



Kiss of Frost

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Category: Romance, New Adult, Paranormal

Description: What good is power if you can't control it? That's the question I've asked myself since I learned I'm the most powerful witch of my generation. In theory, I should be able to bend the air to my will. In practice, I'm more likely to accidentally trigger a hurricane. To prove myself, I have to capture the North Wind—the most volatile force on earth. As far as quests go, I expect it to suck.

What I don't expect is to meet my fated mate in the form of a smooth-talking Scottish Highlander. Callum McLeish is half-dragon and half-incubus. He's also drop-dead gorgeous and determined to follow me to the frozen wastes. It's cold in the North, but my new protector sets my nights ablaze.

Things take a scorching turn when we arrive in the wastes and meet Graeme Abernathy. As a member of the Brotherhood of Ice Dragons, Graeme took vows to live a solitary life. His heart is frozen, and his attitude is as chilly as his castle.

But dragons mate in threes. And the more time Callum and I spend around Graeme, the harder it is to deny the pull between us. Graeme isn't supposed to feel anything. So why does he feel so perfect to Callum and me?

Still, there's something unsettling in the air. As things heat up between the three of us, danger does as well. Because Graeme has secrets—and a past that refuses to die. As the temperature plunges, the stakes couldn't be higher. If I don't unravel the mystery that swirls around Graeme, I could lose both of my men forever.

Total Pages (Source): 75

Chapter One

GEORGIE

Talk to the dragons, they said. No big deal.

“Yeah, right,” I muttered as I stood in the antechamber outside the Great Hall of Castle Beithir. A pair of enormous wooden doors carved with dragons in flight loomed before me. Door handles as big as my head gleamed under the soft glow cast by the chandelier.

Canting my chin up, I eyed the light fixture. At least the place had electricity. When the elders first informed me I’d be traveling to King Cormac’s castle, I wasn’t sure the seat of the ancient dragon king would have modern conveniences. Until six months ago, Cormac was supposedly lost in some kind of fire dream. Then he and his mate, Niall, found their fated female. The news of the dragon king emerging from centuries of madness would have been shocking enough. But his and Niall’s new mate was a fabled female dragon—and her blood had held the key to breaking the curse that wiped all the other female dragons out of existence.

Over the past six months, rumors had flown among the Firstborn Races. Everyone wanted a look at Cormac, the legendary dragon king.

Everyone, that is, but witches. No, my people wanted to see Niall Balfour, Cormac’s half-witch mate. The dragons called Niall “Consort.” But the temperamental head of House Balfour had other names among the witches.

Curse breaker.

Kin slayer.

Master of all the elements.

No one was really certain about the last moniker. But Niall's grandfather, Mullo Balfour, had possessed all seven elements.

Until Niall killed him.

Nerves prickled down my spine as I gazed at the door handles, which were fashioned to look like flowing water. The design was undoubtedly a nod to Niall, whose root element was water. Of course, if he'd dueled with Mullo, Niall most likely possessed the blood element now, too. Maybe the door handles were supposed to represent blood, the most coveted of all the elements. Maybe Niall would take one look at me and decide I was unfit to lead House Blackwood. He could kill me with a flick of his wrist. Burst the capillaries in my body and watch me bleed out on the flagstones.

Swallowing hard, I smoothed the front of my barasta. The protection spells woven into the fabric sparked against my palms, which had gone clammy despite the castle's chilly air.

Outside, the wind howled around the castle's ancient stone towers. To most people, the sound might be unnerving. But I'd been born to wield air. I could travel through it, stepping in and out of currents as easily as someone walking from one room to the next. The journey from New York to Scotland had taken moments. But I could only jump currents to places I'd visited before, so the last leg of my trip had involved scrambling in and out of boats in the freezing waters of the Hebrides until I reached the dragons' secret island hidden behind a layer of cloaking magic.

My stomach lurched, memories of the turbulent boat trip from Stornoway making me sway on my feet. I swallowed my rising nausea as I held out my hand and felt for a breeze.

There.

A faint, chilly tendril of air curled around my fingers. The nausea receded as I lifted my hand and let the breeze play over my palm. Deep within my chest, my magic sparked. The breeze responded, spiraling into an elegant column and making a smile tug at my lips. A second current flowed through a nearby arrow slit and joined the first. They eddied around each other in a graceful dance.

“Oh, now you’re just showing off,” I murmured, my smile growing as I gave them a push with my magic. The currents built, soaring upward as they hovered above my palm like a tiny tornado. As the wind threaded comforting fingers through my hair, the aches and inconveniences of two days of rugged sea travel faded. The currents spiraled higher, the wind tugging at the hem of my barasta.

Laughter bubbled in my throat as I fed the wind more magic, setting the tower sparkling. Without warning, the magic inside my chest twanged like someone plucking a discordant note on a harp. The column of wind shivered, then listed sharply to one side.

“No!” I cried, bringing my other hand up to steady it.

The wind jumped from my palm, streaked across the antechamber, and smashed into a big wooden cabinet. As the wind dissipated, an enormous vase perched atop the cabinet rocked from side to side.

I leapt toward it. “No, no, no—”

The vase toppled, smashed against the flagstones, and shattered.

I froze, my heart knocking against my ribs. I just broke King Cormac's vase.

"Fuck," I whimpered.

"Rotten luck," a deep, accented voice said behind me.

Whirling, I came face to face with a blond giant.

Well, face to pecs. The giant's chest filled my vision, the broad expanse covered by a gray cashmere sweater. Tipping my head back—and then back some more—I encountered a pair of honey-colored eyes. They crinkled at the corners as the giant gestured his ceramic mug toward the mess on the floor.

"Dinnae fash yerself about the vase, lass." One honey-colored eye winked at me. "I never fancied it anyway."

Page 2

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:02 am

My brain tripped over itself trying to untangle the giant's words. He waited, his expression kind, as he sipped from his mug. The scent of coffee hit my nose as I took in his golden-blond hair gathered in a ponytail at his nape. More golden scruff covered his jaw, which was as rugged as the rocks that surrounded Beithir Island. Several beaded bracelets decorated his thick wrist. As I gaped at him, something primitive and impossibly ancient moved through his eyes.

His beast. This could only be King Cormac, owner of the vase I'd just smashed. Also? The most ancient being on the planet wore jeans and stacks of bracelets. The heady scent of roasted coffee beans hit me again, and I weighed how weird it would be if I asked the king of all dragons for an Americano with an extra shot of espresso.

"You're the witch from House Blackwood," he said, his voice matter-of-fact as he studied me. The side of his mug said "I Kilt It on the Dance Floor" in big, blocky text. He followed my gaze, turning the mug to peer at the words before flashing me a smile. "Isolde's idea of a joke. Give me a claymore, and we'll have no problem. But ask me to tolerate the music they're playin' in the pubs these days?" He shuddered, a look of mild horror passing over his handsome face. "If you can even call it music. It's more like noise, innit?"

I cleared my throat. "I..."

"The elders of your house said you wanted to pay your respects to Niall." Cormac's eyes twinkled as he leaned toward me and lowered his voice. "Fair warning, lass, my mate is a prickly sort. But he's softer than he lets on. You might have to poke him a bit to get past the brambles."

Before I could respond, the Great Hall's doors opened, both panels swinging back seemingly of their own accord.

King Cormac brightened. "Ah, here we go." He stepped through the doors and, coffee in hand, strolled into the Hall. As I wandered in after him, my breath caught.

Dragons.

I'd never seen more than two at any given time. The race's numbers had dwindled so low, rumor had it the males avoided gathering in groups lest some calamity cull their population any further. But that was far from the case now. A dozen tall, broad-chested men stood around the Hall, their glittering eyes trained on me as I stopped inside the yawning doorway. Each one wore a sword strapped to his waist, and each one looked ready to draw his blade and separate my head from my shoulders if I made a single wrong move. A fire roared in a massive hearth carved with sinuous dragons in flight. The flames were reflected in each man's eyes.

No, I realized, the flames danced inside their eyes.

Except for Niall Balfour. He stared at me, his dark gaze as cold and menacing as a winter's night. He sat on a raised platform adjacent to the hearth, his posture rigid in his throne-like chair. His black barasta gleamed with intricate black embroidery, the spells in the threads so powerful the whispered incantations floated to me on the air. As I held his stare, the temperature around me plunged. My heart sped up, and I had to stop myself from taking a step backward.

"Oh, for heaven's sake," a feminine voice called out. A second later, a beautiful dark-haired woman peeked out from behind the hulking man positioned before her chair on the platform. The dragon warrior was so huge, he'd obscured her entirely.

She rose and stepped around him just as Cormac reached the platform. The king

stopped and swept her a courtly bow, his movements all the more impressive with his coffee mug still in his hand.

“My queen,” he murmured, his gravelly voice heavy with affection.

The woman’s eyes softened as she dipped a shallow curtsy. “My king.”

Cormac mounted the platform and kissed her cheek. Then he settled in the larger chair next to Niall’s and cut him a sharp look. “We have a guest, mo chridhe.”

“Aye,” Niall said without taking his eyes off me. “An unwelcome one.”

“Niall!” the woman, Queen Isolde, exclaimed. Still standing, she swept her gaze around the room. Exasperation tinged her features as she raised her voice. “Enough, all of you. Mullo created the Curse.”

“And he’s dead,” a male near the enormous hearth said darkly.

Growls of approval rose from the other dragons in the Hall. Niall’s expression remained forbidding as he gazed at me.

Isolde swung toward him. “You’re a hypocrite, Niall Balfour, and you’re teaching your warriors to be rude.”

At last, Niall’s icy reserve cracked. He jerked his head toward the queen, his dark brows pulling together. “A hypocrite?” he asked, his tone incredulous.

“Yes,” Isolde said, propping her hands on her hips. “The witches consider you their king—”

Niall cut her off with a negative sound. “They don’t have a king. They never have.”

He cast me a dismissive glance. “Just petty despots who preside over crime families.”

“Well,” Isolde said, “I guess that makes you the petty despot of House Balfour. Considering your predecessor is dead.”

“Too right he is,” one of the dragons growled in a voice thick with approval.

Another chorus of answering growls went up.

“Quiet!” Isolde snapped, her green eyes flashing.

Cormac caught my eye and winked at me over the rim of his coffee mug.

Niall gave Isolde a patient look. “You don’t understand, lass.” Pain moved through his eyes. “Our men watched our women die one by one. For centuries, we searched in vain for a cure. We went to war with the other Firstborn Races. We made the vampires our mortal enemies. Our people were pushed to the brink of extinction, and it was all because of the witches.”

Page 3

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:02 am

“No,” I said, stepping closer to the platform, “it was because of Mullo.”

Niall turned his dark gaze to mine. For the first time, I noticed the glass of water on a small stand next to his elbow. A weapon. Unlike me, Niall Balfour was a master of his root element. He didn’t need a sword to kill.

Heart thudding like a drum, I forced myself to hold his stare. “Your queen is right. You’re a hypocrite, Niall Balfour.” I pointed at the water. “You shun your heritage, yet you rely on its gifts. You can’t outrun your blood. My father taught me that.” I walked forward. “He never liked your grandfather. Mullo Balfour wasn’t universally beloved among the houses.”

Niall’s mouth tightened. “I find that difficult to believe. Your kind worships power.”

“Our kind reveres skill.” I stopped at the base of the platform beneath Niall’s chair. “It’s the vampires who worship power.”

“They worship blood,” he corrected.

I shook my head. “They are the same, my lord.” Niall narrowed his eyes, but I plowed on, raising my voice to address all the dragons in the Hall. “You were wrong to blame the vampires for your losses. You made a whole species your enemy over a false accusation. Tell me, Lord Niall, will you do so again? Will you turn your back on your own kind and sow discord between dragons and witches?” Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Isolde sink into her chair, a look of approval on her face.

“And I suppose you speak for all witches?” Niall demanded.

“I speak for my house. It’s one of the reasons I’m here.” I drew a deep breath and recited the statement the elders drilled into me before I left Manhattan. “We, the witches of House Blackwood, seek an alliance with the dragons. We come not as enemies but as allies, asking for peace and cooperation between our two races. We offer our assistance in rooting out the last of Mullo’s followers among the witches.” I glanced at Cormac. “In exchange, we ask for safe passage to the Oracle of the North Wind.”

Gasps went up around the room.

“I mean, my safe passage,” I said, going off script. “I’m the only one going, so the passage is for me. The assistance with rooting out Mullo’s followers thing is a group effort, though.”

Niall’s dark brows drew together. “Why do you need to visit the Oracle? You seek its guidance?”

“Not exactly.”

His brows pulled tighter. “Then why go at all?”

Words stuck in my throat. The weight of a dozen pairs of eyes pressed against me. Should have read a book about public speaking before I left. “I, um, have to capture the North Wind.”

More than one dragon in the Great Hall sucked in his breath.

Niall’s expression went from hostile to incredulous. “You’re going to capture the North Wind?”

Heat rose in my cheeks. “I only need it for a little while.” Please don’t ask why I need

it.

“Why do you need it?” Niall asked.

The heat spread down my nape as familiar embarrassment flooded me. “I can’t assume leadership of my house until I prove I can control my element.”

“And you propose to do that with the North Wind? A sentient element and one of the most volatile, temperamental currents in the world?”

“That’s the quest the elders set for me.” Those dicks.

It was probably my imagination, but Niall’s gaze appeared to soften. “The North Wind is an important part of the global climate system, lass. The humans might notice if you take it.”

“I’ll put it back when I’m done with it.”

Cormac chuckled.

Niall looked at him. “You knew about this?”

The king gave his mate a mild look. “You’re hardly shy about your hatred of witches, Niall. In their wisdom, the elders of House Blackwood sent their request for an audience to me. I felt it wise to grant it.”

“Are you serious?” Niall demanded. He seemed to realize he’d just challenged Cormac in front of an audience because he cast a quick look around the Hall before moderating his tone. “Historically, you haven’t exactly been cozy with the witches, either, my lord.”

Cormac turned to Isolde and took her hand. He brought it to his lips before turning back to Niall and giving him a lazy smile. “Aye, mo chridhe, that’s true. But I try to learn from my mistakes. And I don’t hate all witches.” His voice dipped lower. “If you recall, I’ve always been particularly fond of you.”

Something hot and intangible arced between the two men. Isolde looked on, her lips parting as Cormac continued brushing his mouth over her knuckles as he stared at Niall.

Page 4

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:02 am

My heart sped up. The air between the three of them thickened—nothing a mundane would notice. But I knew air. It was more varied and complex than most people realized. Emotions traveled on it. Strong memories could linger in it. Passion could turn it electric.

Like now. Lust crackled in the imperceptible currents flowing through the spacious, ancient room.

Dragons are polyamorous. It was the first thing young witches learned when we studied the other immortals among the Firstborn Races. I'd been taught that dragons were obsessed with their mates—both of their mates. But I never truly understood it until now.

What would it be like to belong to two people? Witches rarely married for love. My mother always claimed we meddled too much with potions and spells for fate to bring us the perfect match.

There was no question that Niall, Cormac, and Isolde were perfect for one another. The queen gazed at the men with love shining in her eyes. Her lips curved as Cormac lifted Niall's hand and brushed a kiss over his mate's knuckles. Heat flared in Niall's dark eyes, warming his expression.

After a long moment, Cormac turned his gaze to me. "The Oracle of the North Wind is guarded by an ice dragon. His name is Graeme Abernathy, and his fortress is called the White Gate, which sounds pleasant enough until you realize it's covered in a layer of enchanted frost that eats uninvited guests. Do you know how dangerous it is to approach an ice dragon?" The easy, relaxed expression he'd worn in the antechamber

fled, replaced with razor-sharp intensity and power that sparked against my skin. “And before you answer, lass, you should know that the Brotherhood of Ice Dragons answers to no one, not even me. They’re emotionless creatures incapable of compassion. Abernathy won’t sympathize with your cause. Not because he’s cruel, but because he’s unable to feel anything at all.”

My stomach flipped over. “Yes,” I said, my voice raspy in the suddenly quiet Hall. “I know these things.” The elders had set me the most difficult task they could think of. They’d done it on purpose because they didn’t want me to succeed. They believed I was too weak to lead my house. Unbidden, my father’s last words drifted through my head.

A dark wind is coming, Georgie. Only you can harness it.

He died before I could ask what he meant. But dying words held their own peculiar magic. Only fools ignored them. If I was destined to duel with darkness, I needed the power of my entire house behind me.

I lifted my chin. “My father led House Blackwood for five hundred years. His seat is my birthright and my fate. I don’t need the ice dragon’s sympathy. I just need him to stay out of my way.”

Cormac’s eyes gleamed with something that might have been respect. “Spoken like the daughter of Ramsin Blackwood.”

“I only hope I can live up to his name, sir.”

A door near the hearth opened, and a tall, broad-shouldered man with dark hair entered the Hall. He looked down at a smartphone as he spoke in a distracted tone. “Chloe just sent new photos, Isolde.” He lifted his head and stopped short as his gaze landed on me. His green eyes went wide. “Oh...” He darted a look at Cormac and

cleared his throat. “Uh, apologies, Your Majesty, I didn’t realize we had guests.”

“New photos?” Isolde asked, her voice approaching a squeal. She jumped to her feet and practically flew from the platform to the dark-haired dragon’s side. “Lemme see, lemme see!” She grabbed the phone from his hands and peered at the screen, her glossy black waves falling around her shoulders. “Oh gods, he’s so cute.”

The dragon cradled his hand to his chest and gave her a look of mock horror. “Nearly snatched my hand off.”

“Quiet,” she murmured, swiping the screen. “I’m looking at an adorable dragon baby.”

“Aye, he’s a braw lad,” the dark-haired man said, his handsome face breaking into a smile that so closely resembled the queen’s, I realized he was none other than Bram McGregor, her twin brother. They’d been separated at birth by a demon physician who kidnapped Isolde so he could extend his lifespan by siphoning her blood. Niall had scented her presence in the demon plane and rescued her, setting in motion the discovery of Mullo’s duplicity and ultimate death.

On the platform, Niall and Cormac wore fond expressions as they watched Isolde and Bram. Around the Hall, the other dragons relaxed, identical looks on their faces. The softest breeze stirred, layers of love and affection swirling in the current. And it was no wonder, if the dragons had welcomed a new baby. Now that the Curse was broken, perhaps one of the mated triads would produce a daughter. Any female born to the dragons would likely be spoiled and pampered beyond reason.

Of course, she’d also be surrounded by suitors once she came of age. Not one but two mates would await her.

My nape prickled as I looked around the Hall, my gaze falling on each warrior.

Plenty of women would be thrilled at the prospect of two burly, commanding men vying for her attention. But the dragons were known to be ruthless about their mates. Once they found their fated female, nothing but death could stop them from claiming her.

The prickling in my nape turned into a shiver.

Another man stepped through the open door behind Bram, almost bumping into Bram and Isolde in the process. Tall and strapping, his wide shoulders filled the doorway. His dark blond hair was a riot of messy waves.

“Och,” he exclaimed, stumbling back with a good-natured smile. “‘Tis a traffic jam we’re having.”

Without warning, a powerful gust of wind ripped through the Great Hall, snuffing candles and making the fire leap in the hearth. As the current tossed my hair, the same electricity that had arced between the king and his mates slammed into me.

LUST. It struck me squarely in the chest, the blow so powerful it knocked me back a step. Instantly, moisture flooded my panties. My inner muscles clamped hard.

I sucked in a breath, mortification and confusion swirling alongside my desire. At the same moment, the newcomer stepped around Bram and Isolde. Green eyes locked with mine.

And turned the color of emeralds set aflame. The wind gusted harder, tousling his hair. Between one blink and the next, ghostly horns appeared around his head and then vanished.

“YOU,” he said, his voice echoing as he pointed at me. As soon as he made the gesture, another wave of lust hit me, tightening my nipples until I cried out.

“N-No,” I said, backing up. Or trying to. Because every cell in my body screamed at me to cross the Hall and fling myself at the stranger.

“Aye,” he said, his green eyes glowing more brightly as he strode forward. “You’re mine.”

Page 5

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:02 am

The declaration sailed on the air and flowed straight into my lungs. Sexual arousal exploded, loosening my knees. The dragon caught me before I could fall, and my vision filled with smiling green eyes and a firm jaw shadowed by golden stubble.

“A witchling,” he murmured, drawing my gaze up to his glowing eyes. They flared with satisfaction. “Perfect.”

“What?” I breathed. Somehow, I maintained enough presence of mind to remember where I was, and I turned my head toward the platform.

Isolde stood at the base, her hands clasped under her chin as she beamed at the stranger and me. “This is the best surprise!”

Niall shook his head and muttered, “Unbelievable.”

King Cormac smiled. “You came here looking for your fate, Georgina Blackwood. It appears fate found you first.”

Chapter Two

CALLUM

The witch’s jaw dropped as she stared at the king. “What do you mean?”

“It means you’re mine,” I said, struggling against the urge to sweep her into my arms and carry her from the Great Hall and straight to my bedchamber. My magic tugged hard, eager to be let off its leash so I could pleasure my mate.

She looked up at me, her purple eyes a swirl of lust and growing trepidation. With a little gasp, she scrambled from my embrace. I let her go, and she staggered back, one hand outstretched like she meant to ward me off.

“That won’t work,” I said, shrugging. “I’m only half demon.”

“Demon?” She flicked her gaze over my hair, probably looking for horns.

“Incubus, to be exact.”

“Oh, gods,” she whimpered. She tugged at the hem of her barasta, which was shorter and more form-fitting than the kind Niall wore. Witches were physically weaker than the other Firstborn Races, so they wove protective spells into their jackets. Their barastas also shielded them from other witches, who might attempt to steal their elements. The Consort always wore black, but my witchling was a fetching sight in a barasta the same deep purple shade as her eyes.

The sweet scent of her arousal soaked the air, stiffening my cock and putting a growl in my throat. Around the Hall, the unmated dragons shifted on their feet. A few made pained, strangled sounds as the scent hit them.

The witch’s cheeks went scarlet. Her nipples poked from underneath her barasta like little spear tips. The heady perfume of her cream swirled around me. She was wet, my witch, and probably seconds from soaking through her panties to drench the tight black pants that hugged her sweetly rounded hips.

Mine. Every bit of that cream was mine.

Her nostrils flared as she looked me over, her beautiful eyes lingering on my shoulders and jaw. “I didn’t come here for this.” The last word turned into a moan as she rocked her hips forward. The blush in her cheeks deepened, and mortification

joined the lust in her eyes. Poor, wee thing probably didn't understand what had hit her. Although, she wasn't exactly wee, my witch.

No, she was fucking perfect. Tall and curved in all the right places. Black hair and those gorgeous purple eyes. A full mouth that was going to look delectable wrapped around my dick.

"I want you," I told her.

Her lips parted. "What?"

"You heard me."

A dragon next to the hearth turned away and discreetly adjusted his erection. Another spoke through clenched teeth. "Get her out of here, McLeish. She's throwing off enough pheromones to level the castle."

The witch opened her mouth like she meant to argue, but only a low moan emerged. She swayed on her feet. I sprang forward and caught her again, and this time I didn't hesitate as I swept her off her feet and strode from the Great Hall.

"What are you doing?" she gasped even as she rolled her delicious body against mine. Her barasta rode up, exposing the creamy skin of her midriff.

I hitched her higher in my arms as I hurried to the stairs and took them two at a time. "Getting you away from the others."

"Would they hurt me?"

A surge of protectiveness flared so hot it nearly took my breath away. When I spoke again, my voice was an octave lower. "No one will ever hurt you. Not with me

around, witchling. But your need is so strong it affects anyone near you.” I reached my bedchamber, shouldered through the door, and kicked it shut behind me.

The witch’s eyes went wide. She squirmed in my arms. “Put me down.”

Page 6

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:02 am

I set her on her feet in the middle of the room and stepped back. “My need is great, as well,” I told her. “But I won’t touch you unless you ask me.” I couldn’t keep the longing from my voice as I added, “And I’m hoping you’ll ask, witchling.”

“I have a name,” she tossed back, her chest heaving. Gods, her tits were perfect. High and round under that damn jacket that needed to go immediately. She was built for fucking, with curves that checked every box I possessed. She drifted toward me, then seemed to realize what she’d done and took a swift step backward. “I’m Georgina Blackwood of House Blackwood.” She hesitated, then muttered, “Everyone calls me Georgie.”

“Georgie,” I murmured, my dick pressing painfully against my zipper. “It suits you, darlin’.” As her nostrils flared, I swept her a short bow. “I’m Callum McLeish.” I straightened. “And if I have my way, you’ll scream my name to the bedroom rafters every night from now on.”

She gasped. “Do you always talk to women this way?”

“Nope. But you’re my mate, sweetheart. It’s my duty to bring you pleasure.”

A frown marred her smooth forehead. “You can’t be serious. We just met.”

“Then we’ll get to know each other. I have no qualms about courting you.” Or stretching you under me and kissing every inch of your sweet body. I folded my arms so I wouldn’t reach for her.

She gnawed on a plump, pink lip, and I suppressed a groan.

“If you’re wanting to keep things chaste between us, Georgie, I suggest you stop doing that.”

She darted a look between my legs, and her eyes went wide.

“Or that,” I choked out.

“Sorry,” she gasped, clenching and unclenching her fists at her sides. “Are you doing this?” One hand fluttered to her throat. “Making me feel this way?”

I shook my head. “That’s a common misconception about incubi. We don’t provoke desire. We simply understand it better than others.” I let my magic off its chain as I leaned toward her. “A lot better.”

“What does that mean?”

Lust bloomed within me, its tendrils snaking through my veins. My senses narrowed to the delectable woman in front of me. “That I know exactly what you want.” A window opened in my mind. Georgie’s sexual fantasies poured through it and flickered like a movie reel. Scenes unfolded in vivid detail, every frame heightening my desire. My voice dipped to a growl as I unfolded my arms and stepped into her. “You’re a naughty lass, Georgina Blackwood.”

Her pulse throbbed in her neck. She stood her ground, which was sexy as hell. “Prove it,” she challenged. “Tell me what I want.”

“Me, inside you.”

“I don’t—”

“Aye, you do,” I said, tucking a finger under her chin. “You want me to put you on

my bed, strip you bare, and spread your luscious body open. You want my hands on you, witchling. Sliding up your thighs and urging them wide. Running my thumbs up and down your slick, puffy lips and pushing them apart so I can see how much cream you've made for me."

Her lips parted on a gasp, and her breath fluttered over my fingers. Her arousal swirled, whispering all her secrets in my ear. I recited them, spreading them before her like a dealer fanning the cards at a blackjack table.

"You want my tongue, too, sweet Georgie." I brushed my thumb over her pouty bottom lip. "You want me to find that hot, wet place between your legs and lick your throbbing clit to the edge of orgasm. You want me to suck every drop from your pussy, thrusting my skilled tongue as deep as it'll go. And Georgie?"

"Yes?" she croaked.

I pressed my thumb between her lips until it grew damp from her mouth. "My tongue is very skilled, and it'll go very deep."

Her lashes fluttered, and she released a broken groan. Her pupils reflected my irises, which glowed bright green with my power.

I pulled my thumb from her mouth and resumed stroking her full lower lip. "You want me to tongue you to the pinnacle of pleasure, feasting on your cream while you grip my hair and grind your pussy into my face. So wet and loud, Georgie. Mmm, I can hear it, darlin' and I want you to make my face your own private saddle."

"Fuck," she whimpered, beginning to pant.

"Aye, lass, that's next." Her knees gave out, and I caught her and lowered her to the floor. I lay her down gently and sat back on my heels. I rested my palms on my thighs

even though I was dying to touch her. “You want me to fuck you, Georgie, and I will. I’ll fuck you like you deserve to be fucked, sweetheart. Like you’re the only woman in the world. Because that’s exactly what you are for me. Fate has delivered the most precious gift into my arms this day.” Unable to help myself, I ran the backs of my knuckles over her flushed cheek. “For as long as I live, I’ll never touch another.”

As I’d spoken, her eyes had filled with wonder. Now, that little frown reappeared between her brows. “I thought dragons always mated in threes.”

“Aye, we do. And one day, you and I will find our man.” My cock jerked at the mere thought of such good fortune. At the same moment, my magic swelled, Georgie’s lust providing the fuel. Her deepest desires sparked against my skin—and they were all the more powerful because they’d been buried so far down that she was only now aware of them.

“You want that,” I said, her fantasies parading through my head. I lifted a lock of her hair and rubbed the midnight-colored strands between my fingers. “You want two men in your bed. Filling your body. You want us to take you in turns, coaxing you to the brink of release over and over again. You want us to take you together, fore and aft, your sweet body writhing on our cocks.”

Page 7

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:02 am

She moaned and thrust her hips up. “Yes!” she cried, her voice cracking. “I want it.”

My magic flared higher, putting words on my tongue. “We’ll make you ours, lass. Worship you with our mouths, hands, and cocks. I’ll hold you open, and our mate will lick your pussy until you come. And when you’re trembling and begging for me, I’ll finger your pretty arse and hold that open, too. Nice and wide, Georgie, so our mate can slip his big dick inside.”

Her eyelids fluttered. Her nipples beaded, pushing against her breasts. I brushed a featherlight touch over one thrusting peak. It jutted harder.

“Gods,” she groaned, lifting her hips again. “Callum...”

My name on her lips nearly had me coming in my pants. “Aye,” I growled, holding her lock of hair before her eyes. “Watch.”

As she fixed her purple gaze on it, the black strands curled around my finger of their own accord.

She flicked startled eyes to mine. “How?”

“Your body knows its master.” When storm clouds gathered swiftly in her gaze, I planted my hands on either side of her shoulders and braced myself above her. “You can’t hide your desires, lass. Not from me. You want to be mastered, sweet Georgie, and it’s my privilege to give you exactly what you want.”

Her eyes darkened with raw lust—and it was like an injection shot directly into my

veins. With the energy she was giving me, I could go without sex for months. But, fuck me, I didn't want to.

"I'll give you everything you want," I said, trailing my fingers down her cheek. When she turned her face into my hand, seeking me, satisfaction joined the lust that threatened to crack my bones open. "Say it, lass. Ask for what you want."

"Callum..." She bowed her spine, her body brushing mine from shoulder to thigh. Then she gripped my collar in both hands and yanked me down as she surged up to meet me. Our mouths crashed together, and her growl rumbled against my lips. "Fuck me, damn you, and make it as good as you promised."

Chapter Three

GEORGIE

Callum hesitated above me for approximately one-tenth of a second.

Then he sprang into action, seizing my mouth as he gave me his full weight. His cock pressed between my thighs as he stroked his tongue boldly against mine, each caress so hot and thorough it stole my breath. I capitulated with a groan, my hands sliding into his hair before I even realized what I was doing. His thick waves were as soft as they looked, and I speared my fingers through them over and over as he kissed me with a passion that was both fiery and reverent.

How in the name of all the gods did he manage to make it both? And what the hell was I doing, sucking the face off a man I'd just met? I shouldn't sleep with him. I couldn't. I'd come to Castle Beithir to pay my respects to Niall Balfour and secure King Cormac's permission to approach the Oracle. Hooking up with a half dragon, half incubus had not been part of the plan.

But my body didn't seem to care. It wanted Callum McLeish and all the wicked promises he'd whispered in his rough, raspy voice. It wanted his big, hard body and strong, callused hands. He was undoubtedly a warrior. Most dragons trained from childhood. For all I knew, he'd been swinging a broadsword in the Highland mists for five centuries.

"Need to taste you," he growled, switching from kisses to soft bites. He nipped at my bottom lip before pulling back and gazing down at me with unearthly green eyes. A lock of dark blond hair spilled over his forehead, giving him a roguish look. "I scent your honey, witchling, and I'm fit to die if I can't have it."

"How old are you?" I demanded.

"Eighty-one." If he was surprised by the sudden question, he didn't show it.

"Oh."

Humor and the hint of a challenge twinkled in his eyes. "You were expecting something different?"

"I don't know. Older, I guess."

"More experienced," he said, the twinkle growing brighter.

"Maybe."

"Hmm." Slowly, deliberately, he rolled his hips against mine, grinding the biggest dick I'd ever felt in my life against my aching pussy.

I couldn't stifle my moan as I spread my legs, making more room for him.

He rewarded me with a sinuous thrust that dragged directly over my clit. When I sucked in a sharp breath, he gave me a lazy smile. “Want to know a secret?”

“Yes.” My kind loved secrets. We traded in them for fun and profit. Mostly profit.

“You don’t need experience if you know what you’re doing.” He lowered his head, and I braced for a kiss, but he caught my bottom lip between his teeth and tugged gently. At the same moment, he rolled his hips again, giving me another preview of the monster he was packing between his legs. As another moan broke from me, he released his bite and licked the sting he’d left behind. “And I know precisely what I’m doing, Georgie mine.” He moved fast, sitting up and flicking open the fasteners that marched down the front of my jacket. Flip, flip, flip, he reached the end of the line and flung my barasta open, exposing my lacy black bra and the swells of my breasts that rose above the demi cups.

Page 8

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:02 am

My nipples stiffened against the lace.

“Happy to see me,” Callum said, then he yanked both cups down and latched his mouth onto one of my nipples.

Fire. It crackled in a frazzled path from my nipple to my clit. He sucked hard, every draw of his mouth pulling that path into a tighter line. His fingers found my other nipple, and he pinched hard, wrenching a squeal from me. He worked me in tandem, flicking his tongue around one nipple while he fingered and pinched the other. He slurped and sucked, the wet sounds of his attention accompanied by the low rumble of his satisfied-sounding growls. After a moment, he moved his mouth to my other nipple and proceeded to drive me wild.

“Yes!” I dug my teeth into my bottom lip so I wouldn’t scream. He hadn’t lied. His tongue was very skilled. He went at me like a man possessed. At the same time, I sensed he was completely in control of himself. And once again, the balance left me a little dizzy—and maddeningly aroused.

He rocked his hips against mine, rubbing his hard length up and down the place that throbbed for him. My heartbeat pounded there—a hard, pulsing rhythm that drove my need higher.

“More,” I gasped, tangling my hands in his hair and yanking hard

He released my nipple with a pop and lifted his head. One dark blond eyebrow shot upward as his lips curved. “And how old are you?”

The unexpected question startled me into answering. “Fifty-seven.”

The humor in his eyes melted into something dark and deliciously wicked. He lowered his chin, his heated gaze landing on my bare breasts, which trembled as I struggled to control my runaway breathing. My nipples stood up wantonly, the peaks a lurid pink from his fingers and mouth.

Meeting my eyes once more, he slid a hand down my body to the juncture of my thighs. He cupped my pussy through my pants, his long fingers resting over my opening. He pressed, pushing my sodden panties into my aching center and pulling a grunt from me. “Old enough to have taken lovers.”

Abruptly, my lust cooled. “Is that a problem?”

“Not at all, lassie.” He rose to his knees and pulled his shirt over his head. He tossed it aside, and I almost swallowed my tongue at the sight of his muscular chest and washboard abs. Lines of scrolling text were tattooed around his ribs. Before I could get a good look, his body turned to black smoke.

I shot upright, my heart pounding. Dragon. How could I have forgotten? The smoke circled me, ruffling my hair on a current that brimmed with playfulness. The haze returned to the carpet in front of me and reformed into a solid—and very nude—Callum.

My mouth went dry at the sight of his dick, which lay thick and hard between his powerful thighs. Moisture beaded at the slit, and prominent veins ran up the length of his meaty shaft. The heavy balls nestled underneath were as smooth and hairless as the skin around the base of his cock, and my cheeks heated as I recalled learning that particular fact about the dragons. I’d been thirteen when my friend Mariah of House Crane sneaked a book about dragon lore with very detailed illustrations into my room. Giggling and blushing, we’d pored over the forbidden pages by flashlight.

“You better hope you never cross paths with one of the dragon lairds,” Mariah had said.

“Why?” I’d breathed, an unsettled feeling gripping me as I studied the drawings of nude men shifting from beast to smoke and back again.

Mariah had shot me a startled look. “You mean you don’t know? The dragons lock up their females. If a dragon pair thinks you’re theirs, they won’t ask if you feel the same. They’ll just take you, Georgie, and they’ll never let you go.”

Mariah’s warning echoed in my head now as Callum stared me down. He hadn’t taken me...had he?

“You can’t keep me here,” I blurted, fighting the urge to scoot backward. In the corner of my mind, I was aware my declaration would have been more effective without my bra bunched under my breasts and my nipples damp from his mouth. “I’m not a prisoner.”

“That’s true,” Callum said. Gaze never leaving mine, he gripped his cock and began to stroke. “But it’s hard to be a prisoner when you don’t want to leave, eh, lass?”

“You don’t know that,” I huffed. As soon as the words left my lips, I realized my mistake. If Callum knew my desires, he knew I was so hot for him I was in danger of melting.

In another blur of movement, he stood, bent, and scooped me into his arms.

I clutched at his shoulders—and resisted the urge to dig my fingers into the hard muscle. “What are you doing?”

“You keep asking that, lassie, and I keep telling you.” He winked as he carried me to

the bed and placed me in the center. "I'm giving you everything you want." He pushed me onto my back and yanked my boots off. As I sputtered, he thumbed my fly open, unzipped my pants, and dragged them down my thighs. All of this happened shockingly fast, leaving me nude except for my sodden panties.

It would be so hot if he ripped them off. The thought entered my head as clear and bright as a beacon.

Callum looked up, his nostrils flaring. His voice went so low it rumbled the bed beneath me. "As I said, you're a naughty lass, Georgie Blackwood."

My heart skipped a beat. "Do you know everything I'm thinking?"

"No, just your desires. And I approve of every single one." He ripped my panties away in a flash of movement, baring me fully. The air stirred, and ghostly horns flickered around his head. He stared at my pussy, the look in his eyes so hot it seared my skin. He climbed onto the bed, his thick cock bobbing, and pushed my thighs wide. Cool air teased my heated center, which ached to the point of pain.

"We shouldn't," I said, the protest pitifully weak in my ears.

"Why not?" he countered, running a fingertip down the seam of my pussy. He sucked his finger into his mouth, and his eyes went heavy-lidded. "Mmm, lassie, you taste perfect." He rubbed my clit, sending a bolt of raw pleasure through me and making me cry out. "That's it," he said, trailing his finger down and stirring it around my opening. "Make more of this honey for me. Legs wider, lass, I want to see my pussy."

Page 9

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:02 am

My breath seized, my moan emerging as a choking sound. “It’s not yours.”

“Aye, it is.” He went flat on his stomach and kissed the top of my mound. Golden stubble tickled my skin. He lifted his head and gave me a roguish grin. “Dinnae worry, lassie, I’ll take verra good care of it.” He lowered his head and fastened his lips around my clit.

“Fuck,” I whimpered, my head falling back as pleasure pummeled me. Hot, buttery warmth rolled from my clit to my nipples, which tingled with every draw of his mouth. He suckled and teased, alternating between hard sucks and quick flicks of his tongue. He French-kissed my pussy, making out with my clit and my opening. He slid his tongue south, grazing the most secret, intimate part of me before ascending and nipping at my folds. I fisted the sheets and pulled my knees back as he buried his face so deep between my legs I had to wonder how he could breathe. Then I stopped caring as he plunged his tongue inside me, fucking me with it in deep, languid strokes.

My mouth hung open, panting breaths spilling from me as I drank in the sight of him between my thighs. His shoulders were insane. That playful lick of hair had fallen over his forehead again, making him look like a pirate. A sexy, Scottish pirate.

“Play with your tits,” he murmured between his wicked kisses.

I dragged in enough oxygen to gasp, “What?”

Green eyes met mine, humor and heat dancing in the emerald depths. “You heard me.” His pink tongue lashed out, flicking over my clit.

“Shit!” I released my death grip on the sheets and palmed my breasts as he looked on, withholding his tongue like he wanted to make sure I obeyed before he gave it to me again. But he would. Because I wanted it, and he knew it. He’d spoken my fantasies aloud as if he read them from a book. As unsettling as it was, it was also strangely freeing. If I couldn’t hide my desires from him, I might as well enjoy myself.

I pinched my nipples, rolling the taut peaks between my fingertips.

“Aye,” he growled, planting another soft kiss on my clit. “That’s a good lass.” He slid his thumbs up either side of my pussy, gliding easily over my wet, swollen lips. He lifted his head, and something hot and possessive moved through his eyes. “You may have taken others into your bed before, lass. But you’ll never take another, save for our mate.” Thumbs on either side of my pussy, he spread me lewdly. “You won’t want to, witchling, because I’m going to train this pussy to purr at my command.” He lowered his head and resumed his feast.

As fresh pleasure assailed me, I was lost. I tried to muster up some kind of clever retort to counter his masculine arrogance. But I couldn’t speak with his tongue making firm circuits around the exact place I needed him to be. Just as my orgasm approached again, he switched to slow, languorous licks that landed everywhere but my clit.

“No,” I groaned, stretching the word out as I thrust my pussy shamelessly at his face.

He carried on with his torment, sucking down my folds before blowing gently on my poor, neglected clit. “I’m going to be so good at this, Georgie,” he said, his hot breath coasting over my drenched, quivering opening. “So good that you’ll be a slave to my tongue.”

Gods, I was halfway there already—especially with him edging me so cruelly. When he paused his ministrations to press a damp kiss on each of my inner thighs, I sobbed,

desperate for release. I plucked at my nipples as my inner muscles clamped repeatedly. I wanted him inside me. Even as I thought it—and felt the unmistakable tingling of an oncoming orgasm—I knew he wouldn't let me come yet. I bucked helplessly, chasing the speed and friction he denied me.

He slid his hands under my ass, spreading me wider and raising my pussy to his mouth. He kissed and licked and nibbled, and I sank my fingers into his hair and threw my head back. Every tease of his tongue and every brush of his stubble drove my need to a fever pitch. “Oh fuck, oh fuck, oh fuck,” I babbled, my body trembling. “Don't stop. Please, don't stop.” I was close...so close.

He stopped, snatching my orgasm right out from under me.

“No!” I levered myself onto my elbows as he rose to his knees and stroked his cock. “Finish me off, you Scottish douchebag!”

“Douchebag?” He continued working his dick, which was ramrod straight and leaking precome. The muscles in his forearm flexed, and it was sexy and infuriating. “That's not very nice, Georgie.”

“You deserve it.”

He smiled, his mouth and chin shiny with my arousal. He shoved his free hand through his hair, smoothing the unruly waves. Then he dragged it over the lower half of his face and licked the moisture from his palm.

A whimper escaped me.

“You said we shouldn't,” he pointed out, his tone light and reasonable.

The nerve. I narrowed my eyes. “You said you know what I want.”

“Aye.”

“Apparently not, because I want you to finish what you started.” In case there was any doubt, I spread my legs wider and pointed to my clit. “Now.”

In response, he swiped moisture from my pussy and spread it over his cock, his big hand working my juices up and down his shaft. It was so filthy and so fucking hot, I couldn’t decide if I wanted to punch him or kiss him.

“You like this, lassie?” he asked, a knowing look in his eyes. Gods, I could hear his strokes, the sound of my moisture on his shaft unbearably arousing.

I reached a hand between my legs to finish myself off. Quick as lightning, Callum caught my wrist and pinned it next to my head. He caught the fist I swung at him and pinned that one, too, and then I had six-and-a-half feet of aroused Scotsman stretched over me, his massive dick lodged against my pussy. His mouth hovered above mine, our breaths mingling. My breasts mashed against his chest. I strained against his grip, testing his strength. As expected, I couldn’t budge him.

“You don’t want me to let you go,” he murmured, the teasing notes gone from his voice. Despite the dominance of his position, his eyes were tender. “And I never will, witchling. Not for as long as we live.” He kissed the tip of my nose. “Now let me love you, lass. Let me show you how well we fit together.”

My breath caught. Was I really going to do this? Let this man—this dragon—claim me? Because this was more than sex. If Callum’s intentions hadn’t been clear before, they were now.

Page 10

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:02 am

They'll just take you, Georgie, and they'll never let you go.

Never was a long time for an immortal. Could I commit to a man I'd just met? Gods, I could hear the gossip now. The elders would call me irresponsible. Other witches might settle for something more blunt, like "lizard lover" or "dragon ho."

A breeze stirred—warm and soft. My magic flared, reaching for it, and the breeze streaked to the bed and ruffled Callum's hair. That playful lock had disappeared when he smoothed his hand over it. The current teased it out again, arranging the twist of dark blond hair over his forehead just so.

He smiled and tipped his head back a bit, closing his eyes as he let the wind have its way with him.

My heart thumped harder. A deep, unfathomable knowing filled me. Maybe it was foolishness. Maybe it was lust. But my gut told me it was real.

Fate.

Air was a wild element. Difficult to control. It had a will of its own. But it had never lied to me.

Callum lowered his head and opened his eyes. He had the thickest eyelashes—curly and tipped with gold on the ends.

"Yes," I said, stroking his jaw. "Make love to me."

His lips curved. “Ah, lassie, that’s the right answer.” He claimed my mouth, his kiss giving me my own wicked taste. Slowly, he released my wrists and settled more firmly against me. He reached down and notched his cockhead against my opening, and he swallowed my gasp as he slid inside me in one smooth thrust.

Thick. Full. Perfect. He stretched me, his cock leaving no quarter. But I didn’t want mercy. I wanted every hot, rigid inch.

“Gods,” I breathed against his lips as he held still inside me, giving me a moment to adjust.

He’d been the king of control from the moment we locked eyes in the Great Hall, but now his voice shook as he withdrew slowly and then thrust all the way back inside. “Fuck, Georgie, you feel so good on my dick.” He gave me another thrust, and his breath fluttered over my lips. “Just as you should, lass.”

I wrapped my legs around his hips and lifted my head so I could slant my lips over his and do a little claiming of my own.

His growl of approval vibrated against my breasts. Hips rolling, he braced one forearm next to my head and ran his other hand down my flank to grip my ass. He pulled my cheek wide and deepened his thrusts, settling into a rhythm that dragged his cock over my clit.

“Callum,” I moaned, slinging my arms around his neck and moving with him.

“Aye, darlin’. That’s me inside you. My big dick. Do you like it?”

“Yes. Gods, yes.”

“Take it, then. Every inch is for you.” He fucked me harder, rocking the huge bed as

he moved his lips to my jaw. He kissed down my neck to the hollow of my throat, and he whispered against my fluttering pulse. “I’ll take care of you, witch.”

Even drunk out of my mind with lust, I managed to inject a level of cheek into my voice. “Maybe I’ll take care of you, dragon.”

His lips curved against my throat. “Deal.”

He quickened his thrusts, pounding into me. Eventually, his pace grew too frantic, and he rose to his knees, gripped me around the hips, and jerked me into him.

“Yes!” I wrapped my hands around my thighs and pulled my knees wide. “Fuck me, Callum! Fuck me hard.”

His eyes glittered as he turned feral, drilling into me with deep, savage strokes. Sweat sheened his shoulders. His mouth hung open, his breaths coming in animalistic grunts. His balls smacked my ass. Skin slapped skin. We descended into something brutal and fierce.

A claiming. And it went both ways, I realized. Maybe this man was taking me—but I was taking him, too.

“Come for me, Georgie,” he growled, and he pressed my knee to my shoulder and used his other hand to give my clit small, furious strokes.

Friction.

Pressure.

Perfect.

I detonated, my vision blurring as I screamed my release. My pussy spasmed, clamping on Callum's thrusting dick. He followed with a roar, burying himself to the hilt and pumping hot come inside me. His fingers continued those exquisite circles on my clit until I grew too sensitive, and then he pulled his hand away, gripped my jaw, and seized my mouth in a savage kiss.

Page 11

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:02 am

His dick twitched inside me as he collapsed on top of me, his tongue tangling with mine. His strong arms circled me, and then he rolled us so we lay on our sides, my thigh hooked over his hip. After a moment, he broke off the kiss and rested his forehead against mine.

A current flowed around us, cooling the sweat on my skin as Callum spoke in a low, foreign tongue, the sibilant sounds overlapping and lifting the hair on my nape. Dragon language. I'd never heard it. Only dragons could speak it. Legend said it couldn't be written down. It wrapped around me now, caressing my limbs with ghostly hands. It followed all the paths Callum had blazed across my body, marking me in every intimate place he'd kissed and stroked. I didn't need a translation to know what it meant.

Callum had claimed me. I was bound to a dragon for life.

He lifted his head. The glow in his eyes faded, his irises dimming to a shade that could pass for human. He pulled a lock of hair off my sweaty neck and held it up. At once, the black strands curled around his fingers. He smiled.

“Mine.”

Chapter Four

GEORGIE

An hour later, I stood before the mirror in Callum's bathroom with my hair piled on top of my head and a towel wrapped around me.

I just fucked one of the dragons.

Like, fucked him fucked him. My pussy still ached from the things he'd done with that battering ram dick of his. Not to mention his mouth.

But that wasn't the part the elders would care about. Well, it was like item two or three on the list of things they'd care about. Because the first item—written in big, bold letters—was that I'd let a dragon claim me. Forever. I stared at my reflection and imagined myself standing before the elders. “Well, you see, gentlemen, his cunnilingus was just that good.”

“I am so fucked,” I whispered to the mirror.

A knock on the door made me jump. Before I could say anything, it swung open, and Callum's broad shoulders filled the doorway. He was shirtless, his mouthwatering pecs gleaming through the steam that rolled from the bathroom. The lines of tattoos marched down his ribcage and stretched toward his rock-hard abs. A pair of jeans rode so low on his hips, it was obvious he hadn't bothered putting his underwear back on.

I swallowed the moan that tried to climb up my throat.

“Brought your things,” he said, bringing a hand up. My backpack dangled from two of his fingers. The same fingers he'd used to—

Nope. Not going there.

“Why bother knocking if you're just going to barge in?” I demanded, swiping my backpack from him. My towel slipped, and I dropped the pack and tucked the corner of the towel more firmly inside the material across my breasts.

Callum leaned against the jamb and gave me a knowing look. “You’re freaking out.”

“No, I’m not.”

“Aye, you are. You’re rethinking everything, witchling. Questioning fate.”

I narrowed my eyes. “You said your gift is reading desires, not minds.”

“That’s true.” He waggled his eyebrows. “And I’m verra gifted.”

Ugh. That accent. It got heavier during sex. Although, I suspected he purposely laid it on thick. I could hardly blame him. Scottish Highlanders had been making women drop their panties for hundreds of years. It was the kilts. How was any red-blooded female supposed to resist a brawny man in one of those things? They were sex traps. And the Scots knew exactly what they were doing. They were a menace walking around in their pleated tartan making women fantasize about getting railed on the side of a mountain.

Suddenly, Callum’s eyes glowed that eerie, otherworldly green. He tilted his head. “You want me to fuck you in a kilt, lass?”

I pointed toward the bedroom behind him. “Get out.”

“Going at each other right out in the open?” Despite his scandalized expression, amusement danced in his eyes. “You’ll get us arrested.”

“Out!” I shoved him—and it was annoying knowing I only did so because he consented to be moved—then reached for a current. I caught just enough wind to shut the door on his grinning, sexy face.

Dammit.

Muttering, I pulled clothes from my backpack and dressed quickly, forgoing my barasta in favor of a thick, woolen sweater. Warming potions would only get me so far in the Arctic. And if I got past the White Gate, potions would be no help at all. According to my research, the temperatures that far North were so extreme they tested even an immortal's endurance.

I was kneeling in the middle of the bathroom stuffing a puffer jacket into my backpack when Callum's deep voice rumbled through the door again.

Page 12

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:02 am

“There’s a visitor out here for you, witchling.”

I froze, wariness rising. Who would visit me at Castle Beithir? The elders couldn’t know about my mating already, could they? “Who is it?”

“The Consort.”

Shit! I stood so quickly that I banged my knee on the vanity. “Shit!”

“Everything all right, lass?”

“Yes,” I hissed, gripping the edge of the sink as I shook off the pain. I yanked the towel from my head, finger-combed my hair into some semblance of order, and squared my shoulders. It’s just Niall, I told myself. I already had Cormac’s permission to approach the Oracle.

Wait. Did I?

“Witchling?”

“Coming!” Gods, I had to stop answering to that ridiculous nickname. With a deep breath, I opened the door and stepped into the bedroom. The men stood on the rug before the hearth. Callum had put a shirt on, thank the gods, but his hair was still tousled from me using it as a leash. Niall was as menacing as ever, the inky threads of his barasta appearing to move in the firelight.

“Ah, here she is,” Callum said, moving toward me. His green eyes twinkled as he

lifted my hand and kissed my knuckles. “You look fetching in that sweater,” he murmured. “It puts a bloom in your cheeks.”

“Thanks,” I said through clenched teeth. Damn him, he knew it wasn’t the sweater making me blush. I reclaimed my hand and faced Niall. “You wanted to see me?”

“Aye.” He strolled forward, his boots ringing against the polished hardwood. “I bring a message from King Cormac.”

“Yes?” I held my breath.

“First, he offers his congratulations on finding your mate.”

“Thanks,” Callum said, the satisfaction on his face strong enough to power a large city for a month.

Niall gave him a mildly exasperated look before returning his gaze to me. “The king also gives his permission for you to approach the Oracle of the North Wind.”

Relief rushed through me. “Thank you. And King Cormac.”

Niall’s expression sobered. “This quest of yours is fraught with danger at every turn, lass. To reach the Oracle, you have to pass the White Gate. The Brotherhood of Ice Dragons is a dwindling order, but the handful of members who remain are fierce warriors. Graeme Abernathy is no exception. His castle is one of the most inhospitable fortresses in the world. But it’s not nearly as inhospitable as its master.”

Shivers prickled down my arms. “I know. I’ve studied the Brotherhood.” After the elders announced my quest, I’d spent days huddled in the library at House Blackwood’s headquarters in Manhattan. I’d devoured every scrap of information I could find about the Brotherhood of Ice Dragons. Before the dragons’ females died

off, some of the males had undergone an elaborate, mysterious ritual to freeze their hearts. Once frozen, their hearts didn't beat—and they became incapable of feeling emotion. This meant they could never fall in love. It also meant they were impossible to kill. Everyone knew the only surefire way to kill a dragon was to kill one or both of his mates.

But the ice dragons didn't have mates, and they never would. This made them formidable weapons—and the perfect candidates to guard the immortal world's most priceless treasures.

Like the Oracle of the North Wind.

Niall's expression stayed solemn. "I don't doubt that you studied, Georgina, but I can say with authority that none of the books you read tell the full tale. It's been centuries since Cormac outlawed the practice of creating ice dragons. He'd already soured on it when Graeme approached him. At the time, our women were starting to fall ill and die. Cormac permitted Graeme to join the Brotherhood against his better judgment. Cormac regrets the decision."

Callum looked at Niall sharply. "He does?"

Niall nodded without taking his eyes off me. "I'm not one to trumpet others' tragedies, but in this case I believe it's important for you to know what you're facing. Graeme Abernathy joined the Brotherhood after he lost his mate."

Callum paled. "I didn't know that."

"Well," Niall said, tossing Callum a look, "you're naught but a bairn among our kind." Despite his teasing words, a shadow moved through Niall's eyes. "It happened centuries ago. I'm not sure how Hamish died, but I believe it was some kind of accident. Graeme took his vows so he could stay alive. Although, I'm not sure you

can call that kind of existence a life. Losing a mate is..." He cleared his throat. "It's not something dragons can endure. History tells us only a few have managed it, and only due to some kind of magical intervention."

"Like freezing their hearts," I said, goosebumps lifting on my skin. I had to agree with Niall: a life without emotion was hardly a life at all. Why would Graeme seek it out? From what I knew of dragons, most followed their deceased mates into death.

Callum's air of mischief disappeared, and a sense of readiness took its place. He looked ready to spring into action at the first sign of danger. "You should reconsider this quest of yours, witchling."

My heart sped up. "I can't. Trust me, I'm not looking forward to slogging through the snow and hoping the ice dragon's castle doesn't eat me. But I have to fulfill this quest."

"Why? What's so important about it?"

Page 13

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:02 am

Abruptly, I remembered he hadn't been in the Great Hall when I explained the reason behind my mission. And the two of us hadn't done much talking. Because our mouths had been otherwise occupied. Then we'd entered into a lifelong mate bond.

Fresh panic rose.

I shoved it aside. "I was predicted to be the greatest air witch of my generation."

Pride shone in Callum's eyes. "That's hardly a surprise. I felt your currents playing with my hair. And it was sexy when you flexed your power against me a moment ago."

Heat rose in my cheeks, and I avoided looking at the bed as I said, "Unfortunately, I haven't lived up to my potential. I have power—a lot of it, actually. I've always been able to draw the wind. But I can't control it."

Niall grunted softly. "Air is a fickle element. It takes years to master."

"True, but my skill level has stayed status quo for decades." I sighed. "The Council of Elders won't accept me as my father's successor unless I prove I can harness the wind."

Callum scoffed. "By giving you an impossible task? That's hardly fair."

"Maybe not, but I don't have a choice."

"Aye, you do. You can stay here where it's safe."

“No,” I said firmly. “I’m going North. My father wanted me to lead House Blackwood, and I will.”

Callum studied me. Then he nodded. “Right, then. We’ll leave in the morning.”

My jaw dropped. “We?” I shook my head. “You can’t come.”

“You can’t stop me.”

“I didn’t invite you.”

“Then I’ll take my own trip to the Oracle. I’ll walk next to you.”

Frustration rose. “That’s absurd.”

Callum shrugged.

Niall folded his arms as if he was settling in for a show.

I pinned Callum with what I hoped was a stern expression. “I have to capture the wind by myself.”

“I won’t interfere, witchling.”

“I have to do this alone,” I said.

“Too bad. I’m yours now. And if you think you’re walking into the Arctic and facing off with an ice dragon alone, you’re dreaming.”

“You can’t come,” I said through clenched teeth.

“Doing it.”

“Don’t you have a job here?” Oh gods, I didn’t even know what he did for a living. Maybe he was unemployed. The elders would love it.

“Not anymore,” he said cheerfully. “I was training to become a Sovereign Guard for the king, but mated males can’t serve. So I’ll just guard you now.”

I looked at Niall.

His gaze was mild. “You mated a dragon, lass. We protect what’s ours.” His dark eyes flicked to my new, infuriating mate. “Callum is a solid warrior and a good male, even if he’s a pain in the arse sometimes.”

Callum gave a good-natured laugh. “You’re one to talk, Cousin.”

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:02 am

I almost swallowed my tongue. “Cousin?”

“Distant,” Niall said, and now unmistakable mirth gleamed in his eyes as he looked at me. “I suppose you and I are related now. Does that make you feel better or worse?”

“I think I’d feel better if you hadn’t recently killed one of your relatives,” I said bluntly.

A mysterious little smile played around Niall’s mouth. “Then you’ll be relieved to know Mullo’s death came at the hands of Chloe Drexel, mate to Lachlan MacKay and Alec Murray. She’s human, but she’s also a donum. Mullo never saw her coming. She slipped under his defensive spells and turned all his elements against him.”

I knew my shock showed on my face. Donums were exceedingly rare. Throughout history, they’d been highly prized. They could siphon power from any magical creature. For short periods, they could wield the powers they drained. Human donums were almost unheard of.

Niall walked to the door. Hand on the knob, he looked over his shoulder. “My grandfather was taken down by the unlikeliest opponent. Sometimes, the things we overlook are the most powerful. And the most dangerous. Don’t forget that as you travel North.”

“I won’t,” I said.

He nodded. “Do you have a gift to offer Graeme?”

“Yes.” Tradition dictated that anyone approaching the Oracle brought a gift for the ice dragon. Apparently, the Brotherhood didn’t take vows of poverty when they froze their hearts. My father’s dagger rested at the bottom of my backpack. The blade was spelled to cut through any object without breaking or growing dull, which made it useful for torture. As gross as that was, the spell was lost to history, making the dagger the only one of its kind in the world. I had to hope it was valuable enough to satisfy Graeme Abernathy.

A smile touched Niall’s lips. “Well, then,” he said softly, “good luck to you, Georgina Blackwood.”

He left, and for a moment, Callum and I stared at the door. At last, I turned to him.

“You really won’t stay behind?”

He met my gaze, determination in his green eyes. “Not a chance.”

Arguing with him was a losing battle. I was certain of it. “Fine, but I’m in charge.”

A slow, lazy smile spread across his face. “Och, lassie, that’s one of my kinks.”

Chapter Five

CALLUM

The only thing better than seeing Georgie Blackwood from the frontside was seeing her from the backside.

Because, damn, what a backside. Sunlight sparkled over the snow that dusted her sweet curves, making it look like her lower half was sprinkled with diamonds.

I thrust my hiking poles into the snow and pushed forward, my gaze on my witch's plump ass and long, toned legs. Thank fuck for lycra. Or whatever that tight, black material was. Assuming we made it out of the Arctic alive, I was going to write a sonnet about it.

"I think I can get us closer."

Maybe an entire saga. It wasn't like I was hurting for inspiration.

"Callum!"

I brought my head up just as Georgie stopped and glared at me over her shoulder.

"Did you hear what I said?" she demanded. Her cheeks were flushed the same deep pink as her pouty mouth. She'd plaited her hair in two fat, black braids that streamed over her shoulders. Snow dotted the thick, glossy strands. More snow clung to her spiky eyelashes. Her knit cap made it hard to tell if she was frowning, but judging from the way her purple eyes narrowed further, she probably was.

As it turned out, my witchling was a no-nonsense sort of leader. She'd pushed us hard since we started across the snow. My quads were screaming, but I didn't dare complain. The quest was obviously important to her. I wouldn't do anything to slow her down.

I leaned on my pole and offered her my most charming smile. "I heard you, love. You think you can get us closer to the White Gate. I assume you mean pulling us through the currents like you did before." Which had been a distinctly unpleasant experience. I took shadow form on the regular, so whipping through air shouldn't have bothered me. But my shift was effortless, my movements controlled.

Georgie's method of travel was nothing of the sort. One minute, we'd stood in the

courtyard of Castle Beithir. The next, we were in the center of an honest-to-goodness hurricane. “Hang onto me!” Georgie had yelled, her hair whipping about us. Then she’d yanked me into the chaos. We’d staggered through the wind and into the center of Manhattan. Two more of those trips had landed us somewhere south of the North Pole. A final hair-raising hop had spit us into Gelhella, the magical plane that hid the Oracle from human eyes. All in all, the journey from Scotland to the Arctic had taken twenty minutes.

I wasn’t keen to repeat the exercise.

“Yeah,” Georgie said now, looking around at the mountains of snow and ice. “I just worry about getting stuck.”

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:02 am

Apprehension drifted through me. “Stuck?”

“Uh-huh.” She twisted all the way around, her gaze on the snowy wasteland that stretched for miles in every direction. “I can only travel the wind to places I’ve been before.”

“You’ve been to Gelhella?” Like most magical planes, it sat like a layer over its human version. But Gelhella was even more desolate than its non-magical counterpart. The place was winter on steroids, and with none of the charm. Not a polar bear or cute penguin in sight.

“My father insisted I visit all the magical planes,” Georgie said. “He wanted me to be able to travel freely, but Gelhella is so cold I didn’t go far before I chickened out and caught a current home.” Her tone grew distracted as she peered into the distance. “Still, some of this looks familiar. I feel like I could get us closer...”

“Just out of curiosity, lass, what happens in one of these stuck scenarios?”

“Well, we’d wander for a bit—”

“Wander through the hurricane?” Because hell no.

She looked at me, her frown deepening. “Is that what it felt like to you?”

Alarms blared in my head. The lads liked to give me shit for my heritage but my incubus blood was good for a few things, and one of those things was knowing when a woman was gearing up to use my intestines as a necklace. Maybe some nice kidney

earrings to match.

I straightened, and then made my face the picture of a reasonable, supportive male. “Your wind felt just fine to me, witchling. But don’t you think you should conserve your power?” I nodded toward the snowy dunes to our right. “I could shift and fly us over much of this terrain.” I’d suggested it as soon as we stumbled into the Arctic, but Georgie had promptly quashed that idea, arguing that it was foolish to waste my energy flying in such difficult conditions. She had a point. My wings would ice over quickly, requiring frequent stops. On the other hand, feeling her sleek thighs squeezing my flanks would have been well worth the hassle.

She gazed at the dunes, obviously reconsidering her decision. Then she shook her head. “No. We don’t know what kind of reception we’ll get when we reach the White Gate. If we have to fight, we’ll need your strength.”

Desire curled through my limbs—and settled in my dick, which decided it operated just fine in subzero temperatures. I reached out and tugged one of Georgie’s plaits. “You think I’m strong.”

She rolled her eyes. “Don’t get ahead of yourself.”

“You like my muscles, witchling. You’ll hear no kink-shaming from me.”

“That’s not a kink.”

“It is when you think about it as often as you do.”

Her cheeks went a touch pinker. “I can pull the air from your lungs, dragon.”

“Something to try in the bedroom later.”

Her sigh of exasperation puffed white in the air, but her voice held a tremor of amusement as she turned and started walking again. “Are you ever serious?”

“All the time,” I said, falling into step beside her. “Especially when it’s about fucking you senseless.”

“We’ve slept together once.”

“Aye, and it’s now my life’s goal to remedy that oversight.”

She laughed, and the low, throaty sound immediately made me adjust my life goals. In my head, I scribbled out fuck Georgie senseless and wrote make Georgie laugh as much as possible.

Well, maybe they could be concurrent goals.

I speared my hiking pole into a chunk of snow. “Once I use my big muscles to power past the White Gate, what comes next?”

She slanted me a look. “What do you mean?”

“The North Wind is sentient, yes? That’s what makes it an Oracle.”

“Yes. I mean, that’s what I’ve read.”

“So do we have to fight it or something? Or is it like you answer a riddle or sit down and play a game of chess with it?”

“Don’t make fun.”

“I’m not.”

“Mmhmm.” She shoved her own pole into the ice. “Anyway, I’m not exactly sure what to expect. According to my research, everyone has a slightly different experience. A lot of people visit oracles to ask for wisdom, but nothing says you can’t ask for a favor.”

“So you’re going to ask it to come with you?”

She looked at me, her eyes swimming with worry. “Is that dumb?”

“No,” I said, meaning it. “Seems like a better approach than trying to wrestle it into submission.”

“Yeah.” She faced ahead. After a moment, she spoke in a low voice. “But I truly don’t know what I’m doing, Callum.”

I tugged her to a stop and touched her jaw. “Hey, that’s not true.”

“It kind of is, though,” she said with a shaky laugh. “I’ve tried to imagine how I’m going to make this work, but I don’t have a solid plan. I’m not like all the famous immortals in the stories who set out on epic quests and walked away from an oracle with new powers or priceless knowledge.”

“Yes, you are.” I traced my gloved finger along her cheek because I couldn’t help it. “You think those immortals weren’t nervous? That they never worried about the outcome or doubted their chances of success?”

“Probably,” she murmured.

“Definitely.” I leaned in and brushed a kiss over her cheek, my lips following the path of my finger. When I pulled back, she was smiling.

“What was that for?”

I shrugged. “You needed it. And you’re beautiful. And I wanted to.”

Her smile turned into a laugh. “In that order?”

“You’ll never know,” I said with a wink. “I like to cultivate an air of mystery.”

She shook her head, but her smile lingered as we started forward again. The landscape was as barren as ever, but the air felt warmer now that I’d chased the worry from her eyes. I sneaked glances at her, making sure it stayed away. We lapsed into a comfortable silence, our boots crunching in the snow.

“I love that sound,” I said after a moment.

Georgie shot me a startled look. “Me too.”

A smile tugged at my mouth, and I let it win as tenderness stole through me. “Of course you do. We’re fated to be together.”

She didn’t reply at first. We crunched side by side, our hiking poles stabbing through the icy crust that covered the snow. Then she looked up at me. “You really believe that, don’t you?”

“It’s not a belief. I know it.” I returned her gaze. “Don’t tell me witches don’t believe in fate.”

“We do. It’s just...” She shook her head. “The houses are mired in politics. Most witches marry for power or position. My parents loved each other, but their union was grounded in the desire to produce a powerful heir.”

“And they did.”

She sighed. “Unfortunately, they didn’t.”

“You seem to wield power just fine to me. You flew us through the wind from Scotland to the Arctic. The savings on plane tickets alone is impressive, Georgie.”

She laughed, but then she shook her head. “Grabbing the wind has never been my problem. I can catch it, but I can never seem to hold it.” Her brow furrowed, and she appeared to grope for an explanation. “Have you ever seen a baseball game where an outfielder is backing up, glove in the air, ready to catch a fly ball? And it hits his glove and for a second, he’s got it, and the whole stadium is ready to celebrate, but then it pops out of his glove, and everyone groans? That’s me with the wind. I get so close, and then everything goes wrong. I can grab the wind, but I always drop it.”

My heart ached for her. I knew next to nothing about witchcraft, but I knew how much the witches coveted power—and reviled those who had little of it. “Maybe it’s as the Consort said. Given enough time, you’ll master your element.”

“Not quickly enough for the elders of House Blackwood. They won’t settle for anyone less powerful than my father. To be honest, I understand their position. My father’s power kept our enemies at bay. If I take over without proving myself, the other houses will circle like vultures.” She gestured toward the expanse of snow ahead of us. “Which is why I’m currently trekking through a frozen void to possibly die at the hands of an ice dragon.”

“No one is dying today, lassie.” I lifted one of my hiking poles and curled my bicep.

“Not with these muscles.” When she laughed, I placed a big, bold check on my mental list. We walked for a few more minutes, and I gentled my tone. “You speak of your father in the past tense.”

“Yes.”

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:02 am

“How did you lose him, lass? If you don’t mind me asking.”

“I don’t mind,” she said softly. “He died after a duel. Both of my parents died that way, actually. They were legendary duelists among the houses.” She gave me an inscrutable look. “Do you know how dueling works among witches?”

I did, but I wanted to hear it from her. I wanted her voice in my ears and her explanations instead of the scraps of knowledge I’d picked up here and there. “A little.”

“Every witch is born with a root element. For example, Niall Balfour’s element is water. Mine is air, obviously. But most witches want to gain others. In rare instances, a witch might receive an element as a gift. But more often, we duel for them. The winner rips their opponent’s element away by force. Losing it will weaken a witch for a time, however, we recover eventually.”

“But not if you lose your root element,” I said, and I stopped her with a hand on her shoulder. “I’m sorry, lass. I had no idea you were all alone in the world. But you’re not alone anymore.” I tossed my hiking poles to the ground and pulled one of my gloves off so I could brush my thumb over her bottom lip. “You’ve got me. We came together in a rush, and I’m not complaining. But I know you need more. I’ll give it to you. I’ll give you everything.”

Her lashes fluttered as she drew an unsteady breath. “Callum...”

My magic tugged in the center of my chest. I let it have its way for a moment, and faint images spun behind my eyes as I gazed at my mate. “I’m going to erase all those

doubts that keep bouncing around your pretty head, witchling.”

“I’m glad you didn’t say pretty little head.”

“Aye, I try not to be an idiot.”

Her lips curved. As fast as it came, her smile faded. “You don’t have any doubts? About us, I mean?”

“Not a one. You’re everything I ever wanted.” My voice went husky as I stroked my thumb over her mouth again. She had the most adorable spray of tiny freckles across the bridge of her nose. “You’re perfect, Georgie.”

Her desire swirled into my nostrils, the heady scent curling phantom fingers around my dick and stroking hard. I suppressed a groan as I rested my forehead against hers. “I want to give you that spanking you’re thinking about.”

Purple eyes jumped to mine. “Wh-What?”

“You heard me,” I murmured.

“You say that a lot.”

“You pretend to misunderstand a lot.” I tipped her chin up and kissed her. And, oh, she was sweet. And warm. Even in the depths of eternal winter, Georgie set me aflame. I cupped her face in both hands and tangled my tongue with hers, drinking her in. Drowning in her. She was cherry blossoms and vanilla and a hint of something deliciously dark and wicked.

“Witchy,” I murmured against her mouth. “Mmm, Georgie, I want to fuck you right here in the snow.” Her breath hitched, and I slid my hands down her body to her

backside that had been teasing me all day. I grabbed two handfuls of firm, round bottom and squeezed. “As soon as we’re done with this quest, I’m going to put my handprints all over your arse. Spread you over my thighs and swat these pretty cheeks until they’re hot and pink.”

“I... I don’t know...”

“You’ll say yes.” I nipped her bottom lip. “You’ll say yes several times, actually. Over and over, begging me like the good little witch you are. And when I tell you to part your thighs, you’ll obey, Georgie mine. Let me slide my fingers from your pink arse to your pink pussy, where you’ll be so slick for me. I can’t wait. Gonna lick you off my fingers and go back for seconds.”

“Fuck,” she gasped, gripping my jacket in two tight fists.

“Make that bad little witch.” I swatted her ass, and she squealed against my mouth. “I should punish you for making me hard in the most inconvenient sex location known to man.”

Her shaky laughter puffed over my chin. “You are one filthy dragon.”

“I am, sweetheart.” I kissed my way down her neck and nosed her turtleneck aside so I could suck at her skin. I spoke in between kisses and gentle bites. “I’m a...filthy...besotted...incorrigible beastie.” But I was also in very real danger of doing something stupid like making love to her in the middle of Gelhella. As much as I wanted to curl up in her heat and stay there for an age, I wouldn’t put her in danger. Summoning every ounce of willpower I possessed, I pulled back. “We should keep moving.”

For a moment, she swayed, her eyes heavy-lidded with desire. Then she shook herself, the blush in her cheeks spreading down her neck. “Of course.” She cleared

her throat and launched into a flurry of fussy movements, straightening her hat and patting her braids into place. As I retrieved my hiking poles, she called out, “Wait!”

I froze, my senses primed for an attack. “What is it?”

“The tip of your nose is pink.” She unzipped her jacket and retrieved a small glass bottle. She hesitated as she uncorked it. “It’s a warming potion. You, um, don’t have to take it if you’re nervous.”

She thinks I don’t trust her. She had good reason. Among the Firstborn Races, witches had a reputation for sneakiness. They sold their spells and curses, mixing the incantations into potions and poisons. The witches claimed they were simply doing business, and they didn’t discriminate when it came to their clientele. They’d sell to one man on Monday and turn around and sell to his enemy on Tuesday. The majority of immortals considered those practices dishonorable. Untrustworthy.

I took the bottle from her and sniffed it. “Smells nice. Potions are good, right?”

“Right. They’re infused with spells, which are benevolent.”

“And poisons are bad. You load them up with curses.”

Page 18

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:02 am

“Yes,” she said. “Both are spoken. It’s the intent that makes the difference.”

I touched the tip of my tongue to the bottle’s rim. “Tastes good, too.”

Desire darted through her eyes. “I’m a decent potion master.”

“Shouldn’t it be mistress?” I asked, raising a brow. “Because I’m totally on board with that.”

“You just threatened to spank me,” she said dryly. “Now you’re submissive all of a sudden?”

“Correction, I promised to spank you. It’s happening, lass. Mark your calendar. How much of this should I drink?”

“Two sips. Small,” she emphasized as I tipped the bottle back.

The potion tasted as good as it smelled—and it worked like a charm. Instant heat spread through me, chasing away the chill that had seeped into my bones. “You’re brilliant, Georgie,” I said, handing the bottle over. “That was much better than decent.”

She took a sip.

“Mistress,” I added in a silky voice.

She gave me a reproachful look as she corked the bottle, but I wasn’t fooled. She

liked the compliment. I had a feeling she didn't receive enough of them. Another item to add to my list.

Fortified against the cold, we resumed our trek. The sun dipped lower in the sky, but it remained bright, its rays turning the snow into a field of crystals. Giant mounds of frozen snow loomed over us as we lumbered forward. I'd insisted on transferring most of Georgie's gear into my pack, which was stuffed with extra clothing and enough food for a week. She'd kept her backpack, though, and it bobbed with her movements. So far, the load didn't appear too heavy for her. Maybe I could move more of her gear to my pack when she wasn't looking...

"There!" she said, stopping and pointing. A castle tower peeked above the horizon, its stones sparkling white in the sun. Georgie looked at me. "It's the White Gate."

"Aye." And I hope it's not hungry. Unlike Georgie, I wasn't keen on research. I hadn't been the best student as a lad, and I preferred pop culture to the ancient sort. I didn't know a whole lot about the Brotherhood of Ice Dragons—a lack I seriously regretted now—but I knew the White Gate was enchanted as hell. The fortress protected the Oracle, and it ate people who approached without permission.

"Are you nervous?" Georgie asked, eyeing me.

"What?" I drew myself up. "Hardly."

"You look nervous." She patted my arm, then moved forward, heading toward the White Gate. "It's okay, dragon," she said over her shoulder, "I'll protect you."

Cheeky witchling. "I'm not nervous," I said, following.

"Try to keep up," she called.

I chuckled as I let her take the lead, my gaze fixed on her pert backside.

The fortress was farther away than it looked, and we walked another hour before the full structure appeared above the horizon. As King Cormac had promised, it was coated in ice, with four sturdy towers pierced with arrow slits. A massive portcullis covered the front gate, its thick metal teeth thrust into the ice at the fortress's base.

"Looks homey," I told Georgie, squinting against the castle's glare. The sun had sunken behind it, making the towers blush. If we were lucky, we'd reach the White Gate before the sun went down—or as far down as it would go in the Arctic in the middle of summer. I was building an argument for why we should stop and make camp for the night when Georgie asked, "So, how does it work?" She stabbed at the ice with her poles. "You're a dragon, but you're also an incubus."

I smiled. "You want to know which half is more dominant."

"I saw the faint outline of horns when we were"—she kept her gaze firmly on the snow in front of her as her voice caught—"together."

"A quirk of DNA, I suppose," I said. "My horns only appear when I'm feeding, and they're never solid. No one's really sure why it happens. There aren't a lot of demon-dragon halflings running around. Demons love their horns. My mam is vain about hers, but I've never really given a shite about not having any."

"Your mother... She's a succubus?"

"Aye. Alive and well with my fathers in the demon plane. The incubi kingdom is a merry place, as you might imagine. I'll take you some time."

"Are you the only incubus halfling?"

“At the moment, aye. And that’s unlikely to change. Dragons inherit secondary magical traits from their mothers, so any bairns you and I have will be half witch.” I shrugged. “Of course, we won’t have children until we find our mate.”

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw her gnaw at her lip. I knew what question was coming next, but I let her take her time asking it.

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:02 am

A second later, it came. “You, um, you’ve been with men? I mean, obviously, you have. It doesn’t bother me. I don’t want you to think...” She trailed off as I stopped and faced her. She stopped too, and her expression was an endearing mix of embarrassment and curiosity—and a healthy spark of desire.

“The answer is yes,” I said gently. “I take pleasure in men as well as women. I’m bisexual and polyamorous, lass, as all dragons are. In other eras, we didn’t have words for those things. We just were. We bond that way. We love that way. And we love deeply.” I lifted one of her braids and let the silky rope slide through my palm. “Sometimes, I think it was better when we didn’t have the words for it. Definitions can box you in. Make you think things have to be or look a certain way. But the only thing you need to know is that you’re meant for me and I’m meant for you. And when we find our mate, everything will fall into place the way it’s supposed to.”

“You sound so confident.”

“Because I am. Maybe we’ll have some growing pains, but we’ve got all the time in the world to figure it out.” I booped the tip of her nose with my finger. “It’s not like we’re going to meet our mate today, witchling.”

Her shoulders relaxed. “Well, that’s a relief.” A delightful kind of mischief sparked in her eyes. “You’re more than enough to handle for now.”

“Oh, lassie, now you’re speaking one of my love languages.”

A roar split the air, the sound so intense it shook the ground under my feet. I moved without thinking, shoving Georgie behind me. Then I ripped my coat off and drew a

blade.

Another roar burst my eardrums. Something really fucking big was coming.

“Stay back!” I barked at Georgie, my voice muffled as my ears repaired themselves. Just as they popped, a shadow swooped across the snow. I whirled, one arm flung out to make sure Georgie obeyed.

A dragon dropped out of the sky, his body obscuring the sun. His wings beat the air in great whooshing sweeps, pulling giant clouds of ice crystals from the ground. A long, spiked tail whipped back and forth as the dragon’s icy blue eyes focused on me...and then flicked to Georgie hovering at my shoulder. But his eyes weren’t the only icy thing about him. His entire body was a cold, sinister blue. Solid ice brought to life—so he could dole out death.

“Graeme Abernathy!” I shouted, drawing his stare. “We have permission from King Cormac to approach the Oracle of the North Wind!”

The dragon’s eyes narrowed.

Then he opened his mouth and issued a stream of blue fire.

Chapter Six

GEORGIE

Callum yanked me out of the fire’s path before I could scream.

The icy blast struck the spot where we’d stood, the impact sending a thick plume of snow flying into the air.

“Get down!” Callum yelled at me.

Was he kidding? Air was my element. And this was my quest. I wasn’t about to cower off to the side while he fought my battles for me.

I sprang away from him and ran, my boots kicking up snow. An ear-splitting screech filled my ears. A second later, blue fire seared the ground in front of me. Snow exploded in my face as I staggered back.

“Dammit, witchling!” Callum growled, clamping a hand on my shoulder and spinning me around. His green eyes flashed with warning. “I told you to—”

“I’m sorry but I have to do this,” I said, jerking away. Summoning my power, I swiped a hand through the air and caught a current. It thrashed in my hand, the tail jerking wildly. Gritting my teeth, I spun and flung it toward the ice dragon. The wind formed into a transparent spear that disrupted the air as it streaked to its target. It slammed into the dragon’s flank, sending him tumbling through the air like a log.

Triumph filled me as I tossed Callum a grin. I swiped the air again, harnessing a current and flinging it as hard as I could. It quickly formed into another spear, its tip speeding toward the dragon as he righted himself. Just before the spear struck, it abruptly changed course and broke apart. Shock waves rippled through the air like water disturbed by a skipping rock.

The ice dragon watched the ripples dissipate. Then he swung his gaze to me—and bared his fangs in a smile that promised retribution.

“Shit,” I muttered.

With a mighty flap of his wings, the ice dragon sped forward. Callum seized my shoulder again, and the world went sideways as he shoved me to the ground.

“Stay down!” he bellowed and then shifted to smoke. His clothes hung in the air for a split second before landing in a heap on the snow beside me. Where he’d stood, a thick, black cloud now hovered in the air. It shivered once, then hurtled toward the ice dragon. A heartbeat later, the cloud burst into a brilliant green dragon.

I sucked in a breath. Callum was beautiful—but he was half the size of Graeme Abernathy.

The dragons slammed into each other, their bodies colliding with a boom that echoed off the mountains of snow. Blue and orange flames erupted from their jaws. The blue fire caught Callum in the side of the face, and he shrieked and jerked his head back as he dug his claws into Graeme.

The ice dragon roared and flapped his wings, carrying Callum higher in the sky.

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:02 am

My heart hammered as I scrambled to my feet. The dragons continued ascending, claws and fangs flashing as they fought. For a second, it seemed like Callum had the upper hand. He freed himself and dipped under Graeme, dropping out of the larger dragon's sight. A second later, he sprang up behind Graeme.

I held my breath as pride blossomed in my chest. Callum was smaller, but he was quick. He could—

Graeme whipped one of his claw-tipped wings backward, nailing Callum in the snout. Callum screamed and listed to the left.

Graeme flipped around and flew at him.

“No!” I yelled.

This time, Graeme swung his tail. The barbed tip struck Callum in his hindquarters. Bright-red blood spurted and rained in gruesome droplets that dotted the snow.

I raced forward, stumbling and crying out. “Stop it!”

Callum tumbled, his fall uncontrolled. A scream lodged in my throat, but he flung his wings wide, halting his descent. He hung in the air and shook his head like a boxer stunned in the ring.

Graeme roared. Snapping his wings close to his body, he hurtled downward like a bullet, aiming straight for Callum.

“Stop!” I cried, running as I clawed currents from the air. I flung them—one from each hand—toward Graeme, but it was no use. He dodged both missiles easily and slammed into Callum with a sickening crunch. Callum’s blood splattered over the snow as he gave another agonized shriek.

My mate. Something unlocked inside me. A bolted door flew open, and searing rage boiled forth. With it came a deep sense of knowing. It welled from the depths of my soul and burned like a thousand torches. Callum was mine, and no one would take him from me. A roar filled my throat as the ice dragon sank his claws into Callum and bore him to the earth. He rode Callum to the ground, and they landed with a deafening crash that sent snow flying into the air like lava spewing from a volcano.

I pumped my arms, my hat flying off as I raced forward. The snow cleared, and I stumbled to a halt at the sight of a nude, bearded giant standing over an equally nude Callum sprawled on his back. Callum groaned, one hand clutching at his leg. Blood coated him from hip to ankle, but the gash in his thigh was already knitting back together.

“Thank goodness,” I said, relief pummeling me as I started forward again.

The giant faced me, the look in his pale blue eyes stopping me dead in my tracks. He didn’t appear angry. No murderous intent gleamed in his gaze.

Because nothing gleamed in his gaze—and the utter coldness was more terrifying than fury.

We faced off, Callum’s pained groans joining the erratic thumping of my heart. Graeme stood utterly motionless as he took my measure. He was the largest man I’d ever seen. At five-eleven, I was tall for a woman. But he had at least a foot on me. His body was corded with muscle that glistened in the sun. It was impossible to tell if his jaw was firm under all that beard, but instinct told me it was cut like steel. His

shoulders were two thick mounds covered with intricate tattoos that traveled down to fists the size of my head. Forget washboard abs. He had a whole laundromat, the grooves between the muscles cast in deep shadow.

The rest of him was just as enormous. The phrase “tree trunk thighs” had always sounded silly to me—an exaggeration gym bros used once all their brain cells died off. But Graeme Abernathy had a whole forest situation going on. My gaze strayed between his thighs, and I quickly yanked it up.

“Witch,” he rumbled, his voice deep and hoarse, as if he rarely used it. His frigid stare traveled slowly down my body. As it did, the wind shifted, carrying the metallic scent of Callum’s blood away from me. The breeze ruffled Graeme’s hair, which was a rich, dark brown in desperate need of a trim.

He brought his head up sharply, his nostrils flaring. For a second, his blank stare shifted, and his eyes filled with something that might have been surprise. Then he growled and stepped toward me, menace rolling off him in thick waves.

“You think to work your spells against me?” he demanded.

Confusion swept me. I backed up, my heart beating faster. Except dammit, retreating from a predator was almost always a bad idea, so I stopped and lifted my chin. “I can’t cast spells without speaking. And, anyway, that’s not why I came.”

“You shouldn’t have come. Now leave.” He turned and started toward Callum.

“Wait!” I lurched forward, my fingers itching to grab at the wind. As he swung back around, the breeze picked up, blowing harder in his direction. “That’s my dragon you injured. I want him back.”

A groove appeared between Graeme’s dark eyebrows. He stared, and that inscrutable

emotion flickered in his eyes again. Just as swiftly, it fled, a curtain of ice slamming over his eyes. “I don’t kill women. Go away.” He turned back to Callum.

“Don’t touch him!” I yelled, anger spiking as I rushed forward. I swiped the current from the air and tossed it at his back. It struck him between the shoulder blades and shoved him forward. Fast as lightning, he spun around and flung his arm out. Snow streaked across the distance between us and blasted me in the face.

I staggered backward, sputtering as ice crystals rushed into my nose and mouth. Just as I started to fall, a rough hand seized the front of my jacket and hauled me up. My toes scraped the ground as my vision cleared.

And filled with a thick brown beard and narrowed blue eyes. “You struck me,” Graeme growled.

I kicked, grateful for the boots that protected my toes as I made contact with his shins. I clawed at his fist under my chin. “I’ll do it again, asshole! Put me down!”

He grunted, but he showed no sign my struggles bothered him. He just stared at me as he dangled me in the air like a cartoon character. One of my braids flew up and slapped his jaw. Suddenly, he dropped me to the ground and stumbled back—and now the look in his eyes was unmistakable.

Fear.

Page 21

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:02 am

I scrambled to my feet, my chest heaving. How could he be afraid of me? I resisted the urge to look over my shoulder to see if some kind of monster had magically appeared.

As quickly as it arrived, the fear fled Graeme's eyes. The ice descended once more, and his voice went low and dangerous. "Leave."

"Not without Callum." As if I'd summoned him, Callum stirred in the snow behind Graeme. He lifted his head and blinked at me with bewildered green eyes.

"Georgie?"

"It's okay," I called out. "Don't move."

Callum's gaze sharpened as he took in Graeme. Callum's expression darkened, and he moved like he meant to stand.

"Stay down!" Graeme barked, swinging toward him.

I grabbed at Graeme, my fingers brushing his arm. "Leave him alone!"

The ice dragon swung back to me, his eyes glacially cold. "Don't touch me."

"Don't threaten her!" Callum growled, shooting to his feet. He stormed forward.

Graeme charged toward him. I reached for the wind. Everything slowed down.

Callum kept coming. Graeme roared and flung out his hand. A deadly looking icicle shot toward Callum. I screamed as Callum tried to jerk out of the way. The icicle sliced his hip. Blood sprayed.

I seized the current. Power boiled in my chest.

Graeme tossed a cloud of snow at Callum, who went down with a bellow.

I hurled the wind at Graeme, but he moved faster than I could track. Something hard and cold slammed into me, and I hit the ground. Snow crunched.

And everything went black.

Chapter Seven

GRAEME

I watched from the shadows.

It wasn't necessary. The witch and the lad were unconscious, and I was cloaked with power I'd inherited from my mother. But the shadows were safe. They were familiar, unlike the two who lay side by side on the bed before me.

A witch and one of my own kind. And they were mated. Even if the witch hadn't said so, I would have known from the way the lad fought to protect her. His ferocity had been foolhardy, but it was hardly a surprise.

What was a surprise was that she'd fought just as hard to protect him. And not necessarily because she was female. I'd encountered enough shieldmaidens to know women could be just as ruthless as men on the field of battle. But witches were a wily sort. Weak in body, they hid behind their potions and poisons. They hunted their own

kind, ripping elements from kinsmen for the sole purpose of amassing power.

But the raven-haired lass had looked ready to gut me if I touched the lad. Her eyes had glowed like amethysts as she bent the wind to her will. Unfortunately for her, the wind had proved too difficult to control.

Georgie. The lad had called her that. Unconventional, but it suited her somehow.

I tilted my head as I studied her and the contradictions she presented. I knew power. I'd always been able to sense it in others—another gift from my mother. The witch brimmed with it...but it spilled everywhere. She was like a goblet overflowing. Her magic made a mess of things.

Even so, she was a beauty. The fur I'd draped over her and the lad couldn't muffle her charms. Black hair. Skin like fresh cream. Tall and curvy in every place a man wanted to hang onto. Her arse was just as tempting as her tits, which were plump and round and probably crowned with nipples the same deep pink as her mouth. And her scent... When it hit me outside, I'd felt almost...drawn to her.

But that was impossible. More likely, she'd sewn some kind of defensive spell into her clothing. She didn't wear the embroidered jackets the witches favored, but that didn't mean she was unprotected. Undoubtedly, that tantalizing essence was some kind of trickery. A spell meant to throw me off balance. Get under my skin and sow confusion.

Whatever the scent was, it was as contradictory as the rest of her. Bright and sweet, but also dark and decadent. Like berries and hot candle wax that burns like the devil before it cools. And over all this lay a whiff of smoke—another reminder that she belonged to the lad.

I let my gaze wander to him. Callum. A solid Scottish name. He'd fought decently

outside, which meant someone much older had trained him. I didn't receive much news in Gelhella, but I knew the world had changed. Men no longer lived and died by the sword. But the boy had a swordsman's build, with thick shoulders and sculpted arms. He was a halfling, of course, although I couldn't pin down his mother's heritage. His hair was somewhere between brown and blond, as if it couldn't decide which color it wanted to be. But his eyes had made up their mind. They shone like emeralds, the pretty irises fringed by long, curly lashes. When I'd fought him, I'd noticed the ends were tipped with the most enchanting shade of gold—

I jerked away from the wall, a frown tugging at my forehead. What did I care what color the lad's eyelashes were?

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:02 am

He stirred on the bed, and I held my breath. A second later, he sat up. The fur fell to his lap as he swept his gaze around the tower room, clearly scanning for threats. His breath puffed in small white clouds, and goosebumps spread down his arms and across his muscular chest. He turned to the witch and ran light hands down her limbs, squeezing here and there in an obvious check for injuries. When he didn't find any, some of the tension left his shoulders. He smoothed the hair off her forehead, and his expression softened as he gazed down at her, his fingers touching her pulse and then petting the fine hairs at her temple. After a second, he bent and brushed his lips over hers.

It wasn't until the sunlight slanted across me that I realized I'd drifted out of the alcove and into the main chamber. No matter. My magic was strong enough to hide me.

Callum stood and tucked the fur more firmly around the witch's shoulders. Then he examined his flank where I'd gored him with my tail and sliced him with the ice. The injuries had healed quickly, his immortality repairing the damage. I'd sponged the blood away after I hauled him upstairs. His skin was pink but whole.

And his body in profile was perfection, the sweep from his buttock to his ankle like a bit of poetry I'd read once and forgotten. But I remembered it now. Dusty words reemerged in my mind, and they were no less beautiful for having lain dormant for so long. On the contrary, time and distance made them more compelling. Oh, there you are, something whispered in my mind.

I moved forward, an invisible hook in my chest drawing me more fully into the midnight sun. But maybe the hook wasn't invisible after all, because an ache

bloomed under my sternum and spread under my skin.

And if I was honest with myself, it wasn't the first time. Outside, when I'd fought the young dragon, the ache had thrown me for a moment. It had distracted me, giving the lad a chance to swoop under my belly and pop up behind me. He'd probably thought he was clever. I knew better.

More witchcraft. That was the only explanation, I thought as I returned my gaze to the witch. Perhaps her incompetence was part of her strategy. She lured her enemies into believing she was clumsy and inadequate. And I'd fallen for it, foolishly giving her an edge. It wouldn't happen again.

The hook sank deeper, and I rubbed at my chest, my thumb stroking a hard line in the spot where my ribs joined. The lad stepped back and ran a hand through his hair, taming his crop of waves. Honey. His hair was the color of honey in a pot, the bottom darker than the syrup on the surface. And like honey, it would be lighter still if the individual strands were teased away. Honey was a memory, too. The North didn't hold such luxuries. The ice didn't yield anything sweet.

But I recalled the tang on my tongue. The slow spread of nectar that was always something of a mess. Worth it, though. It had always been worth it.

The lad turned and looked toward the tower room's sole window, giving me an unimpeded view of his body. Like all our kind, he was tall and well-formed.

But no, that turn of phrase didn't do him justice. He was beautiful. Wholly different from the raven-haired witch but just as stunning. Hers was a body a man could sink into. But the lad was all sinew and hard angles. His nipples were tight little points puckered against the frozen air. His cock hung heavy between his thighs, the shaft long and meaty even in his unaroused state. His balls were tight from the cold. They'd be hard and compact in my palm if I cupped them, the skin pebbled with the

same goosebumps that covered his arms. I'd warm him, though. If I knelt before him—which I never would—and took his cock in my mouth, his chilled flesh would heat. It would stir against my tongue, growing stiff and full and then hot, so very hot.

He shivered suddenly, the movement setting his dick swinging just so.

A groan slipped from me before I even registered its existence.

Callum jerked his head to the spot where I stood.

Impossible. I took a swift step backward, the shadows of the alcove enveloping me. But I didn't need to hide. My mother's people were never seen unless they wanted to be. Her magic ran through my veins, cloaking me from even the most perceptive observer.

The lad's eyes glittered, a bright sheen rolling over his irises. Alertness hovered about him as he peered into the alcove. For the briefest moment, the outline of elegantly curved horns appeared on either side of his head.

Demon. I listened for my mother's gift, my ears perked for it to whisper the nature of the lad's power. But there was only silence. Possibly, I needed to get closer. Or maybe the boy's mother came from some little-known clan. The demonkind were many, their tribes so varied it was impossible to keep track of them all.

The lad spoke suddenly, his voice touched with the lilting notes of my birthplace. "Are you going to show yourself, or are you too much of a coward to face me like a man?"

I shed my glamour and stepped from the alcove. "Bold words from a boy who just lost a fight."

A smile curved his lips as he looked me up and down, his green eyes taking in the fur-lined trousers and sealskin shirt I'd thrown on after I shifted. "I'm not a boy, old man. If I were, you wouldn't be thinking about how my cock would feel in your mouth."

He can't know—

But he could. "Incubus," I said, a growl in my voice. It sneaked in without permission, as it had outside, roughening my tone without my consent.

"Aye," Callum acknowledged. "A third, anyway, though halfling rolls off the tongue more easily."

I looked at his mouth, and my thoughts flipped around, putting him on his knees at my feet, his green eyes locked with mine as he lapped at my cockhead.

Callum sucked in a breath. I tore my gaze from his mouth in time to see his eyes go wide. He hid the expression quickly, tilting his head so those honey-colored threads in his hair caught the sunlight. "And you... Fae, I'm guessing?"

"Stop making me want you."

His smile was patient. "You know it doesn't work that way." Before I could respond, he gestured to his thigh. "You cleaned me up."

"Didn't want blood on my bed."

"Or you wanted to get a closer look at my cock you can't stop thinking about."

Another growl formed in my throat. "Watch your tone, boy. I haven't decided whether to kill you yet."

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:02 am

“If you were going to kill me, you would have done it already. Although, I might die of hypothermia.” He winced as he cast a look down his body. “I thought the regular kind of blue balls was bad, but this kind is giving those a run for their money.” He tipped his head back and blew into the air, his breath puffing around his face. He waved a hand at the frosty cloud and gave me an expectant look.

“What?” I demanded, searching my memory for blue balls and run for their money and coming up short.

“Aren’t you cold? Your castle is a refrigerator.”

I thumped a light fist against my chest. “Ice dragon.”

He snorted. “More like masochist.”

Another unfamiliar word. Judging from his tone, it was a bad thing. And it was...irksome for this pup to know something I didn’t. It shouldn’t have bothered me. Like honey, bother was a thing from my past. Irritation was a distraction, and I’d removed all distractions when I took my vows. But the lad’s attitude—his carefree air and unusual turns of speech—chafed in a way I hadn’t experienced in hundreds of years. Bother leaked around the edges of my mind like water flowing around a barrier.

It made me want to put him in his place. Undoubtedly, that was the witch’s doing, too. I should have resisted the urge to school him.

Instead, I opened my mouth and spoke in rapid-fire Gaelic. “Are you always a

disrespectful pain in the arse?”

“I was taught that respect is earned,” he replied easily in the same language.

With a grunt, I switched back to English. “You fought well enough. Who trained you?”

“Bram McGregor.”

The name was as foreign as everything else he’d said. “Who is he?” I asked. “Your mate?” For some reason, the thought of that had me stepping forward, another unwelcome growl forming in my throat.

“No,” Callum said. “He’s mated to Fergus Devlin and Halina of Krovnosta. Bram is brother to our queen.”

“Now you’re lying, boy. We have no queen. We barely have a king. Cormac was lost to the fire centuries ago.”

“Perhaps your advanced age has diminished your hearing,” Callum said, moving forward so we stood less than a foot apart. A shaft of sunlight fell between us—a yellow barrier sparkling with tiny snowflakes that drifted through the uncovered window. “I told you I’m no boy. And I speak the truth. King Cormac has emerged from the fire. He reunited with the Consort, and they found their fated female in the demon plane. She was lost to us for over three hundred years, but now she’s back among her own kind.”

I searched his gaze, looking for duplicity. “Her own kind...” I repeated. “But she can’t be—”

“A dragon,” he said, his eyes gleaming. “I know it’s hard to believe, but it’s true. And

it gets better. The Consort discovered that Mullo Balfour created the Curse. Two of our kind are mated to a donum. She battled Mullo and turned his magic against him.”

“Mullo is dead?” The head of House Balfour had been a formidable witch.

“Aye, and the Curse with him.”

For a moment, I could only stare. “Broken?” I asked, my voice hoarse in my ears. The Curse that had caused so much heartache and destruction? The Curse that had ripped my life apart? The room tilted, and I flung out a hand to steady myself. But there was nothing to grab onto, and I ended up stumbling into Callum.

“Whoa,” he said, gripping my arm. His touch frazzled through me like an electric shock, lifting every hair on my body.

I sucked in a breath. Our gazes locked. He’d stepped into the beam of sunlight, and now his hair was more blond than brown. The tips of his eyelashes gleamed like they’d been dipped in liquid gold.

“Are you okay?” he asked, his deep voice cutting through my shock.

Except that was impossible. I didn’t feel shock—or delight or relief or anything of the sort.

I yanked my arm from his grip. “I’m fine.” I stepped back, putting the sunlight between us once more. “I don’t need your help.”

“All right,” he said easily, his gaze steady.

“You tell the truth about the Curse?”

He nodded. “I vow it.”

The sincerity of his words rang in the air. The mysterious illness that had plagued our women was...gone. The Curse was broken. King Cormac had emerged from his fire—and joined with not one but two mates.

“Fate has smiled upon Cormac,” I said, my voice gruff in the quiet chamber. Snow swirled in the beam of sunlight, the flakes seemingly lighter than air.

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:02 am

Callum followed my gaze, and he observed the flakes' dance for a moment before lifting his eyes to mine. "Maybe fate has a few smiles left for the rest of us."

The ache in my chest deepened like someone pushing their thumb into a bruise. I ignored it as I stared at Callum. The stubble on his jaw sparkled almost as brightly as the snow. "You need a shave."

"You're one to talk," he murmured.

I jerked my gaze to his, expecting mockery. Instead, I found humor...and something soft. It shimmered in his green irises, which were the same shade as the Highlands I hadn't seen in so long they were as distant to me as honey.

The smile in his eyes made its way to his mouth. "I thought your castle ate people."

"You're safe enough inside."

"Ahh. So nothing will gobble me up?"

The thumb dug deeper into the bruise, and it was an effort to push out a strangely breathless, "No."

"Pity," he said, and he sounded disappointed.

Movement behind Callum drew my gaze. He turned as the witch sat up in bed, her dark plaits spilling over her shoulders. Purple eyes traveled from Callum to me and back again. Her breath clouded the air.

“Och, lass, your lips are blue,” Callum said, hurrying to her side.

“I’m okay.” She fixed a determined-looking gaze on me. “You attacked us outside.”

I folded my arms. “You were trespassing.”

“We have King Cormac’s permission to approach the Oracle of the North Wind.”

“Cormac doesn’t rule here. His permission is meaningless.”

She flung the fur aside and stood. Immediately, her jaw chattered, but the determined glint in her eyes sharpened. “Then I’m asking your permission.”

“Denied.”

“Why?”

“If you were meant to reach the Oracle, you would have passed the White Gate unnoticed.”

“What?” Her brow furrowed. “That wasn’t in the books.”

“Maybe you read the wrong books.”

Callum huffed a startled laugh.

Georgie shot him a glare.

His expression went instantly contrite. “Sorry.”

She turned back to me with narrowed eyes. Then she seemed to change tactics. Her

features smoothed out, and her tone turned polite. “Look, we didn’t mean to trespass. If you could just reconsider—”

“No.”

The polite tone flew out the window. “Why not?”

“The Oracle is sacred. Its wisdom must be protected. One frivolous request for guidance can damage it for centuries.”

Georgie drew herself up. “My request isn’t frivolous.”

“You’re hardly the first person to make that claim.”

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:02 am

She moved across the chamber. Callum stuck to her heels as she stopped at the bar of sunlight and tipped her head back to meet my eyes. Her cheeks were wind-chapped. Dark circles made half-moons under her eyes. She needed care. Callum should have never brought her North.

The ache in my chest spread. Under my sternum, long, bony fingers stretched toward my shoulders. I unfolded my arms to relieve some of the pressure, but it didn't help. I must have injured myself during the fight.

"I have to get to the Oracle," Georgie said. "The elders of my house gave me a quest. If I don't fulfill it, they'll never accept me as my father's successor."

"What's the quest?"

She hesitated. "I have to capture the North Wind—"

"Absolutely not."

"I won't keep it forever!"

"No." I turned and strode to the door.

"Wait!" She followed, her footsteps rapid behind me. "You don't understand." She grabbed at my arm.

I whipped around, my hand aloft and poised for attack. Snowflakes danced above my palm as they awaited my command.

Callum moved swiftly, tucking Georgie behind him. His green eyes were hard, all signs of humor gone. I had several inches on him, and I'd bested him once already, but he showed no sign of fear as he faced off with me.

"Unseelie magic tricks," he said, shooting an angry look at the snow swirling above my hand.

He was right. My mother had hailed from one of the dark courts. Only the Unseelie could wield the elements as weapons. I didn't possess all of my mother's gifts. I couldn't read minds or charm others into doing my bidding. But I could cloak myself when I chose to stay hidden. And I could bend winter to my will.

I let the snow form into dozens of needle-sharp icicles. Ice coated my tone. "My magic trick grazed you the first time. If you give me cause to strike a second time, boy, rest assured you won't get up again."

Callum's nostrils flared. "You—"

"Please," Georgie said, shoving her way in front of him. "There's no reason to fight." Her breasts rose and fell with her rapid breaths. A wild pulse fluttered in her throat.

The ache tugged hard in my chest.

Georgie frowned, the anxious look in her bright purple eyes shifting to obvious confusion. Over her shoulder, Callum's eyes gleamed just as brightly.

But the colors were all wrong. The eyes that mattered to me—the only eyes that had ever mattered to me—were a soft, sweet brown. They smiled easily. When they were glazed with passion, they turned the color of amber.

Those eyes were more precious than honey. And just as distant.

I closed my fist around the ice, letting it sink into my skin and flow through my veins. It must have shone in my eyes, because Callum shuffled back, nudging the witch with him.

“I grant no permission to approach the Oracle,” I told them. “I’ll have food and drink in the Great Hall for you in one hour. You’ll take sustenance, and then you’ll take your leave from Gelhella and never return.”

I took shadow form and slipped through the keyhole, leaving my clothing and memories behind.

Chapter Eight

GEORGIE

For a moment after Graeme left, I stared at the pile of his clothes that had plopped to the floor. My heart pounded as a tiny, niggling, impossible thought fluttered at the edges of my mind.

No. No way. It couldn’t be.

Why not? the impossible thought asked.

Because this is the last thing I need.

Great, now I was arguing with rogue, disembodied thoughts. But the tugging in my chest was difficult to ignore. For some reason I couldn’t fathom, I wanted to step over the clothes and go after Graeme.

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:02 am

No, it was more than that. Even as I tried to turn from the door, something rooted me in place. The idea of Graeme leaving was...painful. And I wasn't sure how I knew it, but I knew that ache would fade if I went looking for him.

As I contemplated the very real likelihood that I was losing my mind, strong but gentle hands clasped my shoulders and turned me around. Callum studied me, then gave a firm nod.

"Right. You feel it too."

I licked my lips, my heart thumping faster. "What?"

He gave me a look that let me know I wasn't fooling him for a second. Then he tipped his head toward the door. "Yon crotchety ice dragon is our mate."

"He can't be."

"Oh, so you weren't ready to run out the door and chase him just now?"

"No."

His smile was soft. "Pants on fire."

I let my shoulders slump. "But... How? His heart is frozen. He can't feel anything."

Callum's expression turned shrewd. "Oh, he felt something, all right."

“You saw his fantasies?” And why did I want to know what those looked like?

“Glimpses.” Callum gave the door a thoughtful look. “I’ve never seen anyone fight so hard to repress their desires. Makes sense, I suppose, considering he’s one of the Brotherhood. Poor thing is probably confused.”

Poor thing? I grabbed Callum’s jaw and forced his gaze to mine. “Graeme tried to kill you.”

“A flesh wound,” he said good-naturedly.

“He can’t be our mate. He already had one, remember?”

“Aye, and he died centuries ago. Clearly, fate decided to give him another go. You and I are like a BOGO deal.”

“He doesn’t even like us.”

“He’s an ice dragon, lass. They’re a different breed. Off-the-grid, monkish types. He’s not used to talking to other people, let alone romancing one.” Callum took my hand from his jaw and planted a quick kiss on my knuckles. “I thought you studied up for this quest. You must have skipped the chapter about impotence when you read about the ice dragons.”

Heat rose in my cheeks. “So he hasn’t...?” I cleared my throat. “Not even...self-care?”

That earned me a grin. “Not for a good long while. But I suspect his pipes are working now, so to speak.”

My face threatened to burst into flames, which was a welcome development in the

freezing room. Jumbled thoughts racketed about my head as I tried to process Callum's words. Graeme, the ice dragon, was our mate? It couldn't be true.

"I don't feel as drawn to him as I did to you," I said.

Callum's expression turned smug. "Well, that's hardly a surprise." He gestured at himself. "Just look at me, lass."

"I'm serious," I said, trying to ignore his nudity. Only Callum McLeish could look sexy while standing stark naked in a freezing castle. Apparently, the concept of shrinkage didn't apply to him.

"So am I." He rested his hands on my hips. "The mate bond isn't always a lightning strike, Georgie. It's different for everyone. But it can't be ignored. That's the one constant you can count on when fate matches you with a dragon. Resist all you want, but you won't be able to ignore that bond. You'll keep looking over your shoulder, searching and searching for it. Trying to get another glimpse because you have to see it. Just one more look, you think, but then you're spun around and running toward it. You'll do anything to reach it, to wrap yourself up in it. And once you have it, nothing can pry it from your grasp."

I stared up at him, hardly daring to breathe. "That was beautiful, Callum."

A soft smile touched his lips. "Well. I'm not a nerd like you—"

"I'm not a nerd!"

"—but I know passion. Give this some time."

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:02 am

Panic blossomed in my chest. “I’m sort of on a tight schedule right now.” And, oh gods, what would the elders say? My mind dumped me back in front of them, their disapproving eyes fixed on me as I explained why I’d returned home with not one but two dragon mates. “Well, you see, gentlemen, the ice dragon turned out to be a strapping lumbersexual...”

The panic spiked into something hot and nauseating. I swayed on my feet as the protein bar I’d stuffed down earlier threatened to come back up.

Callum moved before I could, bending and sweeping me into his arms.

“I’m okay,” I said, pushing against his shoulder.

“Wheesht,” he said mildly, carrying me to the bed. He deposited me on the edge and gently guided my upper body down until my head was between my knees. “Deep breaths now,” he said, the bed sinking as he sat beside me and rubbed a gentle palm over my back. “In through your nose and out through your mouth.”

I did as he said, embarrassment mingling with something warm and welcome that set my limbs tingling. Comfort, I realized. Had anyone ever comforted me this way? Cared for me when I needed it? My parents had always seen to it that I was looked after, but they’d been too busy leading our house to take care of everyday chores like nursing a child through illness. Those sorts of tasks had fallen to servants. Unbidden, a memory flowed through my mind, carrying me on short, determined legs as I raced into my father’s study. I’d been six years old, and I’d just sewn my first defensive spell into my barasta. My mother had perched on the edge of my father’s desk, a sword resting across her leather-clad knees.

“Look!” I said, bowing hastily before sweeping a hand down the embroidery. “Mother... Father... I set the spell with my own hand.” The work had taken countless hours, and my neck ached from bending over the cloth as I chanted the spells into the thread.

My mother smiled, and she and my father exchanged an indulgent look. Something about it made my own smile fade, although I wasn’t sure why.

“It’s lovely, Georgina,” my mother said, easing off the desk. Her black hair streamed over her shoulders as she crouched and examined the embroidery.

My heart fluttered, and I pushed out my chest so she could see the crane I’d worked into the design. “It’s the symbol of your maiden house,” I said, as if she didn’t know.

“Indeed,” she murmured, straightening. “A steadier hand next time, Daughter.” Her sword flashed, and the tip pressed against my ribs before I could blink. “Your spell has a weakness in the stitching under the bird’s wing.”

“Better?” Callum asked now, his long fingers stroking down my spine. Graeme must have removed my coat when he brought me into the fortress, and only my thin moisture-wicking shirt separated Callum’s fingertips from my skin. Suddenly, I wanted nothing more than for that barrier to disappear. Swallowing the lump in my throat, I sat up and flung myself into his arms.

He grunted, but it was a pleased sound as he hauled me all the way into his lap so I straddled him, my face buried in his neck. He didn’t question my behavior, just held me tight and hummed deep in his chest, the sound reminiscent of a big cat purring as it bakes in the sun. But Callum wasn’t a cat. He was a dragon.

My dragon. He was right. I’d taken that second look he spoke of—and then I’d spun around and wrapped myself up in him. And now that I had him, nothing would pry

him away from me. As unsettling as it was, I accepted it. But could I really accept Graeme Abernathy? In the middle of a mystical quest that would determine my future?

I pulled back so I could see Callum's face. "What do we do?"

"Hmm?" He was as relaxed as ever.

"You heard me."

His lips curved at my use of his pet phrase. "I don't know for sure, lass. But I'm thinking we start by going downstairs and claiming our mate."

"And how do you propose to do that?" I asked, panic creeping into my voice. "Graeme is cold and distant and—"

"—sexy as hell?" Callum's eyes lightened a shade. "With those tattoos and that beard, hmm?"

"Don't you dare tunnel into my mind."

He reached down and palmed one of my butt cheeks. "Admit it, lass, you're attracted to him." He gave my bottom a light squeeze. "And you want to know something else?"

"No."

"Liar." Another squeeze, and I whimpered against his lips. "Graeme wants you, too. He can't decide if he's more fascinated by your arse or your tits but he wants a handful of both." When I shuddered, Callum pulled me more tightly against him and nipped at my bottom lip. "Wait until he hears what you want, you greedy lass."

“What?” I whispered, knowing I was walking into his trap. But I didn’t care. “What do I want?”

Callum’s eyes glowed more brightly as he basked in my lust. “Oh, Georgie, you want everything.” He rucked up my shirt, then slid his hand down the back of my leggings and under my thong. His fingers skimmed my crack, and then he teased a fingertip over the most secret part of me. Another whimper escaped me as he traced my puckered opening, working decadent circles around a place where no one had ever touched me. “You want one of us here, darlin’”—he shifted me on his lap so my pussy lodged firmly against his thigh—“and you want the other one here.” He rocked me so my pussy ground into him. He pressed his finger more firmly against my hole, making my breath hitch. “Stop me if I’m wrong, lass.”

I didn’t stop him. Couldn’t, really. All I could do was lean forward and run my tongue over his bottom lip, drawn to him, wanting him. “No,” I murmured, the word muffled against his mouth. “You’re not wrong.”

“Of course not. Lift up a little.” As I obeyed, he thrust his other hand down the front of my leggings, slipped under my panties, and found my clit. “Soaking wet,” he rumbled, stroking my clit like a master musician plying his instrument. And he was. Callum McLeish had promised to master me. To own my desire. He made good on that promise, playing my body with skill that stole my breath and set a fire blazing under my skin. I grew so wet that moisture slipped back to my hole, and he took full advantage, fingering my juices into the tight whorl.

“Callum,” I gasped, clenching and rocking and burning up. My labored breaths and broken whimpers filled the room. In some remote corner of my lust-addled brain, I wondered if Graeme could hear. If he’d storm into the chamber and see me grinding my ass and pussy all over Callum’s hands.

“Fuck,” Callum muttered, his horns flickering around his head. “You want to be

caught, filthy girl?”

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:02 am

“Yes,” I moaned, my face as hot as my body. Can’t hide. Not from Callum. He saw every dark, wicked fantasy. He fed on me as I took my pleasure, and that was a fantasy, too, sitting in the lap of a sex demon who knew exactly how to make me come.

“Get wetter for me,” he ordered, stroking me faster. “Let me hear how loud this pussy can get.” His eyes narrowed to burning green slits as he worked me front and back, his finger tunneling deeper into my ass. The invasion was shockingly intimate and so, so good. Why the hell hadn’t anyone ever told me?

Callum’s eyes lit up the room. His voice dipped low as he looked me in the eye and whispered filth that set me on fire. “I should make you do this in front of Graeme. Order you to strip and spread your pretty thighs over my lap so he can watch me finger your ass at mealtimes. Would you like that, witchling? I’ll get you started and then he can finish you. I’ll open you up. Get you nice and loose. Then I’ll send you round the table, your big tits swaying. Make you bend over and spread your pretty backside so he can fuck this tight little hole.”

With a squeal I’d probably be embarrassed about later, I grasped Callum’s shoulders and rocked my hips in a wild rhythm, my breath spilling from me in wanton moans.

“That’s it,” he crooned, “fuck my fingers, Georgie.” He widened his circles on my clit, smearing moisture over my swollen folds and sopping entrance.

“Yes!” I gasped, rocking faster. Writhing and grinding and digging my nails into his shoulders. Sweat beaded my brow as I chased the orgasm that hovered just out of reach.

Callum flattened his palm against my pussy, the heel of his hand against my clit.

“Oh...” I gasped, and then I was coming, my muscles clenching everywhere. All over his fingers. I curled forward and squeezed his shoulders so hard I probably hurt him, but I couldn’t stop. My ass and pussy tightened, and my mind blanked. I could hear my keening wail, but it didn’t matter. Nothing existed except my pleasure and the man who gave it to me. He took me through it, his deep voice rumbling in his soft brogue. His breath teased my hair as he murmured in my ear, telling me how good I was. How perfect. Declaring me his with a possessive growl I’d been dying to hear and was only now aware of it. But Callum knew.

How could he know how much I needed to belong to someone?

The orgasm faded, and I lay boneless and limp against him with my forehead on his shoulder. He pulled his hands from my leggings and held me. After a minute, he turned his head and kissed my temple.

“My gorgeous Georgie. You’ve bewitched me.”

I lifted my head. As reality descended, it hit me that I’d just let Callum finger-fuck me—in two ports of entry—in a desolate castle tower. “We shouldn’t have done that.”

“Aye, we definitely should have.”

“Nay, we really shouldn’t have. I need to get to the Oracle, not”—I groped for the right words as Callum lifted a brow—“take orgasm breaks.”

“Nothing says you can’t do both, lass.” Callum gestured to the window. “The Oracle is just a wee distance away. We’ll get there. I promise.”

Not according to Graeme, we wouldn't. My heart rate picked up as a fresh wave of anxiety descended.

Callum eyed me. "You worry too much."

"You don't worry enough. How can you be so nonchalant about this?"

"You'll have to be more specific, witchling, considering we're navigating multiple crises at the moment."

"That's exactly my point!" I clambered off his lap and jerked my clothing back into place. With a glance at the door, I lowered my voice. "You're certainly taking Graeme being our mate in stride."

Callum leaned his weight on his palms behind him, indolent in his nudity. "Fate has given me two mates in less than forty-eight hours, lass. I'm basically a luck dragon at this point. I might have to change my name to Falkor."

My breath caught, my irritation with him fading. "You like *The Neverending Story*?"

"It's one of my favorite movies. They did Artax dirty, though. I cried my eyes out."

"Me too." I stared at him, that sense of knowing settling even deeper. "What about *The Princess Bride*?"

"Hello. My name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die."

Wonder spread through me. "I guess we have a lot in common."

He stood and took me in his arms. Tenderness shimmered in his eyes as he stroked my hair away from my face. "I'm not nonchalant, Georgie. I'm fortunate. And I'm

willing to fight for the gifts fate has given me.”

I swallowed hard as I gazed up at my own gift—my sexy, silly dragon who never appeared to worry. I’d fallen for him so easily. But Callum was easy to fall for. He seemed so certain about Graeme. What happened if I didn’t feel the same? In the back of my mind, an unhelpful voice alerted me to another possibility—one far more likely than I cared to admit.

What if Graeme fell for Callum but not me?

I thought about asking. Instead, I opened my mouth and asked, “What if Graeme doesn’t like eighties fantasy movies?”

“Inconceivable,” he said with a perfect lisp.

A shaky laugh burst from me. Then I drew a deep breath. “I guess we should go downstairs and find out.”

Callum smiled. “As you wish.”

Chapter Nine

CALLUM

Georgie was more relaxed as we descended the tower’s twisting stone staircase.

Some people might argue that orgasms were an inappropriate stress reliever. I wasn’t some people. My witchling had been wound tight as a spring before I put her on my lap. Now, her eyes sparkled a bit. If I could persuade Graeme to grant her passage to the Oracle, she might give me more of those broad smiles that showed her straight, white teeth and turned her cheeks all rosy.

As it happened, I had a plan for making that a reality. And if my plan unfolded the way I hoped, I might even coax a smile from a certain ice dragon.

I pitched my voice low as I helped Georgie down a particularly tight turn in the stairs. “Would you do something for me?”

She gave me a curious look. “I’ll try.”

“Let me do the talking when we meet with Graeme. I have an idea.”

“What kind of idea?”

“Something simple. But I might have to adjust my strategy on the fly depending on how Graeme reacts. Do you trust me?”

For a moment, I thought she’d argue. Then she nodded. “All right. I trust you.”

“Thanks, witchling. Watch your step.”

“Do you think Graeme will be okay with you wearing his clothes?”

I glanced down at the loose-fitting shirt and surprisingly well-made trousers Graeme left behind when he shifted. “It was either this or nothing. If he makes a fuss, I’ll just compliment him on his needlework.”

She studied the seam that ran down my sleeve with a witch’s practiced eye. “You think he makes his own clothes?”

“Unless he’s got a tailor locked in one of his towers.”

She shuddered, clearly considering the possibility. “Or maybe he travels off-plane and goes shopping.”

“Doubtful. He says things like take your leave and sustenance.”

“True. He probably doesn’t get out much.”

“Or ever.”

We navigated another tight turn, and I slowed her with a hand on her arm. “And Georgie?”

“Yes?”

I lowered my voice again. “Maybe keep the whole mate thing to ourselves for a bit. People in denial tend to react poorly when you shove the truth at them. And right now, Graeme’s favorite river is in Egypt.”

For a second, confusion reigned in her eyes. Then she gave me an exasperated look. “I refuse to laugh at that.”

“I thought it was pretty good,” I said mildly.

“It was terrible. Most of your jokes are terrible.”

I sighed. “It’s a good thing I’m so attractive, then.”

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:02 am

She let me help her down the last few steps, her head on a swivel as she took in the fortress's gray stone walls lined with torches set in iron rings. "Do you know where you're going?" she whispered as we entered a long hallway.

"No, but most medieval castles built for defense have a predictable layout." And the White Gate was definitely medieval. The place looked like it hadn't been updated since it was built. The sound of our footsteps echoed off barren walls coated with frost. Around the torches, water trickled down the stone in rivulets that puddled on the floor. Arched windows allowed weak sunlight to spill over the flagstones. Snow drifted through the openings, which contained no glass to stop the cold and moisture from entering.

The only breaks in the drab gray walls were deep alcoves. Most were empty, but some held ancient-looking weapons fixed to the stone. In one, an enormous suit of armor stood on a pedestal, the helmet's visor nothing but a dark, narrow slit.

Georgie shivered, and I tangled my fingers with hers and squeezed her hand. "Come on. Almost there."

We walked in silence for a few more minutes before reaching a pair of massive wooden doors. Intricate symbols decorated the wood, the designs like the ones that covered Graeme from shoulder to wrist.

I looked at Georgie. "I think we found the Great Hall."

"Should we knock?" she mouthed.

I shook my head. Undoubtedly, Graeme was already aware of our presence. I gave Georgie's hand another squeeze and pushed the doors open.

Jackpot. The Great Hall spread before us, the large space more impressive than the rest of the fortress. Tapestries depicting knights in battle hung on the walls. The arched windows sparkled with stained glass that cast colorful squares on the stone floors. A fire burned in the hearth, its heat a welcome respite from the deep freeze that gripped the rest of the fortress. Some kind of cooking pot dangled from a hook over the fire. The scent of stew wafted in the air.

Graeme sat at the head of a long, wooden table, his cool gaze fixed on Georgie and me as we entered the room. A pitcher and a wooden cup sat at his elbow. The earthy aroma of beer joined the stew in the air. Our backpacks leaned against one of the table's thick, carved legs.

"You brought our things inside," I said, injecting cheerfulness into my tone as I escorted Georgie to the table and pulled out a chair for her. Once she was settled, I met Graeme's eyes. "Mind if I sit?"

"I have a feeling it doesn't matter," he replied, casting a deliberate look over my clothes. "You seem to do whatever you want regardless of others' wishes."

"That's not true." I sat and slanted Georgie a conspiratorial look. "I'm well-behaved."

She offered a weak smile before turning cautious eyes to Graeme. The tension was back in her shoulders. Another orgasm was out of the question—at least for the moment—so I offered Graeme my most winning smile.

"We'd like to talk about Georgie's quest."

"I gave you my answer," Graeme said. "The answer is no." He pushed back from the

table and stood, one hand gripping the back of his chair. His big body was wrapped in another set of well-crafted, fur-lined clothes made of some kind of animal skin. The tattoos around his wrists peeked from under his sleeves, the geometric designs sprinkled with dark hair. His were a swordsman's hands—big and leathery with gnarled knuckles marred by dozens of tiny, silvery scars. It took a lot for an immortal to scar. Whatever had given him those wounds had been a fierce opponent. No wonder he'd dispatched me so easily outside.

Abruptly, I realized he hadn't really fought me at all. He'd merely played with me, a powerful dragon swatting down an inferior opponent. He'd mastered me with minimal effort.

And didn't that just get my dick's attention. It tightened in my borrowed pants—his pants. His scent covered me, smoke and sweat and damp fur. It wasn't unpleasant. Like him, it was strong and undeniably masculine. If I took his clothes off, I'd still smell like him.

Graeme made a tight, strangled sound. His lips parted as he stared at me, confusion swirling in his pale eyes. They were still cold, but now they went hooded, something predatory stirring in the frozen depths.

Slowly, I leaned back in my chair. "I was hoping you'd consider changing that answer to yes." I let a lazy smile touch my lips. "Graeme," I added softly.

Wood creaked. We both looked at his hand, which gripped the chair so tightly his knuckles had turned white. My magic roused, lifting its head and tugging at its leash. Sometimes, the leash was useless. When a person's desires were powerful enough, they came to me whether I willed it or not. A vision flickered to life in my mind now, the images playing in my mind's eye.

Scarred hands holding my hips... My own back spread before me, muscles bunching

as I absorbed steady thrusts... Me looking over my shoulder just before a big arm looped around my chest and hauled me up—

“Stop it,” Graeme growled.

The vision disintegrated, bits and pieces of Graeme and me fluttering away.

Georgie sucked in a breath.

I lounged in my chair, my gaze locked with Graeme's. Outside, the wind picked up. It howled down the chimney, making the fire spit and dance. I forced myself to stay still, my posture relaxed and more than a little taunting. Come and get me, my pose said. I was prey, yes, but I wasn't afraid to be eaten.

Graeme snapped his attention to Georgie. “I'll have no witchcraft in my home, woman.”

Her eyes went wide. “I'm not doing anything!”

“Leave her alone,” I said quietly, drawing Graeme's focus back to me. “She's not using any magic. She needs to get to that Oracle. It's important.”

“She'll never survive the trip.”

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:02 am

“You don’t know that,” Georgie said, clearly forgetting her promise to let me handle Graeme.

He turned to her. “Aye, I do. The Oracle is thirty miles from here, and each mile is fifty degrees colder than the one before it. The snowdrifts soar higher than the tallest mountains on the human plane. Crevasses open regularly and without warning, sending visitors plunging into an abyss so unfathomable even I’m not certain how deep it goes. The only certainty in Gelhella is death. So do yourself a kindness and go home.”

“Go with us,” I said, and I could have laughed at how he’d unwittingly stumbled right into my plan. More than one relationship had blossomed due to forced proximity. If I could persuade him to accompany Georgie and me to the Oracle, there was a chance he’d accept the mate bond along the way. The icing on the cake would be Georgie capturing her wind and taking over House Blackwood. I’d kill two birds with one stone, be a hero, and spend the next six months screwing both of my mates into oblivion (figuratively, of course). Also, the six months was more of a starting point. I was open to longer terms.

Georgie gave me a startled look. Graeme frowned.

I leaned forward and pleaded my case. “You’ve protected the Oracle for hundreds of years. I assume you know the terrain and all its hidden dangers. If you’re worried about us getting hurt, take us to the Oracle yourself. Georgie can do her thing, and then she and I will be on our way.” Which was a slight omission, since Georgie and I weren’t leaving Gelhella unless he came with us.

Graeme's jaw flexed. A battle played out in his eyes—duty versus desire. I kicked myself for not pressing Niall for details about Graeme's mate. How had he died? When had he died? If Graeme joined the Brotherhood to stay alive, he must have had a reason. It would have been helpful to know these things. But I never expected to discover that Graeme Abernathy was my mate.

So now I was flying blind, trying to convince an ice dragon to thaw just enough to give me a chance. If he cracked the door, I was confident I could open it the rest of the way.

The wind howled more loudly. In the hearth, the fire responded, the flames soaring upward like they longed to join the screaming current.

Georgie looked toward the blaze.

And Graeme looked at her. His eyes traveled the delicate line of her jaw. Imperceptibly, his expression softened.

Of course. Graeme wasn't just my mate. He was Georgie's, too.

And I had my opening.

Working off instinct, I reached for my magic. I spooled out its chain, letting it flow toward the big, bearded dragon with fae powers and a frozen heart.

Show me what you desire. I held my breath as tendrils of my power stretched toward Graeme. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Georgie tense. My clever witchling, sensing magic in the air. I couldn't manufacture lust or force Graeme to feel. But I could read his desires as easily as plucking a book from a shelf and cracking the spine.

“Tread carefully with this, Cal,” my mother always warned me. Even among humans, stereotypes haunted us. Stories of incubi—and, to a lesser extent, succubi—stealing into beds and feeding off the unwilling or oblivious existed for a reason. Sex was power. It motivated people. Made them act in ways they couldn’t always control. Sex had started wars and inspired epic stories. It could ruin a kingdom...or a man.

The vision appeared in a rush. Graeme’s rough hands slid up Georgie’s pale legs, spreading her wide as he bent his head and kissed his way up her inner thigh. His beard scraped her skin, making her shiver and arch her back. A white fur rug spread beneath her, the color a stark contrast to her glossy black hair. Her pink nipples stabbed toward the ceiling, and her soft cries filled my head. Graeme reached her center and flicked his tongue over her clit.

“But you don’t want that,” I said.

Graeme tore his gaze from Georgie. As soon as it landed on me, he glowered, and I knew my power shone in my eyes. He squeezed the chair, the scars on his hand flexing.

“You don’t want her to leave,” I clarified. “You want her on that rug, spread and moaning your name as you feast between her thighs.”

“Callum,” Georgie gasped, reproach and a hint of fear in her voice as she looked between me and Graeme.

I pressed on. “You want to know what she tastes like but you already know it’s perfect. Because she was made for you.”

Georgie raised her voice. “Callum, stop.”

“You can have what you want, Graeme, but not if you send her away. She’ll leave,

and you'll miss your chance."

"Callum!"

"Are you really going to risk losing her?"

The chair snapped with a loud crack. Georgie clapped a hand over her mouth, muffling her hoarse cry. Outside, the wind rose to a wail as loud as a banshee. It was impossible, but I could have sworn it buffeted the fortress, setting the Great Hall swaying. Almost certainly, a storm was brewing.

I braced for an even bigger storm—for Graeme to roar or maybe toss the chunk of wood in my face. Instead, he set it carefully on the table. As he stared down at it, a trickle of blood ran down his hand. It dripped onto the floor as the wound closed. When he looked up, his eyes were cold. Dead.

"You were wrong from the start," he told me. "I'm not worried about you getting hurt."

Georgie lowered her hand to her throat.

"Your packs are there," Graeme said, gesturing. "Take them and go."

“Not tonight,” I said. “It’s late.”

“The sun never sets this time of year.”

“We walked all day. Georgina is exhausted.” It was the truth, which was probably the only thing that persuaded him as he looked her over, his cold gaze taking in the dark smudges under her eyes. “She’s a witch,” I dared to add. “She’s not like us.”

Graeme looked at me. “There is no us.” He walked to the end of the table and stopped just long enough to say, “You’ll stay in your room tonight. And you’ll leave at dawn.”

* * *

Ten minutes later, I faced Georgie across the bed in the tower chamber. It didn’t seem possible, but the room felt even colder than before. Or maybe that was just the chill emanating from the angry witch across from me.

“Trust me, Georgie,” she said, her voice artificially low.

“That is a terrible impression of me, lass.”

She propped a hand on her hip and fluttered her lashes. “Let me talk to him. I have a plan.”

Okay, that was unfair. I didn’t bat my eyes like some coquette... Did I? I lifted my palms. “Look, I know you’re angry—”

“What happened to saying nothing about the mate bond?” Pink entered her cheeks as she lowered her voice to a growl. “You certainly didn’t mind shoving it in Graeme’s face when you talked about him going down on me!”

Regret sluiced through me. “I know, and I’m sorry. I saw him looking at you. He might not care about me falling into a crevasse, but I’m willing to bet he feels differently about you braving the snow. I took a risk and gambled on him having a soft spot for you.”

“I can’t afford to take risks right now. This isn’t a game for me, Callum. The only time my father ever believed in me was the day he died.”

I stilled. “What do you mean?”

She hugged her midsection. “When my parents married, everyone thought their offspring would be special. Two powerful air witches coming together? They were guaranteed to produce greatness. But then I came along, and I was far from great.”

“I’ve seen your magic,” I said, shaking my head. “I’ve felt it. Those hurricanes you produced were incredible.”

“They were chaos.” Her expression turned stark. “Everything I do teeters toward chaos. Riding the wind isn’t supposed to feel like you’re standing in the middle of a hurricane. My mother could slip into the slightest breeze and step out of it halfway across the world. I’ve never been able to wield that kind of control.” She gave a humorless laugh. “And you know the worst part? The wind likes me. I’m a magnet for air. It’s like there’s all this power just waiting for me. And sometimes I can seize it. I can hold it for a second. But then it jumps from my hands and crashes into something or causes a big accident.” Her shoulders lifted and then fell. “I’m the outfielder who can’t catch the fly ball.”

“Georgie,” I murmured, rounding the bed. When she didn’t move away, I rested my hands on her shoulders. “You are more than your power.”

“Not to the witches of my house. Power is everything among my people.” She swallowed hard. “You told Graeme I’m not like you.”

I winced. “It was a stupid thing to say.”

“No, it was true. I’m only a little bit stronger than a human. In some houses, witches who can’t control their elements are servants. In the old days, they were slaves.”

Anger sparked in my chest. It was an effort to stop it from tightening my grip on her shoulders. “No one will make you a slave. Not while I walk the earth.”

“I would never let that happen. But this quest is about more than status. As he was dying, my father told me something. It sounded like a prediction...or a prophecy. He said a dark wind was coming and that only I could harness it.”

The hair on my nape lifted. “What does that mean?” Unlike other immortals, I didn’t hold witches in contempt. But I couldn’t deny that their magic held a certain creep factor. I’d also heard enough stories to know that prophecies could be dangerous things—particularly if they were ignored.

“I don’t know,” she said, her voice barely a whisper. “I’ve read everything I can get my hands on, looking for answers or some kind of guidance. But I’ve come up short. The only thing I know is that my parents hoped I would master my element and lead House Blackwood after they were gone. And I’m determined to do that.”

“I’ll help you.” I brushed my thumb down the sweet slope of her nose, tracing those tiny, enchanting freckles. “How could anyone ever doubt your power, Georgie? You wield an infinite amount of it over me.”

Her eyes drifted shut as she leaned into my caress. “I have to get to that Oracle, Callum.”

“Aye. We’ll make it happen.”

She opened her eyes. “Not if Graeme throws us out in the morning.”

“He won’t.” I set her gently away from me and went to our backpacks next to the hearth. After a few seconds of rummaging, I withdrew a bunch of protein bars and a couple of fire sticks.

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:02 am

“The lighter is in my pack,” Georgie said, kneeling next to me.

I gave her a smug smile as I held up one of the fire sticks. “We’ll do it the fun way.” I squeezed the stick and let heat build under my skin. After a second, the stick burst into flame. As Georgie gasped, I tossed the stick into the hearth and quickly added the others. Within moments, a decent fire blazed in the hearth.

Georgie groaned as she held her palms to the flames. “Gods, that feels good.”

I looked at her.

“I know what you’re going to say.”

“Tell me,” I murmured, lust snaking through my veins.

Her eyes lowered to my mouth. “We’re not having sex right now.”

“That’s definitely not what I was going to say.”

“You know what I meant.”

“You’re right. We should probably eat first.”

“Callum...”

I captured one of her hands and brought it to my heart. “I’m going to get you to that Oracle, witchling. I vow it. I miscalculated with Graeme. I’ll be more careful next

time. And I didn't mean to embarrass you by describing his fantasy. But I did, and I'm sorry for it, lass."

Her dark lashes swept her cheeks. "Does he really think about doing...that with me?"

My lust thickened. "Yes, exactly as I described." I ran a fingertip down her cheek to her jaw. "He wonders if your skin is as soft as it looks. I could tell him it's even softer than he imagines."

"Most men would be jealous knowing another man had those thoughts about their female."

Rich, potent pleasure joined the lust in my veins. I read fantasies, but maybe my witch had a few insights of her own. Because that throaty note in her voice let me know she understood a thing or two about my desires.

Fingers on her jaw, I tipped her chin up so she looked into my eyes. "Ah, but I'm not most men, darlin', and neither is Graeme."

She drew a shaky breath. "You would share me...the two of you."

"Mmhmm. Are you thinking about it?"

"I thought you already knew what I was thinking."

"I do," I rasped, letting my power rise as I grasped her arm and pulled her to her feet. The green light spilling from my eyes gilded her face as I threaded my fingers through her hair and walked her backward to the bed. "I know everything."

She moaned softly, and she went down without protest when the backs of her knees met the mattress. The sweetest sigh eased from her lips as I stretched on top of her

and put my mouth to her ear.

“Allow me to tell you.”

Chapter Ten

GRAEME

Georgie’s moans drifted through the door as I stood in the corridor in the North Tower.

I shouldn’t have listened. I shouldn’t have brought the stew or beer upstairs, either. But the bother had returned, creeping into my thoughts as I sat in my room after I left the Great Hall.

Callum is right, it whispered. Witches were weaker than other immortals. Gelhella was a brutal place, and the young witch had journeyed for hours. Fatigue had clung to her in the Great Hall. And it...bothered me.

A distraction.

I couldn’t afford distractions, so I fetched the stew from the Hall. Halfway up the stairs to the tower, I realized the stew would taste better with the beer. So I fetched that too. But I shouldn’t have, because my unwelcome guests had clearly found distractions of their own.

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:02 am

The witch's soft sigh eased through the door. It tightened my jaw as I stared at the scarred, weathered wood. A moment later, the lad's deep rumble reached me, followed by low, feminine laughter. His laughter joined hers, and then the bed ropes squeaked.

The lad's muffled, lust-thickened voice flowed into the corridor. "Just like that, Georgie." A light smack punctuated his words. "Ride me. Oh, that's a good girl." Another smack. "Faster, lass."

The witch's breathy gasps slipped around the door's hinges. An ache shot through my jaw as I braced a hand on the wood and lowered my head. Eerie green light spread from under the door. The bed ropes squeaked louder, the sharp squeals falling into a steady rhythm.

"You don't want her to leave," Callum's voice said in my memory. "You want her on that rug, spread and moaning your name as you feast between her thighs."

But he had her now. She was his feast, in every sense of the word. So very lucky.

Did the lad know how lucky he was? He surfaced in my mind, his green eyes steady and his honey-colored hair glinting in the light of the Great Hall. He had a roguish air about him, playful and irreverent. But his eyes had gone deadly serious when he held my stare across the table.

"You want to know what she tastes like but you already know it's perfect. Because she was made for you."

No. The witch was made for him.

The green light spread wider until it puddled around my boots. The witch's cries grew louder. The lad growled, the sound dripping with satisfaction. More smacks rang out, each one followed by Georgie's breathless sobs.

My jaw ached. My cock stirred, long-dormant sensations stealing through me. Pressure built between my thighs. It tightened my balls without my permission, building and building until my sack was heavy and full.

It was the lad's power. It had to be.

But maybe it was the witch. Maybe it was both of them, I thought, squeezing my eyes shut as I curled my fist against the door. Splinters pierced my skin, but I didn't feel the sting. Sensation centered in my groin, where my dick twitched and strained and...needed.

Gods, I needed—and it had been so long since I needed. It was all-consuming, this need. Obliterating in its intensity.

So very dangerous.

It flooded my dick and my mind, filling my head with visions of plump breasts and smoothly rounded shoulders. Hair-roughened thighs and the elegant arch of a masculine foot. Long, black hair falling forward but not quite obscuring the soft tip of a pert nose. A spray of unexpected freckles. Golden stubble on a firm jaw.

I needed these things. And they were within reach, just on the other side of the door.

More smacks. A woman's pleased moans. A man's grunts as he prepares to come.

The wind screaming down the corridor.

I lifted my head, and the blast caught me in the side of the face. Snowflakes gusted through the windows and made the torches on the wall shudder. The wind howled, tipping the wooden pitcher I'd left on the floor. Beer spilled over the weathered floorboards.

A storm was coming. It had been brewing since dinnertime.

I breathed it in, letting the icy air swirl through my lungs. The cold burrowed under my clothes and eased the tightness in my groin. On the other side of the door, feminine and masculine murmurs mingled. The bed ropes were quiet.

I fetched the pitcher and walked away, snow dogging my steps. The air grew colder as I reached my tower. By the time I climbed the stairs to my chamber, my breath was a steady stream of smoke around my head.

My room was sparse and neat, with only a narrow bed and a row of hooks for clothes on the frost-coated walls. But the study connected to it was a maze of clutter. A stack of books tipped precariously as I shouldered my way through the door, pitcher in hand. I steadied the stack before picking my way around piles of scrolls and other stacks on my way to the big desk under a bank of arched windows.

Wind battered the glass, which was thicker at the bottom due to its age. Outside, the horizon was black with an approaching blizzard. The midnight sun strained through clouds heavy with snow.

The pitcher still held a little beer, and I drank it down, letting the brew warm me. Centuries ago, the Brotherhood had made other things—wines and elixirs that generated income to buy armor and castles. But those days were long gone now, along with most of the Brotherhood. It might have mattered if I'd been capable of

loneliness.

But I wasn't, so it didn't, and I set the pitcher aside without remorse—or distraction.

The wind screamed louder as I settled behind my desk and gazed sightlessly at the room around me. Row after row of bookcases rose to the ceiling, each shelf stuffed with scrolls and leather-bound books. Some were so old the spines were flaking apart, the letters too faded to be legible. Others were nothing but bundles of parchment held together with thread.

Other items sat here and there among the books. Glass jars and small, jewel-colored bottles reflected the weak sunlight. A bundle of rare herbs from a long-forgotten plane nestled next to a mortar and pestle. A dagger carved from a single chunk of obsidian lay beside a moonstone inlaid with silver. The crimson bones of a phoenix filled half of one shelf. A crystal skull rested on the other half, its wide eyes a kaleidoscope of colors.

Some of the items were so precious their value couldn't be measured. They were lost things. Priceless things coveted for their magic. Some were so powerful they were the subject of treasure hunts and fabled searches. None had ever brought me the thing I searched for.

But I couldn't stop. My vows bound me. I'd said the ancient words as the head of the Brotherhood thrust his fist into my rib cage. With my vision swimming and my beating heart steaming before me, I'd promised my service through bloodied lips.

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:03 am

And I had never been forsworn. I had protected the Oracle of the North Wind for eleven centuries. Sometimes, travelers evaded me. These were the worthy ones. If they slipped through my wards and under my notice, they were meant to reach the Oracle. These travelers weren't always powerful, but many were, and they returned with powerful gifts—bundles of rare herbs and crimson phoenix bones. Priceless books and crystal skulls.

Most travelers didn't make it past the White Gate. These I sent away, but not before I took whatever knowledge they carried in their packs and belongings. Because I'd vowed to serve when I said my vows, my eyes wide as I watched the ice cover my heart. But when the Grand Master thrust it back into my body, I'd taken another vow—a secret one I'd whispered over and over in my mind until it was as loud as a shout.

I will never stop searching.

Wind howled, tugging me from the past. I pulled a book toward me and opened it. As the storm began to batter the castle, I resumed my search.

Just as I had every night for over a thousand years.

* * *

The cold woke me.

I blinked—and it took me a moment to figure out why the room was sideways. I'd fallen asleep with my face pressed to the inside of the book. A page stuck to my

cheek for a second as I lifted my head.

The study was still. Too still. Ice coated everything, including the ends of my hair. I ran a hand through the tangled mass, which I usually cut with a knife when it got too long. But that was the last thing on my mind as I gazed at the ice glistening around me. On its shelf, the crystal skull shimmered under its glassy layer, its eyes glazed with frost.

The temperature plunged another dozen degrees. Cracks raced down the cover of one of the books on my desk. A second later, the book shattered.

Hamish glided through the door.

I went as still as the room around me.

Hamish stopped just inside the threshold. His auburn hair brushed his shoulders, the color vibrant against the brown quilted gambeson the same shade as his eyes.

“My love,” I said hoarsely. “Please speak.” It was a useless request. Hamish never spoke. He visited sparingly—once a decade or so—and he never, never talked. Not once in eleven centuries.

I didn’t dare rise. In the beginning, when he first showed himself, I tried to go to him. But he vanished when I approached, so I’d learned to move as little as possible. Instead, I devoured him with my eyes, running my gaze over his handsome face and long, leanly muscled body. The sunlight was stronger now, and it turned his hair to fire. He was so real in the doorway, I could almost feel his breath on my neck and his strong hands clasping mine.

But his eyes were sad.

“Why have you...?” I started, but I already knew. I knew why he’d come.

Hamish stared at me, the sorrow in his brown gaze grinding my guts to pulp. The morning sunlight set the ice-coated study glittering like the inside of a diamond. It was beautiful. I saw none of it.

“I’m sending them away,” I rasped. “The witch... She tried to trick me. The incubus is working with her. They want to reach the Oracle. I won’t let them. I’ll order them to leave immediately.” My pleas turned to babble, my words tripping over each other. “I’ll do it straightaway, love. I don’t want them here. I don’t want—”

Hamish glided backward, part of his shoulder passing through the door frame.

“No!” I gripped the edge of my desk. My throat tightened. “Don’t... Please, I’m sorry. I’m so sorry.”

Sunlight slanted across the study, a thick beam shining inches from the tips of Hamish’s boots, which began to fade.

“Don’t,” I gasped, shoving my chair back. Ice formed fissures on my clothes as I stumbled around the desk, knocking scrolls to the frost-covered floor.

Hamish’s gaze stayed sorrowful as his hair lost its color and his legs grew transparent. His skin turned gray.

“No!” I lurched forward, slipped on the icy floor, and went down hard. My hip and elbow struck in unison, white-hot pain knifing through me. I scrambled to my knees.

Blood bloomed across the front of Hamish’s gambeson, turning the brown cloth black.

“Don’t,” I whispered—and knowing what came next didn’t lessen the horror. Blood trickled from his pale lips. It spread across his chest and down his stomach like gruesome tributaries branching off from a deep spring.

He moved backward, his eyes never leaving me.

But he would. He always left me.

“I’m sorry,” I croaked. “I’m sorry.”

Page 36

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:03 am

The blood soaked Hamish to the waist, the color as gray as his skin and hair. A river of it flowed down his chin. I couldn't stop it. I'd never been able to stop it. Once upon a time, his blood had soaked my hands. So much of it. My fingers twitched with the memory of trying to scoop it from the ground and put it back.

"Don't go," I begged, the entreaty as futile as the first time. Now, as then, ice numbed my knees and I knelt and prayed to any god who would listen. I prayed to Hamish, too, but he was as silent as the gods had been all those years ago.

Moisture trickled down my cheeks and froze on my skin. Tears.

Not possible.

Not possible.

But they were hard and real under my fingers when I pressed my trembling hands to my beard. Salty icicles formed at the corners of my lips, and the ache returned to my chest. I clawed at it, choking on emotions that spiraled up from the dusty corners of my mind. One by one, they slammed into me: confusion, regret, sorrow.

The last was a scab ripped off a wound. Sharp and ruthless, it cut me open, pulling wet, quivering gasps from my throat. Animal sounds spilled from me as I reached for Hamish, fresh tears freezing almost as soon as they fell. "She cursed me," I said between sobs. "She must have."

The beer.

The incubus had distracted me in the Great Hall, and the witch had poisoned the brew. In my mind's eye, I watched the pitcher spilling in the corridor. Watched myself tip it back and drain it before I settled behind my desk.

She'd poisoned me, cursing me to feel. The lad was young and too inexperienced to fight me. The witch was no match for my strength or power. So she'd resorted to the underhanded tactics of her kind.

"I'm sending them away," I told Hamish. "I'm sorry." I was sorry for so many things.

Soft, sad brown eyes held mine. Hamish drifted backward...

"Don't!" I cried, crawling forward. "Don't leave me again!"

He faded to nothing. Gone.

The beer shot up my throat and spewed from my mouth. It froze as soon as it hit the floor. There wasn't much, but my stomach didn't seem to know that, and it continued cramping. I heaved and gagged on my hands and knees, snot and tears freezing on my face. Eventually, my retching turned to weeping, and I collapsed on my side. The ache persisted, a throbbing, gaping void that couldn't be filled.

Memories of Hamish flooded my mind, filling my head with images of us riding horses through the fields, laughing and joking. I saw us lying in bed, our limbs entwined and sweat cooling on our skin. We walked into battle together. Bled together. Loved together. I loved him, I loved him, and he was gone.

It wouldn't kill me, this sorrow, because it wasn't real. No witch's curse could unravel my vows. My heart was a solid weight in my chest, its beats as still and cold as the ice-coated room around me. But the sorrow was a weight, too. It would slow me down and put the Oracle in danger.

Grunting, I struggled to my feet. The witch had done this, and she wasn't leaving the White Gate without answering for her crime. If I could feel sorrow, I could feel other things.

Like resolve. I let it fill me as I entered my chamber and went to the wash basin. The water was frozen, and I punched through it with a spike of anger.

Yes, I thought as blood dripped from my knuckles to the frigid water. I could use that too.

Chapter Eleven

GEORGIE

"Where the hell are you, Callum McLeish?" I asked irritably as I shivered at the window. My heart sank at the sight of the snow, which looked at least ten feet higher than yesterday. The storm had passed, but another approached. Ominous clouds clustered on the horizon, promising a fresh blizzard. If Callum and I had any hope of reaching the Oracle today, we needed to leave the White Gate as soon as possible.

But that was going to be hard to do with Callum missing. After a fitful night on the lumpy mattress, I was a collection of aches and pains. Meanwhile, Callum had slept like a log, his soft snores filling my ear as he cuddled me like I was his personal body pillow. He'd risen in an obnoxiously cheerful mood and announced he was going on a "reconnaissance mission" around the fortress.

"What are you reconnoitering?" I'd grumbled, massaging my neck by the fire.

He'd looked skeptical as he stripped, preparing to shift. "I'm not sure that's a word, lass."

“It’s a word.”

“If you say so.” Grinning, he dropped his pants and stepped out of them.

“I do say so.” I made my expression stern—and studiously ignored how good he looked with the morning sunlight gilding his muscles. “Do you think it’s wise to go running around the castle?”

“I’ll stay smoky.” Nude, he crossed the chamber, seized my hips, and tugged me against him. “And I’ll look for coffee.”

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:03 am

My protests crumbled. “You will?”

His eyes twinkled. “If there’s coffee in this castle, it’ll be yours, witchling.”

Dammit, he had me. He read sexual desires, but coffee was just as satisfying as sex, so maybe I shouldn’t have been surprised. “All right. But remember, you promised not to provoke Graeme.”

“I won’t.” He planted a soft kiss on my forehead. “I just want to get the lay of the land. Maybe find some bacon to go with the coffee. Unless you want to eat cold stew for breakfast?”

“Gross.” I’d gasped as he shifted to smoke and spiraled up my body in a playful arc. “Don’t be gone long. And I need at least two sugars!” I’d called as he streamed under the door.

I turned to the door now, my gaze falling on the pot of stew Callum and I found in the corridor when we went hunting for a bathroom last night. Graeme had left two bowls and spoons, along with a frozen puddle of beer. My cheeks heated at the thought of him standing in the corridor as I straddled Callum. And, oh gods, what if he’d heard Callum reciting my darkest, most wicked fantasies? The ones that involved Graeme being a very active participant in the aforementioned straddling?

It would never happen. Even if Graeme was our mate—and my internal jury was still out on that—he was an ice dragon. His eyes had been utterly cold last night when he declared he didn’t care if Callum and I got hurt.

Then he'd brought us stew. I gnawed at my lip as I studied the pot on the floor. Graeme had searched our packs. He'd taken nothing, but he left the items in enough disarray to let us know he'd inspected our belongings before returning our bags. He knew we had enough food and water for several nights.

So why bring us dinner?

The air shifted behind me, and I turned as a line of black smoke streamed through the open window. It curved sinuously, weaving in and out of itself and putting on a show.

"You didn't find coffee," I said, wincing at the whine in my voice. But...caffeine.

The smoke formed into a disheveled Callum. His eyes were bright as he came to me and took me by the shoulders. "I know you're pisappointed."

I blinked. "Disappointed."

"No, pisappointed. It's when you're pissed and disappointed. Pisappointed."

"I thought pissed meant drunk in the UK."

"It does," he said, his tone mildly offended. "But we have Netflix, lass. And, anyway, I found something better than coffee."

"Impossible."

"Withhold judgment until you've seen my surprises." He released me and crossed to his pile of clothing on the bed.

I wandered forward, my gaze traveling down his muscular back and firm ass as he stepped into his pants. "Surprises? As in, plural?"

“Aye,” he said, facing me as he pulled his pants over his hips, covering his dick. I was still masking my disappointment when he grabbed my hand and pulled me to the door.

“We can’t go out there!”

He faced me and walked backward, drawing me with him. A mischievous smile played around his lips. “You mean you don’t want a hot bath?”

I stopped resisting. “You found a bathroom? A real one?” Because the wooden porta-potty in a closet down the hall was not it. Callum was right—hot water was better than coffee. I’d washed up as best as I could with the wet wipes in our packs, but after a day of hiking and a couple rounds of horizontal activities with Callum, my scalp itched and my deodorant verged on waving the white flag of surrender.

“Even better,” Callum said. “It’s a caldarium.”

“A cal-what?”

His eyes lit up. “Wait, do I know something you don’t?”

“Just tell me what it is.”

“I will, just let me sit with this feeling for a moment.”

“Do you know how much coffee means to me, Callum?”

He grinned. “The Romans built them. They were heated with some kind of fancy tunnel system under the floor.” My continued confusion must have shown on my face, because he said, “Big stone hot tub.”

“Lead the way, dragon.”

Laughing, he tugged me through the door and down the corridor to the same spiral staircase we’d descended last night. This time, however, he guided me up instead of down. Moments later, we ducked through a narrow door and stepped onto the tower’s icy roof. Snow stretched in all directions. The tower soared above it, reducing everything on the ground to miniature. A snowy boulder we’d passed yesterday looked like a marble.

“This isn’t a bathroom,” I said, my heart speeding up as I eyed battlements that looked like they’d been smeared with white frosting. “Also, doesn’t this castle eat people?”

Callum tucked my arm into his elbow and helped me over the ice. “King Cormac said that’s only for uninvited guests. Graeme carried us inside, so I’d say we’re invited. But don’t worry, we’ll stay away from the stone just in case.” Steps from the battlements, he stopped us and moved behind me. Resting his hands on my shoulders, he turned me gently and pointed. “Look there, witchling. It’s faint but you can just make it out.”

I squinted... Then I sucked in a breath.

“You see it,” Callum said, his smile curving against my ear.

“Yes.” The Oracle of the North Wind. It shimmered blue on the horizon. Every few seconds, a darker blue pulse fired through it. “It’s closer than I thought.”

“Aye. My guess is about an hour on foot.”

“It’s farther than it looks,” a deep voice growled. A second later, Graeme stepped from nothing, appearing between me and the battlements as if he’d been there the whole time. Which, of course, he had. Fury poured off him, thick waves of it distorting the air around him.

Callum shoved me behind him so quickly I had to clutch at his shoulder to steady myself.

“That won’t work,” Graeme said, his gaze locking onto me. The glacial indifference was gone, replaced with a deep wrath almost demonic in its intensity. His eyes were red-rimmed and raw, as if he hadn’t slept. But his bulk was as intimidating as ever. He towered above the battlements, his broad form filling the horizon. The muscles in his shoulders flexed as he stabbed a thick finger at me. “You can’t hide from what you’ve done, witch.”

Callum bristled. “What are you talking about? She hasn’t done anything.”

Graeme bared his teeth and took a menacing step forward, and I suddenly understood how people must have felt when marauding Vikings washed ashore. “Don’t play ignorant, boy. You worked with her in the Great Hall, diverting my attention so she could poison my beer.”

“I did no such thing,” I said.

Graeme’s lips curled into a snarl. “Such a fine actress. I applaud your efforts, but your scheme is finished. You’ll reverse this curse or suffer the consequences.”

“Don’t threaten her,” Callum growled. His muscles tightened further under my hand. He was poised to strike.

I stepped out from behind him. “What is it you think I’ve done?” Callum reached for me, but I shook him off. “No, I want to know.” I put my shoulders back as I faced off with Graeme. “How did I curse you? And please be specific. If I’m to reverse this poison, I need to know exactly what I put in your beer.”

“More theater,” Graeme bit out. The air around him rippled. “I tire of your game, witch.”

My heart thumped hard against my ribs. If I grabbed at the air, I wasn’t sure I could hold it, let alone form it into a weapon strong enough to take down Graeme. Callum was a rigid presence at my side, his big body just barely held in check. I knew that if Graeme made one wrong move toward me, that check would disappear. And Callum would likely lose any battle between them. Memories of his blood splattering the ground flitted through my head.

No. I couldn’t let that happen. But Graeme was so angry—

My breath hitched. Graeme was angry. And yesterday, he’d been aroused. At times, he’d seemed startled or confused. He’d felt—and he wasn’t supposed to feel anything.

Callum’s voice rose in my mind. “The mate bond isn’t always a lightning strike, Georgie. It’s different for everyone. But it can’t be ignored.”

Graeme hadn’t ignored us. He’d tried to. He sent us to our rooms and ordered us to leave. He claimed he didn’t care if we got hurt.

And then he brought us stew.

“Kill me, then,” I said suddenly, lifting my chin.

Callum looked at me sharply. I waved him to silence without breaking Graeme's stare.

"Do it," I said, my heart thundering in my ears. "If I cursed you, killing me will set you free. Niall Balfour proved as much when he killed Mullo. The curse that killed your females broke the second Mullo took his last breath. Do the same now. Kill me."

Callum's growl echoed around the frozen tower. "Georgie—"

"Quiet," I said, taking my eyes off Graeme long enough to give Callum a warning look. "This is between me and Graeme."

Callum's chest rose and fell swiftly. A muscle jumped in his jaw, and for a second I worried he might ignore my order. At last, he gave a curt nod.

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:03 am

I turned back to Graeme. “You can be done with this in the next few seconds if you throw me from this tower. I’m a witch. As you’ve so helpfully pointed out, my strength is nothing compared to yours. I probably won’t survive the fall.”

Graeme’s eyes glinted. He lifted a hand like he might brush at his chest, then seemed to catch himself and lowered it. “I...”

“Kill me,” I said. “I’m nothing to you.”

His brows pulled together. Emotions raced through his eyes. Anger. Confusion. Hints of fear. He blinked rapidly, as if the swift parade startled him. When he finally spoke, his voice sounded like it was scraped from the back of his throat. “I...will not.”

Relief tried to loosen my knees, but I stiffened my spine. Somehow, I kept my voice steady. “If you’re not going to kill me, I’m taking a bath. Your mattress sucks, I haven’t showered in forty-eight hours, and I’m in the throes of caffeine withdrawal. Any dragon stupid enough to get between me and hot water is going to spend the next month as a toad.” I turned to Callum and adopted the imperious tone my mother had used whenever she was fed up with lesser immortals. “Take me to the caldarium.”

“Yes, ma’am.” He proffered an arm. As I took it, Graeme stepped forward with a growl.

“You’re not going down there alone.”

I curled my fingers around Callum’s bicep and gave Graeme a pointed look. “Then I guess you’d better come, too.”

Callum moved us toward the door that led to the stairs. Steps from the threshold, I looked over my shoulder at Graeme, who stared back at me with a mix of anger and bewilderment on his rugged face.

Suddenly, my fickle power was an asset. Rumors of my clumsiness and magic-fueled catastrophes had plagued me my whole life. My parents had done their best to quiet the whispers, but word had leaked out. When witches from other houses visited, they often tried to test me. I wasn't a legend like my parents, but I was still their daughter. Power was half skill and half reputation. If you acted like someone who could level a city with a tornado, people tended to treat you like one.

I held Graeme's gaze and raised a brow. Sell it, sell it. "Well, dragon? Are you coming or not?"

Chapter Twelve

CALLUM

The air in the caldarium was oppressively warm. Torches sputtered along the walls. A thick mist floated above the ground, ferrying heat and moisture. Carved from the rock under the White Gate, the place was a welcome respite from the rest of the frozen fortress.

But it did nothing to assuage the chill flowing between me and Graeme.

We faced each other across a small antechamber outside the bathing room. Georgie had taken one look at the enormous square pool filled with steaming water, murmured "viva Roma," and left Graeme and me to each other's company.

Probably not the wisest decision. Training with Bram McGregor, I'd learned that a cool head was the best defense in battle. Then I watched a male threaten my mate.

The fact that the male in question was also my mate didn't seem to matter.

He leaned against a wall that still bore chisel marks from when it was carved, his thick arms folded over his broad chest and a glower on his face.

I returned the favor from the opposite wall as soft splashing sounds and the floral scent of Georgie's shampoo drifted from the bathing chamber. Irritation prickled through me at the thought of her luscious body slick with soap and warm water. She probably looked like a mermaid with her black hair plastered to her head and her firm tits bobbing above the water. Those pink nipples ripe as little berries through the steam. I should have been washing her back. Instead, I was locked in a staring contest with Graeme Abernathy.

"Fuck," I muttered.

Graeme raised a brow. "Problem?"

"Aye. You."

He flashed a tight, humorless smile. "I must not have heard you correctly. It sounded like you're blaming me for problems you created."

"No, you heard me just fine."

A blast of chilly air rolled off him. "The only problem here is you, boy."

Deep in my chest, my dragon lifted its head. I pushed off the wall and stalked forward, all my cool-headed training evaporating. I stopped inches from Graeme and showed my teeth. "I'm getting really tired of you calling me boy."

"That's a shame."

My temper spiked. “It makes sense, though.”

“Oh, yeah?” He unfolded his arms and stepped into me, his chest brushing mine.

“How so?”

He had a couple of inches on me, and I had to tip my head back to meet his stare.

“Fate gave you two mates, and you’re scared out of your mind. But you’re too much of a fucking baby to face your fears, so you resort to childish insults and throw a temper tantrum every time your dick gets hard.”

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:03 am

His nostrils flared, and outrage leapt into his eyes. “You’re not my mate.”

“Keep telling yourself that. Maybe you’ll actually believe it one day.”

He grabbed my shirt by the collar and hauled me up so we were nose to nose. “You’re not my mate,” he snarled. “Your witch poisoned me.”

I smiled. “That’s a great theory, Graeme, but it has a fatal flaw.” I reached down and grasped his cock, which was hard enough to rip through his pants. At his swift intake of breath, I swiped my tongue over his lips, tasting fire and salt and the dark magic of the fae. I knew my power shimmered in my eyes as I spoke against his mouth. “You were hard for me long before you drank that beer, sweetheart.”

His blue eyes widened. His shaky breath teased my lips. Then he spun me around and shoved me against the wall. My back hit the stone, forcing a grunt from me as Graeme gripped my throat and growled in my face.

“I’ve had enough of your mouth.”

“No, you haven’t.” I arched into him, rubbing my cock over his. “You’ve got a whole list of things you want to do to it.”

“Shut up.”

“Make me.”

He tightened his grip. At the same time, he shoved his face against my throat. His

heated breath fanned my neck. “I should fuck you right here. Right up against this wall.”

Lust sizzled through my veins. “Do it.” Gods, I was ready to beg him for it. He wanted inside me, and I was game. His masculine scent filled my lungs. His hard body trapped me against the rock. No place to go, but I didn’t want to leave. I wanted him to set me on fire.

He panted against my neck, his warrior’s body throwing off aggression and sweat. He rocked his hips, rubbing our dicks together, and I wasn’t sure he realized he was doing it. He released another shuddery breath, the sound ending on a low, sexy whimper.

“It’s okay to be afraid,” I said.

He pulled back, storm clouds darkening his eyes. “What?”

“You heard me.”

The storm broke. “I’m not afraid,” he growled, “but you should be.” He brought his mouth down on mine.

Fucking finally.

He kissed me hard, bruising and punishing. His tongue probed my lips, seeking entry. When I didn’t give it fast enough, he grabbed my jaw and forced his way inside, swiping his hot, needy tongue over mine.

Triumph surged in my veins as I shoved my hands into his hair and kissed him back, matching him stroke for stroke. His tongue was slick and hot. The stone dug into my back, the rock as hard and brutal as the male taking his pleasure from me. And, fuck,

I wanted to give it to him. Give and give forever. My dick leaked in my pants, everything between my legs hot and hard and swollen. I hooked a leg around his thigh and thrust my hips forward, rutting against him.

Never, my mind whispered. Never had I felt this way with a man. Submission didn't phase me. I fed on fantasies, and it was the nature of my kind to bend and adapt. I could be whatever Graeme wanted me to be. But I'd never been so...hungry.

Yes, that was it. My need was insatiable. I could drink from him forever and never get my fill. Wasn't meant to.

He groaned into my mouth. His hands were everywhere, tugging at my clothes and digging into my skin. He shoved his thigh between mine, spreading me wider and giving himself room to grind.

My balls ached. My magic rushed forward, spinning Graeme's fantasies through my mind like a carousel. Me bent over the wooden table in the Great Hall, my cheek pressed to the wood and my pleased moans rising to the ancient beams. Me on my back, my ankles in his hands as he pumped between my thighs. Me astride him, riding him like Georgie rode me the night before. The vision wavered, and she took my place, her head thrown back and her tits bouncing as she worked her body up and down Graeme's cock.

"You'll have us both," I said, tearing my mouth from his. I gripped his shoulder in case he tried to come in for another kiss. Because it was important to get this right, I realized suddenly. Georgie and I had come to him together. My gut told me fate had arranged it that way for a reason.

Graeme stared at me, his mouth wet and blurry. "Both?" he rasped, his air distracted.

"Georgie is right around the corner. We can seal our mate bond now." I moved my

hand to his cheek and stroked his beard. “Fate led us here, Graeme. Your search is over.”

I had a split second of warning.

My feet left the ground, and the antechamber whipped past as Graeme flung me away from him. I twisted in mid-air and would have landed on my feet, but something slammed into my side, tossing me to the ground. I landed hard, the wind knocked out of me. Graeme was on me in a blink, hauling me up and snarling in my face

“I have a mate. His name is Hamish, and I will never stop searching for him.”

Hamish? The mate he’d lost centuries ago? I gasped for air as I fought his grip. “You search for a dead man?”

Page 41

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:03 am

He paled. Then he roared, the force of the sound rocking the antechamber. His fist flew, and my head snapped back.

Pain exploded behind my eyes. I staggered, then shifted to shadow form.

Graeme streamed into the air beside me, his body a seething, roiling mass of vaporized rage. We spiraled around each other as we sailed toward the ceiling.

Abruptly, he vanished.

I slowed, twisting this way and that as I searched for signs of him. If I'd had a pulse, it would have been racing. If he'd cloaked himself in glamour, he could be anywhere. He could be right beside—

A tight, concentrated ball of smoke appeared a dozen feet away from me. It split into dozens of smaller balls.

Oh, fuck.

The balls shot toward me like a hail of bullets. I couldn't move fast enough, and they slammed into me, scattering my form into tiny pieces. The world spun. Disorientation swept me as I struggled to reform. But I couldn't pull myself together. Gritting my teeth in my mind, I shifted in the air and plunged to the cavern floor as flesh and bone.

Several of those bones snapped as I hit the ground and skidded on my stomach. The rock peeled my skin. Agony knifed through me, ripping a cry from my throat.

Graeme's answering roar pierced the fog of pain. I flipped onto my back, the taste of blood in my mouth.

Graeme stalked toward me, his eyes wild and unfocused.

Georgie stepped between us clad in nothing but a towel. "Stop!"

Graeme recoiled like he'd been struck. He blinked at her, his bare shoulders heaving.

She faced off with him like an avenging angel, her wet hair streaming down her back. A strange power hovered around her, and it had a voice. But it didn't speak. No, it writhed, filling the air with vicious whispers I couldn't quite catch. Witchcraft. I'd never experienced it up close. Anyone who claimed witches were the weakest immortals had clearly never seen one ready to throw down.

"You will not touch him," Georgie said, and the whispers hissed with a thousand different tongues. The hair on my nape lifted. I was suddenly grateful I couldn't see her face.

Graeme's ragged breaths filled the antechamber. His pale gaze shifted from Georgie to me. For a moment, something like regret flickered in his eyes. Then he took shadow form and streaked away, setting the torches dancing in his wake.

Georgie whirled around and rushed to me. "Callum!" She knelt at my side and held trembling hands over my body as if she was afraid to touch me. Her eyes glittered bright purple with anger and worry. As she looked me over, the worry won out. "Talk to me. Are you okay?"

"Never better," I grunted as I sat up.

"You're bleeding! Oh gods, your arm..."

I looked at my forearm, where a purplish splinter of bone protruded from my skin. As Georgie and I watched, it shivered and slid back into place. “I might need a band-aid,” I said, nausea filling my mouth with saliva.

She lowered her voice to barely above a whisper. “You need to get out of here. Both of us. Now.”

“But...Graeme.” We couldn’t leave him.

“He attacked you,” Georgie said, something fierce leaping into her eyes. “He was going to kill you. Gods, Callum, how can you even think of staying?”

“He wouldn’t have killed me.” I was sure of it.

Pretty sure.

She put her mouth to my ear. “We should go to the Oracle before the storm comes. You heard Graeme. If I’m meant to get past the White Gate, I will. And I’m not going to sit around freezing my ass off, waiting for him to beat you.”

Something—my wounded male pride, perhaps—roused in my chest. “He didn’t beat me.”

She pulled back. “What did he mean about searching for Hamish?”

So she’d heard that. “I don’t know, but I’m hoping he meant it metaphorically.” Which had to be the case. The Firstborn Races were hard to kill—and dragons more so than most—but no one had ever returned from the dead. I was sure of it.

Well, pretty sure.

Fuck.

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:03 am

Georgie's eyes were pools of anxiety. "What if you're wrong about him?"

"No." Not after that kiss. I took her hand. "I'm not the best warrior." I winced. "I'm kind of shite at fighting, actually. My magic isn't good for battle, but it's good for this. Sex is more than the physical act, witchling. Desire starts in the mind. Graeme is the finest fighter I've encountered, but swords and fists are useless against thoughts. I'm right about us—all three of us. I know it."

She cupped my unshaven jaw. "You're not shit at fighting." Her eyes glittered, and the whispers shivered around us again. "You're mine, and I wouldn't change you even if I could. But Graeme is over a thousand years old. Please don't ask me to watch something like that again." Her mouth trembled, and she spoke on a broken whisper. "I can't stand to see you hurt."

My heart squeezed—and it made my decision for me. Graeme wasn't going anywhere. If anything, a little distance might be good until the three of us could figure things out. I covered Georgie's hand with mine. "All right. But you should let me fly us to the Oracle."

"What about the cold? And your injuries!"

"The Oracle is within sight. I can make it." I nodded toward the caldarium behind her. "I'll wash the blood off and be good as new." When doubts huddled in her eyes, I held up my newly healed arm. "See? Already better. I'm a dragon, Georgie. I can get you to that Oracle. We'll answer its riddle and be on our way."

She huffed. "It's not a riddle—"

“Details, lass. Let’s get there first. Then we’ll figure out how to get your wind.”

She gnawed at her lip. Then she nodded. “Okay. We can try.”

“Do or do not. There is no try.”

Amusement touched her eyes. “Yoda?”

“Aye. I didn’t attempt the voice. You’re welcome.”

The amusement swelled, but worry was swift on its heels. “You promise you’re okay to fly?”

“I vow it. Now, get ready for the ride of your life.”

Chapter Thirteen

GEORGIE

Crossing Gelhella on foot was challenging. Sweeping over it twenty thousand feet in the air was utterly terrifying.

But it was also exhilarating—in the way that speeding through the sky at heights and speeds reserved for helicopters was probably exhilarating. Except helicopters didn’t have glittering green scales and several rows of serrated teeth longer than my body. They didn’t have long tails that lashed the sky or spiky horns that paraded down their backs.

I clasped two of those horns now, my thighs clenched against the scales that joined Callum’s shoulders to his neck. The storm that had loomed in the distance all morning had rolled swiftly forward as we took off from the North Tower of the White

Gate.

It enveloped us, turning the air to the inside of a snow globe. Frost coated Callum's scales, but he pushed forward, his massive wings beating with a powerful rhythm.

Icy wind screamed past my head. Snow pelted my face, invading my nostrils and clustering on my eyelashes faster than I could blink it away. Callum's head blocked some of the blast, but he couldn't protect me from everything, and the wind buffeted me like a giant throwing punches.

My father could have blocked it. As a child, I'd seen him heft an invisible shield against the wind. He'd held the currents in thrall and then turned them against his enemies, sending cyclones to decimate anyone who dared to stand against our house. My mother's magic had been more precise—and just as deadly. She'd been a sniper among our kind, a witch who used air to assassinate in quick, devastating strikes.

My father's battles were big and bold, but my mother's were the ones people talked about. They recounted her deeds in the whispered tones people used when they spoke of something dangerous and terrifying.

I used to act out her most famous kills when I was young. At night in my bedroom in House Blackwood, I'd grab wind with a dramatic flourish and hurl it toward an imaginary opponent. After workers repaired the wall for the third time, a servant appeared and said that my mother would like it very much if I stopped.

No matter how hard I trained or how long I studied, I'd never lived up to the hype that preceded my birth. The great experiment of Ramsin Blackwood and Bellona Crane was a great flop.

But I could change it.

A dark wind is coming, Georgie. Only you can harness it.

My father's last words echoed in my head as I squinted at the Oracle's blue light. The glow spread across the horizon like a beacon. I was so close. Callum's wings beat the air in giant sweeps. The wind tossed his big body around like a cork bobbing in water, but he pushed forward as the snow thickened. Every few seconds, the flakes blotted out the Oracle.

Callum lowered his head and leaned into the wind. I plastered my body to his back, hoping to boost whatever aerodynamics I could. Cold seeped from Callum's body into my layers of clothing. His scales had been hot to the touch when I climbed onto his back atop the tower. Now, a thin sheet of ice dulled the bright green.

I turned my head so I could see his wing. Ice had formed on the membrane and the tips of the claws that decorated each joint. Worry gnawed at my gut. Airplanes deiced their wings for a reason. Callum could only collect so much extra weight before he was forced to descend.

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:03 am

As if he sensed my concern, he released a short roar and flapped his wings hard, dislodging some of the ice.

Blue lightning forked across the sky, followed by a deafening boom. A second later, shockwaves rippled through the air. The powerful current tossed Callum sharply to the side, sending him into a barrel roll.

A scream lodged in my throat as I gripped his horns and felt my body lift away from his back. With another roar, Callum jerked in the opposite direction. But he overcorrected, and I slammed into his scales, my teeth clicking together. Snow and wind lashed my face. The temperature plummeted. Every breath seared my lungs. My sweaty hands froze to Callum's horns.

Lightning blazed a blue, jagged path—a million tiny veins forming and dying. Thunder split the air.

Callum struggled against the current, his body bobbing and swaying. His scales vibrated beneath me, the power of his struggle resonating through my bones. A bolt of lightning struck so close that Callum banked sharply to avoid its shock. The world flared as bright as the sun, blinding me. I waited for my vision to clear before I realized the blanket of white was the storm.

Pinpricks of pain fired across my head. Horror dawned as I realized the wind was ripping my hair from my scalp. It was too much. No quest was worth dying for.

Gritting my teeth, I ripped my frozen hand from Callum's horn. Blood froze on my torn palm as I pounded my fist against his scales. "Go back!" I screamed, but the

tempest snatched the words away. Blue lightning fired all around us. Callum pumped his wings, but a brutal downdraft slammed into us. My stomach flew into my throat as we dropped several hundred feet in less than a second.

Lightning exploded, sparks flying. Callum screeched and veered violently to the left. His right wing smoked. Blood sprayed from a tear in the membrane. More blood flowed over his wing, quickly freezing as Callum fell into a spin.

The world whipped around and around. Faster and faster. I clung to Callum's horns, but my body was a rag doll. We spun so fast, I couldn't see. Couldn't think. My stomach heaved, bile burning my throat. My toe caught on one of Callum's frozen scales. Blind and desperate, I dug my toe in and tried to climb. But my foot slipped, and my legs dangled. I lost my grip on one horn...

And I fell.

A dragon's agonized shriek accompanied my descent.

Wind.

Snow.

My body tumbled. Everything was white.

Someone was screaming. After a second, I realized the sound came from me.

My father's last words were meaningless.

I was going to die.

My heart stuttered. My chest burned. Wind roared in my ears.

Wind. I couldn't slip into the currents unless I was standing still. Even if I could have shaped them from the air, weapons were useless to me now. The element I'd never been able to control sped me toward my death.

I squeezed my eyes shut and waited for impact. I saw myself in my mind's eye, an ice-encrusted corpse lying broken on the frozen ground.

Heat caressed my skin. I opened my eyes as a pale blue dragon swooped over me. His wings stretched wide, icy blue veins spiderwebbing over his wings.

Graeme.

In a breathtaking, elegant move, he snapped his wings close to his body and rolled out of sight.

I slammed into something hard. My head bounced, and I tasted blood. The sky spread over me, but I wasn't falling anymore. Black huddled at the edges of my vision. My thoughts grew sluggish.

Safe. I was safe enough for now. As the blackness closed in, a line of black smoke streaked overhead. Somehow, I knew it was Callum.

Relief pulled a gasp from my lungs. My mate was safe, too.

The blackness became a weight. I let it pull me under.

Chapter Fourteen

GRAEME

"She'll be all right."

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:03 am

The lad followed his declaration with a sigh of relief loud enough to drown out the crackling fire. He wasn't looking for a reply as he sat on the edge of the witch's bed and checked her pulse for the hundredth time. The wisest course of action would have been to keep my mouth shut and let him tend to her. Nothing good could come from picking a fight with the boy.

"No thanks to you," I said, glowering at his back from my spot next to the hearth. I leaned against the wall with my arms folded across my chest. My forearms rested over the ache, which had returned and now throbbed so fiercely it was all I could do to keep from groaning.

Callum stiffened. Slowly, he rose from the bed and faced me. He had to be cold in nothing but the trousers he'd yanked from one of the backpacks, but he'd been too focused on Georgie to see to his own comfort. He was fortunate—the lightning strike had shaken him up, but he'd healed as soon as he shifted to two legs. In a way, Georgie's fall had spared him further injury. Once he no longer had to worry about keeping her on his back, he'd taken shadow form and halted his dangerous descent. He'd been an irritating presence at my side on the flight back to the castle, and he'd snatched the witch from my arms as soon as I touched down on the tower.

"I beg your pardon?" he demanded now, tension coiling around him like a snake. The storm had blown itself out, and the evening sunlight sheened his bare shoulders and gilded his ridiculous hair that was too stupid to figure out what color it should be. The light touched the ends of his curly eyelashes, which were also stupid. But his arm was whole, with no sign of the burn that could have cleaved his wing in two. His body would have regenerated. Then again, maybe not. He was so young. Dammit, he had no business flying into a blizzard. He could have been hurt. If the lightning had hit

just a bit to the left... If the bolt had struck him in the head...

The ache burrowed deeper, and I wanted to claw at my chest to make it stop.

Instead, I stared at the lad and said, "You're a fool."

"Aye, that's true."

The admission was strangely disarming. Most people weren't so quick to admit their faults. I'd expected an argument—or at least some kind of smart-ass response. His easy acceptance made me feel boorish as I said, "You shouldn't have taken her up there."

"Also true, but I didn't have much choice." Callum flashed a tight smile that didn't reach his eyes. "Someone kept denying her passage to the North." He moved forward, his strong, lean body as ridiculous as his hair. "Then someone tried to screw me against a wall before using me as a punching bag." He stopped a short distance away. "Someone," he said softly, "is an asshole."

A growl rumbled in my throat. The ache spread in my chest. "You play with fire."

His gaze didn't waver. "Will you hurt me again?"

My chest burned. The memory of him skidding across the ground flashed in my head. A second kind of discomfort joined the ache, and it felt like...regret. It twisted deep, sinking past muscle and sinew until I couldn't stand still. I couldn't stand it, and I reached for my chest but ended up reaching for him. Then he was in my arms with his back to the wall as he'd been in the caldarium, and I loomed over him with all his stupid, ridiculous beauty under my hands.

"You..." I dragged in a breath, wincing when the ache delved deeper. "You tried to

seduce me.”

Callum’s eyes fired bright green. “Tried?” His voice turned silky. “Oh, I never try, sweetheart. When I want someone, I get them.” He lifted a hand like he meant to stroke my beard.

I caught it and pinned it beside his head. “You won’t get me, demon.”

“I already have you.” He held my gaze, seemingly untroubled by my grip on his wrist or his position between me and the wall.

“You don’t,” I insisted. The ache shoved deeper, stealing my breath. I panted against Callum’s lips as tears burned my eyes. “You don’t have me. I’m not yours.”

“Is that why you came for me?” He used his free hand to catch a tear that spilled down my cheek. When he flicked it away, a diamond bounced over the floor’s wooden planks.

I caught his other wrist and pinned that one too. “Don’t,” I tried to growl, but the order emerged as a sob, and I wasn’t sure if I pleaded with him or myself.

“You came for me. You couldn’t let me go.”

More tears streaked down my face, turning to diamonds as they tangled in my beard. “You fell,” I said, nightmare visions filling my head. His beast screaming in agony as lightning struck his wing. His bleeding body plunging toward the frozen ground. I shook the images away, and my fingers tightened on his wrists. “How could you put yourself in that kind of danger? I told you not to go North!”

“You came for me.”

“Stop saying that!”

His gaze didn't waver, and neither did his voice. “You came for me.”

“I shouldn't have,” I snarled, the ache ripping into my guts. “I should have let you fly away, and then I could have been rid of you. And I would have finally had peace. No more listening for the sound of your voice or worrying where you are or thinking about the things you make me—” I snapped my mouth shut.

“What?” he whispered, his eyes glowing so brightly they cast tiny pools of green light on his cheeks.

The ache exploded into a thousand razor-sharp pieces that shredded the last of my restraint.

“You make me feel,” I rasped, and then I grabbed his face and crushed my lips to his. And the bother that had leaked around the barriers in my mind burst forth, washing away indifference and exposing all the anger and desire I'd denied. The first fueled the second, turning the kiss hot and aggressive. Callum tangled his hands in my hair as he thrust his hips against mine. So hard and perfect.

I yanked his head back and sucked at his throat, tasting fire and salt. His pulse thundered against my tongue. I followed the throbbing vein down his neck to his collarbone. Dipped my tongue in the hollow of his throat before painting kisses over one round, thick pec. And I couldn't stop. I took one flat, pink nipple into my mouth and sucked. Then I bit down.

“Fuck,” he rasped, jerking against the wall.

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:03 am

Green spilled over my vision. I surged up and gripped his throat. “Don’t read me.”

He grabbed my wrist. “I can’t control it. Your need is too—”

“Don’t,” I said, tipping his jaw up with my thumb. “If you read me, I’ll stop. So control it. Understand?”

Lust flickered in his eyes. His throat worked under my hand as he swallowed. “I understand.”

Gaze locked with his, I reached between us and stroked his dick, my hand gliding easily up and down the strange, slick material of his trousers. His rigid length leapt under my palm, and he pushed his hips forward, wordlessly asking for more, faster, now.

I moved my free hand from his throat to the nipple I’d sucked, and I kept up my strokes on his dick as I pinched the damp peak. His breath shuddered as I leaned in and closed my teeth over his earlobe. “I could make you come like this. Would you like that?” He gave a noncommittal grunt, and I reached lower and cupped his balls. “Make you empty these in your fancy trousers with all these fucking pockets.”

He gave a weak, startled laugh. “Now my pockets offend you?” The laugh turned into a moan as I squeezed his sack. I kneaded gently, testing the weight in my hand, and he rewarded me with another plaintive sound.

“Your trousers offend me.” I spun us and shoved him away, panting like I’d just sprinted up a flight of stairs. “Take them off.”

He smiled and did me one better, twisting into shadow form and quickly shifting back. The light from the fire caressed his bare skin. I seized his hips and jerked him into me.

“Good lad,” I growled. Then I sank to my knees.

His eyes widened. “Graeme...”

I brushed a soft kiss over his cockhead. My lips grazed his slit, and I licked the moisture that beaded there. Fire and salt spread over my tongue. I groaned as I brushed my face over his shaft, letting his hot, silky length caress my cheek. His smoky scent invaded my lungs. Pleasure shuddered through me as I kissed the crease where his leg joined the rest of his body. I nuzzled his heavy sack, dragging more of his scent into my lungs.

His fingers slid into my hair and gently tugged me back. Lust and something infinitely deeper shimmered in his eyes as he gazed down at me.

“I want to suck you,” I said. “Will you let me?”

He nodded mutely, then ran a hand down my face to my beard. He made no move to draw me forward. Just cupped my cheek and looked at me, his gaze steady...and knowing. True to his word, he restrained his power. He didn’t tunnel into my desires, but he knew me.

How did a boy know so much?

The answer trembled in my chest—and I realized it had replaced the ache. The pain was gone. The surprise of it parted my lips, and it was the most natural thing in the world to lean forward and take Callum into my mouth. My eyes slid shut as the smooth, rounded surface of his cockhead flattened my tongue. He groaned, and I

blinked my eyes open so I could see him.

I had to see him.

He was a painting above me, the slopes and angles of his handsome face touched with sunlight. The thick muscles in his chest tightened as he looked up at the ceiling and moaned. I grasped his hips and sucked him deeper, drawing his salty taste to the back of my throat. I pulled back and swirled my tongue around and under his cockhead, teasing the taut, delicate band of skin where his tip met his shaft.

“Gods,” he gasped, bucking gently. His cock twitched and pulsed, the shaft wet and heavy. The veins scraped the corners of my lips. His grunts fell around my ears. I pulled back a bit so I could lick up his length. Holding his stare, I ran my tongue from his cockhead to his base and back again. Then I surged forward, taking him to the back of my throat.

“Shit,” he whimpered, widening his stance. He cupped his hands around my head, his fingers clenching in my hair as I bobbed on his dick. “Fuck. Fuck, Graeme.”

He leaked on my tongue, and I swallowed and swallowed and couldn’t get enough. I sucked hard, hunting for more of his taste as I slid a hand around his hip to his smooth, firm ass. I delved between his cheeks, finding the tight whorl of his entrance and pressing gently.

He groaned and jerked his hips in short, sharp thrusts. His fingers tightened in my hair.

I traced circles around his hole as I let him fuck my mouth. His thrusts grew deeper and less coordinated. Saliva dribbled from my lips and into my beard. The floorboards dug into my knees. My dick was a thick, hot rod between my legs. But these discomforts were of no consequence. Not with Callum’s cockhead nailing the

back of my throat and his taste filling my mouth. Not with his tight, hot pucker gasping against my finger.

His breathing grew uneven, and his thighs began to tremble. I pushed my finger into his ass, and he let out a choked sob. He tipped his head down, his mouth slack as he watched his glistening cock tunnel in and out of my mouth. I pushed my finger deeper, grazing his gland. He clamped his hole around me and pumped his hips faster.

“Close,” he grunted. “So close.”

I wrenched my mouth away.

“Fuck!” He clutched at my shoulders, his wet dick bobbing wildly. His ass squeezed my finger, and his expression was savage as he swayed on his feet. “Finish me!”

I rested my free hand on his thigh and leaned in, letting his slick cockhead brush my lips. “You want to come?”

He pressed his hips forward, pushing his drooling slit against my mouth. “Finish me,” he rasped, and now his tone verged on begging.

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:03 am

I nodded. But as I opened my mouth to comply, Callum looked up sharply, his gaze on something over my shoulder. I turned my head and locked eyes with a wide-eyed Georgie. She observed us from the center of the bed, her cheeks flushed and her chest rising and falling swiftly. Callum had stripped her to her underclothes when he checked her for injuries, and her nipples poked hard against the tight swath of fabric stretched across her breasts. As our gazes held, the sweet perfume of her arousal reached me. Her eyes lightened to violet.

“Do as he says,” she whispered. “Make him come.”

Chapter Fifteen

GEORGIE

For a moment, nobody moved. I was pretty sure nobody breathed. The only sound in the room came from the crackling fire, which was so big someone must have shoved all the fire sticks into the hearth. The men stared at me, their powerful bodies frozen in a tableau far sexier than anything my imagination could have cooked up.

When their moans first woke me, I’d assumed I was dreaming—or maybe I’d died in the storm, after all, and this was heaven. Then I realized that, no, that really was Graeme on his knees with Callum’s dick down his throat.

They were everything I hadn’t known I wanted. Callum nude and gleaming in the sunlight. Graeme clothed and kneeling before him. Callum’s strong legs spread wide enough to steady him as he rocked his hips into Graeme’s eager mouth. Graeme caressing Callum’s hip before squeezing Callum’s ass...and then moving his hand to

a place that made Callum tip his head back and gasp at the ceiling. But he'd looked back down seconds later, his green eyes fastened on Graeme like he couldn't bear to look away. Like something was tugging at him to take another look—and then another and another.

I knew the feeling.

“Please keep going,” I said, my voice breathless in my ears.

A beat passed. Then the air shifted, ferrying a powerful current of lust from the men's direction. It slipped around me and caressed my skin. As if they'd rehearsed it, both Callum and Graeme lowered their gazes to my breasts.

My nipples were already tight. Now, they poked hard against the thin material of my sports bra. My breasts ached, and hot moisture dampened my panties.

Graeme lifted his gaze to mine, and for the first time since I'd met him, his pale eyes were hot instead of cold. He nodded toward my sports bra. “Take that off,” he rumbled, his voice rougher than usual.

From having his throat ravaged by Callum's dick, I realized.

The tug I'd felt toward Graeme the first night in the castle returned. Callum's words played in my mind. Resist all you want, but you won't be able to ignore that bond. You'll keep looking over your shoulder, searching and searching for it.

Graeme had done a whole lot of resisting. He'd pushed Callum and me away to the point where I doubted the bond was real. He'd sent us running from him.

And then he'd chased after us. He saved my life. He saved Callum...and then knelt before him and apologized with his mouth and his submission.

Graeme watched me now, need and expectation in his eyes. Above him, Callum's gaze had narrowed. He stared at me like a hunter with prey in his sights. Before, the men had been consumed with each other, the two of them ready to go up in flames.

Now, all that heat concentrated on me.

Swallowing hard, I pulled my bra over my head. The stretchy material tangled in my hair, and my breasts bounced as I pulled it free and set it aside. My nipples thrust out proudly, tightening further under the men's stares.

"Now the panties," Callum said.

My breath hitched. I was soaked between my legs, nothing but the blanket and a thin layer of cotton concealing my arousal. But right now, those barriers were everything. They were the last warning signs before the road plunged over a cliff. If I kept going, I couldn't turn back.

But I couldn't lie to myself. I couldn't ignore that I wanted these two men more than I'd ever wanted anything in my life.

The road was safer, but I didn't want safe. I wanted to go over that cliff.

Desire and fear mixed inside me, potent chemicals combining and swirling through my veins. My heart thumped faster. Cool air teased my nipples, reminding me how decadent it was to sit in the middle of the bed with my breasts bared for two men.

"You would share me...the two of you," I'd said to Callum in this very chamber. Dragons are polyamorous. It was the first thing I'd learned about them. And when Mariah Crane had returned to her parents' house the morning after our sleepover, I'd dug out the book she left behind and looked at the drawings until the hot, squirming feelings I didn't understand grew too intense to bear.

I understood them now, but they were no less intense as I pushed the blanket down.

Callum and Graeme followed the movement, and their eyes roved my bare legs and the plain cotton panties that were so wet they molded to my pussy. Heat slid like honey through my limbs as I hooked my thumbs in my waistband and stripped the fabric from my body. I was so wet, my arousal smeared the insides of my thighs.

“Callum,” Graeme said softly.

“Aye?” Callum answered, his stare fixed on my mound.

“What does she want the most?”

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:03 am

Oh gods. I knew what was coming, but I whimpered anyway as Callum's eyes flared bright green. His magic was painless. It didn't ravage or invade. It was stealthy and all the more dangerous for it. Sex was a drug. A weapon. It was power. Maybe the only kind. And Callum wielded it with breathtaking precision.

He reached down and pulled Graeme to his feet. Callum's dick was still red and engorged, and it bobbed as he wrapped an arm around Graeme's shoulders and pulled him close. "She wants this first," he murmured, and he took Graeme's mouth in a searing kiss.

I leaned forward, my heart thumping harder. The castle could have exploded, and I'm not sure I would have noticed. They didn't ease into it. There was no warm-up. No, they skipped straight to incendiary, the tangle of their jaws hotter than anything I'd seen in my life. It transcended a kiss, sliding into something primal and indelibly masculine. Maybe it was the hint of danger that burned between them or the low sound of their mingled grunts of pleasure. Whatever it was, it set my body on fire. If I'd been able to tear my gaze from the men, I might have looked down to make sure my skin wasn't smoking.

Graeme's hand found Callum's ass and squeezed. Callum groaned and rocked onto his toes, grinding his bare dick into the front of Graeme's pants. Callum moved like sex personified, undulating his hips in a slow, wicked roll. Without breaking the kiss, Graeme shifted his feet, rotating Callum so I had a full view of Callum's ass.

And then Graeme put his hands all over it. He palmed both cheeks and dug his fingers into the muscle. He kneaded and teased, pulling Callum's buttocks apart and giving me forbidden glimpses of Callum's smooth cleft and tightly puckered

entrance. Heat suffused my cheeks as Graeme rubbed circles around it. He pulled his mouth from Callum's and locked eyes with me over Callum's shoulder. Holding my gaze, he withdrew his hand from Callum's ass and lifted it to his mouth. He sucked on two of his fingers, then carried them, wet and glistening, back to Callum's cleft. Without breaking my stare, he painted moisture around Callum's rim before pushing a thick finger into Callum's ass.

My pussy clenched. Callum's deep groan of pleasure reached my ears. Only half aware of what I was doing, I rose to my knees in the bed. My breasts felt so heavy and full, my nipples hard and aching. Desire pounded between my legs. Moisture seeped from my pussy, and the scent of my arousal lifted around me. My hair streamed over my shoulders, the ends grazing my nipples. Lust soaked the air, and it infected me, spreading through my veins and turning me shameless. I wanted to plunge my fingers between my legs and finger the silk I knew I'd find there. I wanted to crawl on all fours to the end of the bed just to feel my breasts sway.

And I wanted to keep going—to slip to the floor and crawl to the men and kneel nude at their feet. I wanted Graeme's hands in my hair guiding my head to Callum's cock. I wanted them standing above me, blue and green gazes watching as I took Callum into my mouth. I wanted so many things, and I wanted them with these men.

They'll just take you, Georgie, and they'll never let you go.

Good, I thought, holding Graeme's gaze. I didn't want to get away.

Graeme pumped his finger into Callum's ass, delving a little deeper each time. My breathing went ragged, and I felt every thrust in my pussy as I watched Callum's pink hole flex and flutter around the intrusion.

Power buzzed in the air, turning it wild and electric. The currents slipped around me, brushing my overheated skin and dripping pussy.

Graeme pulled his fingers from Callum's ass and spun Callum to face me. He slung an arm around Callum's chest and nuzzled his neck, making him shiver. Callum's dick stuck out from his body, the head smeared with moisture and the skin of his shaft stretched so tightly it looked ready to split. When Callum reached for his cock, Graeme seized his wrist and held it at Callum's side. Callum hissed, but he didn't look angry. His throat bobbed, and he let his head fall against Graeme's shoulder.

"What does she want now?" Graeme growled in Callum's ear.

All the hair on my body lifted as Callum's glowing green eyes fixed on me. "Me in her cunt," he said, his voice so low and rough it was unrecognizable. "You taking my arse."

Deep in my mind, in the part of my brain still capable of coherent thought, a voice whispered that maybe this was too much, too fast, and too soon. But then Graeme reached down and gripped Callum's cock, and the voice flitted away.

"Is that what you want?" Graeme asked, his lips brushing Callum's ear as he pumped a slow fist up and down Callum's straining dick.

Callum's eyes were two glowing green slits. "Aye."

The men stared at me, their gazes pinning me in place. My body shook with need, but I didn't dare move. As the air thickened with lust, I recalled another thing I'd read in Mariah Crane's book.

Dragon blood runs true.

At the time, it had been nothing more than a fact on a list—a bullet point consumed and forgotten. But I understood it now. Dragons were the apex predators of the immortal world. Callum and Graeme may have inherited gifts from their mothers, but

no one looking at them now would mistake them for anything other than dragons.

If I ran, they would chase me—and they would enjoy the hunt. Their forefathers had scorched entire villages looking for their females. They'd gone to war to find new brides. They'd burned and destroyed, doing as they pleased because no one could stop them.

Callum and Graeme watched me, the promise of the chase in their eyes. Try it, their gazes said.

And, gods help me, some part of me wanted to run, to be caught and pinned and taken in all the ways Callum had whispered in my ear when he pulled my darkest, most twisted fantasies from my brain. I wanted to be hunted and claimed.

“Please,” I rasped, wetting my lips. The men groaned in unison, and the sound shot straight to my pussy.

Graeme released Callum and swatted him on the ass. “Give her what she wants.”

Callum was on the bed in a second, snagging my legs and jerking me into position beneath him. He kept one foot on the floor as he tilted my chin up and brought his mouth down on mine, searing my lips with a kiss just shy of violence.

I moaned into his mouth as I spread my legs and felt his hot dick prodding my sex. I thrust my hips up, trying to screw my pussy onto his cock.

“Greedy lass,” he growled, and I got a flash of heated green eyes before he trailed his mouth down my body and latched onto one of my nipples. As he gave it a rough suck, Graeme appeared over his shoulder.

“Gods,” I whimpered, staring up at him while Callum bit and suckled my nipple.

Graeme's pale gaze roamed our bodies, taking in Callum's ass and my spread thighs before settling on Callum suckling my breast.

"Now the other," Graeme murmured. As Callum moved his mouth to my other nipple and sucked hard, Graeme studied the one he'd just abandoned. The soaked, reddened peak tightened under his regard, and I whimpered again as more moisture pooled between my thighs.

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:03 am

Graeme drifted forward until he loomed over me. Then he bent and closed his lips around my nipple, his head next to Callum's.

"Oh... Oh gods," I gasped as they both sucked me. Two men at my breasts. Two hungry mouths pulling and pulling. Every flick of their tongues sent a shudder rippling to my clit, which throbbed with need. My breathing grew ragged and fast. My hips thrust upward of their own accord. When Callum's dick brushed my hot, swollen entrance, I pumped my hips higher, not caring how desperate I looked.

"Please," I begged, pulling at the men's hair. "One of you has to fuck me."

Graeme released my nipple and straightened. Without warning, he twisted into a column of smoke. His clothes landed on the ground in a heap.

"Gray backpack," Callum said around my nipple. "Front pocket. Small bottle."

Graeme reformed and went to Callum's pack. "What is this?" he asked, withdrawing a plastic bottle of clear liquid. He opened it and sniffed.

Callum pulled his mouth from my breast and twisted to look at Graeme. "You'll like it. Bring it over here."

I touched Callum's shoulder, drawing his attention back to me. "You brought lube to Gelhella?"

He snaked his hand between our bodies and pinched my clit, making me moan. "I'm an incubus, Georgie mine. I don't go anywhere without lube." Humor and mischief

danced in his eyes. “And if you’ve seen the size of Graeme’s cock, you’ll thank me later.”

Graeme, who was clearly a quick learner, poured a liberal amount of lube into his palm as he returned to the bed. As he stroked moisture up and down his dick, Callum’s words sent apprehension tingling down my spine. At some point, they would take me together. Fore and aft, as Callum had said, their dicks inside me. Stretching me. I wasn’t sure there was enough lube in the world to make that happen.

“Hey,” Callum said, tipping my chin back to him. “Stay with me, witchling. Right here, right now. This is all that matters.” He shifted his hips. “Remember what I told you when we first mated? It’s my privilege to give you everything you want.” At my nod, he smiled and whispered, “Such a privilege, Georgie, to pleasure a woman as breathtaking as you.” His cock nudged my pussy, spreading my lips, and then he pushed inside me in one long, easy thrust.

Pleasure punched through me, scattering my fears. “Oh, fuck,” I gasped, arching and tossing my head on the bedding.

“That’s my lass,” Callum said, pulling out and thrusting back in. I was so slick, his dick tunneled in and out easily. “Let me make you feel good, witchling. So fucking beautiful. So tight.” He swiveled his hips, grinding his dick into me. I could hear how wet I was, and heat spread over my face as the sound of my sopping pussy accompanied his thrusts. Moaning, I let my eyes drift shut.

A warm hand slid up my calf, and I opened my eyes and saw Graeme with one hand on my leg and the other on his dick. He worked the lube over and around his thick length as he stood next to the bed and watched Callum fuck me. Graeme smoothed his palm up my leg and curled his fingers behind my knee. Then he pushed my thigh up, opening my pussy even wider. Letting Callum’s dick drive even deeper, the thick shaft dragging over my clit. Over and over. Ruthless and so good I cried out.

My spine bowed. Lust built, great plumes of it rising higher and higher. I clawed at Callum's shoulders as he thrust harder, setting my breasts bouncing. Graeme kept his grip on my leg and his hand on his dick.

The orgasm took me by surprise. One second I watched Graeme's hand pumping his cock, the next I threw my head back and screamed as my body flew apart. My pussy convulsed around Callum's dick, and my thoughts blanked. Worries were nothing. They didn't exist. For a moment, I didn't exist. Just pleasure, warm and perfect.

I rode its waves, floating somewhere sweet and formless, and when I drifted back to myself, Callum's head was between my thighs, and he was lapping at my come. I gasped and spread my legs wider, and he pushed his nose and mouth into my pussy and ate me like he was starving. Every wet stroke of his tongue sent aftershocks fluttering through me.

"Oh, gods," I murmured, limp and shivering. Already, a second orgasm hovered. How many could I endure?

"Get everything," Graeme said, moving behind Callum. In response, Callum thrust his tongue deep, and I realized Graeme wanted him to lick me clean. Before I could squirm in embarrassment, Graeme pulled Callum up by the shoulder and growled, "Now give it to me."

Callum twisted around and let Graeme pull him into a kiss. They held nothing back, the muscles in their jaws working hard as their tongues clashed. Callum's legs were spread wide on the bed, and his softened dick glistened with my juices. Graeme rubbed a big palm over Callum's abs, a growl rumbling in Graeme's throat as he tasted me on Callum's lips.

They weren't even touching me, but pleasure threatened to consume me again. Sunlight slanted over their powerful bodies, highlighting the muscles in their arms

and shoulders. The rasp of Graeme's palm on Callum's stomach was almost as sexy as the slick sounds of their tongues.

At last, Graeme broke it off and pushed Callum back down. "Spread for me," he rumbled, and Callum's groan was deep enough to shake the bed. He pushed my thighs up and lowered his body on top of mine, sealing us from shoulder to hip. His hardening dick notched against my pussy as he braced himself on his elbows and moved his knees apart.

Graeme climbed onto the bed, his eyes glittering with something primal and possessive. He ran a hand down Callum's back before slipping it between Callum's cheeks.

"Fuck," Callum grunted, his breath tickling my cheek. Then his eyes slid shut as Graeme's arm moved in a rhythmic motion.

I touched Callum's jaw, lust and curiosity spreading through me as I watched emotions play over his face. I couldn't see what Graeme was doing. Pinned flat by Callum's weight, I couldn't see much at all. But it didn't dampen my desire. On the contrary, there was something deeply sensual about seeing Callum's reactions up close. With every thrust and twist of Graeme's fingers, Callum shuddered or moaned. His lashes fluttered, and his expressions ran the gamut from fierce concentration to discomfort to ecstasy. When Graeme leaned over and kissed the back of Callum's neck, Callum dropped his forehead to my shoulder.

"Now," he gasped. "I'm ready."

"You sure?" Graeme murmured. From the way he rocked his hips against Callum's ass, he'd lodged his erection between Callum's cheeks and was now dragging it up and down Callum's cleft.

My arousal soared even higher. I dug my teeth into my bottom lip as I fought to stay quiet. I wasn't letting anything derail this.

"Aye," Callum rumbled against my neck. "Fuck me." He pulled back and stroked my cheek. "How we doing, lass? You feel all right?"

"I feel perfect." I touched his jaw. "How do you feel?"

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:03 am

He grinned. “I’ll tell you in a minute.” He sobered, bending and planting a tender kiss on my brow. His tongue dampened my skin as he reached down and guided his dick inside me. We both groaned. My nipples pebbled against his chest. He pulled back, then shifted forward suddenly, his dick lodging deeper inside me. His eyes drifted shut, and his groan was different this time—soulful and deep. My eyes went wide as I realized Graeme had entered him.

“Oh, fuck,” I whispered, my pussy clenching. “Keep going.”

Callum released a shaky laugh. “You in a hurry, witchling?” As Graeme rocked into him again, his laughter became a moan. “Fuck. Oh, fuck, right there.”

“More?” Graeme asked softly, one hand stroking Callum’s hip.

“Aye. Give it to me.”

Graeme obliged him, thrusting hard. The movement pushed Callum’s dick deeper inside me, wrenching a soft cry from my lips. My heart sped up, and sweat sheened my skin. Their combined weight pressed me into the bed, which started to squeak as Graeme began to thrust in earnest. He pumped his hips, setting an unforgiving pace that drove Callum’s dick into me over and over. Callum’s balls slapped my ass. His cock stroked my clit. Pleasure rushed me, and I panted and writhed, trapped under the men as the three of us raced toward release.

Then Graeme grasped my ankles and pushed my knees to my shoulders, splaying me wide open. “Fuck my dick,” he grated. “Show me how much you want it.”

“What?” I gasped, confusion swirling. Then Callum began to move, and I realized Graeme wasn’t talking to me.

No, he addressed Callum, who pushed to his hands and began snapping his hips in a wild rhythm. He pumped his body between me and Graeme, driving into me and thrusting his ass backward onto Graeme’s cock. The powerful muscles in his chest went taut. His eyes glowed so brightly it almost hurt to look at him.

“Good boy,” Graeme said, one hand braced on Callum’s shoulder and his gaze locked on Callum’s ass. After a second, Graeme tipped his head back. “Fuck, lad, you feel so good.” Abruptly, he took over, pounding his hips into Callum’s ass.

Our bodies slapped together. The sounds of raw, unbridled sex echoed around the chamber. “Yes, yes,” I chanted, my breathing labored. Pleasure pulsed through me, every nerve ending crackling with it. An orgasm took shape just out of reach, and I arched my hips, trying to seize it. I clawed at Callum’s chest as we rocked together, his thrusts becoming less and less coordinated the closer he came to release.

“Let go, m’eudail,” Graeme ground out. “Give it to her.”

Callum threw his head back. His body tensed, and he opened his mouth on a wordless cry as he jetted inside me. I tumbled after him, my vision going black as my pussy clenched around his dick. Dimly, I was aware of Graeme’s shout and Callum’s soft groans. Of heat and sweat and the hot press of hard bodies against mine.

Then I lay on my side between Callum and Graeme, my body tingling from the aftermath of the best sex of my life. Gods, my ears were ringing. Callum nuzzled my neck from behind, his warm palm covering my hip. Graeme was a solid presence in front of me. His eyes were closed, and one thick, inked shoulder rose and fell as he caught his breath. Fatigue tugged at my eyelids. I sighed as I prepared to surrender the battle to stay awake.

Then Callum lifted onto his elbow and spoke across my body in a language I recognized as Gaelic.

Graeme stiffened. Opened his eyes. He replied in the same language, his tone as stiff as his posture.

“It’s not a big deal,” Callum said, sitting up. “I just thought—”

“You thought wrong,” Graeme said. He darted a look at me, and something like panic flashed across his features. He left the bed and started for his clothes.

Callum and I looked at each other.

I scrambled upright and watched as Graeme scooped up his pants. “Where are you going?”

“Nowhere.” He shoved his legs into his pants and grabbed his shirt from the floor. He kept his gaze averted as he muttered, “I have to...eat.” He nodded, as if the statement pleased him. “I’ll see you anon.” Without so much as a glance at us, he walked to the door and left.

For a moment, Callum and I sat motionless. Then Callum looked at me. “What the fuck is anon?”

“It means soon. What did you say to him in Gaelic?”

“Oh. That.” Callum’s gaze turned thoughtful, and he studied the door for a moment before looking at me. “Right before I came, I could have sworn Graeme called me m’eudail.”

“And that means?”

“Sweetheart. Or darling.” A knowing look entered his eyes. “He’s freaking out.”

“About us?” I shook my head. “What am I saying, of course he’s freaking out about us. I’m freaking out about us.”

Callum grabbed my hand. “Are you?”

“I mean, we just...”

“Fucked like a bunch of circus animals?”

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:03 am

“Had sex after he chased us from the castle and we nearly died.”

“He also rescued us, lass. Don’t try to convince me you don’t feel the mate bond. I know you do.”

I couldn’t lie to him. One, his power allowed him to crack open my mind and read my fantasies like a fortune cookie. But also, I didn’t want to lie. After so much confusion and frustration, I wanted to figure things out. I wanted to understand Graeme. For a moment, I’d thought we were headed in that direction. Then he’d grown angry and fled like he couldn’t wait to get away.

“Has anyone ever rejected the mate bond?” I asked Callum.

“No. Absolutely not.”

“Are you sure? You’ve researched it?”

He frowned. “I don’t need to. If any dragon had ever rejected fate, I’d know about it. Everyone would.” Callum pressed me down gently and levered his body over mine. “Graeme is an ice dragon—”

“That’s what I mean. His heart is frozen. If he can’t feel, he can walk away from us.”

“He felt plenty,” Callum said. “But you make a good point. Graeme isn’t an ordinary dragon. He took vows to protect the Oracle, he’s been alone in this fortress for hundreds of years, and he lost a mate. Of course he’s conflicted. But he’ll come around, lass. I’m sure of it.”

I gnawed at my lip as worry twisted through me.

“It’s sexy when you do that,” Callum murmured, his dick growing hard against my thigh.

“How can you think about sex at a time like this?” When his eyes lit with mischief, I covered his mouth with my hand. “Never mind. I forgot who I was dealing with.” His smile curved against my palm, and I lowered my hand. “I wish I had your flair for optimism.”

He grabbed my fingers and kissed them. “You worry because you don’t like to feel out of control. And you think if you plan for every possible negative outcome, you’ll be protected. But dwelling on our fears only gives them power over us, witchling.”

My heart raced as his words sank in. Gods, was he...right? My entire existence was about lack of control. Maybe my problem with my magic wasn’t an absence of skill. Maybe it was my personality.

“Here’s what I think we should do,” Callum said. He kissed my fingertips one by one as he spoke. “Sneak down to the caldarium. Then come back here and eat a bunch of protein bars. Gross, I know, we’ll burn them when we’re back in Scotland. Then you let me eat your pussy. Then we sleep.” He nipped my thumb with his teeth. “And we’ll worry about Graeme in the morning.”

That playful lock of hair had fallen over his forehead. When I smoothed it back, it sprang forward again. And I lost the smile I’d been fighting. “All right. We’ll go with your plan.”

Chapter Sixteen

GRAEME

Sunlight flooded the study. Water dripped somewhere, thick plops beating a steady rhythm.

I sat at my desk with my head in my hands and the scent of Georgie and Callum in my nose. On my body. Under my skin.

I am forsworn.

I am forsworn.

How could I have succumbed to temptation? How could I have been so weak? It was my fault. I couldn't blame the lad...or even the witch. That would have been easy.

And I didn't deserve easy. Remorse seared my gut. Shame burned my eyes and put a lump in my throat. Sorrow was a weight across my shoulders. So heavy. But in the chamber at the top of the North Tower, I'd felt light.

I'd...felt. When I knelt before Callum. When I watched Georgie bare her sweet curves. When Callum's ass flexed as he thrust into her. When I thrust into him, fucking them together. I'd felt so light I thought I might float away. And I had for a moment, when I pumped my release into Callum's tight passage. For one bright, blissful moment, I'd been untethered. Unburdened. Undone.

Plop. Plop. Plop. The water dripped its unwavering beat. The storm had passed, and the temperature was mild.

He never came when the weather was warm.

He might never come again.

My shoulders shook, and a low sound broke from my throat. The shame in my eyes

overflowed and streaked down my cheeks. Diamonds dropped to the book I'd opened but hadn't read.

Plop. Plop. Plop.

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:03 am

The water fell, and I lifted my head and stared at the bookshelves that lined the walls. I'd built them myself, dragging rare, precious driftwood from the frozen shores of the sea. One by one, I'd cut the boards and nailed them into place. In the beginning, I made the nails, too, heating the forge in the bowels of the White Gate and sweating as I poured iron into molds. Then the world grew older and travelers seeking the Oracle brought small, sharp nails spit from the mouths of machines.

Even then, it had taken years to collect enough to build a bookshelf. But I'd had time. Century after century, shelf after shelf, I'd filled the study with the knowledge I pulled from pockets and packs and saddlebags.

Plop. Plop. Plop.

I'd read everything—every word and spell. Every recipe and enchantment. I'd studied. I'd experimented, pouring salt in a circle and invoking gods and monsters and things too dangerous to be named aloud. But I had spoken their names. A few times, I'd been certain the beings I pulled from various voids and dark planes would find a way to kill me. But always, the ice had held. The beings railed and thrashed, furious at being summoned by someone who couldn't be killed.

Plop. Plop. Plop.

Always, the ice held. Always.

Until the witch and the lad appeared.

Century after century, I'd searched and come up empty-handed. My empty hands

hadn't bothered me. My futile search never disappointed or upset me. When a book revealed yet another dead end, I closed it, shelved it, and selected another. When a shelf filled to the ceiling, I built a new one.

I studied.

I searched.

I brewed beer and elixirs and watched the Brotherhood dwindle. Watched my race rush to the edge of extinction. On the rare occasions one of my brethren visited the White Gate, they had despaired. But I'd been unmoved.

Because always, always the ice had held.

Plop. Plop. Plop.

The bookshelves blurred. Diamonds dripped down my cheeks. My breath came faster, and then turned into shuffling, gasping sobs. With trembling hands, I eased my chair back from my desk and opened the sole drawer. It held but one item—a faded drawing sketched in haste.

The colors were almost all gone now, but they were vivid in my memory. His sun-kissed skin. His sweet brown eyes. His auburn waves tied back with a red ribbon. I'd teased him about it, pointing out how the color clashed with his hair. But secretly, I'd loved it—how nothing, no matter how radiant, could ever rival him. He'd burned so brightly, it was like all that fire inside him needed a place to go.

My throat burned as I stared at Hamish Cameron, the man I'd drawn as he leaned against the side of a tavern with the sun on his face.

"Be quick about it," he'd teased. "I haven't got all day, and this place smells like

shite.”

“I’ll take as long as I please, thank you,” I’d answered, but I’d worked faster—mostly because I wanted to get him home and into our bed but also because he was right about the shit. Then again, just about every human village had smelled like shit in those days.

I wished I’d taken more time.

Plop. Plop. Plop.

Sunlight spilled through the study’s windows and over the parchment, which was creased from where I’d folded and refolded it. I ran a finger down one furrow, brushing the bend of Hamish’s arm. My chest tightened, and the pressure climbed into my throat until I had to open my mouth and release it.

“I’m sorry,” I gasped, rocking forward, and I longed for the ice and the oblivion it had brought me. I’d forgotten how much it hurt to feel.

Plop. Plop. Plop.

Wind swept through the study and ruffled my hair. The temperature plummeted. A floorboard creaked, and I brought my head up sharply.

Hamish stood in the doorway. My bedchamber showed through his body, which was fainter than ever. But he was smiling. He turned his head and looked at the shelves. The ribbon in his hair was as gray as the rest of him.

“It’s red,” I rasped, tears clogging my throat. “It’s supposed to be red.”

Plop. Plop. Plop.

Dammit, where the fuck was that water coming from?

Hamish looked at me, and for the first time in eleven centuries, I heard my mate's voice. "I have to go, Graeme. You found what you were looking for."

I stood so quickly, the chair crashed to the floor behind me.

PLOP. PLOP. PLOP.

“Hamish!” I cried, my voice booming off the shelves.

The water boomed, too, booming and booming and booming.

Hamish’s lips curved in the sweetest smile. Then he disappeared.

BOOM. BOOM. BOOM.

Wherever the water was coming from, it was a torrent. The sound filled the study, the beat so loud it throbbed in my head.

No.

Not my head.

My chest.

BOOM. BOOM. BOOM.

Hamish was gone. And that boom wasn’t water.

It was my heart.

Chapter Seventeen

GEORGIE

I woke with a gasp, the echo of wind in my head.

Expecting to hear it again, I gazed around the tower chamber. But the room was still. Nothing was amiss. Midnight sun pooled on the floor and fell over the bed. Callum sprawled on his stomach beside me, his arms hugging the pillow and his mouth slightly open. The bedding was twisted around his hips. His back rose and fell evenly in sleep.

A smile pulled at my lips as I studied him. After a long soak in the caldarium, he'd tried making s'mores from the peanut butter and chocolate protein bars in my backpack. Easily the worst food I'd ever tasted, but my cheeks still hurt from laughing.

"Blanket hog," I murmured, smoothing the ever-present lock of hair back from his forehead. My bladder chose that moment to make its presence known, and I eased quietly from the bed, threw on clothes, and slipped into the ice-cold corridor. My teeth started to chatter as I took care of business, and I said a silent vow to never take indoor plumbing or central heating for granted again. I was halfway back to the chamber when a gust of frigid wind carried a man's low, sorrowful moan down the corridor.

I tensed, my heart pumping faster and my senses primed for the sound, which had blown from the direction of Graeme's tower.

It came again, louder this time. Wherever Graeme was, he was hurting.

Wait. Maybe he was hurting for real. As in, injured instead of sad.

Another moan—louder and sharper. It wasn't the sound of a man mourning his lost

love or regretting his life choices. No, Graeme was in trouble.

Heart racing, I dashed back to the chamber. “Callum—” I stopped short on the threshold, my gaze landing on the empty bed. Callum was gone.

Wind whipped through the windows, snuffing out the fire. Fear twisted in my gut, and a cold sweat broke out over my skin. He wouldn’t just leave. Not unless he absolutely had to.

The moan sounded again—but this time, it came from overhead.

And it wasn’t Graeme’s moan. It was Callum’s.

I didn’t think. I just ran, my heart skipping beats as I scrambled to the spiral staircase and flew up the steps two at a time. Callum’s moans grew louder and more agonized as I neared the top.

“I’m coming!” I cried, my voice echoing in the narrow stairwell. My mind raced with possibilities. Had he fallen? Was he trapped? Had Graeme returned and challenged him again?

The last thought had me tripping over my own feet in my rush to reach him, and I stumbled and banged my knee on the top step. Gritting my teeth, I burst through the narrow door and skidded onto the tower’s roof.

Empty.

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:03 am

Callum and Graeme were nowhere to be found.

But the battlements were smashed like someone had taken a hammer to the stone.

And a trail of footprints in the snow led to the edge.

“No!” I gasped, lurching forward. A tight hand gripped my arm and spun me around, and then Graeme was snarling in my face.

“What are you doing up here alone?”

I yanked at his grip. “Let me go! Callum is hurt!”

Shock flared in Graeme’s eyes. “What do you mean?”

“Let me go!” Desperation rose, wild and hot, and it lent me enough strength to break his hold. I whirled—and promptly froze as I struggled to comprehend the scene before me.

The footprints were gone, the snow pristine and unmarked. The battlements were intact. Every stone was whole. The fortification appeared exactly as it had the last time Callum and I had visited the roof.

My mouth went dry. “I don’t... I don’t understand.” I walked forward, but Graeme caught my arm again.

“You’re not going to the edge,” he growled. “Where is Callum?”

“I don’t know!” I cried, tugging at my arm. I’d never wished I had a dragon’s ability to shift into smoke more than in that moment. “I heard moaning, and there were footsteps. Let go of me so I can go find him!” I swung my booted foot at his calf and connected.

He grunted. “Damn you, hold still!”

“No!” I swiped my free hand through the air, grabbed a current, and flung it in his face. The wind was too weak to do much damage, but it blasted him, making him sputter and release my arm.

I rushed to the battlements and peered over the edge. The snow at the base of the tower was smooth, with no Callum-sized holes in the powder. Relief whipped through me, and I sagged against the frost-covered battlements.

“Georgina,” Graeme said behind me, an odd note in his voice.

I turned to find him as pale as the snow around us. His eyes were wide...and terrified.

“What is it?” I asked, and I started to come away from the stone, only to yelp when something wet and rough swiped over my palm. I jerked my hand away, prepared to see blood, but there was nothing. But as I stepped away from the battlements and stared at the white crenellations, I could have sworn the fortress...wagged its tail.

No. That was stupid. I’d fallen harder on the stairs than I thought, and now I was hallucinating.

“It likes you.”

I looked at Graeme, whose expression had gone from frightened to awestruck. He stared at me like he’d never seen me before. Like he couldn’t believe his eyes.

“What?” I asked, looking from him to the battlements. The frost sparkled in the weak sunlight, the thick layers of white like spun sugar. The White Gate ate trespassers. My heart pumped harder. Did that mean it...licked people it liked? I turned back to Graeme, and his expression had changed yet again.

Now, he stared at me with an intensity that stole my breath. As I looked into his eyes, something impossibly ancient stared back at me. I’d seen its like before, when I met King Cormac in the antechamber at Castle Beithir.

Graeme’s dragon had me in its sights—and it had exactly zero intention of letting me go.

“Um...” I cleared my throat. “I need to look for—”

“You’ll look at nothing without me,” Graeme said, his voice rumbling the stone beneath my feet. He held out his hand. “Come away from there. Now.”

“Excuse me?”

“The battlements are slippery and dangerous. You’re not permitted to come up here anymore.”

My jaw dropped. “What?”

He stared, his gaze unwavering—and deadly serious. He’d gone full caveman. Mariah Crane’s voice reached through time and space and whispered in my mind. If a dragon pair thinks you’re theirs, they won’t ask if you feel the same. They’ll just take you, Georgie, and they’ll never let you go.

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:03 am

I'd thought I knew dragons. But I only really knew Callum, and he was only eighty-one years old. He quoted Yoda and liked eighties fantasy movies about princesses. He was a modern man with a twenty-first century view of the world.

Graeme was not a modern man. He didn't watch movies about princesses. He locked them in towers.

But maybe he could be reasoned with. "Let's talk about this."

"If I have to carry you down from here, I will."

Okay, so he couldn't be reasoned with. I drew myself up. "If you think you're carrying me—"

"You have five seconds."

"Have you lost your mind?"

He started toward me.

"What happened to five seconds?" I cried, backing up and bumping into the battlements. Another rough caress swiped over my back, and I half-turned and scowled at the castle. "Stop licking me!"

Graeme reached me. Before I could move, he bent and tossed me over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes.

For a second, I was too stunned to move. Then indignation rose, and I kicked like a mule. Graeme clamped a thick arm around my thighs and kept walking. A second later, he ducked through the door and started down the staircase.

“Put me down!” I demanded. As the stairwell started to spin around me, I realized that kicking and screaming was one of those things that sounded good in theory but was difficult to implement in reality. Every step jolted my stomach, shoving breath from my lungs. Graeme’s arm banded around my thighs like a vise. My hair dangled in my face and found its way into my mouth. I spit it out as blood started to pound in my head. “Fine! I won’t go to the top of the tower.”

He didn't respond, just continued down the stairs as if he carried reluctant women over his shoulder all the time.

“I will pull the air from your lungs, dragon!”

His voice rumbled against my stomach. “If you were capable of doing that, you would have done it already.”

Dammit. He’d called my bluff. My parents had been capable of delivering on that threat, but I certainly wasn’t. I swiped at the air, trying to catch a current, but the scant wind slipped through my fingers.

As we reached the bottom of the stairs, my anger gave way to worry. Where the hell was Callum? What if he was hurt and needed my help?

“Graeme, please,” I said, letting my concern fill my voice. “I need to find Callum.”

“I’m right here,” Callum said. “What the fuck is going on?”

I pushed up as much as I could and twisted around to see Callum standing in the

middle of the corridor with an arrested expression on his face. He looked a little disheveled but otherwise unharmed as he ran anxious green eyes over me.

“Are you okay?” he asked. “Did he hurt you?”

Graeme growled low in his throat. His arm tightened around my thighs as he stepped toward Callum. “Don’t ever let me hear that accusation coming from your mouth again, boy.”

Callum blinked. Then he stepped forward, a curious look gleaming in his eyes. “You’re the one holding my mate on your shoulder, and it’s pretty clear to me that she doesn’t want to be there.” Callum’s voice went silky. “Old man.”

Graeme edged forward, his growl rumbling against my stomach. “What did you say?”

I suppressed a groan. Save me from testosterone. They were seconds away from a dick measuring contest.

“You heard me,” Callum said. That inscrutable gleam in his eyes glowed brighter. “That’s my mate. Put her down.”

“The mate can speak for herself,” I said loudly, struggling against Graeme’s strong grip. For a second, he hugged my legs like a stubborn toddler might cling to a toy. Then he grunted and swung me to my feet. My head spun, and I stumbled into him as I swayed and almost lost my balance. He caught my arms, and my head ended up pressed to his chest, where his heart thumped so hard and fast it felt like it might burst through his ribs.

With a gasp, I wrenched back. “Your heart...”

He went utterly still. The anger drained from his face, and his pale eyes turned so

stark and vulnerable that I swore my own heart throbbed with an echo of his pain. Slowly, I placed my hand over his sternum. His heartbeat kicked against my palm, every pulse an affirmation.

Mine.

Mine.

Mine.

Callum moved to my side. He reached up and stroked Graeme's beard. As Graeme trembled and then leaned into Callum's palm, I realized that odd gleam in Callum's eyes hadn't been masculine aggression. All his "my mate's" had served a purpose. He hadn't been challenging Graeme. He'd been doing some affirming of his own, helping Graeme to see the truth.

"It beats for you," Graeme rasped, covering my fingers with his. He drew a ragged breath, his big chest swelling against my palm. "Both of you."

"Aye," Callum said gently, petting Graeme's beard like someone might soothe a wild animal they'd tamed. "I thought that might happen."

Graeme folded his fingers around mine. "I'm sorry about the roof. But you..." He closed his eyes for a moment. When he opened them, tears turned them as blue as the snowladen sky above Gelhella. More tears soaked his voice as his gaze took in me and Callum. "I have fought this mate bond. I've made it difficult for us. If you let me, I'd like to show you why."

Chapter Eighteen

CALLUM

Graeme led Georgie and me to a study so packed with books it was hard to see the

floor.

Under other circumstances, I might have teased him about being as big of a nerd as Georgie. But the anguish in his eyes curbed my tongue. As we picked our way around the tottering piles of scrolls and books, the same strange, barely-there whispers I'd heard around Georgie in the caldarium rose in the air. The hair on my nape lifted, and I wanted nothing more than to shift to shadow form and streak back to my chamber. Maybe leave Gelhella entirely and find a nice pub in Edinburgh with a TV and pizza slices as big as my head.

Georgie, on the other hand, looked like she'd stepped into an amusement park and Christmas and her birthday all at once. She practically vibrated with interest as she examined the shelves lined with bottles and bits of twig bundled with twine. A creepy crystal skull grinned from one sagging shelf. Another shelf held a pile of red bones that glistened like blood in the sunlight that streamed through a bank of windows glazed with thick, wavy glass.

Georgie knelt abruptly and ran a hand over the floorboards. She rubbed her fingertips together, then rose and looked at Graeme. "Salt. You've done spellwork in here."

"Aye," Graeme said. He'd stayed near the door, as if he was reluctant to enter. "This is where I...searched."

Georgie's eyes grew soft and sad, the purple color like a bruise. "What were you looking for?"

Graeme pressed his lips together. Then he turned his head, clearly fighting a powerful emotion. His throat worked, and a battle played out over his face as he stared sightlessly at the windows. When his reply came, it was more breath than sound. "Him. For more than a thousand years, I searched for...him."

Silence settled over the study like a weight. Georgie looked at me, helplessness in her gaze. I knew I returned the expression as I stared back at her. At last, she navigated around the stacks and columns, her black hair shining in the sunlight as she went to Graeme. She was a tall woman, but she was tiny in front of him, her head fully a foot lower than his. But that didn't stop her from reaching up and cupping his jaw.

"Tell us about him," she said, "but not here." She stroked her thumb over his cheekbone. "Is there another place we can talk?"

Graeme's eyes flickered with something like gratitude before he nodded. Without a word, he turned and led us from the study. He kept Georgie's hand tucked into his elbow as we moved through the castle, descending the stairs and walking down torchlit corridors. We passed the Great Hall and entered a section of the fortress I hadn't seen when I did my early morning scavenging. The flagstones were large and polished to a fine sheen. Intricate carvings adorned the woodwork. Even the sconces on the walls were nicer, the iron worked into designs like flowers and animals.

"They're the personal badges of the dragons who served in the Brotherhood," Graeme said when he saw me looking. The hint of a smile touched his mouth. "Far older than coats of arms and tartan."

Of course. The Brotherhood was older than Scotland itself, possibly older than the standing stones various ancient peoples had left scattered about the Highlands. I tried to wrap my head around a thousand years of living—of watching times change and civilizations rise and fall. But it was like trying to count grains of sand on a beach. Impossible to measure or truly comprehend.

At last, Graeme stopped before a pair of carved doors similar to the ones outside the Great Hall. But these were bolted with a thick metal bar. Just as I wondered where he kept the key, he pressed his hand to the metal, and the bar faded from sight.

Georgie sucked in a breath. She turned curious eyes to Graeme, who offered another smile—this one sweeter and broader than the one he’d given me. “I’ll tell you how it works later,” he promised. When she beamed back at him, I forgot all about the punch he’d given me in the caldarium. The ice javelin and the blows from his wings and tail disappeared too. A sigh rose in my chest as I resigned myself to being in love and easily manipulated for the rest of my days. If I was this easy over a couple of smiles, there was no hope for me.

Not such a hardship, though. The perks more than made up for it.

Graeme pushed the doors open, and my thoughts blanked as I stared at a room full of—

“Treasure,” Georgie breathed, gazing over the glittering array of gold, jewels, and furniture. The space was massive, with vaulted ceilings and walls lined with shelves and cabinets glittering with priceless objects. On the floor, a small mountain of sapphires twinkled next to a throne carved from jade. Pearls and rubies completed the miniature mountain range. Tapestries of every size and shape decorated the walls. Brilliantly patterned rugs covered the floors. Everywhere I looked, more wealth and beauty greeted me. Even the air smelled rich, like flowers growing in a museum.

I looked at Graeme. “What is this place?” Our kind was drawn to shiny, precious things. More than one dragon housed a hoard under his castle. But I’d never seen or heard of anything like this.

“Gifts from travelers seeking the Oracle.” He stared at the display like he was almost surprised to see it. And maybe that wasn’t too far off. He’d spent centuries without emotions. He confirmed as much a second later when he said, “I never had any use for these things, so I brought them here.” An apologetic look moved through his eyes. “I took knowledge, though. Books and magic. Anything I thought might help me with my search.”

Georgie took his hand. “Tell us about it.”

He guided us to the back of the room, where chairs and sofas were grouped around an empty hearth with a beautifully carved mantel. A plush, white fur rug spread over the floor. When Georgie and I were settled in two of the chairs, Graeme lit a fire with a bit of kindling and a flick of his wrist. Then he sat on a silk-covered sofa in front of us and began to speak.

“My mate’s name was Hamish Cameron. I met him when I was a little over two hundred years old. I...lost him shortly after my four hundredth year. We were happy. I loved him.” He shook his head a little. “No, it was more than that. I was so deeply in love with him that it hurt me sometimes. Like walking into the sun after spending a few hours indoors. That first step into the light is so bright and warm, you’re always a little surprised when it hits you. That’s how I loved Hamish.”

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:03 am

Georgie put her hand over her mouth. Her eyes sparkled with tears.

The fire crackled and set the treasures around us glowing. Golden light played over Graeme's face as he continued in a low, rough voice. "We were happy, but we were missing something. Even the most devoted male pairs long for their female. We were no different. In those days, our women were already growing ill. They were dying and taking their mates with them, and everyone was terrified. Hamish took it hard. He wanted to help Cormac find a cure. The king was ailing, experiencing bouts of rage and forgetfulness. He'd searched so long for his female..." Graeme's shoulders lifted as he sighed.

"Hamish worried the Curse would drive Cormac into the fire," I said.

Graeme nodded. "I dismissed those concerns. I'm ashamed to admit I dismissed the Curse...at least in the beginning. I'd spent time with my mother's people when I was young. The Unseelie are powerful beyond comprehension. I assumed the dark courts would know how to unravel the Curse."

"But they didn't," Georgie said quietly.

"No," Graeme said, his voice just as hushed. "They didn't. Hamish and I visited the Unseelie. We begged my relatives in the Winter Court for help. We petitioned their queen, Circe, to ask the rulers of the other courts for assistance. They tried everything they could think of, but no one could figure out where the Curse had come from or what it even was. So Hamish decided we should approach an oracle. We chose the North Wind because of my heritage. I guess Hamish thought the Oracle might favor me because of my mother's gifts. But we never reached it."

The hair on my nape lifted, but this time there were no dark whispers or remnants of ancient magic to spook me. Just the knowledge that the worst part of the story was to come.

Georgie moved to the sofa and put a hand on Graeme's arm. "What happened?"

"Hamish...fell," Graeme whispered, his eyes wide like he was seeing a horror replay in front of him. My heart thumped faster as I recalled him looking just as scared and helpless after the lightning struck my wing. "I don't know how it happened," Graeme said hoarsely. "The White Gate was different back then. The Brotherhood was bigger, and the castle was crowded. I couldn't find Hamish anywhere, so I went to the top of every tower. And..." A tear sprinted down Graeme's cheek. "The battlements were broken, like he'd slipped or maybe fought with someone. But there was only a single trail of footprints." Another tear streaked down Graeme's face and turned into a diamond that tangled in his beard. "I found Hamish at the base of the tower with an icicle through his heart. He was already dead."

For a second, shock rendered me speechless. Then disbelief made me rasp, "That's impossible." Georgie gave me a sharp look and might have spoken, but Graeme waved her off.

"No, Callum is right. It should have been impossible because dragons are almost impossible to kill. But Hamish was gone." Graeme squeezed his eyes shut, and his features contorted with pain. When he opened his eyes, the pain swam in them. "I wanted to die, too. It was like someone had lodged that icicle in my chest. I blamed myself for not protecting him. For not finding him in time to save him. And I wanted to die, but more than anything I wanted to bring him back. So I went to the Grand Master of the Brotherhood of Ice Dragons and offered my heart. My only request was that I be assigned to guard the Oracle of the North Wind."

"Why?" I asked. "Why do that to yourself?"

“I deserved it.” Graeme drew a shuddering breath. “But there were other reasons. Gelhella suits my gifts. And I vowed to never stop searching for a way to bring Hamish back to me.”

Apprehension slid down my spine. “Is that what you were doing in the study? Searching for ways to bring him back?”

Graeme nodded. “That was another reason for coming here. I took whatever knowledge I could and studied it.”

Georgie squeezed his arm. “Did you ever visit the Oracle for yourself?”

“Aye, I did, lass. But the wind yielded no answers. Hamish was gone, but...” Graeme swallowed. “His ghost returned to me.”

My apprehension turned to a shiver, and I resisted the urge to look over my shoulder.

Georgie frowned. Then she spoke slowly, like she was choosing her words carefully. “My father always said a powerful memory could live in the wind. But he believed ghosts were a thing of the mortal world. Once immortals cross over, he said they never—”

“Hamish returned,” Graeme said firmly. “I don’t mean to contradict your father, lass, but I know what I’ve experienced over the years. Hamish visited sparingly, but it was him.” Graeme rubbed a hand over his face, his shoulders slumping. “Now that he’s gone for good, I worry I kept him on this plane when I shouldn’t have, that maybe I trapped him with magic I found and had no business using.”

“What do you mean?” I asked. “What makes you think he’s gone for good?”

“He came to me today. He smiled just as my heart began to beat, and then he

disappeared.” Graeme hesitated. “I broke my vow to him, but maybe I was never meant to make it in the first place. Now that I’ve acknowledged fate, perhaps I’ve set him free.”

Georgie’s frown had lingered, and now she worried at her lip with her teeth.

“What’s wrong, lass?” I asked.

She met my gaze briefly before turning to Graeme. “When you found me on the roof of the tower today, I think I saw the broken battlements.”

Graeme stiffened. “That’s not possible.”

“It’s part of my power. Strong memories can live in the air for a long time. I saw the tower just as you described it, with the footprints in the snow and the battlements—”

“No,” Graeme said, “it’s not possible because Hamish didn’t fall from the North Tower. He fell from the South Tower on the other side of the castle.”

She was silent for a moment. Finally, she nodded. “I was tired. Maybe it was a trick of the light.”

Quiet stretched. The fire danced, casting shadows over the treasures that surrounded us. Graeme’s eyes were tired but clear as he looked at Georgie and me.

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:03 am

“I don’t know where to go from here,” he said. “I don’t know what to do next.”

I leaned forward and rested my hand on his knee. “Then we’ll do what’s easy. We’ll go to bed, and we’ll start new in the morning.”

He stared at my hand for a moment. Then he placed his on top of it. “Is it really that easy?” he asked, more than a hint of hope in his voice.

My heart swelled, and I turned my hand so I could rub my thumb over his knuckles. “It can be. If we’re willing to work for it.”

His pale eyes held mine. I’d thought them cold, but now I realized I was wrong. They weren’t cold.

They were pure.

“I am,” he whispered.

“Then that’s what we’ll do.” As the three of us rose and started for the door, I stopped. “There’s just one problem.”

Georgie frowned. “What is it?”

“We need a bigger bed.” When she blushed furiously, Graeme laughed—and the rusty sound was so delightful, I immediately amended my mental checklist, adding make Graeme Abernathy laugh at the top.

“Don’t worry, lass,” Graeme said, “I think there’s a bed in here somewhere. The lad and I can take it apart and haul it upstairs.”

“Calling me lad again,” I murmured, but my rebuke was probably ineffective with a smile still pulling at my mouth.

A few minutes later, we found the bed. As Graeme knelt to begin dismantling it, I caught Georgie’s eye and winked.

“What was that for?” she asked, suspicion and curiosity warring for dominance in her purple eyes.

I tipped my head toward the hearth. “You see that fur rug over there?”

She followed the direction I’d indicated. The blush in her cheeks deepened. “Is that...?”

“Aye,” I said. “We’re taking that upstairs too.”

Chapter Nineteen

GRAEME

I stood at the window in the North Tower and realized that Callum was right: Things seemed a bit easier in the morning.

The night hadn’t brought any big revelations. Georgie, Callum, and I hadn’t fixed anything. After Callum and I reassembled the bed, the three of us had simply...slept. I’d been certain I would spend every moment tossing and turning. Maybe rise in the middle of the night and return to my tower and everything that was familiar. I’d spent so long searching, I wasn’t sure I could lie still and let my mind drift instead of

thinking about the next book or another spell or something I might have missed.

I hadn't expected the warm press of Georgie's body to feel so perfect...or for Callum's soft snores to weight my eyelids until I drifted into the most restful slumber I'd experienced in...

Well, a long time.

I certainly hadn't expected to wake with Callum's lips brushing my cheek and his sleep-roughened voice whispering, "Be right back. I need to make my bladder gladder." Half of what came out of Callum's mouth was gibberish to me, but I'd understood that one. The smile in my heart needed no translation.

Through the window, the Oracle gleamed blue on the horizon. My heart thumped steadily in my chest, each beat a reminder that I was an oath-breaker. As far as I knew, the Brotherhood had no protocol for dealing with dragons who betrayed their vows. Even if such a protocol existed, there was no one left to punish me. The Grand Master had died fighting in the War of the Firstborn. Dozens of other ice dragons had perished the same way. The order had dwindled, and now we sped toward becoming a footnote in history.

But my vow to the Brotherhood wasn't the only one I'd broken. The horizon blurred as Hamish's voice flowed through my head.

I have to go, Graeme. You found what you were looking for.

Guilt tugged at my heart like an anchor. My selfishness had kept him here, a prisoner on a plane he could no longer touch or feel. Had he suffered? Or had the icicle that took his life stopped him from mourning our love? From longing for a future that was as cold and broken as his body at the bottom of the tower? How could he ever forgive me? Was he even in a position to forgive me?

These questions whirled through my mind. They would spin into something beyond my control if I let them. Like King Cormac, I risked retreating into fire—or ice.

But I had something else in common with Cormac. My guilt was heavy, but it had a counterweight in the form of a sweetly curved witch and an impertinent incubus. The mere thought of them being hurt—or hungry—had loosened the ice around my heart. Then I'd watched Callum fall, and the ice had crumbled. Seeing Georgie on the roof of the tower had blasted the last of it away.

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:03 am

And then Hamish had come, giving me permission to move on. It was such a beautiful gift...

How could I waste it?

“Sun’s up,” Callum murmured, stepping beside me. He eyed the horizon as he lifted a jeweled goblet to his lips.

“The sun is always up this time of year,” I said. A woodsy scent with hints of caramel hit my nose. “Whiskey in the morning?”

“I couldn’t find any coffee.” He huffed. “Some treasure room you have.”

“Took the long route to the privy, did you?”

He swallowed another gulp of whiskey and smiled. “I did a little reconnoitering. Georgie insists that’s a word, but I’m not so sure.”

“It’s a word.”

“If you say so.” He gave a wistful sigh and stared into his goblet. “This whiskey would taste a whole lot better with coffee in it.”

I let sarcasm leak into my tone—and privately marveled at being able to feel that particular emotion—as I said, “My apologies, Callum. The next time travelers pass the White Gate, I’ll check their bags for coffee.”

He looked at me, questions in his eyes. I knew what he wanted to ask because the same questions swam in my mind. Now that my heart was beating, could I continue to guard the Oracle? Did I even want to?

The questions fled Callum's eyes, and he offered me one of his lazy smiles as he sipped his whiskey. "Georgie will be pleased to hear it. Coffee is the key to our witch's heart."

I looked over my shoulder to where she slept in the big, ornate bed some ancient traveler had dragged through Gelhella to curry favor. Georgie's long, black hair streamed across the pillow. One slender, silken leg peeked from the white sheets. Desire stirred within me at the memory of rolling over in the night and feeling that warm, silky skin against mine. I jerked my gaze away to find Callum watching me with glowing green eyes and a knowing expression.

"Keep your gifts to yourself," I said.

He gave me an innocent look. "I'm just enjoying my whiskey." He took another sip. When he lowered the goblet, a bead of amber liquid clung to his lips. He licked it away, and I caught my breath as my dick let me know it was also awake and ready to begin the day.

Callum's voice went husky. "I didn't take you for an early riser."

I dragged my gaze from his mouth, and we both knew I wasn't talking about the time of day when I said, "Neither did I."

Slowly, he set his goblet on the window's deep embrasure. "But something changed?"

"Aye." I wanted to kiss him, to run my tongue over his lips and taste whiskey and

smoke and him. I wanted to feel his heat wrapped around my dick again. The resistance of his body and then that slow, sweet giving way that was so different from making love to a woman. I wanted to do everything with him. There were so many things I hadn't done with him. I didn't know where to start.

He reached up and tugged my beard, and he spoke in the soft, musical language of our shared homeland. "Let's start in the sky."

I looked out the window. He wanted to fly together? The snow sparkled under the sun, and for the second time that morning, I had to acknowledge that Callum was right about something. I wanted to soar over the white expanse with him beside me. I turned back to him. "I don't even know if I'm an ice dragon anymore."

He smiled. "One way to find out."

* * *

Ten minutes later, I had my answer. As I stretched my wings and coasted on the air, my heart beat steadily.

But my dragon was unchanged, my body as frozen as Gelhella spread beneath me.

Callum and I flew side by side, our bodies casting enormous shadows over the snow. Just before we'd left the castle, he'd whispered something in a sleepy Georgie's ear, then strode to my side, stripped, and gave me a look of unmistakable challenge. "Try to keep up."

I had no problem matching his pace. But the excitement I'd felt at the prospect of flying with him had faded as soon as I burst into living ice.

Fresh worries plagued me as I stretched my icy wings wide and swooped over one of

the White Gate's towers. Maybe this was my punishment for breaking my vow—I was tethered to the Oracle, unable to leave Gelhella. It would serve me right. I'd imprisoned Hamish. Now, my vows entrapped me.

But I was vulnerable. My heart beat, plaguing me with emotions. Distractions. And if I made things official with Callum and Georgie—if I said the words to bind the three of us together forever—I'd make them vulnerable too.

I wheeled in the air, preparing to return to the castle so I could go to my study and search for answers. I'd read every book on my shelves ten times over, but I'd been looking for spells to resurrect my mate. Maybe a second read would reveal a way to restore my dragon to flesh and blood. And if that failed, I'd have to convince Callum and Georgie to return to Scotland without me. Even as the thought materialized, I knew it was hopeless—especially when it came to Callum. I had a better chance of raising the dead than persuading a dragon to reject the mate bond. And Callum was easygoing, but something told me he had a stubborn streak a continent wide.

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:03 am

Abruptly, I realized he wasn't beside me. Tendrils of panic rushed through me as I slowed, wings flapping, and scanned the ground.

Something wet and cold smacked me in the face. With a roar, I shook snow from my snout and twisted around in the air.

Callum stood on two human legs on the battlements, stark naked and packing another snowball. His grin was visible even with the distance between us.

Indignation pumped through me. I beat my wings once and streaked toward him. He gave a shout of laughter, twisted into shadow form, and streaked straight upward. A second later, he burst into his dragon, his green tail waving behind him in a taunting ripple.

And the chase was on.

I dove after him, my wings sheering the air as I trailed him through the sky. The thrill of the hunt coursed through me, banishing all thought of oaths and oracles as I focused on exacting revenge.

Callum's laughter drifted in his wake, followed by the hissing, twisted syllables only our beasts could speak. "Easy, old man. Wouldn't want you to break a hip."

I snorted a stream of icy vapor and surged forward, my gaze on his glittering hindquarters. He weaved and dodged with impressive agility, rolling and spinning when I got too close. But I had centuries on him, and I read the little twitches and feints that gave him away. When he spiraled to the left, I was already there, snapping

at his tail.

He shifted to shadow form and jetted to the right.

“That’s cheating,” I barked, but my jaw opened in a grin as I pursued him up and up, clouds whipping past my face. After a second, I spun into smoke and joined him.

And, suddenly, what had been a chase became a dance. We spiraled around each other, weaving in and out of the currents. Joy burst in my mind and streamed through the particles of my body. Time faded. Worries fled. Nothing mattered but the air and the sky and the male circling me. Matching me. Spinning around me in choreography so ancient and sacred it was written on our bones.

He led me, and I let him, streaming after him as he punched through clouds and rode the air. When he shifted into his dragon and swooped toward the ground, I shifted with him—and I laughed when he skimmed his claws over the snow and flung the crystals into the air, making the world sparkle. He reminded me of the hounds of my youth. After the knights returned from hunting, the dogs used to roll in the grass, yipping at nothing and everything and generally being ridiculous.

At last, he turned toward the castle. When we neared the North Tower, he twisted into smoke and streamed through an arrow slit. I shifted and followed, trailing him through corridors and passages until we reached the caldarium.

Callum hit the ground on two legs, and his mouth was on mine before I’d caught my breath. His throaty laugh rumbled against my lips as I walked him swiftly backward and toppled us into the water. He was still laughing when he came up wet and tangled in my arms.

I pushed him against the wall, and his laughter turned into a strangled gasp as I ground my cock against his. Water lapped around our waists and ran down our bodies

as we rutted against each other. He squirmed against me, one hand tangling in my hair and the other gripping my shoulder. We stayed like that for a long moment, our faces inches apart and our breaths mingling as we worked our dicks together. His eyes glittered like emeralds. Water clung to his dark blond stubble and the gold-dusted tips of his eyelashes.

“So pretty,” I murmured, sliding a hand between us and gripping his cock. He moaned, thrusting against my palm as I stroked down the shaft and over his swollen cockhead. The water was clear, and I tipped my head down and watched as I ran a rough thumb around the rounded, dark red tip. “Blushing for me.”

With a muttered curse, he seized my face and crashed his lips to mine. He seized control, too, stroking his tongue boldly, roughly. Thrusting it deep and forcing my jaw wide. In a sudden move, he spun us, reversing our positions so the wall bit into the small of my back and it was my dick in his hand.

Surprise and pleasure crackled through me. I could have stopped him, but I couldn’t resist him. Not when his kiss made every nerve in my body come alive. Set little fires under my skin and made my heart race until it thumped to the same frantic rhythm of his own.

His hand on my cock was just as devastating. Rough with a swordsman’s calluses yet achingly gentle as it worked me from root to tip. He knew exactly how to touch me, how to move his hand to drive me mad. How to make my body tighten and my release build. How to drag out the pleasure and how to bring me to the edge before hauling me back.

Finally, I was too close, and I wrenched away, my chest heaving. “Was that one of my fantasies?”

With a shake of his head, he murmured, “No. It was mine.”

My heart skipped a beat. He spent so much time giving others what they wanted. How often did he get what he wanted? I fingered a lock of hair that had fallen over his forehead before running my fingers down to his temple. “What other fantasies live in here?”

“I want to eat your ass, Graeme,” he said, his voice quiet and matter-of-fact. “I want you spread over my face while I take you apart with my tongue. I want to feel you twitch and shudder above me while I thrust inside you, teasing you open and licking you until you’re squirming and begging to come.”

My face flared hotter than the sun. Words stuck in my throat as lust and wariness mingled in my chest. “What are you...?” I cleared my throat. “What are you asking for...exactly? Because I don’t... I mean, I don’t think—”

“Wheesht, sweetheart,” he said, stopping my babble with a finger over my lips. His eyes softened. “I know how it’ll be between us, Graeme, and you’ll hear no complaint from me. I’m not asking for anything you’re not willing to give.” He tugged my beard as a spark of wickedness entered his eyes. “But even big, strong tops need their asses eaten sometimes.”

I rested my forehead against his with a groan that was equal parts embarrassment and lust. “You have a filthy mouth.”

“You have no idea,” he chuckled. He splayed his hands over my hips, dipping his thumbs in the creases that seemed made for his touch. He stroked me there, and I got the sense he was gentling me. Because he was gentle. And kind. And so sweet I wanted to crawl into his arms and just...rest in him.

“Yes,” I whispered, excitement trembling inside me. “Take me apart, m’eudail.”

His breath hitched at the endearment. “Graeme,” he murmured, and then he kissed

me, softly this time, just the barest meeting of lips and tongues. There was a promise in it—maybe he said it out loud and I was simply too enthralled to know for sure. But I heard it all the same.

I'll take care of you.

I'll take care of you.

When I was breathless all over again, he reached around me and patted the smooth, stone floor. "Come up here for me."

My dick was a wild, swinging thing as I let him get us into position, him on his back and me facing his feet and straddling him. Then his hands were on my hips, guiding me backward and easing me onto his face. He spread me, and the bolt of lust that shot down my spine made me wonder how I was going to survive his tongue.

At the first warm flutter, I squeezed my eyes shut. He teased and licked me, alternating between long, lazy strokes and light flicks that made my toes curl. Desire wound a hot, languid path from my entrance to my dick. After a few gentle kisses, he flattened his tongue against my hole, driving pressure into my passage.

"Gods," I moaned, any inhibitions I might have harbored falling away. I arched my back and pressed my hole wantonly to his lips, begging for more. He gave it to me, pushing the tip of his tongue inside me. I rode it, grinding down on his face as my breathing grew uneven. I opened my eyes and stared down his long, powerful body stretched before me. His cock lay hard and swollen on his taut stomach, the tip shiny and so tempting that my mouth watered.

"Can I touch you?" I asked, seconds from bypassing permission and doing exactly what I wanted.

His response was a warm lash of his tongue and a muffled, "Please fucking do." His breath gusted over my hole as I took him in hand, and he groaned into my opening

when I began to stroke him.

He squeezed my cheeks and lifted me up enough to gasp, “Oh, fuck, Graeme. Gods, just like that.” He ran his hands up my thighs, trailing sparks in his wake, and I felt his saliva dribble from me. The damp air of the caldarium teased my entrance, which was open and quivering.

“Damn, that’s hot,” he whispered, spreading me wider with his thumbs. He stroked them up and down my rim, and I could feel his stare. His eyes seared my entrance like a brand, sending lightning bolts of lust sizzling through me. With a thick groan, he prised my cheeks wider and buried his face in my crease.

My breath punched from my lungs. He sucked at my hole, and my head fell back on a gasp. “Fuck,” I grunted as his tongue darted inside me. He hummed in response, sending vibrations through my swollen, aching sack.

I thrust my hips back, grinding mercilessly on his face as he sucked and licked. His hands squeezed and kneaded my cheeks, wordlessly urging me to move faster. I obeyed, my grunts mixing with the filthy sound of his tongue spearing me.

He gave a throaty growl of approval and pushed his tongue deep, hitting the spot that made stars burst before my eyes. I gasped and rolled my hips in time with his thrusts. My aching cock sailed up and slapped my stomach, but I didn’t dare touch it. If I did, everything would end and I didn’t want it to end, so I clung to Callum’s dick for dear life as I writhed on his face, my breath spilling from me in needy sobs that echoed around the mist-soaked room.

The air filled with our grunts, the drip of water, and the thick, wet smack of his mouth on my hole. I moaned his name as I stroked him faster. He was leaking so much, he was slick in my grip, his cock shuttling through my fist. His groans vibrated from my hole to my balls, which slapped against his chin. He bucked his hips, his groans

growing louder.

“Come for me,” I ordered, my hand blurring on his dick. “Let me see it, lad.”

A second later, he obeyed. He bellowed into my ass and spurted hot stripes of come over my fist and his belly. He was still shuddering when I climbed off him and flipped around. My ass was soaked. My dick throbbed, the tip red with blood, as I pushed his legs up and apart, exposing his perfect hole. Smooth and pink and furled tight like the bud of a rose.

“I want you,” I growled, smearing his come up and down his cleft. I worked my damp hand over his tight balls and back down to his pleated opening, slicking him with seed.

“I’m yours,” he said, his cheeks flushed and his eyes sheened with his power. He pulled his legs wide and thrust his ass up, shamelessly offering himself. He moaned when I pushed come into his hole, and he cried out as I pumped a careful finger inside, coaxing him open. Already, his dick hardened again, the glistening length swelling against his abs.

“Do you want my come inside you?” I asked, running my gaze from his plumping dick to my finger thrusting in and out of his cream-coated hole. I added another finger, and he made a strangled sound and pulled his legs higher.

“Aye, I want your come,” he said, panting. He thrust a hand between his legs and stroked his fingers over mine, dabbling in his seed and fingering his entrance. Helping me stretch him. “Breed my arse, Graeme. Fill me up.”

I didn’t need to be told twice. Draping my body over his, I positioned myself at his entrance and rubbed my cockhead up and down his slick opening.

“Now,” he gasped, eyes gleaming. “Fuck me.”

I pushed inside him, and we both groaned as his ass clamped around me. He was so tight and hot, and he took me so well, his ass like a sheath made especially for my cock. He lifted his hips, forcing my dick deeper.

“Callum,” I breathed. Emotion welled, and tears pricked my eyes. I dropped over him and rested my forehead on his shoulder so he wouldn’t see.

“I’ve got you, sweetheart,” he said, wrapping his arms around me. Then he wrapped his legs around me, hugging my body to his as I began to thrust. He crossed his ankles behind my back and stroked his fingertips over my nape. His dick wedged between us, slicking our bellies with come. He held me through every stroke, his pleased moans filling my ears. “That’s it,” he gasped. “That’s my spot. Gods, you’re going to make me come again.”

I fucked him harder, my world narrowing to the tight grip of his ass on my dick. Sweat stung my eyes as I thrust deeper, faster. So close. I was so close, but he felt so good I didn’t want to finish. I wanted his ass strangling my cock and his heels digging into my back. His breath in my ear and his thighs squeezing my hips. I wanted him forever. Gods, how had I ever resisted this man?

“Graeme,” he cried, his voice cracking. Our chests slipped against each other. His cock throbbed between us. He smashed his mouth to mine in a fierce, sloppy kiss. My thrusts grew more frantic and uncoordinated. We couldn’t maintain the kiss, so we gasped against each other’s mouths, our noses brushing as we groaned and rocked together.

All at once, Callum jerked hard. His ass clamped tightly around my dick, and his hot, wet release spread between us. The scalding splash of his come sent me over the edge, and I shouted against his mouth as I pumped deep in his ass.

We held each other, both of us panting and sweating. Our hearts thundered between us, and more strong swells of emotion filled me. Relief. Gratitude. And a third thing too raw and new to acknowledge. It thumped in time with my heart, telling me what I already knew. I couldn't send Callum and Georgie away. Even if I found a spell that allowed me to ignore the mate bond, I couldn't use it. The lad and the witch were mine. I was keeping them.

A fourth emotion joined the others.

Resolve.

And I knew what I had to do.

Chapter Twenty

GEORGIE

I held the razor-sharp edge of my father's dagger against Graeme's neck. "Don't move, dragon."

He sat in a chair before the fire in the tower chamber, his head bent forward as I trimmed his hair. I'd finished with the top part, and I had to admit it looked pretty good. Now, Graeme's thick, dark waves framed his handsome features instead of obscuring them.

"You should let her do your beard next," Callum said, tossing a peanut in the air. His chair, which was one of four he'd hauled upstairs from the treasure room, tipped precariously for a second as he rocked backward and caught the nut in his mouth. The chair crashed forward, and he gave me a triumphant look. "That's thirty-five in a row."

"You're distracting me," I told him, scraping the blade down Graeme's nape. "Also, you shouldn't be eating those."

"Why not?"

"They came from the treasure room, right? You have no idea how old they are. Peanuts don't have a long shelf life."

He popped one into his mouth and spoke around it. “They’re not from the treasure room, witchling. I found them in Graeme’s pantry when I was reconnaissancing.”

“Reconnoitering,” Graeme and I said together.

“Besides,” Callum continued as if he hadn’t heard us, “it’ll take a lot more than expired peanuts to make me sick. I’m immortal.” He caught Graeme’s eye and winked. “And I follow a high-fiber diet.”

Graeme’s nape went pink—which further confirmed my suspicions about why he and Callum had taken so long during their morning flight. They’d returned with wet hair and smiles on their faces. Graeme was far less tense than he’d been before. He’d joked with Callum as they brought furniture and extra blankets up from the treasure room. More than once, I’d seen them exchange a lingering look or touch each other just a little longer than necessary.

And it...didn’t bother me. I’d waited for a spark of jealousy, but it never came. On the contrary, seeing them so easy with each other warmed my heart—and sent heat spiraling to certain places. Throughout the day and into the evening, my mind had conjured up all sorts of steamy scenarios starring Callum and Graeme. Seeing them kiss had set me on fire. Watching Graeme take Callum’s ass had practically melted my bones. If I harbored any resentment at all about the morning, it was that I hadn’t been around to see them fuck.

Apparently, fate knew what it was doing when it matched me with two dragons. Because I wasn’t jealous.

No, I was riveted—and increasingly turned on. Something intense and sensual had been simmering among the three of us all day, and I couldn’t help but feel like it was barreling toward an explosive conclusion.

“Finished,” I announced, using a cloth to dust the hair from Graeme’s neck. I plucked a silver hand mirror from a small table (two more of Callum’s finds) and reached around Graeme’s shoulder so he could see his reflection.

His pale eyes widened. After a second, he ran a tentative hand through his crop of dark waves. His gaze met mine in the mirror. “You did a fine job, lass. I don’t recognize myself.”

“Do you like it?”

“Aye, I do.” He touched his jaw. “I’m not sure how I feel about losing the beard, though.”

“You don’t have to lose it,” I said, stepping around him and setting the mirror aside. “I can just clean it up a bit.”

He gave the dagger in my hand a wary look. “All right. Just a trim.”

I put a gentle hand under his chin and angled his head to the side. Bristly hairs fell swiftly under the blade as I drew the dagger downward. Shaping his beard was much easier than trimming his hair, and it wasn’t long before I was on my last few swipes of the blade.

“That’s a magical dagger,” Graeme murmured, eyeing it.

I nodded as I trimmed a stray hair at the corner of his mouth. “It belonged to my father.”

“So it belongs to you now.”

I stopped, my gaze colliding with his. “Um...there’s some debate about that.”

“Your father led your house, yes?”

“Yes, but—”

“And you are his heir.” Graeme nodded his chin toward the dagger. “Then that blade is yours.”

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:03 am

My chest tightened as I looked down at it. The steel reflected my face even more clearly than the mirror had reflected Graeme's. "It belongs to the leader of House Blackwood," I said. "And that will probably never be me." I cleared my throat and lifted my head. "But it doesn't matter. I brought it as a gift for you."

Graeme shook his head. He gave the dagger an admiring look. "No," he said softly, "that's a witch's blade." He looked at me, his blue eyes steady. "And you are a powerful witch, Georgie Blackwood. I inherited the fae gift of sensing power. Yours is stronger than you think, and that dagger is in the right hands."

Tears pricked my eyes. "Do you really mean that?"

"I vow it." He snagged my hip and tugged me between his spread thighs. Contrition moved through his gaze as he looked up at me. "I tried to stop you from fulfilling your quest. I ask your forgiveness, lass. I'll fly you to the Oracle in the morning if you wish it. I also seek its guidance, but I would have taken you anyway."

My heart sped up as the heat from his hand seeped through the fabric covering my hip. "Will you ask the Oracle about your ice dragon?" Callum had told me Graeme was unsure of his status in the Brotherhood—which meant he was unsure what that meant for the three of us.

"Aye." He grimaced. "I supposed that's one benefit of retaining the ice. I won't have any trouble flying you and Callum North."

I twisted so I could look at Callum over my shoulder. "Oh, I probably wasn't going to invite Callum," I said lightly.

He offered me a lazy smile as he tipped his chair on its back legs. “There you go dreaming again.”

Desire stirred low in my belly. “Don’t forget that I’m in charge.”

“Is that what you like?” Graeme asked, drawing my gaze back to him. “To be in charge?”

The air in the room shifted. Tiny sparks danced on the currents, which slowed as Graeme palmed my other hip. His hands spanned my waist easily, his thumbs touching over my pubic bone.

“Sometimes,” I said, my voice breathless. We definitely weren’t talking about leading an Arctic expedition anymore.

He made a humming sound as he brushed his thumbs against my leggings. “Well, you definitely get the final say on who comes, lass. But hopefully we can convince you to let Callum join us.”

Callum’s chair creaked behind me. I turned to find him on his feet and advancing toward me, his movements fluid. “I’ll convince you, Georgie. I can be very persuasive...if you’re willing to listen.” My heart raced as he stepped close and pushed my hair over one of my shoulders. Then he lowered his head and planted a soft kiss on the side of my neck.

Shivers coursed down my spine. I swayed as desire swept me, and I braced my hands on Graeme’s thick shoulders. “I don’t know,” I moaned, feeling my way through the game as I went. My heart pounded faster. “I think I need to know what each of you has to offer before I decide.”

Graeme made a low sound I felt between my legs. “Callum? Do you have any ideas?”

“As it happens...” With a firm but gentle hand on my shoulder, Callum pushed me slowly to my knees. His growl rumbled above me. “Why don’t you take that big dick of yours out, Graeme, and give our witchling a taste of what you have to offer.”

My pussy clenched. On my knees between them, I should have felt small and vulnerable. Instead, I felt powerful. They wanted me, and they intended to have me—together. There was no question we were headed in that direction. Currents of lust slid over my skin as Graeme spread his legs wider. Firelight danced over the tattoos around his wrist as he unfastened his pants and withdrew his cock. It was hard and swollen, the thick veins plump with his arousal. The tip bobbed inches from my lips as he gave himself a slow stroke.

Callum ran soft fingers through my hair. “Do you want to suck him?” he murmured.

“Yes,” I said, my voice more breathless than before. I licked my lips, and both men groaned. Callum kept a light grip on my hair as he guided my head forward.

“Nice and wide, lassie,” he said. When I followed his instructions and took Graeme’s cockhead into my mouth, Callum gave a throaty growl of approval. “There you go.” Fingers in my hair, he tugged my head back and forth, working my mouth up and down Graeme’s cock. “He’s too big for you to take him all the way, so you’ll have to use your hand. That’s my girl, wrap your fingers around his base. Good. Now stroke him as you suck.”

I gripped Graeme’s dick and moaned around it, practically drunk on lust. Everything about this was so, so filthy—Callum’s orders, his fingers tangled in my hair, the floor digging into my knees, Graeme watching through heavy-lidded eyes, his lips parted and his big chest rising and falling more quickly.

With Callum’s hand doing the steering, I had no choice but to keep my jaw stretched wide and accept the dick thrusting into my mouth. Graeme grew harder against my

tongue. The fire crackled as Callum continued bobbing me forward. My jaw began to ache, but I didn't want to stop. My saliva flowed more quickly, wetting Graeme's dick and dribbling down my chin.

"Fuck," Graeme said softly, thrusting to meet my mouth.

"Uh-uh," Callum scolded, pulling me off Graeme's dick. "You're not in charge, remember?"

Graeme tipped his head back and cursed at the ceiling, and Callum chuckled as he turned me toward him and rubbed his thumb over the hinge of my jaw, soothing the ache with firm circles. "You okay, darlin'?" he asked, heat and tenderness in his glowing eyes. His touch was achingly gentle as he wiped the drool from my chin.

"Yes," I said huskily.

"Can you handle more?"

"Please."

Approval flared in his eyes. He stepped back and shifted to smoke, shedding his clothes. On the chair, Graeme did the same. Then they shifted back, and I was on my knees between two large and very hard men. Graeme's dick jutted from his hips, the shaft glistening from my mouth. Callum's cock was less girthy but it curved slightly. More heat flared under my skin as I remembered how he used that curve to his advantage, hitting all the right spots whenever he was inside me.

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:03 am

Graeme's gaze dropped to my chest. "Take that shirt off, lass. I want to see your pretty tits bounce when you suck me again."

Hands shaking, I pulled my shirt over my head and unhooked my bra.

"The leggings, too," Callum said, "but leave the panties for now."

A groan tangled in my throat as I obeyed, wriggling out of my tight leggings and tossing them aside. As I resettled on my knees, both men stared at the thatch of fabric between my legs, which was so wet that the outline of my folds was visible. I squirmed under their scrutiny, every brush of cotton against my clit an exquisite kind of torture. Somehow, kneeling at their feet with the press of the sodden fabric against my sex, my arousal on full display, was more scandalous than being fully nude.

Damn Callum. He knew precisely what he was doing when he ordered me to leave my panties on.

He moved closer, and his cock brushed my cheek.

I didn't hesitate, just turned my head and sucked him into my mouth. His salty, smoky taste exploded on my tongue as I bobbed on his dick.

"Good lass," he breathed, cupping the back of my head and thrusting gently into my mouth. Precome spurted onto my tongue, and I swallowed it down. My breasts jiggled with my efforts. Graeme's gaze fastened on my chest, and he groaned loudly and reached for his cock.

On impulse, I released Callum's dick, turned my head, and wrapped my lips around Graeme.

He cursed in Gaelic and spread his legs wider. The chair creaked rhythmically as I set a steady pace. Callum's wet, glistening dick bobbed near my cheek, waiting to be serviced again. My core clenched, my pussy clamping repeatedly. After a moment, I pulled off Graeme's dick and went back to work on Callum's. More moisture soaked the cotton between my legs. And it was no wonder—because nothing had ever been hotter than this. Naked except for my ruined panties, I took them in turns, sucking and bobbing. Swirling my tongue around their cockheads and licking up and down their shafts. My jaw throbbed. Spit dripped onto my breasts. The men's moans and shuddered breaths accompanied the fleshy sound of their cocks tunneling in and out of my mouth.

The next time I turned to Callum, he shook his head and hauled me to my feet. "Your turn, lassie," he said, then brought his mouth down on mine. He gripped my ass and pulled me against him, and I gasped as the hard ridge of his erection ground into my stomach. His kiss was hard and demanding, his tongue hot and possessive. He reached down and cupped my pussy, then thrust his hand down the front of my panties and rubbed his fingers over my clit.

Warm hands closed around my waist, and I gasped into Callum's mouth as Graeme's chest pressed against my back and his dick prodded my hip. Now I was sandwiched between them, their muscular bodies crowding me front and back.

Fore and aft, Callum had said when he read my deepest fantasies. Goosebumps lifted on my skin. Suddenly, I was grateful for my extra-long bath in the caldarium—and the fact that Callum and I had eaten almost nothing but sports bars with a high fiber content over the past few days.

My nipples stabbed Callum's chest. He played with my clit, circling and stroking and

driving my need to a fever pitch. I whimpered into his mouth as I teetered on the edge of orgasm. Just before I tipped into ecstasy he broke off the kiss and yanked his hand from my panties.

“No!” I protested, breathless and disoriented. I sagged against Graeme and glared up at Callum. “Why did you stop?”

Callum’s eyes glittered with his power. The outline of his horns flickered in and out of view as he licked my juices from his fingers. “Oh, I’m not stopping, lass. But I don’t think it’s fair to keep this delicious pussy all to myself.” He hooked his thumbs on either side of my panties and drew the fabric down, letting it nestle just below my sex. “And Graeme looks hungry,” he added, swiping his fingers down my slit and offering them to Graeme over my shoulder.

“Starving,” Graeme rumbled, sucking Callum’s fingers into his mouth. My knees loosened, and Graeme looped an arm around my waist, supporting me as he licked Callum’s fingers clean. “More,” he grunted.

Callum obliged him, swiping moisture from my lips and pushing his fingers into Graeme’s mouth. When Graeme finished and demanded yet another taste, Callum stole a helping for himself before fingering my entrance and lifting his fingers to Graeme’s lips once more. I hung limply in Graeme’s grasp, my body threatening to blast apart as they feasted on my arousal.

“It’s not enough,” Graeme growled suddenly. Callum was one step ahead of him, spinning me around and ripping my panties from my body so quickly he left me dizzy. Before I could get my bearings, Graeme went to his knees and buried his face in my sex.

My orgasm burst inside me like a rocket, bowing my spine and tearing a scream from my throat. Callum caught me against him, and I reached both arms up and clung to

his neck as Graeme sucked my clit hard. Hot, liquid pleasure rushed through me, and it was so fucking good I never wanted it to end. Sobbing my release, I reached down clumsily and gripped Graeme's hair. I held his face against my pussy and rolled my hips, chasing the waves.

Graeme growled and shoved one of my legs up so my foot rested on his shoulder. He thrust a finger inside me. Then he pushed his nose and mouth into my sopping pussy and licked me from my entrance to my clit.

I screamed again as one orgasm flowed into another. My pussy clamped hard around Graeme's finger. My knees buckled, and now Callum's arm circled my waist. He spoke in my ear, his words neither English nor Gaelic. The guttural language twisted around me, weaving a sinuous path to my pussy and stroking alongside Graeme's tongue.

"Shit!" I cried, jerking in Callum's grasp. He cupped one of my breasts with his free hand, and I could tell his eyes were fastened on Graeme as I writhed and bucked. My chest heaved as sensations peaked. Just as I grew too sensitive, Graeme pulled back and stood.

In one swift movement, Callum swept me into his arms and strode to the bed. Graeme was right there, too, ripping the sheets back and helping Callum settle me in the center. Once I was propped on the pillows, Callum turned to Graeme, seized his hips, and pulled Graeme into a searing kiss.

Graeme grunted, then gripped Callum by the nape and turned the kiss up by about a thousand degrees. My jaw dropped, the remnants of my orgasm rising again as I watched them go at each other. Graeme moved his free hand down to squeeze Callum's ass. Gripping the muscle, Graeme thrust his hips forcefully, grinding his dick all over Callum's.

My heart pounded in my chest and clit. Unable to help myself, I reached between my legs and stroked. Another orgasm hovered, but I didn't want to come just yet so I avoided my clit. I slid my fingers up and down my folds, feeling wicked and lush as the sounds of my wetness mingled with the men's grunts.

Callum pulled his mouth from Graeme's and gave me a look hot enough to set the bed on fire. "You can touch, witchling, but don't even think about coming."

"I won't," I breathed, spreading my legs and rubbing in wide circles. He and Graeme watched for a moment, then Callum took their dicks in one of his hands and stroked them together.

"Fuck," Graeme muttered, looking down at their cocks pressed snugly together in Callum's fist. Graeme rocked his hips, his muscular ass flexing as his breath hitched and a flush spread over his cheeks. He'd been handsome before. Now, he was unspeakably hot with his shorter hair and his beard hugging his firm jaw.

A possessive thrill shot through me. My mind flashed back to the Great Hall at Castle Beithir, where I'd watched King Cormac with Niall and Isolde and wondered how it would feel to belong to two people. Now I knew it was more than that. I didn't just belong to Callum and Graeme. They belonged to me, too...and to each other. Life was never going to be boring.

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:03 am

Right now, it was scorching. As my clit ached and more moisture soaked my fingers, I wasn't sure I could keep my promise to Callum. My hips lifted, and moans spilled from my lips as I battled the orgasm that threatened to crash over me.

As quickly as they'd come together, the men broke apart. Callum crooked a finger at me.

"Come here, witchling," he commanded, his voice low and husky. I was still panting from watching him and Graeme together, but I immediately sat up and crawled down the bed.

"No," Callum said firmly. "Close but not quite, lass." He pointed to the floor. "Down there. Get on your hands and knees and crawl to us like the good little pet you are."

I hesitated for a moment. Then I sank to my hands and knees and crawled toward them. Never in my life had I been so aware of my body. The ancient floorboards scraped my palms and knees. My breasts swayed, my nipples puckered tight and buzzing with arousal. My hair hung over my shoulders, the ends teasing my breasts. I could only imagine what I looked like from behind, with my drenched, swollen sex peeking between my thighs.

Flames danced in the men's eyes as they watched me. Their erections strained from their hips. A thick bead of moisture clung to Graeme's slit. As I drew near, my mind filled with a vision of me stopping at his feet and licking it off.

"Do it," Callum said softly, and he reached over and gripped Graeme's shaft and held it at the ready for me. Graeme and I moaned in unison, and we locked eyes as I rose

to my knees and traced my tongue around the tip of his cock.

“That’s a good lass,” he rumbled, his dragon moving through his eyes.

Callum cupped a hand under my chin. His horns were more visible than ever as he feathered his thumb along my jaw. “Do you want us both, Georgina?”

Even in my lust-addled state, I didn’t miss his use of my full name. Callum called me everything but Georgina, which told me he wanted to be absolutely certain I was on board with what was about to happen. He wasn’t content to rely on his gifts. He wanted to hear it directly from me.

“Yes,” I said without hesitation. “I want both of you inside me. Please. I want it so much.”

His lips curved. “Then crawl back to the bed so I can see my pussy.” As a gasp parted my lips, he tipped my chin higher. “Just now, you were wondering how it looks peeking between your thighs. Crawl back to the bed and I’ll tell you.”

Wild, dizzying lust shot through me. Aware the men watched my every move, I turned around and crawled. The journey back was almost too hot to endure with my flushed sex dripping and my clit aching so fiercely I had to bite my lip to keep from crying out. But it was everything I wanted, and Callum knew it.

His hands lifted me as I reached the bed, and he guided me onto my knees and forearms with my ass high in the air. The bed dipped as he climbed in after me. He slid a hand between my thighs, and I moaned as his fingers spread my sex. He tugged upward, and I arched my back as he pulled my pussy lips wide open.

“Your beautiful little cunt is so wet,” he rasped. “Such a sweet, drenched pussy.”

“Please, Callum,” I moaned into the bed, my voice so breathy I couldn’t be sure he heard me. “Please fuck me.”

“With pleasure,” he said, his accent thickening. His thumb teased my entrance, stirring my juices. “But not here, Georgie mine. Not tonight.” He drew my body’s moisture up to the crack of my ass and rubbed his thumb around my anus. “I’ll be here tonight, taking this pretty hole.”

The bed dipped again, and then Graeme moved in front of me and assumed the position I’d occupied against the pillows. He held Callum’s bottle of lube, and he poured a liberal amount into his palm and stroked it over his thrusting shaft.

Callum’s amused voice sounded behind me. “I take it you’re a fan of lube, Graeme?”

“I don’t know what being a fan means,” Graeme said, “but if it means I like this slick stuff, the answer is yes.” He looked at me and pumped his dick. “Come sit down, lass. Get me nice and wet.”

“Finally,” I breathed, and both men laughed as I scrambled forward and straddled Graeme’s thighs. He positioned his cock at my entrance, and he held my gaze as I sank down. He was huge, but I was so turned on that I took him without pain. Even so, I bit my lip as his dick filled me up, stretching me to the brink and finally nudging my womb.

“Georgie,” he rasped, wonder blooming in his eyes. He smoothed his hands up my sides to my breasts, weighing them in his palms before stroking back down to touch a single fingertip to my engorged clit. As I shuddered and cried out, his voice went hoarse. “You’re so tight, lass. The way you’re gripping me...” He shook his head like he couldn’t believe his luck. “Damn.”

The buzzing, heady, powerful feeling flooded me once more. He was an

accomplished warrior—dominating and ruthless—but I had weapons of my own. I could bring him to his knees without lifting a finger. There was power in that. I squeezed my pussy hard around his dick, and his nostrils flared wide.

“Georgie...” he said through clenched teeth.

“What?” I asked innocently, borrowing a page from Callum’s book. I rolled my hips in an experimental thrust, and Graeme sucked in a breath.

“You’re being wicked with me.”

Callum chuckled as he moved forward and snagged the lube next to Graeme’s knee. “That’s a spanking offense, witchling.”

Nerves prickled over my skin as he disappeared behind me. A second later, the bottle cap clicked open. I tried to make my voice light as I said, “Hopefully not tonight.”

He put a warm hand on my shoulder and pushed me forward until I sank to my forearms on Graeme’s chest. “Not tonight,” Callum affirmed. He smoothed his palm down my back and kept going, running a gentle hand over one of my cheeks. “I’ve got just one use for this bottom tonight.”

My throat went dry. When I tried to look over my shoulder, Graeme grasped my chin.

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:03 am

“You’ve got nothing to worry about, mo leannan. The lad won’t hurt you.” He turned his hand and ran his thumb across my bottom lip, and his eyes went tender. “It’s only pleasure you’ll be having.”

My heart squeezed. “What do those words mean? Mo leannan?”

“Lover.” He spread his legs wider beneath me, and I felt Callum get into position. Graeme continued stroking my mouth as Callum brushed something wet and warm down my crack. His touch was gentle—and just as pleasurable as when he touched my pussy. But it was also...different. Forbidden and deeply intimate. As he teased and stroked, every slick swipe echoed in my sex. Within seconds, I was gasping against Graeme’s thumb. When he pushed it between my lips, I moaned and sucked hard.

Callum stroked up my cleft. Immediately, I missed his probing finger, and I thrust my ass higher in demand. His low, pleased chuckle drifted over me, and he swooped down to my hole and pushed a slow, gentle finger into my ass.

My muscles clenched involuntarily. I moaned around Graeme’s thumb. My pussy rippled around his dick, and I started rocking before I was even aware what I was doing.

“More?” Callum murmured, twisting his finger inside me.

I nodded frantically, not willing to release Graeme’s thumb. I didn’t want to do anything to stop the flow of pleasure. My breasts dragged over Graeme’s chest, my nipples as hard and sharp as diamonds. My pussy throbbed around his cock, and an

exquisite pressure built in my ass.

Callum withdrew a bit. When he pushed back inside, I could tell he'd added a second finger. A burn spread around my rim, and I whimpered as I stilled, giving myself a second to adjust.

"You're doing so well," Callum said. "Sit up a bit, witchling." As soon as I did, Graeme reached a hand between our bodies and stroked my clit with skillful fingers.

"Oh fuck," I said, releasing Graeme's thumb. I started rocking again as lust frazzled through me. "Oh fuck, oh fuck, oh fuck." I didn't realize the burn had faded until Callum began thrusting his fingers.

"So good, Georgie," he crooned. "Opening up for me like a good lass. There you go. Just a wee bit more."

I moaned in response, lost in the sensations flooding my ass and pussy. Dimly, I registered that Graeme had sat up higher and placed his free hand on my hip. Still stroking my clit, he began to thrust, pumping his hips up and driving his dick deeper inside me. I braced my hands on his shoulders and moved with him, my body caught between his dick and Callum's fingers.

Lust coiled tight inside me. I let my head fall back as I worked my body over the twin points of pleasure. A second later, Callum's fingers disappeared, and something much bigger prodded my hole.

"Slow down a little, lass," he said in my ear. As I obeyed, he put his hand over Graeme's. Together, they held me steady as Callum pushed his dick inside me.

For one tense moment, panic gripped me. Then Callum slid his other hand around my body. Forming his fingers in a downward V, he pulled my labia taut, exposing my

engorged clit. Graeme went to work right away, rubbing and stroking. I was absolutely soaked, and each circuit smacked loudly.

Pleasure roared back. I sagged forward, my gaze on the men's fingers working magic between my legs. "Oh god... Oh god, keep going."

Callum's stubble scraped my shoulder as he kissed the side of my neck. His chest rumbled against my back. "Yeah?" He pushed forward, lodging his dick deeper in my ass. "Does that feel good, darlin'? Two dicks inside you? Filling every inch of you?"

"Yes," I gasped. Gods, he was right. They crowded every part of me.

"Do you want to come all over us, lass? Your pretty pussy squirting and your tight hole wringing my come from my cock?"

"Gods, Callum," I gasped. Only he could make me blush while I was impaled on two dicks.

He pushed forward again, and I felt his balls nestle snugly against my ass. "Fuck," he grunted. "I'm all the way inside you, Georgie. Do you feel it?"

"Yes," I moaned, rocking harder.

"I feel it," Graeme said in a strained voice. "I feel you, lad."

I didn't think it was possible for things to get any hotter, but Graeme's words lit a new fire inside me. So far, the men had exercised iron control. But as they started to move, they both shuddered and cried out. Through some unspoken communication, they fell into a slow, sexy grind. As Callum pulled out, Graeme thrust up. When Graeme withdrew, Callum surged forward. They went on like that, fucking me in tandem, their cocks meeting and sliding over each other inside me.

My head fell back onto Callum's shoulder, and I moaned loudly as Graeme leaned forward and took one of my nipples into his mouth. He sucked and flicked even as he pumped his hips up. Callum cupped my other breast, his strong fingers kneading my pliant flesh as he nuzzled my neck.

"You're so good, Georgie," he murmured. "So fucking sexy." His voice went low and rough. "When we're done, I should make you crawl on the floor for the rest of the night just so I can see your pretty holes leaking me and Graeme. Would you like that, love? Crawling back and forth between us so we can see your pink cunt and gorgeous hole smeared with our come."

I couldn't speak. Couldn't do anything but dig my fingers into Graeme's shoulders and ride the waves of pleasure that built so high I worried they might actually destroy me.

Callum's sweaty chest slid against my back. He seized my waist and pounded hard, his hips slapping my ass and his cock driving into me over and over. Graeme cursed and matched Callum's pace, and the three of us descended into something wild and primitive. The pleasure soared and soared. It was going to crush me, but I wasn't sure I cared.

"Come," Callum growled, and the wave crashed down. I went rigid as something inside me snapped and flung me into a million pieces. My vision wavered. Callum grunted and thrust hard, flooding my ass with wet heat. A second later, Graeme stiffened and pumped his release deep inside me.

We collapsed in a tangle of limbs on the sweat-soaked sheets. For a minute, I couldn't move as I struggled to catch my breath. I stared at the beamed ceiling, imagining little pieces of myself fluttering down.

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:03 am

“Holy shite,” Callum gasped, rolling onto his back next to me. “That was intense.”

I nodded, unable to form words just yet. On my other side, Graeme propped himself on one elbow and looked down at me with a serious expression in his pale blue eyes.

“How are you, lass? Was it...okay?”

I stuffed my exhaustion away and sat up. He followed suit and I leaned in, cupping his face in my hands and kissing him deeply. I felt his jolt of shock at first, but then his muscles relaxed and he returned my kiss with equal passion. As we eased apart, I traced my fingers along his jawline. “It was more than okay,” I said. “It was perfect.”

He ducked his head, a grin breaking across his face, and it was so adorable I wanted to swoop him up and cuddle him. But he was nearly seven feet tall and more than twice my weight, so I settled for leaning back in and kissing his cheek.

“Ahem,” Callum said behind me. When I turned, he lounged against the pillows with his legs crossed at the ankle. He pointed to his face. “You missed a spot, lass.”

I rolled my eyes, but I knew my grin matched Graeme’s as I leaned forward and pecked him. He grabbed me around the waist and dragged me onto his lap.

“We need a word better than perfect,” he said, his green eyes twinkling. “You’re the nerd. You can think of one.”

“I’m not a nerd!”

“Uh-huh.” He looked at Graeme, and the mischief in his eyes slid into something more heated. “It’s early yet. We should go down to the caldarium and clean up so we can get each other all dirty again.”

“We should sleep,” I said. “We have no idea what we’ll face when we approach the Oracle tomorrow.”

“You worry too much.”

“You don’t worry enough.”

Callum looked at Graeme. “You’re the tiebreaker. What’s it going to be?” Callum tipped his head toward me. “Boring bath and bed?” He winced when I punched his shoulder. “Or bath, delicious fuck, another bath, and then bed?”

Graeme looked out the window. When he turned back, his gaze drifted down my body. “If we move quickly…”

“Ha!” Callum squeezed my waist. “I’ll wash your back, witchling.”

“You’re impossible,” I said, but as Graeme rose and tugged me from the bed, I was glad Callum won.

Chapter Twenty-One

CALLUM

“I’m not sure how I feel about this,” I grumbled.

Georgie and I stood in the castle courtyard with the morning sunlight streaming around us. We waited for Graeme, who was banking the fire in the Great Hall before

we left for the Oracle. A light snow fell, but the weather was calm. Graeme expected an easy flight north. He also expected me to get there by riding on his back.

“Does it really bother you that much?” Georgie asked as she tucked her chin and closed the top fastening of her barasta. After we’d returned from the caldarium last night, she spent the evening chanting under her breath, reinforcing the spells in the embroidery and generally making the atmosphere in the tower chamber creepy as hell.

Fastening closed, she looked up. “Callum?”

I grunted as I stared at her breasts.

She grasped my jaw and forced my gaze up. As she studied me, her purple eyes widened. “Oh wow, this really does bother you.”

I tugged from her grip and huffed. “It’s emasculating.”

Her brow furrowed. “But...” Suddenly, pink tinged her cheeks.

“What?” I asked, but I had an inkling where her thoughts had strayed. I folded my arms. “You think because I bottom for Graeme that I should have no problem climbing on his back when he’s in dragon form.”

“I...” The pink deepened. “No! I mean, I didn’t mean—”

“You’re cute when you’re flustered,” I said, grinning.

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:03 am

She sighed, looking slightly frazzled. “It just never occurred to me that it would upset you this much. I don’t feel like I give up any power when I fly with you.”

“That’s because you don’t have wings.” I had no problem with Graeme’s dominance in the bedroom, although I had elaborate, wide-ranging plans to show him all the pleasures that came with being mated to an incubus. But there was a difference between ceding control to Graeme in bed and allowing him to carry me when I was perfectly capable of flying on my own.

But this was a unique situation. Worse, I’d proved I wasn’t capable of flying to the Oracle. The memory of laboring under the weight of thickening ice, of pitting my dwindling strength against the wind as I tried to keep Georgie on my back, was seared into my mind.

I couldn’t risk her safety again. And I wouldn’t do anything to hurt her chances of fulfilling her quest. Graeme’s dragon was solid ice and impervious to the frost. He was also a battle-hardened warrior. And I was...good at sex. Not exactly the kind of companion one wanted for a dangerous magical quest.

Georgie’s frown deepened. “What is it?”

I shook off my negative thoughts. “Nothing, witchling.” I raked a deliberate gaze down her barasta and tight leather pants. “I was just thinking it’s going to be uncomfortable flying to the Oracle when you’ve got me all hot and bothered.”

She smiled. “I’m pretty sure that’s your permanent state of being.”

“It is when you’re around. Leather-wrapped witch is one of my favorite things.”

She looked down at her pants. “I wore these so it would be easier to grip Graeme’s scales.”

I sighed. “You’re only making me harder.”

Her laughter rang out across the courtyard just as Graeme emerged from the main keep. He wore a bemused expression as he came to us.

“What’s so funny?”

Georgie slanted me a look. “Just Callum being Callum.”

“I think I can guess what it was about, then,” Graeme said.

I smiled, then gave him the same thorough perusal I’d given Georgie. “You look hot.” He blushed as expected, and I sighed again. “Shy bears are another one of my favorite things.”

Confusion clouded his eyes. “Bears?”

“I’ll explain later,” I murmured.

Georgie took pity on him and lifted her backpack from the ground. “I have your clothes here, Graeme. So you have something to wear after you shift.”

“Thank you, lass,” he said. Then he glanced at the sky. “We should leave right away. There’s no guarantee this weather will hold.”

Georgie sobered instantly. “Callum and I are ready when you are.”

Graeme nodded, then strode to the far side of the courtyard. In one beat, he twisted into smoke, shedding his clothes. Another beat, and he burst into his monstrous, pale blue dragon. Ice scattered across the weathered flagstones as he shook himself, his horned tail striking sparks. Blue flames flickered in his nostrils as he swung his head toward Georgie and me. His inner eyelids flashed across his pale eyes, briefly obscuring his vertical pupils. He snorted, then lowered one massive wing to the ground in invitation.

“Shotgun!” I called out, jogging toward him.

Georgie made an angry sound as she hurried after me. “Callum!”

I spun and let her catch up. “I’m teasing, witchling. You sit wherever you want.” Graeme waited patiently as we mounted. When we were settled between the horns on his shoulders, I patted one of his icy scales. “Ready, big guy.”

He spread his wings, raining more ice onto the stones. Then he gathered his haunches under him and shot into the air. Instantly, wind whipped in my face. I gripped his horns as the steep angle of our ascent flung me backward. Graeme’s frigid body seeped through my pants and chilled my skin. Beside me, Georgie hunched low, her dark hair streaming behind her like a pennant. Graeme’s frozen wings beat the air, carrying us higher. The courtyard and the White Gate fell away, and then Gelhella spread below us.

Within seconds, the Oracle beckoned a bright, shimmering blue. Graeme sped toward it, slicing through the sky like a stone loosed from a slingshot. For the first time, I understood the power and might of the Brotherhood. And I realized just how formidable—and modest—Graeme Abernathy was. He flew at speeds I could only dream of, his icy body shredding the air like a hot knife going through butter. Every pump of his wings sent us hurtling toward the Oracle, until my vision filled with its blue glow. A few more seconds of mind-bending speed, and the glow enveloped us.

The air rippled, and I knew we were close. Power hummed in my ears. A frozen mountain range appeared below us, its peaks rising from the snow like jagged, white teeth.

I looked at Georgie, who leaned over Graeme's scales with grim determination stamped on her face. A sense of helplessness gripped me. I'd teased her about solving riddles or playing chess with the Oracle, but the truth was I had no idea what to expect from a mystical, all-knowing entity. Anger joined the helplessness as I thought of the elders of her house putting her in this position. She'd lost her parents. Her father had burdened her with an ominous prediction. And then the very people who were supposed to guide her had saddled her with an impossible task.

But I'd wager they hadn't anticipated fate matching Georgie with a pair of dragons. Wicked satisfaction spread through me as I pictured showing up at House Blackwood and riling a bunch of tight-arse witches. With Georgie's permission, of course.

The Oracle's light swelled. The air itself seemed to shudder, and the sky went black as night. The wind cut out abruptly, like a giant had thrown a switch. My nape tingled as magic rushed around us. Graeme dipped suddenly, and we entered what looked like a hollowed-out volcano. Its soaring walls glittered with ice. The Oracle's light beamed everywhere. Power brushed my skin.

"It's a caldera," Georgie breathed, wonder in her voice as she gazed at the twinkling walls.

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:03 am

I reached over and squeezed her knee. Leave it to my witchling to know the proper term.

Graeme slowed, then stretched his wings wide and spiraled downward in a slow, graceful descent. The blue surrounded us, its soft glow pulsing like a slow, steady heartbeat. Snowflakes hung suspended in the air. They melted as we brushed against them, only to reappear after we passed. Ahead of us, a thick curtain of mist descended from the sky like a waterfall. It spread across one side of the caldera as if a god had draped a blanket of snow and diamonds over the edge of a massive bed.

Georgie gasped as Graeme took us down, her lovely features gilded with blue light.

And it struck me—the air was utterly still, without even the hint of a breeze. The Oracle of the North Wind was supposedly the most powerful, volatile current in the world. But there was nothing volatile about this place, where everything floated like a slow-moving dream.

Graeme touched down on a pristine sheet of snow. I helped Georgie off his back, and we waited as he shifted and dressed.

I grabbed Georgie's hand and squeezed. "Are you all right?" I asked in a low voice.

"Yes," she whispered, gazing around. "It's beautiful."

Graeme gestured to the curtain of mist. "It's this way." He hesitated. "I have to warn you, lass, the Oracle doesn't speak to everyone."

“I know,” Georgie said, her face solemn. “I’m prepared for that to be the case. But I have to try.”

He nodded, then led us across the snow. Our boots didn’t crunch, and we left no footsteps. The curtain loomed ahead. My heart thumped harder as we neared the sheet of white. What if nothing happened? I wasn’t sure I could stand to see Georgie’s hopes crushed so unjustly.

We kept moving, and for a moment I thought Graeme intended to lead us through the mist. But when we were about fifty feet away from it, the curtain suddenly disappeared.

Graeme stopped, his body instantly tense. Georgie and I stumbled to a halt beside him. My heart raced as I stared up at what the curtain had been hiding.

Two icicles as thick and tall as Manhattan skyscrapers thrust from the ground. Between them, a tempest raged. Blue lightning fired over swirling, writhing wind, which soared to the very top of the towering icicles. The wind’s howling was muted, as if it was trapped behind a sheet of glass. The air around us remained still, but now it carried the sharp scent of ozone mixed with the bite of snow and ice.

Georgie’s expression was captivated as she stared up at the seething mass. Her hands twitched at her sides as if she longed to touch the roiling force.

The air thickened. Tongues of energy licked over me. Power swelled, tightening my chest and pushing against my eardrums. As it probed and explored, I realized it wasn’t simply raw power or a natural force.

It was intelligence.

The wind didn’t have eyes, but it peered at us. Waiting.

Graeme looked at Georgie and spoke in a voice so low it was barely audible. “You can go first if you want, lass. It’s your choice.”

“What do I do?” she breathed, staring wide-eyed at the wall of wind.

“Walk forward but don’t cross the pillars. The Oracle revealed itself, which means it’s likely to listen to your request. State your petition and wait for it to respond.”

She took a deep breath and stepped forward. “I—”

BOOM.

Georgie released a startled scream as the snow beneath us trembled. Graeme and I grabbed her and tugged her swiftly backward.

“What’s happening?” I shouted at Graeme.

He shook his head, his features pinched with worry as he stared up at the Oracle. “I don’t know. It’s never done this.”

“Should we leave?”

Before he could reply, a gap appeared in the wind directly in front of us. Lightning crackled as it expanded into a doorway. Mist swirled and coalesced into a figure.

I angled my body in front of Georgie’s. Alarms blared in my head, and a sense of panic seized me, urging me to find a weapon or shift to shadow. To grab my mates and run from this place.

Blue light blazed around the figure like an aura. Then it winked out, revealing a handsome man with vibrant red hair and soft, soulful brown eyes. His brown, quilted

coat and dark pants looked like a costume from a period film or a museum display.

Graeme sucked in a sharp breath.

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:03 am

Georgie clutched at my arm. My heart knocked against my ribs as I put my hand over hers. I didn't have to ask the man's identity. I knew.

I'd know one of my kind anywhere.

But this was all wrong. Georgie had said it herself. Ghosts were a thing of the mortal world.

"Hamish," Graeme croaked, falling to his knees.

Georgie tightened her grip on my arm.

Graeme's dead mate stepped from the doorway and onto the snow. He advanced toward us, his steps as soundless as ours had been. The helplessness I'd felt during the flight returned. My instincts screamed at me to take my mates and go. My gut told me something was wrong. But I didn't know anything about the Oracle. Was this part of its plan?

Hamish stopped a dozen feet away. He looked down at Graeme and spoke in a deep voice colored with the Highlands. "You stopped searching, my love."

Graeme paled. His mouth worked, but no sound emerged. Finally, he rasped, "You told me to."

The blue light around us swelled, and for a second I could have sworn Hamish's expression flickered between sorrow and rage. But then his mouth trembled, and his eyes filled with tears.

“A test of your vows,” he rasped. “And you failed it.”

Graeme swayed on his knees like he’d been struck.

Hamish reached both hands up and unlaced the front of his coat. He pulled the two halves apart, and my stomach dropped to my knees.

In the center of his chest where his heart should have been, there was only a hole. It went all the way through his body, showing the wall of wind behind him.

“You betrayed our vows, Graeme,” Hamish said. Blood began to trickle from the corners of his mouth. “You ripped my heart out the same as that icicle.”

Chapter Twenty-Two

GEORGIE

My heart pounded painfully as I watched more blood pour from Hamish’s mouth. Behind him, the North Wind boiled and seethed—a tumult holding itself in check.

“I’m sorry!” Graeme cried out, rocking forward on his knees. He braced his hands on the snow like he was prepared to crawl to Hamish. “Forgive me.”

Callum’s bicep was tight under my hand. His face was a mask of pain as he stared at Graeme kneeling in the snow.

Hamish stood silently, blood flowing down his chin in a gruesome mimicry of the waterfall of wind behind him. The hole in his chest was large and disturbingly smooth.

Graeme’s voice flowed through my memory.

“I found Hamish at the base of the tower with an icicle through his heart. He was already dead.”

The tower.

The battlements.

“The battlements were broken, like he’d slipped or maybe fought with someone.”

My heart pumped faster as I let my gaze wander down Hamish’s body to the snow at his feet. He’d left no footprints when he stepped from the Oracle.

“There was only a single trail of footprints.”

When I’d rushed to the top of the North Tower after I heard a man’s cry on the wind, the line of prints had run all the way to the battlements before plunging over the side.

Air was so much more powerful than people knew. Emotions traveled on it. Passion turned it electric.

Strong memories could linger in it.

Tragedies could linger in it.

I'd seen Hamish's fall.

Except...I couldn't have.

"Hamish didn't fall from the North Tower. He fell from the South Tower on the other side of the castle."

My heart pounded harder. Blood rushed in my ears. I couldn't always control the air, but it had never, never lied to me. Strong memories could linger in the wind, but they couldn't change the past.

The hair on my nape lifted, and my father's voice whispered in my mind.

A dark wind is coming, Georgie. Only you can harness it.

"I'm sorry!" Graeme sobbed. He gazed up at Hamish with tears running down his face. "I didn't know... I didn't know..."

Blood soaked Hamish's jacket, turning it black. Through the wound in his chest, the wind raged like a wild animal caught in a trap. And for one brief, startling moment, the wind met my gaze.

And held it.

My breath caught. The wind didn't lie. And my father, one of the greatest air witches

to ever live, had been right. Immortals didn't leave ghosts behind.

I stepped around Callum and pinned my gaze on Hamish. "You're lying."

Behind me, Callum tensed. I couldn't see it. No, I felt it in the air. I'd always been able to feel the things that moved in the currents, even when I couldn't catch them.

Hamish flicked his brown eyes to me. His blood-stained teeth flashed white between his lips. "Cease, witch. You have no power here."

The Oracle raged behind him. Through him. I lifted my hands to the towering wall of wind. "Maybe not," I said. "But there is other power here." The same sense of wonder I'd felt when we descended into the caldera spread through me again. "So beautiful," I murmured, and the faintest breeze caressed my palms. Just a fraction of power, but it took my breath away.

I lowered my hands and turned to Hamish. "You desecrate this place with your lies."

"Cease!" he barked, his voice suddenly deeper. Darker. The air around him rippled. It was quick. Subtle. Nothing a mundane would have noticed.

But I knew air.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Graeme staring at me from the ground. But I couldn't look at him. I couldn't bear to see my big, gentle, broken-hearted mate humbling himself before a fraud.

I pointed at Hamish. "You're lying. No true mate would terrorize the one he loves with blood and anguish."

A dark wind is coming, Georgie. Only you can harness it.

Hamish's features contorted with rage. "You stupid bitch!" he screamed, bloody spittle flying from his lips.

"It's coming!" my father shouted across time and space.

I see it, Father. I'd always been able to catch the wind, but I could never hold it. I was a magnet for air. It liked me. But it always got away from me. I was the outfielder, glove in hand, ready to catch the fly ball. But I could never keep it.

I wasn't meant to.

I was meant to let it go.

Hamish flew at me.

I flung my hands toward the Oracle and screamed, "COME TO ME!"

A thousand panes of glass shattered.

Wind burst from between the pillars of ice. It roared through the caldera, brushed my hands, and slipped free. A whiplash of frozen current knocked me off my feet and hurled me backward. Strong arms caught me, and I crashed to the snow with Callum's shout in my ears.

“I’ve got you, witchling! Stay down!”

Callum covered my body with his as the icy tempest of the North Wind raged around us with the voice of a thousand hurricanes. Callum lurched to the side suddenly, and he jerked something into us.

“Got you, too,” he gasped, a sob of relief in his voice. I turned my head and locked eyes with Graeme. Saw his tear-streaked face. His beard. His sad, serious eyes and beloved features. He wrapped an arm around Callum, and the three of us huddled on the ground as the North Wind howled its rage.

But its anger wasn’t for us.

As soon as I thought it, the wind rolled itself back. My heart thundered in my ears. For a second, nobody moved. Then Callum lifted off me. His shocked gasp brought my head up, and disbelief and confusion mixed in my chest as I tried to figure out what I was seeing.

A short distance away, a stunningly beautiful woman with long platinum hair sprawled on the ground. Her icy blue gown spread around her. A spiraling, twisting column of snow and blue lightning hovered above her. As I stared at it, the column shifted, forming into dozens of shapes and forms in rapid succession. A tall man with a long, white beard. A snowy faun. A woman with terrible eyes. A small child dressed in brilliant white robes. The column was all things and nothing. It was everything. Timeless and formless and powerful beyond comprehension.

COME, it beckoned, its soundless voice wrapping around me and pulling me to my

feet. On either side of me, Callum and Graeme stood too. The three of us looked at each other, then walked to the Oracle.

The woman on the ground gasped as she stared up at us. Her body jerked, and I realized the North Wind was holding her. When her bright blue eyes fixed on me, they narrowed with so much malice, a shiver passed through me.

Graeme made a choking sound. “Circe...”

The woman drew a shuddering breath. “You were supposed to be mine.”

Graeme paled. “What?”

Her mouth tightened. “He never loved you like I did.” She released a short, angry sob. “I’ve waited so long for you. I’ve done so much for us. I captured the ice and the wind! I’ve held the Oracle for over ten centuries while I waited for you to come to your senses. And yet you still refuse to see!”

“What are you...?” Graeme swayed. Then a sudden stillness stole over him. “What did you do for us?” His features darkened, something terrible and dangerous filling his eyes. “What did you do to Hamish?”

“I pushed him,” she said. “I did it for us!”

Graeme growled. “You killed him.”

“No,” she insisted, a pleading look in her eyes. “I only pushed him, Graeme. And then I showed him why he needed to die.”

Chapter Twenty-Three

GRAEME

I stared at the Queen of the Winter Court and tried to wrap my head around what she was telling me.

My heart thudded painfully, but I welcomed it. I wanted to feel.

A warm hand slipped into mine. “Look,” Georgie whispered, gesturing to the spiraling, twisting Oracle.

It glowed a bright, powerful blue...and then a familiar scene appeared.

The South Tower of the White Gate.

“Graeme!” Hamish called out, appearing in the frame.

My gut clenched, and I understood what I was seeing. The North Wind was showing me the past. I was going to watch Hamish die.

Georgie tightened her grip on my hand. On my other side, Callum wrapped his fingers around mine.

“Come out, you arse!” Hamish called again, humor and exasperation in his voice. The midnight sun wove bright fingers through his hair, setting the strands on fire. He walked toward the battlements, leaving a trail of footsteps. Without warning, they shattered, flinging snow and stone into the air.

“What the fuck!” Hamish exclaimed, stumbling back. He recovered and rushed forward.

No. My chest tightened. Horror filled me, and I wanted to squeeze my eyes shut, but I

forced myself to keep watching.

Hamish stopped at the edge of the broken battlements and leaned over, his head tipped down as he gazed at the ground. An icicle—long, round, and deadly sharp—appeared out of thin air behind him. An invisible hand plunged it into his back and pitched him violently forward. He bellowed. Twisted.

And fell.

The North Wind shifted, rippling and swirling. Its blue light pulsed again, and the scene changed. Now, Hamish lay on his back in the snow at the base of the tower. He blinked, clearly stunned, as he roused from the impact. His heart dangled from a long, thin thread of pink tissue that protruded from a gaping hole in his chest. The icicle still speared his heart, which had ceased to beat.

But it wasn't enough to kill him. Not an immortal. Certainly not a dragon.

"Shite," he said weakly, his face tinged green as he stared at his ruined chest. He frowned, then turned his head.

The scene panned slowly to the right, revealing what lay in the snow next to him.

Me.

I stared at myself lying on the ground, my head severed from my body. My eyes gazed sightlessly at the Arctic sky. My expression was empty. The stump of my neck was crusted with frost. My body was frozen solid, my lips blue and cold.

"Graeme!" Hamish screamed, the sound hoarse and wrenching.

Abruptly, the vision wavered, cutting off his cry, and I realized the North Wind had spared me the agony of watching my mate's dying moments. The scene skipped, revealing Hamish sprawled dead on top of me with tracks of frozen tears on his face. Suddenly, my body under him shifted into Circe, who had glamored herself to look

like me. She shoved Hamish off her, stood, and straightened her gown.

The scene shifted. Now, Circe strode across the snow, her skirts sweeping a path through the ice. She entered the caldera and lifted her hands. Wind screamed toward her, but she threw it back, her power fueled by madness. She harnessed the North Wind—and imprisoned it between pillars of ice.

The scene skipped forward, and I knew what came next.

I saw myself stumble into the caldera, my hands stained with Hamish's blood. I lurched across the snow he never got a chance to cross and went to my knees before the Oracle he never got to petition. Instead of asking it how to save our females from death, I pleaded with it to bring my mate back to life.

The curtain of mist was silent. The Oracle didn't grant me an audience. But it did sometimes. I knew that. I knew that it might speak to me one day. Maybe it would hear my petition if I served it. Protected it. I didn't have much time. My mate was dead. I would follow shortly, my soul consumed by sorrow. I had to hurry.

Again, the scene skipped.

Now, I stood before the Grand Master of the Brotherhood, my eyes wide as I stared at my bloody heart in his hand. Ice crept over the pulsing, steaming organ, arresting my sorrow and binding me to the Oracle I'd pledged to serve.

Binding me to a lie.

The scene blinked out of sight, and the North Wind twisted into a column of icy wind once more. At my sides, Georgie and Callum vibrated with rage.

But their anger was nothing compared to mine as I turned my gaze to Circe. "You

killed my mate,” I said, wrath spreading inside me.

Tears filled her eyes. “I did it for us, Graeme. You were supposed to be mine.”

“What the fuck are you talking about?” I demanded. “You barely know me. I met you a handful of times as a boy—”

“Yes!” she said, an odd, unsettling smile spreading across her face. Her eyes were large and overly bright. “And you were unforgettable. My people don’t wed halflings, but I knew you were mine from the moment I met you. I sensed your strength and your power. You wield the elements of winter the same as I.” She swallowed, and her gaze filled with something yearning and desperate. “Don’t you see it? You took the vows of the Brotherhood so fate could bring us together.”

“I took vows to find a way to bring Hamish back to me.”

Her white brows drew sharply together. “That’s not possible, and you know it. You needed time to accept how perfect we are for each other. But your wait is over. We can be together now. I’m your match, Graeme. I’m your fate.”

Shock, anger, and disbelief swirled in my chest. Memories of the Winter Court flooded my brain. Hamish and I had spoken with Circe. We’d asked her to help us stop our females from dying. She’d sent us away.

And then she’d tracked us down and murdered my mate. She tricked him. Made my bold, loving Hamish think I was dead. She’d broken his body and crushed his heart.

“I’m going to kill you,” I told her. “But first, I want you to look at something.” I lifted Georgie and Callum’s hands, which were still entwined with mine. “These are my mates. My most precious gifts. Fate delivered them to me, and they delivered me from the living death you condemned me to endure for over a thousand years. I love

them with all my heart. I want you to know that before you die.”

Circe’s eyes went wide. For a moment, genuine pain shone in the sapphire depths. Then her expression changed, shifting into something so dark and malevolent I almost took a step back.

“Precious gifts?” she asked silkily. Her eyes slid to Georgie. “A witch who can’t control her element”—she looked at Callum—“and the weakest, most worthless kind of dragon halfling.”

Callum stiffened.

Circe’s lips curved in a cruel smile. “An incubus,” she drawled. “Among the fae, we keep them as slaves.” She raked a dismissive gaze down Callum’s body. “I’m sure the boy is good for pleasure, but his kind has little else to offer.”

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:03 am

Georgie made a low, angry sound. The North Wind hovered, its form shifting and reforming into various shapes. A dozen faces flashed across the lightning-streaked currents.

Callum released me and stepped closer to Circe. My gut clenched, and I reached out to haul him back, but Georgie put a staying hand on my arm.

“You’re right,” Callum said softly as he stared down at Circe. “I’m good for pleasure. I understand desire better than anyone, mortal or immortal. Commoner or queen.” He knelt abruptly, his knee next to Circe’s shoulder.

“What are you doing?” she demanded. Her eyes jerked sharply, and I realized she couldn’t turn her head. The North Wind pinned her completely.

Callum’s voice was steady. Patient. “I can see your desires,” he told Circe. “I see everything. And you want Graeme so much you’ve let it consume you. But you don’t love him.”

“Yes, I do,” she hissed, her eyes turning hateful.

“No,” Callum said. “There is no love in you.” He rose and stood over her. His power shimmered around him, casting green light over the snow and Circe’s face. When he spoke, his words rang with truth. “But there is love in Graeme. I’ve seen his desires, too. I’ve seen everything he wants. Every fantasy. Every hidden, secret dream. And he never, never wanted you. And he never will. You can enslave him. You can kill everyone he loves. You can burn the world until you’re the only thing he sees. And he will never want you. Never.”

Circe blinked up at him. Then her face crumpled. She wailed, her grief climbing and swelling until her scream filled the caldera. She screamed and screamed until her voice gave out and the sound ceased. Even then, her mouth stretched open. Her eyes stared at the sky, madness in the blue depths.

Georgie stepped forward, her gaze on the North Wind. “Death can be a kindness,” she murmured.

The column shivered. For one brief moment, a woman appeared. She inclined her head.

Georgie moved next to Callum. In one swift movement, she swept her hand from the North Wind to Circe, then yanked it back sharply.

Circe gasped. Her skin shriveled, wrinkling and sticking to her bones. Then she turned to dust.

The woman in the North Wind moved forward. As she approached Georgie, she shifted into a young, smiling man with blue hair. He stopped before Georgie and bowed his head.

DAUGHTER OF THE AIR. YOU HAVE MY THANKS.

Georgie caught her breath. Her voice trembled. “You’re welcome. Um, it was nothing, really.”

The boy’s smile broadened. Then he looked at Callum, and he shifted again, forming and reforming into a woman who was somehow both old and young and every age in between. Affection danced in her eyes as she lifted her gaze to Callum’s hair. A light wind ruffled his waves, tugging a playful lock over his forehead.

“Oh,” he said, reaching up and shoving it back. “That happens a lot.”

The affection in the woman’s eyes deepened. She lowered her gaze to his chest, and the breeze sighed. PURE HEART.

Callum lowered his head, his cheeks dusted with pink.

The North Wind approached me last. By the time it reached me, tears flowed down my face. The wind didn’t take a form as it stood before me. Maybe it knew I didn’t want to see anything I couldn’t be certain was real.

“Do you know where he is?” I asked, my throat burning. “Is he...happy?”

The wind twisted and swirled, building and building and folding in on itself. For the briefest moment, I caught a glimpse of him.

Hamish.

He faced away, his red hair shining in light that came from everywhere and nowhere.

YOU CAN GO TO HIM.

I jerked my gaze to the top of the column. My heart pounded so hard I felt lightheaded.

YOU CAN GO TO HIM, the North Wind repeated. HE IS YOUR MATE.

“But...” My tears flowed faster. “I have others.”

YOUR CHOICE WAS TAKEN FROM YOU ONCE. I RETURN IT TO YOU NOW.

I looked at Hamish, at the long spill of his hair. I could go to him. Or I could stay with Georgie and Callum.

I couldn't do both.

I squeezed my eyes shut, hot tears tracking down my cheeks and into my beard. I knew how to let something go. Georgie had just shown me how.

"I love you," I whispered. When I opened my eyes, Hamish was gone.

The North Wind shivered. I RELEASE YOU FROM YOUR VOW.

My heart skipped a beat.

The wind shot into the air, whipped around the caldera, and disappeared.

Georgie and Callum turned from watching it. The three of us locked eyes.

I opened my arms as they rushed into them, and we crashed together. My nose landed in Georgie's hair. Callum's lips brushed my cheek, and I turned my head and kissed him, stroking my tongue against his. After a few breathless seconds, my lips landed on Georgie's and I tasted her tears. We stayed like that, kissing and holding each other, until Callum lifted his head.

"Um, not to ask a stupid question during an intense moment, but where did the wind go?"

"It'll be back," Georgie said. "It's been locked up for a while. It needed to stretch."

He gave her a skeptical look. "It told you that?"

“Wind is my thing, Callum. I’ve spent my whole life studying it.”

His lips curved. “Nerd.”

She rolled her eyes.

I smiled and pulled them both into another kiss.

Epilogue

GEORGIE

I emerged from the covenstead of House Blackwood and stopped short at the sight of Callum and Graeme sprawled in the seating area next to the fireplace.

Well, Callum sprawled. Graeme sat at attention, a broadsword resting over his thighs.

I blinked. “You brought swords?”

Callum stood and gave Graeme an exasperated look. “Graeme brought a sword.” He turned to a nearby table and lifted a cardboard carrier stuffed with tall, white paper cups. “I brought coffee.”

“Coffee,” I breathed, rushing forward. I snatched a cup from the carrier, popped the lid off, and inhaled. “Oh... Oh, that’s good.”

Callum looked at Graeme and smirked. “Told you my idea was better.”

“You did,” Graeme said, rising and thrusting his sword into the scabbard strapped around his waist. “Ad nauseam.”

“Bless you.”

Graeme scowled. “Ad nauseam means—”

“I know what it means, sweetheart. I just like to see you flustered.” Callum turned to me, and his expression went from teasing to anxious. “Well, witchling? What’s the verdict?”

I wanted to mess with him, but I couldn’t do that to poor Graeme. Callum could handle it. Graeme might actually storm the covenstead and challenge one of the elders to a duel. I set my coffee on the table and spread my arms. “You’re looking at the leader of House Blackwood.”

Callum whooped, lifted me, and spun me in a circle. When he set me down, Graeme took over, threading his fingers through my hair and slanting his lips across mine. He stroked his tongue deep, channeling all his love and relief into his kiss. When he pulled away at last, tears sparkled in his eyes.

“Oh, my love,” I said softly, wiping them away. They turned to tiny diamonds on my fingers, and I tucked them in the pocket of my barasta.

Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 5:03 am

Callum chuckled. “It’s so cute that you keep them.”

I gave him a look. “You dragons are shockingly casual about flinging diamonds around.”

His gaze turned heated. “You’ll have to train us, lass.”

Desire pooled between my legs and turned my voice breathless. “I think you’ve already trained me.”

He laughed again. Then he pulled me against him and tipped my chin up. “I’m proud of you, witchling. You’ll lead your house with grace and wisdom.”

My heart squeezed. “I couldn’t have done this without you.” I looked at Graeme. “Both of you.” I turned back to Callum. “I guess I should have known you two wouldn’t follow the rules and stay away for this.” As I’d predicted, the elders hadn’t been thrilled with the news of my mating. They’d banned Graeme and Callum from today’s meeting, insisting I needed to explain my failure to harness the North Wind without “interference” from “outside influences.”

Callum shrugged. “We figured it could go one of two ways. If the elders named you leader, you’d be in charge and no one could tell you what to do. If they didn’t name you leader, Graeme and I would be right here, and we could enter your coven thingie—”

“Covestead.”

“—and knock some heads together until they stopped being cocksuckers and named you leader. Either way, our witchling becomes queen, and we become your loyal subjects. The three of us go home and fuck. Everyone lives happily ever after. The end.”

“I’m not a queen,” I said, fighting back laughter. “And I can’t believe you convinced Graeme to agree to this.” I slanted my enormous, bearded mate a look. “He hates breaking rules.”

“Not when swords are involved,” Callum said. He gave Graeme a look hotter than the fire in the hearth. “He gets up to all kinds of mischief when he’s got a sword in his hand.”

Graeme shook his head, but he was obviously fighting his own smile as he turned to me. “We also came to bear witness, lass. I know we’re not exactly unbiased, but we intended to speak on your behalf in the event the elders questioned your account of what happened at the Oracle.”

I’d figured as much, and I went to him and cupped his cheek. “Thank you. I would have been proud to have you speak for me.” Fortunately, it hadn’t come to that. The death of a fae queen was always big news. Circe’s demise had rippled across the immortal world. Everyone, including the elders, knew I’d killed her using the North Wind’s help.

What they didn’t know was that I’d asked the North Wind instead of commanding it. I hadn’t harnessed it. I’d partnered with it. My whole life, I’d tried to be my parents. But now I knew my magic didn’t work that way. It didn’t bludgeon. It didn’t force. I didn’t bend the wind to my will.

I worked with it. And sometimes, I dropped it. But that was okay. I just picked it back up again.

Callum and Graeme watched me, heat and love forming little fires in their eyes.

“Ready to go home?” Graeme murmured.

“Yeah,” I said, putting my hands in theirs. We’d already decided to split our time between Scotland and Manhattan. Graeme had a lot of living to do, and Callum and I couldn’t wait to show him everything. I smiled as I tugged them into the wind.

“Oh shite, not this again,” Callum said.

I laughed as I skipped us home.

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