

ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS

ELLORA'S CAVE
Quickies

MAGICK MEN:
A SHOT OF MAGICK
RHYANNON BYRD

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MAGICK MEN: A SHOT OF MAGICK

Rhyannon Byrd

Chapter One

Lachlan McKendrick awoke in an agony of sensation—his tall, powerful body shuddering with the lingering memories of mind-blowing sex.

He had dreamt of her again last night.

Not one of those fleeting dreams, like the whisper of a butterfly's wings that hovered at the nebulous edges of your consciousness. No, this had been a white-hot, raging blast of physical sensation that had tormented him the whole night through, scraping down his nerve endings like a vicious force of nature.

She'd come to him in brutal, sweet visions of flesh, lust and need—an angel from hell who had tortured his senses—and last night had been particularly painful.

No sooner than his eyes had closed, his cock already hard from thinking of her, had he heard her husky voice whispering in his ear, the sound ethereal and far away, although her breath was sweetly erotic against his hot skin.

"Is this for me?" she'd drawled, her slender hand wrapping around the wide base of his cock, not afraid to grip him with a strong, tight pull as she'd milked the long length, wringing rough shouts of pleasure from his throat. He'd bucked beneath her, his big hands biting into her flesh, desperate to keep her where he could fuck her to his heart's content.

Her fingers had tightened, her thumb stroking across the broad head of his aching cock, smearing the salty moisture streaming there from the slit, driving him insane. "You're a witch," he'd gritted through his clenched teeth, the guttural words being torn from his soul. "And if you're not careful, I'm going to be fucking you like one."

She'd given a throaty laugh, moving against him in a delicious press of flesh against flesh, and he'd felt the slippery sweet cream spilling from her cunt, dripping down the insides of her strong, lean thighs as she'd wrapped herself around him.

“You don’t scare me,” she’d murmured thickly. Her tongue had licked a line of fire from his ear to his collar bone, taking gentle nips from his warm flesh, her wicked hands holding tight to his throbbing cock. “Do with me as you dare, Magic Man. I can take you. All that you ache for – whatever you need – I want to be the one who gives it to you.”

The seductive words had cut loose his tenuous control and he’d eagerly swallowed down her sharp gasp of surprise as his mouth had taken ownership of her own. His tongue invading like a sword, he had deftly flipped her beneath him.

“Now!” she’d cried into his mouth, her nimble tongue tangling with his, her desperation just as needy, just as violent in its quest for satisfaction. She’d spread her legs wide, lifting her hips, trying to take the too long, too thick mass of his cock within her hungry pussy, but he hadn’t been ready to ease her ache so soon.

Ignoring her snarling groan of frustration and pulling hands, Lach had licked his way down her shivering length, feasting upon the taste of need riding her so high. He loved that he was the only man who could make her burn. The only one who could make her scream her pleasure. She didn’t need to tell him he was the first lover who’d made her come – her pleading body told him all he needed to know.

He’d sucked gently at the soft skin just above her sexy little patch of blonde curls, the honey swirls of hair already glistening with the juices creaming from her delectable, sopping cunt, assaulting his senses. “Oh shit,” he heard her moan, and he couldn’t help but smile against her fevered skin. She was such a pleasure; one he longed to gorge himself on over and over in an eternity of forevers.

His hands had held her silky thighs spread wide as he’d shifted to look down at her. His nostrils flared as he’d devoured the beauty of her drenched flesh. He’d never known a woman who appealed to him more, as if she’d been made just for him, from the demure pink lips, wet with cream, to the tight bud of her clit, berry red and ripe to bursting. And the tiny hole he loved best of all. The intoxicating taste, like warm melted sugar and strawberries. The way it gasped like a little mouth, aching to be ripped

open—fucked till she shouted and screamed and writhed in the throes of ecstasy. The way cream spilled as he had lapped it into frenzy and then had dribbled down his throat with the first plunge of his tongue as it dug deep inside.

He had teased her, eating at the pulsing flesh until she'd pulled his hair, shouting, "Now, damn it! I said now!"

"Such a bloodthirsty little bitch," he'd laughed, covering her trembling body with his own. He'd nestled the huge round head of his cock within the sweet, cream-covered lips, pinned her grasping hands high above her head, and taken her as hard as he dared, knowing in his dreams he could not harm her.

He'd pounded—slammed her with his cock, forcing himself through the delicious clench of her tight pussy, nudging her womb. He'd ridden her writhing body with all his power, reaching between them to spread the puffy sweet lips of her cunt farther apart, holding them wide, wanting her to feel every inch—every slide of his engorged penis. Over and over he'd buried himself to the root, cramming her full of cock till she was blood red and gasping, the rhythmic clenching of her pussy pulling feral, beastly sounds from his throat.

The orgasm had gathered in the roots of his soul, blazing through his blood, scorching and urgent and full as he'd ground against her soft womanly body, praying for the release he knew would never come.

It never did.

And last night was no different.

He had woken up alone and aching. His throbbing cock standing tall and angry, furious at fate for teasing him with a taste of the one woman he couldn't have.

"Fuck!" he'd roared through the silence of his room, throwing off the sweat-soaked sheets that had still smelled of her cream and grabbing the nearest clothes he could find.

At six-five, he was tall and mean and muscle-honed from all the long, grueling hours he spent training other *Magicks*—Warlocks and Witches—in the arts of combat and self-defense. He had thick, reddish-brown hair that he normally kept trimmed

much shorter than his outrageous cousins, light green eyes, and golden skin. He was well-dressed, always in control of his strong, passionate emotions, and wealthy enough to afford any luxury he wanted, from houses to cars to women. Though sex was one thing he'd never had to pay for.

He'd always had a look of danger, but now that look took on a more sinister character. His hair was longer, shaggy around the strong bones of his face, jaw dark with auburn stubble, big body wrapped up in ragged jeans, a black T-shirt, and big black boots as he left his house to pace the early, fog-filled streets of Edinburgh.

He looked like the kind of man you wouldn't want to meet in a dark alley, and he felt like one as well. And to be honest, he didn't know how much more of this he could take.

You'll take as much as you have to, man, his Warrior's pride warned. Because you canna let those blasted fools win. Not this time! You've pledged them your bloody loyalty, but they havenna any claim on your cock!

Yeah, well, too bad the governing High Council of Magicks—made up of his five outrageous uncles—thought otherwise.

They'd put a bloody curse on him, the well-meaning fools. One that changed his women into fucking animals every time he shot his blasted load. And the only way around it was to find his *bith-bhuan gra*—his soul mate.

His uncles, it seemed, had taken it upon themselves to ensure that he stopped sowing wild oats and began planting a few instead.

In the belly of the right woman, of course.

It was intolerable. He was so full of sexual frustration his skin felt like it was about to burst. Hot, tight, and disturbingly prickly, like an itch beneath the surface that remained just beyond his reach. He'd tried alleviating the painful pressure on his balls himself, taking matters into his own big hands, but ended up putting his fist through his shower wall when he'd been unable to bring release.

That was apparently yet another one of the Council's twisted concoctions. According to their sadistic curse, he could only achieve an orgasm with a woman. And if he didn't want to find himself shooting his cursed load of magic in front of another friggin' furry pet, he had to find the true woman – whatever the hell that meant.

It means we're royally fucked, man, his pride chimed in again. Completely screwed.

"Shut up, will you," he growled, wondering when he'd become crazy enough to argue with himself.

The Council Leader, his Uncle Seamus, wasn't seeing him or taking his calls, which left him to rely on his cousin Kieran for information.

There wasn't much. And looking back on it, Lach could only thank Saephus he hadn't actually been inside any of the five Witches he'd bedded, or *Cailleachs* as his people called them, at the time of release or he'd probably be sentenced to death right now for assassinating his elders. So far there'd been a cat, a monkey, a goat, then a goddamn smelly sheep (he was Scottish, but he wasn't *that* bloody Scottish), and finally a foaming at the mouth Rottweiler. That particular occasion had turned out even worse than those before it. Becca was a big enough bitch on the best of days, and it'd cost him a tetanus shot and five stitches for the fucking bite she'd put in his leg.

Because the wound had been made by another *Magick*, he hadn't been able to use his own power to heal it.

And the dreams, well, they were their own kind of torture.

The whole situation was ludicrous, especially for one as powerful as he. Why not Kieran or Dugan, Mal or Blu? One of his wild cousins who would laugh it off and go with the flow, or at least not kill themselves thrashing against it.

And to make matters worse, he was beginning to believe there wasn't enough magic in the world to save him.

“If there was,” he snarled beneath his breath, “I’d have bloody found it by now. I’d be fucking myself blue, instead o’ wasting my time lusting after a woman I canna have!”

He’d been walking the barren streets of the city for hours now, searching for answers, huddled within a black leather jacket, the biting cold of the wind stinging against his face as it whipped around his head. And yet, a part of him—a part he didn’t want to admit was there—knew he was waiting for the hour of seven to roll around once again. Then he’d find himself standing in the doorway of The Wicked Brew, his eyes hungry for just a glimpse of the one thing that brought him even a glimmer of peace these days.

He’d found *her* three weeks ago, when he was on a walk just like this one. And he’d dreamed of her each night since.

There was only one problem.

Well, one on top of the fact that his uncles had plagued him with a freaking curse on his cock and he couldn’t screw without shooting a load of magic that turned his women into angry animals, leaving them craving a piece of his ass to chew on.

His balls were blue, his time was running out, and instead of searching for the true *Cailleach*—his *bith-bhuan gra*—he’d become obsessed with *her*. She was goddamn fascinating, beautiful and intelligent and spirited as hell. So different from any woman he’d ever known before.

There was just that one minor, somewhat unfortunate detail.

The woman who haunted his sleep and every waking hour was not a *Magick*.

She was not of his kind.

No, the woman of his dreams was a fucking mortal.

Chapter Two

Lach stood before the door of the café undecided, longing to go in every bit as much as he wanted to run like hell in the opposite direction. It was an internal struggle mired in lust and fear and the strange need to protect the little mortal from a power that was far too dangerous to risk her with.

And, of course, he couldn't discount the unfathomable fact that he was unequivocally scared shitless of her.

He didn't understand it, this bizarre effect she had on him.

The only thing he did know with any degree of certainty was that if he'd had his way, he'd have fucked her at that first intoxicating smile, regardless of the obstacles. And there were plenty. His family, this infuriating curse, and that whole mortal thing.

He didn't do mortals.

At least he never had before. His power was formidable to most *Magicks*, his size and strength overwhelming to even the strongest of the *Cailleachs*.

But to a human?

Well, he'd always known he could be damn near deadly.

So he'd never traveled down that particular sexual road before, and to be honest, he'd never really cared to.

Until now.

But he couldn't do it. Only Saephus knew what the load of magic erupting from his cock these days would do to a human mortal if he tried to fuck her.

And the worst part of all was that she wanted him too. She wanted to be ridden just like in his dreams, crammed so full of cock she could barely breathe.

The first time he had ever set eyes on her he'd known. He'd smelled her erotic scent, seen it in the heat of her eyes and the sensual curve of her lips the moment they first came face to face. He'd been out prowling the early morning streets when he'd wandered into the quirky shop and found her standing behind the counter, laughing with another customer. He'd been longing for some relief from this continual nightmare, his leg burning with stitches and his cock on the verge of implosion, and there she was.

It'd been an instantaneous reaction, from the physical surge of his pulse to the emotional clenching of his heart. Something inside of him had recognized her on every level as a man, and he'd been back every goddamn day since.

Yeah, his pride grumbled. Because you canna stay away.

She'd become an addiction, and at this point, despite the incessant need for her ripping at his insides, she was the only thing that gave him a moment of calm. He was hooked, craving that warm feeling of belonging she invoked in him like a junkie hungered for his fix.

All he had to do was see her and it was as if a shroud of contentment fell over him. Something steady and comforting, like home. And yet, at the same time it was as volatile and raging as the molten belly of a volcano, twisting him with physical need.

It was fucking pathetic. Here he was, the most powerful of the *Magicks*, and he'd been reduced to hovering on the doorstep of a mortal café, afraid of entering the world of the *gnach* because of one puny little female.

"Fuck this," he growled beneath his breath, shaking off the dramatic musings of his over-exhausted mind. He may not have figured out a way around the fucking curse, but he could sure as hell handle a woman.

With that thought in mind, Lach squared his shoulders and walked inside, hoping to inconspicuously disappear into a dark corner, but for a man of his size and bearing, not to mention his rugged good looks, it was impossible to go unnoticed.

He hadn't taken two steps past the threshold before she looked up at him, smiled her siren smile, and murmured, "Hey, Magic Man."

She'd called him that from the first, though he wasn't sure why. There was no way in hell she could know what he really was, or how true a nickname she'd chosen.

Despite his resolve to remain unaffected, the mortal's smile hit him like a flash of heat spilling through his cold bones, beating against the rhythm of his heart.

Without warning he had a sudden flashback to one of his dreams. "Mmm," she'd drawled, her wicked tongue taking hungry licks of his throbbing flesh. "I love your taste, your shape, your size. You've a beautiful cock, Lachlan McKendrick, and I want it to belong to me, as does your heart."

Then she'd stuffed her mouth full of him, swallowing down his shaft till he could swear he'd hit the back of her throat. But it wasn't just the amount of cock she could swallow when so many women could barely take half of a man his size. No, it was the way she sucked at him so greedily, as if she took as much pleasure as he did, her pink tongue rooting into the slit, always eager for his taste.

And the little hum in the back of her throat drove him wild. He fantasized about what it'd be like to be able to fill that humming little mouth full of scalding come. To feel her cheeks and tongue and throat working as she swallowed him down with greedy satisfaction.

Saephus, it'd be so good it'd probably kill him.

"What can I get ya?" she asked, ripping him back to the present, and his cock demanded he answer, "You."

He only just managed to resist the dangerous impulse. Or better yet, push her to her knees, pull out his monstrous hard-on, and let her show him just how much she loved swallowing. Instead, he mumbled, "Colombian. Black. No sugar," and stalked off to the corner table by the window.

He faced the street, trying to ignore the shudder of need her husky voice sent through him each and every damn time she spoke to him. Of course, he was no more

successful today than at any other time over the last three weeks. His cock grew long and hard and thick within the confines of his jeans, and he wondered for the thousandth time how he was going to survive never having this woman beneath him, her legs spread wide, delectable cunt open—wet and aching, just waiting for him to fuck the shit out of her.

The image was so clear in his mind he could almost taste the juices spilling sweetly over his tongue, sliding down his throat, filling his belly. Behind him, she gave a throaty laugh at his usual cranky reply and there was an answering twitch in his jeans, his cock insistent in its demand for satisfaction.

“Goddamn traitorous body part,” he grumbled beneath his breath, knowing the fucking thing was going to be the death of him. She set his steaming cup before him, making his head spin as her teasing feminine scent hit him hard, assaulting his already bruised senses.

Against his will, he looked up at her reflection in the window, the hazy picture in no way diminishing the impact of her face and figure on his aching body. She was beautiful, yes, but he’d had beautiful women before and they’d never had this kind of effect on him.

Women were a pleasant pastime, a necessary recreation meant to be enjoyed and then set aside for the next in line. They were not—*not*—meant to be hungered for. They were not things that he *needed*. And they sure as hell weren’t the objects of his obsession.

Except for this one.

Her figure was firm, yet seductively lithe. Not particularly tall, but then neither was she short. She was, in the most mundane of phrases, the perfect height, and with all the right curves in between. Then there was the blushing golden skin—which he knew would go raging red when she creamed for him—hair the color gold of a good whiskey, and those damn eyes. Ice gray, ringed with a deeper charcoal, framed by fine arched

brows and thick lashes. And when they looked directly at you, it felt like a fucking lick of fire down your spine.

It was a burn he couldn't get out from under his skin.

She held his stare in the window, waiting it seemed, as if expecting—or maybe hoping for something from him, but finally relented with another lift of her lips and walked back to her station behind the counter, resuming her work as if they hadn't just filled the steamy interior of the café with enough physical heat to warm the whole blasted city. The answering twist of his gut drew the lines of his scowl deeper, so that he looked on the verge of a thunderous rage when Kieran found him but a moment later.

His cousin stood beside the small table, his own irritated expression revealing his personal frustrations. "If you're not going to answer your fucking phone, Cousin, then why in Saephus' name did you give me the blasted number in the first place?"

Lach took a slow sip of coffee, watching beneath his brows as Kieran angrily crammed his big body into the seat across from him. "Maybe because I havenna felt like talking?"

Kieran's look was deep and direct. "And if I'd had something important to say?"

He snorted. "Then you'd have known how to find me, which is exactly what you've done. Now, isn't it?"

Black hair flowed over broad shoulders as Kieran shook his head. "Och, but you havenna made it easy, Lach. It's times like this I wonder why I even bother with you." But they knew it was a lie. They'd been the best of friends their entire lives; either would have gladly given their blood for the other. Though these days, Lach wasn't sure just how much his blood was worth anymore. Taking another needed shot of caffeine, he decided to get the bad news over and done with.

"Your meeting with the almighty Council last night?" he drawled, his deep voice thick with sarcasm. "Were you able to discover anything new from our esteemed elders?"

This time it was Kieran's turn to give a snort of disgust as he slouched back against the gleaming wood of the chair, his big hands slapping against the surface of the table. "Those miserable old fools won't relent, Lach. Not even my father would budge on the issue. I talked myself blue and they still won't give a fucking inch. The curse stays until we find a way around it."

A growl of frustration rumbled from Lach's throat, the infuriating news combined with the mortal's intoxicating nearness pushing him to the limits of his fraying control.

"Fuck! Do they think I'm going to just keel over to their harebrained schemes and let them dictate my life? Do those stubborn idiots even understand what they're dealing with here?"

The grooves around his mouth and at the corners of his eyes grew deeper, the exhausting effort it took to control himself clearly taking its toll. He looked bleak, angry and dangerous, like a man who'd reached his limit and would soon have nothing left to lose.

He stared into the steaming darkness of his coffee, his big fingers tight around the thick white mug in his hand. "I don't know how much more of this I can tolerate, Kieran. This miserable fucking mess is going to push me too far, and then we're all going to pay for their meddling."

And it wasn't just the not screwing part that was driving him crazy. No, it was the fact that he wasn't screwing the little mortal working behind him. Her image remained powerfully clear in his mind even when he wasn't looking at her, as if it'd been burned into his subconscious for an eternity of torture.

"They're nearing the end," Kieran murmured, studying him out of eyes that were far too dark and wise for his slightly younger years. "I know you're pissed, and you have a good right to be, but what they've done, they've done outta love. They want to see the family secured, the McKendrick line assured for the future, and you're the oldest power."

Lach was too furious to listen to excuses and diplomacy, his emotions strung too tight. “And will you be so gracious when your own turn comes?” he snarled, his eyes glowing red, raging and ready for a fight.

Kieran’s mouth twisted with dark humor. “So long as they dinna try to mate me with something that has more legs than I do – and more hair, I’ll try.”

The glow softened, but a slow burn still smoldered in the light green depths of his Warlock eyes. “So you say now, but it’ll be interesting to see what happens when it’s your own life they’re pulling the strings on.”

“And you’ll be there to enjoy my misery, won’t you?”

The corner of Lach’s mouth kicked up in a reluctant, answering grin. “Smiling like a jackass,” he muttered beneath his breath.

Kieran’s rough laugh burst out over the gentle noise of the café, and Lach watched in the window’s reflection as the mortal looked over to their table, her gaze curious – and as always, as hungry as his own. She walked to him, one hand holding a carafe to refill his cup, but he knew it was only a ruse. He could smell her need for him in the coffee-scented air, strong and pure, and knew he was scenting just as heavily. They were like two beasts in heat, just waiting to tear into one another.

“You know, you should try that more often,” she murmured, bending close to fill his cup. Bloody hell, it was all he could do not to lean forward and take a big ol’ meaty taste of the luscious, cotton covered breast swaying just inches from his mouth, swallowing her down in one ravenous bite. He knew she’d taste like sin, and be just as deadly to his senses.

His lips curled in a snarl, his only defense against her. “Do what?”

She licked her bottom lip, watching his smoldering eyes follow the teasing movement, and the corner of her own beautiful mouth kicked up. “Smile. It almost makes you look half-human.”

He tried not to watch her as she walked away, her gait as smoothly seductive and natural as the woman herself. For both his sanity and her safety, he needed to look

away, but it was an impossible desire. Fuck, he couldn't keep his goddamn eyes off her. And he wasn't the only one aware of his preoccupation with the honey-blonde, gray-eyed mortal.

Across from him, Kieran made a humming noise of interest. "What's bothering you, cousin?"

Lach growled, raising one dark auburn brow. "You have to ask?"

"I mean—the little American beauty, Lach. The one you can't drag your blasted eyes off."

He downed the fresh coffee like it was a much needed shot of tequila. "Keep out of it, Kieran. Trust me; I'm not in the mood."

His cousin's black brow mirrored his own. Kieran looked over at the woman, giving her a long, hot look that traveled all the way from her toes to the side part in her silky tresses. He whistled beneath his breath, the low sound filled with appreciative suggestion. "Now don't be gettin' all testy on me, Lach. She is a fine one, I'll give you that. Beautiful breasts. Nice ass. I like her coloring too." He looked back to his scowling cousin, smiling like the devil he was. "If you're not interested in her, man, I'd be happy to—"

"Don't even think about it."

Kieran slouched further into his chair, crossing his brawny arms across the wide width of his chest while he studied his cousin with curious fascination.

"You never minded sharing before."

"I do now," Lach growled, his tone betraying his unusual possessiveness.

"So it seems, cousin. And does the mystery lady have a name?"

His entire body vibrated with tension. "Evan," he finally grunted, his reluctance to share even this much of her obvious in the biting enunciation of each syllable as it passed his lips. And he didn't like thinking of her by name, finding it necessary to keep

that impersonal distance, needing the constant reminder that she was not *Magick*, but mortal, and thereby out of his reach. "Evan Hayes."

The woman in question reached up to pull down a mug from one of the top shelves, her sensuous figure stretching in a seductive arc that Kieran, as a lusty man, couldn't help but notice. He studied her closely, and all too easily came to an understanding of Lach's preoccupation with the little mortal. And was maybe even just that tad bit resentful that he hadn't seen her first. "So the lovely Evan's all your own, eh?"

The grooves went deeper, mouth compressed to an impossibly hard line. "No, she's not." But despite his words, his look clearly said otherwise.

"Hmm?"

Saephus, he couldn't take much more of this. Kieran was driving him outta his blasted mind, while little Evan Hayes made his goddamn gut ache with hunger, not to mention his friggin' cock. One look at her and he was loaded and ready to blow. It was fucking insanity what this mere mortal could do to him. But then, there wasn't a damn "mere" thing about her either.

"Hmm, what, damn it?"

"Has it not occurred to you that she might be the one?"

Just then Evan laughed with a man at the counter, giving him one of her warm, killer smiles, and Lach clenched his hands into fists, struggling to hold in his possessive need to blast the bastard into another dimension. He could read him as clear as day, his lust as evident as the smarmy smile spreading across his boyish face. Any second now and the weakling would get a load of magic right up his bloody ass.

With obvious distraction, he mumbled, "The one what?"

Kieran laughed beneath his breath. "For such a fucking genius, cousin, you can be damn blind when you choose to be. The *one*, Lach. As in the answer to your wee problem with the Council."

Lach looked back at him, his shock easy to read for one who knew him as well as Kieran. "Did it escape your notice that she's a blasted mortal?"

"So? Who said your *bith-bhuan gra* had to be a witch?"

"Excuse me?"

Kieran shrugged, ignoring the deadly tone of his cousin's voice. "I'm just saying they dinna say *Cailleach*. She doesn't have to be a witch."

Lach's big, muscle-packed body shuddered with tension, and the lights of the café flickered above them.

"What the fuck does that mean?"

"It means, you stubborn ass, that your *bith-bhuan gra* could be just a woman."

Lach stared, his expression held tight, as if unwilling to let himself understand, and Kieran sighed with frustration. "A mortal woman, cousin. Och, havenna you questioned why you keep coming back to this place day after day? And I canna say I've ever seen you stare at a woman, *Magick* or mortal, the way you've been eyeing that wee lass. I'm thinking the answer might be right before your eyes, and you're just being too fucking stubborn to see it."

A fine anticipation rippled beneath his skin, radiating power like the lethal grace of a panther as it paced its cage, awaiting fresh meat. Any second now and he was going to pounce.

"No." Just one word, rough with force, thick with fear. "No fucking way."

Evan looked toward them at the sudden outburst, and Kieran couldn't resist the temptation to wink at her, finding it too much fun to push Lach's buttons when it'd always been impossible to get a rise out of him before. Maybe this pretty little mortal was just what his too serious cousin needed. She blushed a pretty shade of pink at his obvious interest, but had enough spunk to return his smile instead of slinking away, and Kieran decided he liked her. Yeah, he was starting to get a real clear picture of why

Lach had been skulking back to this place day after day, suffering the constant mortal contact.

“Get your fucking eyes off her or I canna be responsible for what I do to you, Kieran.” The words were so guttural they were barely intelligible.

Kieran seemed to consider the threat—then gave another devilish grin. “You’d fight me for her, would you, even while saying she canna be your own?” His grin widened, black eyes bright with power. “Stop being a blind fool, cousin. The lass is already yours.”

Lach rose to his feet in a blur of movement—his chair tumbling back against the floor in a loud, scraping crash of wood against stone—and stared down at his friend and family, knowing that what he was about to say was nothing but the absolute truth.

“Lay a hand on her, Kieran, and I’ll kill you. I’ll fucking rip you limb from limb.”

With that powerful threat, he tossed a ten note down on the table and stalked out through the door of the café, back into the bitter cold and the newly fallen snow. And despite the ache in his gut to take one last glance at her to hold him over till tomorrow, he never once looked back.

Chapter Three

Evan stood at the counter, nibbling her lower lip, two tickets to the Edinburgh Theater for the night's performance clutched in her hand. One of the café's regulars had something come up and so she'd offered the tickets to Evan if she wanted them.

She'd taken them eagerly. And though she loved the theater, Evan couldn't have cared less what the tickets were for, so long as they gave her the opening she'd been looking for.

She had to find a way to reach her *Magic Man*, because of all the men she'd ever known, he was the only who made her *burn*.

The only one who called to her heart and made her physically ache with hunger—like an empty, needy void within her that only he could fill. No matter that the gorgeous creature tormented her daily with his cold detachment and deliberate avoidance.

It wasn't that he didn't notice her. That was what drove her most crazy. So crazy that there were times it would've been pretty satisfying to tell the gorgeous jerk just to fuck off and kiss her little American ass, then go and find another sexy Scot to slake her lust. Maybe even the black-haired beauty still sitting at the table, studying her with those mesmerizing midnight eyes. He had a look about him that said he knew how to fuck a woman into oblivion, steeping her in pounding pleasure, but her goddamn body just wasn't biting at the bait.

It wanted Lachlan McKendrick. Case closed. No second choices, no matter how good they looked. It didn't care that he was the most infuriating man she'd ever known; it only cared that she get him between her legs, buried deep inside, and keep him there for as long as humanly possible.

A slow smile spread across her face at the thought.

Oh yeah, her body couldn't care less that he was a total shit. Three weeks of flirting with the tall Scottish stud and zilch. Not a goddamn thing. Nothing—except for that occasional look, the one she'd catch him giving her when he thought she wasn't paying him any attention. God, it was incredible. Dark and hungry and dangerous, like he'd do anything to have her naked and in his arms, his to do with as he pleased. Her cunt would go warm and creamy, drenching her panties, aching to be fucked, and all because the bastard had looked at her with those magical green eyes.

He tried to play it so cool, but it was those looks that always gave him away.

She saw those same looks in her sleep, when her sex-starved body would dream of him in vivid, heart-pounding detail and her throat would go dry from her cries of passion.

And to make it worse, she could see glimpses of the man he really was buried beneath the seething mask of discontent he wore like a shield, hiding from the world.

Hiding from her.

She wanted to know that man buried within the distant stranger. She *needed* to know him. For some bizarre reason, he felt like a part of her. Her body didn't care that they were strangers, didn't care their relationship consisted of little more than casual exchanges and carnal looks.

Hell, it wasn't all that concerned with the fact she had some serious doubts as to whether he was even human in the first place. She'd always been fascinated by the mystical, but she'd never known just how far into lust she could fall for someone who she was certain wasn't altogether human.

Not that she'd seen him sprout wings or perform magical acts of wonder, but there was an air of magic about him all the same. Something he wore like a second skin and it touched her every time he was near, like a whisper of sound, stroking her senses. It warned of formidable power and strength, but it didn't scare her. If anything, it drew her to him in a way she'd never been drawn to any man before. She'd called him Magic Man from the first day they'd met, and the name definitely fit. And after seeing how

uncomfortable it made him, the teasing nickname had quickly become too much fun to resist.

But it didn't really matter *what* he was; she wanted him. He could've been the Jolly Green Giant for all her sex glands cared, and they still would've gone into cream melting overdrive every time she laid eyes on him.

He was hers.

Hers.

And now she was just letting him walk away again without doing a goddamn thing to move this thing forward. The beautiful black-haired one sat at the table, his glittering black eyes watching her like prey, anticipating her next move, curious to see what she'd do.

It *was* her move, and there really wasn't any question about what it was going to be.

You know what you want, honey, her hungry libido groaned. Now go and get it!

Damn straight, she thought, and it felt good to finally be taking some action.

By the time she hit the cobblestone sidewalk, he was already turning right at the corner. "Hey, wait!" she called out.

In her rush to reach him in time, she'd run out without her coat and the crushing cold ripped right through her, freezing her to the bone. But he'd stopped at the sound of her voice, standing at the corner, watching out of hooded eyes as she ran after him, and the look burning in those smoldering green depths almost made her forget the miserable Scottish winter raging around her.

When she reached him, her lungs were aching from the cold and she could barely feel her fingers. Of course, being a man, he didn't seem to notice. No, his green eyes had shot straight to the hard tips of her nipples, staring hungrily at the way they pressed against the thin gray cotton of her shirt. The greedy way he looked at her only made them pull tighter, until her breasts felt heavy and aching for the touch of his lips and tongue and teeth.

An uncontrollable moaning noise of physical hunger purred beneath her breath and his eyes ripped back up to hers at the erotic sound.

Then an answering grunt burst from his throat and he snarled, "What in the hell are you doing?"

Evan thrust the tickets into his hand, her cool fingers deliberately brushing against his hot skin. "I wanted to invite you to the theater tonight."

She watched as he looked down at the tickets, his light green eyes quickly scanning the scripted writing, beautiful mouth pressed into a grim line of determination. She knew he was going to say no and moved to beat him to the punch. "Come on, Magic Man." Her voice was a seductive purr, pouring over him, coating him in need, meant to drive him outta his goddamn mind. "I dare ya," she added with a teasing wink.

In a blur of movement, his hand shot out and he grabbed her, manacling her fragile wrist in an unbreakable grip that was only just shy of hurting her. She could feel the restraint he used, the leashed power thrumming beneath the surface of his hot skin against her own, and knew that despite his anger, he was still trying to be careful with her.

A delicious shiver spiked through her that had nothing to do with the weather and everything to do with the thrill of being at this man's physical mercy, just like in her dreams. She wanted to be laid out and penetrated, nailed to his bed beneath all those long, rippling muscles. Wanted to be shown in no uncertain terms just how badly he'd been aching for her. Wanted to be fucked till she passed out from the pleasure, reaching the kind of sexual heights she knew existed but had always had trouble attaining with her previous partners.

But her purring hormones told her she wouldn't have to try very hard with the prime specimen standing before her, no matter how much of a jerk he was.

Their attraction reminded her of two sculptures she'd once seen in a museum. On their own they would have been ideal and complete, freestanding, each a work of individuality without the other. And yet, when pressed together, they created

something wonderfully different. A new form that uniquely strummed the senses while soothing the soul. It'd been a profoundly beautiful piece and she'd never forgotten it.

But it was that strange fitting of form that reminded her of how she felt about Lachlan McKendrick. Individually they were complete, but put them together and Evan knew that a thing of wonder would be created. And she didn't just mean cock to pussy, though she wanted that massive bulge behind the fly of his jeans so bad she could taste it.

No, it went beyond fucking to something deeper. It had to do with the way they would fit together in sleep and throughout the day. From the press of his body against hers to the way he'd hold her in his arms for the sheer joy of just touching her. The way her smaller hand would fit inside his much larger one. The way he'd hold her to his side as they shared his morning walks.

Christ, she didn't know how she knew these things, but she did. And it was driving her out of her goddamn mind. Why did she have to crave this union with a man who looked as if he were fighting a battle every time he laid eyes on her?

Hell, she didn't know what his problem was, and she was never going to find out if she didn't get through his armor and reach the man hidden beneath.

She watched as his lips pulled back over his teeth like those of a wolf when it growled. He was just as dangerous, just as menacing as he snarled, "If you know what's good for you, little girl, you won't ever fucking touch me again!"

Anger flared hot and deep within her chest. Who did he think he was—the conceited prick! For what was surely the hundredth time since setting eyes on the man, Evan wondered why she couldn't just let him go. Why him? What was his friggin' problem?

She jerked out of his grasp, but it was infuriating to know she was able to get free only because he let her. "I'll touch you if I damn well please." She stood straight and proud before him, her voice cool and steady, though inside she was seething with

frustration, as much with herself as with him. "And in case you're blind, I'm not a fucking child."

"Coulda fooled me." He took a step closer, towering over her, too powerful to resist despite his arrogant attitude. "If I touched you," he sneered, his warm, deep voice hard and condescending, "I'd fucking break you."

With a forced indifference to outdo his own, she casually shrugged her slim shoulders. "Yeah?" she asked, rolling the word off her tongue in a husky drawl. "I'm sure I could probably go for the rough stuff as well as the next woman, but I'm afraid I only let men fuck me. I don't screw around with scared little boys."

He literally vibrated before her, a strange wave of heat crashing against her, as if she were blasted with a physical manifestation of his frustration, and she wondered not for the first time just what he really was. His big hands balled into fists at his sides, his voice little more than a rasp as he demanded, "What do you want from me, Evan?"

Other than his body pounding her into oblivion, she didn't have a clue. There should have been a thousand witty comebacks slipping off her tongue to put him in his place, but all she could think to say in her temper was, "I want you to go to hell."

She saw his beautiful mouth twist into a smile but it lacked the warmth of the one she'd seen him give the black-haired stud in the café. No, this was a cold, mean, calculating smile; one she supposed was meant to drive her away as his eyes flicked over her once more. They were hot and hungry and full of lust, burning with an inner fire as he grunted, "I'm sorry to disappoint you, lass, but I'm already there." Then he turned and walked away, and she let him go.

Almost.

Suddenly the words were spilling from her lips before she'd even known she'd say them. "I dream of you."

He stiffened and stopped dead in his tracks, but he didn't turn around.

"Every night, I dream of you. And I wake up with the feel of you still throbbing inside of me. If that's not magic, Lachlan McKendrick, then I don't know what is."

She held her breath, waiting for him to turn back to her, only to see him walk away. Her teeth clenched and her hands fisted, angry resentment pouring through her till she felt sick on it.

How could he do this? How could he just walk away from this – this thing between them? What in the hell was he so afraid of?

Screw it, she thought. Christ, she'd already run after him once and spilled her soul, no freaking way was she going to chase after him again. Her body was just going to have to learn to goddamn do without; and her heart – well, she didn't know what its problem was. She wasn't in love with Lachlan McKendrick. Hah! How could she fall in love with a man she didn't even know?

But there was no denying the fact she wanted him in her bed.

Behind her, Kieran stood in front of the café, witnessing the battle of wills. It was clear he didn't need to be a *Magick* to see that the mortal wanted his cousin for her own. Hoping like hell he wasn't going to get his ass killed for this, he shoved his hands deep in his pockets and set off toward her as soon as Lach stalked away. He spoke quietly, but his deep voice was firm with conviction as he said, "He's yours, you know."

Evan spun around so quickly she almost fell on her backside. Kieran reached out to steady her, but she shrugged away, too pissed to be hospitable. "Great," she sneered, cutting him with her icy glare, "Another one. Do you guys travel in pairs, or what?"

He smiled at her fire, thinking of how much fun it was going to be watching this spirited little mortal keep Lach on his toes. "I'm his cousin, lass. Kieran McKendrick, but you can call me anything you like, seeing as we're going to be family and all."

Her slim frame vibrated with anger and cold and stunned disbelief. "Then how about Jackass, because I'm not finding this the least bit funny!"

"Good," he laughed, "because I'm not joking." Then he pulled a battered matchbook and pen out of his jeans' pocket and proceeded to write down an address in the McNeal Hills, one of the recently renovated, most high-priced areas of town. "He'll

not be happy with me at first," he laughed, handing the address over to her. "But just remember his bark is worse than his bite."

"I wasn't aware he did happy in the first place. All I ever see him do is scowl," she grumbled, studying the scrawled address, wondering why this guy was sticking his nose into their business, even if he was Lach's cousin. Her chin lifted and she gave him a steady look, but his black eyes were unreadable. "Why are you doing this?"

The sudden flash of his smile was almost enough to warm the chill in her bones. "Because kin looks after kin," he drawled in his thick Scottish burr, "and there's more going on here than meets the eye." He nodded toward the matchbook in her hand. "Don't be too hard on him, darlin'. It's eating him up inside not to have you. And I canna help but think it must be hell on a man when he discovers he now belongs to a woman. If you want him, and I can see that you do, go after him," and then with a wink, he added, "I promise you, lass, he's all yours for the taking."

"Yeah?" she smirked, hating that she'd been so easily read. These McKendrick boys were a strange lot all right, and things were growing stranger by the moment. "And just what makes you think I want to take him anywhere?"

One black brow arched with obvious humor, making her grit her teeth, and he laughed, "Oh, so you don't want my cousin, then?"

Shit, she thought, it was too freaking cold to stand out in the snow and argue with the beautiful bastard. What was it with these McKendrick men anyway? Were they all like this? She tapped the matchbook with her nail, still studying him from beneath her lashes, trying to figure out his angle. "If I use this, then I owe you. What is it you want from me, Kieran McKendrick? You don't strike me as the sort who offers something for nothing."

He made a low guttural noise in the back of his throat, thinking that what he'd really like was something he couldn't have. The pretty little spitfire was Lach's now and he wouldn't touch her, but the temptation to do just that was like a fucking pain in his gut. Then the corner of his mouth kicked up in a wicked grin. "Got any sisters, lass?"

She gave a sudden throaty laugh, gray eyes sparkling at the hopeful note in his voice. "One, yes."

Kieran's dark eyes burned like black ice. "Och now, then I just might know a way you can repay me."

Chapter Four

The mortal was waiting for him on his goddamn doorstep.

He'd taken the long way home, trying to walk off some of his frustration, but it hadn't worked. And here she was, the woman of his blasted dreams, sitting like a pretty picture against the rough stone steps of his townhouse, fresh faced and smiling her siren smile. He thought briefly of turning around and heading away in the opposite direction, but the determined look on her beautiful face told him she'd only come after him.

"How in the hell did you know where to find me?"

Her smile widened, teasing and light, completely at ease. "Let's just say a little birdy told me."

Kieran.

"I'm going to fucking kill him."

She leaned back, elbows braced on the top step, magnificent breasts provocatively displayed between the open sides of her brown leather jacket. His tongue stroked the roof of his mouth in a restless gesture of hunger, eager to curl around the tips of her puffy nipples and suck till she screamed from the sharp stab of pleasure.

Her own tongue clucked, knee swinging side to side as if she had all the time in the world. "If I didn't know better, I might start to think you didn't want me here."

Lach ripped his eyes to hers, trying to quell her with the full force of his glare. "You should learn to trust your instincts."

She held his stare, her own gaze steady and strong despite the ache of desire pulsing through her. There was a heavy pull on her heart that she couldn't define – all

she knew was that she was bound by it, drawn to this rugged man as if he were an extension of her soul, necessary for life.

Did he feel it?

Was this why he fought so hard to resist their attraction?

A glimmer of understanding began to take seed. This undeniable feeling of need was so overwhelming, it was like losing yourself, and she almost couldn't blame him for struggling so hard against it.

Almost.

"If you want me to go," she explained in a steady voice, "all you have to do is tell me to go. Tell me to leave you alone, Lach."

"Goddamn it, I can't do that!" he gritted through his clenched teeth. His eyes narrowed, drilling into her own. "And you know it, don't you?"

He didn't wait for an answer, but climbed the steep steps beside her and opened the huge oak door.

"Then why do you keep fighting so hard?" she asked after him, following him inside before he had the chance to slam the door in her face.

He ignored her, climbing the staircase on the far wall, his big boots heavy on the gleaming hardwood floors. The house was immaculate, the furnishings dark and antique, with a rugged edge of beauty that perfectly fit the man. He turned at the top to see her following after him, and lifted his brow at her impressive tenacity. "Maybe I don't like being chased by women?"

She couldn't help it; she smiled. "Well, I can't say I like the thought of you being chased by women either, but I'll take care of anyone who tries to get near what's mine."

His eyes flared. "Bloody hell! You just don't stop, do you?"

They'd entered the master bedroom, *his room*, and the sight of the immense king-sized bed set her already pounding heart to racing with dizzying anticipation. She watched him draw off his black leather jacket and boots, and then he moved toward her

for the first time, probably trying to intimidate her right back out of his personal domain.

Too bad for him his little intimidation tactic wasn't going to work.

"No," she drawled, eating up his magnificent physique with her eyes. "I don't stop. Not when it's something important."

He took a step closer, blocking the light from the opposite wall of windows with his big, powerful body. "And you think two strangers fucking each other raw is important?"

Her lids lowered, shielding her expression. "It's more than fucking I want from you, Lachlan McKendrick. I think you know that."

"I don't think you know what you want!" he snarled.

The hell she didn't. "You're lying. We want the same damn thing!"

"Don't you think I'd touch you if I could, woman? I'd already have you nailed to the blasted wall with my cock shoved tight up your cunt, fucking your sweet little brains out, but I—*Fuck!* I have a problem and there's no easy way around it!"

Her eyes went wide, cheeks flushed with color. "OhmyGod! You don't mean—"

Lach growled low in his throat. "Not that kind of problem, damn it!"

"Oh," she sighed, blinking in obvious relief. "*Thank God.*"

The animalistic growl continued to rumble in his throat, a warning of what was to come. "It isn't safe for you here, Evan. I'm not a normal man and you're playing at something that you know nothing about."

Her beautiful eyes went dark with challenge and she moved a step closer, unwilling to let him think she was afraid of him. "Then show me what you are, damn it! Stop running from me, Lach! I know you're not like me, but until you face up to this thing between us, we don't have a fucking chance of getting through it! The first time I laid eyes on you, I could see there was something different about you—some kind of power just waiting to be set free.

I may not understand everything that's going on here, but I know what I feel, Lach. I know that I want you."

She reached out to touch his chest and he flinched at the contact as if she'd burned him with an invisible flame. "Whatever you are, Magic Man, I'm not afraid of you. Maybe I should be, but I'm not."

"And if I canna control it?" he thundered, towering over her, blasting her with his rage so that she could actually feel it against her skin like a warm gush of air blowing against her, surging around her body. Any second now and he'd be tumbling right over the edge. "I've been cursed, you little idiot! Every time I come, I shoot a load of magic outta my cock that turns the woman into a fucking animal! An animal, Evan! Are you getting the picture?"

A small smile played across her lips. "So you can make a woman go crazy on you, Lach? That's it? God, I could've told you that the second I set eyes on you. I may be human but I'm not a weakling, big guy. I can take it."

He looked as if he couldn't decide between laughing and shouting the house down. His eyes squeezed shut and he prayed to the gods for the strength to see this thing through. "I'm a cursed Warlock, Evan, and I'm turning women into *real* animals. As in furry with four legs, damn it!"

"Oh." Her face went blank, expression completely dumbstruck, but she wasn't running. Instead, she stood before him, silent and serious, obviously thinking the whole thing through, chewing on that goddamn luscious lip of hers. "Wow. That's—I mean—*Jesus*, I don't know what that is. Who would do such a thing to you?"

Lach didn't know what else to do but to answer her question, too tired of fighting to reason out why she was still here and not screaming down the street, trying to escape. With a ragged sigh, he leaned against the rough stone wall at his back. "I come from an ancient family of *Magicks*, Warlocks and Witches. My uncles are the family elders and they cursed me because they want me to find my *bith-bhuan gra*, or what mortals call

their soul mate. If I come with a woman who isn't the true one, then the curse temporarily turns her into a bloody beast."

Her head tilted to the side as she thought about what he'd said. "Hmm. What kind of animal?"

"So far there's been a cat, monkey, goat, sheep, and a fucking Rottweiler, though I've been lucky not to have been inside any o' them at the time. But after the bloody dog, I don't think you'll find it too surprising that I havenna wanted to try again."

Her entire body shuddered as her vivid imagination conjured up image after bizarre image. "Jesus. I guess you can only be thankful no one turned into something hungry – with teeth."

He gave a short bark of laughter. "Oh, that last one had teeth all right. I've got the scar on my leg to prove it."

"Ouch. That must have sucked."

For a moment he just stared at her, unable to understand how she could believe him so easily. But she did. He could see it in her eyes, and he knew he'd underestimated her. Maybe she really did *know* him. "Among other things, yes," he drawled, "it did indeed suck."

She shifted from foot to foot in a restless gesture. "And it's because of this curse that you've stayed away from me?"

"Aye," he muttered, not looking the least bit happy about the admission.

Evan smiled. "Well then," she murmured, her look turning sly.

"Well then what, damn it?"

One shoulder lifted. "If the problem's just with you, you could always make *me* come."

He blinked down at her, his gaze so intense she felt it like a rough scrape of sensation against her skin. It was so hot she actually flushed at the raw carnality of it, a beautiful shade of pink painting her high cheekbones with color.

His hands fisted at his sides to keep from grabbing her to him, ripping her jeans off and ramming his cock so far up her cunt she could feel it threatening to break through the other side, as if he'd shove himself straight through her. *Saephus*. She was too fucking tempting to resist; this intoxicating combination of brazen and demure proving too much for him.

"No," he grunted, unable to say more without grabbing her and shoving his tongue straight down her throat.

Evan nibbled on her lower lip, the sight of her straight white teeth sinking into the tender flesh making him ache with hunger for a slow, deep taste. "Don't get all surly," she laughed with a wink. "I was only teasing."

He stood unmoving, deep gaze fixed on her, direct to the point of obsessive.

She shifted anxiously beneath such a blatantly ravenous stare, and her sly smile suddenly bordered on uneasy, conscience demanding she be completely honest. "Hell, it'd probably be a waste of time anyway. I've never really been that easy to—well, I mean I've *never* been *easy*. I just mean that I've never really had an earth shattering kind of, um—"

Jesus, she was rambling like a great blithering idiot here. And the intensely absorbed way he just kept staring at her wasn't helping her suddenly blabbering tongue. It was as though his light green eyes glowed with an inner flame, illuminated by the power within him. They burned on her, devoured her, as if he were anticipating her taste, bite by sumptuous bite; silent and hot and full of need. She took a deep breath, blowing it up through her bangs as she often did when she got flustered. "What I mean is that I've never been that easy to bring to an—um, to an orgasm."

Before the final consonant had fully passed her lips, his tall, muscle-packed body was pressing into her much smaller one, big hands gripping her shoulders, long fingers digging into the soft fabric of her jacket and the even softer flesh beneath it. The low, rough words growling from his throat were more beast than human. "I could make you

come till it hurt, Evan! Make you cream till you begged me for mercy! *Begged me!* But I canna fucking touch you and not come all over you – and I won't risk you like that!"

The curse was dangerous enough to another *Magick*; who knew what it would do to a mortal? He'd rather die than cause her a moment's pain – and yet, even without the bloody curse on his cock, it would be difficult for a man of his size to fuck her and not hurt her.

But to never sink inside of her sweet little cunt would be his own personal hell.

In some insane way, this powerless little mortal had become the foundation of his reason for living, and he began to wonder if Kieran had been right. *Was she the one?* His power told him that she had to be, because she was the heart of his existence, his very soul. How could she not be the one? But how could he risk her if she was? What if she changed anyway?

He wanted to rage and fight against it as strongly as he wanted – no, *needed* – to cram himself inside of her, embedding himself so deep, penetrating her until he pierced her heart and claimed her forever! He wanted her bound to him in a way that would make it impossible for her to ever know another man again. Wanted her possessed, his and his alone, with a dominance of will that came as much from being a man in love as it did from being an arrogant Warlock.

She stared up at him with her ice gray eyes, her feelings open and honest on her face, everything exposed there for him to see. "*Lach?*"

It was as much a plea as it was a question.

Everything within him twisted with need, painful knots of hunger burning inside, and he clumsily shoved her away from him as his head spun and he fell to his knees. The ache was overcoming him, and he feared that he'd soon be too far gone to control the power's hunger for her. Not to mention that of his heart.

Evan stumbled back, catching herself on the foot of the monstrous bed. He looked up at her from beneath his brows, his glowing green eyes feral and dark. A strange

movement shifted through his gleaming irises, as if a beast was prowling there, preparing to strike.

“Run.” One word – dark, dangerous, hungry.

Run? Like hell. She’d come too far to chicken out now. Yeah, she was a little frightened in that *God, I really hope he isn’t about to eat me* kind of way, but there was no fucking way she was backing out now. And even though she was just that little bit unnerved by his mind-blowing admission, she wasn’t afraid of the man himself. He could be a Warlock or a Witch or whatever the hell he wanted, so long as he was hers.

She stood at the end of the bed and ran one hand through her hair, acting as if she had all the time in the world. Then she bit her lower lip in a slow, deliberate action and flashed him a challenging smile. “No, I don’t think I will.”

He growled in the back of his throat and a fine tremor moved through her, but she held her ground. Her fingers fluttered at her sides, and then she flicked the top buttons of her jeans.

One.

Two.

Three.

A dark, feral sound filled the room and then he was on her in an instant, his speed greater than that of any mortal man, and she was trapped before she ever reached the fourth. One second she was standing at the foot of the bed, and in the next she lay flat on her back, their clothes gone, her body bare and vulnerable while Lach’s powerful thighs forced hers wide and his muscle-roped arms pinned her hands at the sides of her face.

“*Evan.*” It was a gasp, a grunt, a growl. “What in the fuck are you doing?”

She welcomed his weight, the delicious press of his heavy body against her own, and spread her legs wider, inviting him to take whatever he wanted from her. “Maybe I think you’re worth a risk or two.”

Lach screwed his eyes shut, hanging his head between his powerful shoulders, his hands clenched into huge fists around her own. "Damn it, Evan, you don't know what you're saying and I'm not going to be able to help you if this goes bad."

"But I do. Why don't you just try trusting me, Magic Man?"

He shuddered against her, the last of his control slipping through his fingers, and then his head was at her breast, his mouth hot and hungry against the lush mound, sucking her deep. She cried out at the shock of sensation while he worked the puffy nipple against the roof of his mouth, suckling at her as if he drew life from the fiercely erotic taste of her flesh. It was too good, the feel of her breast against his tongue, his teeth gently scraping around the firm mound, and he pulled away only to latch onto the other, drawing her in with deep, rhythmic pulls she could feel shooting all the way to the core of her pussy.

She went unbearably wet, dripping down the insides of her thighs, and he pressed the head of his massive cock against the swollen, pussy-pink lips of her cunt, nudging the tiny hole with a teasing stroke, giving it barely a taste of the delicious stretch that was soon to come.

Evan arched beneath him, a low, beastlike sound purring in the back of her throat, demanding to be filled and fucked. "Jesus, now, damn it! Don't hold back, Lach. I want it all. Every inch of it, right now!"

His muscles flexed, held tight with intent, and then he slammed into her, forcing the fist tight clench of her cunt to open and swallow him whole, rippling around him like a fucking little vise of pleasure. The feel of her was incredible, and he clenched his teeth against the need to spill his seed then and there, filling her up till she was coated with him, sticky and wet with his come.

"Are you on the pill?"

She shifted beneath him, her breath coming in rapid pants as she tried to assimilate the fact that she was stretched so wide and he was buried so deep. It hurt like hell because he was so massive, the granite hard shaft so long and thick, digging itself so far

inside of her. But the dull pain was slowly beginning to recede and a throbbing ache for more was quickly beginning to take its place, demanding and insistent. "No," she moaned, needing him to move. "No pill."

"Fuck," he grumbled by her ear, his voice little more than a low rasp of sound, guttural and deep. "I'm sorry, lass."

His hips flexed, pressing even deeper, the huge head of his cock surging past her cervix, hitting a place that had never been penetrated before, and she moaned at the resulting jolt of pleasure/pain. "God, why are you sorry?"

He struggled to hold himself still within her, trying to allow her deliciously tight flesh the time to get used to him, but it wasn't easy. The need to hammer her rough and fast and deep was riding him hard, and any second now he was going to give in to it and fuck her raw.

It was almost unthinkable that he'd do it without protection, but he wanted to fuck Evan without anything between them. He wanted to fill her womb full of come and make a miracle with her so badly he could almost taste it. "I'm sorry because I don't fucking care if you're on birth control or not," he growled savagely. "And I'm not giving you a choice about it now."

She angled her hips, trying to take him deeper, and then flexed her inner muscles, smiling when he shuddered and growled above her. "Good, because I don't want one. All I want is for you to get on with it already!"

He gave a short bark of groaning laughter, loving her sass, knowing she'd always be strong enough to keep him in line and hold her own against him when his Warlock's arrogance got the better of him. He pressed a smiling kiss to her soft lips, teased gently inside the sweet heat of her mouth, and then he was gone.

His hips pulled back, his hunger for her taking over, and suddenly he had her hands pinned high above her head, holding her captive as he began a violent rhythm that had him shoving his thick cock in to the root, pounding through her gorgeous cunt till he thought the ecstasy of it would surely kill him. He was much too big for her, but

she somehow took him, the carnal sounds spilling from her throat telling him how much she loved the feel of his cock hammering her so hard.

Evan arched beneath him, demanding everything he had to give. It was an addictive, raging bliss, because her *Magic Man* was fucking her brains out. His strong hips jack-hammered, shoving his cock into her cunt with brutal strength, filling the tight little hole to bursting. A thick, immense penetration. A delicious stretch beyond anything she could endure – and yet, she craved that feeling of being full of him, of that enormous cock breaking her open and fucking her, holding nothing back.

Christ, she couldn't get enough of it. Every time his body crammed itself in, forcing its way through her tight, drenched tissues, it was like a surge of power, as if he thrust her full of life. It glowed from her skin, a liquid illumination, and she could almost swear she felt it pumping from her pores with each meaty thrust.

"Oh God!" she cried, the hoarse words being ripped from her throat as a delicious pulse began to throb within her womb, spreading outward, soaking her in sensation. *"Oh Jesus, Lach, I'm going to come!"*

He cried out and his massive cock hit her high and deep, a thick ramming of flesh against flesh, the impossibly hard plowing into an unbearably soft, wet haven, and she screamed, her cunt gripping him so tightly it felt bruising. She came in a warm, sweet, clenching gush around him, and he couldn't bear it. His balls drew up hard and tight, painfully full, and he ground his jaw as the first wave ripped through him, scalding and hot and strong, pumping into her in a powerful surge as he slammed her with his cock again and again.

The bed rumbled beneath them, shaking upon its legs, banging against the wall as his magic poured from his body into her own. His heart stopped with fear and terrified sensation, all his formidable power focused on keeping her there with him, beneath him, and it was a profound rush of wondrous relief when she held tight to him, taking his come, claiming his future.

They shouted and ground against one another, the gut-wrenching sensations grinding down their nerve endings until they were drained and spent, clutching at one another in ecstasy, their skin soaked and smelling sweetly of sex.

A wide, satisfied smile broke across her face, while he grinned wickedly against the sensitive skin beneath her ear, teasing it with slow strokes of his tongue. The curse had been broken, the hungers of the flesh momentarily fed, and a love more powerful than all the magic in the world discovered at last.

Lachlan McKendrick had found his *bith-bhuan gra*.

Chapter Five

“Um—Lach?” Evan whispered just a moment later, her voice sounding strangely tentative after the mind-shattering intimacy they’d just shared.

“Yeah?” he groaned, his own voice harsh, ragged and out of breath.

“Who are they?”

“Huh?”

“Who are they?”

“Who’s who, sweetheart?”

“These—um, five old guys with long beards who are staring at us. Not that I’m a prude or anything, babe, but I *am* a one man kinda woman.”

His entire body went tense above her, every muscle going hard in shock and disbelief. He turned his head to the side and cracked one eye, unable to believe what he was seeing. His uncles were there all right, grinning like loons, obviously as pleased as punch with themselves. “I don’t fucking believe this,” he growled, reluctantly pulling his still hard cock from her sweet, clinging depths. His body curled around her, shielding Evan’s naked flesh from the five sets of curious eyes looking on. “Get out,” he snarled. “Get the fuck out!”

Seamus tsked from his post at the foot of the bed. “Och now, Lach. Don’t be gettin’ all testy on us, lad. It’s no something we’ve ne’er seen before.” Evan peeked a wide-eyed look at him over Lach’s broad shoulder, and the old man’s grin widened, his bushy gray brows wagging mischievously. “Mind you, I canna say I’ve ever seen one as fine as this.”

“Seamus, take your goddamn eyes off my woman or I canna be held responsible for what I do to you.” Lach struggled for the edge of the sheet, doing his best to keep Evan

covered beneath him. “And that goes for the rest of you too. Get the fuck out o’ our house!”

They laughed and clapped each other on the back, saying “*Our* house! Did you hear the boy say *our* house?” followed by “Told you he’d come around, I did. Just had to find the right lass to make him settle, he did,” and then a “He’ll be thanking us for this when he’s no longer worrying about giving us a wee peek at paradise, now won’t he?” which was rejoined by several enthusiastic shouts of “Aye, he will.” Lach clenched his teeth together so tightly his jaw began to ache.

Knowing the only way he was going to get rid of the nosy old biddies was to blast them from the room—so he could get back to more important things that involved lips and tongues and sweet, slippery juices—Lach carefully pulled the sheet up over his back, then rolled to his side, keeping the soft fabric tucked tightly around Evan.

She smiled at him, her face flushed from coming, looking so beautiful it made his heart ache, as well as his cock. Saephus, he loved her, and he was going to spend the rest of his life proving it to her in sinful, explicit detail.

He leaned down and placed a warm, wet kiss against her soft lips, smiling because he couldn’t seem to help himself. Shit, he’d probably spend the rest of his life grinning like a jackass, and rightfully so. The gods knew he didn’t deserve her, but that sure as hell didn’t mean he wasn’t keeping her.

“I have to get rid of the pests, but I’m nowhere near done with you yet,” he warned.

She laughed huskily, running her fingers through the silky locks of his hair. “I should hope not, because *I’m* not done with *you* either.”

He kissed her again, unable to resist the sweet temptation, the fever in his blood that only she could ignite beginning to boil all over again. Evan moaned and the kiss deepened, consuming them, pulling them under like a violent force of nature until they heard the gleeful snickering coming from the other side of the room. His uncles were huddled together by the large stone hearth, rejoicing over their success, heads bent in private council, planning Saephus only knew what. Lach pulled reluctantly back from

the intoxicating taste of her mouth, relishing the fact that hers was the only flavor that would ever pass his lips again.

“I better get them out o’ our house before they zap the whole friggin’ family here.”

Her lids lowered over questioning eyes. “*Our house?*”

Lach tipped up her chin with the edge of his fist. “*Aye, our house. Tell me you havenna been thinking I’d ever let you get away from me, Evan. I’d kill any man who ever dared to touch you. You’re mine.*”

Her arched brow lifted in an arrogant imitation of his own. “*And are you mine?*”

He lifted her hand and pressed it to his heart, letting her feel the rapid beat that came just from having her near. “*In this life and the next, sweet. I’d never touch another woman, be she mortal or *Magick*, for anything in all the dimensions, ever again. And I canna think of anyone more special to belong to than you.*”

Her eyes went hazy with love and lust at the heartfelt admission, marveling at what kind of wondrous fate ever decreed that she be the lucky woman to own the heart of so wonderful a man. It mattered not to her whether he was mortal or magic, only that he loved her and always would.

Knowing the truth of her words was already shining in her eyes, she replaced the press of her hand against his heart with a soft, sweet kiss from her lips. “*I love you, Lachlan McKendrick. Always and forever, I’m yours.*”

His arms wrapped around her like steel bands, securing her to him, his body trembling as the words rushed up at him. “*Ah, Evan, I was wondering when you were going to get around to telling me that. I hate to admit it, but it’s been giving me some bad minutes wondering if I was ever going to hear those words from you.*”

She smiled against his chest. “*And?*”

His arms squeezed tighter, and then his hands moved into her hair on either side of her head, tilting her face up to his. “*And I love you too, lass. Och, I always have. Why*

do you think I've been so bloody scared to be near ya? I havenna trusted myself not to toss you over my shoulder and steal you away and have my wicked way with you."

She licked her lips, trying to focus through the haze of desire. "Speaking of having your wicked way, do you think we could get some privacy before I have my own with you?"

Lach's eyes flared, shocked at the realization that he'd momentarily forgotten about his meddling, obnoxious uncles. He looked over to find them all watching with wide-eyed fascination, the lot of them hanging onto their every word, smiling like a twittering group of old women. Saephus save him. He made sure Evan was still covered and then rose to his full height, standing tall and proud and unashamedly naked beside the bed.

Evan blushed for him, but then she figured when you looked as gorgeous as Lach did, you really didn't care if people saw you clothed or naked as a jaybird. Of course, the only woman who was ever going to see him in all his magnificent glory ever again was herself. And it was a view she planned on enjoying and taking complete advantage of for all eternity.

Lach stalked across the room like an angry wolf preparing to fight for his territory, but the five old men just kept on smiling, as if they didn't notice the danger burning in his light green eyes. No, they were too busy taking stock of his cock.

"Och now," his Uncle Reggie remarked with enthusiasm, "I told ya the boy took after our side o' the family."

Lach rolled his eyes at the outrageous comment, the corner of his mouth lifting when he heard Evan trying to stifle her infectious giggles behind him. They might drive him out of his bloody mind, but at least his family was sure to provide them with their fair share of humor in the years to come.

"Aye," his Uncle Iain readily agreed. "They all do. Why do you think they've been so blasted hard to settle down? It takes a lusty wench to be able to satisfy a pri—"

“Enough!” Lach roared, trying not to laugh; his heart smiling for him at Evan’s choked gasp behind him, her laughter muffled by the covers she’d apparently pulled over her head.

She peeked over the edge of the sheet just in time to see Lach throw his arms up into the air, muscles bulging, rippling down his back in an impressive display of strength, and then there was an immense crash of thunder overhead that she could’ve sworn sounded like the heavens roaring. Across the room from her, his uncles’ eyes bulged as wide as her own.

“He’s come to it, then,” the one named Seamus called out over the resonating cracks of thunder. “I told you old fools he’d tapped into his power in its entirety. Thank Saephus he found the pretty little lass there or it could’ve been the end of us all.”

“*Out!*” Lach roared. His hair whipped around his head as if he were caught in the center of a violent windstorm. “Leave now, or like I warned you before, I cannot be responsible for what I do.”

He lowered his arms, pushing them forward, and the blast of wind rushed against his uncles, sending peals of proud laughter up to the sky.

“Fine, fine,” Seamus called out as they gathered their long, ancient cloaks around their still powerful bodies. “But we’ll expect to see you for dinner on Sunday. We can perform the binding ceremony then.”

A streak of lightning cut through the room, blinding her as she watched the strange tableau from the safety of the bed, and then his uncles were gone in a crackling flash of light, and she was alone once more with her *Magic Man*.

He turned back to her, his eyes burning hot, and she could feel the hunger coming from his body, crashing against her in warm, erotic waves of promised pleasure. “Are they gone?”

“Aye,” he growled, climbing onto the end of the bed and slowly crawling over her, his huge cock hard and ready to fuck, the wide, blunt tip already streaming with juices.

He gripped the sheet in one strong fist and ripped it away, sending it to the floor as his eyes fastened on the juncture of her closed thighs.

She watched as he licked his lips and had to bite back a groan. "And are we going to dinner on Sunday then?"

"Aye," he drawled again, his nostrils flaring as he smelled her delicious scent on the air, strong and sweet and feminine. "But I'll be eating you now, if you havenna any objections."

Evan took a deep breath as anticipation spiked through her, sharp and sweet, setting her body to a fine tremble. She parted her thighs, lifting her knees out high at her sides, loving the stark, ravenous look that fell over his face as he looked down at her open, glistening cunt. She was primed and ready, hungry for his massive cock, dripping with cream and aching to be fucked.

With a teasing smile, she reached down and circled the tiny hole with the tip of her finger, slowly dipping inside, and then pulled it out of her clinging depths, rolling her hips with the erotic movement. Her finger glistened, shiny with sweet tasting cream, and she lifted it to his lips for a decadent taste.

Lach opened his mouth and drew the juice soaked digit between his lips, sucking it clean, his senses clenching and cock crying at the honey sweet taste and smell of her cunt.

Evan pulled the slender finger free and he grunted, "*More,*" holding her thighs spread wide as he shoved his face straight into her, his tongue digging deep with the first plunge. One thumb found the ripe, almost bursting bud of her clit and pressed hard, roughly stroking it, while the other found the sweet little hole of her ass and pierced deep, shocking a hoarse cry from her throat.

He laughed into her; a dark, dangerous sound of arrogant satisfaction, looking forward with savage anticipation to the eternity of fucking they had before them. He'd happily spend it right here, pressed up tight against her pussy while she flooded his

face with cream, filling his belly with love and lust and the sweet, faithful taste of their love.

“Come,” he ordered into her. “Come for me, Evan, right down my fucking throat like you have in my dreams!”

The harsh, guttural command sent her tumbling straight over the edge, her body writhing, cunt pressed shamelessly to his face, pumping against his wicked mouth and tongue. And then in a blur of movement she was pressed hard to the wall, pinned by his hard-muscled body, her knees held wide over his elbows and his cock buried up to her eyeballs while he fucked her into an endless, screaming climax that pulsed through her blood like a rush of flame, scorching her with its pounding intensity.

He must have used magic to get them there so quickly, her nailed to the wall and penetrated within the blink of an eye, and she smiled at the lucky fortune of having this beautiful *Magic Man* who’d stolen her heart all for her own. Yeah, she was a lucky girl indeed; but then, she planned on making him feel pretty lucky too.

“I love you,” she moaned breathlessly, his beautiful cock still fucking the hell out of her, hammering her with love. “*I love you.*”

His lips found hers, his mouth claiming possession of the sweet, moist recess as thoroughly as his cock claimed her cunt for his and no other. “I love you too,” he grunted, his lungs laboring for air. “So much it bloody hurts. Promise you’ll never leave me, Evan. We’re bound forever, lass, and I’d die if I lost you.”

She kissed him sweetly. “I’ll never leave you, Lach. I’ll always be yours.”

“*Always,*” he growled, taking the kiss deeper.

And then her *Magic Man* sent her crashing over the edge of ecstasy all over again.

About the author

Rhyannon Byrd is the wife of a Brit, lucky mother of two amazing children, and maid to a precocious beagle named Misha. In her seven years of marriage, she's moved from California to England, and then back to California again (they forgot to tell her there's no central heating in houses built 200 years ago) and finally to Florida, where she doesn't have to worry about it getting cold. It's been an exhausting existence, but in the past year she's somehow managed to find the time to put pen to paper – or fingers to keyboard – and give life to the stories and characters she loves. That is, when she's not threatening to kill her computer!

She graduated magna cum laude with a degree in Literature and Writing Studies, and while at school she spent most of her time writing papers on the psychoanalysis of medieval lit. Hmm...hardly a useful tool in modern day America, but hey, at least it taught her how to write. Now her days (and let's face it, most nights) are filled with creating the erotic love stories she enjoys most; those about strong alpha heroes and the fascinating women who capture their hearts, keeping all that wicked wildness for their own. When not writing, Rhyannon loves watching football and F1 racing, reading, painting, and traveling – but most of all she loves her crazy, supportive, hellion-filled family.

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