



Fortune's Favor

Author: *Tamrin Banks*

Category: Romance, Paranormal

Description: Alexander Fortune:

I'm on desk duty. Well, not really. My last undercover case turned into a huge mess and somebody ended up dead. And it's my fault. My captain refuses to let me work another case until I get my head on straight and my temper under control.

Until she shows up. Now he's all in on me helping Gypsy Devine find her stalker. But a psychic? No way do I believe in that. No matter how gorgeous she is or how much I want her, there's no way that somebody can tell the future. And I can't respect somebody, let alone feel anything else for somebody like that.

Gypsy Devine:

I need help. My dreams led me to the captain and he insisted that Alexander Fortune is my last best hope.

Considering that I know he doesn't believe in what I do, I'm not sure I trust him to really keep me safe. But I have to trust somebody.

Alex is gorgeous and snarky as heck. But he's good at what he does and I hope that he is because when I look for my future all I see is empty blackness.

Can the skeptic cop keep me safe? What happens if he does? Will he ever want to see me again?

Bite Club invites you into Fortune of the Heart, a world where seances stir the past and fortune-telling reveals the future — but love is the one thing no spirit or card can predict. In this collection of paranormal romances, destinies are crossed, fates are challenged, and every heart must decide whether to trust the unknown or forge a new future beyond the veil.

Total Pages (Source): 18

Page 1

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 7:43 pm

Chapter One

GYPSY

Dark night. Stars slowly turning until they sizzle into the nothingness of space. Echoing steps and fiery pain. Fear. So much fear.

My heart pounds in my chest, my breath panting out as I search the night around me. All I see is darkness. All I feel is fear. He's out there. I know it. I can feel the sickly sweet taste of him all around me. The air is thick with it.

Danger. Anger. Down to the bone anger that's driven him to this.

And it is a him. I know that too. I just don't know who he is. I can't see him.

My hand comes up to press against my shoulder and I close my eyes, fighting the blackness trying to creep up at the corners of my vision. Waves of pain wash over me and I grit my teeth, biting my lip to keep from moaning or screaming.

Because if he hears me. I'm dead. If he sees one single movement. I'm dead.

I hear a bush rustle off to my left and I freeze painfully, all the breath being sucked right out of my body.

He's still out there. Still looking. And if he finds me, I'm dead.

If he gets any closer, he'll see me hiding and that will be it for Gypsy Devine, psychic

extraordinaire.

I'm sure people will wonder how the hell a killer got the drop on a psychic. I know I've wondered that too. Why can't I see this guy? Why can't I figure out who he is and why the hell he's messing with me?

What the hell did I ever do to this guy to make him want me dead?

A car door slams and I fight the urge to run towards the sound. He'll be on me before I ever reach help that way. I've got no choice but to sit here and hope and pray that somebody up there loves me enough and I've done enough good in my life to not end up dead out here tonight. Alone.

I hear footsteps close by...slow, steady. A hunter stalking his prey, single-mindedly focused on killing. On ending me.

Loud rock music thumps in the clearing of the woods and headlights flood the area as teenagers jump out of what seems like a million vehicles and laugh and yell.

Muttered curses off to my left and then loud thrashing as he runs for the hills.

I take a deep breath, close my eyes and lean into the tree in front of me. My shoulders sag and that sets off the thumping pain in my injured shoulder. I press on it with my hand and wait for a few minutes until I hear another vehicle further off.

He's finally gone. I'm safe for another night.

But if he keeps coming and coming, I'm not going to be safe for long. I don't understand how this guy ducks my mind's eye but he keeps getting the drop on me. It's like he's a cut-out and there's no life there. He's a mannequin so I can't see him or feel him.

Can't sense his thoughts or desires or feelings at all. He's a literal black hole for everything that I can usually tell about people within seconds of meeting them.

It shouldn't be possible. I should be able to feel him out there. Sense him somehow.

But I can't. There's something wrong. And if I don't figure out what it is, I'm dead.

I like to think there's such a thing as ghosts but I'm not hanging my hopes on hanging out as a specter for the rest of my life.

I need help and there's only one man that I trust enough to get me through this.

My ex-stepfather. Captain Jeremiah Stone. The only cop that I've ever trusted enough to tell him the truth about my abilities.

The fact that he believed me without me having to prove a damn thing to him makes him a different kind of man than I'm used to.

A better man than any I've met before or since.

The best man for this job. He'll make sure I live and find out what's going on and I'll finally be able to get on with my life without the nightmares and the dread plaguing me every day of my life.

He's my last best hope.

Page 2

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 7:43 pm

“Gypsy! What the hell happened to you?” I lift my exhausted head and shoot him a half-smile.

“Wouldn’t you like to know, Pops?”

His stern lips twist and he glares at me. “Don’t get cute with me, young lady. You’re bleeding on my front porch.”

“Yeah. That kind of happens when somebody gets you with a knife.”

“Did you go to the fucking hospital, Gypsy?” He reaches out and wraps his arm around me and tears spring to my eyes. I forgot how much I missed his hugs.

He helps me inside and I shake my head. “No. I didn’t know if he’d look there.”

Another sharp look and he settles me on his couch, pushing me until I’m resting against the cushions.

“I’m gonna get blood on your couch.”

He snorts. “It’s seen worse than this. What have you managed to get yourself into, Gypsy girl?”

I close my eyes and fight the tears again. My mother and her constant stream of daddies made it hard for me to relax when I was growing up. But not with Jerry. He was always the exception to the rule and it broke my heart when their marriage broke up and she packed me up and moved me away from him. He was always my rock in

the twisted life I was forced into. The one I carried with me that very few people knew about.

I didn't even tell my mother. Although she claimed she was psychic and she scammed a helluva lot of people with that tall tale.

Little did she know her own daughter found her powers when she was thirteen! I sure as hell wasn't going to tell her about that. Lord knows what she'd have dragged me into to make money.

I opened my eyes and studied him as he pulled my sweater off my shoulder and winced. "You need stitches."

I shake my head. "I'm not going to a hospital. We both know you can stitch this little scrape up."

Rolling his eyes, he stands up and points a finger at me. "As soon as we get you fixed up, you're telling me what the hell is going on and we're gonna get this figured out."

"Yeah, Jerry. I know. That's why I came to you. I need help."

His smile doesn't slip. "I always knew you'd be back. It's good to see you, little one," he says softly.

"You too, Jerry. You too." And this time I don't even bother to hide the tears trailing down my cheek. I've missed the hell out of this man. He's the only dad I've ever known.

Hopefully we can figure this out before I end up dead in a ditch somewhere and never get to restart my life with him in it.

Chapter Two

ALEX

Frustration sizzles along my nerve endings as I take another stack of paperwork to transfer to another file.

I am sick to death of this shit. The Captain has had me digging through all these old records and digitizing them before filing them in the archives for weeks now. I know he thinks I've fucked up and I am a fuck up but this is ridiculous even for him.

He's a good boss but for some reason he thinks my last assignment where I worked with the feds to take down some human traffickers running around in our neck of the woods really messed me up.

I'm not messed up. I just don't like guys like that. And I sure as hell didn't like to see all those young girls being used like that. Drugged, dead to the world and raped.

Shivers run up and down my spine and I feel sick to my stomach yet again.

On that part he's right. I cannot seem to kick the pictures of those girls with the dead eyes, the strung-out look to them. The bodies ravaged by drugs and pain.

I close my eyes and fight the nausea coming up the back of my throat. When I open them, the Captain is standing in front of me, his eyes sharp and knowing.

"I need you to come into my office. Now," he says and turns on his heel.

Captain Jeremiah Stone is pretty damn observant and I don't like the sharp tone of his voice. If he thinks I need to be benched for psych reasons I'll be out of here so fast my head will spin.

Page 3

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 7:43 pm

Standing, I follow him into his office, jumping slightly when I see somebody else is in here with him.

A woman. A gorgeous woman with hazel eyes and blond curls down to her waist. She looks like an old painter's version of an angel. Ethereal and slightly unreal she's so perfect.

Those hazel eyes lift to mine and a jolt hits my chest. My hand lifts and I rub at it, trying to push whatever the hell this is down.

I don't do women that look like this. Don't get me wrong. I've been with women. Just not for awhile and maybe that's why I'm fighting the urge to grab this woman and throw her over my shoulder, striding out of the captain's office and out the door.

Once again, I don't do women. Especially not good girls and this woman looks like the very definition of a good girl. Although there's something ancient and knowing in her green and gold eyes, there's also something innocent that should leave me cold.

Good girls are nothing but trouble. I don't need that kind of trouble.

My eyes move to the captain and there's something in his eyes that tells me that I need to stop thinking about the girl's breasts and how the plump puppies would fill my hands. He looks like he would like to snap me in half right now.

I chance another look at the girl and I can't help but wonder if the old dog has a much younger girlfriend.

He growls and points at a chair. "Sit down. Now." Then he stalks over behind his desk and points at the other chair. "Sit down, Gypsy girl."

Without question, the young woman slips around the desk and sits down, her eyes cutting to me and then dropping.

Then the captain starts pacing back and forth. "I need a favor from you and if you agree, I'm gonna fast-track you getting back to work in homicide."

My brows lift. That's where I've wanted to work for the last six years but he kept passing me over and saying I wasn't ready. This has to be a huge favor if he's willing to overlook his own worries about whether I'm ready or not. But I don't question it at all.

"I'll do it."

He shoots me a glance, brows lifted. "Are you sure?"

"As sure as I can be considering that you haven't said what you need."

"I can't tell you anything until you agree and then nothing that I tell you goes out of this room." His dark eyes shoot over to the girl and she doesn't say anything but I see the way she nods slightly.

She trusts him. But although I look, I don't see anything that looks like heat. Neither of them looks like they're full of passion or love.

If anything, she trusts him and he has a fatherly look to him. Like he's trying to take care of her.

I nod my head and he says, "that's not good enough. I need you to answer me."

“I will do whatever this favor is that you need. Nothing leaves this room.”

“Good enough.” He goes back to pacing the room. Then he stops and puts his hands in his pockets. “So what do you know about psychics?”

My lip curls and I grunt, “I know that they’re all crooks. I’ve never met one real psychic.”

“Well, you have now.” He nods over to the girl and I groan, really wanting to drop this whole thing.

There’s no way in hell he can possibly think that this little slip of a girl is actually a real-life psychic.

I don’t know what she’s doing here but I know that whatever con she’s pulling, I’m gonna make sure that she’s outed before it’s all said and done.

I’m not letting her con the captain, no matter who she is to him.

Chapter Three

GYPSY

This guy is an ass. He doesn’t like me and I saw the way his lip curled when Jerry said that I am a psychic.

But Jerry just glares at him and then turns to smile at me. “It’s okay. He’s not as big an ass as he’s acting like.”

Page 4

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 7:43 pm

I don't think I believe him. I love him. But I don't think I believe him.

Iron Hills hasn't changed much since I left Wyoming with my mom. It's still a lonely, wild area. But at that time, Jerry was a beat cop and he was gone most nights.

That was one of the things that pissed my mom off. That and he didn't make nearly enough money for her. He had a nice, big house that he'd inherited from his parents when they died and my mom was under the impression that he had money.

And he was under the impression that she loved him. Both of them were wrong.

As soon as she found out he didn't have money, she was gone. But I stayed in contact with Jerry for a long time. He was my lode stone sometimes. He was the one who kept me sane in mom's craziness.

I like to think that I love her and I miss her but it's hard sometimes. Because she made my childhood a mess. That kind of thing is hard to forget. Not to mention that she took me from the one guy that I really loved and felt understood me.

Jerry knew my secret and he kept it all these years. Until now.

He sighs. "I know you don't believe it. But Gypsy's the real deal. I've known her for a long time and she's totally legit."

The guy doesn't say anything and I'm thankful because the look on his face says he's got a lot to say.

“I’m not sure about this, Jerry,” I start. He waves me off and the feeling in the pit of my stomach makes me want to pop a bunch of Tums.

The guy across from me is gorgeous. I mean in the dictionary he would be the guy whose picture was under “tall, dark and handsome.” Deep blue eyes like the sky at last light. Full, sensual lips which are currently so tight I’m surprised his mouth isn’t folded all the way in. Long, dark eyelashes which are a crime against women everywhere. We should all rise up and revolt at wearing mascara because of those eyelashes.

He’s tall and broad and yet lean, like a runner. When I look at him it’s like a physical punch to the chest but yet I can’t see a damn thing. Not his aura, not his future. Nothing. He’s like a blank page in a diary.

Jerry smirks at me and waves at the guy. “Gypsy Devine, this is Alexander Fortune.” I groan at the name but Jerry laughs. “I know. It’s perfect isn’t it?”

“That’s debatable, Jerry.”

“Anyway. Gypsy Devine is my stepdaughter....well, was my stepdaughter while I was briefly married to her mother a lifetime ago. Anyway, she and I stayed in touch after the divorce. Gypsy here showed up at my door last night and she’d been hurt.”

Stabbed. Yeah. It did fucking hurt.

“So go to the cops where you live.”

I glare at him and fight the urge to stick my tongue out at the bastard when Jerry glares back at him too. “Not an option, Fortune. She needs someone to watch over her twenty-four seven.”

“Who exactly are you watching out for? I mean, do you know who or what is messing with you and how?”

“I don’t know who he is.”

Satisfaction rises in his face and he smirks. “You’re not a very good psychic then, are you?”

Jerry nods at me and I sigh, grumbling, “I can’t see my own future anymore. It’s all black. Like a television set on the fritz.”

“Does that mean that you’ve got no future?”

“I-I honestly don’t know. It’s always sketchy for a psychic to see their own future but I can usually see something even if it’s just a flash. But right now? Nothing.”

“Okay. So you don’t have a clue what the hell is going on here.”

“I do not.”

“I take back what I said previously. You sound like a terrible psychic,” he scoffs.

“And you sound like a dick,” I growl back at him, fighting the urge to stick my tongue out.

Jerry sighs. “You two fight like little children. Could we keep this on track? I need you to watch out for Gypsy. And if you do I’ll give you what you’ve been fighting for for years. Despite my reservations.”

Alex doesn’t answer back but I can practically smell the rubber burning in the room while he’s considering his options.

Page 5

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 7:43 pm

“How was she hurt?”he asks. Like I’m not right there in the room and he can’t ask me a direct question.

I ignore him and Jerry groans. “Ugh. She was stabbed, alright.”

Alex rears back and frowns. “Stabbing requires getting closer to your victim than just shooting them would. It sounds like he’s definitely got a personal ax to grind with you. How many people have you pissed off with your fake hocus pocus routine?”

“I don’t tell anybody anything that isn’t the truth. Nothing about me is fake....especially my predictions.”

“I find that hard to believe.”

“Enough!” The captain roars. I jump and then narrow my eyes at him. He shoots me an apologetic smile. More of a grimace really.

“You agreed to this.” He points at the asshole across from me. “You can’t back out now or I swear to god I’m going to toss your ass out of this department and blackball you everywhere on the west coast. And you,” he points at me. “You need more help than I can give you, honey. So you’re gonna cooperate and we’ll have you all taken care of in no time. And then we can spend some time together. I’ve missed you and I don’t want anything to happen to you. I want you safe.”

My heart melts and I fight those damn tears again. Nodding my head, I glare at the guy across the desk.

“Fine,” he snaps.

I don’t know how I feel about being protected by a guy that looks like he’d rather feed me to the lions but if the Chief trusts him, I guess I will too.

I really have no choice at this point. He’s all I’ve got. “Fine,” I mutter.

Chapter Four

ALEX

Why am I doing this again? Oh yeah. Because I want to be a detective.

I walk next to her, alone for the time being. “So can you tell me anything about this guy? You said you were attacked with a knife. He had to be close to you. What did you see or feel?”

Her blond brow lifts and she says, “Pain. I felt pain.”

Groaning under my breath, I mutter, “Yes, yes. But what did you see?” Irritation fights with the urge to hug her. Which is crazy. I don’t know this woman. I don’t even like her. I mean, she’s claiming something that I know doesn’t exist except for con artists. I should hate her guts. She’s everything I loathe, thanks to my childhood.

My mother believed everything she was told by those people and kept coming back for more. Trying to talk to my dad.

After he died, she spent every damn dime we had going to so-called psychics and fortune tellers for just one minute of talking to him. She couldn’t function without him. I’d like to say she loved him so desperately but I honestly think she just wanted to yell at him for leaving her.

Their marriage was not a little slice of heaven. It was a mess. A constant litany of nagging and fighting that gave me a gooddamn reason to spend as much time as possible away from home. I found more places in this town to hide than anybody I knew.

Until I met the chief when he was investigating one of mom's "psychic friends network" people.

I push those memories way down. I've had enough time to let the memories go. So if I want my career to move forward, then I need to push my innate suspicions way the hell down. And keep from popping off at Gypsy.

Gypsy? What the hell kind of name is Gypsy?

We reach the house that I own that's very close to where I work. Nodding at it, I sigh, "Well, here we are."

"Where are we?" She stops on the sidewalk and taps her foot, crossing her arms in front of her chest. Her head tips to the side and her hazel eyes narrow into golden-green laser beams.

"This is my place. Where you're going to be staying for awhile."

"Oh hell no! I'm not staying with you."

Smirking, I say, "How exactly am I supposed to watch you twenty-four seven if you're not staying with me?"

"I don't know. But this doesn't work for me at all. I'm already aware that you don't like me and I'm supposed to give my safety up to you? But not to even get a break from your smarmy face....? I don't like it."

“Too bad, sweetheart. The Chief knows darn well that I’m your best chance at staying alive and finding out who the hell wants you dead. Don’t you trust him?”

Page 6

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 7:43 pm

She points a finger at me and stabs me in the chest. I grab her finger and it's like fire burning from that tiny little point of contact all the way down to my cock.

She jerks back and holds her hand to her chest, her cheeks flushed and her eyes lowered. "Uh-ummm. Of course I trust Jerry. You're the one that has issues with what I do."

Anger flares and I grit my teeth. "You wanna know why that is, sweetheart? Because your kind conned my mother endlessly out of every last dime my father left her when he died." I stalk back and forth on the sidewalk in front of my little house, tearing at my hair. "Do you know what it's like to watch every bit of stability you've got in the world get pissed into the wind by the woman who's supposed to take care of you? I do. I know it very well. There were so many nights that I went to bed hungry and listened to her out in the living room with some con telling her a bunch of bullshit about my dad. But she ate it up. Because it gave her the chance to keep fighting with him instead of actually living for me and herself!" My voice gets louder and louder until I'm practically hollering at her.

But she stands there, her hand still clenched protectively around the finger I touched. "I do know exactly what you mean. Because I had the same thing with my own mom."

My brow lifts and I eye her suspiciously. "You're trying to tell me that your mom was conned out of money by psychics when you are a psychic?"

Shaking her head, I see her full lips quiver and my heart sinks. "No. What my mom did was follow her heart endlessly. No matter whether she should or shouldn't. She

married five times and each man supposedly loved her. But they really didn't. She worked her ass off at first taking care of them and me and then it just started to fall more and more to taking care of them because she didn't want to make them mad and then have them leave her. That was the worst thing in the world to her." She turns away and walks up to the sidewalk up to my door. "I didn't think it was the worst thing in the world. Mine was always being left out of everything. I was her only child, her only daughter and yet she didn't have time for me. She was too wrapped up in meeting and marrying the next mister right to even notice me half the time."

And now I can't stop thinking about some little girl sitting in a corner, forgotten, while her mom makes dinner and acts like the perfect wife for each husband. Fury builds up and I have to clamp my lips shut to keep from telling her that she deserved better. I know she did. Just like I did.

I wish I believed that that little girl knew she did. Maybe that's why she's convinced herself that she's psychic. Because it helps to push aside some of that pain from her childhood. She's more than just a sad little girl.

She's special.

"Come on. Let's go inside and we'll work this out. Don't worry. I've got this."

If she suffered in her childhood and that's why she's imagining what she is...well, I can't really blame her.

Sometimes it sucks to be a kid.

But as I watch her soft, rounded hips sway up the sidewalk, I can't stop my dick from getting fucking rock hard.

Her ass has to be about the best I've ever seen. Full, round and firm. Just right to take

a bite out of while I fuck her from behind.

I grind my teeth and swear under my breath. I need to lock that shit down.

Neither one of us have the time or inclination to just delve into the raw hunger that I feel around her.

She's the kind of girl you keep and marry. The kind you take home to mom and dad even if she is crazy for believing she's psychic.

She's not the fuck 'em and leave 'em type. So I'm gonna have to keep my aching dick in my pants and help her and the Chief and then as soon as this is all over, find a willing woman and fuck her into next week and hope that that works.

I don't want a wife. This girl has forever written all over her. She's not for me.

Chapter Five

GYPSY

Hissing breaths come from the dark. A slight rustle that makes my skin crawl. Something furtive whispers in the night and I close my eyes, praying.

Something crawls on the ground and then dry, raspy skin touches my ankle. I bite my lip to keep from screaming. "Wh-what are you?"

"Don't you recognissse me, my love," it hisses. "I'm your faithful husband come back to find you. I'm sure you've missssed me as much as I've missssed you."

My eyes widen as a huge, dark green snake with glistening scales slithers across my foot and then wraps itself around my ankle. I can't breathe. His dry body wraps

around me and I can feel his scales sliding along my bare skin, the edges catching on my skin roughly.

Shaking and whimpering, I fight to keep my eyes open. “It’s only a dream. It’s only a dream,” I keep repeating the words desperately. It’s a nightmare. Not a dream. But it’s not real. None of it.

There is no giant snake speaking to me as it wraps around me. It’s not real. It’s not real.

But his hooded head comes up to peer at me and I can see myself reflected in his eyes, terror on my face. “My bride. I have been waiting and waiting for you to be reborn so that we can be together. The gods that tore you from me cannot keep us apart any longer. I cannot wait until my lips touch yours.”

His hood comes up behind him, huge and dark in the mists around us. His huge mouth opens and his long, white fangs glisten in the light, poison dripping off of them. I can feel the steel coils of his cool, raspy scales tightening and my breath stutters in my chest.

“Mine,” he hisses and then his head drops and he’s heading right for me, his mouth open and his reptilian eyes glowing in the dim light.

Page 7

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 7:43 pm

“Noooo! Stay away! Get away from me!”

“Jesus! Wake up, Gypsy! Wake up!”

Thrashing and fighting, I wince when my eyes open to bright light and my fist hits something solid.

“Shit!” He grunts and holds his side. “Jesus, woman! What the hell was that?”

“A dream,” I pant. “It must be just a dream. It’s not here. It doesn’t exist,” I babble, terror bubbling up inside me like hot lava.

“What the hell are you talking about, woman? Wake up!”

My eyes finally focus and I sigh, deep and hard when I realize that I’m here in his house. Alone in a bedroom that he told me I could use.

A bedroom without a snake. At least I think so. I jerk up to stand in the bed, whimpering, my terrified eyes searching the covers after I kick them off the bed.

“Is it here? Where is it?” I whisper. “It c-can’t be real. NO. No way.”

“What are you babbling about, Gypsy? What’s not real?” But I climb up on top of the bed frame, jerking my feet up, my eyes flying back and forth.

“Gypsy,” he says gently. “What’s wrong? What’s going on, honey?”

I can't stop shaking and the bed frame wobbles around me where I'm wrapped around one of the four-poster bed frames. "H-he was here. I felt him. He was here."

He growls and pulls his gun out of the waistband of his black silk pajama bottoms. "Where? Where is he? Do you know who he is?"

"Python. His name is Python."

Alex's brow crinkles. "Is that a nickname or something?"

"No. That's his real name. His name from the beginning of time has always been Python."

My voice is low, controlled. But I can't quit shaking and my ears are peeled for that hissing, raspy voice.

"He said I'm his. I'm his bride. The gods stole me from him. He's been searching for me forever and now he's found me. He's come for me."

Tears stream down my face and Alex shoots me a befuddled look. "I don't get what you're talking about, Gypsy. You're not making sense. But it sounds like you just had a horrible nightmare."

"He had me wrapped up and I couldn't get away." I close my eyes and shudder. "I could feel his scales sliding across my skin. His scales were so rough and cool. He lunged for me with his mouth wide open and his fangs gleaming..."

"What the hell, Gypsy? It was a dream. Just a horrible nightmare of a dream. None of it was real."

"Are you sure?" I ask, my eyes opening, meeting his. He looks so calm. His dark blue

eyes were sharp and steely.

“I promise you. There was nothing in this room with you. Calm down, sweetheart. You can sleep with me for the rest of the night.”

He holds out his hand and I hesitate briefly before I hold out a shaking hand and reach for him, letting him gently peel me off the post.

“Come on, sweetheart. I’ve got you.” I shake my head and he sighs. “Will you feel better if I check the room?”

I nod and he pushes me gently out the door, his hand firm in my back. “Go ahead out. I’ll look around. Don’t worry. I’ll be fine and so will you. I’ve got this.”

I let him push me out the door and close it gently behind me. Then I wrap my arms around myself and shudder, my eyes searching the shadows.

Whatever that thing was, I don’t think it was just a dream. I think Python was my worst nightmare come to life.

I absolutely hate snakes. Especially giant, talking ones that won’t leave me alone. That think that I’m theirs.

Leaning against the wall, I suck in air and desperately try to convince myself that it’s all going to be okay.

Page 8

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 7:43 pm

But if my future lies with a giant python, I think I'd rather be dead.

Chapter Six

ALEX

As soon as I push Gypsy out of the room, I lean against the wall and run my fingers through my hair. Taking a deep breath, I sag lower, my heart still racing. She scared the holy hell out of me. I thought somebody got into my house and was trying to kill her.

I have a fantastic security system. Top of the line so I'm not sure how the hell that would happen without me knowing. But I guess anything is possible.

The next question would have to be about Gypsy herself. The way she was babbling, it almost sounded like she was on drugs. Did she say there was a giant python trying to kill her? That sounds like she's either insane or on drugs!

Or it's a metaphor but I have no idea what that might be a metaphor for.

I bend down and start picking up the bedcovers. They're lying helter-skelter all over the hardwood floor and I sigh. She made a mess out of this room but I guess if you're having nightmares about a giant snake trying to devour you whole you might be excused for losing your mind and tearing shit up.

The sheets are pulled off the bed and tangled and I quickly start working my hands around and remaking the damn thing. My OCD would make me lose my mind if I let

this shit liearound. So after smoothing the fitted sheet, I add the top sheet and start tucking it in carefully, even going so far as to crawl under the bed and tug at the corners to fit it tight.

An old army trick. I like my bed like I like my hair usually. High and tight.

Huffing, I tug and stretch until you could bounce a quarter off that bitch. Then I start to slide out but as I do, something gleams in the dark and catches my eye. I reach out and touch it, sure that it's probably just some bit of fluff or something. Just not sure why it's almost glowing in the dark.

But after sliding out from under the bed, I hold the thing up and chills creep over my skin, a strange buzzing in my ears.

Because what I'm looking at looks a helluva lot like a snake scale but it's huge. Easily the size of my fist. And it's glowing with green energy, practically throbbing. I can feel something evil slithering inside me and I drop it like it's burning hot.

Immediately it bursts into flames before it hits the floor but sparks settle onto the floor, burning merrily until I stomp them out with my bare foot, hissing with pain.

What the fuck was that? It looked like a huge, and I mean huge, snake scale. Like one that a gigantic python would have. But that's not possible. There are no snakes that big. Not on this planet.

And what the hell would it be doing in my house? Or any house?

Blowing out a breath and staring at the floor, I can't seem to wrap my head around what's happening right now. Because if I do, I have to admit that there's something strange going on here and that Gypsy might not be as big a con as I think she is.

Shaking my head, I pick up the rest of the blankets and toss them on the bed, not even bothering to look any further. If there's something else in here, I'm not sure I want to know about it.

But I do search the closet and all around the room in the dark corners. There's nothing else hiding in there so I can thankfully tell Gypsy that with a clear conscience.

But I don't know if I can tell her about that.....thing on the ground under the bed.

Because if I do, she might run and I am starting to get the idea that there's nowhere she can hide and she needs me a helluva lot more than even the captain thought she did.

I don't believe in supernatural or psychics. Maybe that will help or hinder me.

But I'm starting to think I might be wrong and if I am, Gypsy is in a lot of trouble.

I don't know anything about giant snakes so that's my next investigation. But in the meantime, I need some sleep. And it seems like she needs to be with me so I'm going to have to deal with this strange...attraction that I feel for her sooner rather than later.

I don't want a woman. Certainly not this woman.

But she can't be alone. Not while....nope! Not going there. I'll leave that for morning.

Where I can hopefully find some kind of explanation for what I just saw that isn't a giant, dream-invading python that sheds his scales in a girl's bedroom even though he's not there.

Or is he? Fuck, I've got a headache that won't quit and I think it's from trying to think this through.

Because none of it makes sense. Supernatural stuff doesn't exist. I just have to keep telling myself that. Or I think I'll go as mad as she sounded.

Chapter Seven

Page 9

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 7:43 pm

GYPSY

I trail after him, still out of breath and so damn creeped out it's not funny.

Snakes! Ugh! I hate snakes. Always have and always will.

Maybe that's why I saw that...whatever that was. I'm trying to put a face to my attacker in my dreams and it's my worst fear.

A snake. A cobra actually. With a giant hood that towered over me.

Shuddering, I wrap my arms tighter around my middle. I just don't want to think about the dream.

I wish I'd brought my tarot cards with me. I like to use them sometimes when things aren't making sense. This is definitely not making any kind of sense.

A giant snake. Called Python?

My brow creases as Alex nods at the bed. "You go ahead and get settled. I've got to go to the bathroom. Then we can both hopefully get some sleep. So far this has to be the longest night of my life," he huffs.

Wincing, I smile slightly. "I'm so sorry that I woke you up. I mean, I know it was just a dream. I shouldn't have been screaming and messing with your sleep schedule."

"How exactly can you stop yourself from acting a certain way when you're

dreaming?” he snarks but there’s a little quirk to his firm lips that lets me know that he’s not seriously mad.

“I don’t know. But you’d think I’d have more control than that! I mean I’ve seen a lot over the years.”

“Did you find anything in there?”

He pauses and his pretty blue eyes dart to the side of the room. Like he can’t look me in the eyes. My chest tightens and I gulp harshly.

“No, I didn’t.”

But I can hear it in his voice. He saw something. He just doesn’t want to tell me.

I’m not sure if I want him to or not.

Instead I climb into his bed and curl up facing the opposite wall, closing my eyes, my heart still pounding.

I can still feel that dry, slithering skin rough across my own skin. But it was so strange. I mean, it would have to be. It was a huge talking snake.

But the other thing is that he wasn’t speaking English. I don’t know what the hell he was speaking but I could understand him. I don’t know any other languages. I don’t even know what that...thing was speaking.

So how did I understand it? He said I was his wife. His mate? But that’s crazy! Right?

But some people believe in reincarnation. Could I have lived another life? What

would that be like? Did I even believe in that?

The short answer is...yes, I do. Maybe because I'm psychic so I know that sometimes things that seem strange are actually true. Maybe I can picture it better because of that.

I hear the light from the bathroom click off and then the sheets rustle and the bed dips behind me. Warmth encircles my backside and I take a deep breath.

I can feel him sitting there, breathing quietly in the dark. He moves and I can feel it all the way to my core. My whole body heats up and I gulp a swallow, feeling a tingling in my toes as they brush against his silk-clad leg. I jerk my toes back quickly.

His breath huffs out and then he sighs. "So what did that thing look like?"

"Big and green, kinda glowing." Shuddering, I fight to keep the nausea from welling up in my throat.

"Anything else that you've remembered since you're good and awake now?"

I turn over and he's lying there, his dark blue eyes shining in the dim light of the moon coming through the windows. "You're gonna think I'm crazy."

He snorts. "I didn't say you were crazy when you were talking about a giant snake! What else could you tell me that's crazier than that?"

Page 10

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 7:43 pm

“He wasn’t speaking English.”

His dark brows crinkle. “The snake?”

“Yeah. He was speaking another language. And I understood him.”

“What languages do you know? Maybe that will give us a clue about your giant nighttime visitor.”

“I don’t know any languages except English.”

He sits up and I fight to keep from staring at the bare expanse of his broad, tanned chest. Light furring defines his thick muscles and I swallow roughly.

“How is that possible? You said you understood exactly what he was saying?”

“I did. But it was strange. I’d never heard that language before and I still don’t even know what it was.” I stop talking for a minute, thinking.

No, it can’t be.

“What? What are you thinking? Something just came to you. What is it?”

“Ummm. The guy? The guy who stabbed me? I didn’t understand what he said but whatever it was, it was in that language. I can still hear it in my head. But I didn’t understand him. Not at all. How can I understand the...snake? But not the guy? What was different?”

“You were dreaming. You were asleep. So your unconscious understood what he was saying but your conscious mind has no idea what the suspect was saying. Interesting.”

Hesitating, I sit up. “I wonder...do you believe in reincarnation?”

He groans. “Ugh, Gypsy. I’ve told you that I have a problem with psychics. I have a problem with all kinds of supernatural things. Not just you. All of them. I don’t believe in any of that.” There’s a strange look on his face when he says it though and I have a feeling that he’s hiding something.

Again.

But if nothing else I’ve given him something to think about. If only I wasn’t so tired tonight.

My eyes close and finally, finally I feel sleep tugging at me, blackness overwhelming me.

With a sigh, I finally let it all go and drift off, feeling more safe than I think I ever have in my life.

Chapter Eight

ALEX

Pale light sneaks under the curtains in my bedroom and I groan silently. My whole body feels like I’ve gone ten rounds with Sugar Ray.

I want to close my eyes again and sleep some more but as soon as I do, a couple of things pop up in my head.

One...the weird snake scale last night that caught on fire and looked exactly like what Gypsy described.

Two...a soft body curved into me, puffing breaths in my ear and a scent that makes my dick hard as a rock.

Three...my dick is aching, throbbing to be inside Gypsy. And she's lying here in bed with me. So damn close that I can taste her scent on my tongue. Feel the silkiness of her skin underneath me and see her lush body pressed into me so closely that I'm two seconds away from pushing over top of her and slamming home.

Which would be rude, right?

But when her eyes open and she's staring into my face, her golden-green eyes luminous with desire, I can't help myself. I'm only fucking human.

My lips drift down to hers and then lock on and everything else in this damn room fades away to nothing. I don't give a damn about the snake, the dream, the guy who assaulted her. I don't give a shit about any of it. I just want her.

Her lips move and I suck in a breath, stunned. Fresh, sweet berries and cream. No woman should taste that good. My hips move closer to her and my hands slip into her hair, holding her head tight so that my lips can devour her sweet taste. My cock jerks and I hear and feel her sharp, in-drawn gasp and then I feel her hips jerk, pushing against mine and it's everything I never thought I'd want.

"Alex," she groans and I feel the insane urge to roll her under me, line up with her slit and push my aching dick home.

Page 11

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 7:43 pm

I lift my head and the stars glow in her eyes just for me. She wants me. And I want her more than I ever thought it was possible to want a woman.

“Gypsy,” I growl and my hand slips down between our bodies. My fingers push her panties aside and the slick heat of her burns away every damn brain cell I have left. I shouldn’t do this.

But I need her. My whole body is on fire and my soul feels like a man begging to slake his thirst in the desert. I’m a desperate, crazy man. All for her.

My hand slips inside her swollen petals and she groans under her breath, her head falling back and her eyes drifting shut. “Alex?”

“You’re so wet, baby. So hot and wet.” My fingers find her little button of nerves and I grind my thumb down hard, making her jerk and she groans. “Oh my god, don’t stop.” As if. I couldn’t stop this if I tried.

But I need more. My restless body slides down the bed and I tug and pull at her clothes, ripping them off of her until my head is buried between her thick, rounded thighs. The sweet scent of her arousal dances in the air and my mouth closes on her weeping slit. I moan at the deliciously tempting taste of her on my tongue.

“Manna from heaven,” I hiss, breathing through my nose as I run my tongue and teeth over every inch of her luscious pussy, drinking her juices deep until she’s writhing on my face, her hands tangled in my hair and tugging hard, like I’m the only steady thing in her world right now.

“Fuck, Gypsy. I need more. I need it all.” My finger traces the pretty pink petals of her hole and my tongue drags up her slit, lapping at the juices dripping into my needy mouth.

Bearing down hard, I eat her out like she’s my last meal and she’s the only thing standing between me and starvation.

Because she is. Her slick juices drip down my throat and my whole soul finally feels alive for the first time in my life. This woman. This woman is the one that’s meant to be mine. I don’t care what the hell she does. I don’t care if she’s a witch sent to steal my soul and destroy me. I’ll gladly take whatever’s she’s dishing out. As long as she lets me find myself between her thighs every damn night of my life.

Attacking her, I lap and twist my fingers inside her, filling her. My hand pushes into her belly as I take all of her that I can, my tongue fucking her relentlessly, feeling her tight, wet pussy fluttering around it.

With a shriek like a siren’s song, she falls apart on my mouth and I drink down each fluttering pulse, draining her dry. Pushing harder and harder until she goes rigid and screams again, her back bowed off the bed and her limbs taut, her lush body flushed with her release.

Then she falls to the bed and unlike any other time in my life, I don’t immediately jump her.

I pet her hair and tuck her into my side, enjoying the soft, pliant feel of her body in my arms and smiling so hard I’m amazed my lips don’t crack.

She finally comes up for air and her eyes open wide when she feels my thick length stir against her belly. “Don’t you need to...?”

Shaking my head, I kiss her gently. “We’ve got time. Just relax for a minute or two.”

Her body slowly goes limp and I feel the exact moment she finally relaxes wholly.

And then my fucking phone rings and I sit up, groaning, as I reach for it, swearing when I see who it is.

“I need to take this, sweetheart. Why don’t you go take a shower? I have a feeling this might be the quietest part of the day today. Get some rest while you can.”

I jump out of the bed and stalk out into the living room and then out onto my back porch, closing all the doors behind me. This conversation is gonna be a doozy. I don’t want her to accidentally overhear it.

If I think it’s as crazy as it sounds, what the hell is the Chief going to think?

Time to find out.

“I need to talk to you about something. Please don’t send for a doctor until I’m all done. Because this is going to sound fucking crazy as hell.”

“Okay,” he says. “Tell me what’s going on.”

“Here goes.”

Chapter Nine

GYPSY

There’s a smile on my face and it feels like it’s permanently painted on. Alex Fortune

ate me out. What's more....he seemed to enjoy it. I mean I've had oral before but nobody but nobody ever made me feel as good as he did.

I slip to my feet and grab my panties, slipping them back on. Then I open the door and meander into the living room, not really surprised to see that it's broad daylight. I mean, it's early in the morning but not that early.

I can't believe I slept in after that terrifying nightmare. After that, I didn't believe I'd ever fall asleep.

Page 12

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 7:43 pm

Until I curled up with Alex. Then the warm, masculine scent of him tickled my senses and before you knew it, I was sound asleep.

He's done it again. I can't believe how relaxed and happy I feel right now!

But as I get closer to the door, I can hear him talking and it sounds bad.

Like real bad.

"What the hell do you mean she had a nightmare about a snake, a giant snake at that, but that it was really there?"

"I was in that bedroom this morning before I went back to bed. I saw what that room looks like. I saw that scale under the bed. It was fucking as big as my hand and it glowed green. Whatever that thing was...and believe you me, I don't like to think what I'm thinking, I think it was there. I think it attacked her while she was sleeping. What's more she said that it didn't speak English but that she understood it even though she doesn't know any other languages! There's just no way that's possible. Is it?"

There's a sigh through the phone and then Jerry sighs. "Yeah, it's possible. Anything's possible."

I see Alex's head shake and he growls, "I don't believe in supernatural. I'm a cop. I believe in what I can see. In what I can feel around me. I don't believe in psychics and giant snakes, dammit!"

“I didn’t either. Until I saw Gypsy at work. Her mother was one that faked being psychic. When it came out what Gypsy was, she tried her best to figure out how to use her own daughter in the best way for her. And she didn’t care if Gypsy got hurt in the process. All she cared about was making a buck and having just as much control of her daughter as she could. I swear sometimes I think she was jealous of Gypsy because she wanted what Gypsy had. The power. It all meant something to her. It didn’t mean a damn thing to Gypsy. All she wanted was someone to love her.”

“I don’t know how I feel about all this. But I can tell you that I care about her. A lot.”

“Then you’ll figure out what to do. But until you do, I have a friend. A white witch. I’ll send her out there to you. She usually doesn’t do house calls but this circumstance calls for one if nothing else does. You need familiar surroundings. Strong ones that carry your vibrations.”

My brow lifts when I hear the Chief’s words. I didn’t realize I had made such an impression on him that he’d met other supernaturals.

“She’ll be there in half an hour. There’s a lot to go over. I’ll come over too and we’ll see where we are with this thing. If it was just some crazed nutter I’d let you deal with this yourself, but this is different. And I think you’re going to need all the help you can get.”

I turn back to the bedroom, my heart pounding when I think about that scale. I’m not sure that any help is going to get me out of this without some damage.

I don’t just mean to my body now. I think my heart is in just as much danger.

Chapter Ten

GYPSY

The doorbell rings and I jump. Alex looks over at me, his brow lifted. “It’s just the Chief to go over a few things with us. Don’t worry, sweetheart.”

That’s easy for him to say. He doesn’t have a nine-foot snake convinced that he’s the thing’s wife!

“Hello, Gypsy,” my step-dad says and then he hugs me lightly. “How are you doing, honey?”

“I’ve been better.”

“Okay. Well, we’ve got some information and that may cause you to rethink everything you know. But it’s interesting.”

The Chief comes inside, his salt and pepper hair curling lightly on his distinguished head in the sultry heat of the day.

But the person behind him is what gives me pause. Her long hair is braided in a bunch of little twists and she’s wearing a soft white caftan. Her smile is as radiant as the sun and her pale gold cheeks are pink with pleasure.

And her eyes are on the Chief.

Hmmm. What is going on there?

The door closes behind them and the tiny woman smiles at me gently. “I see her around you now. That’s what he’s come for. Her. And she wants to go to him. She loves him.”

My eyes widen and I stare over at Alex and Jerry. “What are you talking about?”

“That’s why you could understand him when you were asleep. She took over. She would willingly go to him but she’s trapped right now with you.”

“She doesn’t need to be. She’s free to go and get her groove on with him. I don’t care.”

Page 13

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 7:43 pm

“Of course you don’t. You didn’t even know she existed.”

“Why is that? You’d think that if there was a dead human being stirring around me, I’d be able to feel them. I’m a psychic, for god’s sake.”

“Yes. Yes you are. But she’s an old soul and she’s very good at hiding.” She stops and her pale blue eyes narrow and then she nods.

“Yeah, she wants to go.”

“So tell her that I’m fine and I’d appreciate it if she’d just let me go, then let herself find whatever it is she needs.”

Then I pull up short, my eyes wide, panicked. “What happens to me if she leaves me?”

“You’ll be fine. I’ll stabilize you when it all happens so that you’re safe.”

“How are you going to call a snake demon out?”

She shakes her pale blond head. “Oh, he’s not a snake demon. He’s a god. Named Python. He was in Greek and Roman mythology. The priestess at Delphi was always his wife. The one that foretold the future on her throne over the hole at Delphi.”

“He’s a God. And he’s married to a priestess. I don’t remember anything like that.”

“Trust me. Now this is going to be tricky. You’re going to need to pretend to want to

see him tonight. We'll hold a seance. And when it all starts and he appears for his bride, I'm going to hold onto you and separate her from you. Giving you both what you want. You don't want to be dead and away from the living and she does. We're going to give everyone what they want. But fair warning...". Her face tightens. "Don't think this is going to be easy. He wants it all. You and her. Both of you together have much more power. He wants those powers. So we're gonna have to be really careful."

"How are you going to keep that from happening?" I ask nervously.

"You two are." She points at me and Alex. "You're going to have to be stronger than ever before."

"And he's going to have to hold onto what he wants. You. His love."

I snort. "Ummm. I think you're getting mixed signals."

She just shakes her head sadly. "You're so good at reading other people but for yourself? You're too blind to see what's glaringly evident in front of you. Humans. So sad."

Huffing, she walks into the kitchen and the attached open dining room. "This is where we'll bait and set the trap. And it will work out perfectly. As long as you focus on each other and nothing else. I will take care of the rest of it."

Alex looks over at me and this time I see something in his deep indigo eyes that I've never seen before. I just can't tell what it is.

And I don't think I'm ready to say for sure. It's more dangerous than any snake God out there.

And it may be the end of me.

Chapter Eleven

ALEX

Pacing the room, I watch the shadows building outside. A storm is moving in and the clouds scuttle fast and furious, dark and boiling.

The white witch hums to herself, lighting a candle at the table and putting a dark black crystal alongside it. And then she adds more dark crystals and some pale pink ones. She smiles when she sees me looking.

“Obsidian and rose quartz. Protection and love. They’ll help along with some others to pull her free and help her transition.” She comes closer. I jump a little bit. The Chief said her name is Artemis but he called her Art. And she flushed when he did and bit her lip. I’d hazard a guess that these two know each other a lot better than they’re letting on.

She reaches out a pale hand and when I hold my own out she slips something inside it. A red and a black stone. Each one of them sits glowing in my palm and I stare at them, unsure what she wants. “The black stone is obsidian and it will protect you. It’s a strong barrier to obstacles. The other is garnet. Passion. That passion will hold her to you no matter what he tries. So hold on tight to them and her and don’t lose sight of them no matter what happens.”

I nod my head slowly, not really sure what the hell is going on. But she turns to Gypsy and offers her two stones as well. But one is a shimmering gray and one is a black. “Labradorite for resilience and courage and intuition. And onyx for focus, awareness and self-control. You need to keep your wits around you no matter what he does. Keep strong.” Her hands reach out to both of us and she grabs them, holding

tight. “It’s almost time. I would wait until three in the morning which would make my magic stronger but it will also make him stronger so I don’t think that’s a wise idea.”

She nods to the table and we both sit down. Artemis looks at Gypsy and smiles. “Give me one hand and keep your other clasped with Alex, both of you holding the stones in your entwined hands. It will make it harder for him to pull them away from you.”

I nod my head and hold on tight to hers at the table, frowning when I feel heat and fire burning up my palms and all the way up my arms. But nobody else flinches so I sigh and settle back. The Chief steps away from the table. “I’ll be here if you need me but I think this has to be you three. The power of three is strongest.”

Frowning, I can’t quite believe his words. How does he know that? What the hell else is the chief hiding?

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 7:43 pm

“Do you have the onyx necklace that I gave you on?” She asks him and he nods slowly. “Good. There is something else you must do. You’ll know it when you see it but don’t let it disturb us or we might lose focus and that would be deadly for Gypsy.”

He nods and stations himself by the table, his arms crossed over his chest.

Artemis grins and then she sighs, her eyes closing. A chill creeps through the room and the shadows become darker, deeper, deadlier. A soft hissing, raspy sound comes out of that darkness and I feel Gypsy tense but she doesn’t let go of me and I hold her hand tighter, focusing all my strength on her. She relaxes but I can still feel her fear and Artemis says, “Let go of it or she can’t find her way out to him, Gypsy. She needs a strong conduit. And you do too or you’ll be sucked into this as well.”

She nods her head and then relaxes even more. I feel her hand soften in mine but I just grip it tighter.

Artemis holds mine tighter and then she sighs. “You’ve come to the wrong vessel, Priestess. You’re supposed to be at peace with your lover in heaven. Up high on Olympus with the Gods and your lover.”

A soft, wavering glow builds up in Gypsy’s hand and then it rises until it’s above her head. A woman’s form comes into focus behind her, wearing a long white gown and with coils of dark hair and smudged eyeliner around her black eyes. “Where is he then? I’ve searched for him so long. That’s why I took this vessel. So I could finally find him and make him mine. For all eternity. We’ve been apart too long.” Sorrow tinges her words and tears run down her pale cheeks. “Help me find him.”

A sobbing gasp comes from Gypsy and I tug at her fingers, fear rising. Something's coming. I feel it.

Something slithers behind Gypsy's chair and I almost cringe. I'm not a fan of snakes and the one rising behind her is enormous. Easily nine feet tall. Gypsy's cheeks are pale and her eyes are open, staring into nothingness.

I want to scream at Artemis to stop. Something's wrong!

But the Chief is here and he's watching and saying nothing. So maybe I'm over-reacting.

The sliding glass door bangs and then breaks and the winds outside pour inside. Leaves and broken branches litter the floor and the air all around us. Artemis and Gypsy's long hair twirls around their heads and the cobra opens its hood behind Gypsy, its red-rimmed eyes fixed on her slender body. I can feel some kind of pull that has her hand loosening.

"Get away from her, you freak," I growl, holding the gems and her hand tightly. I can feel the raw stones cutting into my palms and I'm probably bleeding but I don't give a damn.

The cobra hisses and its eyes dart to me. Artemis shakes her head and mouths not yet.

Every instinct in me is saying to grab her and run. Run as far and as fast as we can to get away from this thing.

But it will keep coming. And I refuse to allow her to live in fear for the rest of her life. So I settle and sit back, huffing.

Another shadow separates itself from the darkness and I blink. Rain lashes at me and

I blink again. Surely that's not....

But the Chief howls and lunges at the guy with eyeliner around his eyes, muttering in some weird language as his red-hot eyes burn into me.

The two of them fight and I see the dagger in the guy's hand, gulping when I see the snake on the handle.

The guy who stabbed Gypsy. He's come back. And this time he wants us all.

Chapter Twelve

GYPSY

Whimpering, I fight the darkness around me. Wind and rain lash at my clothes and I can feel them but I can't see a thing.

Except for her. She's beautiful. Pale, soft skin and a quirk of her red lips. Long, dusky coils of hair drawn up on her head in an elaborate twist and golden serpents coiled around her hair and her throat and arms.

"He thinks that you're me because I've been using your power to draw him out. We share a bloodline, sister. That's why it's so easy for him to hear me calling from you."

"So go to him. He wants you not me."

Her fingers come up to wrap in a coil of dark hair. "He wants us both now."

"I'm not his." I shake my head.

“No, you belong to this other man who holds your hand and fights forces he cannot win against.”

“Love is a force that’s hard to beat.”

“But do you know if he really loves you.”

Page 15

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 7:43 pm

I can feel her words all the way to the core of me. Like a physical slap. But I can see the golden ropes wrapped around our entwined hands now and they're building, twining into our arms and up and up. Until they're wrapped around our hearts and my own heart blazes with gold.

"He does. He might not know it but he does. He'll never leave me. And he'll fight with everything he's got to keep me. Python will never win. Take your victory and go to him. Leave me alone."

Her face twists. "I don't know that I will. Your power and my power will make us unstoppable."

Shaking my head, I hold the gems tighter. "How did you feel when you were stripped away from him when he was killed and taken by the gods?"

She sighs and it's like wind through the trees. "Like my very soul was stripped from me."

"And yet you'd do that to another woman with no thought to her own pain?"

Her brow creases and she glares at me. "That's different."

"No, it's not. Love is love. Pain is pain. Gods, goddesses, humans. We all struggle to heal from pain. It's all the same."

"It's for the greater good," she mutters under her breath but I can see her thinking.

“Is it? Because I think that’s the same thing that the God that killed Python would say. Wasn’t that Apollo and didn’t he get in trouble for it?”

“He did.”

“Why do you think?”

“Because he took away a light of the world!” She yells, her fists tightening at her sides.

“Or is it because he caused many people pain that was unnecessary. Especially you.”

“He tried to make me work for him and tell him the future and I refused.”

“And what did he do?”

She sighs again. “Imprisoned me until I gave in. But I never did. I starved myself because I was never going to work for him. I’d rather die.”

“And so would I. I will not work for Python. That’s your job. My job is here. With my family. My love.”

Something tugs at my hand, trying to pull me away and I hold tighter, the gems cutting into my palms. “Go away and leave me alone!”

The cobra rears up behind her slim form and then he coils around her and she smiles, her palm rising up to touch his snout. “My love. I’ve missed you so. Centuries. Centuries that I’ve been calling for you but you didn’t hear me.”

“I’ve been looking everywhere, my bride...”. His hissing voice makes me shudder but there’s something else in his eyes. They’re not black voids anymore. They’re soft

and full of joy. “I’ve missssssed you sssso,” he hisses.

“Take me home. Let’s leave these mortals to their petty squabbles and go home to Olympus. Where we belong.”

“Only if you come with me and stay forever.”

Her mouth twists and her skin flushes as his coils tighten around her. “I’m bound to you by love. Forever.”

Wind whips around us again, lightning flashing wildly, a void opening up behind their two entwined figures. Black clouds swirl around them and then...they’re gone. And the storm ebbs to a softer, gentler rain and wind.

My eyes open and I jump in my seat when I see everyone staring at me.

And I see Jerry’s arms wrapped around a man holding a dagger as they struggle.

But then, with a swirl of black clouds, he disappears into the ether, screaming and slashing out, his dark eyes wild and glowing red with hate.

“What the hell just happened?” I say, stunned, pulling one hand loose and rubbing my forehead.

Alex pulls my other hand up and kisses it gently. “We won. They’re gone.”

Page 16

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 7:43 pm

“Who was the other guy?”

Artemis smiles. “Let me tell you a story.”

Fifteen minutes later I’m staring at her in awe. “That guy was a reawakened priest, er...the ghost of a priest?”

She nods. “Yeah. He was sent here by Python before he realized that his bride’s soul was entwined with yours. I don’t really understand why he wanted you dead. Unless he didn’t. He just wanted you hurt to make you easier to take.”

Alex nods. “I suppose that makes sense to a centuries-old God that’s been out of it for too long to realize that he’s gone around the bend.”

“Yeah. He wasn’t thinking clearly but then I suppose if you were kept from the love of your life by a God you’d be angry and a little crazed too!”

“I suppose that’s true. But what did he hope to gain by getting Gypsy?”

“Gypsy is a descendant of the original Priestess of Delphi. Her blood flows in her veins. So if he could get his hands on her, he thought he could find his bride.”

Alex snorts. “That’s some twisted logic.”

“I suppose if it was centuries ago and you were a God it might make more sense.”

“Will he come back again for Gypsy?”

I shudder and Alex's fingers wrap around mine. Blood drips from our palms where the raw stones cut into them.

"No. They're at peace." Artemis sighs. "Love still conquers all it seems." Her pale eyes lock on Jerry and my eyes narrow. I'd really like to know what's going on there.

But for now.

Alex's eyes lock on mine and he stands up, holding my hand. "Walk with me."

I follow him out and he settles me on a porch swing in the back yard. The glass from the broken patio doors is gone and it is all in one piece again. I don't even try to figure that one out.

He sits down and holds both of my hands in his. "You know, when we first met, I thought that you were a complete con. I didn't understand how the chief could think that you were real. Supernatural stuff doesn't exist." He snorts and I giggle.

"Yeah. There are more things betwixt heaven and earth than any poor mortal could know."

"I never thought I'd see a Greek and Roman snake god," I say, smirking.

"I bet. But I realized that I was....I don't know, blocking myself from something wonderful because of my attitude towards fate and love and all those other supernatural things as well. You've opened my eyes, Gypsy Devine. You've brought me love and given me hope and I hope to hell that you feel the same way because I can't lose you. Just feeling your hand slip in mine scared the hell out of me. If I lost you...well, I think I can see why Python searched for centuries for his love. Time wouldn't mean a damn thing. I'd brave every damn thing to get back to you. I have been blind, but now I can see and what I see is you. I love you, Gypsy Devine. There

may be cons out there but you...you are the real deal. It would break me if I lost you. Can you ever fall in love with an idiot that didn't realize what he was missing?"

Grinning, I touch his cheek gently. "I already have. I think I knew as soon as I saw you blustering and growling like a bear. I can't resist grumpy, growly men. They're my catnip."

He growls at me and tugs me to him, whispering against my lips, "I better be the only catnip you're messing with from now on, Gypsy. I'd hate to have to tie you to the bed for being a bad girl."

I cock my head and grin cheekily. "Which part of that is supposed to be bad?"

He groans and pulls me in tight, his lips a mere whisper from mine. I can feel the warmth of his breath. "You are a wicked woman, Gypsy. I can't wait to clear these people out of here and get wicked with you."

Giggling, I sink into him when his lips touch mine. Fireworks explode behind my eyes and my heart feels so light, it's like I can fly.

"Let's kick these two out and then christen my bed."

"Amen to that, Fortune. Amen to that."

I wrap my arms around him and he lifts me up, carrying me like a bride on her wedding night. His eyes flash with midnight fire and I glower at Jerry and Artemis when we come inside.

He doesn't even pause, just walks right past them to the bedroom. "Close the door on your way out, Chief. I'll see you at work soon." Then he slams the door and slides my body down the wall. "Now, where were we?"

“I was a very bad girl and you’re going to show me how to be even worse!”

Page 17

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 7:43 pm

His brows lift and he groans. “All night long.” His mouth comes down on mine and I sigh, my tongue tangling with his. Wildfire shoots up my arms and straight down to my clit which is throbbing wildly.

His hands coast up and down my sides and he pushes me back into the door, lifting me up until I’m pinned between the wood and his big body.

“I can’t wait for you, Gypsy. You’ve been driving me insane since I first saw you.”

He fumbles with his zipper and tugs it down. I pull wildly at my leggings, twisting and contorting myself until he grabs them and rends one whole side and they fall off of one leg. Then he grabs my panties and gives another almighty tug and I’m bare, my hot pussy cooled by the chill in the air.

Until he pushes his cock up against me and I feel it hit my clit. I moan and wrap my legs tighter around him, my thighs already aching but I don’t give a shit.

My eyes widen when I see his thick length and I lick my lips, lust firing up inside me. My whole body twitches and bends and then he lines his cock up with my wet, hot slit and slams home so hard that stars burst behind my eyes. Pain and pleasure meet and the stretching burn is almost too much. He leans into me and holds me with his body while his hands hold my head steady and his tongue plunders mine, twining together in an erotic mating dance that makes my entire body pulse with hunger.

His head comes up and his dark blue eyes meet mine, his forehead resting against my own. “I love you so much, Gypsy Devine.”

“I love you more, Alex Fortune. But if you don’t move, I’m going to have to kill you,” I mutter.

He laughs and then his hips retreat and thrust into me so hard that the door shakes in the frame. “Faster,” I mutter. “Harder. Don’t stop. You feel so good.” The burning stretch gets hotter and my body tightens, coiling.

He doesn’t stop, his body slamming into me over and over again. Pain ratchets up and he groans under his breath, his hands coming up so that one hand catches my hands and holds them to the door and the other grasps my throat, squeezing lightly. My vision blurs and my body tightens and shudders and then...

“Aaah!” I scream and it’s like the universe slams into me at full speed. Stars and fireworks, supernovas and exploding galaxies all around us and our bodies in the middle of the maelstrom, caught up in it, legs wrapping him, his arms holding me tight, his steel-hard length pounding into me as he gasps, his face flushed and taut.

Then his hot seed erupts inside me and I can feel the universe expanding around us, like we’ve come up against the end of the galaxy and it’s claimed us.

“Yes, baby, yes!” He jackrabbits a couple more times and then staggers away from the door and falls on the bed, panting, his dark hair wild around his head.

He closes his eyes and I can’t stop smiling.

I wanted my own person for so long and I didn’t think with my gifts it was possible to be surprised by fate.

But this time, fate blew me away in the best way. I found the love of my life and I just know that fate’s got so much good in store for us.

After all, I've found my own personal Fortune!

EPILOGUE: ALEX

My wife chants and Artemis stands beside her, her hands on a tiny baby head.

I can't stop smiling. My daughter. I've got a daughter.

Artemis and Gypsy smile at each other and then Gypsy grins at me. "She says her name is Constance."

"I thought we agreed on Jessica. Jess for short."

They both shake their heads. "She says her name is Constance. You can't fight a child as strong as her. She knows what she wants."

I groan under my breath. "What exactly does that mean, wife?"

She grins cheekily and then smiles down at our newborn. She had the baby at home and Artemis was here to help. She was a freaking goddess. No medicine. No nothing. She just did what she needed to do.

Course she almost broke my hand on one of the contractions but it's alright. It will heal.

"You know what it means. She's a strong supernatural. I can feel it on her. So does Artemis."

I groan under my breath. So now along with boys, I've got to worry about random snake demons or whatever else happens to need her help.

“Perfect,” I mutter under my breath.

“She is perfect,” Gypsy says, smiling down at the baby. There’s a soft, content, happy look in her hazel eyes and I can’t look away. She’s breathtaking. More beautiful than any goddess.

Page 18

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 7:43 pm

“Don’t even think about it. She’s got at least six weeks before she can do that,” Artemis mutters.

“I know that.”

“Well, good.” Then she turns to Gypsy. “How do you feel about coffee tomorrow and we’ll discuss possible training for when she starts to get her powers. And some early training to make it easier for her.”

“I think that sounds perfect. I’ll see you tomorrow.”

I follow her to the door and let her out, sighing and then walking back to my wife and baby daughter.

She’s bathed in a golden light that gilds her soft curves and pale skin. My gaze goes to the window and my mouth curls. It’s midnight and there are only a handful of stars out and no moon. There’s no light at all that should be raining down on her but there is.

There always is if you know what to look for. When I first met her all I could see was the fear that she would con me.

Now? Now the light shines on her like she’s an angel from heaven and I know what a lucky son of a bitch I am to have found her.

There’s nobody like her. She’s one of a kind. And she’s all mine. Forever.

“I love you, Mrs. Fortune.” She turns her head and smiles up at me and there’s so much love and desire in her eyes that it warms my heart.

When I first met her, I was frozen. Blind to the good in the world.

Now, I know it’s her that brought me back to life and love. And she does it every damn day in a million different ways.

Including giving me the life I always dreamt of. A child. A wife and a supernatural love like no other.

“I love you too, Mr. Fortune.”

Fortune by name. Fortunate in life. And love.

I rest my chin on the top of her head and hold both of my girls to me. My whole world is wrapped up in these two girls.

And my good fortune knows no bounds.