



Lyrical Magic
by
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Prologue

The screeching ripped across the eerie silence like a dagger through a worn, frayed fabric. Daffyd's head snapped up at the howls of pure terror, its anguish beating against his ears. The scream testified to pain; the kind that usually announced the end of fragile life. Not uncommon among humans of this violent time. But this time the sound swiftly filled him with fright unlike any he'd ever had before—even when Queen Maeve, proud and puffed up on her supposed power, stripped him of his magic and all that she believed to be Fae within him. He hadn't broken out in a cold sweat as he stood before the Fae queen, but he did so now. There was something all too familiar in the sound. He had never heard it in such a state before, but he knew the voice.

"Ceinwen! Ceinwen!" He screamed as he raced toward the thick oak door, propelled by pure unadulterated dread. *No, let her be all right.*

He knew deep inside, he *knew*, his lady love wouldn't be all right. For all her abilities and enchantments, Queen Maeve failed to reduce him to a mere mortal. After all, his father was Bran, the Blessed, and it would take more, far more than the cool, calculated hatred of the queen to banish his immortality or his powers entirely. Demi-gods didn't bend a knee to the Fae. He had crowed in his secret knowledge the coldly beautiful monarch could never best him.

Why hadn't he considered the bitch would strike his heart outside his chest? The eerie, frosty cackle of the queen came rushing forward in his mind, mixing with the horrible shrieks emanating from behind the door. He would be too late. Maeve would have her revenge. He flew up the stone staircase to his chambers, beating his hands against the heavy enchanted oak door. There was only one person in his castle that would dare try to keep him out of his own chamber. Not even Maeve could've prevented him from entering.

"Let me pass at once, Goda!" He bellowed, pleaded, screamed uncaring of who might hear. His heart slammed ruthlessly in his chest, his throat as dry as the dust upon the floor. "Please, she's, she's..." the words died on his tongue as he slumped to the floor. There was no sound coming from the room, no movement at all.

Goda's plump hands grabbed him, hauling him up despite his weak knees. The sorrow in her red-rimmed eyes when he dared to look up was too much. She shook her head slow, refusing to let him past. As indomitable a creature as she was, she looked old and tired, tears actually falling on to her plumb cheeks.

"Daffyd, no," she said in a tight voice. "Give the midwife time. Time. Childbirth is a difficult thing." She shot him a weak, withering smile. "You can do no good in there."

"No, something is wrong with her—with *them!*" he shouted, impatience and anxiety made him dance from side to side in attempts to pass Goda. He could shove her aside with the wave of his hand, but the woman had nursed and reared him when his parents were too busy crafting mischief for mortals.

"Relax, Daffyd," She cooed at him like she had when he was a child, stroking his arms, at this point wrestling him. "Ye are the son of a god and a fair Fae. Act like it." But the command was not as sharp as it should've been. There was no true censure. His dread increased, bubbling up like bile from his gut.

Tearing his eyes from the solid, unmoving oak door, he glanced down at her face, and saw her compressed, trembling lips and scarlet cheeks. Breaking through the heavy silence, a wail so wretched with anguish rose up against the air, and tore his very heart in two. Swiftly followed by a quiet so deafening, so great, it appeared to be far hungrier than the previous howl and at that

very moment, Daffyd's heart stopped beating for a full minute. He stared down at the woman who'd been his nurse. Her shoulders had slumped, her body losing all fight.

Goda stepped to the side. A breath slipped by and he bolted toward the door, shoving through it and falling into the crimson horror which had once been his bedroom, *their* bedroom, where their son had been conceived, where he made love to his Ceinwen over and over again until their love had created new life.

He saw it. Yet, he didn't really see *it*. He saw her, and him, and just as it all came crashing into meaning, into purpose and point, Daffyd sputtered, "No! No! C-C-Ceinwen..." His voice was a hoarse croak, unable to scream, to shout, or yell, the very words crumbled from his lips, spilling to the floor, spilling to the stained beautiful redwood floor, like his heart, like his beloved's blood splattered across the love, the love of his son, of his future, and of his grief.

Racing to her pale, placid body, he cradled her to his chest and tried to conjure her existence back from the world beyond this one. He lacked power and magic enough to undo this travesty, this gross miscarriage of justice. The rules governing such usages of magic didn't matter as much as her life, their lives. He cared only for his family as he attempted to summon every ounce of his supernatural strength to give them back the spark of life he knew was no longer there. He even tried to force his own life force into the prone broken bodies. But he knew even as he tried it was too late. In a wink of Fate and perhaps Fae mischief, he'd lost them both.

Aye, Daffyd, leave the humans for their kind, and embrace the beauty that is Fae. My daughter is one of such loveliness, many desire her hand. I offer it freely to you, Queen Maeve had said, voice streaked with pride as she sat amongst her court—his parents as guests. He'd rejected her offer as only a being wrapped in the bonds of true love could do.

The powerful queen could not—no, *would* not, allow such an offense to pass.

"Ceinwen," he whispered against her ear, one - which he'd kissed and licked a hundred times prior to this moment. He'd nibbled it and it fed his passion, but now, now only a slow dull ache ate up the spot where moments before his heart had been. "It is I, Daffyd, beloved. Speak."

"Sire, no words will mistress's lips speak again," the midwife whispered, her voice coarse against the tense air. "Forgive me. I—I...do not know—"

"My son?" He didn't look at her, he already knew. As hopeless as he was, he still asked. "What of my son?"

"I, I know not, sire," she said so soft, so doused in fear, the words dissipated before reaching his ear. Crumbling as they left her mouth, the young midwife slid backward into the shadows growing large in the corners, cast about by the fireplace. "Forgive me, sire, forgive me..."

The words fumbled over and over themselves as if trying to escape because she couldn't.

Daffyd anger ignited in the pool of tears. Cruel and cunning the fate of his family had not been left to chance for the Fae crafted their own faith with magic, malice, and malevolent thirst for conquering all. Ceinwen's once vibrant blue eyes gazed cloudy by death would never sparkle with laughter again. Soft sweet words of love would never leave those lips, soothing his very soul.

He gripped her arms and noted again their coolness despite the fierce fire. She would never again taste the sweet flavor of maple wood on the air, nor hear the lively concert of crackles, pops, and hisses of burning lumber.

Dead. Gone forever, never to be resurrected. Daffyd wiped his cheek, hardly noting the dampness glazing his finger tips. His gaze traveled from Ceinwen's face to that of the seeming sleeping babe. How sweet and innocent the child looked. At least the midwife had cleaned the child. There had been no real need to do it, but she had. Goda appeared at the door. Daffyd actually felt her movements more so than saw her. His eyes had been nailed to the graying child in the arms of his wife, and the wife whose unseeing eyes took in the ceiling. And he who held it all—held nothing at all.

He leaned down and allowed his lips to brush the still moist inky black curls of his son's tiny head.

He shall never lead a life, love a woman, or laugh at his mother's wicked humor. And I shall never recover from such a grave injury as this.

"Daffyd, Daffyd, you must leave them now," Goda said quietly. "Come, you must grieve."

A heartbeat ticked by and he blinked.

"Grief is a waste of time. If it's between grief and emptiness, give me emptiness," he said, voice growing cold—frigid like the iciness in his veins.

He looked away from Ceinwen and across to the woman who- had been more mother than his own. Goda plowed into the room, waved out the midwife, and put both hands on her chunky hips.

With lips trembling in angst and growing sadness, Goda took the blanket, stretched it over the baby and his beloved. She hummed an ancient tune of loss and mourning and memories with deep and dark regret. She spoke not to him, knowing as she did, that nothing could quell the ache inside him. Relinquishing his hold on the woman he's loved, he slowly got up from the bed and bowed down to the floor where he allowed fat, furious tears to fall freely. What a fool he'd been. He hadn't protected her, under-estimating the fury of the Queen of the Fae. He would pay for that for the rest of his days.

Four thousand years later....

New York, New York

Someone was in the apartment with her. She could feel his presence even though she couldn't see him. Oh he wasn't there in person, that would be too easy to explain, to get rid of, to fight against. Her phantom lover came to her every night, taunting and teasing until she thought she would go insane. There wasn't anyone she could tell about it, who would believe her? Besides, in her secret heart of hearts, she wasn't so sure she wanted it to end.

The first ghostly touch was to her face. A gentle caress of a sultry breeze. It may have had the substance of a lover's breath but she could feel his fingers trailing across her skin. Her head fell back as she allowed him full access to explore. The silky folds of her robe slowly opened, the hot gust of air across her puckered nipples was so soft at first. As always the specter's fingers tightened down on her skin, sending sharp pangs of pleasure shooting through her. The feel of her phantom lover's insistent mouth closed down on one nipple while the fingers kept the pressure on the other. The sensation was every bit as intense as a real mouth, only without the corresponding wetness.

What would his real mouth feel like suckling her breast so fervently? She would get the chance to know. She knew this as surely as she knew anything else. She would one day experience his actual hands sliding down her body, cupping her mons and pressing just right against her clit. One day her hands wouldn't grope empty air as his mouth reached her most sensitive spot. His body would block the cool air from wafting across her spread pussy as his tongue delved inside, over and over again until her body tightened painfully, locked in a release that seemed like it would never end.

Most of all, she would feel the gentle kiss against her forehead when it was over. Instead of unseen hands pulling the covers over her and tucking her in, she would feel the man sliding next to her and holding her close. One day....

Chapter One

Shiri scowled as she contemplated the bullshit her boss was handing her. This sucked! First of all, she was none too jazzed about the magazine's focus for next month. Blue-eyed soul? This rag had been founded to give minority musicians and singers something of their own. For five long years, everyone here had worked their collective asses off to turn this project onto a publication that rivaled *Rolling Stone*. They featured artist ignored by most mainstream publications in America. The focus was supposedly on everything from jazz to spoken word. The artists they covered were not only African-American, they were Japanese, Cuban, South American, hell even French. So-called blue eyed soul singers had plenty of exposure. Why the hell were they covering it?

Oh, she knew why this particular assignment had been handed to her; interviewing the Welsh sensation, Daffyd Priddy. His debut CD had smashed every record for recording known to man. His second one outsold the first. Now poised for his third release, Shiri was prepared to admit this was a major "get," he had never given an interview to anyone before. The man was a virtual recluse, recording from his home on the Welsh coast. He was rarely seen in public. She didn't believe for a second Travis was sending her overseas because her name happened to be the title of his upcoming CD. That would be corny beyond belief. Her name simply means "my song" in Hebrew, something anyone with a computer could come up with.

No, Travis was sending her away for a far different reason. A reason that only added fuel to her already burning temper.

"Look, Travis," Shiri tried to reason. "So Calisto sent me some, uh, weird stuff. So he calls and leaves bizarre messages. I am sure it is just..." He was just pure fucking bat shit crazy.

Hell not even she, the queen of bullshit could pull it off. As much as she wanted to rationalize it, she knew damn well the dude was not firing on all cylinders. Calisto, the Cuban rapper she had interviewed over the course of three days was seriously disturbed. Because she had a natural knack for drawing her interviewees out of their shell, this guy had taken it as genuine interest. Because she obviously wasn't into him, his so-called affections had turned into something dark and ugly. It started out with phone calls, about fifty a day. Now he was sending her dead roses and dead rats. The last little gift had been a heart shaped box of chocolate with worms and a beautifully intricate dagger nestled in the middle. At least he had taste.

"I want you safe, Shir." Travis leaned forward to look at her intently. "He may not know where you live now, but he will find out. Until we have something definite, the safest place for you is out of the country."

His sincerity was real, but ugly suspicion snaked up her spine. That was why they were doing this ridiculous issue. This wasn't about blue-eyes soul, this was all about her. A whole throw away issue all because she managed to catch the fascination of a psycho.

"You did all of this to protect me didn't you? The whole stupid blue-eyes soul issue."

Travis sprawled back in the black imitation leather chair that frankly was an affront to the huge oak desk. The man had no taste in décor, but he was a damn good editor-in-chief. She should have suspected something like this. It was beyond cheesy; Travis was hip, gifted with an uncanny knack for spotting future musical trends even if he couldn't decorate worth a shit. White guys singing soul was an age old tale. One she didn't really care to delve into.

"I am not saying that." Travis was hedging and none too convincingly. "This guy, there is something about his voice. It's like hypnotic or something. You have to listen to this new CD. Just give it a chance."

Shiri took the CD with a small frown marring her brow. "Alright I'll listen, and I'll go. I am going to kill the mini bar and charge all kinds of shit to my hotel room. Be forewarned."

The look on his face was not something she wanted to see. There was something he wasn't telling her. Travis was a handsome, deep chestnut-skinned man, with close cropped hair and eyes a warm milk chocolate. Suddenly his vibrant skin looked pallid, his dancing eyes flat. Travis was a rock, yet suddenly he was squirming like a kid in the principal's office. What the hell was going on here? What was he not telling her?

"Travis, I am so not taking any bullshit right now." Life had suddenly gotten complicated enough. "What the hell aren't you telling me?"

"He requested you specifically, Shir. He wasn't taking no for an answer." Travis looked everywhere but at her. This was so not going to be good. Shiri gripped the arms of her chair waiting for the hit. "I was going to send you to South Africa for the music festival. You always seem to get the major find in Africa. Then Daffyd contacted us, not through his people, but directly. No one can get near him, Shir!" His eyes turned back to her, pleading and desperate. Shiri felt herself go cold. "I knew there was no way I could get you to go without a hook. He wouldn't accept anyone else."

"Yeah, yeah, so you say."

What the hell was going on here? What had Travis done?

"You won't be staying at a hotel; you are flying to his castle, in Wales."

"Oh, hell no!"

Shiri jumped to her feet ready to do battle if she had to. What the Sam Hill was he thinking? She was not about to go off in the middle of nowhere with some strange dude who might or might not be insane. Hadn't that gotten her in enough shit with Calisto? From all accounts, the man rarely left that damn castle. Perched on a freaking cliff overlooking the Irish Sea, it was rumored the graves of his wife and infant son were the reason he never leaves. The whole thing sounded like some kind of "*Wuthering Heights*" nightmare. She hated that book, she'd be damned if she lived it.

"What the hell were you thinking? This isn't just about me is it? You are pimping me to get a fucking exclusive? You bastard!"

Travis looked crushed, truly crushed. His composure crumbled, his eyes welling with tears. Well, tough shit! She was not about to stay in some creepy castle with some dude who couldn't get over the death of his wife and kid. Yeah, it was tragic but she was no counselor. He needed a therapist not an interviewer. Isn't that what got her in this mess in the first place?

"Shir, please, it's not like that I swear!"

"Then what the fuck is it like, Travis? Tell me, why would you even think to agree to this shit?"

"Please, Shir, it's not like that. I would never send you back into a dangerous situation! Please, just, just..." His voice trailed off as if he was looking for a reason. "Just listen to the song."

"What song?"

"Shiri."

Well, shit. He *did* think the song was about her. This was insane. The entire world was going stark raving mad.

"I am outta here." The CD landed nice and neatly on her editor's desk without so much of a thump. Former editor.

She didn't jump to her feet this time. No, she was going to leave this office and the magazine she worked her ass off to help create with dignity and grace. She was better than this. She would move to L.A. Yep, plenty of work out there. Her name was golden. Yeah, she would have to wait until this crap with Calisto died down, but she could do that. She had a nice little nest egg she could live off of for a while. Maybe she would check out the South African music festival. She could work free lance for a hot minute and stay away from the crazy ass Cuban.

Just as she made it to the door the first lyrical stanza hit her.

*She haunts my days, she rules my nights. Shiri, with you my heart takes flight.
Skin as dark as night, eyes blue and bright. Shiri, let me make it alright.
Goddess beyond beautiful you are. I need you, you are my guiding star.*

Corny as hell, but his voice...He was beyond hypnotic. Despite her righteous anger, justified indignation, she felt the pull. She could see him in her mind's eye. Hair so black it had midnight blue highlights, the same color as her eyes, fall in locks down his back. Eyes a glacial gray pleading with full sensual lips waiting for her kiss. This song *was* about her. She had no idea how she could be so sure aside from the fact he seemed to know all about her most unusual feature- dark skin with bright blue eyes was not common among African-Americans. The song was haunting, beautiful despite the corniness of the lyrics. He called to her in a way she could not explain. Goddess help her, but she had to answer.

She felt an answering song welling from within her very soul. Her body suddenly felt too tight for her skin, too hot for the dregs of winter. Light headed, she returned to the chair, entranced in his song. Why had she never listened to him before? How was it she had bypassed his music like stepping over garbage? As the song drifted to a close, she opened her mouth to say the only thing she could say.

"I'll go."

Chapter Two

Across the ocean, just off the coast of Wales, splats of icy rain pelted stone castle walls, clattering like rocks across a smooth surface of glass. Daffyd paced before the weathered wood shuttered window. Shut tight against the fierce wind roaring in from the sea, the two windows in his bedroom suite kept the frigid frost from seeping in. Despite the chill skirting the outward gloom of the hearth, Daffyd found refuge in its icy glumness as he had since the ill fated night of his family's demise.

He paced before the enormous ornately decorated hearth. Haphazardly situated across the mantle and other flat surfaces in the room, scores of candles danced in time with snippets of air slipping between the aged rocks as if excited by this recent addition of scents already competing in the rather intimate space. The castle might have been fitted with electricity and other modern comforts, but he took comfort in the soft light of candles. He found their soft glow more soothing than the harshness of artificial light. Perhaps he simply had grown old-fashioned, preferring long, luxurious baths to hasty, quick showers among many other little quirks.

Above the mantle's marble top sat a large painting of Ceinwen. Long ago, when his grief swam ever present threatening to drown him, he had the painting created so he could gaze upon her countenance whenever he desired. An enchanted elf by the name of Leaf created the portrait from Daffyd's memories of Ceinwen, using the image from his mind with uncanny accuracy. The painting seemed to breathe. Ceinwen's cheeks glowed as if stained with the pink blush of life. They rose upward in a serene smile of love and fondness and a hint of heat. She had given him that look when ready to taste him and hold him in her arms.

On this chilly night, it was not the painting that kindled the carnal cravings threatening to overwhelm him. No, his eyes remained locked on the exquisite rugs thrown across the stony floor as visions of a far different woman danced in his head.

"She should be here soon." The dark, his constant companion and sole confidante for so long seemed to be waning. He was almost afraid of the glimpses of light into his life. "Soon is not quick enough. I can be patient. I can wait, yes?"

Silence, except for the crackle of the fire there was no reply. Well what had he expected? There was no one in his private chamber but his own musings. His body stiffened. Cock as solid as an ornament made of stone, he knew the waiting would become more torturous with each passing moment. He groaned, quiet but tangible—his need draping his shoulders like a heavy cloak weighed and pressed about him.

He stopped and rolled his shoulders, unlocking the tangle of taunt nerves bunched together there, coiled like a snake ready to pounce at the first sight of Shiri. He began to pace again, body anxious and so wired from his hunger for her. He was ravenous and impatient. To ward off the energy pooling in great quantities about his person, he increased his pacing to an invigorating clip. He'd run today, played games about the castle, and his fit body testified to his athleticism. None of it had lessened his lust for Shiri—which had been his initial thought.

She's beautiful; far beyond that nonsense these so-called modern men deemed beautiful. At one time, thinking this of another woman would've been unthinkable—dishonorable, but that was before, before...

His eyes shot open.

Ceinwen his mind filled in automatically.

The wind whipped about in a howl so furious, Daffyd got up and slowly made his way to the window. Unbolting it, he flung the wood shutters back and as the sea's cold scent wafted

around him, his eyes dropped down to the fog pooling at the onset of a small field of woods. Grand headstones announced the final resting places of his wife and son, but in the tense murkiness and gray fall of rain, Daffyd couldn't see them clearly. A sliver of moon appeared, and then vanished behind the rolling waves of murky clouds. It didn't really matter. He knew the locations by heart. With his eyes trained on the vicinity, he sighed.

Ceinwen, her golden hair and sun-brushed personality sentenced to silence by death was below with her feet toward the sea. Daffyd allowed his mind to return to the edges of sorrow that were encased around the memories of his Ceinwen. Wisps of sullenness infused his once happier existence. Now, when he cast his reflective glance back to that time of light, of joy, and bliss, these dim clouds skewed his vision of love, laughter, and life in elation.

Ah, Ceinwen, my love for you will always remain. And yet, this woman, Shiri, inspires a craving so fierce, so ravaging, I, I cannot help myself nor can I deny her. Forgive me, but I must have her.

Guilt ran through him, turning each section of his being to frost. Yet even that couldn't cool his need for Shiri. With swiftness, his guilt merged to anger which burned in his eyes. He clutched the window sill and leaned out, into the sharp daggers of the frigid wind. Sleet slammed into him, saturating his clothes, his skin and his hair but he barely felt it.

He'd spent many years in deep mourning. For so long he thought he would never feel again. He had certainly never thought to love again. He's lived encased in ice, merely existing despite pleas from his parents and his friends such as they were. The only time the frost fled from him occurred when he saw pictures of Shiri or read her work. Her words wound about his heart, binding to him before igniting every nerve in his body. What she brought out in him was something he'd ever experienced in his long existence. Desire seemed a pallid word to use; the thing that drove him to stroke his cock with a fury was something far more raw, more elemental.

With his arms thrown wide as if to fully embrace this notion, Daffyd laughed in the face of the raging storm. Maeve had certainly never intended for him to feel again. She thought she'd broken him. For a time, so had he. Even with the twinge of guilt forever lurking like a shadow in his mind, he felt on the edge of something momentous. Feeling far more at peace than perhaps was his right he bolted the window once more, feeling invigorated and a touch chilly. Removing his shirt, he held it up to the roaring fire he had ignited with a simple thought. Daffyd glanced up once more at the oil on canvas portrait of Ceinwen.

"I am sorry luv, but Shiri is surely my salvation."

He knew his words to be absolute truth whether the woman in question understood it initially or not. The seductive and sensual Shiri would arrive at Cardiff International Airport soon. He'd be there to see her, no other would do, no envoy or entourage necessary. His intimate intrigue for her, the need to taste her sweet skin, to hear her lyrical voice and to inhale her feminine scent would be the only companions they needed, aside from a driver of course. There was no way he could operate one of those modern nuances with her so close.

As that very thought scampered across his mind, he could stand it no longer. He had to see her. Now. He promised himself he wouldn't do this again, but he couldn't help himself. Turning toward the light of the fire, he lifted both hands, focusing on the air and the hidden dampness it contained. Conjuring all the minuet specks in the oxygen, he summoned the traces of magic he still retained for this sole purpose—to see Shiri.

The air above his upturned palms shimmered before solidifying into droplets. Once condensed, the liquid dropped into his palms with a *plop* and spun gently. The silver puddle swirled as Daffyd whispered, lovingly to it, the enchantment brushing the water's surface. The surface cleared in stages until Shiri came into sharp focus. In the midst of crossing her legs, Shiri glowed with the otherworldly beauty common to most Fae—and yet, he knew the gorgeous

human had no Fae in her bloodline. Seated on her bed, she rubbed her feet in slow, firm circles. Those gorgeous lips moved and he realized she was talking to someone.

And something burned and leapt awake inside him.

It had not occurred to him that she may be attached to someone. Such a thing seemed an abomination. He didn't recognize the fury that swept through him as jealousy, he just knew he would allow nothing to stand in the way of making her his.

Serious harm will come to any who will stand between us, Shiri. You belong to me. You may not be aware yet, but you will not be able to withstand the pull of destiny.

Daffyd's breath caught painfully and sharp at the very sight of her. Partially dressed, she managed to steal his breath and jerk his dick to a full blown painful hard on. He brushed his palms across his crotch knowing he may find release, but nothing but having her would ever relieve the ache. He snarled in frustration. Who in the seven hells was she talking to?

Unable and damn unwilling to carry his hunger alone, Daffyd threw the enchanted water into the air, where it glittered against the midnight blue dark. As they fell, each droplet smacked the room's landscape into smeared streaks, washing it away until he found himself in the brightly lit canary yellow and cream of Shiri's bedroom.

Still seated on the bed, Shiri stiffened. Her fuchsia lace bra's strap slid down her smooth, luscious shoulder. Nothing else moved. Daffyd's lips twitched at the sight. He breathed a sigh and Shiri shuddered as if the brush of air actually touched her skin. Slowly, the soft supple waves of her hair slid across her shoulder as she turned to peak behind her. Those bright blue orbs searched the area where he stood and Daffyd frowned.

Surely, she cannot see me.

No human should have been able to feel his presence. Shiri's eyes searched his general vicinity as if she knew, was certain, something or someone was there.

Perhaps she is simply lucky, or a human sensitive to the Otherworldly.

To test the theory, he drifted closer and she remained like a statue on the bed's edge. Her smooth foot with its brightly colored toes remained in her hands.

Once more, as if feeling his movement, Shiri leapt from the bed and spun to face him. Daffyd's musing stalled as his eyes focused on her twin chocolate teasers. Those breasts were the most delectable sight he'd ever laid his eyes on, and being immortal, his eyes had seen more than the average male. He licked his lips in anticipation. Beneath the purplish-pink lace, dark cinnamon nipples and deep cocoa areoles pressed against the thin material. The bra's lace cupped those globes and Daffyd scowled. To hell with the lace, his hands should clasp those magnificent cocoa tipped mangos. So succulent... he reached for them, brushing Shiri's puckered peaks.

Instinctively, Shiri sighed and at the same time swatted at his hands. Her well manicured fingertips gliding through him.

Daffyd shuddered.

She can feel me! Most strange this sensual spirit.

"I, I know you're here. Stop it and show yourself!" Her voice trembled a bit, but not from fear. Daffyd had heard panic or fear in a woman's voice too many times to mistake the sound. Shiri's voice lacked terror, but something close to fascination, curiosity. And arousal.

Her pretty face became strained and she tugged on a sheer satin robe which swirled about her knees in a whisper. It hugged her voluptuous form and robbed him of his breath again. His eyes could make out the contours of her crotch and ass. She continued to back away from Daffyd's spot beside her bed. The flaps of the gossamer-like fabric kept catching between her thighs as if they wanted to partake of her sex in the same anxious barely restrained manner as he did. She belted the robe as if she meant to bar him from touching her again.

Daffyd's own disappointment lessened as Shiri walked to the large walk-in closet. He glided around to her and reached for her again. Touching her had become a compulsion.

She shuddered again—a moan fleeing her lips. Clapping both hands over her mouth, she closed her eyes and said in the heated husk, “I must be jumpy as a cat on a hot tin roof.”

“No, no,” Daffyd cooed to her, though she could not hear him. “Do not be afraid of my touch. When we meet in your time, my hands will make you shudder but not from the coldness of distance. You’ll shriek in joy, pure ecstasy and when I am done, you will lay with me—forever.”

As he spoke these words, Shiri had untied the robe and allowed it to drop. It melted in a whisper, slipping over her shoulders, catching temporarily on her still stiff peaks before touching the carpeted floor in a hush.

“Shiri! Girl, come on!” came a female’s voice from outside the bedroom.

Damn the gods!

Closing his eyes, he kissed her neck and opened his eyes in time to watch her slump back against the closet’s door and shiver. He noticed her pressing her thighs together, smooth, delicious flesh quivering.

Yes, luv, feel the heat between us.

“Shiri! Damn girl, what the hell are you doing in there?” came the female’s voice again, closer this time to the entrance.

Daffyd balled his fist, knowing there was no hope for it. A soft *pop* and at once, the space of happiness melted into the gloomy shadows of his suite back in his castle. He managed to collapse the puddle of enchanted water in his palms, carefully willing it back in place. Sweating, he stumbled over to his lounge chair, collapsing into it—exhausted. With his heart beating against his chest as if attempting to leap from its confines, he released a breath in slow puffs. Using magic did that—drained him something fierce, but it had been worth it.

Finding the chaise lounge uncomfortable, he eased himself to the floor. He must save his strength. Lying back on the carpet, he breathed deeply of the woody scent filling the air. After several minutes, he leaned up on his elbows. He smirked into the scarlet-orange flames plowing through thick chunks of lumber. His little visit to Shiri taught him more than just a little about the woman that had so completely enthralled him. In his varied experiences, a mortal didn’t possess the kind of awareness she did no matter how sensitive they may be.

She is more than mortal.

Something in her spoke of a mystical quality, perhaps buried deep within her bloodlines. It intrigued him, to be sure. Everything about her did. Again he smiled. The inexplicable feeling of happiness buzzed across his flesh, making the light hairs stand in joyous applause.

“You will be quite the challenge. I do so enjoy puzzles.”

He closed his eyes and sighed at the thought of Shiri lying beside him, cooing words of love and devotion.

“I will just have to make that happen.”

Chapter Three

Shiri swallowed the restless anticipation as best she could. Why had she ever agreed to this? Daffyd Priddy. Her research had shown that Priddy was Welsh for bard. How apt. She supposed she should feel honored he had chosen her for his first exclusive interview. She did in a way, she supposed. But there was something more to this. She had known on some primal level that this trip would forever change her in some way she could not begin to understand.

It was that song, *Shiri*, that called to her. Something in the softly sung melody wove a spell around her, setting her skin aflame. She couldn't help but think the name of the song was much more than mere coincidence. He was calling to her. But why? What interest did he have in her? Moreover, he was watching her. He watched her dress, he watched her eat, he watched her shower. It was insane on a rational level, but she could *feel* him watching her. She felt every ghostly brush of his phantom fingers against her heated skin. Her nipples tightened to the point of pain as the cool air grazed her in her least guarded moments. She knew it was Daffyd, though she couldn't prove it, could never share the knowledge with a soul. They would think her insane.

Goddess help her, but she wanted so much more than ghostly caresses and words of adoration whispered on the wind. She needed to feel the heat of a hot mouth engulfing her nipples, she wanted a large, forceful hand between her thighs. The dream lover was driving her insane. She needed the flesh and blood man, pressing her down with the solid weight of his body. She needed the friction of skin against skin. Daffyd would give that to her.

"Snap out of it, Shiri," she muttered to herself, trying to relax against the plush leather seat of the private plane.

He had sent it for her, complete with assorted delicacies to tempt her tongue. There was a full staff of not one, not two, but three flight attendants to see to her comfort. There was a full bath and bedroom for the long flight. Shiri knew it would be useless to attempt to sleep. She was so close. She had tossed and turned for days, waiting to finally be there and meet this mysterious man face to face. His picture was not enough. His mysterious ghost walks as she had come to call them were hellish at best. He'd not only sent an itinerary, he also included a packet all about his castle and very little about himself. Included was an eight-by-ten color photograph. It was the oddest thing; first of all, it was strange to send her an itinerary-she was going to Wales not on a vacation, and secondly, what was up with the tiny blurb about himself?

Not that he had said that much, only his name, which she already knew, that he lived in a castle on the edge of a cliff. He had mentioned how tall he was, his weight, the color of his hair and eyes, his favorite foods, favorite pastimes. It reminded her somewhat of a personal ad. As weird as it might have been, she found it endearing. And that picture.

She pulled it out her briefcase to stare yet again at the glossy of the man who looked like he stepped off the pages of some kind of gothic romance. His hair was jet black, without a trace of light to be found anywhere. His eyebrow arched thick and strong over piercing light gray eyes. Maybe it was a trick of the light, but she swore those eyes glowed. On a whim, she had framed the picture, not wanting anything to mar the surface of the beautifully masculine man. She traced the outline of his lips. Lips that could be cruel or sensual. She shivered at the possibility of both.

Closing her eyes she welcomed the waking dream that had haunted her since she first heard the poignant song that bore her name. He came to her as she lay bare beneath the light of the Beltane moon. Although the wind whipped in a fury around her, she was not cold. She lay on the new grass, open, wet and ready. He circled her, walking with deliberate hesitation, his eyes never leaving her wanton body.

“Open for me.”

The command, deep and heavy with need and barely controlled passion had her spreading her thighs without demur. Placing her feet flat on the earth, she opened wide, showing him everything.

“Touch it.”

Her hands swept down her body, skimming over the rigid points of her nipples, down to her needy center. Her fingers brushed lightly over the lips of her pussy. She drew it out, knowing what he wanted. His soft words, lightly accented swept over her ears, rousing her desire unlike she'd ever felt before. His fierce gaze centered on her fingers, watching as she teased her clit, plunging two fingers deep inside only to draw out her precious dew, spreading it around her nubbin before repeating. Her breathing grew labored as the movement of her fingers increased. Lost was the finesse with which she had begun. She was frantic, needing to feel more. She kept her fingers plundering her canal, using the heel of her palm to press down on her clit.

“Anrhega 'i ata , cariad.”

With a strangled cry, Shiri wrenched open her eyes. As usual, her hand was firmly embedded between her legs. She felt the sticky residue of her come between her fingers. She really had to stop this, this incessant fantasizing about a man she didn't know. Attributing all kinds of things that simply were not possible for any man to do was perhaps folly, but she knew what had just happened had been shared. The masturbation in her waking sleep was never done alone, he had been with her.

Meeting him would put an end to this. Once she saw the reality, that he was just a man she would be able to stop this. It was always like that. In the end, they were all just men. Nothing special at all. So why was it she wanted so badly for this one to be something more? Why did her blood sing at the prospect of finally meeting, touching him in the flesh? Why, when she had given up on ever finding it did she expect this time to be magic?

Daffyd groaned as his hand gripped his throbbing shaft. Using the pearls of pre-cum, he smoothed it down his length, gripping and stroking once more. The waking dreams were getting worse. He could smell her essence as the vision of her spread before him battered his consciousness. Oh, yes, his Shiri was much more than human. He doubted she even realized it. He doubted she knew she was projecting, welcoming him into her fantasies. It was an invitation he gladly accepted.

In his mind's eye he could see her clearly, her bare mons open and ready for him. His mouth watered, wanting so badly to be where her fingers were. He wanted to taste her, he wanted to be inside her. Lying back against the cool sheets of his bed, his fist pumped faster, harder. Soon, soon he wouldn't have to resort to the comfort of his solitary hand, unless of course it was for her pleasure. Soon.

“Shiri!” He grunted, breathless, his release erupting in a fury splattering his hand.

“Daffyd, it's time!”

He grunted at Goda's shrill voice on the other side of the heavy oak door. Yes, it was time.

Eschewing his love of baths for a shower, he hurriedly prepared himself for the arrival of the woman he hoped would become his mate. He needed to meet the plane, to be the first person she saw. His hands shook as he tried to secure his hair in a simple band at the nape of his neck. Giving up after his third try he had to shake his head. He was as nervous as an untried youth. Not even with Ceinwen...

He waited for the sharp pain to pierce his breast at the thought of his deceased wife. Guilt descended heavy on his shoulders when no pain came. Was that it then? Had his heart

shrugged off the memory of the love he had given up damn near everything for? Had the woman that he defied the Fae queen for vanished like the mist blown out to sea?

“Ye cannot live in mourning forever, Daffyd.”

Goda approached on silent feet. Her weathered face was full of compassion with more than just a touch of reproach. She could have left him long ago. By all rights she should have. Many times he wondered why she didn't walk into the mists, vanishing to the Otherworld. She had stayed through centuries of his surly black moods, through his inability to go beyond the graveyard below. Gradually he had been able to live again, and she had been there. Caring for him, ensuring his creature comforts. She was ever the mother his own mother had never been.

“There is no shame in loving again, Daffyd.” She admonished him again, reaching up to brush invisible specks of lint from his shirt. “There is no shame in living.”

“Ceinwen can never love again. She never had the chance to live.”

It was a common retort, yet the usual heat was missing. What was the use of justifying his self-denial with Ceinwen's memory? It changed nothing. She was gone, dust beneath the earth. And he, he was alive. All these years he had merely existing, but now, he felt the breath of life deep in his lungs. His skin sparked with electricity. All because of one woman, so different from Ceinwen, and yet, he already yearned for her more than he had ever yearned for his dead wife.

What was this madness? Would the answers become clear upon meeting her?

“The plane arrives in twenty minutes,” Goda informed him, shaking him out of his musings.

“I will transport there,” he informed her. “Make sure the car meets us there immediately.”

There was no way he could sit encased in that steel thing. He would suffocate in there, trapped with his own thoughts. Willing himself outside, he felt his body lightening, his essence floating upward and out. The chill of the air blew through him, not quite cooling his fevered insubstantial body. She was so close, yet still so far away. All the thoughts and feelings about Ceinwen intermingling with the need for Shiri swirled in the wind until it began to drift away the closer he got to the airport. There was only thought that remained by the time he touched his feet to the ground. The plane was landing, taxiing to a stop. Soon the doors would open and she would emerge. Shiri.

He was there at the end of the gangplank as soon as the doors opened. Even if she had never seen a picture she would know who he was. Their eyes met and locked in unspoken communication. She grabbed the handrail, swaying at the impact of that gaze. He was even more gorgeous than his picture, all wild and dangerous. He wore all black, a stark contrast to the paleness of his skin. Though the wind roared around him he wore no coat, just black slacks and a black button down shirt, with the top few buttons undone. She licked her lips at the barest glimpse of his skin, almost certain she heard his answering moan.

Her feet moved of their own accord, taking her ever closer to the enigmatic man waiting for her. Her heart beat a rapid tattoo in her chest. She could turn around, refuse to go another step. She should run. She knew, knew as soon as she reached him, she would never be the same. Yet there was an irresistible magnetism, pulling her ever closer. She could no more turn around then she could stop breathing.

“Welcome, *'m enaid.*”

His voice was more devastating in person than played on a stereo. The resonant sing-songy texture washed over her, soothing her anxieties. She could drown in such a voice; it's dark, exquisite sound so mesmerizing. She swayed toward him slightly, her eyes closed, her mouth partially open before she caught herself. What the hell was thinking? Was really about to kiss a complete stranger because of his freaking voice?

“Um, hi. I’m Shiri Simone.”

She offered her hand, unsure. He stared at it, then returned his gaze to her face. She could have sworn she saw his eyes flash with an unearthly light for just a second. She had angered him. She had no idea how she knew, but she was positive that somehow she had offended him. Maybe Welsh people didn’t shake hands? Maybe he was some kind of weirdo that thought he was some kind of medieval throw back who didn’t shake hands with women.

She was about to withdraw her hand when he clasped it in his own. A breathless gasp escaped as she stared down at her small hand swallowed by his much larger one. A shot of pure, scalding electricity zapped her skin from where they connected all over her body. Her eyes flew to his face, witnessing the sardonic smirk as he pulled her closer, until her chest was pressed against him. Sweet merciful goddess, he towered over her. She had to tilt her head back to look at him.

How could such a harsh looking man look so beautiful?

“It is a pleasure to finally have you here, Shiri.”

Why did she get the feeling he meant so much more than the words implied?

Something sparked inside of her. Some ancient knowledge that had been buried deep in her psyche sprang free from the cage someone or something had forced it into. He could sense her arousal, smell it. She knew it as surely as she knew her name. He was fighting not to take her right there were they stood; as if she could read his thoughts she knew he was picturing her naked in his arms, open and willing for him. His thoughts wound themselves around her, spiking the desire she already felt.

“Come,” he moved back just enough to allow her to move. He didn’t let go of her hand. He couldn’t. “The car should be awaiting us this way.”

Should be? Didn’t he know? Shiri tugged at her hand, but he wasn’t letting go. She had no choice but to walk hand in hand toward the sleek, black limo just pulling up.

“My luggage!” She exclaimed stopping, stalling really.

She wasn’t afraid of him, no matter how weird he seemed. But she was terrified of getting in the back of that car. They would be too close; there was nowhere she could run. This attraction between them, it was too intense. Never had she wanted to climb all over a man the way she wanted to climb him. What would she do alone in the car?

“It is being brought, *'m enaid*. We must get you out of the wind.”

Why the hell had she worn a skirt? Climbing into the car, she scurried to the far corner, trying to put as much space between them as possible. He paused when he entered, then sat across from her, giving her precious space. He didn’t speak at first, just watched her with those inscrutable storm colored eyes of his. She twisted in her seat, smoothing her hands down her skirt more to wipe the drops of sweat off her palms than to straighten out any wrinkles.

Hopefully he wouldn’t speak much. Shiri wasn’t so sure she could take the dulcet tones of his voice in such close quarters. Who knows what that voice would inspire her to do. Already she was pressing her thighs together, desperately trying to relieve the aching need pooling in her increasingly damp core. She was willing to bet he could probably make her come just by talking to her.

As the car began to move, Daffyd spoke.

“Come here.”

No smooth words of seduction, no small talk, just straight and to the point. Sure, why didn’t she just jump on his lap and...

The booming sound of his laughter cut off the thought with razor sharpness. It snatched her harshly back to the reality of the car and not the budding fantasy which had flashed across her mind.

“Yes, why do you not do it?”

“What?” Oh, no she hadn’t spoken the words out loud had she? Surely she couldn’t have been that far gone!

“You were projecting. I did not hear your thoughts, I just caught a snatch of the vision you projected. I must say, I didn’t find it objectionable.”

Shiri stared at him as if he had grown two heads. Projection? Images? What the hell was he talking about? If Travis had set her up to interview another wacko she would kill him!

“Look, I don’t know what the hell you’re talking about, but if you even think about going all crazy on me I swear, I will be on the next thing smoking out of here, taking one of your balls with me!”

“Are you telling me you were not just thinking of climbing into my lap and having your wicked way with me? Or that you did not dream of your fingers exploring that delectable smelling pussy of yours underneath the full moon as I watched?”

“How could you... You couldn’t know that!”

It was just a harsh whisper, spoken more to convince herself she wasn’t hearing what she thought she had.

“Come here, Shiri.”

“No.” She shrank back against the seat as if she could hide there.

There would be no hiding. He would not allow it.

“Do not make me ask you twice.”

Something in his voice was urging her to do as he told her to. She could have resisted had she wanted to, yet she crept slowly toward him as if compelled by an irresistible force. She didn’t want to fight it. When she would have sat beside him, he pulled her into his lap.

“Do you think I would hurt you?” Daffyd lightly traced the shape of her lips with his finger. She shivered, though she was a long way from being cold, not anymore.

“No.” And she didn’t. She was safe here with him, at least her body was.

“Give me your lips, Shiri.”

Chapter Four

Leaning forward, she brushed her mouth against his. A tentative touch at first. Her tongue darting out to trace the outline of his lips. With the scorching first touch of her lips on his she knew. *Oh, yes, I am so doing this, and so much more.* When his mouth parted, just a little, she slipped inside, exploring, seeking. Shiri didn't have a vast amount of experience. She was by no means a virgin, but most men she'd been with had always seemed to be in some kind of rush. Daffyd was completely different. His soft, slow kiss didn't pretend to be a brief prelude to her goodies, but he kissed as if he had eternity to spend doing so. Not passive, nor as forceful as other men she had kissed; he made love to her mouth with his tongue bearing the role of cock, stiff and hard, it dove into her mouth and proceeded to work delicious circles around and around. He allowed her to set the tone, giving the impression she was in charge of how much or how little. It wasn't true. He'd instructed her to give him her lips, and she had.

She didn't care when his hand came up to grip her hair, angling her just so in order to take over the kiss, to delve deeper, his tongue impatient. With a small whimpering moan, she surrendered herself over to him; his lips grew even more demanding with each swish of her tongue. Lost, drowning in a myriad of pure sensation, she never wanted to surface from the hot soothing heat rushing her body, scampering up her legs and burrowing into a fire between her thighs. Only Daffyd would quench the flame. Cool air whispered around her thighs giving testament to the fact he had smoothed her skirt up her legs. When had that happened? She felt his fist tugging at the back of her thong. Just like that, the scrap of lace gave way and she was bare to the delight of his questing fingers.

Biting kisses trailed from her mouth, allowing her to breath, down to her throat, finally settling on her distended nipples. Her head flew back as the hot cavern of his mouth encased one, while talented fingers pulled, squeezed and twisted the other. Her hips rocked forward, desperate to connect to something much more substantial than fingers. She need more, of him, of this, and now. She didn't give a damn how the hell her shirt got unbuttoned and opened, or when he had pushed her bra down out of the way.

Hands clumsy from shaking with need, she clawed at the closure on his slacks. Any thought of self-preservation long since vanished into the streams of growling hunger shooting out from the back of her throat. She almost wept with relief as her hands circled his hot throbbing cock, so broad and long, oh Goddess, could she even accommodate something so large? She grasped as much as she could, slowly working her hand back and forth, loving the feel of the heavily veined tool in her hands. A sense of satisfaction washed over her as she watched his head fling back and the groaning gasp that gave proof to his pleasure.

"Goddess, yes!" he grunted, hips lifting in time to her orchestrated movements. "*Ca needed 'ch achos 'n gyhyd.*"

Daffyd knew he had to stop her. Her tiny hand felt so damn good wrapped around his cock, but if he didn't stop her he was going to come. Grasping her wrists, he pinned her hands behind her back. Using one hand to keep them there, he used the other to guide his aching member to her core. With far more patience than he believed possible, he managed not to ram home though he was throbbing with urgency from the tip of his dick down to its root. Instead, he took his time to ensure she was ready, inching into her with deliberate and patient introduction. He ran his bulbous head against her slit, coating his cock with her moisture.

"Tell me you are ready, Shiri." He couldn't wait much longer.

“Please, Daffyd.”

He groaned as she twisted her hips, trying to force herself down on his cock. Shifting his hips backward, he smacked his shaft against her labia, not hard, but with firm pressure.

Shiri stiffened, gasping as a shock of vicious pleasure burst through her. One more brusque smack was followed by the feel of his hot organ soothing over the little hurt. She had to gulp to pull in enough air to breath. The little pain brought her unbelievable ecstasy. As much as she tried to wiggle her hips to get him to rub her clit, he wouldn't allow her much movement. The grip on her hands was like iron, his powerful thighs helped her open for pleasure. She was helpless, and Goddess help her, she loved every minute of it.

She came undone at the seams. Those rugged snippets of soft Welsh tore through her contained composure.

“Are you going to tell me now, *'m enaid?*” Daffyd demanded, his voice heavy, laden with his own desire. “Tell me you are ready for me. Tell me what you need from me!”

“Please fuck me, Daffyd! Please!” To hell with pride. She needed him like she'd never needed anything in her life. He was driving her insane, stroking and spanking her poor pussy. “I need you inside me.”

Stars exploded behind her closed eyelids as he drove straight up her quim, setting off a series of explosions deep within. He hadn't even begun moving, yet Shiri came apart at the feel of his masterful cock seated deeply within her.

“So beautiful, *'m enaid,*” he whispered, finally letting her hands free. “More. I want to see you reach the beautiful precipice of orgasm once more.”

She had to anchor her hands on his shoulders as he thrust upward, each wonderful stroke ignited a new fire. She was burning; every fiber of her being was alive and dancing in delight. Digging her knees against his thighs, she slammed her hips downward with his every upward lunge, eliciting grunts and moans from *him*. Their lips met, this time all passion and combustion, demanding and ravenous.

Daffyd could not last much longer, too many centuries had passed without such pleasure as this—his hold wavered and threatened to dissolve in the hot, sizzling vice of her pus. Grabbing her hips, he pulled her closer even as their bodies parried and thrust. He could feel her erect clit rubbing against his pelvis. He angled his hips to increase the pressure, needing her to come again now.

“Yes, *'m enaid,* that's it!”

Her pussy clamped down on his entire length, impossibly tight to the point of pain. With a roar, he followed her over the cliff, pounding into her again and again until his body shuddered like a leaf in a storm.

“Daffyd!” she screamed, clutching desperately at his shoulders.

Perfect, she was absolutely perfect. But then, he had known she would be.

Saturated from the latest storm, the grounds which ran parallel to the walk-up path became gloppier as Daffyd led Shiri to one of the rear castle entrances. Too narrow for such modern advancements like a car, the slope of asphalt which led to the door would find the vehicle a snug fit.

The memory of how exquisite she felt clamped around his phallus fed an entirely new rush of want to his cock. It stirred as it hardened in agonizing yearning. Loathe to leave her cozy embrace, her moist puffs of breath slowly crossing his collarbone as her body cooled from their fast and furious joining, seduced his senses. Still, Daffyd managed to climb out of the car's rear

seats with only the thought that she would be in his bed for days, years, perhaps centuries to come. Righting their clothing seemed sacrilege. Nude in each other's arms was exactly the way they needed to be.

"Wow!" she exclaimed from behind him. "That's a castle!"

Her astonishment made him smile. It felt good as it spread across his face, relaxing muscles and his heart. He felt a surge of pride he hadn't felt for his home in centuries.

"This is my home. It has been so for...quite some time," he explained over his shoulder, glimpsing her visage settle into a calm sea of rich deep mocha and hints of earthy reds and coppers about her lips and eyes. "Our home."

Shiri paused behind him. He didn't see it as much as feel her presence falter, flicker and then hover as he kept walking forward. With a long look once more over his shoulder, his eyes traced the significant scowl ruining the luscious glow of her face.

This will not do. Surely she feels the incredible and undeniable bond securing us together?

"Do not be rash, Shiri. Come."

He waved her forward, to his side where she belonged.

"I'm not sure what Travis told you, but huh, I'm here solely for an interview." Shiri's attempt at professionalism was laughable at this point. It would've been rude to point it out just then so he said nothing and allowed her to continue. "So, I know the little thing in the car wasn't part of the itinerary, but don't expect that to happen again."

He turned fully to her. She needed to see his face, for what must be said, must be done at this moment. Had been allowed to choose the moment, he'd saved the words until morn, when her silky brunette strands lay against his chest and her body warmed his with its heat.

As it was, he had no choice.

"You're afraid of me, of us. Don't be, *'m enaid*. I like you very much. You will kiss me and I will always return the urgency of your mouth—as before, I will continue to give you more and more until we both satisfy the furious hunger nipping at our nipples. Do not attempt to deny such a power."

Shiri's smile faltered, melting in stages as each of his words made their way in.

"What the hell are you talking about?"

"Come in out of the wind," he demanded once more, more firmly than he intended, making her eyes narrow. Though he was completely aware of the quiet in his voice, he did not like that he had to use such subtle magic to which mortals willingly submitted. "Please."

Shiri's hesitation pricked his heart, but his face did not show it.

"I shall not ask again."

Shiri finally moved forward, albeit reluctantly. She came toward him, heels clicking against the path. To his chagrin, she was resisting his words even if she had decided to comply for the moment. They passed through the rear door without as much as a shared glance between them. It emptied them into the bowels of the castle where his recording studio had consumed all the space once home to dungeon cells, jousting materials, and horses. Now, the slick metallic finish covered the walls, and inside two isolated booths dangled microphones and recording equipment. The producer's consoles rested in darkness, and the wide, square windows also remained sullenly vacant.

"This is where I record." Daffyd's hand swept in the general direction of the recording studio. He stopped when he saw her pull out a tablet and scribble furiously. She drifted closer to the darkened windows, cupped her hand to her eyes and leaned in to peer through the thick glass. "Would you like to see inside?"

Shiri turned and met his eyes, pad in hand. "Absolutely."

With a smile now emerging on her face, Shiri had managed to persuade him, though he doubted she knew he longed to whisk her up to his bedroom. He swallowed his own impulses, relieved to see her grin. He walked up to the door and touched the handle. It swung inside and he whispered softly once he crossed the threshold.

“Lights.”

At once the overhead lights came on, and he stood in the small foyer that the two recording booths overlook. A tiny two-person tawny loveseat ran parallel to the wall. Above it hung an oil painting of his maternal grandfather cast in such subtle colors, no one other than those with Fae powers could even discern it belonged to the winged patriarch. He'd been unable to speak with his grandfather in centuries. Queen Maeve's decree kept them parted, separated between this world and that in which his grandfather inhabited.

“Who is the winged male in the painting?” Shiri asked.

“It is an abstract,” he replied, mostly from habit, but also from curiosity. How was it possible that she could distinguish between the swirling enchantments of the painting to the real image imbedded inside the canvas? She wasn't the least bit Fae; he would've been able to sense it immediately. What was she then? How was it possible she could see it clearly?

She shrugged. “Looks like one of those pictures of fairies. Why do you have it here in a recording studio?”

“Has my interview begun?” he asked, eyes trailing the curve of her lips and wanting desperately to pull them lightly between his teeth. “Are you not jet-lagged? Fatigued?”

Shiri met his heated gaze and quickly dropped her eyes, moving them on to the other parts of the recording studio.

“Yes, why not? I feel fine.” She scampered out of his reach and then took great interest in the recording booth's design. She wrote in her pad, scribbling notes or drawings. Her avoidance, for it clearly could be nothing else, gave him great pause.

Daffyd watched her with careful eyes. This had not gone as he intended, Shiri may have given in to the insane heat between them once, but she seemed hyper-sensitive now, unable to allow herself to give in again. Damn it, he shouldn't have touched her so soon. Not like he could've helped himself, but he should've held on until he got her to his home. Having lost his heart to despair once, Daffyd would not surrender it again.

Chapter Five

Shiri made sure to keep her distance. She couldn't risk being too close to him. The man threw off her equilibrium. She had a hard time thinking around him and she needed to think this thing out. Okay, he was hot as hell, there was no doubt about that, but she didn't hop on top of every hot man she saw. Hell, Travis was halfway hot and she had never had even the slightest urge to jump on him. So what was it about this mysterious Daffyd?

Maybe it was because he was a man of few words, more or less. Or maybe it was that accent, all lyrical, deep and smooth. That would explain her attraction, but not the fact she had just had sex in a limo with a man she didn't know. What was wrong with her? She felt more than simple attraction. She felt as if she knew him, like she had always known him. It was almost as if they had been courting for weeks. Courting? Okay, she just never talked like that. It was his fault. He spoke as if he was from a different time and place. It was disconcerting. He was rubbing off on her, weirdness and all.

And all of that was a big fat lie. Hadn't she already gone over this in the plane on her way over here? Whatever was happening here was weird, freaky, should by all rights not exist at all, yet it was, and it was meant to be. Daffyd wasn't a regular human, and apparently neither was she. She shied away from the knowledge, not quite ready to deal with it yet.

"So, where does your inspiration come from?" She rushed to fill the silence, afraid the new knowledge that was wakening deep inside her would burst free at any moment if she didn't stave it off. His scrutiny was too damned unnerving, his closeness too tempting. It was safe here in the studio. At least she wouldn't be tempted to jump him again, she hoped. She was on her turf. Music, dealing with artists- these things she could handle. The way her clit throbbed when he looked at her was something she wasn't prepared for.

"You."

Okay, so not the answer she was expecting. But then again, he was smooth. She blinked when he traced his index finger down the side of her face. When had he gotten so close? Clearing her throat and holding her notepad out like a shield, she scurried away again, trying to look nonchalant. This was infuriating. She was usually the queen of the interview. Nothing shook her. She needed to get her bearings.

Clearing her throat, she tried again. "Seriously, what led you to sing?"

"Seriously, you. I saw your picture in a magazine about three years ago. You spoke to me, and I wanted to speak back to you."

The breath left Shiri's lungs in a *whoosh*. If that was a pick up line, it was one of the best she ever heard. She was not ready for this. She stared at him in dumbfounded fascination. That couldn't be true, could it? Of course not! He was toying with her. Damn, she was so stupid. Beyond falling into his arms like a bitch in heat, she had allowed him to get under her skin, to play with her emotions. Slamming a mental block down separating her emotions from rational thoughts, she turned her back to him. It took a moment, but she was finally able to dissociate sentiment from fact.

Turning, she pierced him with her best "take no shit" glare. It must have worked because he stopped in his tracks, looking hurt, confused and more than a little pissed. Good. It added courage she hadn't really felt before. Now to lay down the law.

"Look, I don't know exactly what happened between us in the car, but I am not that girl. I am not the star struck kind of girl. You will not treat me like one of your groupies. I am adult enough to admit I wanted you, you wanted me. We had sex, no big deal. But that will NOT

happen again, I am here for an interview. That's it. Okay? We are going to be professional about this. I think we should call it a day. Maybe it would be best to take this up again tomorrow. Can you show me to my room now?"

Shiri was quite proud of her little speech. She managed to stop him in his tracks, which was exactly what she wanted to do.

"Your room is my room." Daffyd seemed to grow a couple of inches right in front of her eyes. "And you are no *girl* at all. You are a woman, my woman. You are here because we belong together. You are '*m enaid chychwior*, the other half of me. To deny this, to deny me will do no good, luv. You are mine, Shiri. As I am yours."

He hadn't moved. She was staring right at him, so she knew he hadn't. Yet, she felt as if he was towering over her. *Projection*. Somehow he was projecting to her the image of him standing over her instead of being a few feet away. The son-of-a-bitch was *deliberately* trying to intimidate her? Oh hell no. Gathering herself, she mentally pushed back, shocked when he actually stumbled backward. Okay, so not expecting that. Something strange was definitely going on here. Something in which she had no experience, she had no idea which way to go.

This had been a mistake. Shiri knew she was way out of her league here. Taking a few cautious steps backward, she could actually see the air around him swirling with bright colors as he righted himself. The anger that had been evident a few short moments ago was gone, and in its place a fierce determination. What was he planning on doing?

"You are very powerful for a mere '*n ddynol*."

A brisk breeze swished around her as he spoke the words. She had no doubt it was intentional. Bastard! He would not bully her with his little tricks.

"For a mere what?" she demanded, taking determined steps forward. "I have no idea what that is supposed to mean, but I do know that I will not be cowed."

Gathering confidence with every step, she did a little projecting herself. She imagined herself stronger, a warrior woman unafraid and secure. She didn't stop until her nose was less than an inch from his chest. Taking her finger and jabbing him, she was more than a little irritated he didn't even move, unlike before. In fact, his chest felt like she had jabbed her finger against stone. Damned man. To make matters worse, he actually smiled down at her. Kind of like an indulging parent.

"I have no idea what you are, '*m enaid*, but I will take delight in finding out all you can do."

Instead of a cool breeze this time, a warm sultry breeze floated around her, caressing her exposed skin, even traveling between her thighs. She felt tiny fingers stroking her skin; against her neck, her thighs, lightly skimming her arms.

"Stop it!" She was hissing between clenched teeth, but she really didn't want him to stop. Her nipples beaded against the onslaught, heat rising beneath her skin. Goddess, what was this man doing to her?

"Come, I will take you upstairs."

Oh thank the good Goddess! Gratefully, she followed him up the back staircase. She was beyond grateful he led her to a sitting room on the third floor. She didn't think she could handle a bedroom right about now; she might have freaked out completely. She might have asked to be shown to her room, but she would feel a heck of a lot better if a maid showed her where she'd be sleeping. She had a feeling being anywhere near a bed with just her and Daffyd in the room would not be wise. Thinking retreat the better part of valor, Shiri sat in a Queen Anne chair adjacent to a rather smallish looking settee.

Daffyd chose the settee, still too close for comfort, but at least they weren't touching.

"You are confused, no?"

That was the understatement of the century. She was downright mystified. She should be running screaming out of here, she should be petrified, or at the very least, alarmed. So why wasn't she? People shouldn't touch other people without putting their hands on them. No one should be able to project an image into another's subconscious.

"Would you care to explain?" Even though she asked, she wasn't sure she wanted an answer.

Daffyd sighed, leaning back and stretching his long legs in front of him. He was like a giant panther, all sleek and graceful. Shiri pressed her legs tightly together to find some relief from the growing need in her crotch. She had never been this affected by a gorgeous man before, getting wet just watching him. Then again, she had never had such a mind blowing orgasm as she had during the limo ride to the. *Mind off sex*, she mentally ordered herself. Easier said than done. This guy was the personification of sex.

"Where would you like me to begin?" he asked nonchalantly.

Shiri was not so easily fooled. He was wound tight, expected her rejection of whatever it was he had to say. Why was that, she wondered. Although he appeared to be all stretched out and comfortable, he was poised to spring. Possibly in case she made a run for it.

"How about telling me what are you?"

It was something she never thought she would say to another person, but he was not...normal. She wasn't sure what he was, but he was not like her. Not that she was normal either apparently.

"I am not so sure about that, Shiri, love. You are not what I am at all, but nonetheless miraculous."

"See!" she exclaimed exploding to her feet. "How did you know what I was thinking?"

"I did not," he replied easily, crossing his ankles, but otherwise not moving. "You were projecting again. I cannot read your thoughts. Those morsels are blocked from me. I know not why."

Shiri was brought up short by that. She had felt him trying to get into her head, into her thoughts. The thing was, she had felt it long before she had ever gotten on the plane. Which meant he had been stalking her for quite some time.

"Tell me what you are thinking, *'m enaid*. You are looking as if I have done something. What is it you want to know?"

"How long have you been with me? I mean, how long have you been touching me, seducing me?"

If he lied, she would know it. She wasn't sure how she knew she would know, but she did. He couldn't lie to her. She was sure of it.

"Three weeks."

He didn't explain further, he didn't try to sugar coat it. He just laid it out there.

"How?" At least she wasn't crazy. She had felt a presence in her apartment in New York, in her dreams. He had felt his hands, his lips all over her body. And her skin still burned in hungry desire for those lips again.

Now her curiosity did the same.

Chapter Six

Daffyd shrugged, eyeing her closely. How ready was she to hear the truth? How much truth would he give her? She still had no idea. It was not he who invited himself into her dreams. She had brought him there. When he had first reached out to her, the last thing he had expected was not only acceptance but an invitation to delve further. It was by her power he entered her dreams. She should have never been able to feel him touching her, but she had, and she had not resisted. She used her power unconsciously, without forethought. When she wanted to repel him, she did. She was just as powerful as he was, in some ways more so.

"I am not human, Shiri. And neither are you."

"Say what?" Shiri balked, crossing her arms over those delectable breasts Daffyd remembered so fondly. "I'm human. I'll give you that you aren't, well, normal. I dunno what you are, but I'm one hundred percent human."

Did he daresay her rage made her even more delicious?

Her speech done, Shiri pursed her lips and waited. Daffyd saw doubt seeping across her features. Minute twitches here and there.

"You do not believe that, *'m enaid*. I can read the doubt clearly in your eyes."

"You don't know what I believe," she said quietly, interrupting him.

He sighed. This should've been simple and had she been completely human, it would have been so. Yet, the muddled mixture of human emotions and otherworldly power made her unstable—a cauldron tittering on the edge of tipping over.

Mortals are nothing more than ordinary beings consumed by emotions, which was Queen Maeve's argument against his marriage to Ceinwen.

Shiri is not Ceinwen.

"Perhaps I should get to the point. I am Fae. Well, half at least. The other half is I suppose what you would call demi-god. You...you are something extraordinary and mysterious."

Daffyd watched every heave of her lovely bosom as Shiri struggled to corral her rapid emotions. From her came feelings of confusion, fear and anger at being deceived. That last part was projected as clearly as if she's said the words.

"I have not deceived you. I'm not hiding anything from you, *'m enaid*," he said softly, trying to use his magic in cadence to simmer her sentiments.

She nodded as if she agreed.

"Please stop trespassing in my mind!" she demanded, rubbing her temples. "If I want you to know my thoughts, I'll tell you. Believe that."

"Fair enough. I apologize. Still I cannot help it. I feel your anguish, your confusion, and it disturbs me."

Daffyd withdrew his mental focus from her.

He glided over to her. If he could but touch her, he would feel better. She would feel better. He couldn't explain it, but when they came together, the power—their power, increased.

"So, you're a fairy," she stated bluntly with scorn. Lips twisted into a sneer. "Where the wings at? You're a little large aren't you?"

I have said too much. She is scared. So often when humans are confronted with the unknown, they respond with anger. But she wasn't human. Who knows how she would ultimately react.

"Our kind have been around forever. Long before mortals took notice. Much of what people deem truths are a hash of ancient beliefs, poor propaganda, and flat out foolishness. And it is not fairy, it is Fae." Daffyd explained as one does to a small child—patiently.

“You’re telling me it’s all crap?” she asked, eyebrow rising in question.

“No. Some Fae have wings, but not all. Some are smaller in stature. Our reproduction mimic yours. Some abilities are passed from parents to child,” he answered, his stomach tight with longing at the very thought of her bearing his child.

He was loath to upset her, but he had to determine what he was dealing with. She must be educated before her ignorance accidentally harmed someone. He could not bear to part from her. Admittedly, concentration was difficult, when all his hands wanted to do was stroke her body, his mouth wanted to cease talking and kiss her elegant neck...

Shiri’s eyes became slits. With a shrug she spat, “Yeah. Right. Why are you acting this way? Keeping up this charade of being a fairy?”

Daffyd held his ground, even as Shiri backed away. He fought back the urge to rush her and hold her. He surveyed her coolly. Reporter cassette clutched in one fist, a pen tucked behind one delectable ear, and her blouse rumpled from their tango in the limousine, Shiri hardly could run away from him now.

Hugging herself, Shiri muttered beneath her breath, “I can’t *believe* you’re a psycho. I should have known better. Living here all alone, no real contact with other people...”

“I am no crazier than you are. Can you deny our shared dreams? How do you explain the feel of my hands across your smooth belly? Brushing the tight tips of your breasts? My mouth on your neck and my lips brushing the small of your back when I am thousands of miles away? You have felt all of these things and we have only met today. Can you deny it?” he demanded.

Shiri’s eyes bravely met his, and they shone with unshed tears. Her fury had been repelled by the calm questioning in his voice.

“No,” she mouthed at last, lips trembling.

“Do you deny the feelings between us? Have you ever felt such power and binding before? Search your soul, *'m enaid*, and answer me true.”

Shiri closed and opened her eyes. They locked onto his and the air thickened.

“I, I can’t. There’s something about you...about us.”

Unable to stand it any longer, Daffyd took small, careful steps toward her. Battling the urge to run to her, he forced himself not to startle her and stopped mere inches from her. Without waiting or warning, he folded her delicately into his arms. He drew her close, clutching her voluptuous being to him as if air to breathe. So different—the stark contrast of his harsh pale flesh, dead from loss, and the warm, alive skin gliding over Shiri’s bones.

Kissing the top of her head, he whispered, “Fear me not, *'m enaid*, for my heart belongs to you and you alone. More so, you are *'m enaid chychwior*, my soul’s mate.”

Her body a coiled spring, Shiri stiffened before melting into him fully. She moaned. The sound caressed his ear like a tongue. He spun her gently to face him. With his fingertips, he titled her head upward so that he could gaze down into those endless discs of desire. Her bee-stung lips trembled as the magic rippled across them—electricity of the otherworld. It prickled her nipples, making them pointed stone. Unable to cease the hot flush of lust, Daffyd brushed those pleading points with the back of his hands.

Shiri groaned and arched automatically toward the source of the action. He smiled.

“You are so wonderfully seductive,” he growled, the hunger making his voice coarse.

Instead of snatching her blouse to tear it in two, he lowered his face to her neck where silky skin the odor of fresh orchids and lust beckoned. But her taste sent more blood to his already aching member. With each kiss and lick came the tang of salt and the sweetness of desire. Shiri indeed was a treat to be had.

And Daffyd intended to have all of her—heart, soul, and body.

Shiri buried her hands in his hair. Her pelvis pressed impatiently against him. The act nearly undid his composure, so great was his yearning for her.

No, she must be in control. Otherwise she may see this as an act of bewitchment.

Daffyd kept his hands on her waist, and drew back from her.

“Don’t stop,” Shiri purred so seductively, he nearly snatched up her skirt and pounded inside her, but he didn’t.

This is too important to be rash. Though he knew the words were wise, they offered little comfort to his throbbing balls. Shiri’s eyes cracked open and she let go of his thick black hair with puzzlement.

“What’s wrong?” she asked.

“Do you want me, Shiri?”

She frowned at him.

“Hell, yeah.”

She removed her blouse and threw it onto the floor, daring him it seemed to refuse her again. Barely restrained mounds pressed against the bra’s thin lace—tempting him, beckoning him to come and savor their charm.

“Kiss me.” How sweetly she ordered him, throwing her arms around his neck. Locking them, she pulled him into her and bit his lower lip.

He winced.

All manner of logic and thought dissolved beneath their joined fire. Daffyd caved. His hands dipped down and yanked her to him. Her pleas met his ears once more. His hands dipped down and roughly yanked her to him.

“Please, Daffyd, please...”

He would not deny her again.

“Please what? Speak the spell which binds us, *'m enaid chychwior.*”

“Take me.” No ambiguity, no hesitation. He was helpless to do any less.

“As you wish, *'m enaid.*”

Daffyd scooped her into his embrace and carried her through the guest room’s archway, down the dim hallway and into his suite. His graceful stride was unhindered by the growing shadows. Shiri felt as if she floated down the corridor. As he strolled the short distance to his bed, he kissed her face, her ears lobes, and her hair. Beneath her skirt, a flood filled the juncture between her thighs. Shiri didn’t really care about what he was at the moment. The way he made her feel, the emotions he conjured in her stole her breath and weakened her will. None of it made sense except when they touched, she came undone.

His hands were like feathers against her back and the underside of her knees. Each delicate kiss from him sent a powerful ripple through to her clit. Burning with desire, Shiri pushed the fabric of her bra beneath her full breasts and pinched her throbbing nipples. Surely, he saw her quake with need. Like a starved person invited to a buffet, Shiri didn’t think she’d ever get her fill of him. The limo should’ve been it. Thirst quenched. Curiosity filled. Instead it had only served to make her hungrier, knowing how well he filled her. Her heart galloped and her clit beat in wet delight as his mouth licked her nipple. She could feel his hardness against her thigh, felt the wet drops of pre-cum against her skin. She wanted it, wanted him inside her, possessing her.

“You torment me.” Daffyd whispered against her skin, making her shudder.

Shiri’s eyes widen as he clamped his lips over the erect peak and bit down before sucking deeply. Shiri sighed, thrusting more into his mouth, whimpering in elation. She was so close.

Daffyd let go of her puckered peak to her dismay, tossing her playfully on his bed. She bounced twice before stopping at the headboard. Across from the bed, a picture, no- a portrait consumed much of the wall above the mantel. Before she could puzzle it out, Daffyd, all nude, with sinewy muscles that moved as fluidly as water, crawled onto the bed, forcing it to move.

With glittering eyes, he said, "Come here."

She could get used that sexy autocratic thing he had going on, as long as he only used it in the bedroom. No wait, she shouldn't be thinking of anything past her time here in Wales. Her relationships never seemed to last for long. She didn't like to be tied down. Although... Looking at him now she couldn't say she would mind being tied up or down by this man—Fae—whatever.

"Come. Take what you desire."

That voice set her skin aflame. She could call him just to listen to the sound of his voice. No wonder his music sold like it was the cure for cancer. Daffyd was a spark and this bedroom was already charged with anticipation. Shiri got to her knees and unzipped her skirt. Her eyes remained on Daffyd. With a sexy shimmy, she slipped out of it and tossed it to the floor. Dancing to a tune only in her head, Shiri stripped out of the bra and twirled it around her index finger before allowing it to soar across the room to some undisclosed location.

With the same index finger, she glided it up and down her clit, tossing her head back to moan and revel in the flush of pleasure rushing over her body. She shuddered with need and delighted in the slow teasing she gave to Daffyd. When she peeked at him, she saw his face showed nothing of the carnal cravings that surely ravaged his insides, but outside his cock bobbed in encouragement to her little show.

"You are a dangerous woman, *'m enaid*. I want you now."

"Come and get it," she shot back just as low and animalistic as he.

Before she could act, he pounced, leaping across the four feet to land on her in true wrestling style. She braced for the impact of his body, but it did not come. When she opened her eyes, he remained leaning over her, his arms on either side of her, supporting his upper torso.

He grinned at her and slowly lowered his head until their lips met. At once her body surged upward to his, all rational thoughts faded. She didn't give a damn. She wanted him—now. Period. She ran her fingernails across his back and he lowered himself down on her as if welcoming the flares of heat. Already the stony hardness of his cock pressed against her pelvis, demanding entry. With his mouth still covering hers, Daffyd glided his hand down between her legs and parted them. Supporting his weight with one hand, he eased her vaginal lips apart, teasing her unmercifully.

"Please, give it to me," Shiri pleaded, digging her nails into his flesh. "Fill me up. Make me scream."

"As you wish."

Without waiting, he hoisted her wonderful ass up with one hand, snatched down two pillows with the other and shoved them under her. She lifted her pelvis toward him and pumped the air. Groaning in growing need, shaking with want, Shiri rubbed her clit with one hand and pinched her nipple with the other. If he didn't do something soon she was going to tear his hair out. Just as she thought it, he thrust inside her. Her breath left her lungs in a whoosh, every nerve in her body tingled.

"Oh!" Shiri scrambled up to her elbows, the sheer girth of the rigid cock making her see stars. "Daffyd!"

"Yes," he croaked against her shoulder, where he placed kisses as he slammed home.

Deliciously slow, Daffyd's slid into her hot tunnel and drew out, taking her breath each time and making her bite her lip. Her muscles clamped down tight around him, reluctant to allow his cock to leave, and greedily clutching it once more. Again and again, Shiri gasped, thrust

for thrust, her body quivered at the sheer impact of having him inside her. She locked her legs around his waist, her pelvis elevated for maximum penetration allowed Daffyd so tap her G-spot with regular rhythm.

Both his muscular, lean arms rested on either side of her and she glanced up at his face. To her surprise, he stared at her, passion turning his face hot, his hair rained down around his face. Framed by those raven locks, Daffyd looked like a fallen angel. So sexy, so tempting. His eyes burned into her, turning her on every bit as much as his complete possession.

“You are so good. You make me feel so good.” There simply weren’t words to express how he made her feel. “Don’t stop.”

“Mine,” Daffyd whispered hoarse and lowered himself to suckle her breasts.

The pleasure plowed through her with each nibble from his mouth. In perfect coordination he slammed his cock home and pinched her nipple with his lips in unison. The angle also allowed Daffyd to press hard against her clit, sending even more sensual shocks throughout her body. A streak of lightening shot down her spine making her quiver. So good, it was almost too much.

The ceiling began to spin as Shiri closed her eyes tight. His rhythm increased and so did hers. She met his thrust with eager ones of her own. Minutes passed, their bodies slapped in sweaty heat, and each time she came close to an orgasm, Daffyd would slow down, nearly removing his member and playing with her clit.

Strumming it with his index finger and thumb, sucking it, and slapping her swollen pussy lips, he said, “Tell me you want me buried deep inside you for all time.”

“Yes, yes, anything, please,” she moaned, twisting the sheets in her hands. “Make me come!”

“As you wish,” Daffyd replied and rammed his cock into her once more. “Anything for you. All for you.”

A sweet desperation infiltrated his words, but Shiri had long since stopped listening.

Daffyd wanted nothing more than to bring her the immense pleasure she brought him. He groaned against her breasts before taking one long, taut nipple into his mouth and sucking it hard until she bucked beneath him. He let go, and sped up his thrusts. Already his balls tightened and spasms rocked through him.

He kept his eyes on the beauty beneath him. So sensual and sexy, she stirred all of his lust into one heady pot. She could never leave him. He knew it the moment he touched her, the moment she called out to him, and now all had been confirmed.

“Fuck me hard,” Shiri demanded, her pussy locked on his rod so hard, he had to bite the inside of his cheek to keep from howling. “I am yours.”

He could stand the pressure no longer. Throwing back his head, Daffyd gave one final shove into the blissful heat of Shiri’s canal and erupted with blinding ferociousness.

“You are...mine!” he roared as the orgasm ripped through him.

Beneath him, Shiri dug her nails deep in his back and locked her legs so tightly around his waist, she surged off the bed.

“Yes! Right there!”

Something strange happened as the flush of lust dried on their bodies. Daffyd lowered him slowly down beside her on the bed. Folding himself around her like protective barrier, she sighed into the comfort of his embrace.

This is right. This is so perfect.

“Yes,” Daffyd said, “It is.”

Three hard knocks resounded through the door. Damn it, the last thing he wanted at this moment was to be disturbed in any way.

“Sir,” came a squeak against his thick, oak door. “There is a call for you.”

Daffyd sighed and removed himself from her. His entire body felt cold being away from her.

“I must take this. I shall return.” None called unless it was important, simply because he didn’t allow many to know his number and certainly didn’t invite idle chit chat. Whoever it was had better have something earth shattering to say.

Chapter Seven

The first sight that greeted Shiri was a woman. Not a real woman, but the massive likeness of a full-figured blonde, whose hair cascaded in wheat colored locks to her waist. Her bright blue eyes sparkled with humor that jumped out of the painting as if real. The mysterious woman was nude, covered strategically by what looked to be some kind of deep brown animal fur. It contrasted beautifully with the stark ivory of her skin. She was beyond beautiful, almost ethereal in a way.

Ceinwen.

The name whispered through her brain out of nowhere. Shiri didn't know how she knew, but she knew with a certainty that this was the woman's name. She also knew this was no casually bought piece of art. This woman was very real and tied to Daffyd in some way. But what? Feeling disoriented and off center, Shiri wanted nothing more than to slink away, to crawl out of the massive bed and run all the way home. However, there was a large leg slung over her both of hers, the hair tickling her smooth skin. An equally large arm held her close to a very broad, warm chest. As much as she wanted to run, she wanted to snuggle deeper into the blanket of flesh that held her even more.

Daffyd had come back to bed a mere twenty minutes after his call and taken her again. This time with a ferocity that thrilled her as much as it scared her. Their almost animalistic attraction was more than just a little baffling. She had never felt this way before with anyone in her life. As soon as he touched her she was ablaze with need. And when he was inside her, she was sent to another universe. Sex had never felt so good. And she had known him for less than twenty-four hours.

That's not exactly true. He has been courting you for weeks. Shiri snorted aloud at the thought. That is if she believed his bullshit about being a fairy.

I am Fae, 'm enaid. Fairy implies something to this generation we both know I am not.

My soul. That is what he had been calling her. Her heart stopped as the meaning of the endearment washed over her. Wait – did he just speak in her head?

Of course I did, 'm enaid. As you were speaking in mine.

I was NOT speaking in your head! I was just lying here thinking.

You are now.

She was, wasn't she?

Bolting up in the bed, Shiri glared down at the man, no, the *Fae*, grinning at her. She was not going crazy; they really had just spoken in her head. As much as she didn't want to believe it, something weird was going on here. She didn't know if she was ready to accept that fairies existed, but this was a long way from being normal. Last night she had been more than a little concerned she was wildly attracted to a man on the edge. Well, a man over the edge really, but now, now she was completely out of her depth. She needed answers and she needed them like yesterday.

“What the hell is going on here?” Her throat was dry and scratchy as evidenced by the rough screech her voice had become.

Man what I wouldn't give for a strong cup of java. As soon as the thought fully formulated in her mind, she was holding her favorite Starbucks mug full to the brim of fragrant coffee. She stared at the liquid in horror. She knew it wasn't Daffyd. As soon as she realized she had let him inside her head, she had slammed down her mental defenses. She had done it consciously and thoroughly, and though she had no idea how she had done, there was no doubt she had done so.

Even if she wasn't so certain he couldn't have heard her, the shock on his face was more than enough to let her know she had done this all on her own.

Okay, she was seriously off kilter here. Closing her eyes she wished the mug away, less shocked that it disappeared as quickly as it had appeared. Yep, it had definitely been her.

"What did you do to me?!" Shiri demanded leaping from the big bed, taking the comforter with her. She almost tripped over the heavy material as she tried to find her balance. She had to put as much space as possible between her and that...that...*being* on the bed.

Daffyd sighed heavily, leaning back against the pillows gathered by the headboard. He didn't bother moving toward Shiri, she was much too scared and confused.

"I did nothing, *'m enaid*. This I swear to you."

And he hadn't. Obviously their mating had unleashed some of her natural gifts that someone had bound long ago. He still had no idea what she was, but he could feel the power streaming off her in waves so forceful, the room was flooded with it. There was no doubt if he could feel it, the Otherworld was more than aware of it. Queen Maeve had already felt the shift of power from their first mating in the limousine; the "call" last night had been an urgent missive from his mother, a part of the Queen's court. He hadn't needed it. From that awful night when the Queen Bitch of the Otherworld had taken his wife and child from him, Daffyd had learned to depend on his powers as a demigod, strengthening his gifts so as to never be vulnerable again. Long before luring Shiri to his castle he had placed wards around his domain. No Fae other than Goda could pass through these walls.

"If you didn't do this to me then what the hell is happening to me, uh? I was normal. I had a normal human life before I met you!" Her voice was heavy with accusation bordering on a full out panic attack. She couldn't help it. She was fine, living a perfectly normal life until this guy waltzed into her life, turning it upside down. In less than a day she had gone from being regular Shiri, entertainment reporter to some – thing. "And stop calling me your soul!"

Damn, it was galling standing in the nude trying to put the pieces together. Because she had taken the downy comforter with her in her flight from the bed, much of his lean, muscled body was bare to her greedy eyes. It was damned hard to concentrate on her righteous indignation with all that yummy looking light golden skin all exposed and inviting. The heat of his eyes traveling everywhere she couldn't hold the comforter to only added fuel to the fire. She was not about to give in again without some answers. She needed to be covered from head to toe to deal with him, and so did he.

Shiri let out a little yelp, dropping her shield as she was suddenly clothed in a pair of jeans and a light sweater. Ones she had left in New York. Daffyd was likewise clothed in jeans, a heavier, bulky sweater, thick winter socks and a pair of boots.

"Oops," she mumbled as he raised a sardonic brow at her. Then right before her eyes, the sweater, socks and boots dissolved into thin air, leaving only jeans that hung low on his hips.

Daffyd suppressed a smile. Yes, she was far, far more powerful than he first believed. Whatever she was, it was not your run of the mill Fae, Brownie, Nymph, or any other creature with basic elemental power. That didn't leave too many options. Why had she been left ignorant to discover these powers all on her own? And again, who had placed the dampening spell in the first place? It seemed that making love allowed the gifts to unfurl a little at a time. What would she be able to do when she was completely free? Even though he was part demigod, he had never seen another as powerful. Not even his father was this powerful, and Maeve never crossed his father, not after that night.

Looking at the woman destined to be his very own, Daffyd's heart constricted at the lost, forlorn look on her face. She looked for all the world like she had lost her best friend. Perhaps she

had. This woman had never in anyway been “normal.” Maybe she never realized it until this moment, but even tightly bound, she drew people to her. She probably drove men half mad, though she was not a siren. Her appeal was far deeper than that. He was willing to bet she had been inordinately blessed with “good luck” her entire life, never knowing it was her will that made things happen. The harder she willed it, the more likely it would come true.

Careful to keep his movements slow and measured, he rose to make his way over to her. How could he not? She hurt, therefore he hurt. The mating of two supernatural beings was ordained by Destiny, their bond timeless and limitless. Every ache and pain she felt, he felt a hundredfold. She did not run when he approached, nor did she even try to evade the arms that enveloped her and pulled her close to his bare chest. Fates, but she felt so right there. Never had a woman felt so much a part of him. Not even...

Shiri shoved at the brick wall that was Daffyd, springing back a step. *Ceinwen, his dead wife.* It was too much.

“How dare you!” she charged. “How dare you bring me here, seduce me-and I don’t care how much I may have wanted it-and then think about another woman while I am falling apart!”

It may have been a bit melodramatic, but damn it, she was floundering here! And he was thinking about his dead wife? She could see it if it had only been a few years, but Daffyd had had...*four thousand years?* How freaking old was this guy?

“Shiri...” Daffyd began, completely baffled by her sudden turn, taking a step toward her.

“You stay back!” Fury, disillusionment, pain, all of these things rose in her so quickly and with such fury it threatened to choke her. She had no idea why Daffyd jumped back, or why he was looking at her like she had suddenly grown a second head. All she knew was she had to get away from him.

Daffyd flinched at the sound of the slamming of the adjoining bedroom door. Should he go after her? It had been so long since he had dealt with any woman besides Goda, who was already ancient the day he was born, he had forgotten how emotionally sensitive they were. One minute he was sure she would melt in his arms, accepting his comfort, the next she was stomping out of the room in full flight. *And on fire.* The only reason he allowed her to escape was he had been stunned to see her surrounded by enchanted flames.

At least I will always know when she is upset. He could have easily held her despite the fire, and he should have. It had been a mistake on his part to let her abilities shock him into immobility. It would not happen again. Sighing heavily he dropped on to a massive chair in front of the fireplace. There was little he could do but wait it out now. He never should have allowed her to push him away.

And she never even realized she was aflame. A smile played at the corners of his lips until his gaze swung to the massive portrait above the fireplace. *Ceinwen.* It had only been a fleeting thought, far short of the pining he had gone through for so long after her demise, but his Shiri had heard it. All in a transitory flash Shiri had picked up not only the memory of his long dead wife, but she had known how long *Ceinwen* had been gone. Impressive, but inconvenient. He had to tell her the sad twisted tale soon.

When she has calmed down, Daffyd told himself. *I will tell her then.*

Shiri had no idea where the room she had been taken to last night was. It was pretty dark and she hadn’t really paid any attention, but she found it with no problems. Thankfully she hadn’t unpacked. Grabbing her suitcase and bag, she took two steps toward the door before stopping. How would she get to the airport? And once there...how was she going to catch a flight out?

Daffyd had sent a private jet to collect her in New York. She had no idea if the tiny airport she had flown into had regular airlines.

"Damn." The one word came out more as harsh exhale. Staring blindly about the room she realized she was well and truly trapped. She would rather cut off her right arm than to go back into his bedroom to beg for a ride in his fancy jet back home. Not with a picture of *the other woman* watching her every move. It was grating to think the entire time she had been taken to the heights of ecstasy, his deceased wife had been watching.

Okay, Shiri, now you are just being ridiculous and sullen, she chided herself. The woman was dead, she wasn't watching anything. The beginnings of a migraine started at the base of her skull, threatening to claw its way through her head if she didn't get a grip and calm down. Dragging herself to the large windows overlooking the Irish Sea, she sat on the window seat, immune to the chilly draft that managed to seep through the sill. Crossing her legs to sit Indian style, she closed her eyes to concentrate the way her mother had taught her and her younger sister when they had entered puberty and everything became a matter of life and death. Taking deep breaths, she found her spiritual center and let her essence expand throughout her body. The throbbing in her skull subsided, the tight knots in her muscles relaxed. She imagined her body surrounded by light and willed the peace the light brought to sink into her bones. Letting her head fall to her chest, she let her spirit wander, forgetting to marshal her thoughts to finding and keeping her center, she let her consciousness go. Her mind swirled in a kaleidoscope of colors and images. Before she could catch her wayward thoughts, she found herself in a meadow filled with lush green grass and vibrantly colored wildflowers. Looking around with her inner eyes, she saw two lovers entwined in the grass, their pale bodies gleaming against the thick emerald and lime grass carpeting the ground. Knowing they could not see her ethereal body, she edged closer to the couple, unable to stifle a gasp of both hurt and surprise as she recognized the woman in the painting above Daffyd's mantel, and none other than Daffyd himself.

'I will love you forever, Ceinwen,' Daffyd proclaimed. 'This I swear to you.'

'I will grow old and die, Daffyd. And you will still be here, free to love again.'

'I will never love again!'

'Do you swear?' the blonde vixen demanded, her eyes coyly downcast as she looked up through thick lashes.

'This I swear, Ceinwen. You are my one and only love.'

Shiri hurled back into the present and into her corporeal body with a crash. Her head felt ten times heavier than it had when she began, the throbbing so fierce it threatened to split her skull wide open. Her eyes burned with tears she could do nothing to hold in. Of course he still had her portrait displayed proudly in his bedroom. He still loved her after all this time. Their animal attraction aside, he would never look at her the way he had looked at his wife.

And he is Fae. She knew that with a certainty now, he had not been lying to her. But why bring her here if he still had the hots for a woman dead for four thousand years? It had to be something about whatever she was. Bits and pieces of disjointed memories and whispered truths flew through her mind. Daffyd had done nothing to her but wake up something that was already there. But what? Maybe Daffyd had simply meant to help her find who she really was.

Then why sleep with you? Why make love to you whispering promises of a love he has already given to another woman?

She had to get out of here! She couldn't think, couldn't concentrate. She needed to get on familiar ground, far away from Daffyd and the danger he represented to her heart. She was not normally an overtly passionate woman, yet this mysterious man, no this Fae had her panting for

him. She was not so blind as to believe it was simply physical. She could not trust his sweet words and ardent declarations.

"I just want to be home," Shiri sank to her knees in a broken cry, never noticing that she had indeed willed herself home.

The moment Shiri disappeared from his home, Daffyd knew. Flying from the seat in which he was slumped, he flung open the door that connected the two rooms to find it empty.

"Shiri!" His roar bounced off the walls, echoing through the castle.

Goda appeared, hovering anxiously by the door, wringing gnarled hands together. "Ouch, Daffyd, I swear I did not notice anything amiss! I did not feel anyone breached the walls."

"Because they didn't." Daffyd allowed his body to fall on to the unused bed, feeling the weight of his miscalculation press down on him like a wall of solid rock. He should have gone after her. He should have said something, anything... The last thing he had expected was that she would realize the extent of her power. She had simple willed herself away from him.

"But Daffyd, if no one took her, how did she..." Goda eyes rounded as understanding dawned. "That was the strange magic in the air last night? I thought the old gods were merely mischievous." Her voice gave testament to her awe and wonder. The magic had been very old and very powerful. She had not even begun to expect the wee human woman could have been the source. The magic had been powerful, no Fae less than a member of the royal court could have been the cause.

"What is she?" Goda whispered, her eyes growing big at the implications.

"I have no idea," Daffyd quietly confessed to the woman who had more or less raised him.

"Does Maeve know? She could be in danger even now!" Goda cast her eyes about the room wildly, as if her anxiety could bring the young woman back. "What are we to do?"

"I will go to her," Daffyd ignored the first question. Goda knew full well Maeve knew. She would have had to have been deep in a thousand year restorative rest not to.

"You cannot bring her back here," Goda cautioned. "Maeve-"

"Maeve will not touch her!" Daffyd thundered before remembering whom he was addressing. "I am not so sure Maeve could threaten my little Shiri even if she wanted to." The last statement was a muttered afterthought, not really aimed toward his caregiver.

Whatever he did, he had to find out the truth about Shiri, and the answers were in New York.

"I must go to New York, but I must talk to her. I do not know when I will return."

He moved to retire to his own suite to ready himself for the journey. Finished, he rushed through the door, his mind whirling, before turning back. Shiri deserved a man who would focus solely on her, not one who looked back to the past. He needed to do something he should have done long ago.

"Goda, please make sure the portrait of Ceinwen is gone prior to my return."

With that he was gone, leaving a shocked Goda to gawk after him.

Chapter Eight

All Shiri wanted to do was fall into bed and have a good old fashioned crying fit. Instead, she was in her apartment for less than five minutes before her mother appeared. She didn't ring up as she normally did when she came for a visit. No, keeping up with the way Shiri's last twenty-four hours had been going, she just appeared out of thin air. Instead her mother just appeared out of thin air, looking nothing like the last time Shiri had seen her. Gone was the graceful age she was used to seeing on her mother. There wasn't a gray hair or wrinkle in sight. Instead a woman far more regal, far more beautiful than Shiri had ever seen stood before her, her face marred only by the worry so clearly evident.

Great, just great. It explained everything while answering absolutely nothing.

"What am I?" No sense beating around the bush. Besides, Shiri had a feeling they wouldn't be alone for long. As hurt as she was by Daffyd's betrayal, she didn't really believe he'd been toying with her. His desire for her was very real, and he wouldn't just allow her to waltz out of his life.

He just couldn't love her as much as he'd loved his long dead wife. Too bad Shiri could accept no less.

"Who is he? What is he?" Nyale Simone looked no older to Shiri than an eighteen year old, only a hell of a lot lusher. She glowed with a golden light surrounding her, her hair falling in tiny braids to her waist. She was almost too beautiful to look at, with deep dark chocolate skin and bright sapphire blue eyes that sparkled like jewels.

And the voice. It was the most beautifully lyrical voice Shiri had ever heard. The magic in its sound was far, far more intense than even Daffyd's.

Shiri didn't ask her mother who she was referring to, she knew. Just as she knew her mother was no upper middle class housewife as Shiri and her sister had assumed. She was the daughter of a freaking goddess. Did that make her a demi-god like Daffyd?

"Shiri?"

Right, her mother the goddess had asked her a question. "He's Fae," she threw out absent mindedly. Daffyd was so far from the point right now it wasn't even funny. "You are—what? Some kind of minor goddess or something? Aphrodite's black sister?"

It may have been a bitter thing to say, but at this point Shiri didn't really know what to think. Her mind was suddenly alive with facts and information pouring in like a torrential flood. It was too much to process all at once, so Shiri pushed it to the back of her mind, allowing it in without letting it interfere with the current conversation. She wasn't really sure how she was doing it, but it wasn't as important as the answers she needed from her mother right now.

"I am sorry I deceived you by keeping you in the dark, you and your sister." She was angry. Shiri could clearly see sparks of red in her otherwise golden aura. "But never make the mistake of insulting me again. The Greeks aren't the only gods in existence you know."

Shiri felt instantly contrite, but not enough to let it go. "And you were going to tell us when?" It was incredibly hard to stay respectful, but she managed to do it. She could feel the power her mother was emanating, and although she wasn't afraid of serious bodily harm, her mother was not above discipline.

Nyale shrugged. "After a normal human cycle of life. I would have aged you...and your sister, before lifting the glamour."

Shiri could only stare at her mother. Really? Just let her live a life never knowing and them BAM! ‘*Oh, guess what, you are really not human and not old, and your whole life has been a lie?*’ It seemed myths concerning the absolute arrogance of gods weren’t far off from the truth.

“You’re wise to keep your thoughts to yourself. And this, this male you have been with is no mere fairy man.” Nyale appeared visibly agitated. Interesting. Why? “A lower mythical creature couldn’t have broken through my block. Where is he from? Sweet heavens child how could you not know what manner of creature you were sleeping with?”

Shiri plopped down on her sofa feeling as if she had just fallen down the rabbit hole. She couldn’t have just heard that right. She didn’t know what she was two days ago and she was supposed to know what Daffyd was? Unbelievable. What had Daffyd said again?

“Half Fae and half demi-god I think.” Like it was important now. “What about Daddy? Is he...normal? And what *are* you? Who are you? Like Isis or something?” Shiri was sure she should have a headache or something. Maybe a mini nervous breakdown. Things like this just didn’t happen. Did this mean all the fairy tales she’d ever heard were true? Were there werewolves and vampires lurking about among normal people?

“Your father is human...mostly.” Shiri’s head snapped up at her mother’s answer. Mostly? Can it get any more convoluted? “Shiri, honey listen. You need to concentrate and tell me everything. Where is this male from? What sort of demi-god? Honey, a mere demi-god couldn’t have awakened your powers. Just because your father’s mother was half- Siren doesn’t mean you aren’t a full blown goddess. I am ancient. Mother Goddess to the Bambara people of Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso and Senegal. I am a creator, which make you, child of my womb every bit as powerful as I am. You and your sister.” Nyale kneeled in front of her taking her hands in hers. It was impossible not to stare into her mother’s eyes, impossible not to be lulled by her voice. “Shiri, someone wishes you harm. Something is following you, and I need to know who and why. Tell me everything so I can teach you how to protect yourself.”

“Daffyd is probably following me and he means no harm.” His wife had been long gone. Shiri knew that the more she thought about it, and even though she tried not to, her mind kept returning to Daffyd. She felt dissociated from reality, from everything without Daffyd. How was this possible? She didn’t really know the man, even if she had slept with him twice. She shouldn’t feel this...empty.

“I am right here, Shiri.”

Shiri didn’t recall jumping up and away from her mother. She didn’t recall moving at all, but she must have because as soon as Daffyd appeared she was in his arms. This was insanity—she was sure she didn’t even like the guy. Much. Yet his arms felt so good surrounding her, his shoulder so perfect underneath her cheek.

“Did you think I wouldn’t come for you, *’m cara?* Did you think I wouldn’t feel it the second you left?” Daffyd’s voice washed over her, soothing her in places she didn’t know needed it.

He still loved his deceased wife, Shiri was sure of it. But he felt something far different for her, and no less powerful. As soon as he touched her she knew it. Had he not followed her, how much time would she have wasted being jealous of a dead woman? Could this day be any more weird?

“Bran the Blessed.”

Her mother. She’s forgotten the ancient African goddess, that apparently Shiri never really knew, was still there.

“I am his son.” Daffyd actually moved Shiri behind him. It was laughable, but sweet. With her newfound knowledge, Shiri knew instantly her mother was far more powerful than her new lover.

As was she.

“Why is my daughter in danger?” Nyale was no longer mildly upset. She was pissed.

“Daughter?” Daffyd’s body relaxed somewhat, but he kept Shiri behind him anyway. She could feel his shock, as well as his relief.

“You reached above yourself demi-god. You mated my daughter without telling her what you were doing. You tied her to you for all time without her knowledge. You’re lucky I don’t crush you where you stand. You will tell me who is threatening my child, or I will make sure it is *your* head buried beneath the London Tower.” Apparently it didn’t matter how powerful the mother was. A mother was a mother.

Shiri felt a burst of pride and yes, love, for her mother. Misguided she may have been; there was no way she should’ve kept this from her and her sister. She could see it when they were children, but now it was kind of important to know you had the power to kill a person with a mere thought. What if something else had released the knowledge of her powers inside her without realizing it? The consequences could have been devastating.

“Maeve, Queen of Fae. I will take care...”

Before Daffyd could finish the sentence she was gone—just like that. Shiri stared at the spot where her mother had been just a few seconds before, then back up at Daffyd. The totality of all she had seen and heard crashed into her, along with millions of other things she had no idea what to do with. It was just too much. Daffyd, her mother, her father...Maeve, Queen of Fae? What did she have to do with anything? No, no, she was not going to ask. In fact, she was not going to do anything. At the moment. Walking to the bar in the corner of her living room she poured a shot of tequila, looking at the tiny glass containing the pale amber liquid. Nope, that wasn’t going to do it.

“Shiri, we must talk.” Daffyd followed her as she calmly walked into the kitchen. When she tried to slice herself some lime wedge, he waved his hands and perfect little wedges just appeared.

Shiri stared down at the wedges. She could’ve just wished for them while at the bar. They would’ve appeared out of thin air. Shaking her head, she picked up the cutting board and headed back to the bar. Completely ignoring the shot glass, she grabbed the bottle and took it to the head.

“We’ll talk,” she assured the Fae-god person. “Seeing as how we are, what did my mother called it? Ah, yes tied together for all time I think she said. I think we have plenty of time to discuss. But right now I am going to drink until I don’t feel like castrating you.”

Maeve was livid. How dare that pissant of a half-breed defy her? Four thousand years and he’d not learned his lesson? He dared he seek out comfort with yet another human woman? Perhaps killing this one would be too kind. This time she would keep the creature in a Fairy hill where she would be a lowly sex slave for Brownies. Or perhaps she would serve the little tart up to the Dark Fae. By the time they finished with the upstart Daffyd would be loath to look at her much less touch her.

Such deliciously wicked thoughts ran through the sovereign’s head as she walked to her reflecting pool. The spell she’d cast on the half-breed’s bed chamber thousands of years ago had borne fruit. Her shadow followed the woman Daffyd thought to replace Ceinwen with. A simple little spell and the bitch would be banished to the realm of the Dark Fae, landing at the feet of the Dark Throne no less. Maeve let loose a bark of laughter as she conjured her spell. Daffyd would learn her memory was long and vengeance was relentless. In the end he would beg at her feet for forgiveness, never mind about her daughter’s hand. Perhaps Maeve would pity him and welcome him into the royal bedchamber, but not until he was completely cowed.

Just as she cast the final components of her spell, the pool erupted in her disbelieving face. Maeve was thrown back on her behind, sputtering and fuming, but unable to move. What manner of magic was this that kept the Queen of Fae pinned to the cold stone floor? Fury consumed her; she struggled to right herself to no avail. She was about to scream for her guard when out of the pool emerged a goddess so ethereally beautiful it hurt for even a Fae to look at her. But Maeve couldn't look away. She was helpless to do a thing as the goddess floated up from the reflecting pool perfectly dry, dressed in a sheer blazingly white robe, a perfect foil for her dark skin.

"You dare to attempt to harm the child of my womb?" Although the words were quietly spoken, they echoed in Maeve's head sending shards of pain through her brain.

An Elemental. The highest form of god or goddess in any culture. They were the ones there from the beginning, older than even the Fae, shepherding the fragile humans throughout time. Anyone would be wise to give these capricious creatures wide berth. Their powers were limitless and their tempers notoriously iffy. Not even the Fae moods were as changeable as Elementals. This one was an African Elemental, one of the very first. Maeve felt an unfamiliar sensation in the pit of her gut. Pure, unadulterated fear.

"I have no quarrel with Fair Goddess. Some other has surely lied -"

"So you did not send your feeble shadow magic after my child?"

Maeve face drained of both color and the natural sparkle so common among the Fae.

Daffyd's woman was the natural child of an Elemental? That would make her a full blown goddess in her own right, not just a demi-god like Daffyd's father.

"I did not know. I swear to you. This half-breed Daffyd tricked me! He told me she was human."

The air surrounding Maeve heated uncomfortably, becoming a slow burn that even turned the air an orange-red. Too late she realized this goddess could read a lie. As much as she tried to call on her own powers to protect her, she felt her skin beginning to burn and melt, although a horrified look down showed no damage to her normally glittering skin.

"You dare lie to me, Fae?" The goddess's blue eyes glowed with promised retribution, chilling Maeve to her bones, even though her body burned with unholy fire. "I do not give warnings. I do not forgive when it comes to my children. There is no mercy for you. You shall burn for four thousand years; no one will be able to stand being near you. Every moment of every second you will burn and you will remember you dared to try to trifle with what is mine."

And with that she was gone.

But the blaze surrounding Maeve, the smoldering unbearable heat, remained.

Chapter Nine

“Mate? Tied for all time?” The tequila wasn’t having the effect Shiri had hoped. She curled up in the corner of her couch as she tried to process the rapid changes her body was currently undergoing. It didn’t hurt really, it was just strange. Were she a normal human being she supposed she would be on the brink of a nervous breakdown, if not completely over the edge already.

But she wasn’t a human being, was she? And neither was this man she’d attracted for whatever reason. With a sigh she set the bottle down and looked up to where he stood. He really was a gorgeous male specimen. All tall and brawny, complete with tousled curls that gave him a playful air to go along with his serious dark looks. Just looking at him made her wet and needy. And he knew it too. She could tell with the way his head cocked to the side, a devilish gleam in those gray eyes.

Ceinwen. Knowledge of the woman came despite Shiri’s best efforts to block it. She had been beautiful, that was a given, but the woman had been truly one of those rare people who was sweet inside and out. That was something Shiri had never been. Saltiness was just her nature. If that was the kind of woman Daffyd had fallen for before, what did that say for their future? There was no doubt he cared for her. Loved her even. She could feel that all too keenly. But what about when they got to know each other better?

“I could not have told you what I did not know.” Daffyd’s voice dropped an octave, no doubt on purpose. Shiri wanted to purr and rub her body against him when he did that. Bastard. “And I assure you my parents are mated.” Shiri huffed at the crooked smile he threw her way and managed not to move from her corner on the sofa. He was charming, damn his hide. Didn’t stop Daffyd from slowly making his way to her though. He curled his big body right around her, his lips skimming across her forehead. “As are we. Had I known what you were I would have warned you. But I cannot say I would have held back.” His hands roamed her body as he spoke directly in her ear. Goosebumps broke out all over her skin, her nipples tightening painfully. “You are far too tempting.”

Being a goddess she should’ve been able to stop the low moan from escaping, but she couldn’t. “Contractions. You are going to have to learn them because I’m not about to hide away in some moldering pile of stone on the edge of a flipping cliff.”

It was feeble at best, but how could she think when the kisses against her neck was robbing her of rational thought?

“We will live wherever you wish, *'m cara.*”

Too easy, but she couldn’t really complain at the current moment. Not with the way her skin had begun to tingle. “This doesn’t mean I forgive you, you know.”

It was a lie, and they both knew it. Uncurling her body, she welcomed his weight pressing against her. It felt so good to be surrounded by a hot, solid wall of man. Daffyd wisely said nothing, intent on raining kisses all over her face. Shiri had willed warm clothing on herself before leaving the Welsh castle, and apparently so had he. The cable knit sweater, jeans and boots were far too many clothing between them. With that simple thought every stitch of clothing both had on was gone. She was really going to love this whole make-it-happen-with-a-thought thing. Especially with the way his mouth traveled down her body, the sucking kisses making a trail from her face down to her breasts.

He cupped them reverently, as if they were something to be worshipped. The first touch of his lips to her quivering, needy flesh was lingering, but gentle. The heat of his breath caressed her nipples every bit as much as his lips. Gradually the action began deeper, his kiss more insistent. Shiri’s hands curled into his wealth of hair as he began to suck in earnest. It was light a

bolt straight from her breasts to her very core, making her pussy contract painfully against nothing. Her body bowed and bucked, seeking fuller contact.

“Not so fast, *'m enaid.*” Daffyd began a slow descent down her torso, stopping every so often to give his attention to a spot here, a curve there. “I want to savor you.”

Shiri prayed he was kidding, but she was all too afraid he wasn't. Couldn't he feel the smoldering heat between them. With every touch she felt as if she would combust completely. Her legs opened gladly at his first nudge, his hand dipping into her sodden pussy. She'd always known that when her dream lover finally became flesh the love they made would be explosive. She'd been correct. A thick digit slid inside her pussy, perfectly curved upward to hit her most delicate spot just right at the same time Daffyd bit down on her nipple. Her back arched, her hips driving upward to welcome him inside.

“Give me your release, Shiri. Come for me now.”

As if her body was his completely to command Shiri's orgasm burst hard. She was left gasping for breath and no time to calm. Not when Daffyd had dipped his head to replace his fingers with a devilish tongue. Oh sweet Goddess, she'd thought his hands had been heaven. He ran circles round and round her clit between sucking down on the little nubbin hard. Just when she thought she would explode, he backed off, plunging his tongue deep inside her channel.

“Oh Goddess please, please Daffyd.” Shiri had no idea what the hell she was begging for. His tongue inside her felt every bit as sinfully delicious deep inside as it had on her clit.

Shiri dug her fingers into his hair, not knowing if she was going to push him away or bring him closer. Immortal beings didn't need to breathe right? She rode his face mercilessly, giving over her complete being into his very capable hands. The room seemed to be spinning, her heart stopped beating as she crested again, harder this time, screaming to the heavens at the ecstasy so powerful it was almost pain.

And still Daffyd would not allow her to let it go. She found herself thoroughly impaled on his long, thick cock, sitting directly on top of him in a twinkling of an eye. Her body didn't seem to have as much trouble catching up as her mind did. She was rocking with abandon up and down, desperate to engulf every inch. Her pussy stretched to accommodate him, he filled her so full; it was exquisite, the burn so sweet she never wanted it to end. It was her last thought before she completely detonated, flying apart.

And it didn't have to Shiri realized. They really did have forever.

Chapter Ten

Daffyd hadn't spent a night away from his castle since Ceinwen's death. He would've thought he would at least miss it somewhat. He didn't. He slept with the woman he never knew he needed so badly wrapped in his arms. Shiri slept like a human after a perilous journey, not realizing she didn't need the sleep. She was a full blown goddess, she didn't need the rest. Her transition was a lot to process, he supposed for someone who had gone through a normal human life thinking they were just like everyone else. She looked more like an angel in her rest. No one would know what a firebrand she was while awake. So different from his human wife.

Ceinwen forgive me, I have to let you go.

But she was gone already. She had been for some time; it only took him a few thousand years to realize it. Well, a few thousand years and a tempestuous handful of a goddess. He would have to be on his toes, that was for sure. Not to mention his new mother-in-law. He shuddered at the prospect of the meeting to come, and it would come. He shook his head as he allowed his body to relax. An Elemental. His father was going to crow with laughter at that one.

Daffyd was drifting off himself when he felt it. A presence so malevolent it made his head spin. He'd never felt anything like it; dark and twisted, it was some form of enchantment he wasn't used to, therefore he had no idea how to counter it. He couldn't pinpoint it, but he could not let it touch Shiri. Carefully climbing out of bed so as not to wake her, he moved into the living room, searching through the shadows for a threat. The evil was pervasive, filling the entire apartment with its stench. It was not a Fae threat, those he could smell miles away. This was something more. He just couldn't seem to pinpoint where it came from. He was about to go and wake Shiri when he heard from the bedroom.

"Calisto no!"

Daffyd flashed to the bedroom to see a crazed man, a human, lift a gun and point towards Shiri's head. He didn't think, didn't hesitate, he flashed directly in front of the gun as it fired. The bullet shouldn't have been able to pierce his skin. But it did. Not as fast or as lethal as it may have a human, but the scorching metal ripped through his flesh slowly, leaving a trail of poison in its wake. He couldn't move; he couldn't push the offending object out. He tried to speak but no sound came out. His last thought before giving in to the lights that beckoned was of Shiri.

It happened so fast she could scarcely process it. The bullet tore into Daffyd, her hands flew out and suddenly Calisto was on fire. Flames shot around his body, his screams renting the air. Although she saw he was clearly burning, nothing around him was affected. The greedy flames only touched him, even as he fell and was reduced to a pile of white ash.

Shiri had never been so scared in her life. She had let her guard down, gone to sleep as if everything was still the same and hadn't awakened to the threat until it was too late. She could have stopped Calisto, would have; but when she saw Daffyd flash in front of the bullet she had frozen for the briefest second. One second too long. It didn't make sense. No human weapon should have been able to hurt him. So why had it?

"You are going to have to start using the senses you so unwittingly unlocked, daughter mine." Nyale had appeared as soon as Shiri had thought of her. "This human has been playing with very dark magic. It is nothing a Welsh recluse would've known to be prepared for. We are going to have to take him back to his country; his gods have to lend him the essence to heal."

Would they do that? Was Daffyd in good standing with the gods of his land?

"How are we going to get him there? What if they say no? What if I lose him?" Panic. Dread gripped her heart with its icy talons refusing to let go.

“Shiri, use the knowledge you were born with!” her mother snapped sharply. “Collect yourself, child. You are a goddess born of an Elemental. Act like it!”

It wasn't as easy as her mother instructed, but she did manage to put on the appearance of complete tranquility as they stood before the Welsh Court of Gods. They were an assortment of deities, rather more like humans than other deities, most of them having ruled humans like monarchs at one time or another. The knowledge of who each of them were and their natures came easily to Shiri, now that she was depending heavily on what she had foolishly ignored precious minutes before.

“We have no quarrel with you Nyale of Kemet.” The one who spoke was Dôn, mother goddess and Elemental in her own right, though not as old or as powerful as Shiri's mother. “Whatever this one has done, we will deal with him. Leave him and be gone.”

“What makes you think I have come here to complain?” Nyale poked the younger goddess. “I certainly never said this poor soul had done anything to me. How could he possibly? I could destroy him with an eyelash.”

Shiri wanted to scream at the matriarchal divas posturing as her mate lay on a raised dais Nyale must've conjured, writhing in pain. She could actually feel Daffyd's spirit struggling to remain in this realm. She wanted to tear their hair out, scratch out their eyes- anything to get them to focus on the situation at hand.

“Daffyd!”

A gorgeous Fae woman who wasn't much taller than a child had flown into the hall of the Welsh gods. Her golden locks swirled in a wind she created by her frantic movements, crystalline tears sparkled down her shimmering rosy cheeks. Even in her great distressed she was stunningly dazzling in appearance. Shiri hated her on sight. She had no idea who this Fae was, but she had clenched her hands not to burn her where she crouched over Daffyd's body. On her heels was a giant creature that could only be Daffyd's father. His raven black hair fell to the middle of his back in wilder curls than the Fae. That would mean the small woman was Daffyd's mother. Shiri breathed an inaudible sigh of relief hoping now they could get somewhere.

“You have been busy Nyale.” Dôn said, still ignoring Daffyd's plight. “The wind carries word the Queen of Fae has locked herself in her hidden chamber seeing no one, but sounds of her screams can be heard in the next realm.”

Nyale shrugged, examining her fingernails as if she had all the time in the world. “She offended me. Someone needed to teach her a lesson and apparently the gods of this land are not up to the task.”

Dôn visibly bristled. Daffyd's parents murmured among themselves, overwrought with sorrow and in Shiri's opinion, helplessness. Shiri had had enough. This was the most ridiculous bullshit she had ever seen. These chicks had more power in their little pinky and they were having a freaking cat fight, albeit a relatively polite one, over what?

“Daffyd requires your assistance.” Shiri faced the Welsh goddess head on, stepping in front of her mother with her chin held high. Let the bitch try something. By all that was good and decent in the world she would smite her where she stood.

The feeling must have awakened something brand new inside her because her skin began to glow, just like her mother's, only with visible thread of electricity crackling all around her. She surprised her mother and the Welsh goddess too, because both females took a physical step back, something Shiri gathered was not done in their circles. Well too fucking bad. Daffyd needed help.

“What manner of magic has done this?” Dôn didn't mention Shiri's serious breach of protocol, for which she was grateful. She was a brand new goddess on the edge, just a hop, skip and a jump away from doing something seriously stupid if someone didn't do something soon.

“Santeria.” Shiri didn’t hesitate to answer. She had no idea how she knew, but that hardly mattered.

The Welsh goddess nodded, walking over to Daffyd and his parents. She placed a now glowing hand on his brow. After a few minutes she turned to Nyale.

“To help him would make him a god in his own right, you know this. Do you accept the consequences?” Dôn demanded.

“If he is to be the mate of the child of my womb, it is a necessity.”

That shocked the other goddess though Shiri was impressed to see she didn’t show it. With a curt nod Dôn bent to whisper something in Daffyd’s parents’ ears. She stood back and allowed her to cover Daffyd’s body with her own. Shiri had to grit her teeth, but she refused to look away.

“Relax, Shir, darling. She is merely sharing her essence with him,” Nyale soothed lowly for Shiri’s ears alone. “She is transferring more power from the universe of the Unseen into him so that he may be your equal. It is necessary.”

Equal, superior, inferior, whatever— as long as he lived, that was all Shiri cared about. It took far too long for her state of mind, but finally Dôn moved away and Daffyd lay still.

“It is done.” Dôn inclined her head ever so slightly in Nyale’s direction. “He is slightly more than a god, our Welsh Bard. I have made him fitting for your child. May your children prosper.”

Shiri would’ve thanked Dôn, would have thanked her mother, but she found herself alone with Daffyd in the bedchamber at his castle. Okay, so they weren’t big on thank you’s and goodbyes. Fine, she would thank her mother later. All that mattered was Daffyd. He would be okay, they would have a chance. That was all she could ever ask for.

Afterward...

Daffyd didn't want to open his eyes. In the thousands of years he had lived, he'd never felt quite as cozy, quite as...comfortable. He was in the same chamber he had slept in more years than he cared to count; he knew that without opening his eyes, but the furs on his bed felt just a little warmer, the pillows a little softer. Not to mention the delightful woman sprawled across him. Life couldn't get any bet-

"What in the hell happened? What was in that bullet? Why do I feel different?" He tried to mentally shake the cobwebs from his head, but what he was left with made no sense.

There was a human, one who had been dabbling in dark magic. It was a kind he'd never come across before, had no defenses for. Stupidly he had jumped in front of a bullet to protect Shiri. Shiri, his one true mate. The goddess he was now tied to for all time, the sexy bundle laying on him at this very second. The last thing he recalled was a searing tear ripping through him; the burn had been unbearable. He felt as if his very soul was being shattered into a million pieces. He could hear his mother weeping and his father, the big giant of a god helplessly trying to calm her.

And then there was calm. Peace infused in every fiber of his being knitting him back together again. He felt himself being rebuilt from the inside out. More power than he'd ever known radiated from his inner core. He'd been changed, became something more.

"Why did you jump in front of the bullet? I was going to stop it."

It was an excellent question. One he wasn't so sure he wanted to answer. Shiri was nothing like his first wife. Ceinwen had been fragile, whereas even living as a human Shiri was a force to be reckoned with.

"I forgot you weren't human." It was as honest as he was willing to get, but she would know that if she was using her powers.

Shiri rolled so that she was lying fully on top of him, shifting her hips so they were pelvis to pelvis, then rotating enticingly against him. She really didn't need to do that, he was already rock hard and ready.

"That's a nice little half-truth, Davie-baby."

"Davie-baby?" She was incorrigible, his little goddess.

Instead of complaining about the nick name he just knew he was going to be stuck with, he twisted his own hips before driving upward, burying his cock into her wet, welcoming heat. It was the most intoxicating combination of pleasure and pain; so sleek and hot it made a man-well, god, want to weep with joy, so tight it hurt so damn good to slide in and out of the snug channel.

"Umm, I like the way you think." Shiri lifted her upper body, taking over the movements he'd started.

She was exquisite. Full, proud breasts taunted him as she slowly rolled her hips, sucking his shaft deep inside her before slowly releasing it almost to the very tip. No Pantheon of gods had a heaven as sweet as hers. He could worship in this temple forever without ever getting tired. Grabbing her hips with both hands he thrust upward in earnest, increasing their tempo with an unspoken demand. Shiri resisted at first, attempting to lift away from him. She even cheated, using her powers to try to keep him from thrusting inside her faster.

Surprisingly, her powers weren't stronger than his. He was able to counteract, moving them both with increasing speed with no problems. That shouldn't have been possible; she was the child of an Elemental. He had been changed in some way—but he would worry about that later. Now was not the time; not when her vaginal walls were constricting against his cock so perfectly. Not with the way those beautiful breasts bounced in front of him like that.

Heaving upright, Daffyd managed to grasp her hands and hold them with one hand behind her back. She didn't try to stop him. In fact she ground down harder on him, her pussy jumping as she did so. Bending his head he took one tight nipple into his mouth, sucking hard. So delightfully responsive, his own little goddess. Her core creamed at the little action, her hips bucking for him. He bit down, rewarded with a spasming massage from her sheath to his dick from tip to root. Daffyd groaned as he lifted his head to repeat the action.

He'd wanted it to last. He wanted to savor the fact they were both alive and hardy, despite the crazed human deluded with insane desires for a woman he could never hope to possess. Wanted to, but he couldn't. Their bodies crashed together only to part, straining and desperate to be a part of one another. The sensations were too much, too intense. When Shiri cried out and bore down harder than before, her pussy sucking him hard, there was no way Daffyd could hold back. With a roar he came inside her, his woman, holding nothing back.

They lay there entwined for a while before Daffyd could talk. It was difficult to put together the words with his woman in his arms.

"Do you want to tell me what happened?" He wasn't sure he wanted to know, but he was different. He should probably know how deep it ran.

As he listened he had to admit he was in awe. It appeared he had attached himself to one formidable family. Dôn hadn't concerned herself with any of the lesser gods in thousands of years. Cold was far too warm a word for that particular goddess. Yet his mother-in-law had not only managed to get the Welsh-Irish goddess to help him, Nyale had gotten Dôn to share her essence with him, making him an equal to the woman he loved.

Not that he needed it, but it was comforting to know they were on equal footing. Chauvinistic maybe, but it was a relief.

"So what do we do now?" Shiri asked, snuggling against his chest.

Being supernatural had its perks. Daffyd's cock swelled in answer to her question, his hips already beginning to move in slow circles as his shaft began to dance inside her. Flipping her on to her back he kissed her deeply until they both were panting for air.

"I have a few ideas. If you play nice I will even sing to you."

Nyale stirred her coffee absently, watching as her youngest child flittered around the kitchen. Unlike Shiri, Naomi had never left home though she was a successful artist who could easily support herself. Nyale had been concerned before that Naomi was too timid, too scared to strike out on her own, but after the drama with Shiri, she was glad to be able to keep an eye on her youngest.

She was going to have to tell her. If she had recognized the natural allure from their essence was leaking through despite the spell cast at their births, Shiri would have been better prepared. They drew people to them; their beauty went far deeper than what the eye could see. They attracted the good and the bad, as was apparent by Shiri's dangerous stalker. All worked out in the end, but Naomi was far different from her older sister. She was gentler, more sensitive. It would not be a good idea for her to stumble onto the knowledge on her own. While it was not physically possible for a goddess to have an actual nervous breakdown, one with the powers her daughters held could cause serious damage to herself and anyone around her. Perhaps binding them hadn't been the brightest idea.

With a defeated sigh Nyale mentally steeled herself for the task to come.

"Naomi dear, have a seat. There is something we need to discuss..."

Glossary of Terms

Anrhega 'i ata , cariad – Give it to me, lover.

'm enaid – My soul

Ca needed 'ch achos 'n gyhyd - I have needed you for so long

'm enaid chychwior – My soul mate

'm cara – My love

Nyale - Creator of the Bambara people, she gives magical powers to women