

The Dark Desires of the Druids: The Tryst

A Ravenous Romance™ Once Upon a Time™ Original Title

Isabel Roman

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**Harrington Manor
Bramhope, England
July 1882**

Malcolm Wargrave, Earl of Preston, was enchanted.

He had met Miss Raven Drake only hours earlier, but already wanted her more than he believed it possible for a man to want a woman. She was a guest of Isadore and Isadore's brother, Lucien, who hosted the four-person picnic under a large oak tree at Harrington Manor.

Malcolm watched as Miss Drake laughed at her friend's imitation of the latest political cartoon of Prime Minister Gladstone, her black hair glinting in the sunlight. The woman's blue eyes sparkled with humor and stole furtive glances in his direction. He longed to see those eyes in the depths of passion.

The day was warm. Miss Drake arrived that morning. It was her laugh that first caught Malcolm's attention, drawing him from conversation with his valet. She'd alighted from the carriage in a flurry of skirts and laughter. He was instantly captivated.

Sipping his wine, Mac watched Raven's full attention turn on him. In another setting, he'd take the opportunity to tug down her bodice and enjoy her lush breasts. Their foursome picnic was an intimate affair, yet Mac couldn't help but wish Lucien and Isadore away.

"Is this your first visit to Harrington Manor?" she asked.

There was a slight Scots intonation to her voice that added to Mac's attraction. He was at a loss as to why.

"Yes, Miss Drake," he nodded, sipping his wine again. He made sure his gaze remained steady on hers and didn't drift to her décolletage.

"You must explore the estate," she insisted. Mac swore she edged closer. He didn't complain. "The horse trails are extensive, and there's a delightful stream in the wood."

“I’ve explored the moors,” Mac admitted, “but not yet the wood. I’d be delighted if you accompanied me on a ride.”

“Absolutely,” she grinned, “I love to ride. Early in the morning, when the fog hasn’t yet lifted, the grounds are almost mystical.”

“Then we must make a date,” he said. “Early tomorrow morning?” Raven nodded. “I have my horse boarded here, perhaps Lady Isadore will loan you hers?”

Isadore laughed. “Raven doesn’t like my Diana. She prefers her own. Luckily, Lucien just purchased a new mare. I’m sure Sterling will suit you nicely.”

Mac stood, stretching his tall frame. Offering a hand to both ladies, he turned to Isadore. “Thank you for the lovely meal. My compliments to the cook.”

“I’ll pass your compliments along,” she nodded.

“As always,” Raven agreed, “it was delicious. I think I’ll walk by the river and cool off a bit.”

“May I join you?” he asked, still holding her elbow.

She slipped a hand through his proffered arm and smiled at him. “Of course.”

They continued their conversation of the latest political cartoons, though Mac’s attention was elsewhere.

He wished she hadn’t worn gloves. He longed to feel her bare skin. Raven’s scent was intoxicating. He wanted to taste her. *Is she sweet or spicy?* Mac guessed the latter: She was a firebird; not the shy maiden but a passionate woman. With her every movement and word, that passion was evident.

The shade from the trees immediately cooled the air. Mac felt Raven breathe a sigh of relief.

“Women’s fashion wasn’t meant to take this kind of heat,” she sighed. “I sometimes wonder why we do this to ourselves.”

“The women of the Ottoman Empire wear much more than this,” he said as she led him along the path. In the distance he could hear the river, and wondered if he could convince her to take a dip with him. Though the water was no doubt cold, he could think of several ways to keep them both warm.

“They cover themselves from head to toe and wear a veil over their faces.”

“I can’t imagine,” Raven gasped.

Turning her to face him, Mac ran a finger down her cheek. “You’re utterly breathtaking, Miss Drake,” he said. “I’d hate to see such beauty covered by a veil.”

She didn’t blush, nor flinch from his touch. “I’m flattered, Lord Preston.”

“This is no idle compliment. I thought so the moment I saw you.”

“Thank you,” she said, unwavering, and smiled. “I thought the same of you.”

Mac laughed and turned her back along the path. “I don’t think a veil would complement my skin tone,” he admitted with a barely suppressed chortle.

His fingers still tingled from where he’d touched her. Raven’s skin was soft, but the feeling between them was anything but. It was as electric as the light bulbs that graced Harrington Manor.

“When we were children,” Raven said, walking closer to the bank, “Isadore and I would often come to the stream. On very hot days like today, we’d take off our stockings and bunch up our skirts and wade into the water. It was always cold, but we’d laugh and splash each other until we were both soaked.”

Mac smirked as she paced a few steps ahead. He could think of much more interesting ways they could pass an afternoon by the river. “Cool water on hot summer days certainly does elicit delicious reactions from a woman’s body,” Mac murmured.

Raven looked over her shoulder at him and smiled. “And I’m sure from a man’s, too.”

Already hard for her, Mac's cock stiffened further. "You're right, Miss Drake." He offered his arm again. Raven smiled and lifted her skirts. She fell into step beside him. "Lord Preston, tell me of your adventures on the sea. I understand from Lucien you were quite the pirate."

Laughing, Mac shook his head. He looked down into her bright blue eyes. "*Pirate* is a bit of an exaggeration. I captained nothing more than a merchant ship. Boring stuff, spices and cloth."

Raven stopped and turned to look at him. For a moment, she watched him as if she could see all his secrets. "Boring, indeed. Something tells me there's more to it than that." She flashed him a smile. "But I won't pry."

She turned back to the stream and watched the water rush by. "I must admit I'm quite envious, Lord Preston. I've often longed to go beyond the shores of Britain to see for myself a greater part of this world."

"I won't lie to you," Mac said and stepped closer. "There are many adventures, many wondrous sights to see." He took her arm and turned her to face him. "In the end, there's nothing as beautiful as England. This is home."

"Yes, home" she agreed. Raven's gaze drifted back to the stream. "If only..."

Mac tilted her chin, forcing her to look at him. "If only what?"

Offering a small smile, she said, "If only there weren't so many constraints."

Surprising him with her boldness, she leaned up to kiss him. Reacting immediately, Mac pulled her closer and deepened the kiss. Raven slipped a hand around his neck. He felt the other slide between the buttons of his shirt. Letting his fingers drift along her shoulder, he traced her breasts along the neckline of her dress.

As abruptly as she leaned into him, Raven pulled away. Breathing heavy, Mac watched her compose herself.

“We should get back,” she said, her voice shaky.

Good, he thought. Not as composed as you pretend. How much will it take to tear away at that veneer and expose the woman beneath? How do I reconnect with the woman willing to kiss a practical strange? The one steeped in conversational innuendo? Mac was determined to find out.

Hard for her, he took a moment to steady himself. He could not take her in the forest.

“Tell me,” she said, breathing steadier now. “Tell me more about your adventures.”

Threading her hand through his arm, Mac offered as innocent a smile as he could manage.

* * * *

Raven adjusted her hat as she crossed the yard toward the stable. Lord Preston stood by his horse, talking softly to the stallion, unaware of her approach. She took the opportunity to study him.

Tall and well built, he carried himself with a confidence few possessed but many tried for. Mac seemed a natural leader. Several scars marred his hands, leaving Raven wondering about what happened to him. *He is hardly a simple merchant*, she mused.

Raven blushed, remembering her behavior at the stream the day before. *But surely he’s come across more aggressive women?* Curious as to what it was like to kiss someone other than Gareth, she’d relished the chance to do so. Her fiancée was a fine kisser, but failed to make her heart stop like Lord Preston. She loved Gareth and planned to marry him; but never had she wanted to be intimate with him or anyone else before their marriage night.

Shrugging, she continued for the stable.

This might be my only opportunity, she thought, *my only chance to discover what it could be like with another man.*

Before her wedding, Raven was free to explore: it was part of their ancient heritage. Druids

believed in the sanctity of marriage, but only after vows were said. *Before that moment*, Raven realized as she studied Malcolm, *I am free to do as I please*.

She didn't know what Lord Preston's views on magickers were, and didn't care. For the first time in her life, this was something that didn't involve her druidic heritage. *I am not an arcane master with him. I am a woman*.

This was normal, something all her own.

"A fine day for a ride," she greeted, pulling on her riding gloves.

"Yes," he agreed with a final pat on his horse's nose. "Just as you described it. I trust you'll be able to find your way?"

His tone was cheeky, but his smile was welcoming. *A challenge, then*. "I can hold my own," she said. "Just try and keep up."

Malcolm laughed. The deep sound sent shivers up Raven's spine. *Oh, my*. Gareth never affected her like this.

"Miss Drake, I think you'll find me able to do that and more."

They were off along the grounds moments later. Raven set a brisk pace and made sure to keep close: not because she feared she'd lose him in the mist (she had great faith in his ability to find his way in the fog), but because she enjoyed being so close to him.

Raven smiled and kicked Sterling into a gallop. She heard Malcolm's laughter behind her, followed by the pounding of his horse as they crossed the wide expanse of Harrington grounds. Exhilarated, Raven headed for the woods. She made sure Mac knew where she went.

She pulled up and turned, laughing and breathless, to her companion. "This was invigorating," She said.

"A hard ride always is," he agreed.

Raven laughed over the lump in her throat. *What would it be like to ride him?* She'd heard of such things but never imagined them. Shaking her head at those thoughts, she dismounted and led her mare.

"I don't think I've ever been along these paths," she admitted. "Isadore and I always headed for the ones closest to the stream."

"Shall we tie the horses, then, and explore?"

"Yes," she nodded, "I'd like that."

Malcolm tied off his horse and waited for her. Her breath was short at his nearness. No matter how she tried to steady herself, it was no use. She stooped to pluck a wild rose.

Fidgeting with the flower, Raven wondered how to bring up the kiss from yesterday. *Nothing like plunging in*, she thought.

"I'm not in the habit of kissing gentlemen I've met mere hours before."

"How long do you normally know a gentleman before kissing him?" Mac asked.

Raven laughed, the tension leaving her. "At least a day," she smiled. "There must be something terribly special about you."

"I'd like to think so," he said, and took her hand.

She glanced down at their joined hands. The way he held hers felt natural to her. Raven wanted to take off her glove and feel his skin on hers. She looked up at him. "There's something I should share with you."

His gaze heated, turning the green to molten gold. "There are a great many things I'd like to share with *you*," He countered.

"I'm engaged," She blurted out.

Malcolm paused, his gaze steady. His fingers toyed with hers for a long moment. "A taken

woman has never been an obstacle,” he said softly. “It’s up to the woman.”

A smile crossed her face.

As they walked along the path, the mist began to lift. The sun was still a distant thought in the forest, but the heat of the day had begun to burn along the ground. The faint shape of a building was outlined in the distance. Raven’s smile turned wicked. *This is it.*

“I understand there are certain rules in an arrangement such as this?” she asked.

“Arrangement?” Malcolm echoed, eyebrows raised.

“Is it not customary in situations such as ours?” she wondered, walking ahead.

“What situation is that?” he asked. Though she didn’t turn, she could feel him very close behind her. His voice whispered into her ear, breath fanning over her neck.

Slowly she twisted around, skirts gliding along the grass. She looked up at him and wondered what she’d been saying. With Malcolm so close, Raven found she couldn’t think.

“Why Lord Preston,” she said breathlessly and cursed herself. “I’m referring to sex.” Raven watched him take a visible breath. “This is an experience I would like to partake in, but there *must* be certain rules.”

His brows rose again, inquisitive and amused. Crossing his arms over his chest he nodded. “You have my undivided attention, Miss Drake.”

“Our encounter,” she paused, “or *encounters* are to remain strictly private. My reputation is important and I don’t want the gossips to perceive me as a ruined woman.”

“I wouldn’t dream of it.” He bowed over her hand, and Raven wondered how he’d come to hold it again. “I understand discretion. My priority is to protect your reputation.”

“In the company of others, we shall, as expected, maintain the utmost decorum.” Raven stopped and added, “When I say *no more*, you will respect my decision.”

Something flared in Mac's eyes. Raven ignored it and continued. "And when I say those words, our tryst will have ended."

Malcolm pulled her against him, hands on her waist. "I'm in agreement," he whispered.

Turning in his arms, Raven pulled out of his embrace and proceeded toward the building she'd seen in the distance. She needed a moment to compose herself in spite of her arousal. Raven's nerves jittered in her stomach.

Breathing deeply, she recognized the building as the old parson's cottage. A vague memory of exploring it with Isadore crept past all things Malcolm. As she reached the entryway and opened the old oak door, Raven hesitated.

"Do you think me a wicked, wretched woman?"

Malcolm placed his hand on her shoulder, gently urging her to face him. She turned, stared into his eyes, and waited for his reply. "I think you a goddess."

She arched her back against the stone entry and touched his face. "Think of me as just a woman. A nameless woman from your travels."

Then his lips were on hers and she forgot all but his taste and feel. His hand smoothed up her blouse and cupped a breast while they kissed. She whimpered and pushed further into him.

They jumped apart at the sudden sound of rustling leaves.

* * * *

Malcolm stepped in front of Raven and scanned the area. Warmth flowed through her.

"A squirrel," he chuckled, pointing to where the creature skittered along branches.

Malcolm spun around and picked Raven up by the waist. She tilted her head down to kiss him as he carried her into the cottage, kicking the door shut behind them. Slowly, he slid her down his body.

Unmitigated lust filled her as she controlled the slight shake of her hand. She unbuttoned Mac's shirt, his heated stare burning through her. He pulled the pin from her hat and tossed it to one side. Whereas she was slow, exploring him, he was impatient.

Letting that impatience guide her, Raven tugged the shirt from Mac's pants, grateful he wore no vest, and pushed shirt and jacket off his left shoulder. Standing on tiptoe, she kissed the exposed skin. His muscle was solid beneath her lips. Running her tongue over the area, she tried to place his taste. *Musky, salty, and so much more than that.*

She wanted to taste all of him.

Malcolm's lips were against Raven's neck, doing wonderful things she never wanted to end. Her head dropped back. She struggled to open her eyes and watch him. Pulling his head to hers, she kissed his mouth and savored the taste of tobacco there. She wanted more.

Raven jumped when Mac's fingers brushed her bare breasts. Naked from the waist up, open to his hot gaze, she almost faltered. *It is far too late now*, she told herself. *I want this.*

Again he lifted her, this time setting her on the old bed. His hands smoothed up Raven's legs, stopping short of her core, and bunching the skirt to her waist. Tugging one boot off, Malcolm kissed down her leg. His mouth closed around one toe.

"Oh," she gasped, eyes widening.

Malcolm repeated the gesture on Raven's other leg and she smiled, sensation tingling up her body. She moaned when his hand slid up her inner thigh. Her breath hitched as Malcolm's fingers teased her most intimate parts. Raven's fingers dug into the old dusty bedding. She collapsed backwards.

"Oh," she breathed again, unable to move but for the arch of her hips.

When Malcolm removed his hand, Raven felt bereft and forced her eyes open. Tossing his

clothes on the floor next to hers, he sat beside her to pull off his boots. She wanted to do to him what he'd done to her, but couldn't move. Raven's hands shook as she untied her skirt, pushed it off, and watched it crumble to the floor.

Malcolm gave her no time to think. He leaned over her, trapping Raven against the bed. His mouth was on hers. The searing intensity shot straight through her.

When his teeth tugged her nipple, Rachel arched against him. Malcolm's cock was hard and pulsing against her thigh, causing another ripple of need to shudder through her. Raven opened her legs to feel more of him, and wrapped her arms around his back to pull him closer. Her fingers traced his spine. She felt scars along his back. This realization was interrupted as Malcolm's mouth closed over her other nipple.

Then his fingers were on her and in her. One slipped into Raven's wetness. She was lost.

Kissing down her stomach, Malcolm's finger slid in and out, building her higher toward a peak she desperately wanted. Shocked when his mouth closed around her nub, Raven almost arched off the bed.

She felt his chuckle against her even as his mouth continued its exquisite torture. His hands moved up her body, cupping her breasts and tweaking her taut nipples.

All she could do was moan. "Malcolm," she gasped, unaware she'd spoken.

His teeth scraped her nub and she exploded. Grinding against him, mind blank, Raven's muscles went stiff. Her toes curled. And then Raven experienced her first orgasm.

She vaguely felt Malcolm kissing his way leisurely up her body, building her toward that peak again. When his mouth reached hers, she tasted her own juices.

Raven's attention traveled south again as she realized Malcolm positioning himself at her entrance. He slowly pushed into her, pausing to search her face for objection. There was none. In

one bold move, he entered her. Raven stifled her gasp.

“Why didn’t you tell me?” he demanded, surprised.

Raven leaned up to kiss him. Wrapping her legs around his waist in a move too natural to notice, she moved against him. Malcolm withdrew, and for a heartbeat she was afraid he’d stop. But, he thrust back in, and her breath hitched.

Unable to help her moans and gasps, Raven wondered if she was a truly wanton woman. The experience was at once frightening and exhilarating as Malcolm continued to move in and out of her. One hand slipped between their bodies and found her nub again. Raven gasped his name, pleading for release.

Malcolm hovered above Raven as his hot seed spilled inside her. Raven rode the waves of orgasm. When he collapsed on top of her, Raven held him close. His weight was comforting as his breathing evened.

“Why didn’t you tell me?” he repeated.

“It wasn’t something of importance,” she said quietly. “I wanted this.”

“And your fiancée?”

“Gareth will accept it. One of the rules,” she reminded him, “is that we don’t speak of it. Of him or anyone else.”

Malcolm rolled to the side and propped his head on one hand. The other drifted over Raven’s breasts. The soft move renewed her spent arousal.

“Very well,” Malcolm nodded, lifting her hand to his lips. He kissed each finger, her palm, and her wrist. “Then let us make the most of our time.”

* * * *

It took longer than it should have to dress. Their clothes were wrinkled and dusty, and there

was no way to disguise what they'd done. Mac worried for Raven's reputation. Not only had he promised to protect her, but he didn't know how Lucien and Lady Isadore would feel knowing their friend had given her virginity to someone other than her betrothed.

She'd said it didn't matter, he reminded himself. I believe her. What other choice do I have?

"I'm starving," Raven said as Mac tied her skirt. "I'm glad we brought a picnic."

"We'll gather the horses and find a nice spot by the stream." He swept her hair to one side and kissed the back of her neck. Despite their activities of most of the morning, Raven shivered at his touch.

The two gathered their horses and walked along the stream. Settling on a large rock in the dappled sunlight, Mac discovered a drawback to making love with Raven: He couldn't stop touching her. Lifting her hand, he kissed along the inside of her arm. "Since all of this is a new experience," he whispered against the corner of her mouth, "we should make love in the sunlight."

"Yes," she breathed, pulling back just enough to look him in the eye. "I can see the appeal of that experience."

"The appeal, eh?" he chuckled, moving to Raven's neck.

"I'd like to see you in the sunlight," she admitted, tilting her head to the side.

"Agreed," Mac whispered. "I'd love to see you dripping wet in the sunlight."

Raven kissed his jaw. He felt her smile. "You make me shiver," she said.

"More than any other?"

Raven pulled back, though he could still feel her arousal. "I think we should clarify the rules between us."

Mac chuckled again, but nodded. This wasn't his first "arrangement," but he would indulge hers. He was prepared to indulge her in all things.

“Go ahead,” Mac said, continuing his homage to her neck. “I’m listening.”

He felt Raven draw a deep breath and tilt her head to allow him better access. “I didn’t realize how freeing all this would be,” she said. “But we still need to take all the circumstances into consideration. I can’t have you—”

She broke off with a gasp.

Mac turned to see what startled her, knowing she thought they were caught. On the opposite bank a man in a dark suit dragged another man, bound and gagged with several boulders tied to his waist, along the rocks. Neither had seen Mac or Raven; and Mac instantly pulled Raven off their rock to hide from view.

“He’s going to drown him!” Raven whispered.

“Stay down,” he hissed, tugging off his boots. As Mac stripped off his jacket, the man in the dark suit heaved the bound man into the stream before turning back into the woods. Mac immediately dove into the stream.

* * * *

Raven rushed around the boulder and watched Malcolm swim to the drowning man. Her heart pounded with every stroke he took. She summoned her magick to her. Eyes glowing, she extended her right hand toward the drowning man and enclosed him in a bubble of air. Raven concentrated on keeping him alive as Mac made his way.

Malcolm dove beneath the water three times. Raven panicked when he didn’t surface as quickly as he should’ve; but still she kept the air bubble around the stranger. Raven felt the bubble break and knew both men were safe.

When they breached the surface, she breathed a sigh of relief. Raven used one last push along the water to move Malcolm faster toward her.

She waded into the stream to help him pull the man onto the bank. Both men collapsed on the ground. “Are you alright?” she cried.

He nodded. “This is the luckiest son of a bitch I’ve ever seen,” he gasped. “There was an air bubble around him.”

“What happened?” she asked the stranger as he coughed and gasped for air. “Who did this?”

“Name’s George Fulton. I’m a courier,” he gasped. “I work for the Leighton Family.” He interrupted himself to clear his throat. Raven grabbed a linen napkin for him to use.

“I was delivering a last will and testament for Old Man Harold Leighton when I was ambushed.”

Fulton tugged on Malcolm’s arm. “I’m sorry to interrupt your picnic,” he nodded toward Raven. “I need your help. I have to get the will to the family. They’re relying on me.”

Malcolm looked up at Raven. “Where could he have gone?”

“There’s a bridge off the property to the road,” she said. “I’ll go with you; I know the land.”

He looked ready to protest when Fulton spoke up. “Thank you, oh thank you.”

Malcolm pulled his boots back on and Raven untied their horses. *This wasn’t how I envisioned our dip in the stream*, she thought. “Stay here,” she instructed Fulton.

Raven taking the lead as they galloped toward the bridge. She was careful not to let Malcolm see her eyes and use her enhanced senses to determine where the woods were disturbed. Making sure her magicks were gone and eyes normal, she turned to him and pointed to the right.

“There’s a path through those trees; it’s probable that’s the direction he took.”

Nodding, Malcolm shot her an odd look and took the lead. They came upon a clearing and the stranger. He’d started a fire and was reading a sheaf of papers: *most likely*, Raven realized, *the will he stole from Fulton*.

* * * *

Mac signaled Raven to dismount and crept through the trees behind the stranger. Motioning for her to stay back, he quietly moved into the clearing, checking for additional assailants. There was only the one man.

“That bastard,” the man muttered. “How could he do this?”

“It’s very obvious he understood your character,” Mac said.

The man jerked up and around, papers falling to the ground. “Who the hell are you?”

“Think of me as Robin Hood,” Mac grinned, and punched the other man.

Though he stumbled backward, he quickly regained his footing and charged Mac. Out of the corner of his eye, Mac saw Raven run out of the cover of trees and gather the will. Easily dodging the attack, Mac brought his knee to the man’s stomach, slamming him on his back.

“Get up,” Mac snarled. Dripping wet, his afternoon with Raven interrupted, he was angry. He wasn’t giving any quarter to this thief. The man stood and Mac saw Raven had all the papers with her several yards away at the tree line. Hitting the stranger once more, Mac watched him collapse, out cold.

Walking back to Raven, he absently rubbed his knuckles. “It’s been a while since I’ve had a decent scuffle,” he grinned. “This didn’t count.”

Raven laughed and kissed Mac’s bruised knuckles. “I gathered all the papers,” she said. “We should get back to Fulton.”

“Yes,” Mac agreed, but caught her around the waist before she could go anywhere.

The papers crushed between them. Her lips were hot and willing under his.

“We should get back,” she whispered.

Nodding, Mac led her through the wood to their horses. “We’ll finish later,” he promised.

On the other side of the stream, Fulton sat on the boulder with a roll in one hand. He leapt up when he saw them.

“You found him?” he bowed, accepting the will. “I can’t thank you enough. My job depended on this.”

He bowed again and Mac stifled a laugh. “Have you the means to get to the family?”

“Yes,” Fulton said. “My horse is tied near the road where that blaggart Gibbons Leighton accosted me.”

“Harold’s son?” Mac guessed. Fulton nodded. “Then we’ll let you be on your way,” Mac said. “I’ll take you across the river.”

Fulton nodded, clutching the will to his chest.

Mac felt Raven’s eyes on his as he crossed the stream. After letting the courier dismount and watching him stumble toward the road, Mac turned around and headed back to Raven.

She sat on their boulder, lunch packed, steady gaze following him. He climbed off his horse and drew her to him. She didn’t resist his kisses. Quickly unbuttoning her blouse, Mac suckled one nipple and then the other. Knowing she was bare beneath her riding skirt, he gathered the material to her waist.

Raven’s fingers fumbled with the buttons of Mac’s pants. Impatient, pulled down his breeches and freed his cock. He closed his eyes while she touched him. Raven’s fingers were cool and light as she stroked him up and down.

Mac leaned against the boulder with her legs wrapped around him. He thrust into her and caught her moans with his kisses. Raven easily kept up with his pace. Mac circled her nub with thumb and forefinger. Her head fell back, hair trailing around them as she came.

“Malcolm!” she screamed.

In the seconds before his own orgasm exploded through him, Mac decided he liked the sound of his full name on her lips.

* * * *

Laughing as they exited the stables, Raven was careful not to touch him. The sun was low in the sky, the heat of the day muggy along the grounds. She wanted to retreat to their cottage, swim naked with him in the stream, and learn his body as he had hers. But they had been gone all day, and she was certain suspicions already formed.

Raven spotted Isadore while crossing the grounds to the patio. She'd have to ask her friend about acquiring some *scheptula*, used by their ancestors to prevent pregnancy. Most of the world believed the Greek herb to be extinct. Lucky for her, it was not.

"Raven?" Isadore jumped up and rushed down the steps. "What on earth happened to you?"

Raven pulled off her riding gloves and smacked them against the palm of her hand. Grinning, she looked up to where Lucien hovered. He looked speculative and worried.

"We were eating lunch when we witnessed a murder attempt," Raven began.

Isadore gasped. Lucien's eyes narrowed. Malcolm chuckled.

"The blaggart tossed the poor courier into the stream. Lord Preston dove in and saved him."

"Then," Malcolm picked up, "we tracked the thief to a clearing and retrieved the will before he could burn it."

"Yes," Raven nodded. Her lips still tingled from the day's kisses. "We gave the will to the courier, who went on his way."

"All in all," Malcolm said, guiding Rave up the steps and across the patio. "A fairly uneventful day."

THE END

This story is a prequel to *The Dark Desires of the Druids: Murder & Magick*, which will be published by Ravenous Romance in ebook and audiobook form in late December 2008. Find out more about Raven and Mac's love affair – and the fate of the Druids – in this sexy new novel!