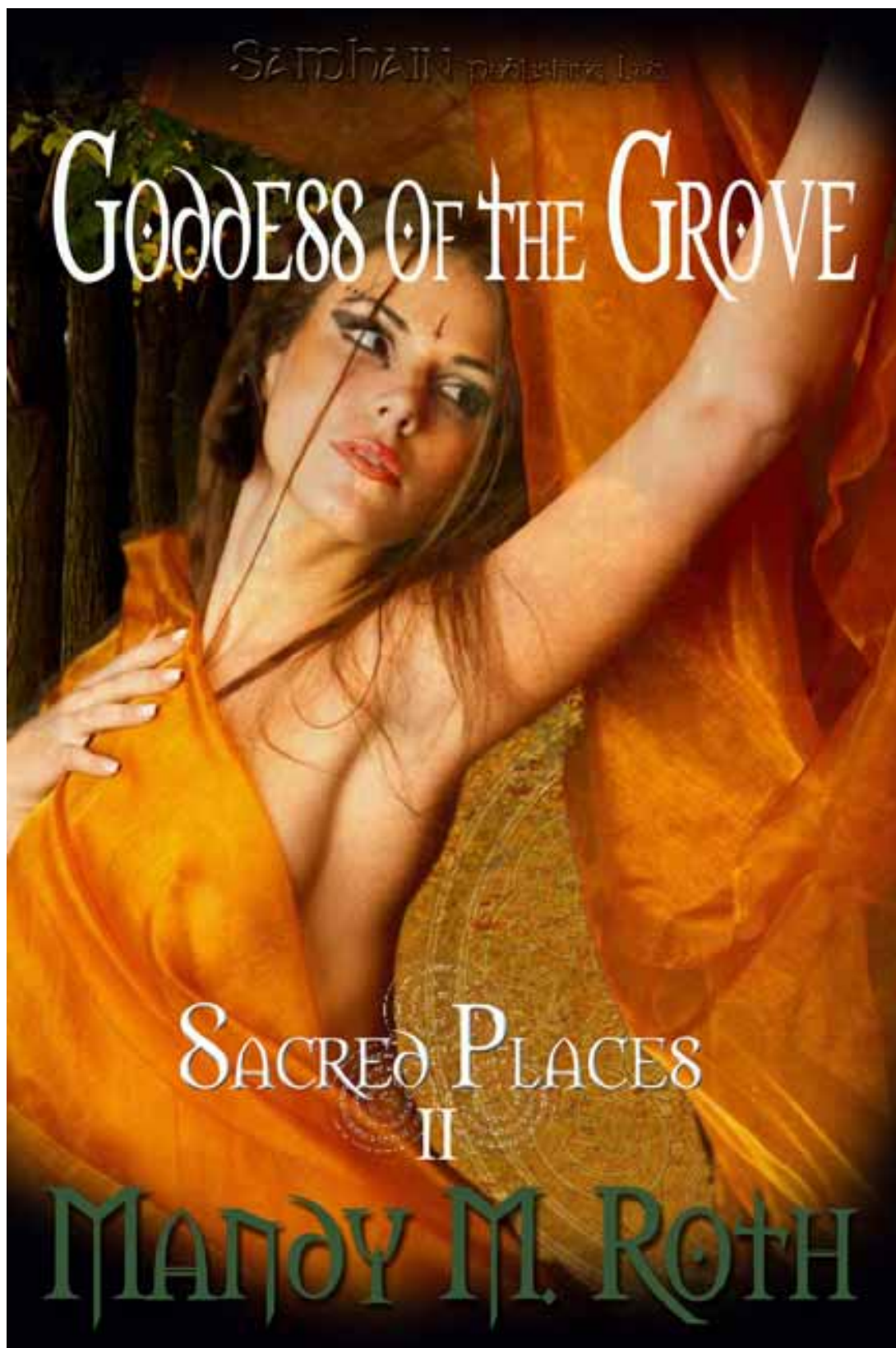


SATURNAIN PUBLICATIONS, LLC

GODDESS OF THE GROVE



SACRED PLACES
II

MANDY M. ROTH

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Samhain Publishing, Ltd.
512 Forest Lake Drive
Warner Robins, Georgia 31093

Goddess of the Grove
Copyright © 2007 by Mandy M. Roth
Cover by Natalie Winters
ISBN: 1-59998-455-5
www.samhainpublishing.com

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First **Samhain Publishing, Ltd.** electronic publication: April 2007

Goddess of the Grove

Mandy M. Roth

Dedication

To my Celtic Warrior for your support of all I do.

Chapter One

Korey O'Caha propped his feet up on the wooden table in front of him and put his hands behind his head as he watched the delicious sight before him. He ignored the weight of his cousin's stare, focusing instead on Gigi. She was a vision he could get lost in for all eternity if he wasn't careful. Already he'd given up his once wicked ways simply to be near her—and what a lovely sight she was. The pants she wore were dark and stopped just below her knees. The top was sinfully tight, molding to her every curve. It had thin straps holding it up and was tied in the front. One pull of material, one jerk, and she'd be exposed to him.

At five-foot-six, the beauty was shorter than women he normally gravitated to and was a bit shapelier than the others as well. Prior to her entering his life, Korey had a tendency to go for tall and skinny, wanna-be-supermodel types. Gigi changed his perception of what the ideal woman was. In truth, she blew his preset notions out of the water.

Mmm, lush breasts. Handfuls. Enough to spill over his hands were he to reach forward and grab them. *Different but in a good way.*

His cock hardened at the thought of having Gigi naked and beneath him. There would be no greater paradise, of that he was sure. His dreams gave him tastes of her bounty, leaving him wanting the real thing. Of course, Korey had been skirting the issue of his feelings for her from day one. Mostly because he had yet to actually come to terms with how deep his emotions ran in regards to Gigi. Each year near her had been sweet torture. He was going on four years of longing, of wanting to touch her, taste her, simply be near her. Any other woman, he would have taken what he wanted, seducing them with ease. Not Gigi. No. She was different.

Special.

Och, the woman has me tied in knots and I've nae even kissed her.

The pub, filled with oversized tables and chairs, and a bar made for taller men, was lit by electric sconces lining the walls. There was a time, Korey could remember well, when they used candles to illuminate the places they frequented. He could also remember what life was like before coming to the States. While he missed his homeland, he was honor bound to serve out the wishes of the elders. He'd disliked the area greatly upon first arriving several centuries back but it had grown on him. Part of the druids' power came from nature and he missed certain things from home—fields of heather, lunar-like landscapes coated in moss and grass, and groves full of sacred trees with rivers running past them.

Soft music played in the background of the seaside pub, a sharp contrast to the pounding storm outside. Severe thunderstorms had come over the area earlier in the day, when none had been predicted. A sure sign of trouble on the horizon. Other, less obvious signals of something being off had cropped up. Korey and his cousin had decided to remain close to the pub, knowing its lure for other supernaturals was great. It was a paranormal hotspot, a natural spring of power, so to speak. So far, all had been quiet in regard to supernatural activity but he had a feeling that was about to change.

As he listened to the music playing, Korey had little doubt Gigi was behind several of the song selections. She seemed drawn to anything with a Celtic flare. He smiled, wishing her attraction extended to him as well. After all, he was as Celtic as they came. He slid his finger over the table, absently playing in a pool of condensation from his glass as he wondered how wet Gigi's cunt would be. His finger twitched and his eyelids fluttered shut long enough for him to think upon his dreams, where Gigi was always moist and ready for him.

The clanging of bottles brought Korey's attention from his lust-filled dreams. He scanned the pub for Gigi, finding her at a nearby table, emptying a tray of used glasses before heading back into the thick of the pub's crowd. Her long, dark brown hair hung to the tops of her breasts. She wore her hair straight today, versus the loose waves it was normally in. Only last night he'd dreamt of running his hands through it, while he pressed his cock deep into her body, taking her from behind, screwing her hard and fast as he shouted her name. He jerked slightly, his cock threatening to erupt at the memory of fucking Gigi in his dreams.

They had started off as random dreams, within days of her arrival into his life, years ago. The dreams had progressed to the point he knew whenever he closed his eyes, he would dream of her in one way or another. Of course, he was a bit more partial to the thoughts of having her sucking his cock while he guided her mouth over him, but the ones where he stood with her in a grove, simply admiring the scenery were nice too. They afforded him the opportunity to be with her and Korey was no fool. He welcomed any chance he had to be near Gigi—awake or asleep.

He couldn't tear his gaze away from her as she headed towards his table. The sway of her hips was spellbinding. It was easy to imagine her riding him, using the same sashaying technique.

His cousin, and the pub's owner, Coyle O'Caha, snickered as he ran a hand through his dark hair. His slate grey eyes held a devilish look. He wore a T-shirt with a rock band on the front, one Korey wasn't aware his cousin even liked. In fact, the more Korey glanced at his cousin, the more he realized the shirt was his. He would have commented but Coyle spoke first. "Pick your jaw up or she may figure out yer infatuated with her. 'Tis a secret I know you hold dear to yer heart. Though I'm nae sure why you bother. The fact yer tongue practically wags whenever she's near is a dead giveaway."

Korey cast an amused look at Coyle. "I'm nae infatuated with anyone. Unlike you, cousin."

"Och, of course I'm infatuated with my wife. I worship the ground she walks upon." A wicked gleam came to his eyes as he took a swig of his beer. "Would that I be home paying homage to her now instead of here with yer sorry arse. She's a might sight better than yer ugly mug."

It was true. Coyle really did worship his wife, Deri. She was home with their toddler, Coyle Junior, or CJ for short. Deri was also expecting their second child. At six months along, she had that rosy glow so many pregnant women held. Coyle doted on her to the point Deri begged Korey to take his cousin with him and get him out of the house for a while, giving her a much needed break. She was a natural-born witch, and prior to a creative bit of interference on the part of Korey, she and his cousin had refused to acknowledge their feelings towards one another.

Each time Korey played with Coyle's son, he knew his decision to intervene was the right one. CJ took after the O'Caha men, his hair dark and his temper short. He had his mother's green eyes and Coyle liked to blame the boy's stubborn streak on his wife for that reason alone. Everyone knew better.

The men in the family had short fuses. Plain and simple.

A little piece of Korey was jealous his cousin had been first to find happiness. Yes, he was happy for him but it did get lonely, wondering if he too would ever find fulfillment. He wasn't opposed to the idea of the sound of tiny feet scuttling about his home and the knowledge that the woman he loved was there each time he stepped through the door. There was a time in his long life when the idea of settling down with any woman was laughable. He'd bedded his way through more villages than he cared to remember. He had mellowed slightly over the years and once Gigi came on the scene, his bad boy days dwindled to distant memories.

A sexy blonde walked by, thrusting her chest out and doing her best to grab their attention. Coyle either didn't see her or didn't care. He made no move to look. Korey let his gaze follow her, willing himself to want her. It would make his life easier if he did. He could take her out back, sink deep into her and fuck away his obsession with Gigi.

The woman lifted a glass to him from across the pub, as if to toast. Korey did the same, trying to imagine her naked and beneath him. When only thoughts of Gigi filled his head, he groaned and looked away, breaking eye contact with the blonde.

It was easy for him to understand his cousin's actions in regards to Deri. Both he and Coyle had been alive for over seven hundred years. They were immortal druid sorcerers whose purpose was to serve the side of good by any means they could. Coyle taught fledgling witches the craft and Korey handled matters of the paranormal that arose in the area. Meaning, he killed bad things when they misbehaved. Destiny said he and the others like him had a soulmate somewhere in the world. It had taken Coyle seven centuries to find his, and he wasn't about to let her go.

The idea of being alone for another seven hundred years left Korey's gut in a coiled knot and a lump forming in his throat. Having no one hadn't really

bothered him prior to meeting Gigi. It was the sight of her face that put foolish notions of forever in his head. Coyle's claiming of Deri had been what pushed Korey over the edge of reason. From the moment he saw the promise of finding that special someone was indeed true, and not invented to give false hopes, he couldn't help but wish with all his might Gigi was whom the gods had selected for him.

He snorted. *I'm nae worthy of her.*

His gaze went to the blonde who'd been flirting with him earlier. She turned, as if sensing the weight of his stare. She stuck a pouty lip out and batted her lashes. Yes, she'd fuck him, of that he had no doubt. He also knew it wasn't her he wanted to pin to the wall. It was Gigi.

"You two want another round?" Gigi asked, startling him.

Korey's groin heated as the object of his desire spoke softly to him. He wanted to find the words to answer her question, if only he could remember what it was she asked. So far, he was only able to figure out she smelled amazing, like jasmine and roses with a touch of apples, and wore the faintest hint of lip gloss on her full lips. He could easily picture those lips wrapped around his cock, taking him deep in her mouth.

As he stared at her front-tied shirt, he thought of accidentally knocking his beer over to get her to move closer. He could then *accidentally* take hold of the thin material and unwrap her blessings. The only thing stopping him was the fact the rest of the patrons would be gifted as well.

He would not share.

Coyle kicked the leg of his chair, causing Korey to yank his feet off the table and sit upright. "W-what?"

Laughing, Coyle shook his head. "No, Gigi. What my tongue-tied cousin is trying to say is, no, we're guid."

Tongue-tied?

Korey attempted to argue the point but was distracted when Gigi leaned over, the side of her breast brushing his shoulder, making his cock twitch. The amused look on Coyle's face made Korey want to slap him out of his chair. It wouldn't be the first time such a thing had happened, nor would it be the last. Gigi picked then to put her hand on Korey's shoulder, saving his cousin from

an ugly fate. Her very touch calmed him. Always had and he hoped, it always would.

“Kor, you want anything?”

I want you.

For a moment, all Korey could hear was the beating of his heart. He wouldn't have been the least bit shocked to see the organ burst free of his chest. It wasn't as if his magik couldn't cause something that absurd to happen. Hell, his cock was on the verge of breaking loose, why not the rest of him? Whenever she was around anything was possible.

He swallowed dryly, focusing on Gigi and the question she'd asked. “No, and I can get my own. You do nae need to be waiting on me hand and foot, Gigi.”

Though, I wouldnae turn you down should you offer to spend the night pleasing me.

Thankfully, his inner thoughts remained hidden. Making an even bigger fool of himself in front of his cousin wasn't how Korey wanted to spend the remainder of his evening. He'd be hard-pressed to get Coyle to stop teasing him as it was.

Gigi gave his shoulder a squeeze. “You know, Kor, you should really lay off the weights. I think you're harder than the table.” She tapped the table with her free hand for emphasis.

If she only knew how hard he truly was, she'd run screaming from the pub. All he wanted to do was spread her out before him and sink his cock into her glorious depths. Taking her would be heavenly, of that he was sure. So many nights he'd pictured her spread out below him as he pumped his cock to release. It was Gigi's face he saw when his orgasm struck and it was her body he wanted to find comfort in tonight.

Tonight? Pfft, more like every night.

Gigi slid her hand down his arm and lifted his black T-shirt sleeve. He wanted her caress to dip further, venture into bedroom territory but Korey knew enough to relish her touch regardless.

She ran her finger over one of his many Celtic and druid tattoos and fire shot through his body. As she traced the one meaning eternal, he stared into her blue eyes and longed to tell her the truth about who he was.

I'm an immortal druid sorcerer, lass, and I cannae think of going a day without you.

The words never left his mouth.

Gigi's soft smile was hypnotic. "Are we still on for tomorrow night?"

"Aye." He stared, transfixed by her sheer presence.

Coyle's chuckle pulled Korey from his stupor. "Now what would you and my cousin be planning for tomorrow?"

Korey gulped, not wanting Coyle to learn the lengths to which he'd go to spend time with Gigi.

Gigi grinned. "Friday night is movie night for us. You didn't know?" She stroked the back of Korey's neck, as if petting him. He was fine with that. "Korey and I have spent almost every Friday night for the past two years either going to see a movie or watching one at my place."

"You do nae say." Coyle's amused look equaled one thing—he was planning to embarrass Korey.

Korey stiffened.

"What is the movie of choice this week?"

Gigi ran her fingers into Korey's hair, causing him to temporarily forget his manly, warrior ways were about to be called into question. "Whatever I want to see. I try to get him to pick but he always leaves it up to me. This week we're renting a new release. One I've been wanting to see about a girl who tries to make it big in New York."

Coyle's lips trembled. "So, Korey likes chick flicks?"

Gigi rolled her eyes playfully and bent, pressing a chaste kiss to Korey's cheek. "No he doesn't, but he still comes each and every week to keep me company. And if you, Coyle O'Caha, dare to make fun of him about it, I'll call your wife and tell her how much you think the idea of a man spending time doing things a woman likes is hilarious."

Coyle paled. “Och, now do nae be hasty, Gigi. I never said I thought it was funny. I just...umm...so, the girl tries to make it big in New York? Sounds fascinating. Might rent that one myself.”

It was Korey’s turn to laugh.

Gigi gave a slight wave to a patron across the pub and Korey reached up, taking her hand in his. Even he was shocked at the move. He was even more surprised to find himself drawing her onto his lap. She felt as if she’d been made to fit him perfectly.

Gigi giggled. “Korey, what are you doing?”

I’m getting ready to fuck you.

His thoughts sobered him instantly, but he didn’t release his hold on Gigi. She felt too good, too right in his arms. As she put her arms around his neck, his cock fought against his jeans, wanting to be free.

Gasping, Gigi froze. “Umm, Kor?”

He had little doubt she could feel how much he wanted her. Touching her chin, he directed her gaze to his. “Aye?”

She wiggled, making him groan. “N-nothing.”

“Will the two of you need to be gettin’ a room?” Coyle asked, taking a drink of his beer and winking at Korey.

One can only hope.

They stayed like that for what seemed like forever. Korey closed his eyes and pulled Gigi’s head down, causing their foreheads to touch. He exhaled slowly, doing his best to control the raging need rushing through him. He waited for Gigi to yell, to push away from him, anything to show she didn’t share his feelings. The moment her warm, tender lips pressed against his he jerked, nearly dumping her from his lap.

Laughing, Gigi hopped to her feet and shook her head. “Looks as though I can still knock their socks off, huh?”

“Verra smooth,” Coyle said, grinning from ear to ear.

Chapter Two

The door to the pub opened and the lightning outside acted as a backdrop for the tall, ominous figure filling the frame. Instantly Korey sensed danger, as did Coyle. They pushed to their feet and Korey tugged Gigi behind him, readying himself for a possible attack. It was rare but not completely unheard of for a supernatural attack to occur with human witnesses. Granted, it was considered bad form, but so was going rogue and killing humans. Sadly, it happened. It was his job to clean up the mess whenever it did.

Gigi ignored his attempt at keeping her safe. She picked up the tray with their empty bottles on it and headed to the kitchen. The figure in the doorway stiffened and Korey sensed power rolling off the man. Korey and Coyle immediately drew upon their magik, preparing to fight if need be. So in tune with one another, they needed almost no words to pass between them. They'd fought enough battles together over the centuries to anticipate the other's moves and they could recognize the other's power in the blink of an eye.

The man stepped in further. His eyes were so dark they looked to be as black as his short hair. Silver earrings lined each ear and tattoos covered his neck and the exposed portions of his arms. The second Korey spotted the man's markings, he drew upon more of his magik. The newcomer's symbols indicated he was into some serious magik. The oppressive feeling in the air meant only one thing—the magik was dark.

“Hey, Kor, you sure you don't want another—” Gigi's words died on her lips and Korey turned to see her eyes widen with something akin to fright.

“Georgia,” the man said, his voice deep.

Gigi dropped the tray and the bottles hit the floor, breaking upon contact. Her gaze snapped to Korey before landing back on the man in the doorway.

“Can I help you, stranger?” Coyle asked, his tone warning.

The corners of the man’s mouth drew upwards. “Just here looking for someone.”

Korey stood tall, puffing out his chest. He shouldn’t feel threatened by the man, yet he did. It wasn’t even a fear of being bested in battle that consumed him, it was something else. The urge to glance at Gigi was great. He held back. Was it fear of losing her?

“We’ve no one named Georgia here.” Coyle kept his magik high. It pressed alongside Korey’s, forming a nice barrier between the man and Gigi, should he attempt a mystical attack of any kind.

“Funny,” the man stared past Korey to Gigi, “I seem to have found her. Though she’s nae giving me much in the way of a greeting.”

Gigi cleared her throat. “Umm, sorry, Parth, I’m just shocked to see you. I thought you...umm...I thought...”

Parth grinned. “Dead? Yeah, the rumors have been circulating. Tell me,” he took another step in, “are the ones about you being married true? What did yer ma tell me his name was?” He rubbed his chin. “Oh, yes, Korey.”

Coyle’s eyes widened and he looked as shocked as Korey felt. Korey had met Gigi’s mother on more than one occasion. She knew they weren’t married. Why would she tell a stranger such a thing?

A shiver of understanding slid up his spine. *Because she knows I can protect her daughter.*

“I’m Korey and aye, Gigi and I are wed. Are you here to wish us yer best?”

Gigi drew in a sharp breath and rushed to his side. “No, Korey, don’t—”

Korey twisted and pulled her into his arms. She fit flawlessly against him. “Do nae be shy, lil’ one, tell me who yer friend is.”

Parth clenched his fists. “Better yet, *Georgia*, you can tell me why yer husband dinnae seem to recognize yer name.”

Korey held Gigi close, ignoring the fact she was trying to break away from him. He could feel her fear of the man and he’d be dammed if he let harm befall her. Cool, protective energy enveloped him and he was unsure of its source. He

knew enough to know it wasn't his cousin's and Korey highly doubted the guy in the doorway gave a rat's arse about soothing his temper.

"Do I nae get even a hug from you, Georgia?" Parth's gaze was hard. "Seems to me, there was a time in our lives, you were *all* too willing to embrace me."

Jealousy flared in Korey. How could Gigi align herself with a man such as Parth, one who practiced the dark arts? Did she know? No. She couldn't have. If she did then she would understand and know what Korey truly was. Since she'd never once uttered a word about magik, he found it hard to believe Gigi knew it existed.

Parth whispered a spell in an ancient language few still knew and a rush of dark power moved over the pub, coating the patrons. Korey recognized it for what it was—a spell to halt time in the minds of humans. Magiks would still move and think freely during it. As Coyle stiffened, making no comment about the spell, Korey knew his cousin was thinking the same thing he was—*let's see what this asshole has up his sleeve.*

Gigi blinked, shocked to see a man she long thought dead standing in the entrance of the pub. Parth looked harder than he had before. Gone was the smile he once wore, replaced with a deep-set knowledge of what it was like to walk on the darker side of existence. There had been a time in her life she followed Parth blindly, believing they had a future together. That time had passed.

Glancing around the pub, she noticed no one other than Parth was moving. "What have you done?"

"Made it so we can speak in private, Georgia." He put his hand out to her but she didn't leave the safety of Korey's embrace. "I'll nae hurt you, lass. You know as much."

"Do I?" She shook her head as she noted the number of tattoos covering his body. Gigi knew what the symbols meant. She also remembered a time he wore only ones representing good.

Parth stepped closer and raked his gaze over her. "Yer even more beautiful than I remember. Married life agrees with you."

Fearing for Korey's safety, Gigi slid out of his hold and ran her hand down his muscular arm. "Don't hurt him, Parth. Please. He's a good man and he doesn't know about things like us."

Parth tipped his head back and laughed. "Things like us? They do nae know yer real name or what you truly are? You tied yerself to a man based on lies, Georgia. Yet you would fault me for what I did to be with you."

"What you did was wrong. You took power from a source of darkness for personal gain."

"Personal gain?" He slammed his fist into his chest. The sound made her wince. "I took it to be with you. To have the power to free you from the ties holding you to the Otherworld. You dinnae ask to be born to yer parents...to be next in the line for their power...and to see you being punished for merely existing was too much."

She couldn't help but go to him. He was right to a point. He had taken on dark magik in order to free her from a binding spell holding her in the Otherworld. She'd spent the equivalent of hundreds of human years locked away but it felt like only a year or so to her. Time moved differently between realms and when one was trapped between them, all rationale went out the window. All that remained was the fact time indeed passed rapidly while she was prisoner—at least for everyone but Gigi. "Thank you again for coming for me, Parth."

"It was my duty as a druid sorcerer, Georgia. And it was," his body stiffened, as if he were apprehensive, "my duty as the man who loved you."

She covered her mouth, fighting her emotions.

"You stood before yer uncle, demanding he leave our immortality intact and nae—"

Gigi's chest tightened at the memory of it all. "Parth, he wanted to wipe all of you from the face of the earth. The little ones he...he was going to kill the..."

Parth caressed her cheek. "I know, lass. I was there. I remember how yer uncle threatened the lives of the children born to be immortal sorcerers. I'll never forget you barging into that village, putting yer power over its residents and shouting with all yer might how you wouldnae allow harm to come to them."

A small laugh tore free of her as she thought of the little boy with hair as dark as night creeping from his family's home to stand near her side. He'd tugged on her dress and given her a handful of freshly picked flowers.

Parth's gentle touch brought Gigi out of her memories of the night. In reality it had been over seven hundred years ago. For her, it had been less than ten years. Ten short years ago she'd encased the residents of the village in a protective spell and paid dearly for her actions—two years trapped between realms and eight living with the knowledge she escaped, but only barely.

"Had I known giving you flowers would win yer hand in marriage, I would have done so myself." Parth glanced towards Korey. "Though, I lacked the same boyish charms then."

"Did Norval hurt them?" She'd been taken, her powers bound and her life forfeited before she set foot out of the village. Gigi had spent almost all of her time locked away worrying her uncle had still managed to find a way to destroy the children of the druids.

"No." Parth crossed his arms over his powerful chest. "Yer uncle couldnae touch any of the druids in the village. They nae only carried their immortality but that of a goddess as well. 'Tis why Norval was able to take you without incident. You had weakened yerself to protect them."

A gasp caught Gigi's attention. She glanced at Korey but he didn't appear to have moved. "Do you know what became of the villagers?"

Parth cleared his throat as his body stiffened. "Aye. They upheld their sworn promise to protect nature, the magik, train others in the craft and fight evil. They grew, fighting the battle while you lay beaten, broken and near death in a cell nae fit for an animal, let alone a person. And I do nae want to hear about how you were only there for two years because I saw the condition yer uncle left you in, two minutes was too long, Georgia."

She winced. "Gigi. Please call me Gigi."

"Tell me how it is you came by the name first."

She snickered. "The little boy who gave me the flowers was thinking it when he heard you call my name. I unknowingly tapped into his thoughts long enough to pick up on it. I don't think he could pronounce my name. I liked his version better, so when I was free, I used it."

“This boy,” Parth’s heated gaze remained on Korey, “meant a lot to you. Why?”

“I wondered that often enough myself. Maybe he was destined to do great things for our kind, Parth. Maybe he was to father a child who was pivotal to our...umm...the side of good staying ahead all these years.”

Parth rubbed his chin. “I am nae working for the enemy, Gigi. I possess their powers but I do nae believe in their cause. I remain close to them, reporting my findings to others, to help our side stay ahead of them. I was too new to the power when we last met to control it fully. You did what had to be done, Gigi. There can be no fault in that.”

“That may be the case, Parth, but it doesn’t make what happened hurt less. I watched you kill an innocent with your bare hands before turning on bystanders.” She shook her head. “I was powerless to stop you. I tried. I did, Parth.”

“Shhh, Gigi. You did stop me from killing so many more. The moment my hands wrapped around yer neck, I woke from what felt like a dream. I couldnae hurt you and by putting yerself between me and the innocents, you saved the rest of them.”

“Why have you come?” Defeat, guilt and a sense of *what if* came over her.

Parth sighed. “To assure yer well. The dark ones have learned Norval stripped you of yer powers and that yer free. They’re nae always the quickest to catch onto things, Gigi. You know how they are...how it is for immortals. We blink and it seems a human year has passed.”

He was right and she knew it.

“They seek to make an example of you to show what happens to an unguarded female of good.” He cast a speculative glance at Korey. “Yer mother told me you live as a human now. I dinnae believe her and I feared this husband she spoke of would nae be equipped to protect you from the dark ones.”

Gigi covered her mouth at the thought of Korey being attacked because of her. “Ohmygods, Parth, I have to go! I can’t lead them to these people. Coyle and Korey are great men. And Deri is my best...oh gods, Deri and CJ. I can’t let anything happen to them.”

Taking her by the wrists, Parth shushed her once more before turning her arms so her palms faced up. As he ran his fingers over her bare skin, she knew his concerns and tipped her head to avoid meeting his gaze. "I can't take it back, Parth."

"No, you mean you willnae."

"To do so would mean those I put under my protection would be subject to my uncle's wrath once more."

"They are nae children anymore, Gigi. They are grown men who are hundreds of years older than you. You spent their lives trapped in a place where time did not move at the same pace, being subjected to torture and ridicule for choosing humans over yer own kind. They are more than capable of protecting themselves now. They are no longer wee bairns with freshly picked flowers, Gigi. I cannae protect you from all of the dark ones when they find you. No one can. You must be able to protect yerself."

She stilled. "Do any of the ones under my protection have young children or grandchildren...whatever?"

Parth looked towards Coyle. "Aye."

"Then my answer is firm. I will not renounce my protection of them."

He growled. "You will die! If nae by the hands of the enemy then from old age or human sickness. Is that what you want? You have barely lived, Gigi. You have not seen yer thirtieth year yet and yer willing to sacrifice all for men who have seen hundreds of years."

She swallowed hard. "No. I sacrifice all for the children who have hundreds of years before them, Parth. They will carry on as their fathers and mothers have done, protecting the innocents from evil. My life is my own. Thank you for coming to warn me. I'll leave immediately to prevent harm befalling the O'Caha family."

"Are you nae part of the family, Gigi? Are you nae married to one of the O'Caha men?"

It was on the tip of her tongue to deny that she was. To tell Parth the truth. Gigi held back. "I would miss him greatly, Parth. But I can't put his life in jeopardy."

His smile was forced. "Yer brogue is gone."

She nodded. "Much about me has changed."

Parth was silent a moment. "Do you love him?"

She stared back at Korey. Thoughts of all the times he'd made her laugh over the last few years and the number of occasions he sat with her when she wasn't feeling well filled her mind. Their Friday night ritual was just one of the many things they now did together. She actually went to him more than she did Deri, whom she considered to be her best friend. The notion of leaving Korey and never seeing him again made her stomach clench and her eyes sting as tears threatened to fall.

"Yes, I do. I love how amazingly sweet he is, even though he thinks he's an arrogant lady's man. He's not. I love how much his family means to him. How he'd do anything for any of them. I love the way he looks at me and doesn't see a goddess to be feared but rather a woman, an equal. And I love how in touch with his heritage he is. I even love the fact he's covered his body in symbols of our kind, though I'm damn happy he's not one of us. But mostly, I love Korey because he makes me feel whole. From the moment I walked in out of the pouring rain, needing a job, he's been a pillar of support for me. I only wish I could have offered him the same in return."

Gigi wiped the tears from her face, sure she'd just seen Korey move. "Make them forget meeting me, Parth. Wipe every one of their minds clear of me."

Parth growled as he looked towards the ceiling. "Shit. They're calling me again. If I ignore the dark ones' summons, they will search for me. I'll return soon and wipe the O'Cahas' memory of you, lass. Make yer peace with them in the meantime." He disappeared, taking his spell with him, allowing the hustle and bustle of the pub to return.

Chapter Three

Korey rubbed his jawline as tension threatened to make it lock. “I willnae calm down.”

Coyle made another attempt to come towards him and Korey’s power prickled, warning he wasn’t safe to be near. “Dammit, cousin, do you wish to bring the gods to Gigi’s doorstep?”

“No.” What he wanted to do was toss Gigi over his shoulder and run for the hills with her, never allowing anyone to harm her. The moment her *precious* Parth dropped his spell, Gigi went about her business as if nothing had happened. Korey was impressed with how easily she’d learned to hide who she truly was from everyone but was hurt she chose to do so with him.

You hide from her.

He balked at his inner voice for daring to point out the irony in the situation. He’d spent years pining after a woman he thought wouldn’t understand who and what he was only to find she more than knew of their kind.

“If you do nae calm yerself, cousin, I will be forced to knock you out with my power. I do nae think you wish to be unconscious if the dark sorcerer returns.” Coyle went to his office door and peeked out. “Gigi still acts as if nothing occurred. Can you believe she’s the woman who saved our village? How did we nae recognize her?”

“What?” He gawked at his cousin in disbelief.

Coyle centered an amused look on him. “You do nae remember?” A sly grin spread over Coyle’s face. “Och, Korey, how can you forget the first woman you ever gave flowers to?”

He opened his mouth to protest but stopped the minute he thought back to his childhood. Seven hundred plus years ago there had been a woman—a beautiful one at that—who stormed into his village, blanketing them in her power. He had weak memories of exactly what she looked like but knew enough to know she was breathtaking.

Korey's mind drifted to Parth's behavior when asking Gigi what was so special about the little boy who had given her the flowers.

Had I known giving you flowers would win yer hand in marriage, I would have done so myself.

Suddenly, it felt as if he'd been struck in the midriff. Korey went forward, putting his hands on his knees and breathing hard. Coyle clapped him on the back of the neck, chuckling slightly. "'Tis a bitch when the love bug nae only bites you in the arse, but does so without you knowing the lil' bastard was there to begin with."

Korey rubbed his stomach and shook his head. "Gigi cannae be the...Coyle, she...it would mean she's my..."

Coyle drew upon his power and in a split second was holding a bucket before Korey's face. "Here, cousin. I've no wish to see you throw up on my office floor."

Pushing the bucket away, Korey narrowed his gaze on Coyle. "How can you joke at a time like this? I just found out the love of my immortally long life was tortured on account of us and is in danger still. Nae only that but she isnae in any hurry to fess up to—"

Coyle tapped Korey's head. "Nae to interrupt your tangent but you do realize you admitted to loving her, right?"

"I did no such..." He paused and then pulled the bucket back towards his face. "Och. 'Tis a horrible bug indeed."

His cousin's laughter grated on his nerves but Korey held his tongue, too worried about the goddess who graced their presence.

"Breathe." Coyle rubbed Korey's shoulder. "That's it. In and out. Are you better now? You know, I felt the verra same way when I realized Deri was my mate. I felt as though someone had run me down and then backed over me for

good measure. 'Tis common, I expect, for us to fall hard when we finally do get around to falling."

The door to the office opened and Gigi entered. She took one look at Korey and arched a brow. "Drink too much again?"

He couldn't help but smile. "Aye, something like that."

She closed her eyes a moment. "Coyle, I need to leave early tonight. I'm sorry."

Leave early?

"No," Korey said a little too quickly. "I mean—"

Coyle took the bucket from him and stared at Gigi. "It's a busy night, Gigi. It'd be better if you finished yer shift."

Korey knew his cousin didn't care if Gigi finished her shift or not. He wanted her to remain close to them for as long as possible, assuring she was safe.

Gigi averted her gaze. "I know and I'm sorry but someone I haven't seen in a long time came in from overseas...unexpectedly."

Korey fought the urge to go to her, shake her and make her confess the truth. "A friend?"

"No one you know." She gave a curt nod before turning to leave the office.

Power coated the room and it wasn't Korey's or Coyle's. Korey tensed. If her friend Parth was back, it would mean Gigi would leave. It didn't matter how many memory spells the dark sorcerer cast, he wouldn't be able to make the magiks forget having met Gigi.

Gigi gasped and spun around fast, paranoia setting in. She was sure she'd sensed someone's magik running over the office area. Her uncle's antics, in theory, should have left her powerless. While she was trapped in the place time didn't move in sync with Earth, his binding spell had worked, preventing her from using any magik while there. Once Parth freed Gigi, her powers began to grow at a slow pace. She was nowhere near as strong as she once was but she wasn't completely defenseless either. She also wasn't someone to be toyed with by anyone other than a fellow god.

Another trickle of power raced over her spine. It was evil. Pure and simple. She turned slightly, her gaze wild as she tried to gauge who and what would materialize in the back office. As her gaze slid over the O’Caha boys, she breathed in sharply, not wanting to see them caught in the middle of whatever was to come. Before she could utter even a hint of a spell, two men appeared, each rivaling the O’Cahas in size. They looked directly at Korey and Coyle and lifted their hands.

Gigi screamed, drawing their attention to her instead. They turned and as they did, Korey and Coyle tackled them, each taking a man to the floor with a thud. Her eyes widened as she stared at the sight before her. The dark sorcerers would surely make the O’Caha boys’ deaths painful for daring to interfere. Left no choice, Gigi did something she never thought she would do in front of Korey—she drew upon her power.

The air around her crackled as it lit with raw magik. Her hair lifted of its own accord as her power danced around her. She put her hands out, directing the energy at the dark sorcerers. Coyle and Korey were ripped from the backs of the men in question a second before her power lifted the dark ones into the air. She glared at them. “You would dare to come here and try to harm them?”

The men looked at one another before staring at her with shocked expressions on their face. “Yer nae supposed to have any power.”

The O’Caha boys gasped as they rolled to their feet. She would have to worry about them later. Right now she had bigger concerns, like how long her power would hold out or if she could control it. Without regular use, one tended to grow rusty and Gigi was as rusty as they came.

Deciding to stop chancing fate, she pulled her power back, leaving only enough to block the new arrivals from being able to call upon their own. If they wanted a fight, it would have to be hand-to-hand. The men wasted no time in trying to charge her, only to find themselves at the mercy of two pissed off Celts.

Gigi stared, wide-eyed, as Korey and Coyle attacked the men with a precision she’d only seen in warriors of the old country. Korey struck out hard, sending one man into the wall and making a picture crash to the floor.

“You willnae touch her!” Korey shouted, his voice so deep it reverberated around her. He punched the man again, this time making the man’s head snap to the side.

Gigi was well aware how much strength the dark sorcerers possessed. To beat one with the ease Korey was showing wasn’t normal. It was her turn to gasp. The sound drew Korey’s attention to her, giving the enemy the opening he needed. He hit Korey hard enough to knock him back and over Coyle’s mahogany desk.

Korey landed on the floor, at her feet. She dropped quickly and touched his split lip. “Korey!”

He batted her hand away and groaned. “Och, woman. I cannae verra well defend you if yer coddling me.”

Ignoring his protest, she touched his lip once more. “Korey, go! They’re not human...”

He glanced to his side, his gaze on his cousin before he touched her hand lightly. “Gigi, I’ll be fine. You stay out of the way. I’ll nae have you harmed.”

He rolled to his side and Gigi knew he was sore. “Korey, no.”

Coyle found himself sucker punched by the second dark sorcerer who had teamed up with the first. He rubbed his jaw as he staggered backwards. His gaze slid to Korey. “Think you can play with yer woman after we’re done here?”

Korey was up and on his feet in seconds, charging the enemy headfirst. As he barreled into one, Gigi covered her mouth to keep from making a noise and distracting him again. She wasn’t sure how much time had passed before she came to her senses and utilized her powers once more.

Lifting her arms above her head, she whispered a chant, similar to the one her uncle used on her all those years ago. There was a loud pop and then a gust of wind as the enemy jerked backwards, clutching their stomachs. Gigi remembered the feeling of being on the receiving end of such a spell and hated knowing she’d been left no choice but to bind them and send them to the Otherworld.

They disappeared into thin air and she waited for a barrage of questions to come from the O’Caha boys. None did.

She locked gazes with Korey. “Why aren’t you freaking out?”

He glanced at Coyle, who shrugged with a shit ass grin on his face. Korey looked back at Gigi and offered a weak smile, putting his fingers to his split lip. “Och, the pain. I do nae think I can go on.”

She lifted a brow and put a hand on her hip. “*Now* you’re dying? Convenient.”

His smile broadened and the tiniest bit of blood seeped from his lip as the split widened. “I thought so myself.”

Shocked, she stared between the men, waiting for someone to shed light on how it was they were so calm in the face of what they’d just witnessed. Coyle smiled and motioned to Gigi. “Cousin, you best be holdin’ yer woman now.”

“Aye,” Korey said, coming to her and wrapping his arms around her.

Gigi felt the presence of safe, somewhat familiar, magik all around her. “Do nae do anything I wouldnae,” Coyle said, laughing as the room seemed to spin all around Gigi.

She clung to Korey and when the sensation finally stopped, she opened her eyes to find they were no longer in the back office of the pub. Gigi looked around at the rows upon rows of trees and rolling hills. “Korey?”

“Look familiar?”

It did. She nodded.

He put one finger up and motioned for her to remain in place as he ran off behind a line of trees. He was gone for a few moments before returning with a handful of freshly picked flowers. A sheepish grin spread over his face as he held them out to her. “I can say yer name now if you’d prefer I call you it in place of Gigi.”

What?

As his words sunk in, she drew in a deep breath. Korey was the little boy from long ago? No. He couldn’t be. That would mean he was a druid sorcerer.

“Korey?”

He rubbed the back of his neck with his free hand, stepping closer to her. “Aye?”

“You’re a...” Gigi found herself at a loss for words. So many times she’d wanted to tell him the truth about herself but kept her secret guarded, fearful

he'd never understand. Tears welled and she reached up to touch his face. As she made contact with his skin, he closed his eyes and tipped his head into the palm of her hand.

His size dwarfed her and seeing his complete surrender was something Gigi would never forget. She went to her tiptoes and pressed her lips to his.

Korey had her swept up in his arms in seconds, smashing the flowers between their bodies. The very taste of her sweet mouth drove him onward, leaving him eating at her lips and yanking at her clothing. He'd waited too long to sample her flesh and would be damned if he wasted another moment without her.

He forgot his own strength, ripping her shirt from her body with ease. As he slid his hands over her exposed back, he growled, walking her towards the nearest tree. Her tongue danced artfully around his and Korey gave in to the desire he'd held locked away for her for so long. He'd always imagined taking her, exploring every inch of her before sinking his cock into her silken depths. The reality of it was his control was gone. He needed her and nothing would stop him from taking her.

He'd drawn on his power, and that of his cousin, in order to transport her to the grove he'd first laid eyes on her all those years ago. Korey took a deep breath, savoring the scents of nature and Gigi's arousal.

Reaching down between them, he tugged at her pants only to find her stopping him. Korey feared she'd end their encounter. When he felt cool, powerful magik ease over him, he knew better. He looked down and noticed she'd taken care of what clothing remained between them. Smashed flowers fell to the ground as he pulled back far enough to take hold of his cock with one hand while lifting her up and off the ground with the other.

Gigi wrapped her legs around his waist and Korey captured her mouth with his, lining up with her wet core in the process. As their tongues touched, he thrust his cock in to the hilt, not bothering with anything beyond being in her.

She cried out, digging her nails into his back as he pumped the length of himself in and out of her tight cunt. Never had he felt anything as glorious as being in Gigi. She bit at his jawline as he continued penetrating her, each

thrust long, deep, hard. Her body barely accommodated him but Korey couldn't stop to worry about that now. No. He fucked her like a depraved man—a man denied far too long.

Gigi pushed at his face, scratching his neck as she cried out, wrapping her legs tighter around his waist. The sex was raw, carnal and nothing like he'd wanted their first time joining to be. Still, he couldn't stop himself as he drilled into her body, pressing her to the unyielding tree.

The sounds of their joining sexes drove him mad with lust. Blinded by need, he tapped into his supernatural strength as he thrust into her, pummeling her to culmination. She bucked against him, panting and clawing at him as her pussy constricted around his cock. His balls drew up and he rooted himself deep within her as seed shot forth, filling her womb. Her body continued to milk him, leaving Korey shaking with each twitch of his cock.

He put his forehead to hers and closed his eyes, never wanting to let her go but knowing he couldn't hold on to her forever. The longer he stood, holding her, still pressed with her body, the more he began to feel the aftermath of their joining. His cheek and neck burned. It took him a moment to remember Gigi had scratched him during the height of the moment.

Staring down at her, he gave her a questioning look. "Gigi, did I hurt you?"

She let out a long, slow breath and wiggled on his cock. "You're not exactly little, Korey, and you weren't...ah...umm, very gentle."

Guilt washed over him. He'd been so caught up in finding out Gigi not only understood what he was but wasn't human either that he'd lost control of himself. "Gigi, I dinnae mean to..."

Pressing her hand to his lips, she shook her head and stared up through thick lashes. "Make love to me, Korey. But," she squirmed in his arms, "not against the tree again. One log," she glanced down the length of him, "ramming into me is more than enough."

A manly chuckle escaped him as he bent to kiss her. "Mmm, I'll take you again, love, but first I'll see to yer battle wounds."

"Battle wounds?" she asked, licking her lower lip.

He kissed the tip of her nose. "Aye, seems as if you gave me a few of my own."

Gigi touched his scratched cheek and heat flared between them. Her magik danced across his skin, healing him. “I didn’t mean to do that. I’m sorry.”

Chapter Four

Gigi rolled onto her side, enjoying the warmth from not only the sun but Korey's sleeping body as well. They had bathed in a river and he'd used his power to conjure a blanket and food. While the bath was much needed to soothe her aching body, the food hit home. She hadn't realized she was hungry until Korey had practically shoved a cube of cheese down her throat.

He insisted she keep her strength up. That she'd need it.

The tone of his voice and his cocksure swagger told her exactly what he had in mind. She hadn't been innocent to a man's touch prior to her joining with Korey but for what it had been worth, she might as well have been. His guilt for being so rough with her ran off him while he bathed her in the river but he'd remained tight-lipped about their first encounter. It had been raw and full of passion, much like Korey.

She traced his handsome face as he slept so soundly she had to lean in to assure herself he was breathing. Many a night of sleeping in the heather to guard against evil left countless warriors schooled in the art of silence, even in their sleep.

Gigi ran her fingers lightly over his scruffy chin before skimming over his lower lip. He nipped playfully at her thumb, catching it between his teeth and alerting her to the fact he was now awake.

He wiggled his brows as he sucked on her thumb. When he released his hold on it, Gigi leaned forward and pressed her mouth to his, still managing to yank on his lip with her hand in the process.

He tugged at the blanket, pulling it down and freeing her breasts. The minute Korey palmed them, Gigi melted against him. His touch was expert. Her

nipples hardened to pebble-like peaks and she moaned in his mouth as he continued his erotic, slow tease of her upper body.

It took Gigi a moment to realize Korey seemed to be going out of his way to not only take his sweet time torturing her but to be gentle as well. Peeling her mouth from his, she panted to catch her breath. “Kor, I won’t break.”

His gaze flickered towards the tree he’d taken her against and Gigi couldn’t stop a splash of heat from going to her cheeks. “I know but I’d like verra much to enjoy you, Gigi, and to show you that you’ve every right to be cherished.”

He tweaked her nipples more, making her belly quicken with desire. Gigi tipped her head back, giving him access to her neck. He took the hint, planting a row of kisses on her feverish skin, making her think she might truly burst into flames if he didn’t continue. She slid her hands into his hair and pulled enough to force his head up. “Korey, all of this...what’s happened between us...it can’t ruin our...”

His gaze locked on her. “Woman, if yer trying to tell me we can finish this and go back to being friends, yer wrong.”

Her breath caught.

Korey flipped her onto her back, sliding up and over her so fast she had no time to protest. Not that she would have. He nudged her legs open with a powerful thigh before settling between them. “It’s too late to go back, Gigi. Yer a claimed woman now. Do nae forget that or even think of trying to run from me.”

She shook her head. “We’re not really married, Korey. You know—”

He thrust into her in one long stroke. Gigi cried out, digging her nails into his back and doing her best to breathe. He struck a perfect rhythm, grinding his lower abdomen against her clit while his sac slapped her ass. It took a minute for Gigi to recognize the feel of his magik and when she did, she immediately began to struggle to get out from under him.

“Korey, no! Don’t tie yourself to...” The words faded as he pumped into her, striking her clit just right and sending her crashing over the edge of bliss. His magik encased her, merging with her own, forever sealing the deal. She was most certainly a claimed woman now. Korey left no question about that.

He'd blended magiks with her during the height of passion. There was no greater binding for their kind. He thrust into her, stilling and coming with a start. A strangled cry broke free of him as his body shook above her.

Gigi wanted to hate him for what he'd done—damning himself to whatever fate her uncle and the dark ones had in store for her—but she couldn't. She loved him, in spite of himself.

“My uncle will want you dead too, Korey.”

“Aye, but nae as much as I want him dead.” He kissed a line down her neck, remaining deep within her. “I cannae believe we waited so many years to be together, Gigi. What took us so long?”

A laugh bubbled up from her. “Well, you were kind of young for me the first time we met.”

He chuckled and bit at her earlobe. “Mmm, yes. Now, yer too young for me. Do you know how old I am?”

She thought back to the day she'd put the villagers under her protection. “I have a fairly good idea. So, yes, you're too old for me. And you're plenty old enough to realize I'll bring you nothing but trouble.”

“I suppose,” he said with a grin. “But isnae what a wife does?”

Gigi slapped the back of his arm lightly. “For that remark I'm making you watch the movie I picked out twice.”

Korey withdrew from her. “Och, I can hardly wait.” He kissed her upper chest, centering on her breasts to start and then moving down her stomach. Licking a line around her bellybutton, he made a torrent of cream form between her legs.

“No more. I need another bath.”

He looked entirely too pleased with the idea of her being wet. He ignored her plea and dropped his head lower, licking a line to her slit. Gigi clawed at the blanket as Korey parted her folds and flicked his tongue over her swollen bud. She thrashed under his skilled mouth. Each lick, each swipe of his tongue left her gasping and another orgasm building.

She screamed, yanking hard on the blanket and arching her back to him. Korey chuckled into her pussy as he lapped up her cream, only serving to make her lower half quake.

Gigi stared down the length of herself at him and gave him a scolding look.

He grinned, his chin glistening with moisture. “Mmm, you taste every bit as divine as you are, my goddess.”

She froze.

His goddess.

Korey kissed her inner thigh and bit at it, causing her no real pain. His words played in her mind again and again.

His goddess.

Panic welled. Norval would come for him and there was no way Korey could defend himself against a god. She’d sealed his fate—doomed him by being too weak to deny him.

“I cannae say it pleases me to see that look upon yer face after I thought I did a rather nice job down here.” He planted additional kisses on her inner thighs before moving up the length of her. “Gigi, you look as if yer going to be sick. What troubles you, lass?”

“I need to talk to Parth. He’s an old friend of mine and he can help keep you safe from my uncle.”

Korey rolled away from her, his anger bristling off him. “You mean he’s an old lover of yers, Gigi. I saw him in the pub. I heard everything he said to you and you to him.”

Gigi stared at Korey’s backside. “I never meant to lie to you, Korey. I only ever wanted to protect you from who and what I was running from.”

He let out a choked laugh. “You do nae deny you were lovers?”

“You’re stuck on that when I’m worried the skies will open and my sadistic uncle will drop out of them and strike you dead?”

Korey glanced over his shoulder, his look deadly. “Aye, I’m stuck on *that*.”

“Typical man,” she said, exhaling and staring upwards instead of at his lush ass. “Ignore the fact a god will want you dead. No. It’s much better to

fixate on a relationship I haven't been in since you were just a boy. That's mature. Glad I fell in love with the sound O'Caha boy."

Gigi continued on her rant for several more minutes before stopping and realizing Korey was watching her with a peculiar look on his face. "Kor?"

"You love me?"

She bit her lower lip and lowered her lids, ashamed to meet his gaze. She'd been in love with him for four years. How had she fought her feelings for so long?

He touched her cheek, surprising her with how close he was. "Never be embarrassed about what we feel for one another, Gigi."

We feel?

She lifted a brow. "And what do *we* feel for each other, Korey?"

"Right now I'm fightin' the urge to whisk you away to a location even more secure than this one before spanking you until you learn your lesson."

Her jaw dropped open. "And what lesson is that?"

"That I do nae need yer ex-lover to protect me, or you. I'm yer husband and I can and will see to yer safety."

She rolled her eyes. "Wonderful. My *husband* doesn't tell me he loves me. No. He tells me he wants to punish me for daring to have the nerve to worry a god...you know, those pesky hard to kill superpowers...will want his head on a platter. My marriage is everything I'd hoped it would be and so very much more."

"Sarcasm does not become you." Korey's shoulders shook and she caught the gleam in his eyes telling her he was fighting the urge to laugh. "I should take you over my knee now. Make sure you understand who is boss in this relationship." He laughed then as he bent to kiss her.

Gigi turned her head away. "And I should spank you for being a big druid bully to me when all I wanted to know was whether or not you claimed me because you wanted to or because you felt you had to."

"Big druid bully?" he asked, feigning shock.

Gigi wanted to play along. She did, but each time Korey changed the subject she couldn't help but think it was because he knew she wouldn't like

the answer. Rolling to her feet, she put her hand out and called upon her magik. She summoned clothing, not only for herself but for Korey as well. “We should head back now.”

“Gigi.”

She refused to look at him while she dressed.

“Dammit, Gigi.”

Again, she faced away.

“Woman, do nae make me keep my promise to spank you. I will.” The anger in his voice made her laugh.

“An honest emotion for once. Good to know you still have those after seven hundred plus years of bedding women, Korey.”

“W-what?”

“Nothing.” She bent to pick up the blanket and found he hadn’t so much as moved let alone began to dress. His blue gaze locked on her.

“Yer really going to hold my past against me? I dinnae know you were out there, Gigi.”

“Yet you’re willing to blame me for Parth when he was my only anything, Korey. He was a good man once. A man I thought would be my husband.”

He was quiet for a moment before nodding. “Is he the man you wish was yer husband now?”

Unable to stop herself, Gigi walked over to him and delivered a good hard slap to his face. It had no effect on him. She expected as much. “You are an arrogant jerk with a one-track mind.”

“But you love me all the same.”

“Yes I do but...” She paused, realizing there was no malice in his voice. “Korey, I do love you. You know that, right? I’m not trying to take away from how powerful you are by suggesting we ask Parth to help us, I’m being realistic. I can’t lose you. Do you understand what I’m saying? I can’t live without you. I understand you claimed me out of some misguided need to protect me but it doesn’t change the fact I really do love you.”

“Gigi.”

She ignored him, continuing on with how much he meant to her. It wasn't until Korey covered her mouth with his hand that she stopped. "Wife, yer about to talk my ears right off my head."

She giggled into the palm of his hand.

"If you would be so kind as to refrain from speakin' a moment."

She nodded, but he kept his hand there anyway.

"Gigi, from the moment you stepped into my life, I've been in love with you. Since I believe I was six or seven at the time that means," he tipped his head back and forth, appearing to calculate the years, "well, I've loved you a long damn time, lass."

Tears fell freely as she stared down at him. Korey's bashful look only made Gigi cry harder. She tried to tell him she loved him too but he still held his hand over her mouth, making it come out more as a mumble.

Korey chuckled. "Aye, guid to know, lass. Guid to know."

He hooked an arm around her waist and pulled her down to him. His kiss was gentle to start but fast moved to heated. Gigi returned it with all she had, loving the kiss more, if that were even possible. Breaking the kiss was hard to do but she did it all the same.

"Korey, we need to go back."

"Och, what we need is to enjoy the start of our honeymoon, *a ghrá*"

She pushed dark strands of hair back from his face and kissed his cheeks. "Mmm, I want that, I do, but if two dark ones were able to track me, more will follow. Coyle is the only one there. It means they'll attack him."

The thought apparently sobered Korey's horny state because he set her to the side and hopped to his feet. He was dressed in seconds and had his hand out to her, his eyes wide. "Come."

Chapter Five

Korey held tight to Gigi's hand as he used his power to travel back to the pub. At first, he assumed all was well. The place seemed quiet, and if Korey's calculations were correct, it should have been closed for business. The office was in order, meaning Coyle had handled the clean up. Still, something felt off. A power he didn't recognize filtered through the air, buzzing about. He almost didn't sense it but thankfully had.

Gigi gasped, apparently sensing the power as well, and ran for the office door. Korey held her back, shaking his head no and pointing to the corner of the room. "Go. I'll check."

She took a few steps in the direction he wished her to be in and then stopped.

Stubborn woman.

Korey moved to the side of the door, listened closely and then opened it, peeking out to see overturned tables and chairs. That wasn't all. He spotted a bloody mass lying in the center of the pub, unmoving.

Coyle.

Everything around him seemed to fog as he rushed out, intent on getting to his cousin to render whatever aid he could.

Do nae let him be dead. Do nae!

Korey dropped to his cousin's side and noticed then that another body lay close to Coyle's. This one was covered in the markings of a druid sorcerer turned rogue.

Parth.

He too lay motionless in a pool of his own blood.

Korey sensed Gigi near him before he saw her. She let out a strangled cry and dropped next to him, reaching for Coyle. Without thought, Korey smacked her hand away. Guilt for having been with her, rutting like a wild beast, instead of here, with his cousin consumed him.

Gigi drew back from Korey and went to Parth's lifeless body. "P-Parth? No!"

She rolled the man over and shook as she touched his cheek. Korey tried to numb himself to the jealousy he felt but couldn't. Nor could he deny the rage crashing through him over Coyle's death. Deri, CJ and the new baby would be without him. For all eternity.

Korey's head fogged more and the next thing he knew, he had hold of Gigi's upper arm, yanking her to her feet. "Take me to yer uncle, now!"

Her eyes widened. "N-no. He'll kill you, Korey. He'll know you're coming. It's a trap."

"Take me to him!" he shouted with so much force Gigi cringed beneath the weight of his touch. Additional guilt struck him but he swept it aside, focusing only on his rage.

Gigi shook her head. "No. I won't take you to your death."

Korey lifted his hand and when he realized it had been with the intent to strike his wife, he gasped at the same time as Gigi, releasing her so fast she fell over Parth's body and struck the pub floor.

"Och, Gigi, I dinnae mean... I wouldnae ever..."

She scrambled away from him and straight into the arms of a man who appeared out of thin air. The man had a head of dark brown hair, streaked with strands of white. His green eyes locked on Korey and he smiled. "Thank you for looking out for my niece. Your work is done."

He lifted his hand and shot power at Korey before Korey could so much as blink. The magik slammed into Korey, lifting him up and off his feet. He struck a table and it buckled under his weight, breaking to pieces. White-hot pain shot throughout Korey's body as he hit the floor and the power of a god turned rogue ripped through him.

Gigi screamed, twisting in her uncle's arms and hitting him hard across the face. It did little to sway him as he slapped her back. Her cheek stung but she stood her ground, shaking her head. "You broke the agreement. You killed those I put under my protection! The other gods will come. They'll sense your betrayal."

He laughed. "I killed no one. If they ask, I will tell them Parth killed the druids."

Gigi tried to get away but Norval advanced on her quickly, jerking her to him. Her lips curled in disgust as he made contact with her again. She wasn't a warrior but she wasn't one to take defeat lying down either. Once in her life she'd fallen under his control because she'd weakened herself. It would never happen again.

She thrust magik at him, causing Norval to release her. The moment he did a huge wave of power, which wasn't Gigi's, slammed into him, lifting him up and off the ground. Her eyes widened and she turned to see Korey, on his side, his arm in the air, wielding god-like amounts of magik.

The blood drained from Norval's face, leaving a mask of terror in its wake. "No. How?"

Korey pushed to his feet, maintaining his mystical hold on her uncle. "I do nae know and I do nae care. You will die for yer sins. And you willnae ever hurt *my* Gigi or anyone else I love again."

His Gigi.

She backed away as Korey sent a blast of power through her uncle, causing the man to contort and cry out in pain. Gigi was numb to Norval's pleas for mercy. He'd shown none in his past nor would he ever grant it should he be allowed to live. He would continue to try to end the line of druid sorcerers. It was his sole mission in life. One Gigi could not abide by.

Turning away, she closed her eyes, letting Korey do what needed to be done. When the screams ended, Gigi knew it was over. She looked back in time to see a flash of white light and then her mother appearing. Where once Gigi's mother had been eternally young, she'd had her powers sapped by her brother and had aged a great deal in the last decade. Gigi knew it happened right after

her escape from her uncle's hold but her mother never fully explained the how or the why of the matter.

"Mother?"

The elderly woman glanced at her deceased brother and then to Korey. "You did this?"

"Mother, Norval left him no choice," Gigi said, going straight for her mother.

"I know, darling. I'm not here to condemn Korey. I'm here to thank him for freeing me from my brother's hold." She shook her head and the long, wiry strands of grey turned back into their youthful dark brown. When it was done, Gigi's mother looked as she had before Gigi put the village under her protection. Anyone who saw the women standing together would assume they were sisters not mother and daughter.

Her mother lifted a hand and waved it in the air. Power zigged and zagged throughout the pub.

Two heavy groans and several Gaelic curses later, Gigi realized the noises were coming from Parth and Coyle. She went to them, going to her knees between their bodies. They rolled onto their backs, each one appearing stiff.

"What in the name of...?" Coyle opened his mouth wide as if to flex his jaw. He peeked out from one eye. "Och, I feel like I spent the night drinkin' ol' lady McCallister's special brew." He stared down the length of himself. "There are no sheep here, are there? I do nae want to be explain' that one to my wife."

Korey let out a soft, tear-filled laugh. "It cannae be that bad, cousin. And a sheep? You've never mentioned anything about waking up with a sheep before. You wouldnae be the reason we got labeled with the stereotype, would you?"

"Uh, I was joking. Aye, joking." Coyle glanced at Parth, who looked as roughed up as Coyle, and they stared at one another for a moment. "I owe you a thank you for coming to aid me. At first, I dinnae think you were here to help."

Parth lifted a dark brow and rubbed his cheek. "Really? So, you do nae greet all yer guests with a punch to the face?"

She stared at him. "How did you know to come back and help Coyle?"

Grinning, Parth shifted his jaw back and forth, rubbing it once more for good measure. “Och, lass, you remember how we always kept tabs on the druids?”

She nodded.

“We dinnae stop doing it after you left, Gigi. In fact, I made it my personal mission to know where each member of the village you gave so much for was at all times. I should have paid these two fools a personal visit years ago. I’d have seen you then.” He touched her arm lightly and winked. “Now, tell me how it was you dinnae know yer husband was a sorcerer.”

She wasn’t entirely sure.

Coyle grunted. “Because we’re damn guid at coverin’ our arses and hiding who and what we are.” He glanced at Parth. “Better than you even.”

“Boys,” Gigi’s mother said sternly.

Gigi glanced up at her mother, emotions lodged in her throat as she nodded her appreciation.

Coyle followed her gaze. “The goddess Carys?”

Her mother nodded and smiled. “Yes, but we’ve met before, Coyle O’Caha.” She motioned to Gigi. “You’ve visited me with my daughter before and,” her gaze slid to Korey, “my son-in-law.”

Coyle and Parth helped each other to their feet and then Parth pulled Gigi up as well. “You healed us?”

Carys locked gazes with Parth. “I did and I’ve also gifted you both with god-like powers. Seems only fair since Korey received the same gift when he shared power and mated with my daughter.”

Gigi embraced her mother, holding her close and letting her tears of joy flow freely. Carys patted her back and lifted her long hair, fixing it. “You don’t have to live in fear anymore, darling. You’re free to love him as it was meant to be.”

Staring back over her shoulder, Gigi caught the flicker of hesitation in Korey’s eyes and knew without being told that she was anything but free to love him. While she may not be as old as him in years, she was wise, and spotting a man full of inner demons was easy to do. He would leave. Of that she was sure.

Stopping him wasn't an option. She'd not spend the rest of her days holding tight to a man who didn't want to be held.

Chapter Six

Gigi packed the last of her things and stared around the tiny two-bedroom house she'd called home for the last several years. For some reason, it, more than any other place she'd ever laid down roots felt like home.

Because of Korey.

Her heart and head knew but none of that mattered. Not now.

Boxes lined the walls and if Deri had been successful in finding last-minute movers, they would be arriving come morning.

A new start.

She sighed. Gigi had already had one of those. Her time with Korey had been her second chance. Unfortunately, it didn't work out as well as she hoped it would.

She ran her hand over a smooth rock she'd brought from the old country with her on her journey. She'd picked it up at the Burren, in Ireland, wanting a token to remember the area by—anything to be connected to something of old. As she held the stone, Gigi couldn't help but remember the grove to which Korey had whisked her away. It too was full of beauty and nature's marvels, as was the Burren.

"I've been out of yer life all of two weeks and you've taken to petting rocks on Friday nights instead of meeting me for a movie and dinner."

She spun around to find Korey leaning against the living room entrance, a smug smile on his handsome face and a bag of something in his hand. He lifted the bag and inclined his head towards her. "Now, I dinnae remember the exact movie title you wanted to watch so I bought five that sounded like they might be it. You've no idea how many movies revolve around a girl wantin' to make it big in New York. Trust me on this."

Gigi stared at him. The black jeans he wore were snug in all the right places and loose in the rest. The matching T-shirt and boots added to his badass appearance. She wondered if he had ridden his motorcycle over and if so, why she hadn't heard him approaching. "Forget how to knock?"

He tapped on the wall for effect. "No. I remember. I simply choose nae to. Why? Something against having movie night with yer husband?"

Husband.

The word made her laugh.

Korey didn't appear quite as amused as he set the bag down on a packed box and came towards her. "Planning a trip?"

"Yes. A permanent one."

He motioned to the stone in her hand and appeared puzzled. "I can sense things from certain places and if I'm right, that's nae from around these parts. Exactly how far away were you planning to go?"

"Far."

"Quite the talker tonight." He opened the box nearest him and began removing items from it.

Gigi huffed. "Korey, what in the hell do you think you're doing?"

He glanced back at her nonchalantly. "I thought it was rather obvious, lass. I'm unpacking for my wife."

"I'm not your—"

He rounded on her, desire burning in his eyes. "You are and you well know it."

But do you?

She snickered, deciding against voicing her inner thoughts. Fighting with him would be too easy. Saying goodbye for good was the difficult part.

It was then Gigi noticed the dark circles under Korey's eyes and the fact he'd not shaved in some time. He stared around her living room, his attention returning to the boxes. "Och, Gigi, I more than know it. I felt yer pain every time you packed something reminding you of our time together. I felt yer fear of staying and of going. I felt yer hurt for what you think was rejection by me."

Her lips pursed in suppressed rage. “What I *think* was rejection? Korey, you walked out of the pub two weeks ago and this is the first time I’ve seen you since then. If that wasn’t rejection, what was it? Enlighten me, oh wise one.”

“It was a seven-hundred-year-old druid sorcerer needing time to grow up and be as mature as his young wife,” he said, the corners of his mouth twitching as if he were fighting a smile.

Crossing her arms over her chest, she peered down her nose at him, willing herself to remain mad. When he went to the bag he’d brought and retrieved a lone flower, identical to the kind he’d given her as a boy in the village, her resolve wavered. She lifted a shaky hand to the flower and plucked it from his fingertips.

He smiled. “Gigi O’Caha, forgive me for being an *edjit*. It was shame for darin’ to raise my hand to you that drove me away.”

“You didn’t hit me, Kor,” she said, taking another step towards him.

“But I lifted my hand all the same.” The humiliation in his voice broke her heart.

She touched his arm and closed her eyes as her magik trickled forth, recognizing his instantly. Korey closed the gap between them and traced a path down her cheek, neck, upper chest and then back to her chin. He lifted her face, bringing her gaze upwards.

“You dinnae object to being called Gigi O’Caha.”

He was right. She hadn’t objected to the idea. Truth be told, she lay in bed at night, thinking about what it would be like to have Korey with her, truly by her side, filling the part of her other half, her soulmate.

He bent and pressed his lips lightly to hers. The kiss was barely there but that did little to stop the rush of desire that spread throughout her body. Gigi yanked at Korey’s lower lip and kissed him harder, not caring her thumb was in the way. He bit at it, managing to catch it while still lacing his tongue around hers. She moaned and knew all Korey had to do was look at her and she was putty in his hands.

“It goes both ways, *a ghrá*, trust me.” He feathered his tongue over her lower lip.

Her body responded, her breasts swelling and her inner thighs quivering with the knowledge of what the man before her could do with his tongue. Her pussy dampened. She whimpered. A manly laugh escaped him.

She paused. "Korey, I didn't say anything out loud."

A shit assed grin moved over his face. "Did I forget to mention one of my god-like powers appears to be the ability to read yer mind? Started right after we made love. At first, I thought I was hearin' things...you know...right up until you thought about my arse bein' lush and all, then I knew it was you." His eyes twinkled with mischief. "After all, I'd nae be imagining my own arse that way. Yers," he drew in a sharp breath, his gaze looking hungry, "is another matter entirely. I've been thinking about turning you over and having my way with every inch of yer body."

"And you needed two weeks to come up with what it is you think you'd do with my body?"

He centered his blue gaze on her. "No. I needed one week to realize I was a fool. I'm old. Cannae fault me for takin' longer than most to see the light. Epiphanies are known to have to be forced on us O'Cahas." He stroked her cheek. "Then, I took several days to think of everything I want to do to you. I've got a verra vivid imagination so we're lucky I only took days...not months."

She slapped his arm playfully.

He winked. "A day to retrieve the flower from the century I first picked one for you and another day to talk my cousin into helping me find that damn movie you wanted to watch."

Her lips trembled as she fought to keep from laughing but failed. "You really made Coyle help you look?"

"Made him? Hell, the man leapt at the chance of getting out from Deri's nursing ways. She made him lie in bed for two whole days!"

Gigi hid her smile. "Two *whole* days after dying and being brought back to life by a goddess? The nerve of Deri."

"Och." Korey's expression was serious. "I know. An hour's nap, maybe. Two days? That's a wee bit excessive, do you nae think?"

She looked away to keep from laughing. "Oh, *totally*."

Korey took hold of her hips and jerked her to him. A fierce growl of possessiveness came from him and Gigi put her hand on his chest. He stared past her, at the sofa, and bent, hiking her up and over one shoulder with ease.

Gigi yelped and Korey swatted her backside.

He tossed her onto the sofa and yanked at her bottoms until they were off and cast aside. The determined look in his eyes told Gigi exactly what Korey had in mind. She opened her legs to him, giving in faster than she should.

He pressed his mouth to her slit, inhaling deeply and making her moan. His tongue found her clit and he circled it, driving her mad with need. Gigi bucked beneath his touch, grabbing hold of the back of the sofa and clenching not only her teeth but her channel around his tongue as he inserted it into her.

He fucked her, sliding it in and out as his face rubbed her clit. Screaming sounded like a great idea. Instead, she held her breath as her orgasm built. The second Korey moved to licking her folds and thrusting two fingers into her, the dam broke loose. Gigi hit her zenith, thrashing her head back and forth and crying out his name.

Gigi assumed he'd join her. He didn't. Korey continued his licks and thrusts, finger fucking her and taking it to another level by pressing his thumb into her ass. She jerked and came again, this time so hard that she lifted off the sofa briefly.

Korey chuckled, the sound of a man who knew he'd pleased his woman.

Running her hands into his hair, Gigi fisted it, tugging to the point she got his attention. "I...need...you."

"Aye, and I need you," he said, moving up and over her. He pulled her shirt over her head, leaving her totally nude while he was still fully dressed.

Korey bent, taking a nipple into his mouth and sucking gently. Gigi squirmed, her pussy wet and throbbing from coming so many times. Each suck, each tug on her nipple made her abdomen spasm. He traced a hand down her torso and slid a finger into her core before rubbing her clit with his thumb.

It was too much, yet not enough.

"Kor-ey," she bit out, gritting her teeth.

He moved to her other nipple, giving it the same painstakingly slow attention. He lifted his head, his eyes gleaming. “Do nae disturb a man when he’s doin’ his best to make up for bein’ an arse.”

Gigi gave him a hard look. “Korey O’Caha, you have two seconds to start fucking me or I will turn you into a toad. I can do it.”

“But then I couldn’t do this.” He nipped at her flesh. “Or this.” He rubbed her swollen bud faster, making her come again. “Or...”

She let her power out enough to zap him in the ass. He twisted and grinned. “Can’t stay away from my *lush arse*?”

Gigi growled.

Korey pulled his shirt over his head, his muscles rippling. When he started to remove his jeans, she tried to sit up and help. His magik slid over her, pinning her in place.

“Korey, I want to taste you.”

“And you will.” He slipped his jeans off and stood before her, a model of male perfection. Gripping his cock, he approached, tossing one powerful leg over her but keeping the other on the floor. His sac hung above her face, his magik still holding her flat to the sofa. “Lick me, Gigi.”

She obeyed, running her tongue out and over his balls. She sucked, gently drawing one into her mouth. Humming, she made Korey jerk above her, his body stiffening. He stroked his shaft and then lifted his hips, pushing down on his cock and putting the head of it to her lips.

“Open.”

Again, she obeyed.

Korey eased his cock into her mouth and Gigi focused on relaxing her jaw and throat. His manly scent assailed her, spurring her on as she sucked on him. He gasped and began making shallow thrusts. Gigi wanted to grab hold of him and force him to give her more. His power prevented that.

She moaned, sucking harder until he gave in, sinking his cock deeper into her mouth. He was too big to take all of him but that didn’t stop Korey from pushing in more. Gigi relaxed, taking all he offered, her mouth wide, full of him. As his cock touched the back of her throat, she raked her teeth over it.

Korey jerked and began moving harder, faster, taking her mouth as he would her pussy.

Gigi closed her eyes, loving the fact she did this to him—she made him this crazy with need.

He eased his power, allowing her to use her hands. She cupped his sac and sucked harder. Korey tried to pull away but Gigi let out a sultry laugh, tossing her power around him, keeping him locked in place as his balls drew up and seed shot forth, filling her mouth. She drank his offering down, savoring the taste of him.

Korey shuddered and lost his footing. One minute her powerful warrior was above her and the next, he was lying on the floor, laughing like a fool. “Och, lass, you do have a way of throwing my manly displays right out the damn window.”

Giggling, Gigi rolled onto her side and stared down at her husband.

Korey winked. “That’s right. Yer husband. Never forget that, Gigi.”

He released his mystical hold on her and she joined him on the floor. “You know, we both have beds. We should try using one sometime.”

“Actually...” He twisted her in the other direction and rolled to his knees.

Korey bent his wife over the edge of the sofa, her knees on the floor and her ass aiming at him. He kissed her shoulder, her skin like silk. “We need to decide where it is we’re going to call home.”

“Uh-huh,” she murmured, thrusting her ass at him like an offering as he continued to plant tiny kisses on her shoulder.

“Are you even listening to me?”

Gigi tipped her head back and he bit at her neck. His cock sprang to life as he rubbed it between the globes of her ass. He speared her pussy with his finger, gathering cream to coat his cock with. Once it glistened, Korey pushed her shoulders downward, forcing Gigi to bend over more.

He speared her cunt with his cock, going deep and to the hilt. She writhed against him, gasping and clawing at the sofa cushions. Korey kept going, thrusting into her, getting lost in the feel of her sweet pussy wrapped snugly

around his shaft. There was no doubt in his mind that she had been created for him. She fit him like a glove.

Korey swatted her ass, quickly rubbing the area before delivering another light smack to a new spot. Gigi pushed back against him, taking him deeper, her pussy milking his cock as she cried out, coming hard.

Giving in, he let go. His come shot forth, filling her. He withdrew quickly, pressing the head of his cock to her ass and finished coming there. The tiny pink rosette called to him and he wanted to claim it, possess it fully.

Being immortal and supernatural afforded him the ability to have next to no downtime between rounds. He growled. "Woman, you've no idea what you do to me."

Gigi glanced back over her shoulder, looking every bit the temptress she was. "Oh, I think I have a fairly good idea."

He rimmed her ass with the head of his cock. "Do you now?"

"Yes."

Was that a challenge he saw in her eyes?

Gigi licked her lower lip. "Yes, Kor, that's a challenge."

She'd read his thoughts? The knowledge drove him onward as he eased himself into her dark channel. She hissed and tried to pull away. Korey caught hold of her hips and kept her in place.

"Bear down, Gigi."

She listened and he pressed in more, working an inch of his cock into her ass. The very sight of his shaft, buried in her, left Korey on the edge of culmination. He tipped his head back, doing his best to focus before sliding deeper into her.

Gigi bucked against him, impaling herself on his cock. She cried out and he followed close behind. Thrusting, Korey lost control. He would never get enough of her. He pushed in, kneading her ass cheeks with his hands as he took her.

"Korey, ah, uh. Kor."

Reaching around her, he rubbed her clit and kissed her shoulder as his cock exploded deep with her. Gigi came, her body tightening on him, causing

Korey to bite his inner cheek to contain his magik. It was that or risk leveling a city block because he still didn't have a full grasp on his god-like powers.

He withdrew and turned her to face him.

Korey cupped her face. "I love you."

"Enough to shower with me and really watch the movies you brought?" she asked, a teasing note in her voice.

"Woman, yer supposed to say you love me too."

"Oh." She tossed her arms around his neck. "I knew there was something I forgot." Gigi kissed the tip of his nose before focusing on his lips, planting kisses on them. "I. Love. You."

Chapter Seven

Gigi snuggled against her husband, shocked they'd actually made it to her bed. *No. Not my bed*, she reminded herself. *Our bed*.

Korey slept silently, his warm body snuggled close to her. Gigi ran her fingers over the various shapes and symbols permanently etched on his body. He had varying triple spirals on him. The one she was most drawn to was low on his left hip, just an inch or so from where his cock lay nestled in a thatch of black hair. She traced the pattern lightly. Its meaning, one of life-death-rebirth, was close to her heart.

Gigi moved to another tattoo, this one a double spiral. It was midway up his torso. She inhaled, pressing her lips to his chiseled chest, thankful they'd not only made it through her uncle and his dark followers, but past their own internal barriers as well.

Korey kissed the top of her head. "If you keep pettin' me, I'm likely to take it as a sign yer up for another round. Since you said you were sore, I do nae think you wish that to happen."

She was sore. They'd showered together and ended up making love two more times while in there. After, they'd gone to bed and before her eyes had closed, Korey was deep within her, loving her with all he had. She'd fallen asleep as he came and had woken to find herself in his arms.

Light filtered through the long green curtains on the windows. Gigi stretched, every part of her body sore.

"No. Thoroughly loved, Gigi. Nae sore."

She planted another kiss on his chest and froze when she heard the doorbell ringing. "The movers."

Hot energy prickled off Korey as he rolled away from her and stalked towards the bedroom door without a stitch of clothing on. He couldn't seriously be thinking of going down to talk to them in the buff.

As the sound of his deep, pissed off voice reached her, she knew he had indeed done just that. Korey slammed the front door shut with such a force that the house shook.

Gigi wrapped the sheet up around her breasts and waited as she listened to him take each step, heavy-footed. When he reached the doorway, his gaze was hard and locked on her.

She scooted back on the bed, bumping into the headboard. Trapped, her breathing grew irregular. "Kor?"

He stared at her for what felt like forever before lowering his gaze. It scorched her skin as if he were really touching her. He smiled. "They'll come back later, after I've spent more time loving you."

"Come back?" He was going to let her leave?

"Aye, they need to move yer things to my house...erm...*our* house. I'll nae settle for Friday nights only anymore, Gigi. I want all of yer time." For a moment he looked like a panther ready to pounce. "I want all of you."

A blush stained her upper body as she remembered their time on the sofa. "You've had all of me, Kor."

"Aye. I have," he said, reaching down and stroking his cock.

Gigi shook her head, pointing at him. "Keep that away from me. I can barely move as it is."

The sly grin spreading over his face told her Korey had no intention of staying away. "I've got seven hundred years to make up for, Gigi."

Her eyes widened. "Pace yourself, sport."

Tipping his head back, Korey laughed. "Trust the Fates to hand me a woman who can set me in my place."

"Someone has to." She bit her lower lip. "Coyle's too busy to keep you out of trouble. That leaves me."

Epilogue

Korey held his daughter with one arm while he let his free hand rest on his wife's shoulder. She was heavy with child and the late-day sun had taken its toll on her. Korey had wanted to remain home with her, making her put her feet up but Gigi would have nothing to do with the idea. Missing an O'Caha family reunion wasn't something she was planning on doing, especially not since they happened so infrequently.

It was hard to schedule events far in advance when the entire family fought evil and evil rarely kept good hours.

He stared over his wife's shoulder and down the front of her blouse. His entire body lit with need. She was every bit as breathtaking as she'd been when she'd walked in from the rain all those years ago.

Darcy wiggled in his arms and Korey smiled down at his daughter. She grinned, her blue eyes wide and her black hair as curly as her mother's. She also seemed to have a penchant for wearing dresses with floral prints. The ironic part of it was, for as feminine as his daughter was, she could deliver wicked bloody lips when provoked. A little boy in her preschool class had pushed her down. Darcy in turn, released a hefty dose of magik on him, fattening the boy's lip. They had to put her in a special program then, one for supernatural children.

She tugged on his bottom lip and giggled before kissing his cheek. Korey hugged her, pride swelling in him.

"Let her play, honey," Gigi said, sounding tired.

Deri moved to sit next to his wife. "How are you feeling? Any better?"

Gigi nodded and reached back to pat Korey's hand. "I'm fine. I wouldn't miss this for the world. But I'd love to not have swollen everything. I'm a

goddess. You'd think that came with perks like normal-size ankles for at least six of the nine months I'm pregnant. But no..."

Deri grinned as if understanding exactly what Gigi meant. Since she had three sons, Korey imagined the woman could sympathize. He glanced out to spot CJ and Evan, Deri's oldest two, tackling their father.

"Get 'em, lads!" he called out, laughing as his cousin pretended to be overtaken by the boys. The youngest O'Caha boy stood next to his mother's leg, watching Darcy carefully. He was younger than her by a year, making him two. He bent and picked a flower. A wide smile spread over his face as he held it up for Darcy who beamed.

Korey shook his head. "Och, no, lass, you cannae be accepting flowers from him, he's blood relation."

Gigi smacked his leg lightly. "Korey, put her down to go play with the boys."

"I like holding her."

The littlest O'Caha boy ran off to play with the others.

"No, you like assuring she stays away from *all* boys, cousins included."

"Aye." He relinquished his hold on his daughter, freeing her to play with the others. She ran right out and tackled Evan. He cast a pointed stare towards his wife. "She gets that from you, you know?"

Gigi snorted. "How do you figure?"

Korey winked and gave her a suggestive smile. "You like to tackle me all the time."

"Oh, are you horny too now that you're at the end of the pregnancy?" Deri asked, making Korey's ears turn red as he tried to tune out his cousin's wife. He didn't want to know just how frisky she and Coyle were behind closed doors.

Gigi squeezed Korey's hand. "Oh gods, yes. This man needs a medal. I think I'd tie him to our bed if I knew he didn't have to work."

He bent, kissing her cheek and nipping at her ear. "Mmm, I'll put in for time off."

A sultry laugh was her answer to his desire to be at her mercy. He kissed her cheek and stiffened when he sensed a familiar magik coating the area. Korey groaned.

Gigi swatted his leg again. "Play nice."

"I do nae wanna." He turned slightly to find Parth approaching. "He's nae an O'Caha."

"Yes." Deri tapped the table, sounding annoyed. "But he did save one's life. Since the O'Caha in question was my husband, I think we'll all agree Parth is welcome among us anytime."

Gigi nodded.

Korey rolled his eyes. "Fine."

Darcy stopped wrestling with Coyle and the boys and stared in the direction of Parth. She ran towards a patch of weeds, lining the back end of the property, and grabbed a handful. His chest tightened as he watched his daughter run after Parth. She tugged on the man's pant leg and thrust the weeds up at him, smiling brightly.

Parth patted her head and took the flowers from her. He looked around as if trying to figure out who Darcy belonged to. Korey's temper flared. "Get away from my daughter!" He pointed at Darcy. "And you willnae be giving or acceptin' anything from that man!"

Darcy's eyes widened and her bottom lip trembled. Gigi was suddenly behind Korey, trying to pick their daughter up. "Don't cry, sweetie. Daddy has it in his head that giving a flower means you're promised forever to someone. What Daddy needs to remember is the flower won him Mommy and unless he wants his ears boxed, he'll stop being silly."

Darcy wiggled and tried to get down. Korey took Darcy from Gigi and kissed his daughter's tear-streaked cheeks. "Och, do nae cry, lass. It'll make me cry too and we cannae have that, now can we?"

She cried harder.

His heart broke. "Come on, lass, Daddy will help you pick flowers for everyone here, okay?"

Darcy nodded, sucking in a deep breath. “O-kay.” She blinked and stared over at Parth. “Wanna help?”

Before Korey could object, Gigi smiled and rubbed Korey’s back. “I think that’s a wonderful idea, sweetie. In fact, why don’t you go with Parth and start picking them.”

“With me?” Parth paled. “Uh, Gigi, I’m nae verra good with children.”

“And you know this because you’ve broken how many?” Gigi put a hand on her hip.

Deri snickered.

Korey refused to find amusement in the idea the man was near his daughter. “Yeah, have you broken any?”

Parth ignored him, focusing instead on Darcy. He smiled and put his hand out. “Uh, flowers, huh? What kind?”

“Purdy ones.”

“Och, of course, lass. I’m nae a fool.” Parth glanced over his shoulder and winked at Korey. “When yer older, I’ll tell you the story of a wee lad who picked pretty flowers for a goddess. I do nae like the ending much though. See, I think the goddess should have left with the handsome warrior, nae the flower-picking youth who—”

Korey made a move to go at the man but Gigi stepped in his path.

“Honey, we need to have a little talk.”

“About?” He kept his sights set on Parth, watching the man like a hawk as his daughter followed Parth to the edge of the property.

“Our daughter and something my mother did right before she was born.”

Korey stilled, knowing he wouldn’t like what his wife had to say. “I’m listening.”

Gigi exhaled and ran a hand through her hair. “My mother meant well, Korey. She did. You know she loves Darcy and you and—”

He cupped his wife’s cheek. “Gigi, yer rambling. Tell me what she did.”

Gigi mumbled something Korey couldn’t quite make out but sounded remarkably like “My mother made sure Parth had a mate and that our daughter always had a protector.”

He blinked, rubbed his face and blinked again. “Gigi.”

“Don’t worry about them, honey, my mother assured me Parth wouldn’t see Darcy in *that way* until she’s of age. He’s already been alive almost eight hundred years without a mate, what’s eighteen more? He doesn’t know. In fact, only Coyle and I knew.”

Korey shot a dagger-like look at his cousin. “Coyle knew?”

Gigi rubbed his arm. “Honey, it was his idea not to tell you. He seemed to think you’d take it bad.”

Every bone in his body told him to overreact and he fully planned to, right up until Gigi grabbed her stomach and stared up at him, pain imprinted on her face. “Baby. Coming. Now.”

“Now?”

She dug her nails into his arm. “Now!”

Deri clapped her hands with glee. “Never a dull moment. And if you’re going to have a baby, what better place than surrounded by immortal sorcerers, witches and countless midwives?” She rushed off to get help and Korey lifted his wife off the ground, sweeping her up in his arms.

He kissed her cheek. “I love you, Gigi.”

She growled and stiffened in his arms. “I hat...ahh...okay, contraction passed. I love you too, honey.”

Korey laughed as he kissed her again. Coyle’s mother and several of their aunts ran towards Korey and Gigi. They began barking orders at him and he listened, knowing better than to cross them. On his way into his grandmother’s home, Korey glanced back and found Parth sitting on the grass as Darcy braided his hair and stuck flowers in it. The dark druid sorcerer did not look pleased. Korey smiled and wagged his brows.

Maybe Gigi’s mother was onto something after all.

Gigi clutched his arm. “Gloat later. Baby now.”

“Yes, *a ghrá*.” He hesitated a moment. “If this one is a girl, can we nae let yer mother bless her? I’ve no wish to see who she’d come up with next.”

Gigi laughed and wrapped her arms around him. “I’ll see what I can do.”

CJ and Evan rushed forward, each holding flowers and trying to set them on Gigi's swollen belly. Korey roared, his temper flaring. "Enough with the damn flowers already!"

Coyle laughed and slapped his cousin on the back before dismissing his boys, who each wore guilty looks on their faces. "Go play while I see what yer mother needs to help make Gigi comfy. Oh, and while I think up new ways to annoy Korey."

About the Author

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Look for these titles by Mandy M. Roth

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View to Kill

How much trouble can one small female be to a modern-day shapeshifting Viking? Well...it really depends on local gun laws.

Go Fetch

© 2007 Shelly Laurenston

Conall Viga-Feilan, direct descendent of Viking shifters, never thought he'd meet a female strong enough to be his mate. He especially didn't think a short, viper-tongued human would ever fit the bill. But Miki Kendrick isn't some average human. With an IQ off the charts and a special skill with weapons of all kinds, Miki brings the big blond pooch to his knees—and keeps him there.

Miki's way too smart to ever believe in love and she knows a guy like Conall could only want one thing from her. But with the Pack's enemies on her tail and a few days stuck alone with the one man who makes her absolutely wild, Miki is about to discover how persistent one Viking wolf can be.

Enjoy the following excerpt for *Go Fetch*:

“Hey, Miki.” He didn't look up, simply kept untying her laces. And, even though he couldn't see the fronts of her boots, was probably taking a lot longer than actually necessary.

“Hey, Conall.”

“How's it going? You have a good trip?”

Miki had to swallow to get the words out. “Yeah.” Okay. One word. Apparently she couldn't manage any better at the moment. All the guy was doing was helping her off with her boots. Of course, he was on his knees doing it. She kind of liked him on his knees.

Get a grip, Kendrick.

She needed to start talking. Now. “How's it going with you?”

He still didn't look up; instead, watching his own big hands slowly remove one boot then start on the other. His hair, thick and almost white blonde, fell in front of his face. Like hers, it was longer than when she

last saw him, just brushing across his shoulders. His hair reminded her of silk and she wondered if it would feel that way against her skin.

“Pretty good,” he murmured softly.

He slid the other boot off and placed it aside. Leaning back on his haunches, he ran his hands over her calves and feet while staring at her face. He had the lightest blue eyes she’d ever seen and they completely mesmerized her.

“Anything else you need help taking off?” he asked gruffly.

Miki almost said “everything” but caught herself. She pulled her feet away from Conall’s wonderful touch and pulled herself up to her knees. Smirking, she gave a little wave. “No. I’m fine. But thanks.” He slowly stood, his eyes never leaving her face. Still on her knees, she moved back away from him as his body kept rising. She’d forgotten exactly how tall he was. And exactly how big. In some respects, the man *was* a bear.

So busy staring and trying to stay away from him, Miki fell right off the bed.

“Miki?” She looked up to find him on the bed, hovering over her. “Are you okay?” He didn’t even try to stifle his laughter. Great. Now he could see exactly the level of her geekiness. It was off the charts, she knew. Well, that should convince him she was definitely not the woman for him. A guy like Conall should get some vacuous super-model babe who couldn’t complete a full sentence or even spell sentence.

“I’m fine.” She sat up, but before she could struggle to her feet, Conall moved around the bed to stand behind her. His big hands slid under her arms and lifted her off the floor as if she weighed no more than a bag of chips.

“Uh...thanks,” she bit out as her feet touched solid ground. She tried to pull away from him, but he wasn’t letting her go. Instead, he pulled her back until he held her against his chest. His arms slid around her body and he leaned in close, gently trapping her arms against her sides. If this were anybody else, she would have completely flipped out. They’d be lucky if they had their eyes when she was done. But she couldn’t even concentrate when Conall had his hands on her.

Husky, against her ear, “I missed you, Mik.”

The man was killing her. “Conall?”

“Miki?” He nuzzled her neck as one of his—*huge!*—hands slid over her breast. Immediately her nipples hardened. She blinked. *When the hell did that start happening?*

“I think you need to back off.” At least she was pretty sure she said that. She was having trouble concentrating. Especially with his tongue sliding up across her neck to her ear.

“You *think?*” His hand squeezed her breast and her back arched. “Or you *know?*”

Oh boy, he’s good. Miki bet that with very little effort, Conall could turn a nun into a whore. Of course, she wasn’t a nun.

She yanked her body away from his and it was as if her skin started to yell at the loss of him.

Miki backed away. “Conall. Don’t get the wrong idea.”

“And what idea is that?”

“I’m not going to sleep with you.”

He took a step toward her. “I am so not talking about sleeping.”

She backed up again. “You’re not going to make this easy on me, are you, Viking?”

He took another step forward. “Not on your life, Kendrick.”

She backed up once again and slammed into a dresser. She held her arm up as if to ward him off. “Stay!”

And he did.

“Look, you’re an unnaturally large, good-looking guy. I’m sure there are a plethora of women out there who would be perfect for you.”

“Personally, I like women who can successfully use ‘plethora’ in a sentence.”

Dammit, the bastard made her smile. She hated that. Especially when he smiled back. He was truly gorgeous. And as dangerous as they come.

Forcing her smile under control, “I’m going to take a shower. So you need to piss off.” She walked to the bathroom and as she stepped into the luxurious and huge room, she realized Conall stood behind her. Okay. Now this was just getting creepy.

She turned around. “Is there something else?”

“No. Not at all.”

“Okay. Well, I’m going to take a shower...by myself.”

“Great.” They stared at each other. She couldn’t understand what the fuck he was grinning at. Then, finally, with a low chuckle he asked, “You do know this is my bathroom?”

Miki closed her eyes. “What?”

“Yeah. In fact, this is *my* room.”

She gritted her teeth. Great. That wonderful smell on the neatly made bed had been Conall. And who the fuck made their bed these days anyway? Miki didn’t make her bed unless she was changing the sheets.

“She told me it was the second door on the right.”

“Actually, yours is third. Right next door.”

“Of course it is.” She would *kill* Sara.

“But, please, feel free to stay. Take all the showers you want. I can help with the soap.”

Images of that danced through her besotted brain and it felt as if someone squeezed her lungs because she was having a lot of trouble breathing.

“Well, that’s very neighborly of you, Viking. But I’ll just go to my own room.”

He wasn’t completely blocking her way, but she had to slide against him to get out of the bathroom and she felt that connection all the way down to her toes. She almost moaned.

“Well, see you at dinner,” she squeaked out.

Then she ran.

Sara believed Tristan died while stationed overseas. The last thing she expected on the eve of her engagement to another man was to be attacked by a monster...and have Tristan come to her rescue.

Missing in Action

© 2007 Amanda Young

To everyone who knew him, Tristan McKade is dead. Only the SCS (Supernatural Control Squad), a top secret division of the military know differently. Sent back to his hometown, Tristan is on the hunt for the serial killer.

Sara McCoy is just beginning to move on with her life without Tristan. Ready to let go of the past, Sara is celebrating her recent engagement. The night is going well—until she notices a man lingering at the back of the room. His resemblance to Tristan too strong to ignore, she follows him outside, where he vanishes.

Unable to concentrate on his assignment, Tristan is determined to let go of the past before more innocent women die. In a bid for closure, he pays a clandestine late night visit to Sara's house to say a final goodbye to the woman he loves—and the son he never knew he had.

Learning the shocking truth, Tristan and Sara are drawn into a bizarre triangle that pits them against The Mangler, an entity determined to possess Sara at any cost. A bloody battle of mind, body and soul ensues. Only one man will walk away alive—with Sara as his prize.

Enjoy the following excerpt for *Missing in Action*:

The body of a young woman between the age of twenty and twenty-five had been found in the alley behind Club Metropolis. As with all the other victims, she'd been raped and drained of all her blood, left out in the open for someone to find.

The perp seemed to get off on taunting them. Though he was careful not to leave behind evidence of what he was, the suspected vampire had a calling card that was unmistakable. The throat of each woman was ripped out, the jugular vein torn and ragged, unlike the straight edge a

knife wound would leave behind. There was always the possibility that the perp was a Were, but it was slim. Wolves were known to devour their prey, or at the very least tear large chunks of flesh from the victim. These murders bore no such evidence.

The fact that he'd gotten away with it again was Tristan's fault. If he had been doing his job, instead of playing hide-and-seek with Sara, the woman would still be alive. Instead she lay lifeless on a cold slab in the city morgue. That he could have—should have—been there to prevent her death and hadn't, burned at his soul like toxic waste.

With few leads to go on, he and Shame decided to split up. Shame stayed behind, doing research, seeing what kind of new information he could gather from the crime scene evidence. Tristan went out and did what he did best—the footwork.

Their most promising lead at the moment was on a man named Lester Morgan, who owned a local gossip paper. It seemed that whenever a new body was found, his reporters were on the beat before any of the other journalists knew what was going on. In one instance, the first murder, one of Morgan's staff had even discovered the body and called in the police themselves.

It seemed like a piss-poor lead to Tristan but he knew better than to not scour all paths provided. It was entirely possible that a wild-goose chase would lead him right where he needed to be. So, he sat outside the office of The Daily Tribune in a late-model green sedan with tinted windows and cased the joint. The building itself wasn't anything special, just brick and mortar. What he wanted to see, were the people who worked there. While Shame swore by lab work and forensics, Tristan was old-fashioned. He wanted to see the employees and the owner with his own two eyes, try to get a feel for them. His gut feelings were seldom wrong and he made it a point to listen to them. Doing so had saved his ass on more than one occasion.

At five o'clock on the dot, people started to file out the front exit. No one looked out of the ordinary. Tristan was planning his next step, possibly breaking into the office, when he saw Sara exit the building.

She wore an apricot skirt suit, her dark red hair pulled back at the nape of her neck in a messy bun. His breath caught as she looked right

at him, like she knew he was there, watching her, before she turned and headed straight for a beat-up old Volvo.

Though he wanted to know why she'd been in the building, he had to put his curiosity on hold. He needed to stay and check out the inner office. Maybe even follow Morgan for a little while and see if he was up to anything fishy. Tristan didn't have time to mess around with anything else.

Fuck it.

He put the car in first gear and pulled out into traffic.

Tristan followed at a measured distance, careful not to be seen, as Sara drove out of town limits and stopped in front of a rickety old white house. Though it had seen better days, the house looked warm and inviting. A red and white swing set sat off to one side of the fenced-in yard. The rest of the lawn was littered with various children's toys.

He wondered if she lived there, if the contents of the yard belonged to her children. Circling around the block, Tristan chose a driveway a couple of houses down and parked, waiting to see what would happen next. Whether she would knock or go straight in.

Tristan breathed a sigh of relief when Sara knocked on the front door. It wasn't her house. A rotund woman with steel-wool-colored hair came to the door, a welcoming smile on her round face, and let Sara in.

Who was the woman? Tristan knew she wasn't a relative. Like him, Sara was an orphan. Her mother committed suicide when Sara was five, leaving her to be raised in foster care.

Sara had only been inside a few minutes when she came out. She calmly walked down the sidewalk, toward her car. She wasn't who caught his attention though. A little boy clutched Sara's hand. Tristan couldn't tear his gaze away from the child. His entire world came to a crashing halt. He couldn't move. He couldn't fill his lungs.

He had a son.

Loup Garou

© 2006 Mandy M. Roth

Lindsay Willows craves a simple life. One where she can make a difference without drawing too much attention to herself. As the daughter of both a vampire and a fay, the cards were already stacked against her. Finding out she's the supposed mate of a dark fay prince doesn't help matters. Especially when there are those who will stop at nothing to prevent her from mating with a prince she's never even met.

When Exavier Kedmen, the incredibly sexy front man for a world-famous band, shows up wanting her to go back to a field she left three years ago, she can't explain the strong feelings that surface for a man she barely knows.

Lindsay finds herself confronting demons from her past, coming to terms with the ones in the present and finally looking forward to a future with the man she was created for. And she discovers evil doesn't care who it hurts to obtain its goals but even the vilest of things fear something, or in the case of Exavier, someone.

Enjoy the following excerpt for *Loup Garou*:

"Hey, who wouldn't want to see me gyrate on a pole?" I asked, sarcastically. "Doesn't everyone sit around waiting to see me make a fool of myself?"

Backing up fast, I slammed into something solid. A warmth laced with soothing power wrapped around me. My breath caught and for a moment, I could do little more than stare at Myra with wide eyes.

"We never have to wait long for you to make a fool of yourself." A slow smile spread over her cocoa-colored face. She winked and my brow furrowed.

Turning slowly, I found myself staring up into the blue eyes of one of the sexiest men I'd ever seen. He had to look down at me and that alone was enough to do it for me because at five-nine, I had trouble finding a man I could wear pumps with and not be taller than them. This stud was

about six-five so there was no way I'd end up taller than him. His tousled black hair hung to his strong chin, putting emphasis on the tiny dimple there.

I had difficulty tearing my gaze from his thick, corded neck and found my willpower only worsened as I dropped my eyes lower, tracing his broad chest displayed nicely in a snug navy T-shirt with a faint outline of a dragon on it. The thing looked like it had been worn several hundred times but I knew it was a designer piece instantly. The inner shopper in me applauded.

"Umm, sorry." As I went to move away from him, he took hold of my arm and sent fire shooting up it. My breath hitched as my inner thighs tightened.

What?

I stared at him, confused, horny, mesmerized.

He raked his blue gaze over me slowly, heating various portions of my already aroused body. "Lindsay?"

"Do I know you?"

Please say yes. Please say yes.

"Linds?"

I drew a blank and offered up a soft smile. "Again with the 'do I know you' because I really don't think I'd forget a body...err...face like yours."

A black brow went up as a sexy grin moved over his face. I got the feeling he was hiding something. If I wasn't so shocked and horny from his sheer presence, I'd have thought to question him more. As it stood, I was a little more concerned with begging him to have his way with me than anything else.

"I believe we have an appointment."

It took me a minute to register what he was saying. "Oh, you must be the guy from Loup Garou. Umm...?"

Myra leaned into me and whispered, "Exavier Kedmen." The way she said it made me think I was supposed to just know him by his name. As much as I wished that was the case, I didn't.

My eyes lingered on his sexy lips as I nodded. He tilted my chin upwards a bit, leaving me envisioning how it would be to kiss him. The

very idea of sliding my tongue over his lush lips made my heart beat faster.

“Did you catch what she said? My name is Exavier. Not Blair.”

Instantly, heat flared through my cheeks. “You heard that, huh?”

He nodded.

“Well, in my defense, I wasn’t staring at your abs when you told me your name. I was fixated on your mouth, Xavs.” The second I realized a shortened version of his name had popped out of my mouth, I shook my head. “Exavier, sorry.”

There was something so familiar about him. I kept staring, studying him for anything that would trigger a memory. Nothing came to me.

His lush lips curved upwards. I bit back a sigh.

He smiled. “I know I’m early but I was in the neighborhood and thought I’d stop in. I brought coffee.”

I perked up. “Coffee?”

Turning, he glanced towards one of the two circular tables in the lobby. A travel carrier full of large cups of what I prayed was French vanilla flavored coffee sat there. I bit my lower lip and whimpered. The man was a dream come true. Sexy and bearing caffeine.

“Lindsay?” Myra nudged me. “I think I smell vanilla.”

“Vanilla?” It took all I had not to moan.

Exavier nodded.

I stared up at him and did the only thing I could think of doing to a man who brought me coffee, I threw my arms around his neck and hugged him tight. Lifting me up and off the ground, he took me by surprise. I expected him to act stunned, not to play along.

Never one to want to lose the edge, I wrapped my legs around his waist and planted a kiss on his forehead. “Trust me when I say I won’t be calling you Blair any time soon.”

“Lindsay Marie Willows, what are you doing?” Myra asked, an edge to her voice said she was doing her best not to laugh even though she didn’t agree with my choice for displaying gratitude.

“Thanking the nice man for bringing me coffee.” I wagged my brows. “You know, I was just thinking about how coffee was right up there next to sex with things I’d rather be doing.”

Myra smiled. “You certainly are well on your way to fulfilling both things then, aren’t you?”

I glanced back at the coffee and then down at the man who held me as if I weighed nothing. Visions of licking coffee off his smooth, tawny skin came to mind. I sighed.

Myra laughed. “Oh, sweetie, I can see it in your eyes. No. It will burn him. That would be bad. Now, get down off the nice man before he presses charges.”

“Hey, I hugged him. He’s the one who picked me up.” I tapped his shoulder. “He’s also the one who is putting me down now.”

Exavier set me down but kept his hands on my hips. I did my best to appear anything but happy. I think I failed.

“Okay, where was I before he went and distracted me with his lips, dimpled chin, blue eyes, broad shoulders...”

Snorting, Myra shook her head. “Gee, anything else?”

“Yes, coffee.” I gave her the evil eye. “That was just low. I think you tipped him off I’d be less than receptive about meeting with him. You told him to come bearing something I can’t turn down.”

“What’s that? A great chin? Ask to see his obliques. I’m guessing they’re as perfect as the rest of him.” She winked at me and wiggled her hips in a sassy motion.

“Bite me,” I said, blowing kisses at her.

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