There was a poof of smoke.

"Dang it, Marissa! What do you think you are doing?" Astrid stood in the middle of the kitchen dressed in only a bathrobe. "I was busy." Her gaze lit upon the bit of jewelry in Marissa's hand. "Ah, my bracelet. I'm glad you found it." She snatched at it, but Marissa closed her fist and tucked her arm behind her back.

"Not so fast, mother. Before I give this back, I need something from

you."

"Is this the man?" Astrid peered over Marissa's shoulder at Justin standing behind her. "Yes, he's a fine one. I can see why you had to have him."

"Mother!"

"It's okay," Justin said, stepping between Marissa and her mother.

"She can say whatever she wants, as long as she helps you."

Marissa could feel the tension in Justin. He was trying to protect her, and the knowledge warmed her heart.

Astrid smiled. "Yes, I can definitely see what you liked about him, my dear. If I were twenty years younger . . . ." She reached out to touch his chest.

"Mother . . . ."

Justin narrowed his eyes at Astrid.

"Fine, fine. I'll help you. Better to rid you of the kiss than have you try to bet it away again." She flicked her fingers and the family spell book appeared. "Honestly, Marissa, all you had to do was ask." The pages flipped so quickly, they created their own wind.

"Just do it," Justin said.

Marissa snaked an arm around his chest and pulled him back toward her. His heart beat rapidly under her palm. Although he acted brave, the beating of his heart told her adrenaline was pumping through him. "Step back. She'll need some room."

"Ah, yes, here it is. The removal spell. Never thought I'd have to use this." She let the book float at chest level and gestured at Marissa. "Come here. It'll only take a minute. But I don't want your loverboy to get in the way. That could pose some problems."

Justin grabbed her hand, unwilling to move.

Marissa leaned forward and whispered in his ear. "It's okay. I'll be all right. She's my mother."

Only then did he let go and step aside to let her join Astrid in the center of the kitchen.

Astrid placed a hand on Marissa's mouth, chanted some words out of the spell book, and a surge of bright green light transferred from her hand to Marissa's mouth. It was over in a matter of seconds.

"There," Astrid said. "I hope you're happy. I don't think I'll be sharing this book with you anytime soon." Astrid made the book snap shut and disappear in a shower of sparks.

Justin and Marissa sneezed.

"I don't want it, mother." She joined Justin at the far end of the kitchen. He immediately circled an arm around her waist and drew her close. "I might be a witch, but I want to live life my way. You keep your spells." She tossed her mother her bracelet. "I don't need them."

Her mother caught the bit of jewelry and snorted. "We'll see about that." She snapped her fingers and instantly disappeared.

Marissa and Justin were quiet for a moment, the reality of what just happened settling in.

"So," Justin said. "Should we try it out?"

Marissa could feel the hard heat of his erection against her back. "By all means . . . ." A thrill ran through her. She was no longer cursed. The kiss was gone. Forever. She turned in his arms. His gaze burned into hers. She moved a little closer, stood on her tiptoes to line her mouth up with his.

His lips were soft—softer than she expected. Instead of the zap of her powers flooding into her victim, she sensed only warmth in her center that radiated outward. She opened her mouth to the tender penetration of his tongue.

Justin caressed her buttocks and thrust his hips down and forward. His erection seated between the V of her legs. Hard, hot cock against soft, moist pussy.

### Kris Eton

She moaned into his mouth, drawing his tongue in deeper. She grabbed at the back of his neck, holding him there, so she could kiss him deeper, longer, wetter.

Now *this* was a kiss. The kind of kiss she'd dreamed about. Her dominant side took over. She pushed him against the refrigerator, her unusual witch strength aiding in her goal to control.

Justin smiled against her mouth. She kissed him lightly and bit his bottom lip.

He liked it when she played rough with him.

She pushed his hands away from her ass, grabbed him by the hips, and ground her body into his. Kissing was just the beginning. She didn't want to stop there. She wanted all of him. Now.

A flick of her hand, and Justin was naked. He gasped. She ran her hands over his well-sculpted chest and down to his hips.

"You. Now you." He groaned. She was still fully dressed.

She flicked her fingers again, and his hand were tied behind his back. She smiled. "Now it's my turn." In a shower of sparks, her clothes fell away.

His eyes smoldered. "You're not playing fair."

"I'm not?" She fisted his cock.

"God." He closed his eyes and tipped his head back.

She tugged at his rock-hard penis. It grew bigger in her hand. "But you like this, don't you? You like the way I touch your cock?"

He opened his eyes. A fevered heat filled his gaze. "Yes."

She flicked her fingers again, and she was suddenly seated on a stool. She spread her legs and tucked her knees so that she gripped the seat. The stool brought her pussy in line with his erect penis.

"Do you like my pussy, Justin?" She spread her labia with one hand, exposing her wet, pink center to his gaze.

"God, Marissa, yes, I do." He licked his lips, his gaze focused on

her cunt.

"Do you want to touch me like this?" She trailed a finger from clit to slit. She paused there a moment then slipped a finger inside. "God, that feels good, Justin. I'm so wet for you. Mmm." She slid her finger in and out of her cunt, all the while watching his reaction. "Your dick would feel so good in my pussy." She trailed a hand up her side and cupped a breast.

"Untie me, and I'll show you how good. I'll fuck that juicy pussy of yours 'til you scream." He nudged her leg with his knee. "And then I'll lick your clit so you come again. You taste so good, Marissa."

His words sent her higher. Cream seeped out of her. Her cunt burned with need. It wanted something bigger than a finger. She pinched her nipple and sighed. Her inner muscles clenched.

She took her finger out and pressed it to his lips. "Lick it clean. Taste my pussy, Justin."

He sucked her finger into his mouth, his soft tongue caressing and cleaning the cream from it. With her other hand, she flicked her fingers. The stool scooted forward. The tip of his penis aligned with her spread pussy. He leaned forward, and his cock entered her. Hot and hard. With her inner muscles she clenched him. He felt so good inside her.

She withdrew her finger from his mouth and set her hand on his shoulder, drawing him closer, his cock deeper.

"Untie me, Marissa." His hips thrust forward and he buried himself in her cunt.

She curled her legs around his waist, the stool barely supporting her. She seated herself further on his cock and then bucked her hips back and forth to help him penetrate her.

The stool fell. She clung to him with her thighs, her hands holding tight to his shoulders.

"Please, Marissa."

He was so hard and hot inside her. But she needed him to move. Now. She flicked her hand again, and the rope bindings fell away. Immediately, he grabbed her buttocks and pounded into her. His dick was like a battering ram. They fell against the counter. He pushed a stack of clean dishes aside. They crashed to the floor. But still he fucked her, deep intense strokes that coaxed an inner fire to life. Her clit pressed against the base of his penis, and as he pumped, the friction brought on an intense orgasm.

She screamed his name, surprised at the climax. He continued to fuck her, and a second orgasm sparked, rolling from within as his dick slid across the sensitive inner ridges of her pussy. When she peaked, he also groaned out his release, his seed spilling inside her.

"Jesus, Marissa." He pressed his face into her hair. "Jesus."

She clung to him, his penis still embedded in her. "I love you, Justin Heller."

He withdrew, scooped her in his arms, and carried her to the sofa in the living room. As he stood above her, his naked body glorious in the twilight, he leaned down and kissed her gently. Then he knelt beside her and touched her kiss-swollen lips with his fingers.

"I love you too, Marissa." He leaned down once more and gave her the sweetest of kisses, tender and slow without any demands.

The type of kiss she would enjoy again and again for many years to come.

### ~The End~

#### **About the Author**

Kris is a thirty-something mom with 2 kids who lives far, far away from civilization, which means she has plenty of quiet nights (and days) to write. She is a movie addict, can bake a mean muffin, and loves reading historical romance - though she'd never try to write one.

## Kiss and Spell

For four years, she worked hard to become published. GOING DOWN was her first real, live book. She's currently busy writing a few others. Kris likes writing contemporary, sexy stories, but she does have a few ideas for some paranormal books.

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