

Miniature  
Rose

Scarlet Rose

# Seduce Me, I'm Irish



Allie  
Standifer





# Seduce Me, I'm Irish

by

Allie Standifer

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Seduce Me, I'm Irish

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Contact Information: [info@thewildrosepress.com](mailto:info@thewildrosepress.com)

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## **Dedication**

To Roni & Jo, you are an inspiration to all of us who follow our dreams. Thanks for making so many come true.

And To Betty, Jenn and Bev: Ladies, don't know what I'd do without you. You are the insanity of what I write. Thanks for the drinks, laughs, and ability to chat with you anywhere in my house. Until our next party...



Lyra Roberts stepped back from the well, disappointment twisting her stomach. It really had been a childish idea, but her Nanny had believed in the wishing well so much, Lyra had to try it. When nothing happened except for the dull plop of her coin in the water, she turned home.

She was at the end of her rope. No cute little man with button shoes had showed up to hand over his gold and make her life perfect. Nor had any sexy hunk in leather pants appeared to ravish her all night.

"Some days," she muttered, following the dark path home, "it doesn't pay to get out of bed."

Water showered across her face, warm and fragrant, soaking her blouse and the front of her jeans. Lyra stopped in mid stride, shocked at the sudden wetness.

And the appearance of a man inside what looked to be a water tunnel.

Then the water was gone, the man stepped forward, and Lyra screamed as if her life depended on it, which it probably did.

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Kaden winced at the woman's screech. "What in the name of the seven worlds are ya shrieking about?"

It was obvious the woman had lost her sense. Thick red hair covered her face and stuck to her cheeks in a peculiar pattern. He could see little of her skin with her hands raised to shield her from some imaginary attack.

"Have ya been injured in some way?" he asked, trying to ascertain if this was the woman shown to him in the water vision. "Do ya need assistance?"

The woman didn't answer, and instead turned and ran, screaming her red-head off.

"Cease!" he shouted to her retreating back. Instantly, she froze with one foot in the air, her mouth open and hair straight behind her like a banner stuck in the breeze.

Kaden closed the space between them, stopping in

front of her still form. Her hazel eyes followed his movements, fear turning them dark. A weight settled in his stomach when he realized he was the cause of her fear.

Slowly, so he wouldn't frighten her, Kaden lifted one hand to brush through her fiery curls. "My intention isn't to harm ya, love. I'm here to grant yer wish."

Kaden watched the slow motion of her throat swallowing and realized his command had frozen everything but the organs needed to keep her alive. "Ya may speak."

Instantly, the woods filled with the sounds of cursing and threats.

"Let me go, you freak show escapee. I got your wish right here." More cursing streaked the air until Kaden thought his ears might burn off.

"If ya haven't any better uses for that mouth, I'll find another way to occupy it." He made his meaning clear by staring at her lush pink lips and licking his own. His gaze traveled down the rest of her lush body. Jeans hugged her rounded ass like a lover. Her green halter top left her back bare. His hands itched to touch the smooth expanse of golden skin.

Damn, if the woman didn't make him hard. The more she fought his magic the stronger her scent filled the air. A musky fresh scent that shot right to his cock. His gaze shot straight to the junction of her legs.

Her mouth closed at once, but her eyes grew wide with suspicion and fear.

"I'm not here to hurt ya," he said again. "Ya've asked for my help in saving yer business, have ya not?"

Magic was a wonderful tool. It allowed him to access the moments before the woman, Lyra, dropped her coin in the water. He knew her wish and her unspoken desire for a lover. She wanted a man to pleasure her like no other for a single night.

That simply wouldn't do.

Kaden was here to make sure all her days and nights to come were filled with nothing but pleasure-wet, multi-orgasms, screaming-to-the-ceiling pleasure.

It might be time to teach his *Liaria* exactly what a mate was good for. How lucky for Lyra that her true mate



of the heart was a two thousand year old leprechaun, well versed in the art of sex in all its various aspects.

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Lyra thought her heart was going to beat out of her chest. She didn't know what to think of the strange man saying he was here to grant both her wishes. She hadn't made two wishes, just the one to save her business.

"Ya are thinking too hard, *Liaria*. In this moment ya are supposed to only feel," the man instructed her while moving closer. Heat radiated from his body, enveloping hers. The strange warmth caressed her from the inside out and centered between her legs.

"Ahh," he murmured in a low, mesmerizing voice. "My need calls to yers. We will have unimaginable pleasure in our joinings."

Lyra wanted to shake her head no. She wasn't going to join with this man, not some weird, park stranger she didn't know. Why in the hell would she?

Leaning forward, he brushed his lips across hers and whispered against her mouth. "I can see the refusal in yer eyes, but I sense the want in yer body. It has been many seasons since ya last felt the pleasure of a man's touch."

The stranger's breath was sweet, flavored with mint, making her want to open her lips to him and take whatever he was offering. For once in her dull unimaginative life, she wanted to be wild and reckless. To throw caution and twenty-eight years of good girl mentality out the window.

Hot lips left a moist trail down her neck. Her skin prickled with desire. "There is no reason to fear me. Ya made the wish, Ya have the blood of Ireland in ya, and now I am here to grant yer every desire."

Tall, dark and sex-on-a-stick licked the words into her ear.

"How...you knew...ummm...stop...have to think." She pushed the unintelligible words past a passion swollen throat. Every touch of his lips, every press of his body made her own flash with heat and pulse in unfulfilled desire.

He gave a soft chuckle as he made his way over her neck and down the slope of her breast. "There is no thinking with the first joining. Thinking, talking and

rationalizing will come after our bodies have been satisfied.”

Satisfying her body sounded like a great idea. Giant puddles of moisture soaked her panties. Her body wanted sex in a way it never had before. Her mind urged her to return the sexy man’s caresses with her own touch.

That didn’t make sense to Lyra. She should be frightened of a man she’d never met, talking and touching her this way, but somehow it all felt right. And maybe, just maybe, for the first time in her life, she was ready to take that walk on the wild side. Common sense be damned.

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Kaden sensed his woman’s acceptance the moment she gave herself over to the mating magic. He understood her reluctance. After all, hadn’t he been swearing against mating just recently?

But that was before he’d been summoned or taken his first look and touch of his *Liaria*, his fated soul mate. Lyra was everything he dreamed of at night when he took pleasure in his own hands. And now that he had the face to go with his fantasy, experienced the taste and scent of her, he no longer needed those dreams to satisfy him.

Releasing some of the magic holding her, he caught her arms above the elbows, lifted her to her toes and kissed her the way he’d been wanting to kiss her since first seeing her. Her parted lips gave him the advantage. His tongue sank into the honeyed depths of her mouth. Lust boiled inside him, savage and hungry, and it was *only* a kiss.

He lifted his head long enough to whisper, “Come with me, Lyra. Let us find our pleasure in the trees where nature will bless our union and prying eyes can’t feast on yer beauty.”

He led her to a small copse of trees on the other side of the well.

“How do you know my name?” She hadn’t told him. She could barely speak with the pulses of pleasure coursing through her.

“The magic told me.”

“Yeah. Try another one.”

“I am Kaden.”

“What are we doing he—”

Magic man cut her off with a fierce kiss. He licked her lips, coaxing her to open for him. His tongue slid into her mouth again, tangling with hers. She moaned. He tasted so very good.

The cool breeze of the night whispered across her heated breasts. Where had her shirt gone? It was just there. His mouth left hers to cover her breast, the suction making her knees weak and her heart race.

He whispered something in Gaelic. His hot breath fanned over her breast. Her nipple beaded tighter as a beautiful dome of green sparkles surrounded them. What in the world?

One second she was on her feet and the next she was on her back and naked. His hands slowly wandered. Long calloused fingers of one hand grazed her nipples, pulling and pinching them. The other hand smoothed over her curved belly and made a path to her clit. She gasped and trembled in anticipation.

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Kaden's fingers parted red curls and slid deeper. With only the slightest touch, her body arched, her breasts grew fuller—if that was possible.

The effect her response had on him was painful. His cock, already hard, could now cut stone. His balls tightened, and moisture gathered on his body. His clothing vanished with a single thought. He took his dick in hand and slowly rubbed himself against her wetness in rhythm with his circular motions on her clit.

Kaden reveled in the sound of her moans and watched as his cock teased her cunt. Shimmering waves of passion threw off intense heat.

She bucked frantically against him. “Please, Kaden, take me now.”

She moaned and grabbed his cock. His steel arousal jerked in her hand, and Lyra turned her hazel gaze on him. “Now, please. Put it inside me.” She opened her arms and legs to welcome him.

Kaden had fucked many women, but they never looked at him with such desire in their eyes. His stomach clenched as his cock throbbed. He shifted to cover her body with his and didn't hesitate as he thrust into her.

Her legs locked around his waist as he pummeled into her tight, hot pussy. He pushed up on one arm and grabbed a handful of soft breast. He pinched and pulled the spiked nipple.

A soft moan escaped her lips.

His balls tightened ready to spurt his seed. The fire grew higher in his blood, his body ready to explode.

Her muscles clenched around him. Her back arched off the forest floor. Her loud cries of release echoed in his head. She clutched his shoulders, her long nails clawing at him. Her harsh breath whispered praise of his body in his ear.

Kaden let himself go. His seed spurted from him in powerful jets, fulfilling the first step of the mating ritual. By the rainbow, he would enjoy whatever pleasures the Fates had planned for him.

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Lyra waited until her heart settled back in the vicinity of her chest. *Wow* was the only word she could come up with to describe *that* experience. This man, holding her so tenderly in his arms, had taken her places she hadn't known her body could go. She had literally seen stars, the explosion of worlds.

"*Liaria*, ya unman me with the gift of yer body." He pressed a tender kiss against her temple.

"Um...yeah...it was good for me, too." How lame was she? That was the best she could come up with. *It was good for me, too, baby?* She worked in a damn bookstore filled with every type of romance novel known to woman.

Instead of being insulted, his laughter carried in the night, and the vibrations echoed from his chest to her head. She smiled. "Sorry, I didn't mean that the way it came out."

He lifted his dark head from the grass to meet her eyes. "What? It wasn't good for ya?" A teasing light shown out of his clover-green eyes and those wonderful soft lips tilted in a half smile.

Lyra found enough energy for a weak punch to his shoulder, then let her hand drop to toy with his nipple. "You know what I meant. I enjoyed being with you." Heaving a deep sigh of regret, Lyra forced herself away from the comforting warmth of his chest.

"No," he protested. "Ya can't be thinking of leaving me now. We've barely begun."

She gave a weak laugh as she sat up, glancing around for her clothes. "With a start like the one we just had, I don't think I would live through an encore."

Kaden grabbed her hand, pulled her down and rolled her underneath him. "Now, what makes ya think I can resist a challenge such as that?" He dipped his dark head and brushed a silky kiss across her swollen lips. The head of his cock pressed against her still pulsing entrance.

Lyra stared at him in shock. It hadn't been five minutes. What kind of man was raring to go after that short of a recovery period? "How can you be so hard again?"

"How can I not?" He pushed a few more inches into her wet sheath. "When the very smell and feel of ya pushes all the blood to my cock?"

He lowered his head, taking small bites that caused shivers to flow down her spine as he whispered, "I want ya to ride me. I want to see the pleasure on yer face as I make ya come. And I want to watch as I fill yer cunt with my seed."

Kaden thrust the rest of his thick cock into her, and they both moaned at the tight fit.

"Oh ye—" *What? Danger, Will Robinson, Danger!* With strength born of pure panic, Lyra pushed and shoved him until he rolled to the side. She scrambled to her feet, frantically looking for her lost clothes.

"Oh, no. How could I have been so stupid? How could I have let you be so stupid?" Spying her jeans and shirt thrown under a mulberry bush, Lyra snatched the items up and jerked them on.

"*Liaria*, what is the matter? Have I done something offensive? Truly, ya do not have to ride my cock if the idea of it displeases ya." Effortlessly, Kaden rose to his feet, his movement so easy and graceful that for a moment Lyra almost forgot about her lapse of sanity. Then his words came rushing back to remind her.

"It has nothing to do with me riding your...anything." She stammered over the word cock, when ten minutes ago she'd been screaming the word and begging him to put it in her. "We didn't use anything." She tried to explain

while searching for her shoes.

Instead of gathering his clothes and getting dressed, Kaden stood with hands on hips, looking confused and somehow sexier than before. The moon glow highlighted the hard planes of his stomach and thighs while emphasizing the moisture gleaming on his cock.

"Ya would like to use love toys?" His expression showed the idea pleased him.

Lyra licked her lips and truly wished she had time for another round with her sexy stranger, but time and sanity were against her.

"Yes—no—I mean I wouldn't mind using certain toys if we were to have...you know...sex again. But since we aren't and we can't, then it doesn't matter."

He leapt the distance between them. Heat and anger flared in those deep green eyes. "What do ya mean we won't be joining again? I did not displease ya." His hands that once held her so tenderly now tightened over her upper arms. "Ya crested for me. How could ya deny yerself such pleasure again?"

"Listen, this was a one time deal for me, Kaden. I don't normally go around having sex with the first hot guy I meet in the park."

"As relieved as I am to hear that, I don't understand what it has to do with us never joining again."

Lyra took a deep breath, stopped fiddling with the shoes in her hand and finally looked at him. "We didn't use any protection."

Instead of the light bulb going off over his head, he only looked more confused. "Protection from what? My magic sealed the area; there were no intruders to disturb us. There is no danger to ya here."

"See." Lyra dropped her shoes and poked his really nice chest with a finger. The flesh didn't so much as budge over his hard muscles. "That's just it. You're talking about magic and voodoo, and I'm talking reality here. That's why this," Lyra waved a hand between the two of them, "can never happen again."

He mimicked her hand gesture. "*This* being our extremely explosive, world-bending, mind-shattering and soul-melding joining?"

Finally, he was getting it...sort of. "Yes, that's exactly

it.”

Green eyes gleamed in the darkness, and suddenly Lyra wasn't so certain Kaden got the gist of her explanation. He towered over her, anger pumping from him in waves. “Ya will not deny me my mate's rights. We have had but a taste of each other. Ya will not deny us the right and pleasure of joining again.”

The tone in which he spoke made his words sound more like a decree than a suggestion, and Lyra had had enough of being dictated to.

“I don't know who you think you are, but I don't let anyone talk to me that way. I didn't take it from the loan officer this morning. I didn't take it from the finance company this afternoon, and I'm sure as hell not going to take it from you tonight. Now matter how good the sex was.” She tacked on the last part as a way to appease his male ego while still letting him know she meant business.

“Lyra, love.” Strong arms wrapped around her and pulled her into a tight embrace. “My words were not meant to insult ya but merely to state my intention of helping ya resolve yer current crisis while maintaining our level of intimacy. My body already yearns to thrust into yer welcoming heat.”

He lowered his lips to trace the shell of her ear. “The way yer pussy grips my cock and pulls me deeper, I feel like a youthling ready to spill in the first thrust.” Clever teeth nipped and nibbled their way down her neck, causing shivers once more to race across her skin.

Resolving not to give in to the Olympic size temptation he promised, Lyra leaned away from him and his talented mouth. “Look, I'm glad I rocked your world and all, but it's time for me to go home.” She pulled away from the heat of his body with a sigh of regret and gave him a small smile. “We'll always have Wilkins Park.”

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Kaden couldn't believe his mate had walked away from him with a raging erection and only a promise to remember a damn park. “By the seven worlds, what kind of mate has fate given me?”

He stormed around the clearing gathering his clothes in the mortal way. He needed time to calm down and come up with a different plan. His mate obviously needed

to understand a few rules of the leprechaun mate relationship.

She just thought she could walk away from him with a few memories and a satisfied body. Soon she would re-think that falsehood. Mating with a leprechaun in the way they had joined was a mating for life. Lyra was his whether she knew it or not.

Kaden would bide his time. He'd follow her to ensure her safety and wait until her body betrayed her. He would be her addiction from now until the end of time. From the moment his seed had entered her body, he had marked her as his. No other would satisfy her need or quench the fire he had started in her blood.

Whistling as he walked, he felt much better. Lyra would beg for his cock, tongue or whatever part of his body he would give her.

The one thing Kaden counted on was the mating heat. Whatever affected one mate, returned two fold on the other. As surely as he desired her, Lyra would come to burn for him. He had to mate with her again, twice more for the ritual to bind. Urgency flamed in his body.

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After a shower and a few self pep talks, Lyra felt more in control of herself. What had happened in the park would stay in the park. After all, what were the chances of running into a six-foot-three, green-eyed, delusional hunk in a city this size again?

She could breathe easy now. She had her walk on the wild side, and no matter how good it felt at the time, she couldn't and wouldn't go for another round. Unprotected sex in this day and age was an invitation to pregnancy and disease.

With all the other problems plaguing Lyra, neither a STD nor pregnancy was on her to-do list.

Going through her nightly ritual, she checked the locks on the doors and set the alarm. Nanny's old neighborhood was safe enough, but it didn't mean Lyra had to be sloppy.

Though why anyone would want to break in with nothing to steal but books, she couldn't imagine. Nanny had filled the apartments with case after case of books. Most of them were so old, Lyra was afraid to touch them.



But when she voiced her doubts to her grandmother, Nanny laughed and claimed they were her treasures.

Checking the temperature on the wall gauge, she notched the air conditioning down a few more degrees and pulled her tank top away from her warm chest.

"What is up with this?" She had been fine a few minutes ago. Now it was like a heat wave had started between her legs and rolled in waves over her body.

Debating another shower while removing the boxers she normally slept in, Lyra watched the hairs on her arms stand up. A chill racked her bones.

"You feel the heat of yer mate's need."

The husky words didn't shock her. For all the bravado of her earlier pep talk, Lyra knew she would see this man again. It was only a matter of time.

Clenching her teeth and hands to keep from flinging herself against him, she didn't trust herself to even glimpse at him. "What in the hell are *you* doing here? More to the point, how did you find me?"

In answer he moved behind her, strong arms circling her waist and pulling her tightly to the proof of his lust. "Ya are like a fever in my mind. I can't stop seeing ya or smelling yer essence on my hands and coating my tongue." The words whispered against her ear, and fire shot a straight path to the meltdown taking place between her legs. "I can smell yer body's need for me."

Sharp teeth gave a painful nip before his hot tongue laved the small hurt better.

Lyra swallowed a moan. She wasn't going to give into him. The man was stalking her. He'd followed her home from the park, broke into her apartment and was intent on killing her. Surely a woman couldn't be this turned on and live. She might be on the six o'clock news tomorrow night, but her corpse would have one hell of a smile.

"Wait." She tried in vain to pull out of his steely embrace. "You can't just break into my apartment and demand sex."

Lyra felt the smile against her neck before he turned her to face him. "There was nothing broken upon my entry to yer home." Talented lips traveled downward to bite and nibble on the crest of her peaked nipples. "As for demanding a joining...there is no need to demand

anything between mates. It's in the nature of leprechauns to understand and anticipate our females' needs."

His calloused fingers pinched and squeezed one breast while hot lips claimed and swallowed the other.

Lyra gave into the sensations flaming through her body, moaned and clutched his hair with both hands. "How the hell can you get me so wet so quick?"

Not bothering to answer her, Kaden's hand left her disappointed breast to travel down her stomach until he reached the pool of moisture gathered between her thighs.

"I would not be worthy of being yer mate, if I could not make yer body weep for me and crest many, many times." One long finger thrust inside her aching pussy while his thumb rubbed circles on her clit.

When her legs started to give out, Lyra threw both arms around Kaden's neck and held on tight. Her pussy clenched tighter when two more fingers were added to her amazing torment.

"More," she managed to whisper in his ear. "I need all of you in me...please."

"When ya are as desperate as I am, when the fire inside can burn no hotter, then I shall make our bodies into one." His voice was strained. "Until then..." In a move too fast to track, Lyra was on the floor, underwear gone, and Kaden's mouth feasted on her clit like it was his last meal.

When she thought she couldn't take anymore, his mouth left her. She knew she was about to come but wanted him inside her. Gripping his hair, she tugged until he lifted his head. "Kaden, I need you in me."

He must have sensed the desire burning her veins. With a last lick, Kaden moved slowly over her body, kissing and touching his way to her lips. Every touch of his mouth spiked the heat swirling inside her pussy. She was desperate for his body to cover her.

Lyra cradled him in her thighs as Kaden moved over her. She hooked her leg around his and shoved his shoulder. As he fell, she flipped so she was on top. That self defense course she'd taken in college had finally paid off.

She locked her gaze on his as she scooted down to straddle his thighs. His eyes grew wide with surprise

when she slowly leaned forward and took his hard cock into her mouth. She licked the smooth flared head. He was big. She had no hope of taking all of that lovely maleness into her mouth. She grabbed him around the base of the shaft and started a rhythmic squeezing.

His head rolled back to the floor, and his hips thrust upward.

She licked and suckled his hard length and played with his soft sac. Her moans were almost as loud as his.

"Enough." He grasped her shoulder and pulled her up, kissing her passionately on the mouth. His cock nudged her tight entrance.

With a long slow thrust, he slid into her. He started a lazy rhythm, pushing in and out of her over and over, taking them higher. His hand kneaded her breast, plucked at the nipple. Little sparks shot through her, and her muscles tightened around him. "Feel how yer warm, wet pussy grips my cock and holds me."

His words shot Lyra upward, her legs on either side of his waist, locking him in place inside her. His rocking thrusts made her pussy gush.

"Oh God, Kaden." His pelvis ground into hers, and the extra pressure did wonderful things to her clit. "You feel so good inside me."

"Lyra, I want ya. Every sarcastic, grating, funny, smart, sexy-as-hell inch of ya." He gripped her waist and lifted her until the rounded head of his dick was the only part left inside her. "Yer perfect."

She couldn't stifle the pleasure bubbling inside her. She angled her hips to take him inside again, but he held back.

Kaden looked up at her and grinned. "Yer body was created for me."

Smiling back at him, she squirmed again, urging him to take her. "Then use it for me."

"Turn over." His grin turned lascivious.

Lyra obeyed, looking over her shoulder at him as she settled on her hands and knees.

He startled her by kissing the small of her back. "Perfect."

The seeping head of his cock found her entrance, and without warning, he plunged inside her and started up a

furious rhythm. The jack hammering of his hips slapped his balls into her clit, sending fire rippling through her.

Lyra tried to clutch the floor beneath her. "More, more," she panted. Her breasts swayed. Her nipples scraped the carpet, only adding to the fire burning within her. "Yes. Almost there. Almost."

She tensed and shattered.

They both shouted in climax, and their essence became one.

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Once again Lyra found herself laying across Kaden's chest, this time on her bed, her breath billowing out and her heart racing. "How do I let you talk me into sex so easily?"

A gentle hand ran through her hair. "I recall nothing easy about this joining."

A self-satisfied smile spread across her lips. "True, you were a bit of a wild man." Lyra pinched the nipple within easy reach and laughed at his wince of pain.

Kaden's larger hand covered hers and gave it a gentle squeeze. "I did not mean to be so rough. Did I hurt ya?"

The concern was there in his voice and his anxious green eyes.

She smiled. "You didn't do anything I didn't beg for." She assured him with a quick bite to his pec muscle.

The arm around her waist tightened, and Kaden pressed a heated, but quick, kiss to her lips. "I must confess I lost all sense of reason once ya took my cock into your very talented mouth."

"You're not so bad yourself with the tongue action." A flush of warmth rushed to her cheeks.

"Of course, I'm not." The smugness of his tone made Lyra lean back from the comfort of his body.

"Well, aren't you sure of yourself?"

Suddenly everything they'd done together didn't feel as right as it had seconds ago. His words and actions had shown him to be a man of experience. For all she knew, he could have been going down on her while thinking of the mating habits of flies.

She pulled away and moved across the bed. Once again she'd made a huge mistake, leaping before she looked with this man.

Kaden leaned up on one arm and gazed questioningly at her. "Where are you going?"

The sheet had slipped enough to give Lyra a view of the hard body she'd licked and kissed her way across a short time ago. Even as her brain screamed to retreat, her body heated up at the sight of so much naked, delicious flesh.

Her head shook as she backed away. "I'm getting your clothes, and you are leaving before this gets any weirder than it already has."

Lyra grabbed her robe from the closet and forced herself to find and gather Kaden's clothes. She found his suit pants hanging from the ceiling fan and didn't bother to question their location. His shirt was ripped, with buttons scattered across the floor. Somehow she didn't remember doing that.

Gathering up as much as she could find, Lyra turned around only to find her way blocked by a large and irritated male.

"Why is it every time we join, ya are throwing me out of yer body and bed?"

The question startled her. She hadn't expected him to be upset. She was, after all, giving him an easy out. Men really didn't want to stay once they'd been satisfied. Right? "This is the first time you've been in my bed."

"And what about yer body? Ya are forever making me leave the haven of yer cunt. Do ya not enjoy the feel of us together after the passion fades?"

Lyra had enough. She had too many things to worry about to add a playboy's feelings to the list.

"Look, this was a one-night stand," she pointed out. "They don't last beyond the orgasm, and they sure as hell don't allow for cuddling. You got what you wanted...twice. Now please get out, and let me get on with my life."

She flung both arm loads of clothes in his direction and stomped into the kitchen. Hopefully, by the time she fixed herself a diet soda, he'd have taken the hint and left.

So if that's what she wanted so badly, why did her chest ache at the thought of never seeing him again?

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Kaden stared in shock as Lyra stormed out of the room after tossing his clothes to him.

“What in the name of all the worlds has gotten into that woman?” he asked to himself while trying to sort out what might have set her off.

From previous trips to her world, he knew women liked to be held and petted after sharing their bodies. But his mate seemed to resent his offer. She’d given him orders and expected him to leave like a well-trained pet. Well, by the pot of gold, he’d be damned a poor man before he followed another’s dictates even if it was his mate’s.

Shoving open the door with the flat of his hand, he was pleased to see her jump at the noise.

“We are not done discussing this,” he informed her in a calm tone.

Her fingers shook around a tall glass before she turned to face him. “I’ve said all I’m going to say. I think that pretty much ends any discussion.” She turned her back to him once more.

Taking a deep breath to calm the rage and hurt inside, he waited a few heartbeats before speaking again. “Ya have had yer say. Now I shall have mine.”

Lyra spun to face him again. “No, you shall not. Who talks like that anymore anyway?”

“I do, and insulting me is not the way to appease my temper.”

Her eyes flashed fire, and her free hand clenched open and closed. “I’m not trying to appease your anything. I don’t care if you’re ever appeased again.” She ran a hand through tangled hair. “Why don’t you take the hint and hit the road.”

He stalked toward her and caged her within his arms, making sure she had no escape. She would be made to listen to his words. Even if he had to take her to bed again.

The thought made him smile.

Unfortunately, Lyra caught the smile and pushed against his chest to try to force her way past him. “You’re an egotistical jerk.”

Her movement thrust her barely covered hip against his hardening shaft. He didn’t bother to hide the swelling of his body. Instead, Kaden pushed back, letting her feel how his dick reacted to her nearness.

“Why am I accused of having an ego? Because I know

ya want me? Or because I act on the desire exploding between us?" He bent to inhale and almost trembled when a wave of lust slammed into him. The subtle scent only one of his kind would note filled his nostrils. His body signature mixed with Lyra's juices marking them as mates.

"You want to cuddle. You won't leave when I ask." Lyra threw her hands in the air. "Do you not understand the concept of a one night stand?"

Kaden shrugged his shoulders. "I have heard of this one night stand." He cringed to think of how many had occurred in his own life before he'd met Lyra. "I have never approved of females participating in this mortal concept."

Her face went comically blank. Then her hazel eyes grew wide and her mouth dropped open. "You don't approve of the mortal concept?" Once again she struggled for freedom from his grip. "And what in the hell do you mean by *mortal* concept? What are you if not a mortal? Vampire? Werewolf?"

Kaden lowered his arms from her shoulders to her waist. Even in the midst of anger, he took pleasure in the nearness of his mate's body. She was perfect for him in every way; he was afraid to believe his own luck.

Her lush full lips pressed into a tight, thin line, a crease appeared between her red brows and her eyes fairly burned him with anger.

Kaden let her go. He had spoken the truth to her earlier in the park, but his attempt to convince her he wasn't joking was lost in the midst of their lust for each other. He had meant to try again to explain who and what he was when he reached her apartment, but his cock had better ideas.

Running a frustrated hand through his already tousled hair, Kaden backed away from the counter to pace her small, but neat, kitchen. If he had never touched her, the truth would have come easily from him lips. But that was before he knew what was missing from his life. He was a leprechaun and Leprechauns were not cowards to hide behind their pots. He gathered his courage and wished for a bit of his own luck before turning to face his none too pleased mate.

“Nay, lass, I am not a hairy dog to run on all fours and bay at the moon.” Kaden thought it would be good to start off with all the things he wasn’t.

Lyra’s lips twisted in a sarcastic smile. “Great, so I know I won’t find you slurping water from my toilet.”

“And I’m not dead. I can walk, stand or run in sunlight. I’ve never lost my soul nor has blood crossed my lips for nutritional value.”

There that should cover it. Him being a leprechaun, not a human, sounded so much better when considering all the other things he could be.

“So, I know what you’re not. Are you going to tell me what you think you are?”

He relaxed a fraction when her question came out easy with no hint of anger.

“Aye, I’m a leprechaun,” he told her proudly.

Lyra’s shoulders bowed, her head sank and small whimper like noises echoed across the room. Her reaction didn’t match any of his expectations.

“Troll’s hammer.” Women’s tears never bothered him before. They were ploy used by most women to gain their way. But somehow, he knew Lyra’s pride would never allow her to show weakness. And tears would definitely be a weakness to his woman.

Crossing the room, Kaden wrapped both arms around her waist from behind and hauled her flush against his chest. The embrace wasn’t meant to be erotic. He simply wanted to offer her comfort.

To his eternal astonishment, Lyra tilted a tear streaked face toward him and burst into laughter. Kaden dropped his arms and retreated to the pine kitchen table, his pride stung. “Why are ya laughing?”

Both arms circling her middle, Lyra struggled to form her words between bouts of hilarity. “You...think you’re...a...a...leprechaun?”

In all his years of life, no one had laughed at him. Yet, this woman, the mate of his heart, had the nerve to make him the jest of her humor? He wouldn’t stand for it. “What does yer amusement have to do with my being a leprechaun?”

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Lyra straightened at his tone, wiped the remaining



moisture from her eyes and faced him.

How could Kaden think for one second she'd believe his tale? The sex had been good. No, the sex had been bone-melting and world-changing. But no matter how good he was between the sheets, on the ground or against the wall, she wasn't going to pretend she bought into his illusion.

"Kaden." She slowly approached the table where he stood, looking defiant and arrogant like the first time she saw him. "I wasn't laughing at you, honest. I was laughing at the idea of you being short, dressed in a green suit with pointed shoes and big ears." Leaning up to nip the lobe of the normal looking ear. "You are a sexy, sophisticated man, and I refuse to think of you any other way."

Hard green eyes stared down. "So ya think leprechauns are tiny little men who play in rainbows and hide pots of gold for any mortal to find?"

His tone was even, but the anger blazed in those eyes and Lyra wasn't sure how to answer. "Umm, yeah?"

"Well, then, it's time someone showed ya the truth." Kaden grabbed her arm in a rough hold, pulled her against him and started to mumble in a strange language.

Swirling colors flooded her tiny kitchen. Greens, pinks, gold and a multitude of others filled the room like a living prism.

"What the hell—" A rough hand was clamped over her mouth.

And a pot of gold shimmered on top of her table before crashing through to the floor and sending wood shards scattering.

"Now there, lass, what were ya saying about leprechauns being short with big ears?"

God help her, Lyra didn't know what to say. There wasn't anything to say. Her nanny had been right. She yanked his hand from her mouth, turned into the hardness of his chest and took his mouth in a desperate possession. Everything he said was true. All the legends and tales Nanny believed in were true. Elation filled her, and she wanted to share her happiness.

Happiness that he'd shared his secret with her, gratitude for him coming into her life and contentment

with the knowledge her grandmother hadn't been crazy all these years. She poured all she felt into the kiss.

Instead of taking over the kiss as Lyra expected, Kaden closed his lips to her and pulled away. His eyes were harder now than when he thought she'd been laughing at him.

"Kaden," she stroked his arms. "What's the matter? You don't want me to touch you anymore?" It couldn't be possible, not with the way they burned up together.

He looked down at her, his expression vying for neutral, but anger ate away his calm. "I see how eager ya are to touch me now that you have gazed upon my gold. I wonder how much more desirous ya would find me if I were to show ya the whole of my wealth."

His cruel words pounded through her mind. Tears burned her eyes again. How could he think, after everything they'd done to and with each other, she'd look to him for money alone. So many emotions had rolled through her at the sight of the shiny metal but *never* had she considered using the gold.

Lyra backed away in short measured steps as, thankfully, anger buried the hurt. "Get out." Her words were soft but carried in the room.

Kaden didn't move except to lift one dark brow. "Ya wish me to leave? Ya were eager enough to share yerself with me moments ago." His voice was mocking. "Do you think I will leave the gold here...with ya? Do ya think I should give it all to ya so ya can save yer nanny's precious shop? Is that what's behind the sudden affection for me?"

"Get out," she whispered again, her voice choking on tears. She'd be damned if she'd break down in front of this immortal and cruel bastard. "Leave my house and take your fucking gold with you."

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Kaden stood dumbstruck in the kitchen after Lyra raced out. "What in the afterlife just happened here?"

His mind groped for answers while his heart ached for the tears he heard being shed. Immortal senses had never been so heavy a burden until now. Each individual drop fell to the carpet, and his stomach churned tighter with every one.

He'd been right. He knew it.

The only other time he'd shown his treasure to a woman, she'd done exactly what Lyra had. Robyn had thrown her arms around him and squealed in joy. She made promises of love and passion that lasted no longer than the time it took for him to explain the gold wasn't all his.

Lyra hadn't made any promises. Her kiss hadn't been flavored with desperation. Instead, it had been joyful, playful even.

Yet when he accused her of whoring for money, she hadn't denied it. He didn't understand why Lyra had simply asked him to leave. No yelling or threats. No pleasuring for just a coin or two.

But then, the well had never shown him Robyn's face. Lyra's had been bright as a picture and just as clear as he traveled to her. Her lack of response to the insulting words he hurled made up his mind.

Lyra didn't want him for the gold.

Looking around her apartment, the truth was evident. His mate didn't need material things to provide happiness. She found joy within her self and family.

The truth ached in his chest as he forced himself to listen to the pain of each sob.

Kaden loved her. He loved every maddening, stubborn and luscious inch of her. And he'd wounded her deeply. Somehow he had to show her how sincerely sorry he was.

"Damn it, leprechauns are not known for their romantic sides. We are the practical people." Kaden wracked his brain, trying to think how to win back his place in his mate's arms.

He was two inches from her sink, when the idea came to him. The perfect way to show Lyra the truth and depth of his love and also save her grandmother's store.

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Lyra leaned her head back against the headboard as she heard the front door finally close. She didn't know what had taken Kaden so long to leave, she was just grateful he was gone.

Taking short calming breaths, she tried to understand why a strange man's distrust had broken her so completely. After all, it was just sex.

A dry laugh cracked Lyra's throat at the thought of Kaden being *just* anything. He was like no other man. He didn't laugh when she explained her nanny's habits and beliefs. He didn't mock her desire to keep the bookstore in the family. Everything about him had been perfect.

Well, perfect until he accused her of wanting to fuck him for some stupid piece of metal.

"Yeah, that was definitely a draw back." Lyra scrubbed tired hands over her scratchy eyes.

As much as his words hurt, her body was still wet and ready for him. Her inner muscles clenched at the thought of his cock pushing deep inside her.

"What in the hell is the matter with me? The man thought I would fuck him for his money, and right now I'd do him any way I could." The restlessness of her body confused her, and the confusion roused her anger again.

Nothing about this night or Kaden made sense. He made love like a dream, had more money than Trump and thought he was a mythical elf.

No, not an elf. Kaden thought he was a leprechaun, one of the little people. He'd even managed to produce the required pot of gold.

Did it really matter when she'd probably never see the man again? It followed the pattern of her life lately. Just when she started to believe in love at first sight, everything was blown apart by her own logic and lack of faith.

Lyra sighed, ran a weary hand through her hair and gave up for the night. Tomorrow, after a good night's sleep, she'd be able to look over the past day and make some sense of it.

Until then, she needed sleep more than she needed to worry about if Kaden was okay and where he'd be sleeping.

Tomorrow Lyra had to come up with a plan to save her nanny's bookstore or be forced to close the doors for good.

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A loud crash jerked Lyra from her restless sleep. A quick glance at the alarm clock showed it was almost dawn. She shoved the sheets aside, flung her legs off the bed and waited.

Rough night or not, Lyra was positive there was a noise coming from her living room.

If it was Kaden, she'd give him a piece of her mind before throwing his ass out the door again.

Not bothering with a robe or pants, Lyra strode to the bedroom door dressed in nothing more than a skimpy tank top and her thong underwear. What was the point of putting on clothes? Kaden had seen her in less.

A clatter from the other room made her stop. When the door opened with a loud squeak fear invaded Lyra's sleep deprived and over anxious brain.

What if it wasn't Kaden, returning for another round of wall banging sex? The thought that there might be a real burglar in her home sent shivers down her spine. But it was too late to turn back. They probably heard the door open. They knew she was coming.

Oh shit, why hadn't she watched more of those police shows and less ballroom dancing with the stars? Should she run back to her room and call the police? The choice was taken out of her hands as heavy footsteps started up the stairs.

Lyra did the only thing she could. She made a mad grab for something to defend herself and hid behind the door for a surprise attack. A dark shadow loomed in the open doorway, and a masculine scent drifted past her nose. It didn't smell exactly like Kaden. It smelled along the same lines as him.

With a deep breath for courage, Lyra jumped out from behind the door. Her loud rebel yell shattered the silence. And her porky pie piggy bank smashed on the intruders head.

Then all hell broke loose, along with the coins from her piggy bank.

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Kaden landed on the floor with a thud. Instantly, he was shoved face first in the carpet, his hands jerked back and tied. Then something silky and soft was stuffed into his open mouth.

It wasn't until Lyra had finished tying him up like a prize hog, she turned on the light.

"Kaden!" She rushed to untie his arms.

When he was free he held her close, his heart

pounding in rhythm with the fear and desire running in his veins.

"Are you all right, my love?" He pressed quick kisses along her forehead, eyelids, nose and cheekbones before raising his head to meet her hazel gaze.

Unwrapping one arm from his waist, she pointed at the door behind her. "I thought someone broke in and was trying to creep into my bedroom."

Kaden was hard pressed to hold back his laughter. And as grateful as he was to have Lyra back in his arms, he would not hide her intruder's identity from her.

He cupped her face with one hand. "Lyra, love, that was me. I dropped something on the floor. I was coming up the stairs to make sure ya were all right," he explained gently, refusing to let go when she tried to pull back.

Puzzled hazel eyes looked back at him. "What are you doing here? Why are you creeping into my bedroom, anyway?"

Then the wounded look was gone, replaced by feminine outrage and anger. "I was scared you were a burglar and a rapist. How dare you presume to sneak into my bed? Do you think because I was so easy for you once—twice—I'd fuck you again?"

Twisting and pulling away from him, Lyra tried kicking him in the balls. Her efforts gained her nothing but did serve to rouse his sleeping cock.

The erection he couldn't keep down, angered her further. "What, you think this fear is sexy?"

This had to stop. He could think of nothing more upsetting than letting Lyra believe he'd thought her sexual actions tonight were the norm. "I would kill any man, mortal or immortal, before allowing them near yer bed and body," he staunchly informed her.

"Yeah, right." Her eyes lost none of their hostility.

Wild red hair beckoned his fingers, so he stroked one hand through the tangles, but kept the other firmly around her waist, tucking her close. The truth was always a simple thing, until it came to women. "As I said, I came up here to investigate a noise I'd heard."

"Why didn't you yell that you were coming up?" Was he mistaken or was there a softening in his mate's eyes?

"Because I was trying not to wake ya before the

surprise.”

“Some surprise.” She sniffed. “And give me back my underwear.” She made a grab for it and missed. “How did you get them?”

“Magic.” He winked at her before frowning. “I allowed ya,” he pointed a finger in Lyra’s direction, “to smash my head with something hard and jingly, then I let ya truss me up like some party goose, and ya would be thinking I’m not keeping a little something for myself?” Kaden shook his head. “Ya have got more damage to the brain than I, if ya think that.”

Lyra looked at Kaden.

Kaden stared at his mate.

At once they both started to talk.

“I’m still mad at you.

“I need ya to listen to me, Lyra, love.”

Kaden let her go so she could pace the room. She turned accusing eyes up at him. “You called me a whore.”

There was anger in her voice, but the hurt drowned out all but a hint of it.

“Aye, love, I did, and it was a mistake on my part. I’m here to tell ya I’m sorry and beg ya for yer forgiveness.” Swallowing every ounce of pride, Kaden went down on both knees and bowed his head.

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Lyra couldn’t believe what she was seeing. The proud and handsome man kneeling before her shook Lyra to her soul.

He didn’t look right in that position. His beautiful dark head bowed made him look defeated. “Get up, Kaden. I can’t stand to see you like this.”

He refused. “I’ll not be getting up until ya say ya will think about forgiving me.”

His words caused a small smile to chase across her lips. “Fine, I’ll think about forgiving you.”

In a flash, Kaden was up, on his feet and closing his arms tight around Lyra’s waist.

“I only said I’d think about forgiving you,” she reminded him.

Green eyes twinkled back at her. “Oh, I know ya promised to think it over. I’m just working on increasing my luck.”

She looked at him with speculation. "I thought all leprechauns were lucky?"

"I am now." He bent his head to kiss her sweetly. She tried to take the kiss to the next level, but Kaden pulled away.

"What, do I have morning breath or something?" Lyra tried to keep the hurt from her voice.

"No, love, there's just something more I want to show ya."

"Oh," she beamed up at him. "The reason behind why I smashed my favorite piggy bank over your head?"

He laughed. "Yes, it is about yer grandmother's store."

The bubbly feeling inside her dwindled. "No, Kaden, we're not going there. I'll find some other way to get the money I need."

"Love, ya've already got the money."

Lyra's eyes grew dark and lines formed between her brows. "If I already had the money, I wouldn't have made the silly trip to the well."

"I, for one, am very glad ya did."

Heat rose to her cheeks. "Yeah, me, too."

He pulled her to the old bookcase her grandmother kept stocked with family books. "This is where yer money is. Some of these books are rare first editions. Collectors would pay thousands of dollars for ones in such fine shape. Yers are in mint condition."

Lyra couldn't believe what he was saying. "You didn't put these books here, did you?"

He laid one tanned hand over his heart. "Upon my honor, I vow they were here the entire time."

Hope sprang upwards in her chest. "You mean all these books," she waved a hand at the massive collection, "are worth money to people?"

"Aye, I would say ya have enough here to pay off the store completely and never have to worry over funds again."

Lyra shrieked and jumped into his arms.

"Wait," he told her. "I've more to show you."

She eyed the bulge in his pants and reached for his zipper. "I can't wait for you to show it to me."

He laughed and stepped away, evading her hands as



he led her out of the bedroom and down the stairs.

At the last step, Lyra stood motionless. Her mouth dropped open and no words would come to mind.

The entire room had been changed.

Hundreds of candles lit the once dark space, lush silk pillows lined the floor, flowing jewel toned material hung from the walls. In the midst of the splendor, a small table was set up with china plates, crystal flutes and small silver serving dishes.

Enough musical instruments lined the far side of the room to make an orchestra weep.

She finally found her voice. "What's with all the floating violins and stuff?"

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Kaden felt his heart lodge in his throat. The next few minutes would be the most important of his life. He had to convince Lyra to join with him permanently.

"I...uh...thought this might set the right mood." He crossed the room with her and held out a chair, wincing as he saw his hand shake. He thrust it behind his back and nodded. The music started to play.

Lyra's eyes went wide with pleasure. "Oh, that's lovely."

Kaden wanted to tell her she hadn't seen anything yet but wisely kept his mouth shut. Instead, he lifted the silver lids to reveal succulent lobster, juicy steaks and delicate chocolate wafers.

"You did all this for me?" she asked, surprise coloring her tone.

Confession time was upon him. "I...uh...did it for several reasons. The first was to show how sorry I am for the words I spoke against ya." He reached for her hand, wanting her to know and believe how sincere he was. "I had been badly treated by a mortal woman years ago. She saw the gold and promised me the moon in return. Later, I found out she had a lover on the side and planed to steal the gold while I slept so they could live together in wealth."

He saw sadness in her eyes and a flash of anger, but none of the pity he expected. His shoulders relaxed.

"Bitch." Lyra summed up her opinion.

A small laugh escaped him. "Yes, turns out she was

quite the bitch.”

“What happened to her?”

He told her with no emotion in his voice. After two hundred years, Robyn wasn’t much a part of his thoughts and had no hold on his emotions.

“She married a much older, wealthier man. When he died she married the young lover. He, in turn, took all of her money, left her penniless, pregnant and ran off with a neighboring lord’s son.”

Laughter bubbled out of her sweet lips. “That’s horrible for the child but nothing less than that woman deserved.”

Gently rubbing his thumb over Lyra’s soft hand he made the rest of his confession. “The child was fine. Shortly after his birth, an unknown relative came to the house. Fell in love with the baby and took him away to live a life of great privilege and wealth.”

Understanding dawned in her eyes. “You did that, didn’t you?”

He pretended to not understand. “Did what, love?”

Eyes narrowed, she tightened her hand around his when he made to pull away. “You either found the relative to care for the child or you were the one who took care of him.”

Truth fell so effortlessly from her lush lips. He wondered why, in all his years, no one else had been able to guess the truth.

“Yes, it was I who went and took the babe.”

“Didn’t she know it was you?” Lyra asked.

He shook his head. “For a small amount of time I used fairy glamour that hid my true appearance. She thought I was a doddering old man with immoral designs on the child.”

Lyra made a face. “That’s disgusting. Why would she let her son go with you then?”

“Money.” Kaden stated. “Enough money and she would have promised me ten children.”

She shivered in reaction to the truth of his words. “Some people should never be parents.”

“I agree, love.” But he knew Lyra, with her kind heart and understanding nature, would be an excellent mother to their children. If only he could convince her to

have them.

"So, do you want children of your own some day?" Her gaze jerked upward to meet his as if a sudden thought occurred to her. "You don't already have like a hundred children running around, do you?"

He couldn't help but laugh at her fearful expression. "No, leprechauns are only able to have children with their *Liarias*. Our own form of population control, I guess."

The relief was evident in the slope of her shoulders. "I mean...it's not any of my business."

Now was the time to come clean, lay his heart and soul, literally on the table.

"I have been meaning to talk to you about that." Kaden cleared his throat, smoothed his shirt and fussed with his flatware. "What *is* yer business, I mean."

She looked a bit wary but motioned him to go on.

He gazed into her beautiful hazel eyes and jumped. "I want everything to be yer business. About me I mean. I want ya to know ya have the right to ask me any questions and I'll answer them."

She jerked startled, but he couldn't quite grasp the other emotions flowing across her face. Then she trailed a finger along his forearm and ran her hand up his thigh under the table. "So you want me to be your confident?"

"No!" How could he muddle this up even more? "I mean yes, I want to be able to confide in ya, but that's not all I want."

She smiled a siren's smile. "You want to fuck me again as well."

"Oh course, I can think of no place I would rather be than buried deep in yer wet body."

Now she must understand what he was asking of her.

"So you want to be fuck buddies?"

The term and definition infuriated him. "No! I do not want to be a drive-by fuck. Ya will have no one else for this position either. The only person ya will be fucking is me."

"And what about you?" she asked softly.

"Me, what about me?" Confusion made his head swim.

"Who else will you allow in your bed while keeping everyone out of mine?"

That was it. Kaden had tried to be romantic. He'd tried to woo and dine her, but sometimes a leprechaun had to do what a leprechaun had to do.

He stood swiftly, his chair hitting the floor with a whoosh. Snatching her out of her own, he threw her over his shoulder and proceeded to tell her the rules.

"Ya will not allow another man to touch yer body. I will allow no one but ya intimate contact with mine. We will be joined in the eyes of my people, and I will get ya pregnant as soon as possible. I will sleep with ya in my arms every night and wake to yer beautiful face every morning.

There let her try and confuse the plain truth on this one.

Instead of furious female jabbering, he was confronted with feminine giggles.

Reaching the door to her room, Kaden was happy to see his magic had cleaned the prior mess of coins and plaster. He threw his *Liaria* onto the bed and quickly followed her. With a soft whisper of words, their clothes disappeared, and he moved himself between her soft thighs.

"Ya laugh at me, *Liaria*?" His heart swelled at the sight of her laughing face. Just that easy, she was able to melt his anger and rouse his other, more pressing desires.

She shook her head, her wine colored hair spreading out to cover the pillow. "I wouldn't dare, oh mighty and powerful one."

He knew she was teasing, and he felt an answering grin spread his lips. "Ya had best remember that, too," he warned with a mock growl.

Those lovely brown green eyes grew serious as she met his gaze. "Were you serious in what you said down there?"

He groaned, lowered his forehead to hers and gently touched her lips with his. "More than life itself."

"But what about the gold and—"

"The gold won't be a problem," he assured her, moving his lips over her face.

"Why?" she persisted.

The softness of her ear distracted him. "Because I have gotten rid of it all."

Soft but determined hands pushed against his chest. "What do you mean you've gotten rid of it? You didn't do something stupid and dump it in the Atlantic, did you?"

Heaving a weary sigh and resigning himself—and his cock—to conversation instead of passionate sex, he rolled to his back. "Nay, I did not dump it anywhere. I have placed all my accounts in a friend's care. He will look after my interests seeing as how my focus is no longer on finance."

Lyra, being Lyra, didn't respect his space or his attempt to keep his hands to himself. She rolled right onto him, propped her hands on his chest and rested her head on her joined hands. "So what is your main focus?"

Giving up the fight, Kaden ran his hands along her silky back to the curve of her ass and back up again. "I will be in charge of procreation, household and business accounts."

One perfect brow raised in question. "Really, now why would I let you take over my life and my body?"

"Because I love ya, and my life would be nothing without ya in it. Because the thought of ya makes me smile. I'm a richer man without a shilling of gold with ya by my side than if I had all the gold in the worlds but no Lyra." He met her gaze and let her read the truth in his eyes.

Silent tears slipped down her cheeks as she pressed a soft kiss to his lips. "I love you, too," she whispered. "But we can't be together."

Kaden's heart stopped in chest then beat in a mad rhythm. He gripped her arms. "What do ya mean? I love ya, and ya love me. We will be together."

He would make it so. He hadn't come this far to lose everything now.

She tried to pull away, but panic rode him hard and made him tighten his hold. "No, ya are not going to leave me. I will not lose ya."

A small delicate hand soothed his cheek. "Kaden, I'm not immortal. Some day I will die, and I'm not brave enough to face it. I can't live watching you remain young and beautiful while I get old and wrinkled."

With a whoosh of air, Kaden sank back to the mattress. His grip lightened from holding Lyra captive, to

simply holding her. "*Liaria*, ya must not ever scare me like that again. If it were possible for me to have heart failure, it would have happened just now."

"See, this is what I mean." She struggled against his chest where he held her close. "You can't have a heart attack and die. I can."

He spread soft, heart felt kisses along her face and neck. "Love, ya don't have to die if ya do not wish it. I made a deal with the elves. In exchange for a small bit of my time looking over their finances, they are willing to provide the nectar of life."

This got her attention. She smacked him on his side, the only part of his body she had good access to. "You idiot, why didn't you tell me this earlier?"

If he lived another two thousand years, he would never understand women. "What did ya think I meant when I said I wanted us to be together forever?"

She gave him a blank look. "I thought you meant forever, like until I die."

"*Liarias* don't die and leave their mates and children. What a horrible thought." He shuddered.

"So I can drink this potion and live forever?"

"Well, maybe not forever, but we are a very long lived race."

Lyra leaned closer and spoke against his lips, "It doesn't matter how long forever is, so long as I can spend it with you."

"Ya are the true treasure of my life, Lyra. I've searched and hidden the fortunes of the world for centuries. I never realized the most precious richness in existence I couldn't touch or see, but in yer eyes I feel the richness of love. Thank ya, my sweet, for making me the richest Leprechaun in the universe."