

LOVE'S LANDSCAPES



Don't Read in the Closet 2014

SPELL BOUND

Pelaam

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Love's Landscapes

An M/M Romance series

SPELL BOUND

By Pelaam

Introduction

The story you are about to read celebrates love, sex and romance between men. It is a product of the *Love's Landscapes* promotion sponsored by the *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* and is published as a gift to you.

What Is Love's Landscapes?

The *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* invited members to choose a photo and pen a letter asking for a short M/M romance story inspired by the image; authors from the group were encouraged to select a letter and write an original tale. The result was an outpouring of creativity that shone a spotlight on the special bond between M/M romance writers and the people who love what these authors do.

A written description of the image that inspired this story is provided along with the original request letter. If you'd like to view the photo, please feel free to join the [Goodreads M/M Romance Group](#) and visit the discussion section: *Love's Landscapes*.

No matter if you are a long-time devotee to M/M Romance, just new to the genre or fall somewhere in between, you are in for a delicious treat.

Words of Caution

This story may contain sexually explicit content and is **intended for adult readers**. It may contain content that is disagreeable or distressing to some readers. The *M/M Romance Group* strongly recommends that each reader review the General Information section before each story for story tags as well as for content warnings.

This story is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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SPELL BOUND

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Photo Description

There is a group of young men, well dressed in greys and blacks, but one stands out from the crowd. Unique, powerful, graceful, his aura sets him aside from the others. They mill together, nervous and excited, outside a three-floored mansion.

The mansion calls itself a centre for holistic studies, but the locals regard it differently.

All who attend there are branded as witches.

Story Letter

Dear Author,

There's a group of young men standing nervously outside the old mansion, but there is one that draws my attention, like a beacon of light among the crowded masses of grey, black and leather clothing.

But his light is dark, mysterious and ensnaring. I cannot avert my gaze as desire scorches in my veins, even though my mind tells me; he is of them, belonging to that strange cult and the black house with its secrets and dark sounds.

"Witches," the townspeople whisper. "Born devil spawn, they are."

But witches aren't real and I'm a Dom. I take what I want and who I want, and I want him, like I need air in my lungs.

I will have him collared, kneeling and begging for my touch, but I cannot help feel that this strange attraction for the beautiful creature goes deeper than lust, stronger than desire, and it will be the end of my reign as the Alpha Dom.

"I shall have him," and yet at those words the radio starts playing: "I Put a Spell on You" by Creedence Clearwater Revival.

Sincerely,

The Wulf

Story Info

Genre: paranormal, action/adventure

Tags: BDSM, demons, soulmates/bonded, male witch

Content Warnings: off-page abuse of secondary character

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SPELL BOUND

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Chapter 1

Mordecai smiled indulgently as his friend leaned across him for a better view of the gate and the building beyond as their minibus approached it. The gate was impressive. The metal looked silver, and depicted a dragon, wings extended.

“That’s so awesome,” Mithras whispered.

Mordecai murmured his agreement, as he looked at his friend. Mithras sometimes reminded him of an over-eager puppy. Although only a few years separated them in age, Mithras still looked, and sometimes acted, like a teenager. By comparison, Mordecai himself was often assumed to be in his late twenties, rather than just twenty-five. His birthday would be in just a few weeks.

A tingle skittered down Mordecai’s spine, as it had each time he thought about it. Not only that, but lately his dreams had darkened, and he felt an inexplicable aura of darkness closing around him. He looked out of the window to lighten his thoughts.

Although they were just an hour’s drive from the biggest, most bustling city in New Zealand, the thick, lush greenery they’d travelled through reminded him of isolated, tropical islands. They’d just driven through the village that was only a minute or two from the house, but those watching the bus hadn’t appeared welcoming.

Mordecai focused on the building, which was three stories high and dark brick. He knew that it was built around a courtyard. On either side of the three steps that led up to a columned balustrade were handrails the likes of which he’d never seen before. They were wrought iron griffins, whose metallic tails wrapped around the nearest columns. The top of each window on the ground floor had flames carved into the stone.

Surrounding each window on the second story were waves carved into the stone. On the top story, the windows had images of birds carved around them, and just beneath the roof stood a series of tikis, in red, blue and green that resembled gargoyles as they looked down. On the roof itself stood a great dragon, its wings extended as if the beast was about to take flight.

Mordecai’s feelings of unease faded. Air, water, fire, and earth, the building paid homage to the four elements, and he knew he’d feel at home there.

“Are you nervous, Mordi?” Mithras asked. “I am. I have butterflies.”

“I guess so.” Mordecai shrugged. “I’m eager. The fact we’re here shows we’re the best. We have the strongest emerging magic.”

“I know that. I do.” Mithras sighed. “I just don’t have your pedigree. Magic goes back a long way in your family.”

“Whatever’s afflicting the female witches, making their numbers dwindle, affected my family as much as anyone else’s.” Mordecai looked harder at his friend. “You’re worrying about the matching aren’t you?”

Mithras nodded. “That, as well as being good enough to be here. My family are so proud. They think marrying a girl without magic herself, but whose family have a pedigree of magic, would be a marvellous accomplishment for me.”

Mordecai scowled. “They’ve tried this for a generation. There are still no more female witches being born than before. But what we do have are some male witches whose magic has dwindled because they’re not in harmony with their mate. They can’t stretch themselves or their gifts because the one chosen to be at their side can’t channel it safely.”

“You sound so passionate,” Mithras whispered, his brown eyes wide.

“I am. I will not be bound to a female that someone thinks should be a good match because somewhere in their lineage was a female with strong powers. I will choose my own mate.” He laid a hand on Mithras’ shoulder. “And if you feel the same, I will speak for you. We both want male mates. I will have nothing less. Do you want that enough to stand beside me?”

“Yes.” Mithras nodded eagerly. “Yes.”

Mordecai exited the bus with Mithras behind him. Of the ten students, only one was female. He adjusted his hat as he looked around. Everyone wore black or grey. He favoured leather pants teamed with a charcoal grey shirt, and a wide-brimmed black hat. Mithras wore his usual black leather corset over a pale grey shirt, and black dress pants.

Even the woman in their midst wore black pants, shirt and suit jacket. Her hair was hidden under her own wide-brimmed hat. But from a distance they’d all look the same. They were all nervous to a degree. For Mordecai it was nervous excitement. He was ready to move on, to command the next level of magic.

Although that meant he really did need to consider finding a mate. One who could not only help harness his power, but one who felt the same desire for him as he would for them. A true mate in every sense. His skin tingled at the thought.

The doors opened, and three people came outside; two middle-aged blond-haired men, who looked eerily alike, and a woman with her dark hair upswept. They all held black capes wrapped tightly around their bodies. They stopped at the top of the stairs. The iron griffins now looked like sentries.

A conch shell sounded, and again. Then a fourth person came out. A gasp arose around Mordecai. The man was Maori, his copper skin liberally tattooed. The intricate blue designs were on his face, chest, arms, and thighs. Mordecai's eyes travelled over the well-sculptured, smooth chest, and the muscular legs.

His thighs were easily visible as he only wore the traditional *piupiu*, the flax kilt reaching to mid-thigh, over which he wore a belt, a *tatau*. His hair was up in a traditional topknot, decorated with feathers, and a bone comb, a symbol of power.

He held a greenstone *mere*. The weapon was short, broad-bladed, and shaped like an enlarged teardrop. Looking like it should be used like a club, the *mere* was a close combat weapon designed to strike an opponent in the body or head. It was also the symbol of a chief.

The Maori warrior spun around, his *piupiu* swirling to reveal glimpses of the tattoos on his muscular ass cheeks. Mordecai recognized what was happening as the *powhiri* and the *wero*, a traditional welcome and challenge.

The warrior chanted as he slapped his chest, arm, and thighs. His eyes widened to show their whites, and he stuck his amazingly long tongue out as he brandished the *mere*. Finally he lay down a small effigy handed to him by one of the men still standing on the stairs. He stood, *mere* raised, knees bent, as if he would strike anyone approaching the effigy.

Mordecai looked around. If any of the others remembered they'd been told about the Maori welcome and challenge they'd face, the display had wiped it from their minds. Removing his hat, Mordecai pushed his long hair back out of the way. He passed the hat to Mithras and stepped forward. He kept his gaze firmly on the warrior as he leaned forward to pick up the effigy.

As he straightened up, the warrior nodded, and opened his arms. "*Tēnā koutou. Haere mai.*" He drew Mordecai forward so that their noses touched in the traditional *hongī*.

“*Kia ora*. Thank you,” Mordecai said.

“Hello and welcome. My name is Arana, and I’m the senior tutor here. Your name is?”

The warrior’s voice was melodic, but powerful. Even Mordecai stood a little straighter, recognising the power and authority of Arana.

“My name’s Mordecai.”

Arana nodded. “Since you were brave enough to answer the challenge, you can be the spokesperson for the other students. If any of you have a problem or issue, report it first to Mordecai. He’ll then seek assistance from us if needed. Let me introduce you to my friends and fellow tutors here.”

The other teachers came to join Arana, and he introduced each in turn. Firstly, he indicated the woman. “This is Era.”

The woman smiled, and nodded slightly. “*Haere mai*, welcome to the Academy.” She stepped back as the two men came forward.

Arana indicated one, then the other. “This is Bryne, and his brother Arlyn. We’ll all teach you during your stay here. Now, if you’ll collect your luggage, we’ll take a register, and show you to your rooms.”

Chapter 2

With a grunt, Kerr sat up in bed. He ran his fingers through his unruly mop of hair. He'd been restless all night. He'd dreamed he was flying, then he'd seen dark shapes pushing through the ground, add to that a figure whose face he never saw, but that he desperately kept trying to get to, and it made for one hell of a bad night's sleep.

He shuffled into the bathroom. He let the shower run while he took care of another necessity before stepping under the hot spray with a sigh of contentment. He poured a generous dollop of shower gel into his hand, and began to work it over his body. He washed thoroughly over his furred chest, the thick nest at his cock and down his hairy thighs.

He'd head to the gym once he'd had breakfast. His abundance of body hair was genetic, but he had to work at keeping toned. He dried off enthusiastically, and then tackled shaving. He kept a well-trimmed anchor beard. He scowled as he saw the shadows under his eyes. He'd need to address those. No one would want to see him walking around the club looking more like he'd rather be asleep than in charge.

Kerr padded from the bathroom through to the kitchen. He yawned, and muttered under his breath. He'd had odd dreams for a week now. Nightmares, for the first time in his life. *I need a holiday. I haven't been away for over a year now.*

Scooping up the remote control, he switched on his TV so he could listen to the news while making his breakfast. He flicked on the kettle for the morning cup of tea, and dropped two pieces of whole-wheat bread into the toaster. Banana, yogurt and berries went into his blender to make a smoothie. By the time he'd poured that into a glass and set it on his table, his toast was ready and the water boiled.

He spread the toast with almond butter, and he took it, and his cup of Earl Grey tea, over to the table. He ate as he watched the news. There was nothing exciting going on, and then he had a sudden realisation. He'd heard that the college was getting some new students. He smirked as he thought of some of the things the local villagers said about the place.

"Hogwarts it ain't." He drained the last of his tea, and took the plate, glass, and mug to the dishwasher. There wasn't enough in there yet. He'd put it on

later. He glanced at his clock. If he left for the gym now, by the time he got back, the students would be arriving. For some reason he really wanted to see them.

Despite what some of the villagers said, as far as he could gather the college was some kind of yoga, holistic, meditation place. But they were, in truth, very secretive. They also seemed to favour dark garb, which he thought unusual, but, until now, had never questioned. His mind made up, Kerr hurried to dress and get out.

Kerr wasn't alone as he watched the minibus drive through the dragon gates, and stop outside the mansion. He watched a group of young men who stood nervously outside; but there was one that drew his attention. He was like a beacon of light among the crowded masses of grey, black and leather clothing.

Kerr wasn't sure exactly how to put it into words, but the stranger's light seemed dark, mysterious and ensnaring. He couldn't look away and desire scorched through his veins, despite the fact the young man belonged to that strange cult and the black house with its secrets, and dark sounds.

"Witches." The woman at his side whispered. "Born devil spawn, they are."

"Not all witches serve evil." Kerr surprised himself, not just the woman at his side, with his retort.

She glared at him. "They're not our kind. But while that... that *place* gives the council big payments, we're stuck with them."

"I've lived here nearly two years. The mansion's always been there, and nothing spooky or evil has ever happened." Kerr smiled down at her, but she wasn't mollified, and headed off, muttering to herself. Kerr put her from his mind.

Witches aren't real but I am, and I'm a Dom. I take what I want, and who I want and I want him, like I need air in my lungs. I want him collared, kneeling and begging for my touch.

Despite the desire burning through him, there was one other thought circling Kerr's mind. He had an odd notion that his strange attraction to the achingly beautiful creature, was something deeper than lust, stronger than desire, and could herald the end of his reign as an Alpha Dom. Kerr shook his head. *Not gonna happen.*

He didn't know how he could arrange it, but he wanted the stranger. "I shall have him," he whispered. As he spoke, he heard a tune coming from one of the cars parked beside him. He recognised it instantly, turned to stare at the vehicle and shivered.

"I Put a Spell on You" by Creedence Clearwater Revival played for a moment before the music stopped.

Chapter 3

As Mordecai turned toward the minibus, heat permeated his body, and his cock reacted, filling slowly. His breath came in short gasps, and he stared into the distance. A man and woman stood side by side, but he knew they weren't together. Despite the woman's superstitious fear, she was irrelevant.

But the man. *The man. Mine. I want him, and will have him. I will have him naked and begging for my touch.* Mordecai wrapped his arms around his body and hugged himself.

The whispered tales of how it felt to find the one destined to be at your side paled into comparison against the reality. Mordecai actually wanted to just leave everyone, and everything, and go claim the man for himself, riding him until neither of them knew where the one ended and the other began. Only it was more complex than that.

He licked his lips, dry from the heat of desire. *I've taken others, but never given myself. That has always been reserved for my true mate. But there are rituals to observe. And I don't even know who he is.*

A smile curved Mordecai's lips. The man's desire for him reached out to him. *An Alpha. My mate is an Alpha. That's good. He's going to need to be powerful to deal with me and all that comes with me.* His smile turned mischievous. He focused on the car close by the man.

The perfect words came to mind. He didn't know who sang it, but the spell would take care of that. "I put a spell on you," he whispered.

A soft laugh escaped his lips as the man turned to the car. "Perfect. I'll find you. Soon."

"Mordecai, get your bags. We're waiting for you," Arana called from the steps of the mansion.

"On my way." Mordecai grabbed his cases, and hurried to where the tutors waited for him. He went inside.

The foyer was beautiful, dark wood, and the light fittings were Art Deco. A gilt-edged mirror hung on the wall to his left with an umbrella stand next to it. On the right was a dark wood staircase, and ahead was an open door leading through to the courtyard.

“The next floor up has the student bedrooms, libraries, and study rooms. The top floor has the tutor bedrooms, and the classrooms.” Arana laid a hand on Mordecai’s shoulder and urged him through into the courtyard. “Straight ahead are the kitchen and dining room. To the left are a first aid room, and various storage rooms. On the right is the swimming pool and gym.”

Turning in a circle, Mordecai finally faced Arana. “This is beautiful.”

The courtyard itself had low-level plants and the occasional tree around in front of the buildings. Awnings reached out from over the ground floor windows providing shade over wooden tables and chairs. In the centre was a fountain. The base had an ornately-carved design of birds, tikis, and flames. The fountain’s water cascaded from the blow hole of a leaping dolphin. Mordecai instantly felt the calm and balance of the elements in alignment.

Arana smiled and nodded. “I was told the power was strong in you. We must ensure your match is equal to you.”

“I have my own ideas on that very subject,” Mordecai said. “But now isn’t the time to discuss them.”

“Mordi, isn’t it amazing? It’s making my skin tingle.” Mithras came over to him, his eyes shining.

“Yes it is. That’s great,” Mordecai said. He squeezed his friend’s shoulder. Mithras’ enthusiasm was contagious. The pair then hugged, laughing.

“It’s going to be so awesome here,” Mithras said.

“Yes. Yes, I believe it is going to be awesome.” Mordecai’s smile turned mischievous. “In more ways than one.”

Chapter 4

The rest of Kerr's day passed without any other strange happenings. He chose to spend lunchtime in the city before going into work. He wandered down to the port, and ate lunch in one of the restaurants at the Viaduct. He took a short walk around, and then it was time to work.

The advantage of working as the owner of a nightclub was the ability to have the morning to enjoy himself. But Kerr was disciplined enough to make sure he was there no later than mid-afternoon. That allowed him to check all the messages, takings, and reports concerning the previous night.

He rarely left before the last customer had gone, so if there were any immediate issues, he was on hand to deal with them. But sometimes his staff thought of something that they decided he should know, and he encouraged dialogue with them.

Unlike Lilith.

He ran his hand through his hair. She'd been his business partner for a year. They ran two BDSM clubs; one welcomed anyone, which Lilith ruled as Alpha Dominatrix, and the other was exclusively gay, where he was Alpha Dom. The clubs fronted on two different streets, but were back to back. A glass walkway on the third story connected them.

That floor in each building had some offices, and a suite of rooms that were used as a home away from home. He frowned. At least he used his as a home away from home. Even though he and Lilith had worked alongside each other for the last twelve months, he barely knew her. He assumed she lived elsewhere, but now he realized she'd never mentioned anything of her home life to him.

Not that it was any of his business. He'd heard often enough that she was a good Dominatrix, but she rarely kept the same sub for more than a week. Sometimes she had two; male, female or a mix. There didn't seem to be any preference for her. He knew a couple of the men she'd been seen with were definitely gay. He absently wondered if she was pansexual. Then he wondered what his sudden preoccupation with her was.

The only problem he had with her was her constant attempts to seduce him. She made light of them now, and he laughed them off, but in the beginning

she'd been quite aggressive, then she'd been passive, but persistent. Although she referred to them as their running joke, there were times he caught her looking at him with naked lust.

He rubbed at his face. He was gay. Through and through. He liked and respected women, but he wanted a man in his bed. And now not just any man. He wanted the man with the long, red hair he'd seen outside the mansion. *He will be mine. I know it.*

He grimaced at the knock on the door. But he went and opened it with a smile on his lips. "Afternoon, Lilith."

"Kerr, sweetheart. You're not dressed yet. Or perhaps I should say undressed. Would you like a hand?" Lilith swept past him. Her black leather corset was laced back and front, but her chest was hidden from view. The matching leather shorts had metal rings down each side, and her thigh-high boots had metal heels and studs down the back. She noticed his gaze, and pirouetted. "You like?"

"It's okay," he said, then he looked at the sub that knelt at the doorway. It was possible the boy was a very fresh faced twenty-five year old, but Kerr had an uncanny vibe about such things. Nor did he like the genuine fear in the boy's eyes. "Where's his ID?"

Lilith looked at him, an elegantly drawn eyebrow raised. "Why?"

"Because I don't allow anyone under twenty-five in my club, and that was the agreement with the joint operation. The cops—"

"They won't care so long as he's over eighteen." Lilith interrupted him, her voice a mix of scorn and boredom.

"I know that." Kerr retaliated by sounding as if he was talking to a child. "But I do. Even if he is over eighteen, which I'm not convinced, he isn't over twenty-five. Unless you get me his ID right now, I'll call the fucking cops myself."

Lilith didn't react to his increase in volume. She stared at him for a few seconds, her dark eyes cold. "Since he seems to mean so much to you, keep him. I'll have his clothes sent up to you." She stalked from the room, her heels sounding heavily on the floor.

The sub looked from Lilith back to Kerr, but didn't move. Kerr went over to him, and urged him to his feet. "How old are you?"

“I was eighteen a couple of weeks ago.” The young man glanced back towards the door. “Am I in trouble?”

“No. What’s your name? Were you looking for a Dominatrix?” Kerr had another vibe about the youth. He wasn’t surprised when he shook his head.

“Michael. And I don’t know what made me say yes to her. She scares me.”

“Are you into the scene at all?” Kerr unfastened the leash, and then removed the studded collar from Michael’s throat.

“I have a friend who likes it,” Michael said. “I liked what he told me, and told him I wanted to try it, and see for myself. Then I was introduced to Lilith.”

“Look, give me a minute.” Kerr went to his office, and picked up a business card for the club. He took it back to Michael. “Give yourself a couple of weeks. Think about it. Then call, and say that I told you to ring. I’ll be sure to call you back and make sure you have a trusted Dom who will do nothing more than give you a personalized tour, and answer any questions you might have.”

Michael looked at the card, and then smiled shyly at Kerr. “I thought you told her I’m too young for your club?”

“You are. But if the scene appeals to you, there are other, less intense places to go. Don’t let one bad experience put you off.”

A knock at his door interrupted Kerr. He patted Michael’s shoulder. Opening his door, a surly man in leather pants held out Michael’s clothing.

“Mistress Lilith said to give you these.”

The man didn’t wait. He thrust the clothes at Kerr and turned away. Kerr had half a mind to call him back, but decided against it, especially with Michael still in his rooms. *Lilith and I need a long, no-holds-barred business meeting.*

Chapter 5

“Are you sure we won’t get into trouble?” Mithras asked.

Mordecai patted his friend’s shoulder. “We were told there were no issues if we wanted to come into town. We’re going into town.”

“Yes, but I don’t think the tutors meant for us to be going into clubs. Especially fetish clubs.” Mithras dropped his voice to a whisper and glanced around as if the tutors would materialize any second.

“It took me a while to find out the identity of the man I saw when we arrived, and where he worked. I thought the safest place for me to approach Kerr would be his workplace. It’s not too personal. Plus there’s the added safety factor of his other patrons. You can go somewhere else if you don’t want to come into the club with me.”

“You should have told the tutors about Kerr.”

Mithras shook his head as Mordecai checked his map. Mordecai smiled at his friend. “Mithras, I want to be sure about this man. I don’t want to blurt it out to our tutors, for them to get... overexcited about it, only for me to meet him face-to-face and have been wrong.”

“From the way you described it to me, there’s no way you think you’re wrong.” He stopped suddenly, his eyes wide. “You’re not thinking of becoming bound to him before telling them are you?”

“No! Of course not.” Mordecai grabbed Mithras and pulled him back into motion. “There are rituals that need to be performed, and a safe place chosen for our binding. I just want to meet him. See him. I’ve felt him close by the mansion this last week, but he’s not going to just knock on the door. According to what I found out, he has a club somewhere here, and this is where he’ll be. I just have to find it. Ah! There it is.”

Shifting his grip off Mithras’ shoulder, he held his friend’s hand instead, and walked up to the doorman with his head held high. Their dress code of black and leather wouldn’t look out of place in a fetish club. However, Mordecai hadn’t thought of proving his age when the doorman held out his hand.

“Identification. Rule here is no one under twenty five. Prove it or move it.”

He glanced at Mithras. His friend was only twenty three, and although he was old enough, he didn't have any form of identification with him. There was only one option. He reached into his jacket as if to bring out a wallet, and as he drew his hand free, he sketched a pattern in the air and murmured a minor incantation. "Pass," he said aloud.

"Pass." The doorman repeated the word, his eyes staring straight ahead.

Mordecai strode forward, pulling Mithras in with him. Not the ideal way to enter the club, but having reached this point, Mordecai was not of a mind to go back home without getting at least an up close view of the man he knew to be his mate.

As they moved through the club, Mordecai wasn't surprised that Mithras stayed close. His upbringing had been sheltered. He didn't expect his friend to be comfortable with such outlandish dress, or rather, lack thereof.

"Over here," he whispered directly into Mithras' ear. He stood his friend at the end of the bar. "A glass of water please. It's a little... warm in here." Mordecai fluttered his lashes, glad they were unusually long, and smiled at the bartender.

The man returned quickly, and handed Mordecai the glass with a wink, and a blown kiss. Mordecai grinned as he gave the glass to Mithras. "Keep hold of this. Wait here. I'll be back in a few minutes. Okay?"

Mithras nodded, and eased back a little to merge better with the shadows. Mordecai was sure his friend would be fine. He wasn't going to be gone that long. Without having to worry about Mithras, he could focus on the man he wanted. No matter how many others were there, Mordecai would find him. *Kerr*. The name rolled so easily on his tongue.

Mordecai half-closed his eyes. He walked slowly, ignoring the flirtatious looks, and occasional verbal approach. *Kerr* was there, but not on that floor. He let his powers guide him. He went through the club and into an area clearly intended for staff only. He walked past spare tables and chairs stacked neatly, ready to be brought through, and stared at a lift.

He pressed the call button, and saw that the two was illuminated. When the doors opened, the button for the third floor was worked only by key. Mordecai smirked. That was basic stuff. He laid a finger on the button. "Move," he whispered.

The lift doors closed, and it moved upwards. The lift rose smoothly and Mordecai hugged himself as he felt the growing nearness of his mate. Then as the lift stopped, he stood tall and exited it, head high, to meet the man. To his left he saw a glass-covered walkway. He frowned. He should have been able to discern something about what lay beyond; a feel for what was over there. Instead it was though a veil hid it from him.

He shook his head. The proximity of his mate was obviously affecting him in more than just a physical way. Mordecai was almost certain he could see a golden thread gaining strength as he walked down the corridor to his right.

As he approached a door, it opened. Up close the man was even more desirable than Mordecai could have hoped for. His dark hair was gelled back. His chest, furred and powerfully muscled, was bisected by a studded leather harness, emphasizing his pecs. Black leather pants moulded to his legs, and accentuated a package Mordecai had an immediate yearning to open and explore.

“My name is Mordecai,” he said. “I’ve been looking for you.”

Kerr looked him up and down. His eyes, a bewitching tawny shade, darkened as his gaze hovered over Mordecai’s body. “Indeed? And just why would you do that?”

A smile crept across Mordecai’s face. Kerr’s voice was low, even, beautifully modulated. But he could hear the desire Kerr did so well to hide. The man was already proving perfect on so many levels that it was all Mordecai could do not to just grab him.

“Because we both felt the same thing when we saw one another the day I arrived at the mansion.”

That sparked a reaction. “How did you get up here?”

“The lift.” Mordecai pointed back the way he’d come. Kerr’s face creased into a frown, giving him a dangerous appearance, but Mordecai stood his ground.

“Not without a key,” Kerr said, his voice dropping in timbre.

“Magic,” Mordecai said, and smirked.

“I don’t believe in magic. Or witches,” Kerr said. “That lift needs a key to get up here. Who did you bribe?”

“I didn’t, and I don’t need keys.” Mordecai held up his hands. He crafted his power so that blue flames danced at his fingertips. “Now you know witches are real.” Kerr stared at him, and Mordecai was pleased to see the man didn’t shrink back. He doused his power. “Now, are you going to invite me inside?”

Kerr cocked his head, a small smile playing at the corner of his mouth. “Somehow I doubt you really need my permission to come inside.”

Mordecai laughed delightedly. “You’re right, of course. And I don’t sparkle in daylight, sprout fur during the full moon, or melt if you douse me in water.”

Kerr’s laughter was rich and melodic. “Come inside. I’d hate to be turned into a toad for forgetting my manners.”

Mordecai couldn’t stop his laughter bubbling free. He crossed the threshold into Kerr’s offices. This wasn’t his home. Mordecai felt a good resonance of the man here, but he was sure Kerr’s home, back near the mansion, would have a much stronger feel of the man. “Thank you.” He turned and gestured around. “This is just part of your work?”

“I have a private suite back there.” Kerr pointed. “But it’s more somewhere useful to crash if it’s a really late night here, and I don’t want to drive home. The villagers said you were witches. You aren’t welcomed by all.”

Mordecai shrugged. “Sad to say, those they see—like me—are generally the ones helping protect their sorry asses. The practitioners of the dark arts on the other hand prefer to keep away from humankind, until striking at them that is. We, the protectors of light, are regrettably feared and misunderstood. We don’t stand around a bubbling cauldron, wearing black pointy hats tossing, in the odd ear of newt.”

Kerr guffawed loudly. “I’m glad to hear it.” He came and stood close to Mordecai. “I’ve thought about you.”

“And I about you. You’re magnificent, and an Alpha.” He smirked, and cocked his head sideways. “I like that, and you’ll need your strength to cope with me.”

Kerr wrapped a hand around the back of Mordecai’s head, and pulled him closer. “Really? You’re so sure of yourself.”

Mordecai rested his hands on Kerr’s bare chest. The energy that crackled between them made them both gasp. “You will help me control my powers, and

enable me to grow. We will be bound, in this world and for eternity. But not here. And not now.”

“I don’t know.” Kerr shook his head, but didn’t move.

“You can. You will. I’m as much your destiny as you are mine. Don’t deny what you feel. Open your heart to it. Embrace it. You will grow as I will.”

Kerr closed his eyes, and Mordecai felt the power dance around them, touching them, enlivening him. He laughed, stepping closer, letting Kerr wrap him in an embrace.

“I’ve never experienced anything like it,” Kerr said. “What is it?”

“Neither have I. You’re feeling a mix of my joy, and my power. When we’re bound you’d be able to find me in a full club like you have downstairs just as I did you. You’ll feel me.”

“Now that sounds very inviting.” Kerr’s voice was a sensual purr of sound against Mordecai’s ear, and the heat of arousal swept through him.

Chapter 6

As he leaned into Kerr, pain suddenly lanced through Mordecai, and he bent double with a gasp.

“What is it? Are you all right?” Kerr said.

Mordecai was glad of Kerr's strong arm encircling his waist. “My friend, Mithras. He's in trouble.” Mordecai hissed out the words from between clenched teeth. He met Kerr's anxious gaze. “Someone here must know what we are.”

“I swear that before you demonstrated your power, I never truly believed in witches,” Kerr said.

“I believe you. I can feel your honesty. We don't have time. I have to get to Mithras.”

“I'm coming with you.” Kerr stood tall, and cracked his knuckles. “This isn't all just show,” he said indicating his body. “If there's trouble. I can take care of it.”

Mordecai nodded, and set off at a run. He and Mithras had been friends long enough for him to be able to track his friend. He was surprised when he crossed over the glass walkway. He saw the lift door to his left as he emerged in the building across the alleyway from Kerr's club. He hit the call button.

“Down,” Mordecai said. “Is there a basement here? He feels deeper than the level I left him at in your club.”

“We both have basements, but the clubs are only connected by the top floor walkway.” Kerr followed him into the elevator, pulled out a key, inserted it and turned it to 'B'. “Without the key, you can't get down to the basement, or up to the top floor.”

“Are you certain the only connection is the walkway?” Mordecai asked as they started down. There was no way anyone had come to their floor, especially not Mithras, and he doubted they'd taken his friend out through the alleyway.

“I'm not sure I can be certain of anything any longer,” Kerr replied.

Leaving the lift at a run, Mordecai's anger grew exponentially to Mithras' proximity and fear. He faced a locked door, and murmured a word of power,

touching the door handle as he did. The lock flared red hot, and fell from the door as Mordecai kicked it open.

Dressed only in his flimsy boy-shorts underwear, Mithras was strapped to a St. Andrew's cross. Two bulky men stood in front of him, their erections still in evidence as a masked Dominatrix readied to strike another blow to Mithras' back. Two red welts criss-crossed the tattoo on Mithras' pale back and inflamed Mordecai's fury.

The Dominatrix screamed as the crop in her hand flared red, and she clutched her hand to her chest as she stared wide-eyed at Mordecai.

"It's all right, Mithras. I heard you. I'm here." Mordecai headed around the cross to face his friend and started unfastening his restraints.

"Who the fuck are you?" One of the two men started forward. "He's ours. Fuck off."

"More importantly, what are you doing with someone who isn't a club member, and clearly isn't consenting to what's happening?" Kerr's voice was low and deadly.

"Who are you?" The second man growled the words stalking toward Kerr.

"I'm the joint owner of these clubs. If you're staff, you're fired. If you're members, the membership's revoked."

The men exchanged glances, and moved to join the woman, who kept staring at Mordecai.

As Mordecai released the last of Mithras' restraints, his friend's legs buckled, and he started to collapse, but Kerr caught him, and swung him up in his arms to cradle the limp form to his chest.

A woman appeared in the doorway. Mordecai was aware of something unusual about her, but his anger and fear stopped him from focusing clearly. He tried to push them away and concentrate on what was happening.

"I was told there was a disturbance. What's going on here?" The woman addressed Kerr, her hands on her hips.

"Do you know those men, Lilith?" Kerr nodded towards the men who still stood back.

Lilith barely glanced at them. "Why?"

“This was non-consensual, Lilith. Ban them or fire them. I don’t care which. But if I see them in either club again, I’ll deal with them personally.”

“Are you quite certain?” This time, although she addressed Kerr, her gaze turned to Mordecai.

“Very sure. Let’s go, Mordecai.” Kerr strode past her, heading out of the room.

Following him, Mordecai glanced back at Lilith. She was examining the woman’s reddened palm, and didn’t look at all concerned about the men. Mordecai frowned. *Who told her there was a disturbance? We didn’t pass anyone. No one came to the door.* He shivered. Something was definitely off-kilter with Lilith, but this was neither the time nor the place to try and work it out.

Kerr was already in the lift, his key in the lock. As Mordecai stepped inside Kerr turned it and the doors closed.

“Are your rooms secure?” Mordecai asked.

Kerr nodded. “It’s a self-contained suite. Lockable. But there’s no reason to worry. No one can get up in the lift without a key.”

“And Lilith has one,” Mordecai said.

“Yes.” Kerr stepped out as the lift doors opened. “She won’t bother us. We’ll be fine up here.”

Mordecai gazed levelly at Kerr. “When we get inside, I’m putting a protection spell on the door. Only the three of us will be able to open the door.”

“You can do that?” Kerr asked. “The key to the suite is on the chain around my neck. I don’t want to disturb your friend.”

Mindful of Mithras, Mordecai eased the chain from around Kerr’s neck, and unlocked the door. As soon as Kerr walked through, Mordecai locked it, and murmured an incantation. The spell wasn’t as strong as it could be, but he had nothing with him to create a charm to make it more powerful. He couldn’t shake the feeling it needed reinforcing.

He’d be back. He wasn’t losing Kerr over this. Kerr was his mate. But having the bad experience meant he’d want to consummate their binding somewhere he felt safe. He followed the sound of Kerr’s voice, and glanced through into Kerr’s bedroom.

Mithras had been put into the large bed, and Kerr knelt at the bedside stroking Mithras' hair, and murmuring quietly to him. Mordecai leaned against the doorframe. There was nothing sexual in Kerr's action. But protective feelings rolled off the big man in waves, and they helped Mordecai relax. He sagged into the wood.

Kerr stood up. "He's asleep. They must have slipped something into a drink. We can take this to the police if you want."

Mordecai shook his head. "No. It's not for them to sort. I'm a witch. So is Mithras. He wouldn't have accepted a drink. Even if he had, one sip would have been enough for him to realize a drink was tainted. Unless magic was involved."

"There aren't any witches here," Kerr said. "We're all just normal people." He winced. "Sorry."

"We're normal, too. We just have gifts that can be trained."

Kerr moved closer, and he cupped Mordecai's chin. "I'm sorry. It's going to take me some time to get used to all this."

"We were fated to be, but that doesn't make it any easier for us. I want you. I know you want me. Love will come in time."

Kerr smiled, and Mordecai felt like his stomach flipped. "You're that confident."

"Yes. Yes I am. Can we go somewhere other than here?" Mordecai glanced at the door, although he knew Mithras was unable to see or hear what was happening. Kerr took his hand, and led him into a living room with a good-sized settee, but they didn't get that far.

In keeping with his nature, Mordecai resisted as Kerr pulled him into an embrace, but the bigger man persisted until Mordecai finally rested his head against Kerr's broad shoulder. "There are forces at work I don't understand," he whispered.

"So long as they don't try to keep us apart, I don't care." Kerr nuzzled down Mordecai's cheek to nip at his jeweled earlobe before darting his tongue into the small shell, which made Mordecai shiver.

"There are rituals to observe before we can become bound."

"Bound? I like the sound of that." Kerr whispered directly in Mordecai's ear.

A hand on Mordecai's shoulder pushed him to his knees. He stared at the bulge at Kerr's groin, evident even through Kerr's leather pants. A thrill skittered down his back. He'd never done this. Would never give himself like this to another. He looked up at Kerr.

The big man's eyes held lust and desire, but there was more. There was a hint of something much deeper already. Mordecai felt as if the ties that would bind them had already cast their spell. Kerr wasn't demanding, and Mordecai wasn't actually submitting. *Not yet.*

He leaned forward, and Kerr hissed softly as Mordecai rubbed his face against the enticing, yet still-hidden, erection. A scent of musk and leather made Mordecai dizzy, and his cock swelled. He reached up to unfasten the pants, staring as hard, thick flesh instantly bulged in his direction.

He freed Kerr's cock and held it in his hand. Kerr ran his hand through Mordecai's hair, then tightened his grip and urged him forward. Mordecai resisted.

"I've never done this. I've never allowed myself to be in this position."

"Stop fighting. Let me take charge. Relax. I won't force you to do anything you don't want. But you want this. We both want this. You don't need a ritual for this. Do you?"

Kerr's voice was soft, almost seductive, but still retained his Alpha's authority. Mordecai swallowed, his throat suddenly dry. He *did* want it. He wanted it very much, but he wasn't willing to be submissive. *Not yet.*

He gently squeezed the flesh in his hand. The quiet groan and thrust of Kerr's pelvis told him the bigger man was taking pleasure from his touches. He leaned a little closer. The tang of pre-ejaculate was in the air, and a drop oozed slowly from Kerr's slit. For a few seconds, Mordecai stared, mesmerized as the drop expanded.

His tongue seemed to possess a will of its own. Before the drop vanished, his tongue darted out to catch the fluid. The taste exploded in his mouth, and he shuddered. Strength, saltiness, raw power, musk, the flavours of the man himself, and something much, much deeper. A whine escape Mordecai's throat before he took the head of Kerr's cock into his mouth.

Leaning against Kerr's thigh, Mordecai sucked slowly. Kerr's hand massaged his head, occasionally directing him into a rhythm enabling Kerr's cock to thrust back and forth in his mouth. Mordecai closed his eyes. He was

enjoying letting Kerr dictate what happened. He fell into synch with the gentle rocking of Kerr's pelvis.

"Enough." Kerr's voice was deep, and low. "I want to taste you. Strip."

Mordecai rose to his feet. All that Kerr wore on his chest was the studded, black leather harness, and it seemed he wasn't taking that off. Instead Kerr attacked his leather pants, pushing them down solid, furred thighs. Mordecai's hands shook as he unfastened his shirt, letting it slide to the floor. Then he undid his own leather pants. Thankfully his weren't as tightly moulded to his legs as Kerr's pants.

He always went commando, and his cock bounced up as it came free. Mordecai whimpered softly at the hunger in Kerr's eyes. There was no hint of colour in them now. Just glittering darkness. He bent down to pull off his shoes, and then shoved his pants and socks off in one move.

Kerr closed the distance between them, and pulled Mordecai tightly to his chest. "As much as I want you, there's something else. Something more. I've never had a feeling like it." He traced the fire tattoo between Mordecai's shoulder blades. "This is beautiful."

Not interested in discussing his tattoo, Mordecai wrapped his arms around Kerr's neck, and pulled him down for a kiss. He thrust his tongue deep into Kerr's mouth, learning new tastes. As his tongue retreated, Kerr's advanced. Mordecai clung to the bigger man as Kerr laid siege to his mouth. Kerr's tongue was the manifestation of the man as an Alpha.

Kerr's tongue swept around his mouth, slid sinuously against his own, ran across the roof of his mouth, and along his gums. Mordecai's knees went weak, but Kerr's hands palmed his ass cheeks, holding him up as much as holding him close.

As the kiss ended, Mordecai rested his head against Kerr's shoulder, panting softly. Kerr lifted him, and carried him over to the couch. Laying him down, Kerr dropped to his knees, and took Mordecai's cock in his mouth. He sealed his lips over the hard flesh, and slid down to take it effortlessly to the root.

Sharp shards of jealousy sliced into Mordecai's chest. No one would ever know this touch again. He groaned as Kerr grazed the head of his dick with his teeth. Mordecai wanted to thrust, but Kerr's hands pinned his hips down.

One of Kerr's hands moved to cup Mordecai's sac, rolling his balls, and the touch was all he needed. His body jerked hard as he came, and he heard a low,

deep, reverberating growl of sound from Kerr as his lover swallowed all he could give.

His body was still twitching as Kerr kissed him. There didn't seem enough air in the room as Mordecai tasted himself in Kerr's mouth. He clutched at Kerr's shoulders, his body on fire. Lust, desire, and love inflamed him. He was certain he was going to combust.

One of Kerr's hands wound in his hair, and he gazed up as Kerr broke the kiss.

"Mine. Today, tomorrow, forever. Mine. No one else, ever again." Kerr's voice was harsh, demanding, and something deep inside Mordecai reacted.

"Yours as you are mine. No one else. Ever again."

The air felt charged with power as Mordecai locked his gaze with Kerr. He was certain he saw sparks at the periphery of his vision as Kerr nodded.

Before they could kiss again, an eerie, drawn-out wail sounded. Mordecai shuddered. He didn't know what had made the noise, but he felt its evil. "We have to get away from here."

Kerr frowned, and then stood quickly, holding out his hand to help Mordecai. "I trust your judgment. What was that?"

As Mordecai got to his feet, Kerr headed towards the discarded clothing. "I don't know, and I don't want to wait and see. No time for leather. We need to get Mithras, too. Is there another way out of here?"

"The door in my kitchen leads onto a patio. At the end of the patio are stairs up to the roof. The fire escape stairs are up there. We can grab sweats from the bedroom."

They hurried to the bedroom together. Mithras' body was sluggish, but his mind was sharp enough. Kerr threw T-shirts at them, but had only managed to drag on sweats for himself when the wail sounded again. Closer. From the other side of Kerr's suite door.

"Your shirts will do," Mordecai said. "We have to go. Now. I don't think my charm will be strong enough to stop whatever that is getting through."

"Come on then." Kerr helped Mithras to his feet, almost carrying the younger man as Mordecai led the way.

The living room led through to a small dining area and an open kitchen. Mordecai's hand shook as he turned the key to open the outer door. He could feel the power of darkness as the suite door began to rattle.

"Thank the Powers that whatever it is has been sent to come through the front door," he said as he hurried along the patio and onto the stairs. "It's not thinking. Just obeying. Hurry. Do you have a car near here?" Mordecai looked down as Kerr slung Mithras over one broad shoulder and began to ascend.

"Across the road, diagonally left. The blue car in the small parking lot."

Mordecai ran onto the roof as the sound of a crash rent the air. "It's through. Quickly!" He raced to the fire escape, and hurried down, Kerr a few steps behind him. He jumped the last few stairs, and as Kerr ran past him, he raised his hands and pointed at the stairs.

The metal glowed for a moment before becoming as fluid as writhing snakes that coiled in on themselves before resuming its solid form. Satisfied, Mordecai took off after Kerr who had just set Mithras in the back of his car.

"It'll follow us down the stairs," he said. "That mess should delay it."

"But it'll still come after us," Kerr said.

"Mordi, give me your hand." Mithras held out his own, and Mordecai clasped it tightly. Mithras closed his eyes and his lips moved as he silently chanted. He sagged back in the car, but smiled.

"The ground we travel on won't leave it a trail for it to follow. It'll be as if we vanish here. But I'd rather not see it face to face if you get my drift."

"In the car, Mordecai."

Kerr slid into the driver's seat, and Mordecai ran around the car. He glanced over at the building. A dark, monstrous shape slowly descended the stairs, and Mordecai shuddered. Even from across the road he could feel its evilness. Whoever had summoned it was a strong practitioner of magic. He would have to confess tonight's happenings to his tutors. He felt certain the creature sought him and Kerr.

He buckled the seat belt, and Kerr drove off. Mordecai didn't look back. The wail he heard was more than enough. Kerr gripped his thigh and squeezed gently.

"Whatever it was, we've escaped it. I'll take you to my private home. In the morning I'll take you back to the mansion."

“I want you to meet the tutors there. Maybe they’ll understand more. I don’t think that’s the last of it, and you are as endangered as I am.”

Kerr glanced quickly at him. “I’ve had dreams where darkness chased me as I tried to find someone I could never see.”

“A premonition,” Mordecai said. “Because of our fated destiny. But who would want to keep us apart? Why? I’m not that powerful.”

“When you changed the stairs, you felt powerful to me,” Kerr said. “I can’t explain it better than that, but it was as if you weren’t even using a half of the power you possessed.”

Mordecai looked across at Kerr, and lapsed into silence as his lover focused on the road.

Chapter 7

Kerr drove to his house. It was too late to go to the mansion. He had no desire to turn up there in the early hours of the morning, with two half-naked young men. He didn't want to have to explain what had happened, especially as it now seemed like some warped dream.

The three of them slept together in his bed, Mordecai and Mithras both cuddled close in his embrace.

When morning came, he took them to the mansion where all three of them were taken aside to meet with the tutors.

"Let me try and explain something, Kerr," Arana said. "The universe is a living entity, and made of the four elements: air, earth, fire and water. It is also a balance; of chaos and order, dark and light, evil and good. Forces like ourselves work towards maintaining that balance. Other forces seek to promote evil, give rein to the dark, and unleash chaos."

Kerr rubbed the back of his neck, and fixed Arana with a level gaze. "Let's make it simple. Basically you're the good guys, white witches, and what we saw was something conjured up by black witches."

Arana shrugged and then nodded. "At its most basic, yes. You, and we, are now involved in a power struggle between evil and good. Mordecai is a powerful witch who has yet to reach the apex of his gifts. You are his fated mate. The one that will help him grow into his full strength, channel his power, and prevent it from burning him out. It's a vital role."

"Where are your mates?" Kerr asked, looking at the tutors.

"Bryne and Arlyn are fortunate in that as twins, each can channel the power of the other. My mate, and that of Era live nearby and are part of this community, although they don't live in the village. They're brothers and farmers. No one questions them. They also keep us informed of the feeling of the villagers, and are the voice of reason when some get a little concerned about us. As you know, we don't promote ourselves as a witches' training academy but as a college for holistic studies. After all, we seek to preserve a balance."

"Then what the fuck happened last night?" Kerr leaned forward, his voice a growl of impatience.

“I think someone knows we have a novitiate with a strong power,” Arana said. “I’m fairly convinced that this was staged to test you, nothing more, Mordecai.”

That was unexpected. Mordecai sat up a little straighter. “In what way?”

“You reacted to Mithras’ distress. You found him without difficulty. You acted with courage and power.” Arana stood and paced the floor. “We need to be careful. A long time has passed since the dark forces attacked an academy. But they have, and they may again.”

“Surely you’re all more powerful than he is.” Kerr stood and rubbed the back of his neck as he looked around. “Why Mordecai? He’s just a student.”

“A novitiate with a great deal of potential. Even more so with his true life mate at his side. With time and training, he will make a formidable force.” Arana reached to squeeze Kerr’s shoulder. “What concerns me more is that this was done so easily. That tells me, you were expected Mordecai. Someone knew you’d find your way to Kerr’s club.”

“But, even I didn’t know that.” Mordecai glanced between Kerr and Arana. “When Kerr didn’t approach me at the mansion, only then did I decide to go to the club.”

“There are many spells that will conjure something instantly. However, you don’t simply conjure a demon. Unless...”

“Unless what?” Kerr and Mordecai spoke in unison.

“Unless what we face is a demon itself. A demon can force apart the veil to bring more of its kind through.”

“If that’s the case, we need you to keep as close to the mansion as possible, Mordecai. We can’t let you go into town again.”

“What about Kerr?” Mordecai asked. He stood, and clutched at Kerr’s arm.

Kerr drew Mordecai against his body, as a protective urge swept through him.

“Can you leave your club in someone’s hands for a couple of weeks?”

“Probably.”

“What about his home? Will he be safe to stay there?” Mordecai asked.

“I think you’d have known if it wasn’t, but I’ll check it tomorrow,” Arana said. “We need to ensure the preparations are made for your binding. Kerr, it

may be preferable for you to stay here until you are bound to Mordecai. We can collect some things from your home tomorrow to ensure you're comfortable."

"Are you sure *this* place is safe?" Kerr asked. "There are walls around the mansion, but how safe are they against a demon?"

"I assure you, the mansion is protected. I'll ensure I get a message to the other elders. It doesn't hurt to be prepared in the meantime."

"As difficult as it may be, Kerr, trust us. We want to protect Mordecai, too," Era said.

"Mordecai, you and Mithras go with the others and rejoin your classes," Arana said. "I'll show Kerr to his room, and we can call around to his house later."

Arana gestured for him to enter, and Kerr walked into his room. A sense of calm descended on him. The walls were a pale green, and in one corner several plants made a tasteful arrangement of shades, green with one flash of red.

A plasma screen TV was set into the wall with a comfortable couch facing it. Beneath the TV was a gas fire with imitation flames. The overhead lights had beautiful glass Art Deco shades. Farther into the room was a table and chairs beside a well-stocked bookcase next to a set of windows that reached from floor to ceiling.

Beyond that was the doorway to the bedroom, only it was like no doorway Kerr had ever seen. It was a large semi circle, half of which was open, the other half had iron latticework. He looked back at Arana. "Very nice," he said.

Arana laughed. "Much of the mansion has Art Deco decoration. We like it."

"Where does Mordecai sleep?" Kerr still felt very protective. He needed to know exactly where his lover was.

"All the novitiates sleep on the floor below. Mordecai is halfway along the hallway. If he is endangered, Kerr, not only will you know it, but you'll instinctively know where to find him. The mansion has power of its own. Even though you and he aren't bonded, the house knows you are his mate."

Kerr shook his head. "This takes a lot of getting used to."

"If you hadn't already spent time with Mordecai, you'd probably think me a madman." Arana shrugged. "Yet here you are, and you're not laughing at me. Already forces are at work, preparing for your binding. Mordecai expected it to

take place in your home. I think it will be better here. This room feels right for you.”

Kerr looked around again and nodded. “It feels... comfortable, right. Like I belong here.”

“Good. Now I still have students to teach. There is a computer and printer in the bedroom. I realise you have a business to run. So I’ll leave you to it. We’ll also begin the preparations for your binding. There are rituals to observe, so it’ll be a couple of days yet.”

“Fine,” Kerr said. “I’ll contact my partner and let her know I’m taking a few days off. I have a deputy who can stand in for me.” He rubbed the back of his neck, and looked directly at Arana. “I’m not going to be able to keep the club am I?”

Arana gave a wry smile. “Mordecai will need you close by. It’s not so much that you won’t be able to. But if he needed you, you won’t hesitate to be by his side. That will be an inherent part of your nature once you’re bound. You already feel you should be near him.”

Kerr laughed softly, running his hand through his hair. “That’s true enough. I guess I’ll make a reasonable amount if I sell it. I don’t know if it would be enough to guarantee financial security for us, though.”

Arana laughed, a rich deep musical sound that made Kerr raise an eyebrow. “Sorry,” he said. “But whatever you make should you sell your business, don’t worry about it not being enough. We have access to funds that are pooled and support all our people across the globe. Neither Mordecai, nor you, will ever need to worry about finances again.”

Kerr knew he was staring, but he couldn’t quite engage his brain to make an intelligent remark. Arana laughed again, and patted his shoulder.

“Let it sink in. Your bathroom is off the bedroom. Attend to your business, relax, and join us downstairs for lunch at twelve thirty.”

Kerr waited until Arana left, and then went to look at his bedroom. The bed was large, with a wrought iron bed head in the same pattern as the doorway. The black writing desk was against the left wall beneath a stained-glass circular window. A dark wood door was on the right, which Kerr assumed led through to the bathroom.

He sat on the bed, and bounced a little. The mattress was firm, and there was no creaking or squeaking. A bolster in a rich crimson lay beneath two

black pillow cases. The sheets were also black, and the thick coverlet was red with a black border. The room had a feeling of opulence, and Kerr felt instantly comfortable in there.

He stood and went to the desk. Picking up the phone, he called Pete, his usual stand-in deputy. As he'd expected, there was no issue, no drama, and not even too much curiosity in regard to the sudden need around a vague request for about two weeks' worth of cover for him. The man was solid and dependable.

He dialled a second time. "Lilith, it's Kerr. I'm good. Look, something's come up and I won't be around the club for a week or two. No. Not sure when I'll be back exactly. Personal business. No. Just personal." Kerr scowled as Lilith pressed for more information. "Look, I'm not going to be there for at least two weeks. I've sorted cover. I'll let you know if the situation changes. It's not like you need me looking out for your side of the business. See you."

He slammed the phone down. He was annoyed more with himself for being irritated with the woman than with Lilith herself. He knew her well enough to know she'd want to know everything. He should have thought out a fake reason for being unavailable. He grimaced, suddenly feeling very sorry for Pete. Lilith would hunt him down, and give him a grilling. Maybe it was just as well he didn't have a fake story.

He stalked into the bathroom. Perfect, there was a decent-sized shower in there. He'd get showered and changed, and then have a chat with his accountant, followed by his solicitor. Although a part of him regretted giving up the club, he had never really gelled with Lilith. Maybe this was a great opportunity to move on. Do something different. He shook his head.

Shared funds across the globe. Amazing.

Chapter 8

Kerr stood outside his room and took several deep breaths. He looked back at the young men and one woman who had lined the hallway as he'd walked along. He could scarcely believe it had only been two days since he'd arrived there. Now he was about to be bound. To Mordecai. Finally.

Apart from meal times, they'd been kept apart, and Kerr was ready to tear the door down to get to his lover. But he'd understood that there were rituals involved, and so he'd waited, and abided by Arana's ruling.

Now his waiting was over.

He opened the door. Kerr swallowed. Mordecai sat cross-legged on the bed and wore only a towel around his waist. His hair was loose, and his eyes were closed. Next to him was an ornate amphora made of greenstone.

The bed had been moved into the living room, and was now positioned within a circle drawn on the floor. Each of the four points of the compass was marked. Mithras stood beside the bed, and the tutors stood close by, each wearing a robe of a different colour.

"Mordecai. It is time to bind with Kerr, your mate," Arana intoned the words in a deep, resonate voice, and helped Mordecai from the bed. "Kerr, take your place within the circle with the man you choose to bind to."

Kerr didn't hesitate. He strode forward and took his place at Mordecai's side. The air around them crackled, and Mordecai grinned.

"Finally," Mordecai whispered.

Kerr nodded, unsure of what to say. Excitement and arousal coursed through his veins, and he tried to ignore the erection tenting his towel. The air around him seemed charged with energy. As he looked around he saw things more sharply, and colours were brighter.

"It is time," Arana said. "Let the binding of Mordecai and Kerr begin."

All the tutors moved to stand around the bed. Era, dressed in green, stood at the north point. She carried the pentacle signifying earth. Bryne wore yellow and stood on the east point. He held a wooden wand, set with glittering crystals, for the element of air. His brother was opposite him on the west point, dressed in blue and holding a chalice to signify water. Finally Arana stood at the south point, wearing red and holding the ritual knife, the *athame*, for fire.

Mithras held a broom, ready for the end of the ceremony when they were bound, and two red roses. For a moment it all seemed surreal, then Mordecai gazed into his eyes. Love, heat, desire, seared into him, and it was all Kerr could do to keep from pulling Mordecai into his arms. They hadn't been permitted to sleep together, or be intimate since the club, and Kerr's cock ached.

But it was more than lust, deeper than desire. This wasn't a fad, or a phase. He'd already made a vow. Mordecai was his, just as he was Mordecai's. His heart yearned for his lover. Arana's voice drew his attention.

"Mithras, please give Kerr and Mordecai a rose each." Arana waited for them to take the rose. "Now exchange the roses. These roses are your first gift to each other to symbolise love and commitment. Each year on your anniversary exchange a single rose to commemorate your love and remind yourselves of your vows and how you felt today. If your relationship is troubled, and you can't find the right words, gift your partner with a single red rose to let them know that you still honour your vows and remember this day."

Era lifted her pentagram. "We offer these blessings upon Mordecai and Kerr. Spirits of Earth, we ask that you give them the rock-solid place to stand and fulfil their destiny. May their journey mirror the vast planes and fertile fields, expansive and alive. When they look up at the Northern Star, may they know that it is as bright and constant as their love for each other as well as the love of the divine is for them."

Bryne held up his wand. "We ask the spirits of Air to keep open the lines of communication between this couple. May their future be as bright as the dawn on the horizon. As Air flows freely to and from and through us all, may their hearts and minds and souls come to know the world and each other in this manner. Seeing not only with their eyes, may they together grow in wisdom."

Arlyn raised his chalice. "We ask the Spirits of Water, that their love for each other and the comfort of loved ones, like the serenity of the deep blue ocean, be the oasis that forever surrounds them. May they be well loved, and love well, letting the surety with which water makes its journey to the sea, flowing over rocks or around trees, even turning into vapour and riding a cloud, ever serve as a reminder that with love all is well and will endure."

Finally, Arana held the *athame* aloft. "Spirits of Fire, we ask that their passion for each other and for life itself remain ever strong and vital, fortifying each day with a vibrancy rooted in boldness, and courage. As Fire clears the

way for new growth, may they know that this power is theirs: to create change and bring about the richness and quality that comes with a true love of life.”

Then all four tutors spoke in unison. “Since ancient times, people have communed with nature to learn more about themselves by example. Since it is within nature that we all do abide, we ask for Mordecai and Kerr the blessings of nature’s elements, air, fire, water and earth. We do this that they may fully come to understand the lessons each element has to offer. The attributes of which are examples of those aspects they mirror not only within divinity but within ourselves as well.”

Arana took Kerr and Mordecai’s hands into his. “Is it also your wish today that your hands be fastened in the ways of old?”

They replied in unison. “It is.”

“Remember then as your hands are fastened, these are not the ties that bind.” Arana held cords of red, yellow, blue and green aloft. “That has been done by the song your hearts share which shall now be strengthened by the vows you take. All things of the material world eventually return to the Earth unlike the bond and the connection your spirits share which is destined to ascend to the heavens. May you be forever as one in the passion and fire of your love.”

Kerr felt the air around him ripple, and it crackled with energy as Arana bound their hands loosely together.

“You are now as your hearts have always known you to be, bound. Today, tomorrow, and for eternity.”

Kerr didn’t hesitate. Tossing his rose onto the bed, he cupped the back of Mordecai’s head and pulled him into a kiss that sent fire through his veins. “I love you,” he said as he eased back.

“I love you, Kerr.”

“One more thing,” Arana said. “Mithras, lay down the broom. We’ll forgo jumping, stepping over it will suffice.”

Kerr’s heart soared at Mordecai’s joyful laughter as they stepped over together.

“Congratulations, Mordi,” Mithras said and hugged his friend. “You, too, Kerr.”

“We’ll leave you alone to complete your binding. Welcome to our fraternity, Kerr, bound of Mordecai.”

“Thank you.” Kerr was touched by the affection in Arana’s deep brown eyes, but at that moment, he desperately wanted nothing more than to be alone with Mordecai.

The moment the door closed, he pulled Mordecai back into another kiss, this time pillaging his lover’s willing mouth. As he withdrew his tongue, Mordecai thrust his own into Kerr’s, matching him in passion and want.

The kiss broke only when both men were panting heavily. The cords were shaken from their hands, onto the bed, then Kerr reached out and snatched the towel from Mordecai’s waist. He let his hand hover close to, but not touching, Mordecai’s hard cock. “Do you want me to touch you? Tell me.”

“Yes.” Mordecai groaned the word. “Touch me.”

Kerr cupped Mordecai’s balls, rolling them in his hand, as he pulled Mordecai closer to him. “Use your mouth on my nipples.”

Mordecai obeyed, nibbling and sucking the peaked nubs, but he also rubbed his face against the fur of Kerr’s chest. Kerr grinned. Mordecai would never be a true submissive. An instinct had told him that the day he’d seen him outside the mansion. He didn’t care. He’d take the incredible man he’d just married in any way he could.

He slid his hand from the nape of Mordecai’s neck to his shoulder, and pushed gently. “Suck me.” His voice was deep, throaty, and filled with desire.

Mordecai knelt slowly, but didn’t immediately obey. Instead he kissed Kerr’s thighs, and licked his way up to kiss Kerr’s ball sac. He dragged his tongue slowly up the length of Kerr’s dick, teasing the head with light licks.

A long, low rumble of pleasure came from Kerr’s chest. He reached down, sliding his fingers into Mordecai’s hair, flexing them as his lover’s lips glided over his cock. He could have dictated Mordecai’s rhythm, but chose instead to simply enjoy the sensation.

Mordecai’s hands weren’t idle either. He stroked up and down Kerr’s inner thighs, scratched gently over his ass cheeks, and fondled Kerr’s sac. Given his arousal was already at fever-pitch, Kerr tugged at Mordecai’s hair, and pulled back from the sinfully-talented mouth. “My turn. Stand up.”

As Mordecai rose to his feet, Kerr scooped him into his arms. He laid Mordecai on the bed, and knelt between long, lean thighs. Mordecai’s cock lay against his stomach, hard, red, its head glistening enticingly. With a feral grin,

Kerr leaned forward. He ran his tongue slowly from root to tip, grazing the crown with his teeth to a soft gasp from Mordecai.

Kerr picked up one of the roses. "You teased me. Now it's my turn." He ran the head of the rose over Mordecai's nipples, then swept it across his lover's chest.

"Kerr, please." Mordecai moaned, and thrust his pelvis upwards, but Kerr just continued to smile.

He ran the rose down to Mordecai's legs, sliding it up and down the sensitive inner thighs, then over the ball sac, and finally up and down the length of Mordecai's weeping dick. He leaned down and lapped up the pool of pre-ejaculate that had gathered on his lover's skin. "I dreamed of hearing you beg for my touch. Do you want me inside you, filling you?"

"Yes. Do it." Mordecai groaned.

Kerr kept up the stroking with the rose up and down Mordecai's cock. He paused to take the lid off the amphora. He inhaled the scent of rose. Dipping his finger in, he smiled. Then he realized there were no condoms.

"You're clean, as am I. If either of us weren't there would be condoms with the lube. We will know no other lovers. It's safe. For both of us."

Kerr coated a finger and pressed it cautiously against Mordecai's entrance. His lover groaned as he penetrated Mordecai. The tightness testified to Mordecai's lack of experience. A long time had passed since Kerr had taken a virgin, or as good as virgin, lover to bed.

He prepared Mordecai carefully, slicking and stretching him, until certain it was time to progress. "Ride me," he said. "You keep control that way. More comfortable for you." Kerr leaned back against a pillow against the head of the bed, and waited for Mordecai to straddle him. "You control speed and depth this way."

Mordecai nodded, and reached behind himself to snug the head of Kerr's cock against his entrance. He slid down slowly, taking Kerr into his body. Kerr murmured encouragement and endearments as Mordecai impaled himself to finally sit flush at Kerr's groin.

"Beautiful," Kerr whispered, and kissed Mordecai. He held loosely to his lover's hips, and Mordecai held onto his shoulders as he cautiously rose and fell. Kerr released one hip and took hold of his lover's softened cock, squeezing and stroking as Mordecai rode him.

To Kerr's delight, Mordecai soon found a tempo that suited him. He rode in earnest, sliding easily up and down Kerr's cock until they were both panting heavily, and sweat ran down their chests. The air around them shimmered, and power surged through Kerr.

"We're aligning," Mordecai panted. "Can you feel it? Becoming as one."

Kerr could indeed feel something. His heart hammered to the same frantic beat as Mordecai's and as they gazed into one another's eyes, something deep inside him clicked into place. At that moment everything around him disappeared, only he and Mordecai existed. His world narrowed to the sight, sound, taste, smell and feel of Mordecai.

He knew instinctively that no matter where Mordecai was, he'd find him, that they'd never truly be alone again. They were each a part of the other.

His climax hit him hard, washing over him in wave after wave of pleasure. The sensation was so intense that his whole body jerked. He heard Mordecai cry his name, seconds before his hand was coated in Mordecai's seed. Their orgasm seemed to extend far beyond any he'd ever known.

Slowly his world returned to normal. He opened his eyes, unaware of when they'd closed. Mordecai had collapsed against him. Kerr didn't care that they'd be covered in dried semen if they didn't clean themselves now. He slid down the bed, his cock sliding free of Mordecai's body as he did. He wrapped his arms around his lover and closed his eyes as a sensation of contentment, that went far deeper than mere sexual satiation, enveloped him.

He and Mordecai were bound. In ways as yet he didn't understand, and yet knew to the depths of his soul.

Chapter 9

To Kerr's frustration, his honeymoon only lasted one day. Then Mordecai resumed his studies. As beautiful as the house and its courtyard were, Kerr was bored. He sat outside with his espresso, and pulled out his cell phone. He texted Pete to find out how things were going at his club. The reply only made him more frustrated. Lilith was trying to make it look as if she was taking over. He rang his friend instead.

"What exactly is she saying?"

"That you needed the time because of stress. You're struggling to cope. And not to be surprised to find you're selling up. In which case she'll be in charge of both clubs, so we'd best make sure we mind what she says."

"No one's believing that shit are they?" A wave of guilt rolled over him. He was thinking of selling. But not to Lilith. He needed to sort this out.

"Well, to be honest, she's making her presence well known over here. A couple of patrons have been asking questions. Oh, and some kid said you'd spoken to him recently. He wanted to meet up with you."

Kerr looked up at the ceiling, but no answer mysteriously appeared. He needed to sort this out for himself. "Okay. Look, I'll be there in an hour, or just over. Can you get a message to the kid? Tell him to be there, too, and as many of the crew as can make it."

Kerr wrote a message for Mordecai. He wasn't allowed to disturb his husband while in classes, and the next break wasn't for another four hours. Time enough for him to get to the club and back, and let his people know there was nothing to Lilith's posturing. Neither Mordecai nor Arana would be very happy, but nothing more had been said about the night they ran from the club. He was an Alpha Dom. It was up to him to reassure his people. Arana would do the same in his place, Kerr was sure of it.

He hesitated long enough to grab his car and club keys, and headed out at a run.

Kerr arrived at the club, and looked around the parking spaces. None of them had been used by his staff. Not even Pete's motorcycle was there. He'd

expected a few to have parked there. He shrugged. There were other car parks around. He unlocked the door and went inside. "Hello? Pete? Anybody?"

The club was in darkness, and silence greeted him. Normally if he called a staff meeting, it was done in the club, but he guessed it was possible they were waiting upstairs for him. Especially if the kid was with them.

He headed to the back of the club, and stopped. He felt the hairs on the nape of his neck rise, and goose bumps prickled down both his arms. A voice told him to run. Now. But he carried on, refusing to give in to the scarcely recognised, and seemingly unfounded, sensation of fear.

He stood to one side, balanced on the balls of his feet as the lift door opened, but it was empty. He went inside, and turned the key. The lift rose smoothly, but he flattened himself against the wall of the lift as the door opened. He stepped out into the hallway.

Empty.

He walked cautiously forward. Nothing. No one. No sounds. He pulled out the key to his suite and went inside, pulling the door shut behind him. "Anyone here?" He wasn't surprised this time when there was no reply. Moving forward, he checked his living quarters. They looked as they had when he'd left.

He turned to leave, but Lilith barred his way.

"I thought I heard you. How are you, dear? Feeling better?" Lilith's mocking tone belied her apparent concern.

"There hasn't been anything wrong with me. I just had some things to sort that meant I needed time to myself. I'll be back here soon enough. Where's Pete?"

"By now he'll be home with no memory of ever being here. The same as those he managed to contact. After all, a bloodbath only draws too much attention, don't you think?"

It took a couple of seconds for Kerr to register what she'd said. He stepped back.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"You know who I am. You've worked with me for months. Ever since we knew you were the destined mate of Mordecai."

"We?" Kerr backed away a little more, wanting to give himself ample room to move when the right moment struck.

“My minions and me, of course. Such a shame I couldn’t sway you. You needed to deny who and what you were for that to work. I’d have loved to have you under my heel as my submissive.”

“Not a hope.” Kerr growled the words.

“Mordecai will come for you. Nothing will keep him away.”

Kerr shook his head. “He’s no fool.”

“No he isn’t. That’s why I wanted you bound to him sooner rather than later. He picked up on his friend’s distress. How much more intense do you think it will be for him when it’s the man he loves?”

Kerr moved. He took a minimal run, and aimed a perfect dropkick to Lilith. And simply bounced off her. Her laughter went from shrill cackle to something deep, and menacing.

Kerr rose to his feet, not taking his eyes off her.

“How very amusing. Perhaps you should see my true form?”

Kerr stared as she shifted.

The black leather jumpsuit rippled, and took on a scaled appearance. Kerr swallowed. *Dear God, it’s her skin.* Her hands became talons. Black, leathery wings sprouted behind her. Her legs fused, becoming a huge serpent’s tail. The top of her head widened and flattened, and two black horns curved above each eye. Her eyes became elliptical and glowed red. Her nose vanished, and her jaw narrowed and elongated.

He shuddered as she smiled, to display two rows of long, sharp, teeth.

“There now, much better.”

The voice remained that of Lilith the woman, although Kerr knew now she was anything but a woman.

“What now?” he asked, forcing himself to remain calm. Panicking wouldn’t help him. He had to keep his mind clear, and take whatever opportunities presented themselves.

“Now I hurt you. If Mordecai hasn’t already felt your fear, a scream of agony will most assuredly bring him running.”

“Why?” Kerr demanded. “Why him?”

“Not him alone. Both of you. Together you will be a formidable team. I intend to stop that from happening.”

“Not if we can help it, bitch.”

Lilith vanished with a bellow that turned Kerr's blood to ice as the ground beneath her churned and opened into a deep hole. A white-faced Mithras stood in the doorway.

“Upwards,” he shouted as he ran past Kerr heading for the fire escape.

Kerr followed him, not wasting his breath with questions. As he emerged on the roof, Mordecai was there with Bryne and Arlyn. Bryne grasped one of Mordecai's hands and held out the other to Kerr. He took it and Bryne lifted into the air. Below him Arlyn and Mithras merged their powers of earth and water.

The building collapsed around them as the ground shook and rocked. Water from Arlyn's hands cascaded down, turning earth and brick into mud and sludge. Only a column of earth remained on which Mithras and Arlyn stood until Mithras guided it to the ground. They then ran for a car.

Bryne sank to the ground and as the car screeched to a halt beside them, he shoved Kerr and Mordecai into the back seat alongside Mithras. “She's coming. Go. Go!”

Mordecai had his arms around Kerr, his face buried against his shoulder. Kerr wrapped his lover in a tight embrace, and glanced out of the back window. There was nothing to see. He looked forward. The traffic around them was still, and their vehicle weaved easily in and out of the unmoving cars.

“They can't see us,” Mordecai whispered. “This is why humankind doesn't realise how much we fight for them. We're moving too fast. By the time they realise your club has collapsed, we'll be halfway to the mansion.”

“How can that be explained?” Kerr asked. “Buildings don't just fall down.”

“Sink hole,” Mithras said. “Our elders will make sure that's all it gets recorded as.”

“Lilith said my people wouldn't remember being called,” Kerr said.

“Deleting a memory is easy when something's as simple as that. But if she tried to remove your memory of me, it wouldn't work. Thankfully she spared your people. Her mind was on us.” Mordecai hugged Kerr harder as if afraid Kerr would vanish.

“I'm sorry. This is my fault. I didn't think.” Kerr bent his head forward and kissed the top of his lover's head.

“I’m just glad we’re so attuned that I knew as soon as you left the mansion. That gave us time to decide how to come after you. Arana stayed behind with Era to ready the mansion for defence. We also have some additional elders coming to help.”

“You make it sound like a war,” Kerr said.

“It is,” Bryne said. “She wanted Mordecai. Now she’ll try and take out the mansion as well. ‘The evil Lilith, who causes the hearts of men to go astray and appears in the dream of the night.’”

“You sound like you know her,” Kerr said. “And since you mention it, I was having nightmares, and she did try and seduce me. She must be a powerful witch. That form she took on was horrific.”

“She isn’t a witch,” Bryne said. “She’s a demon, and that’s her true form.”

Kerr looked out of the rear window again. A swirling mass of greys and blackness followed them, obliterating the sight of anything else. “What the fuck...?”

“She’s called on her minions,” Bryne said. “We have to hurry, Arlyn.”

He laid his hand on his brother’s shoulder, and the car lurched forward causing Kerr to tighten his grip on Mordecai. The mansion came into view, but he frowned to see the normal gate missing. The car screeched to a halt across the open gateway.

As they ran from the car towards the house, Kerr saw the reason why the dragon gate was missing. An iron dragon stood guard, flanked by the iron griffins from the stairway. Harsh, grating cries filled the air that made Kerr wince. He glanced back.

Darkness was almost upon them.

Chapter 10

“Stay near me,” Mordecai shouted to Kerr. He bounded up the steps and into the house. Arana stood waiting for them. “She’s right behind us.”

“The other novitiates are with Era. They’re guarding the rear with the other protectors.”

“She’s almost on us,” Mordecai said.

“We’re ready.” Arana gripped Mordecai’s shoulder. “You can help Era if you prefer.”

Mordecai shook his head. “She came after me. I’m not hiding from her, and I’m not leading her to the other novitiates. They’ll have enough without Lilith herself to handle.”

Arana nodded. “Keep Kerr close to you. His strength will help.”

Mordecai started to turn, but Kerr was already at his shoulder. “Stay close,” he whispered.

“No demon bitch is going to take you from me.”

Mordecai didn’t resist as he was pulled into a demanding kiss. “Or you from me,” he said as the kiss ended. He looked around. Arana was closest to the doorway, with Bryne and Arlyn near him. Mithras stood back a little, his face pale, but there was no mistaking his look of determination.

Mordecai readied himself, letting the familiar tingling sensation build up in his body. He glanced down at his hands, and his eyes widened. Sparks glowed around his fingertips already. He closed his eyes, he felt stronger, more focused. He balanced himself on the balls of his feet. *Come on, you bitch. You’re going down.*

Lilith wasn’t first through the door. Her minions came through; shrieking; black, scaly-skinned and the size of sheep, several rushed through, each as different as the next. One had a snout and sharp, curved tusks, another two dog-like heads, a third a snapping maw like a crocodile, but all were intent on attacking his friends.

Bryne and Arlyn used the power of water and air to deal with two, pinning them to the floor while water covered them. Mordecai felt no sympathy or pity. They were mindless demons, and killing them was the only way to deal with

them. Mithras used earth to crush the third, its slavering jaws oozing black blood before finally stilling.

The next set of minions were bigger creatures, winged, with slashing claws and talons, and tails spiked like scorpions. This time Mordecai added his power into the battle. He burnt one to ashes as it leapt for Mithras who was engaged with another.

“Well done, babe,” Kerr whispered.

“My power. It’s so much stronger. Thanks to you, love.” Mordecai risked a quick glance over his shoulder.

For a few moments, all was still. They all looked toward the doorway, waiting for the next wave. “She’s biding her time,” Arana said. “I don’t like it.”

Yells and screams made them turn, just as another set of minions crashed through windows behind them.

“They’ve breached the rear. Be ready. Era will bring the novitiates here. This is our strength.” Arana’s voice boomed out as Mordecai and the others fought the newest attack of demons.

He proved to be correct. Era ushered the rest of the novitiates ahead of her. Mordecai saw they were bruised and bloodied. He looked around, realizing that he and his friends looked no better. All bore at least one wound from the attacking minions. Even Kerr had claw marks down his arm.

His lover drew him into a hug. “It’s okay. We’re all a bit battered, but we’re doing okay.”

Mordecai nodded. Then he crouched ready to use his power as shadows followed the students. Then he stared. A row of tikis stood guard, barring the way into the courtyard. The animated stone carvings reminded Mordecai of large grey gargoyles. The tikis smashed several minions that tried to follow, their stone fists pummelling at mere flesh.

An inhuman shriek sounded, and Mordecai flinched and moved closer to Kerr. His heart hammered so hard against his chest, he was sure it would burst free. Arana moved closer to the door, his *mere* raised and ready to strike. Mordecai could feel Lilith; she was getting closer. “She’s coming,” he yelled.

The warning was almost too late. Arana dived aside just as a huge, black serpent’s tail lashed out, clipping his body, and sending him tumbling across the courtyard. Bryne ran and stood protectively beside him.

The tail curled and writhed, and slowly the rest of Lilith appeared. She was easily eight feet tall as she swayed before them. Mordecai stared at her. She'd changed her appearance again. Her upper body remained black and scaly, but her face was that of a beautiful woman with long, lustrous red hair. She smiled. Her teeth were sharp, and needle-like.

"You could have spared your friends, Mordecai. You should have come to me when you knew your mate was with me. Now they will all die. All except you, and Kerr. You will be powerless once I break Kerr and make him a mindless slave."

"You haven't won yet," Mordecai said, edging forward to keep Kerr behind him.

Lilith's laughter was shrill and piercing, and made him wince.

"My dear child, look around you. Do you really think a handful of mere babes can withstand me? Perhaps I should start with this one. He meant enough to you to make you come running last time."

Lilith swung around to tower over Mithras who'd been separated from the rest of the group. As she reached for him with deadly talons, Mordecai unleashed a ball of fire that struck Lilith, just as Mithras sent up a cloud of dust.

Lilith shrieked as the dust blinded her and the fire ignited her hair. She swung around, her lips drawn back to bare her teeth.

"Kerr. Hold my hand, but try and keep it hidden. Then Mithras', and tell him to grab hold of someone else and do the same, until we're all holding hands. I have an idea."

It took only a moment for Mordecai's instruction to be followed. Arana was the last. He nodded at Mordecai.

"Oh, how deeply touching." Lilith mocked as she swayed side to side. "All of your friends lined up. All the easier for me to kill."

Mordecai didn't look at her. He felt the bond he shared with Kerr. But more than that. He felt the power of all the elements coursing through him. He raised his head, and took a step forward.

"You're killing no one today."

The ground behind Lilith opened and the iron dragon rose up. It snapped at Lilith's tail, severing part in one crunching bite. The dragon twisted and sank

its teeth deep into the undulating flesh as Lilith screamed, and black blood splattered the courtyard.

Mordecai drew on the strength of each novitiate, as well as the tutors. He felt as if he was taller than Lilith, as if he was looking down on her. He murmured an incantation, and sent a ball of energy to strike her in the chest.

A vacuum surrounded her, water cascaded over her, fire enveloped her, and she was dragged below ground, the earth filling the hole as she vanished.

For long minutes no one moved. Waiting, watching, staring at the ground where Lilith had vanished.

“She’s gone. We’re safe.” Arana came forward. “I can’t feel her. Mordecai, can you?”

Blinking, Mordecai concentrated for a few seconds, and then shook his head. “No. I don’t feel her either.”

“Is she dead?” Kerr asked.

“Unfortunately, no,” Arana said. “We weren’t adequately armed to actually destroy a demon. But with the arrival of the elders I called for, we will be. Just in case she tries again.”

“You think she will?” Kerr wrapped an arm around Mordecai who leaned into the welcome embrace.

“I can’t say for sure. The strength Mordecai exhibited may have come from ten novitiates and four tutors combined, but the fact he was able to deal with it, and use it so effectively, may encourage her to look for easier prey. If proof was needed about your place at his side, Kerr, this was it.”

Mordecai gazed up into his lover’s tawny eyes. “I couldn’t have done it without you.”

Slowly they all made their way out into the mansion’s grounds, and looked around. Minions lay dead or dying. The iron griffins and a couple of stone tikis dealt with any still moving. A man and woman, dressed in black, came from the back of the house. Mordecai recognized the man as an Elder of great power who’d visited his previous college.

“Sorry we didn’t get here sooner. None of the minions around the back will bother you again. The guardians are dealing with those left here. Congratulations, Mordecai. You coped excellently. Your mate complements

you perfectly. We would have helped if we thought you needed it. You have a great future ahead of you.”

Mordecai flushed with pride at the accolade. “Thank you, Elder.”

“Arana, good to see you,” the Elder said. “Although I wish the circumstances were better. Let’s leave the guardians to deal with the minions, while we tend to your novitiates. Then I think they all need to rest.”

“If it’s all the same to you,” Kerr said. “I’d like to tend to Mordecai personally.”

Mordecai smiled and leaned into his husband’s side. “I think I’d like that, too.”

“Go,” Arana said. “We’ll be safe now. I and the rest of the tutors will have the place back to normal. If you need us, we’ll be around through the night.”

“Thank you.” Mordecai slid his hand into Kerr’s. He was quite sure the only thing he needed was his husband.

They walked to their room, and Mordecai offered no resistance as Kerr pulled him into a hard kiss.

“I want you.” Kerr’s voice was husky, filled with need, and Mordecai wanted to give himself to his beloved mate. Wanted Kerr to take control.

“Take me,” Mordecai whispered.

To his surprise, Kerr scooped him into his arms and laid him on the bed. Kerr stripped first, teasing Mordecai by flexing his muscles, and stroking his cock as he tossed his clothing aside. But when Mordecai reached to undress, Kerr shook his head.

“Mine.”

Mordecai didn’t argue, and Kerr kissed him repeatedly as he removed his clothing. By the time Mordecai was naked, he was aching to have Kerr inside him. Kerr positioned him on all fours, and traced the fire tattoo with his tongue, before licking down and over Mordecai’s ass.

With a final nip to his left cheek, Kerr moved back. Mordecai rolled onto his back at Kerr’s command, and moaned softly as Kerr sucked him, rolling his balls before finally sinking a lube-slick finger inside him. “Please, Kerr.”

Mordecai wasn't above begging, but Kerr didn't speed up, stretching him slowly and carefully.

Finally Kerr withdrew his fingers, and coated his dick liberally. "Lie back and enjoy the ride, babe," he whispered.

Long, slow deep thrusts alternated with short, sharp, staccato jabs, of Kerr burying his cock deep inside Mordecai and grinding his hips. There was nothing Mordecai could do, except lie back and enjoy the ride. His legs rested on Kerr's broad shoulders, and Kerr had also pinned his wrists to the bed in one of his large hands.

His cock was trapped between their stomachs, but there was enough friction for him to enjoy, even not having Kerr's hand stroke him. He keened softly as Kerr changed his angle, giving Mordecai's prostate a work out.

Mordecai closed his eyes; he was teetering on the edge and couldn't hold out much longer.

"Let it go," Kerr murmured. "Give in to it. I'm here to catch you."

With a cry of Kerr's name, Mordecai came hard. His body shuddered through a powerful climax as his world turned white and the only sound was the blood pounding in his ears. He dimly heard Kerr call his name as the flesh inside him swelled and Kerr's seed flooded his body.

Mordecai's legs were leaden as Kerr eased them from his shoulders. Mordecai grasped Kerr's shoulders and pulled him against his chest. "I love you," he whispered.

"I love you," Kerr said as he pillowed his head against Mordecai's shoulder.

Mordecai stroked Kerr's shoulders and back. They'd faced their first test as a bound couple, and passed. He knew there would be more battles, more dangers, but with Kerr at his side, Mordecai wasn't afraid to face any of them.

The End

Author Bio

Pelaam lives in clean, green New Zealand and is a multi-published author of gay romance and erotica. When not writing, Pelaam can be found indulging in her other passions as a foodie and wine buff.

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