

Changeling Press

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GYPSEY
KING

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Cynthia Sax

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Gypsy King Cynthia Sax

Cora doesn't need a crystal ball to know the tall, dark stranger standing in front of her is trouble. When he pays to have his fortune told, she sees the two of them making passionate love. Tamos isn't destined to be a transient lover. He's a man she could love for all eternity.

The problem is... Cora doesn't do love and she doesn't do eternity. She likes her freedom. She isn't going to give that up for anyone, not even the smooth-talking, knife-throwing, jail-springing king of the gypsies.

Chapter One

Walk on by. Walk on by. Cora chanted that refrain over and over in her head. She'd spotted the stranger the moment he set foot on the pier. He was tall and broad-shouldered, his toned physique clad in a form-fitting dark suit. Shoulder-length black hair was pulled back from a chiseled face. He was refined yet primitive, and he was not the typical tourist.

He paused in front of her tattered sandwich board. "Gypsy Rose," he read, his deep voice rolling over Cora like the ocean waves. His gaze met hers. His eyes were sky blue, contrasting vividly with his tanned skin. "How original." His lips quirked upward, drawing attention to the crescent moon shaped scar below his mouth.

"I have a permit." Cora tilted her chin up defiantly. Hers was a legal though transient business. There was no need for harassment.

"I'm sure you do." He spun the folding chair around and sat down, his long legs straddling the back. The seat creaked a noisy protest. "Shouldn't you have a crystal ball?"

Her face heated. She'd had a crystal ball. A child had smashed it to pieces a week ago. "It doesn't work that way." Cora smoothed the colored cloth covering her makeshift table. The crystal ball, the tarot cards, and the palm readings were only for show. She gathered her information by touch.

"You're blonde." He reached out and tucked a stray lock of hair back into her red scarf. "I thought gypsies were supposed to have dark hair." His fingertips brushed against her jaw. Sensation shot over her skin, causing Cora to shiver. "Cold, my little gypsy?"

She didn't answer him. The sun blazed on her shawl-covered shoulders. The nearby ice cream vendor, David, did a brisk business. A pale-skinned tourist slathered on sunscreen. The man knew she wasn't cold.

He knew much more than that, she suspected. This handsome stranger questioned her name, her hair color, and her vagabond existence. She straightened the stack of cards. His blue-eyed gaze followed the movement. Panic coiled tight within her stomach. "Is there a question you wish an answer to?" She fought the urge to run, concentrating on business.

"You're the fortuneteller. You tell me." He placed a folded hundred-dollar bill on the table. It was five times her going rate. "Or doesn't it work that way?" he mocked her earlier words. A small gold hoop dangled from his left earlobe.

Cora preferred to see only what her customers needed her to see. The past was easy to access, laid out in their minds like a book to be read. The future was more difficult. It consisted of fleeting images that might or might not come true.

As the stranger tapped his fingers against the tabletop, she pressed her lips together. With this arrogant man, she would read everything. She'd learn all his secrets. "Hold out your hands, palms up."

His hands were worn, a shade lighter than his wrists. Deep lines crisscrossed his palms. He sported no wedding ring, only an antique signet ring on his right hand. His shirt cuffs were crisp and spotless. "Don't worry, little gypsy." White teeth flashed in his dark face. "I washed my hands."

"So have I." That wasn't what worried her. It was the foreboding feeling that with this reading, her world would change. She lowered her hands on his. The contact was instant electricity. She closed her eyes, throwing herself into his being.

Stretches of tanned skin filled her view. The skin was perfect. The rawhide brown pulled taut over defined muscles and was covered with the sheen of fresh perspiration. His black locks were loose, brushing teasingly over his bare shoulders. Her gaze dropped. The bare skin didn't end. He was completely nude. Strong shoulders tapered to a slender waist and a tightly clenched ass. His ass pumped back and forth

between spread legs. The legs were golden and clearly female. The sound of panting and moaning echoed in the darkened room. Fingers tipped by fire-red nail polish gripped his back, leaving a trail of red. Blonde hair draped over the black silk sheets. She couldn't see the woman's face.

She didn't want to see the woman's face. Moisture flooded Cora's pussy. She didn't want to see him fuck the woman. She pushed past the image to... nowhere. There was only a brightly-lit nothing. She retreated.

The viewing angle had changed. He kissed the woman, devouring her mouth, her hair partially shielding her face. His hips moved, his large cock spearing between golden pussy lips again and again. He cupped the blonde's ass with his hands, allowing him to drive farther into her. Cora's pussy throbbed. No one had ever fucked her with that sort of passion.

She pulled her gaze away and headed in another direction with her search, hitting another stark white wall. This was beyond her experience. She faced nothing as though he had no thoughts, no history, no future, nothing other than his enthusiastic fucking of the blonde. She turned, and she was in the bedroom again.

"Tamos, Tamos, Tamos," the woman called. The voice sounded familiar.

"Come for me, Cora," he coaxed. "Come for me now." He bent his head and kissed her neck.

The woman's name was Cora. Cora froze. It couldn't be her. It had to be a coincidence. The woman screamed his name, her fingernails digging into his back. Tamos thrust twice more and then stiffened, his roar of satisfaction ringing in Cora's ears.

The woman fell back in the bed, her limbs loose. It was her face looking back at her. Her lips glistened. Her eyes shone. She looked beautiful and alive and happy. "I love you, Tamos." She reached out with her hands, and Cora saw in her countenance that she did.

This was the man she could love. That realization chilled her to the bone. Love meant commitment. Commitment took away freedom. Cora cherished her freedom

more than she valued her life. "No." Cora pulled back her hands, opening her eyes. She would never settle down to one place and one man.

"No?" That man, Tamos, laughed, the sound like waves breaking on the shore. "Is my future that bleak?" Although he feigned ignorance, Cora read the naked, open desire in his sky blue eyes. He knew what she'd seen.

"I'm sorry. I can't tell you your future." She placed the money in his palm and folded his fingers over it. "I have to go." She stood, slinging her tote over her shoulder. "David," she called to the ice cream vendor. "Can you keep an eye on my stuff?"

"Cora." Tamos caught her arm. "We have to --"

"I don't have to do anything." She glared down at his hand. He immediately released her. "I don't belong to you. I don't belong to anyone." She felt a tinge of remorse at his stricken expression. "The only thing I have to do is be free."

She walked away, knowing he didn't understand. He couldn't. She didn't fully understand it herself.

Chapter Two

Tamos lurked in the shadows, a bottle of cold beer in his hand. He watched his beautiful Cora poke the bonfire with a stick. She knew he was there. She knew he watched her. Sparks lit up the night sky, illuminating her face.

He had finally found his *monisha*, his wife, and she was all that destiny had promised him. Her blonde hair was silken sunshine, falling around her face. Her full mouth was designed for passionate kisses. She tucked her strong and determined chin defensively into her long neck as she prodded the burning wood. Eyes the color of raw honey stared into the fire.

A dread-locked *gadge* turned on music. Cora, Tamos's promised one, straightened, turning slightly to him, and began to sway. Her head fell back. Her arms raised, her bangles jangling. She snapped her fingers to the beat as she danced, her bare feet stomping on the loose white sand, her hips rocking in an enticement as old as time. She danced for him. He knew that as he knew the stars shone above.

Others didn't have that knowledge. A bald-headed *gadge* -- the ice cream seller from the boardwalk -- moved close to her. She swiveled away. The *gadge* followed, placing his hand on her bare waist. Tamos set down his beer, the glass ringing on the wooden picnic table. Cora twisted out of her so-called friend's reach. A frown darkened her face. The *gadge* pursued her.

"You owe me, Cora," the fool said, his greedy hands grasping for her. "I looked out for you all summer."

Tamos pushed his way between them, pulling Cora safely behind his back. "If she owes you, I'll pay her debt." He glared down at the smaller man.

"Who are you?" The man's beady eyes narrowed. He smelled of liquor.

"I'm her future, and you are her past." Tamos rolled up his shirtsleeves, his jacket left in his car. There was only one language this type of man understood and that was violence.

"Why, you --" The *gadje* struck out. Cora gasped.

Tamos flipped the man onto the beach, bending his arm behind his back. The images radiating from his foe made Tamos grimace. "She's a bit old for you, isn't she, Dave?" he growled into the creep's ear. "So I suggest you leave her alone." He did more than suggest. He pushed that thought into the *gadje's* broken brain.

"Fuck you." Dave spat sand out of his mouth. The man's mind was too unstable to control. His reasoning shifted like the sand. They struggled, and Tamos's silver watch slipped off, palmed by the man. Tamos didn't bother to retrieve it. He had no use for it, and only a *gadje* would think gaining an object was compensation for losing his honor.

Tamos increased his grip until bones crunched. "I know where you buried the bodies," he informed Dave. If the *gadje* were smart, he would run as far and as fast from them as he could. Tamos pressed his knee in the middle of the man's back, ensuring he stayed down. He then stood and dusted off his dress pants.

Firelight bathed the woman he protected. Cora glanced up at him coyly from under lowered lashes. "Thank you."

"Come." He held out his hand.

"Where?" Her soft fingers trembled in his palm.

"Away." He didn't say more. She was a gypsy. She'd understand. He led her toward the shore. The smell of the sea tickled his nostrils. The moon shone like a spotlight down on them.

A breeze swept by them, fluttering Cora's long skirt against his legs. They both turned their heads into it. The wind beckoned to Tamos, urging him to follow. "It calls." He could drive to the airport and be in another city by daybreak.

"How do you know this?" Her wide-eyed gaze met his.

"I feel it." He placed his hand on her chest. Her heart beat fast against his palm. "Here. Don't you feel it too?"

"All the time," she whispered as though it was a confession.

He thought so. That was why she ran from him on the boardwalk. He'd tried to call her back, but she was his *monisha*. His powers didn't work on her. "That feeling is part of who we are, Cora. Never be ashamed of it." He dug into his pants pocket, removing a crisp business card. "This is my information." He placed it in her hands. "Call me anytime, anywhere you need me." She would leave him before the sun rose. He felt that with complete certainty. Their connection scared his golden gypsy.

She studied the quality cardstock, squinting to read the words in the dim light. She finally gave up, tucking the business card carefully into the tote slung over her shoulder. "Why? You don't know me."

"Don't I?" He cupped her chin, bent his head, and grazed her lips with his. Awareness shot through him, awareness and possession. She was his. He would have her. "Don't I know you, Cora?"

He deepened the kiss, his tongue pushing between the seam of her mouth. She opened for him with a heartfelt sigh of surrender. He plundered her mouth. She tasted of exotic fruit. He curled his palm, under the silk of her hair, over the nape of her neck, securing her, and feasted.

She was tentative and shy at first, pulling back from him. As they kissed, she found her courage, touching the tip of his tongue with hers before sliding their flesh together. She moaned, leaning into him. He supported her slight weight, relishing how her hips fit against his body. She was perfect.

They kissed until her breath hitched and shoulders stiffened. It was too much for her. Tamos drew his head back. He had an eternity to satisfy the need pounding at him. He'd move at the pace her heart demanded. She opened her mouth to say good-bye. "I think we need to cool off." He blocked her retreat. He kicked off his dress shoes, bending down to pull off his socks and roll up his pant legs.

"What are you doing?"

He smiled, hearing the fascination in her voice. "The water should be cool, shouldn't it?" He waded in the shallows. His skin pebbled at the lower temperature, his toes digging into the wet sand. Cora laughed, the joy expanding in the quiet of the night. She ran to catch up to him. Her slender fingers entwined with his.

* * *

Cora spun around and around on the shore, her skirt billowing out from her legs. "If I were a bird, I'd drift on the ocean breezes forever." Dizzy, she lost her footing and fell. Tamos caught her, his strong arms wrapped tightly around her waist. "I'd never land." She smiled up into his handsome face. He looked like a pirate with his long black hair loose.

"Where would you go?" He easily swung her up into the air like she didn't weigh anything.

She threw her head back, her hands clenching his wide shoulders. She was flying. "I'd go to Bali and dance the Legong." Every finger movement in the intricate dance told a story.

"Then we'll go there next week." Tamos smacked a kiss on her lips, the moonlight glinting off his eyes. "Because I'd like to see that."

She laughed, hugging him close. She loved that he played along with her silly dreams. She'd never spent an evening like this with no pressures and no talk of forever. He assumed they'd part. The business card in her tote told her that. He didn't try to change her mind or change her. "Why next week? Why not now?"

He kissed her again, this time with less mirth and more intensity. Her lips burned under his touch. He tasted of beer and man. "Because we're taking this slowly." He slid her down his body until her toes touched the sand.

She searched his wide back with her fingertips, looking for softness. He didn't have any. He was strength and decisiveness. "And if I don't want to go slow?" His partially unbuttoned shirt revealed a vee of tanned skin. She nudged her nose into that warmth. "If I want to go fast?" She breathed in the scent of bonfire and the sea. She licked. His skin was salty.

"Cora." He hardened even more under her touch.

His cock strained against the zipper of his dress pants. She wanted to unzip those pants. She wanted to stroke him and please him until he pumped her pussy the way he rode the woman in her vision. "You said to call you when I need you." She pressed against the unyielding bulge. "I'm calling you, Tamos." She sucked on his bottom lip. "I need you."

He growled words in a language she didn't understand before devouring her mouth, cupping her ass, and grinding her mound against his fabric-covered cock. When she was convinced he meant to take her there, on the shore, with the water lapping at their ankles, he broke from her. "Come." He tugged at her hand, rushing her up the beach's slight incline. The sand shifted to freshly mowed grass under her bare toes.

He stopped, ripping off his shirt. Buttons popped everywhere. He spread the white fabric on the ground. "It isn't a luxury hotel suite."

"It's perfect." She stared up at the stars. "And look at that view."

"It is something." He looked at her. Their gazes met. "Cora," was all he said before he swept her into his arms, kissing her with a wild abandon. The beach was Tamos civilized. This was the untamed gypsy.

He nibbled and bit at her skin, pushing her blouse off her shoulders. The night air cooled her with its ghostly caress. His hot mouth dragged across the curves of her breasts, and then down and over. She arched, needing that heat on her aching nipples. He covered one, sucking the tip deep into his mouth, pulling and biting. She held his head to her, her fingers lost in his black mane. She pushed her hips up, toward him.

His hand lay flat against her stomach, his thumb circling her belly button. She wanted that thumb lower on another button. She ground impatiently against his thigh.

"Easy," he chuckled. With one smooth pull, her skirt was around her ankles. His dark hand slipped into her white cotton panties. She danced under his touch as she had at the bonfire. There, she'd gyrated for him, begging him to touch her like he was now.

The tip of his index finger brushed against her clit. He was about to enter her, join with her. It was too much, too fast. She froze, a part of her seizing at the intimacy.

"Easy," he repeated as though he knew she was tempted to run. He held her, slowly stroking her wetness, patiently coaxing a response from her.

Defeated by his gentle wooing, she sagged into him, falling backward. He laid her upon his white shirt. The grass-covered ground gave way under their weight, bending to accommodate her curves. He unzipped, yanking down his pants. His hard cock tented his white boxers. He settled between her thighs, his boxers to her panties, his fingers continuing to stroke, his mouth on hers.

She explored his body with her hands. His chest was hard and warm, covered with short black hair. That hair trailed down a defined stomach to the waistband of his boxers. She skimmed her hand over the cotton, feeling the length and width of him. He'd fill her completely.

As his fingers pumped her pussy and his thumb circled her clit, she rubbed him through the fabric, learning the thickness of his cockhead, the slight curve of his shaft. She didn't need to see the future to know she would suck that cock. She licked her lips. She would suck him until he couldn't hold back, shooting his cum into her ready mouth.

"Cora." He snapped the tiny ribbons holding her panties together. "I need you now. I can't wait."

The need in his voice excited her. "Yes, now." She pulled down his boxers. His cock sprang erect and ready, dark hair curling around his base, his balls tucked up high against his body. She wiggled on the grass, positioning him at her entrance. "Fuck me now, Tamos."

He cupped her ass in his hands, his fingertips digging into her flesh, tilting her upward. "Yes," he shouted as he thrust. He was large and hard and his fierce entry stole Cora's breath. Seated fully inside her, he released a roar to shake the stars.

That's how much he wanted her. Cora gripped his shoulders in wonder as he struggled with himself. She felt his body tighten with regained control. He kissed her, a kiss that merged gratitude and lust, as he began to move, rocking slowly and deeply

like the waves on a lazy ocean. She bobbed upon those waves, learning his motion, before joining him, pushing against him, begging him for harder, faster, deeper.

The cords in his shoulders loosened as one by one, he released control of his passion. Their loving tempo increased. He kissed her harder. He sucked on her breasts. He pulled her toward him as he surged into her. The waves of desire became unruly, pitching their bodies together until skin smacked against skin. Cora panted, struggling to catch her breath. The throbbing in her pussy became an ache.

He growled rough words as he was tossed upon her rising passion. "Tamos." Only he could save her. She stared into his face silhouetted against the moon. "Tamos." The storm raged too fiercely. White-knuckled, she clutched to him, her mooring in the sea, but she couldn't hold on. She was breaking.

"Now, Cora. Let go, my little gypsy."

With one hard thrust, she was torn from the safety of his harbor. She screamed, the pleasure dragging her under until she was sure she would drown. He bellowed her name, riding the swell forward, his heat filling her body, pulling her back up.

He had saved her. Tamos rolled with her in his strong arms. She rode his heaving chest, his heart beating strong under her ear. In some cultures, when a man saved another, they bonded for life. Fear crept over Cora because she felt that bond between them. Although it was fragile and tenuous, it threatened her freedom. She couldn't allow the bond to strengthen.

Chapter Three

"Why is she here?" Tamos felt like hell. He'd taken the red-eye flight. He hadn't slept, he hadn't showered, and he was covered with a layer of travel grime.

The uniformed officer's gaze swept over him again, his forehead wrinkled with confusion. Although it was clear that he didn't know who Tamos was, he did know that the man claiming to represent Cora had enough money and power to warrant civility. "The accused has been charged with misdemeanor theft, Mr. Merikano."

She'd been charged with theft. Tamos's top lip curled with distaste. The *gadj*e thought everyone had their fascination with things. "She's not guilty." He rolled up his sleeve, revealing a paler strip of skin where his watch had once been. "Let me guess. It was a silver Rolex with the hands stuck at two and twelve." He had worn the watch because it was attractive and hadn't bothered setting the time. Time was another *gadj*e invention.

The officer's square chin dropped. "He said it was his."

"Did he look like the type of man to wear a Rolex?" Tamos blamed himself for this misunderstanding. He should have taken care of the ice cream vendor, immediately and permanently. "If you need the certificate of ownership, call this number." He slapped a business card on the table. It was his corporate card, not the private card he'd given Cora. "I'll see her now."

"I shouldn't..." the officer protested.

He had wanted to do this the *gadj*e way. He hadn't the patience. His *monisha* was alone and unprotected. Tamos leaned over, locked gazes with the young man, and declared, "You will allow me to see her."

"I will allow you to see her," the officer repeated, mesmerized. Tamos was buzzed through. A guard accompanied him, guiding him through the labyrinth of

offices and holding cells. Tamos inhaled one whiff of the canned recycled air and braced himself. His golden gypsy wouldn't fare well in such a place. There were no windows, no natural light. The guard paused in front of a cell, his face tight with guilt.

Tamos wanted to kill someone when he saw her. "Cora."

She didn't look up. She sat on a blue and white pallet, her knees held against her chest, her blonde head bowed. She rocked, mumbling words he didn't understand.

Before the guard opened the door fully, Tamos had pushed his way past him. "Cora." He took her in his arms, pushing her face into his chest. She trembled. "Cora, it's Tamos." He slid her onto his lap. "You're free, little gypsy. You're safe."

"Tamos?" She looked up. Her honey-brown eyes were rimmed with red. "Is it really you?" She looped her arms around his neck, inhaling deeply. He drew a breath also, her watermelon scent bringing back memories of the beach. "You came for me?"

"I'll always come for you, *monisha*." He stood. "I'm taking her outside," he told the guard, using his powers to ensure cooperation. "If the officer needs anything, he can find us there." He strode, Cora safe in his arms. She needed the sunlight. That was all he knew.

They found it in a little park. He sat on a bench next to the fallen policemen monument. She remained in his lap. "Is that better?" He smoothed her blonde hair back. He'd missed her. Giving her the space she desired was the most difficult thing he'd ever done.

"Yes." She nodded, her forehead rubbing against his neck. "Where were you?"

"New York." He'd gone there on tribe business. It was busy work to fill up the spaces she'd left empty. "The wind called, and I couldn't resist." He traced the line of her jaw with his finger.

"The wind called me too." She glanced up at him, her eyes large.

She felt good in his lap. Her ass fit against him like a rhythm to a song. "Where to?" He caressed her golden cheeks. They were sticky with spent tears.

"Chicago but I didn't get there." She touched his chin. Her fingertip outlined his scar. "Why did you come back?"

"Your call is stronger than the wind's." He kissed her softly and thoroughly. He would always come back for her. "Chicago is on the way to New York. It must have been the same wind."

"It could have been." She smiled. The tight band around his chest eased. They sat in silence, touching and playing. She appeared fascinated with his beard stubble, fanning the short hairs with her fingernails.

"You know what, Tamos?" she finally asked.

"What?" He leaned back on the bench, enjoying the sun on his face and the feel of her in his arms. It was all a man needed.

"I would have come back for you too," Cora whispered.

Chapter Four

Cora wandered around the beach house, running her fingers over the granite counters and the leather chairs and the wooden tables. It was an attempt to ground herself, to regain control.

She scanned the shelves. She opened and closed cabinets. They were full of stuff but there weren't any personal effects. The walls, painted in bright colors, were bare of photos. Cora clutched the white terrycloth bathrobe to her drying body, curling her bare toes on the hardwood floors. The décor's simplicity was the only feature keeping her sane, rooting her to this place. There were too many things. He owned too much. The objects weighed down on her, pushing her under.

"Cora?" Tamos watched her, wariness in his sky blue eyes. His chest was bare. He wore only a matching white towel. His hair was wet, and he smelled of watermelon body wash. It was her scent.

"This..." She took a shaky breath. She could do this. "This is all yours?"

"Ahhh..." He chuckled. She didn't know what he found humorous. "None of this is mine." Tamos tsk-tsked as though she should know better. He opened the windows, letting in the light and the fresh air. "The beach house belongs to the corporation, what we call the tribe in these modern times." He poured two glasses of wine. "They own all. I own nothing. That's the way it should be, don't you agree?" He handed one glass to her, his fingers brushing her skin. A charge of sensation passed between them.

He was naked except for the towel. She wore no clothing under her bathrobe. "Yes," she murmured. He owned nothing. She owned nothing. The wind called him as it did her. She took a gulp of the wine, her thoughts jumbled and confused. "That's the way it should be." She wanted to be with him and have her freedom at the same time.

She stared out an open window at the road winding away from the ocean. Her heart ached because she knew that wasn't possible. "Tamos --"

"Shhh..." He wrapped his arms around her and kissed the curve where her neck met her shoulder. She set her glass down on one of those shelves he didn't own. "Don't worry about tomorrow, my little gypsy. Enjoy the here and now." He brushed his cheek against her neck. "Feel the breeze on your face, the sun on your skin." Tamos slid his hand inside her robe. "My skin against yours, my palm over your heart." She leaned back into him, listening to his deep voice. "I feel your heartbeat, Cora. It's all I feel, my everything. Notice how all else falls away. There's only you and me."

"You and me and the wind." The summer wind swept their hair back. Blonde and black locks entwined, twisting and turning, becoming one. "It's calling to me."

"And where's it sending you?" He kissed her neck.

She turned to face him. "Back into your arms." Cora held his handsome face between her hands and kissed him, pushing her insecurities away. "For the moment." She wouldn't raise false expectations.

"The moment is all we have." He lifted her, holding her against his chest, kissing her until their flavors combined. She hooked her feet behind his ass. Her robe opened, held closed only by the tie. His hands slid up her bare legs to cup her ass.

He walked. She didn't know where he was going. She didn't care. With each step, his hard, towel-covered cock brushed against her spread legs. Her nipples rubbed against the hair on his chest. His fingers probed the crack of her ass. A door opened and banged shut. He kissed her, his freshly shaven chin smooth.

The sun beat down on them, warming her bare shoulders. They were outside. The ocean breeze lifted her hair. With a thump he sat down on a stark white mattress, his cock bumping against her pussy.

She looked around them, dazed from being so well-kissed. He'd set up a bed outside, on the roof of the beach house. All she saw was blue sky.

Tamos grinned that pirate grin at her, the gold hoop in his ear glowing. "Today, you fly, gypsy." He untied her robe. The terrycloth dropped to the floor. She straddled his lap naked -- the desire in his blue eyes making her feel strong and powerful.

She held his head to her, burying his face between her breasts. For several heart-pounding minutes, he rested quietly between her curves, his breath blowing erotic warmth upon her skin. His nose nuzzled the hollow and her nipples tightened with anticipation. She bumped against him, eager for more.

"My wild, wanton Cora." He chuckled, searching out the softness of her breast with his mouth. He sucked her nipple hard, releasing it too soon with a juicy pop. "Always so impatient." He lay back on the bed, his blue eyes glimmering with amusement.

"My slow, steady Tamos." She leaned over him, her hair falling upon his bare chest. "Always teasing me into a frenzy." She moved against him, caressing him with her locks, her rhythm as slow as his. His grip on her hips tightened. "I'm only this impatient with you, you know."

She turned, facing away from him, wiggling her ass back against his torso. She tugged his towel loose. His cock sprang toward her as though sprinting to freedom. "You do this to me." She bent forward, her hands braced on his thighs, allowing the tips of her long tresses to graze his cockhead. A wild hurting sound escaped from his lips. "Only you." She kissed the purple head, licking the precum from his slit. His feet kicked out, his toes curling. "Easy," she taunted him, looking back over her shoulder. His handsome face was contorted in a grimace.

She grinned. She'd drive him as crazy as he drove her. She pumped his shaft with a firm hand while she rocked, her wet pussy grinding against his chest. He held her, his thumb pressing into her ass cheeks, his fingers splayed over her hips.

"Cora, I need to have you." His voice was a growl.

"Now, who's impatient?" She laughed with a bravado she didn't feel. She needed to have him too. Cora crouched over Tamos's body, positioned his cock at her

entrance, and sank down, taking him inch by delicious inch into her. Her eyes rolled back in her head. He felt so good. "Better?" she asked with an unfamiliar huskiness.

"Much." He pushed against the mattress, driving his cock deeper into her pussy.

"I like this position." She cupped his tight balls, and his thighs shook. "I have access to everything." Her index finger circled her clit. He squeezed her ass, and his cock stretched her pussy. She moaned. It was an orgasm-inspiring combination.

"I have access to nothing." He stroked her backbone, sliding his fingers between her ass cheeks. "Except your tight ass." He probed her puckered hole with a finger. She clenched her ass muscles around him. The action squeezed her pussy around his cock. He groaned. "Do that twice more and --" She did it again. "Cora," he warned.

He was serious. She lifted herself, his cockhead sliding against her walls, and fell back down on him, her breasts bouncing. He called her name between gritted teeth. She rose and fell, rose and fell, her leg muscles straining with the effort.

He lunged forward into a sitting position, helping her move, lifting her up and slamming her back down on him. He brushed her hair to one side, kissing her neck, her shoulders. Those kisses turned to nibbles as the pace increased. She put her fingers over her clit, pressing down, so she rubbed against his cock with each movement in and out.

The hot sun heated her bare shoulders. The cool wind brushed over her nipples. His cock was inside her. His chest was to her back. The blue sky was all around them. "Tamos, we're flying, flying," she cried out in wonder. She flung her hands to the side as the spasms overwhelmed her. She shook, dancing like a feather in the wind. She was weightless. She was free.

She was too free. It scared her and she squeezed down on Tamos -- her only connection to the world. He came with a shout, jerking upward into her. He clutched her to him, his big hands on her breasts, but they didn't return to earth as she anticipated. They soared, together, as one.

* * *

The wind blew in from the west. Tamos turned his face into it. Cora did the same. Her blonde head nestled in the curve of his shoulder, her silky hair whipping

against his neck. "It calls." He said the words they were both thinking. He felt the yearning in her body.

"It does." She lifted her chin. Straight white teeth worried a full bottom lip.

"I'm flying to Phoenix in the morning." He hadn't visited tribe members there in over a year, and she'd like Arizona. His wild gypsy could dance in the desert, the colors of the rocks reflecting upon her skin.

Cora's silence was her answer. She wasn't ready to be a couple yet. She needed space. He had to be patient, but it was so damn hard. She was the light to his darkness, the joy to his severity. He craved her touch constantly.

Her hand slipped into his, reassuring him. "Will you phone me every day?" she asked, as though she doubted the answer.

She shouldn't doubt their connection. Talking to her was as necessary as the sun. "At what number?" Her throwaway phone had only ten minutes of talk time left on it.

"The same." Golden-tipped eyelashes fluttered against tanned cheeks. "I signed a contract today." Her gaze met his, reinforcing the significance of her words.

He sucked in his breath and his arms tightened around her. His gypsy had signed a contract for him. He was the only person she wanted to call. That was a big commitment. "For how long?"

She looked away, red blazing across her cheekbones. "A year." Tamos rocked back on his heels. She'd committed to a phone and to him for a year. He grinned, and she gave him a sour look. "It has roaming. I can use it anywhere," she defended her decision.

"Our relationship has roaming too," he teased, his heart filled with hope. "You can use me anywhere." He pushed against her. His cock was hard. It was always hard around Cora. "And I hope you do. I'll miss you, gypsy." He breathed in her fresh watermelon scent.

He wouldn't go to Arizona, he decided. He'd save that trip for her return -- a reward for the torment he'd undergo. While she was gone, Tamos would assist the police and locate the bodies of the girls the ice cream vendor had buried. He'd waited to

do that, not wishing to tarnish their time together. With Cora away, she wouldn't be touched by the ugliness.

But that was tomorrow. Today, she was in his arms. She was with him.

They stood, the two of them as one, their faces turned into the wind, the sun on their bodies, their bare feet in the sand. There was no past. There was no future. There was only the moment and in that moment, Tamos had everything he'd ever wanted.

A bird called above them. Cora tilted her head back. Tamos looked up also. Two gulls circled, crossing paths in the wind, swerving as they passed each other. "That's me." He pointed to the larger bird.

"And that's me." The smaller bird swooped close, calling out. "I'm telling you to hurry up." Cora laughed. She rested her hands on his.

"Always in a rush." He smiled. "Where are you taking us this time?" Where was Cora headed?

"Portland," she said the city name with reverence, as though it were the Holy Grail of destinations. "Have you ever been?"

He'd been to Portland many times. "Never with you." He kissed the tip of her nose. She blinked. "What will we do there?"

"We'll ride horses in Forest Park. It's the largest city park in the U.S.; did you know that?" He shook his head, and she continued, "We'll ride bareback at a full gallop. It'll be like flying."

"I'll enjoy that." He was a gypsy, as she was. Horses were in his blood. "I'll ride the horse all day and you all night." The birds soared higher and higher. "When do we leave?" How much time did they have left?

Her smile dimmed. "In the morning."

Chapter Five

It was only a week apart yet those seven days had felt like an eternity. Cora stood at the side of the highway, staring up at the beach house. As soon as she'd left, she had wanted to return. It made no sense. Nothing made sense without Tamos.

"Hey, baby, going our way?" A blond, tanned beach god hung out of a truck's driver's side window. The radio blasted. The truck bed contained other longhaired sun worshippers.

A month ago, the answer would have been yes. Cora would have jumped in the back and headed wherever they were going.

But today wasn't a month ago. As Tamos often said, it was now. She had to live in the moment. She had to do what felt right now. "Thanks but I'm where I want to be." She waved the good-looking man away. His friends waved back as the truck sped down the highway, heading toward the clear skies.

She was where she wanted to be, but it wasn't a place. It wasn't the beach house upon the hill. She slung her tote over her shoulder, trudging up the road. It was where Tamos was.

Dark clouds rolled in. The wind picked up, slapping her long skirt against her bare legs. She'd traveled for a week, beholden to no one. She'd been completely free with no commitments and no responsibilities.

The freedom hadn't made her as happy as it had in the past. She found herself constantly thinking about Tamos and what he was doing. When she had ridden the chestnut gelding in Forest Park, she'd craned her neck, scanning the path before her, expecting to see him around each bend. At night, she stayed in her shared room, instead of crashing boisterous parties. She had waited for his call and he had called, every single night. She could depend upon him.

Clouds covered the sun and the temperature immediately dropped. Cora breathed in. The air was heavy with humidity. It would rain soon. The precipitation was needed. The grass at the side of the road crackled under her sandaled feet. Plants needed more than sun to flourish. She needed more than freedom to be happy.

She tugged the chain out from under her blouse. A silver key dangled upon it. Tamos had given her that key. She thought she'd never use it, but he knew better. He knew her. She bounced up the stairs, the wood creaking a welcome.

The door was open and Cora's heart lifted. Tamos had reached here before her. She touched the wood and froze. Something was wrong. The doorframe was splintered. She looked over the threshold. The security code keypad was smashed to pieces, the exposed wires cut. A shadow passed over the hallway mirror.

She slowly backed away. She made it to the edge of the steps when her phone rang. It was Tamos. It had to be. He was the only one she'd given the number to.

If he was calling her, he wasn't inside. It was someone else, a stranger, a threat. Dave wrenched the door, his beady eyes glared pure hatred. Cora turned and ran. He was taller, stronger. He grabbed her by her tote. She let it slip from her shoulder. She ran toward the road and made it to the first bend before he yanked her back by her hair. Her feet flew out from under her and she landed hard on her ass.

"You bitch." He hauled her toward the beach house. She struggled, screaming. There was no one around to hear her. She was in isolation. Her phone rang, the sound muffled by distance. It rang again and again. "He's coming for you, isn't he?" Dave, the man she thought was a harmless ice cream vendor, had the strength of the insane. "That all-seeing bastard." He dragged her back by her hair, pulling, until she was forced to go with him. "Then we'll just have to have our fun after that, won't we?"

Accessing the horror show of his brain, Cora knew what type of fun he referred to. Dave was a bad man. He'd done horrific things. Drops of rain splattered on her cheeks. He planned to do gruesome things to her. He planned to kill Tamos. In his mind, that was the future, but Cora knew that the future wasn't set. She would change it. She had to.

Lightning flashed. She tripped and fell. As she looked up, two gulls dived in a free fall, twisting and turning, silhouetted against the darkening sky. She caught her breath, holding it for that long moment. At the last minute, they swooped upward, saved by the rising air. She didn't see any more. A sharp yank on her hair sent pain shooting over her scalp.

She'd seen enough. The scene gave her the strength to endure, waiting and watching for an opportunity to fly to freedom.

* * *

She wasn't answering. Damn it. Disgusted and worried, Tamos threw the phone on the passenger seat. He shifted to top gear, pushing the engine to its full capacity. Cora would answer if she could. She always did. That she couldn't meant... he thrust that thought from his mind. The cops were coming. The security company had called them also. He was closer to the beach house, less than a mile away. He'd get there first.

No, not first. The *gadje*, that creature Dave, was there already. It had to be him. He'd escaped the police, and he knew who found the graves. The *gadje* was desperate, and he'd want revenge.

He wouldn't take his revenge out on Cora. As the king of the gypsies, Tamos had faced and defeated darker and older evil than the *gadje*. He would protect his woman.

Tamos spun the car to a stop at the side of the highway, gravel spraying against the underbody. He didn't want to give the *gadje* any warning. Tamos exited, knives in both hands. He sniffed the air. The killer's pungent stench tainted the air. Cora's watermelon scent also hung heavy, not yet washed away by the rain.

Blood pumped through Tamos's veins as he crept along the path. The storm raged around him, flashing light and dark. He paid it no heed. The threat to all he cherished brought him back to more primitive times. He wasn't Tamos Merikano, CEO and businessman. He was now the gypsy king, one with nature, protecting his destined mate.

Her tote lay in the gravel, its contents spilled. That colorful tote held everything his *monisha* owned. The wind chime was crushed, its cords tangled. It was perfect for

their home, she had told him over the phone. It was then that he knew she was coming back to stay.

The rain moistened his long hair, plastering his dress shirt against his back. He swung up the stairs, avoiding the steps that squeaked. With the wind howling Tamos's wrath, the *gadje* might not notice the noise. Tamos wasn't taking the chance.

Although the beach house was dark, he saw, with his gypsy eyes, the wet trail on the hardwood. He smelled the killer's stench. He heard him mumbling, outlining all the things he'd do to Cora. Tamos blocked the words from his mind, focusing on rescuing her.

They were in the living room. There were two access points. The *gadje* would expect him to enter near the front door. Tamos waited for a flash of blinding lightning and the following darkness to pass in front of that archway. He circled around to the kitchen.

She sat in a chair in the middle of the room. Her knees were primly pressed protectively together, but her sandaled feet were spread, prepared to run. Her blonde hair was mussed. There was blood on her lips and bruises on her forehead and chin. Tamos clenched the hilt of his knives so tightly, his knuckles hurt. For that, the *gadje* would die.

Cora's nose twitched, but she didn't give away his position by looking at him. Tamos, hidden in the shadows, grinned grimly. She was a clever woman.

The *gadje* wasn't a clever man. He didn't know he was there. The man stood between her and the windows, a gun in his shaking hands. "He'll come for you soon." He leaned toward the windows, glancing out, his gun trained on Cora. "Don't expect him to save you. He might have seen... I don't know how he saw that." The man's shoulders twitched. "But he won't see this. If he had, he'd be here, but he isn't." He jumped as the windows rattled with the wind.

Tamos raised his knives, watching the gun. He wouldn't risk Cora by being impatient. He'd wait until the gun pointed away from her.

Cora turned her head, staring at the windows vibrating with the wind. The *gadje* followed her line of sight. "You see him, don't you?" His gun veered slightly but not enough. Tamos coiled all his strength, preparing to strike. "I'm going to kill the bastard. I'm going to --"

The window blasted open. Glass shattered. Lightning flashed. Dave swung toward the sound. As Tamos threw both knives, he pushed the *gadje* backward using the full force of his mind. Cora flung herself to the ground. A gunshot was echoed by the crack of thunder.

The moisture-laden wind in the room suddenly died as though someone turned off the storm valves. Tamos glanced at where the window had been. The *gadje* sat in the frame, broken glass holding him in place. He had a knife sticking out of his throat and another in his chest where his heart, if he had one, should be.

"Tamos." Cora staggered to her feet. Glass glistened in her hair. She raised her hand to sweep the strands away from her face.

She'd slice her fingers. "Cora, love, don't move," he told her. She froze. He moved toward her. She looked toward his voice. "Stay still." He carefully plucked shards from her golden locks. "You're covered with glass. Did any of it cut you?"

The lights flickered on and off. There was a whirr of noise and a loud click. The room filled with light. Cora's honey-brown eyes blinked. "No. I heard the shot. Did he..." Her gaze searched his face.

"He didn't hurt me, Cora."

"He wanted to. He wanted to kill you. His thoughts..." She glanced toward the window and shuddered, her slight shoulders shaking. "I saw them, Tamos." Glass pinged on the hardwood.

His fingers clenched. The thoughts in the *gadje's* mind had horrified him. His little gypsy shouldn't have had to see that. "I know, but he didn't." Tamos gathered up her hair and gently shook it. More glass fell. He picked pieces off her frilly blouse.

Sirens sounded, increasing in volume as they neared the house. The police were finally there.

“While we waited for you to come home, I knew he wanted to kill you and there was a chance...” Her voice broke. “And I thought I could have spent this past week with you, and I didn’t and I missed you so much. Oh, Tamos,” she sobbed. He took her in his arms, uncaring that she was covered with glass. The love of his life, his woman, hurt and he had to comfort her. “I love you.”

He squeezed her reassuringly tight. She was here and she loved him. “I love you too, Cora.”

Chapter Six

Cora stood on the large mattress, the mosquito netting draping down from the ceiling around her. Tamos lay propped up by several pillows against the headboard, watching her with lazy eyes. His long black hair was loose. He was naked -- a white sheet covering him from the waist down. He resembled a sheik prince, and she was his dancer.

She sharply tilted her head back and forth, her nude body held upright as though bound by stiff brocade. Her lips pressed closed in a semi-smile, Cora darted her gaze from left to right. She'd practiced that move in the mirror. "You have to imagine my gold headdress."

"I'm imagining." His voice was a low, appreciative drone.

She twined her arms as the dancer had taught her, her action intentionally sensuous. She parted her fingers slowly and carefully. The Legong was a painfully precise dance. Every movement of her body told a story, and she wanted to get it right. The story she now told was of passion and the love for the man she was dancing for.

She arched her feet, curling her polished toes. His gaze followed the line of her leg. "Imagine I'm wrapped in shimmering fabric." The light from the torches would make her entire body shine. Her lips would be a glossy red. Black makeup would accentuate her eyes.

"I prefer you this way." He laid a dark hand on the tented white cotton. He wanted her, and she wanted him. After months together, their passion for each other remained unabated. She positioned her arms across her body under her bare breasts, forearm resting on forearm, and waved her spread fingers, her head bobbing from left to right. "Very much." He grinned at her silent taunt, the scar below his mouth flashing silver in the light.

"The Legong is performed by young virgins," she told him primly, struggling to maintain her serene expression.

"I suspect the reason they are young is because they don't remain virgins for long." He tugged down the sheet, revealing a hard cock sticking out straight from a base of black curls. She raised an eyebrow at his exhibitionism. "The audience is showing their appreciation." He stroked his shaft slowly, watching her, a pirate's leer on his handsome face. "Please continue."

That was easy for him to say. How could she dance with him touching himself? Cora's steps became less rehearsed and more enticing. She exaggerated the wiggle of her hips, turning in a slow, tight circle, her fingers bending and straightening. When she faced away from him, he groaned. She broke with Balinese tradition and looked over her shoulder. His gaze was on her jiggling ass. She shook it with increased vigor, and his stroking quickened. He wouldn't last much longer. His cockhead was an angry shade of purple. His balls hugged his body. She leisurely completed her circle.

His legs were spread, his cock and balls open to her perusal. He grimaced, his dark eyebrows causing a shadow over his eyes, as he pumped his shaft.

"I give you this flower as an offering." She kneeled on the bed between his legs, her knees together, right palm in her left hand, her arms extended. In her palm, she imagined a yellow water lily, its fragrant blossom perfuming the air. She bowed over him, placing her hands upon his stomach. She kissed the tip of his cock.

"Cora." Her name was a rumble. When she straightened, she gazed into darkened eyes crackling with intensity. His hand worked his cock. The veins on his shaft were a deep navy.

"Do you accept my offer?" She bowed again. The action tightened the muscles in her pussy. His coarse leg hair rubbed against her nipples. His abs rippled under her touch. She brushed his cockhead with her lips and swiped the precum with her tongue.

"Yes, Cora, please, give it to me."

She smiled, glancing up at him, her body bent. She knew what he wanted, and it wasn't a flower. She held his gaze as she sucked his tip into her mouth, sealing her lips

under his rim. She waited, kneeling, her arms outstretched, her lips around his cockhead.

A strangled sound came from Tamos. He pumped, his fingers tapping under her chin. "Cora," he shouted his warning. "Cora!" He thrust. She rode the updraft like a gull rode the wind, drawing back as he pushed forward. Hot cum shot into her mouth in hard, fast spurts. She let it fill her mouth, bathing his cockhead in his own heat, before she swallowed, the suction pulling at his sensitive skin, coaxing every last drop from his body.

He sank back down, his dark head bouncing on the pillows. She licked her lips and scurried up his trembling body. "Did you like that performance?" She beamed, knowing the answer.

"If you get any better at it, you'll kill me." Tamos drew her tightly to him, his arm around her waist. "Bali is, right now, one of my favorite places on the planet."

"That's what you said about Paris." She smiled into his chest, twirling a fingertip in his chest hair. The wind had taken them there last month. Tamos had introduced her to their many French tribe members -- one of whom danced at the Moulin Rouge.

"How could I not enjoy Paris? Your cancan was inspired." He chuckled. She'd danced that completely nude also, telling him to imagine the frilly petticoats and black stockings. She danced often for him but no matter what routine she performed, the finale was the same. She ended up in his arms.

"What did it inspire you to do?" She placed her index finger on his lips.

"This." She squealed as he flipped her onto her back and kissed her. "And this." He nibbled down her neck and over her shoulders. "And this." As he sucked a nipple into his mouth, he cupped her pussy, one of his large fingers slipping between her hot, wet folds. He moved that finger from left to right, left to right, brushing over her clit in a slow and steady rhythm.

"Tamos," Cora moaned, squirming on the soft mattress. She knew from past experience that he could wag that finger for hours -- driving her so insane she couldn't remember her own name.

"Patience, gypsy." He looked up from kissing her stomach. "We have forever." White teeth flashed in his dark face. His blue eyes shone with ill-disguised mischief.

Lying back, she expelled a ragged breath through clenched teeth. Patience, he advised. Despite his extensive training -- all undertaken naked -- patience was the one virtue she hadn't yet mastered. Tamos swirled his tongue in her belly button. Cora spread her arms to the side, digging her fingers into the bed sheets. She wanted that tongue in her pussy. Now.

The tormented expression on his golden gypsy's beautiful face made Tamos grin. She was so passionate, so open and truthful with her wants and needs. He adored her more with each passing moment.

Tonight, he'd show her that adoration. She pushed her hips up, enticing him lower, but he wouldn't be rushed. Tonight, he'd worship her, not in dance, that was her medium, but in sexual expression. He licked and kissed and sucked his way leisurely down her body. She tasted of crushed flowers and fruit offerings. She tasted of an eternity filled with dances upon starlit beaches.

He spread her pussy lips. His fingers were already slickly coated with her sweet juices. He watched her watch him as he licked each finger. Her honey-brown eyes glowed as though illuminated by firelight. Pink flushed her tanned cheeks. Her lips parted, tempting him to kiss her.

He would kiss her, but not there. He bent his head, stuck out his tongue, and swiped over her pussy in one long lick from clit to ass. She called his name, her lithe body jerking under his hands. "Slowly," he murmured. That guidance was hypocritical of him. He fared no better under her teasing.

She growled, and a chuckle escaped Tamos. He'd never heard his sunshine girl make such an ominous sound before. He'd soon turn that growl into a scream.

He licked her tender folds thoroughly, savoring the taste of her on his tongue. He could nibble on her until the sky met the sea. Her soft skin vibrated. He explored her tight entrance, reaching into her as far as he was able. She was silk within. He inhaled her scent. She was all woman, his woman.

He pumped her, ravaging her with his tongue, unhurriedly at first and then gradually picking up the tempo until he thrust faster and faster, drawing delicious cream from her luscious body. She lifted her hips, tilting so he could tongue fuck her even deeper. He cupped her ass.

Between pants, she chanted his name as though that were the only word she could wrap her sweet mouth around. It drove him wild, pushing him nearer to the finale. When her cries became broken, he knew she was there. He covered her furiously red clit and sucked hard.

Her orgasm swept her upward. Her pussy smacked his face, her juices covering his cheeks. Her screams pierced his brain. He pushed into her, her pussy muscles squeezing and releasing his tongue. He drank from her body, sucking up her wetness until the tremors ceased.

"I love you, Tamos." She lay dazed. He placed his head beside her on the pillow, watching her as she recovered. He loved seeing the high color recede like the tides from her face. He watched her brown eyes clear as her quick brain sputtered back into operation.

"I love you, Cora." He stroked her arm. Even if it hadn't been his destiny, he would have loved her. She was everything to him. "But you know that. You saw my future." They had never talked about the image he'd intentionally left for her.

"Did I? This bed doesn't have black sheets either." She pulled the white cotton over the two of them. "Was that vision...?"

"Yes." He kissed the tip of her nose. It was a real glimpse into the future. "That bed is in Osaka."

"Osaka," she repeated, her eyes wide. "I've never been to Japan."

His *monisha* hadn't traveled anywhere overseas. He liked that they would see all those places together. "Will that be where the wind calls us next?" He kept his voice casual, deliberately concealing the eagerness bubbling up inside him.

Their first son would be conceived in Osaka. He stroked her flat stomach. His golden gypsy would look beautiful rounded with his child, her feet bare, her eyes filled

with love. She would make a wonderful mother. He brushed his mouth over hers. She made a wonderful life companion. He was a fortunate man.

“Patience, my gypsy king.” A saucy smile curled her lips. “We’ll go there soon. Let’s enjoy this moment first.”

Cynthia Sax

Cynthia Sax lives in a world where demons aren't all bad, angels aren't all good, and magic happens every single day. Although her heroes may not always say, "I love you," they will do anything for the women they love. They live passionately. They fight fiercely. They love the same women forever.

Cynthia has loved the same wonderful man forever. Her supportive hubby offers himself up to the joys and pains of research. He receives a daily briefing on what every character is doing. You can also learn what Cynthia Sax's characters are doing by visiting her website at www.CynthiaSax.com or emailing her directly at Cynthia@CynthiaSax.com.