



THE TWELVE DATES OF CHRISTMAS

A Jolly Christmas Disaster



A Tale of Christmas Chaos

MIRANDA MAY &
KAYTIE MARIE

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*A Jolly
Christmas Disaster*

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About A Jolly Christmas Disaster: A Tale of Christmas Chaos

Welcome to Love -N- Shenanigans, where Fate intervenes to find your perfect match—literally!

It's a cold, cruel world and the dating scene is no different. Except for twelve lucky souls who've recently signed up for a curious new dating app and quickly find themselves face-to-face with exactly what they were looking for, whether they knew it or not.

This Christmas, dive into a brand-new shared world and set off on twelve spicy, heart-pounding adventures of love ... and shenanigans!

Being raised in a cult, we didn't celebrate holidays like the rest of the world. It's been two years since I escaped and I'm determined to have the perfect Christmas this year. Which is the only reason I signed up for the new dating app that everyone is raving about.

My dating experience is nil, but I don't want to do this alone. I don't expect to make a love match, but I do want someone to share the holidays with. Sure, I could ask my best witches, but they all have their own stuff going on.

I've planned a week of sledding, ice skating, baking, decorating, and a million other things. I've never done any of these things, but it can't be that hard, right? And with the men Fate chooses for me, surely this half-witch will get her Christmas wish. Because after all I've been through, it's time for me to have something good in my life.

Foreword

Hey y'all!!!

Welcome to Kaytie and Miranda's very first co-write! We are both super excited to share with you this story and characters we've fallen in love with. It is a part of the 12 Dates of Christmas shared world, but each book can be read as a standalone.

With that being said, between the two of us, we have FOUR books releasing in the shared world. There's this one, The Monsters' Christmas Party, Chloe's Christmas of Cursed Chaos, and Tali's Christmas Revenge. Why am I mentioning this? Well, the four female main characters in these four books are best friends, and will be in all four of the books. This means there will be some overlap and some scenes that you'll read in more than one book.

We hope that you'll read all of the books, of course, but it's not necessary for them to be read in publishing order. Just be prepared that there might be hints at the other female characters' stories, or some outright spoilers—though we've attempted to try to prevent that. Please be aware that from

Chapter 18 to the end of the Epilogue, there will be spoilers for the other three connected books.

As always, your mental health is important to us, so we've chosen to list some trigger & content warnings on the next page, which may contain spoilers. Thank you, and happy reading!!!

Content Warnings

- DVP
- Group sex
- Mentions of prior abuse by stepmother
- Mentions of abuse by stepbrother
- Voyeurism

New Member Profile



Welcome to Love-N-Shenanigans, the last dating app you'll ever need. Your best match (or matches) are just a few clicks away!

Basic Information

Name: Belle Cassidy

Age: 23

Species: I'm half witch/half human, but I don't have magic sadly.

Job Description: I work with indie authors. I do PA work, editing, and cover design for them. It allows me to work from home and help out amazing authors.

Marital Status: Single

Dependants: None. It's just me and my besties.

Describe yourself using 10 words or less: A fun loving gal looking for the ultimate Christmas experience.

Person who referred you: Vincent, a barista at Serendripty.

Additional Information

Sexual Designation: Female

Sexual Orientation: Straight

Are you Monogamous, Swinger, Polyamorous? I actually have no idea. I've never been in a relationship before. I'm open to any, I guess?

Are you willing to date outside of your species? Absolutely. I'm not exactly a purebred, now am I? I don't even have magic.

Hobbies: Reading, hanging with my girls/coven, watching Hallmark movies, and discovering new things.

Do you have any kinks you would like to be taken into consideration? I don't have any yet, but I'm open to trying anything once.

Please describe your perfect partner/partners: Someone who accepts me for who I am, little quirks and all. Someone who wants to be a partner and not try to control me. Someone who doesn't mind my inexperience and who wants to show me the things they love or the things I've missed out on.

Additional Notes

Full disclosure, I was raised in a cult and didn't know I was half-witch for a good portion of my life. My mom was a witch, but she died when I was very young. My dad married the leader of said cult. She never liked me and was always trying to change me—whether that be my weight, my personality, or my clothes. I was sheltered in our little community and thought that was how the rest of the world lived until I met my best friend Tali. She's the one who told me magic was real—even though my dad tried to tell me it wasn't. When

I was twenty-one, he started acting differently and I couldn't understand why—I still don't. What I do know is he indirectly led me to my mom's spellbook and mementos. That's when I realized I was really a half-witch. Within days, I managed to escape with Tali's help. We didn't celebrate holidays like the rest of the world and after two years of hiding, I want to have a Christmas like in the holiday movies I love so much. I'm looking for someone or multiple someones who want to help me make that a reality.

Chapter One



Belle

My phone bleats, scaring the shit out of me. And when I say bleats, I do mean like a sheep. They're cute and adorable, and they make a great alert tone—I don't care what anyone else says.

I lift a hand to my chest, willing my pounding heart to calm down while reaching for the phone with my other hand. I've been working on a book cover for one of my clients and I got a little lost in it.

Glancing at the time, I realize I've been at it for almost two hours. It's not done yet, but it looks amazing if I do say so myself. But I definitely need a break from it so I guess the text was a good thing.

My phone vibrates a few more times in my hand, telling me without looking that it's my besties chat. Unlocking the phone I swipe away the million social media notifications until I find the one for our chat.

Laoise: 911 Witches!!! I'm on my way to Serendripity now. Meet me when you get off work!

Laoise: But quickly.

Tali: You suck.

Chloe: I swear, if I leave work, and this isn't an emergency, I'm going to kill you.

Me: Sorry, I was working on a cover. Let me run to the bathroom and I'm on my way. Love you!

I drop my phone back onto my desk and quickly take care of business in the bathroom before getting dressed. Working from home means I wear my pajamas ninety-five percent of the time. I'm thankful I was able to find something that I'm good at and can actually make a living off of.

Let's just say the first twenty-one years of my life didn't allow me to learn much about the world outside of the cult I'd been raised in. Not wanting to dwell on that right now, I shake my head and grab my phone, tossing it into my purse.

I shoot my clients a message, letting them know I'm going to be unavailable for the next hour or two before putting my computer to sleep. Then I'm heading out the door.

I've been working for indie authors for the last two years. First as a PA and editor, and then I'd added cover design onto my roster. I'm lucky to be high

in demand considering most indies and those that work with them are struggling right now.

I'm grateful that I don't live too far from our favorite coffee shop since I have no idea how to drive. Tali and Chloe have both tried to teach me, but I'm terrified every time I get behind the wheel of a car. Laoise doesn't drive either, so I don't feel too bad.

"Hey, Belle," Chloe calls and I jerk my head up. Once again, I'd been staring at my feet and paying no attention to where I'm going. I've been working on that for the last two years, but I'm finding it a hard habit to break. When I lift my head, I find both Tali and Chloe standing just outside the door to Serendripity.

I sigh, knowing they waited for me so I don't have to walk in alone. It's something I both love and hate. Saying I'm socially awkward and anxious is putting things lightly. I'm slowly learning to do things myself and trying to come out of my shell, but it's hard. And walking into some place all by myself? That also terrifies me. Sometimes I wish I could just get over it.

I force a smile as Chloe throws the door open. "Hey, girls. Thanks for waiting for me."

"As soon as you're ready to do it on your own, you just let us know," Tali reassures me, as always. I don't know where the hell I'd be without her in my life. Escaping from the hell I'd been living in wouldn't have been possible without her. And I honestly don't know what I'd do without my three besties now that I'm free and safe.

The three of us walk into Serendripity, eyes peeled for Laoise.

"There she is!" Chloe calls loudly, drawing practically everyone's attention to us. I want to run away or hide behind my friends, but I just straighten my shoulders and keep on smiling.

A smile lights up Laoise's face as her eyes land on us. "Oh, finally. I thought I was going to have to be the pathetic girl sitting here all by myself, surrounded by empty chairs."

Chloe is the first to drop into her usual seat, rolling her eyes at Laoise's antics. "Shut up, Laoise. No one would ever think you're pathetic."

And she's not wrong. All of my besties are gorgeous in their own ways, but Laoise? She's breathtaking. She's the only unicorn fae I've ever met, so I don't know if it's just because of her species, but she's literally the most beautiful person I've ever met.

I shoot her a smile as I fall, rather ungracefully, into my seat and lift the waiting coffee to my lips. Mmmmm, that's good.

"Do you want to explain why we had to have an emergency meeting?" Tali asks, obviously being a little impatient. "Some of us have actual jobs we have to be at, you know."

Ouch. Jeez, Tali. I'm not sure what has her in a mood, but I won't mention it. Like me, Laoise has a nontraditional job.

Laoise just waves her hand in dismissal. "I told you to come when you were done. I'd rather have to work than deal with my family any day—even with the money that comes along with it."

"Oh, no. What did they do now?" I gasp, leaning forward in my chair. I've never met Laoise's family and I never want to. They're real elitist assholes, reminding me too much of my father and stepmother.

She tosses an envelope on the table, telling us how she'd received her family's annual Christmas invitation. Chloe's the first one to pick it up, asking Laoise about it before Tali grabs it from her.

"What's it say, Tali?" I ask, already trying to read it over her shoulder. My eyes grow wider with each passing second. What the ever-loving hell is

wrong with her mother?

“Gods, she is the worst.” I have to agree with Chloe as Tali throws the invitation back onto the table. “You’re obviously not doing what she says, right?”

Laoise laughs. “Hell no. My mother should know better than to try to control me by demanding that I not only come to the annual Christmas party, but then she has the gall to choose who I’m to be betrothed to. She’s been trying my entire life, and she has yet to succeed. No, I have a plan. Kind of.”

Tali leans forward, resting her chin on her hand, her bad mood obviously forgotten. “Do tell.”

Laoise breaks down her plan for us about bringing home the most inappropriate dates. I’m both shocked and a little bit in awe of her right now. She wants to bring home the worst suitors for her parents to meet, and basically tell them to fluff off. I could never do anything like that. I’d never had a backbone before leaving my childhood home.

“I’m sorry to interrupt.” I nearly jump out of my chair when a man speaks from behind us. All four of our heads snap in his direction and he just grins. “I’m Vincent. You might have seen me here a time or two. I’ve seen you ladies in here rather frequently.”

He does look familiar, but since I’m never the one who orders coffee—at least not unless I have to—I’ve had less reason to interact with the staff.

“Yeah, I’ve definitely seen you here before.”

I roll my eyes because, of course, Laoise is flirting with him. I wonder if she even realizes she’s doing it. It’s almost second nature to her.

Vincent pulls some cards from his pocket and Laoise reaches for one. “We’ve been told to keep an ear out for anyone who might be in need of this, and you, my dear, sound like you’re in great need.”

Laoise plucks the card from him and reads it with a frown. “Love -N-Shenanigans? What is this? I’ve never heard of it.”

It sounds vaguely familiar to me, but I can’t quite figure out why. I listen as Vincent explains that it’s a new dating app for both supes and humans, which is surprising. Apparently, people are finding their fated mates? I almost scoff at the idea, but somehow manage to bite my tongue. It’s not that I have anything against the idea of fated mates, it’s just that it’s hard for me to believe that there’s a perfect person, or persons, out there waiting to meet me.

Why the hell would anyone ever want to date me? I’m nothing, no one. I don’t have anything to offer someone else except trauma.

But of course Laoise thinks it’s a great idea and hands each of us a card—not that I’ll be making use of it anytime soon.

“Yeah, right. With my love life? I’ll probably end up meeting your guys’ mates, not my own.” Chloe wrinkles her nose and I hate that she’s been so unlucky in love. I might not believe in fated mates for myself, but for my best witches? They deserve the world.

“Come on, Chloe. That can’t keep happening. You’ve just had some bad luck. Eventually, you have to meet your own mates, right?” I glance between Laoise and Tali, begging them to back me up.

Only they don’t—they change the subject instead.

Fine, if they don’t want to reassure Chloe, then I’ll make sure I do. I’ll let it go for now, but I definitely think she should sign up. I’m going to convince her somehow. We chit chat for the next hour before heading home.

Somehow, the card ends up in my purse—though I’m fairly certain I left it on the table when I stood up. One of the girls must have put it in there when I wasn’t looking. As long as they don’t think I’m going to sign up, what harm is there in keeping the card?

I wake my computer up and get back to it. It takes me another three hours to get the cover exactly how I want it. I know I could've spent less time on it, but it's a Fantasy cover and it's for a huge name in the indie romance biz. If she likes my work, she might come back to me again. I'd kill to do all of her covers. It would be great marketing for me.

My phone rings and I glance down to see who could be calling. "Chloe?"

"Hey, Belle. Sorry, I know you're probably busy—"

"Absolutely not. You know I'd drop anything for you, but I just finished the cover I was working on, so you're good. What's up?"

She's silent for a few moments, but I don't try to rush her. She obviously has something she wants to say. I can be patient.

"My old coven is throwing a Yule gala and they want me to go," she finally says with a sigh.

"Okay?"

"The exes and their mates bombarded me and said they were worried about me. How they didn't think I should be alone anymore and that I should try this new dating website."

I laugh. "Let me guess, Love -N- Shenanigans?"

"You guessed it. They said I should use it so I'll have a date to the gala. I really don't want to because we all know how it's going to end because of this damn curse—"

I cut her off. "You don't actually know it's a curse. You just think it is, but I'm sorry, continue. Wait, can I also just say how much I love that you call them the exes?"

She snorts. "It's what they are. Part of me thinks I should do it, but the other part really doesn't want to be disappointed again, you know?"

"I'll make a deal with you," I say slowly, reaching for the card I meant to

throw away but hadn't yet. I really hope I don't end up regretting this. "I'll sign up if you do."

"What?" Chloe's shock is crystal clear and I can just imagine her face right now. "But you don't date."

I sigh. "No, I don't, but I have decided I'm going to celebrate Christmas this year. I want to have a Christmas like I see in those movies I love."

I wait for her to tell me how stupid that is, but she doesn't.

"Then I think we should both sign up. You deserve everything you want, girlfriend."

Tears fill my eyes, but I blink them away. "Well, I'm at my computer now. Let's do it before we change our minds."

She agrees, and I open the website. Staring at the questionnaire, I'm already regretting my life choices, but I force myself to keep going. If I don't have someone to do all the Christmas things with, I know I won't do it.

It's time for me to take control of my life, and live the way I want.

I just really, really hope I don't regret this.

I don't want to get my hopes up. There's always a chance that I won't match with anyone. Plus, I'm not sure that I'm ready for something serious. For now, I just want to focus on making this a Christmas I can never forget.

What I do know is that I won't let my past hold me back. I won't let what happened with Daniel ruin my view on relationships. He's an asshole who used me, and as much as I'd love to make him pay for what he did to me, it's better that I just forget him.

That's the only way I win against him and his mother—also known as my stepmother—is if I forget all about them and the harm they've done to me. I have to live my best life and find what makes me happy. I won't allow them to control my life when they're no longer in it.

This is a step in the right direction, and I'm also getting to support Chloe. None of my besties have had the best of life, but that doesn't mean we can't have everything we want now. It's time we all get what we want—what we deserve.

“Okay, it's done!” I tell her as I hit enter, smiling. Finally, I'm doing something that's (mostly) just for me.

“Me, too.” Chloe sighs. “Thanks for this, babes.”

“Anything you need, anytime. That's how this friendship works, Clo.”

Chloe laughs. “Okay, babes. Let me get off here. Love you.”

“Love you, too.”

I get a message from one of my clients and quickly click on my messenger app so I can talk her down from a ledge. I have to ignore the alert that sounds until I have her calmed down, and when I click over, I find I've been matched with four men—FOUR.

How the hell did I match with four men?

I click on each of their profiles, shocked at how gorgeous each of these men is. I don't understand how they've been matched with plain Jane me? It just doesn't seem possible.

YOU HAVE A NEW MESSAGE FROM DEREK TINKER.

YOU HAVE A NEW MESSAGE FROM CYPIAN FUSCO.

YOU HAVE A NEW MESSAGE FROM JACK FROST.

YOU HAVE A NEW MESSAGE FROM NICK DARKMERE.

And they're all messaging me at once. Don't freak out, Belle. You've totally got this.

I totally *don't* have this.

But I'm going to do it, anyway.

Chapter Two



Jack

“This is stupid,” I grumble as Cy drops beside me on the couch. “What is the purpose of signing up for this stupid service?”

Cy leans over, kissing my cheek. “The purpose is that we all agreed to give finding our mates another try. It’s been half a millennia since we last tried, Jack.”

I roll my eyes. “Don’t you think if we were going to find our mates that we would’ve done it already? We’ve been alive since the dawn of time. I don’t think we were meant to find them.”

“Or they just weren’t born yet,” Cy argues. “I promise this is the last time that I’ll ask you. Derek and Nick have already signed up. You’re the only holdout. Please, baby, for me?”

And how the hell am I supposed to say no to that? With a sigh, I submit the questionnaire before setting the laptop to the side. “Are you happy now?”

“Ecstatic. Thank you.”

He’s so lucky I love his ass—and that he convinced both Derek and Nick to sign up before asking me. My lover is far from stupid. He knows how to get me to do what he wants. I get why he wants to find our mates—or if we’re lucky, a mate for both of us. It’s something he’s always wanted and hoped we’d find, but I gave up hope a long time ago.

Cy—whose full name is Cypian because yes, he’s that old—has always been the most romantic of us. The two of us have been friends with Derek and Nick for so long we don’t even count the years any longer. The four of us are the first of our kind—well, I’m the only of my kind.

I don’t technically have a species, but everyone knows my name. Yes, I’m that Jack. Jack Frost at your service. I’m the one who brings forth winter and I’m generally known as a bad boy and an asshole. The part that no one seems to remember is that I’m Santa Claus’s oldest brother. Yes, that’s right. Santa and Krampus are my brothers. Not that either of them likes to admit it. I haven’t spoken to either of them in... probably close to a millennium.

Cy is a dark elf, which is another species that has a bad rep after a few tried to take over the Fae realm. Gotta love how people want to blame an entire species for the mistake of a few. It might also have something to do with the

fact that they came about from the fae trying to harness demon magic. The worst part about Cy being labeled a bad guy is that he's the most caring and happy guy I've ever met. It's such bullshit the way he's treated by other supes, but I do my best to protect him from the worst of it.

And then there's Derek and Nick. Derek is the first pixie ever born, which came about when a fae and fairy decided to mate. And Nick is the first ever nightmare shifter. All four of us are viewed as the "bad guys" so we banded together and have been close ever since. I just wish the asshole supes would let up. The four of us live together, though Nick and Derek are at Derek's shop right now.

"Now, we just have to wait," Cy says softly, a smile lighting up his face. "I'm so excited about this. Apparently it's run by Fate."

I scoff. "Fate doesn't exist."

"Really? You want to talk about someone not existing?"

He's got me there. There are so many people who believe I'm just a myth, a story made up for kids. So I have to give him that one. "Fine, you're right. So Fate is going to find us our mates?"

"That's what the site says." He shrugs. "Is it bad that I really want it to be true?"

Before I can answer, my laptop pings. I lean over to grab it and find that I have a new match on Love -N- Shenanigans.

"That was fast," Cy says just before his phone vibrates on the table.

Instead of opening the alert, I watch Cy as he picks up his phone. His eyes go wide as he shows me he also has a new match.

"Together?" he asks, that hopeful smile on his face.

Gods, I hope this works out the way he wants. I'd do anything to keep this man from being hurt. I never want to see his sparkle dimmed. I might be a

grumpy asshole ninety-nine percent of the time, but I never want him to become as jaded as I have.

I nod, forcing a smile as I turn back to my laptop. “Together is the only way I ever want to do anything.”

“Who knew the idea of meeting your mate would make you mushy,” he says with a laugh.

I side eye him, which just makes him laugh harder before shaking my head, a real smile forming on my lips. Have I mentioned how much I love this man?

I click on the alert and wait for the profile to open. As soon as the picture loads, my mouth falls open. Belle Cassidy.

She’s adorable. Her bronzed brown hair falls over her shoulders in waves and she wears the most adorable smile on her mostly naked face. She wears an adorable dress that hugs her curves and stops high on her thick thighs. Now this is a woman—all curves and soft where she should be. She isn’t what beauty standards would call perfect, but for me? She’s exactly what I would’ve described as my perfect mate—at least physically. But I think she’ll be perfect for me in all ways. It’s just a feeling I have.

Turning to Cy, I find him smiling softly at his phone. “What’s the verdict?”

Cy jerks his head up, his eyes going to my screen, and his smile only grows. “We got matched with the same woman.”

“Seriously?” I grab Cy’s phone, and sure enough, Belle is staring back at me. “Thank goodness. I was honestly afraid we’d have different mates, and we’d end up pulled apart.”

I hadn’t meant to admit that out loud, but I’m kind of glad I did when Cy lifts his hand to palm my cheek. “If my mate didn’t understand what you and

I share, then she'd be no mate of mine. You and me? We're forever. I love you, Jack, and I always will."

"I love you, too, Cy." I lean down to kiss him, but his phone starts blaring and we jump apart.

He grins as he glances at the screen before showing it to me. Of course it's Derek.

"You don't think..." I trail off, not wanting to finish the sentence.

Cy shrugs. "There's only one way to find out."

While he answers the phone, I take the time to actually read Belle's profile. She's only twenty-three, and a half-witch, half-human with no magic. Gods, that must be hard on her. Though, based on experience, I know she probably does have magic—she probably just doesn't know how to use it. That's something we can definitely work on with her.

She's never been in a relationship? How? She's gorgeous. I continue reading, getting angrier and angrier as I go. A cult? And this stepmother of hers? I'm going to hunt her down and make her pay for the way she treated my mate—because I'm absolutely sure she is my mate. Even without speaking to her, I can feel it in my bones. She's who we've been waiting for, and I'll burn down the entire world if I have to in order to avenge her.

"Jack?"

Blinking my way through my rage, I turn to find Cy staring at me with wide eyes. It takes me another moment to realize that my anger caused me to let my frost loose. It covers every surface, including my love's legs.

"Shit. I'm sorry." I take a deep breath and rein it back in.

As soon as the frost recedes, Cy lays his hand on my arm. "What happened, baby?"

"You didn't read all of Belle's profile, did you?"

He flushes as he ducks his head, mumbling, “No. I was too distracted by her picture.”

I throw my head back as I laugh, pulling him against my side. “Maybe wait a bit before you do. That shit is dark. What did Derek have to say?”

“Oh, all four of us share a mate.”

“No shit?” I grin. “That’s actually pretty awesome. But you can tell that she’s our mate too, can’t you? Just seeing her through the computer, I know she’s ours.”

He nods. “Same. Derek and Nick said the same thing.”

I sigh. “We’re going to have to go slow with her. She lived a very sheltered life and has never been in a relationship.”

“You don’t think she’s a virgin, do you?”

“Gods, I hope not. Not that there’s anything wrong with being a virgin. It’s just not something I want to deal with.” I run a hand over my face. “She wants a holiday movie type Christmas. I’m not a hundred percent sure what that entails, but I plan to do my best to give it to her.”

“The good news is you have me, and I know exactly what it means. It’s nothing the four of us won’t be able to handle.” He grins. “But you better get ready to woo her, because that’s exactly what happens in those movies.”

“Woo her? That I can do.”

And for the first time in a long time, I’m excited about something. Finding my mate changes everything. I can’t wait to meet her and make her ours.

“So, her past is traumatic?” Cy asks quietly and I tighten my hold around him. He’s so empathetic, I know this will hurt him.

I quickly summarize what I’d read and by the time I finish explaining it to him, there are tears falling down his cheeks.

“Why are humans so cruel? Who would do that to their stepdaughter?”

I scoff. “It’s not just humans, babe. Supes are just as bad. Try not to dwell on it too much. Yeah, she had a sucky life growing up, but now she’ll have us. I think we might be able to coax her magic from her. Even if she doesn’t know it exists, I know it’s there somewhere. If her mother hadn’t died so young, she would’ve helped her with it.

“But since she wasn’t around, we’ll show her. It might be weak, but I think she’ll appreciate it if we can help her find that spark inside herself. She seems... sad? It doesn’t sound like she expects anything romantic to happen between her and whoever she matches with. I think our girl might have some self confidence issues that we’ll need to help her with.”

“Yes, definitely. She’s gorgeous, isn’t she? I don’t know how she’s never been in a relationship before. Were the men she was raised around blind?” Cy pulls back to look up at me. “We should message her. I want to go on our first date as soon as possible. I just want to meet her, spend time with her.”

I nod, focusing back on my laptop. “Then let’s message her, but try not to overwhelm her with your enthusiasm, yeah?”

Cy nods, focusing on his phone once more.

I click on the message button and when the chat box loads, I have no idea what the hell to say. This is ridiculous. No one would think I’m as old as I am with the way I’m acting like a teenage boy right now.

I take a deep breath before forcing myself to relax.

JACK: Hi Belle! I’m Jack, and we’ve just matched. I also have it on good authority that you’ve matched with my three best friends and roommates, Cy, Derek, and Nick.

JACK: I know all four of us are looking forward to meeting you. I’m not 100% sure what a holiday movie type Christmas looks like, but Cy promises me I’ll enjoy it.

JACK: I was hoping that we could get our first date set up. I'm not sure if you want to start with a group date with all four of us or not, but if that's too overwhelming, then Cy and I could take you on one just the three of us.

BELLE: Hi! I wasn't expecting to get matched so quickly. Nor was I expecting all four of you to message me all at the same time.

JACK: Sorry?

BELLE: No reason to be sorry. If it's alright with all of you, I'd definitely prefer to do a date with you and Cy, and then Derek and Nick. I've never been on a date before, and the idea of all four of you at once is a little overwhelming for me right now.

JACK: Say no more. Just tell us where and when, and we'll be there.

BELLE: How does coffee sound? Tomorrow around 4 at Serendripity? If we hit it off, we can go to dinner afterward.

JACK: Done. We'll see you tomorrow at 4. I'm really looking forward to meeting you. Both of us are.

BELLE: Me too. See you then!

Now all we have to do is make it until tomorrow afternoon. We can totally do that.

Chapter Three



Cypian

I hate how nervous I am right now. Jack and I stand out in front of Serendripity, and I can't seem to force my legs to move. Sure, we're early, but I can already tell that Belle is inside. There's a part of me that's inexplicably drawn to her very presence, telling me she's here.

"Can you feel her too?" I ask him as I reach for his hand.

He turns his head to look at me, nodding with a small smile on his face as his fingers intertwine with mine. “I can. I wonder if she feels the same draw toward us?”

“I guess there’s only one way to find out.” I take a deep breath before taking a step forward, and then another.

Jack squeezes my hand before striding forward and pulling me into the coffee shop. My eyes instinctively seek her out, trying to find my beauty amongst the patrons. A smile lights up my face as I find her speaking to another woman. They’re about the same height, but the other woman wears her black hair in a bob.

“Should we wait?” I ask just as Belle’s head snaps up, her eyes finding us, and a smile lighting up her face. The other woman keeps talking before realizing she’s lost Belle’s attention. She follows her line of sight, her green eyes narrowing as she watches us approach.

“Jack! Cypian! I’m so glad you’re here.” Belle is beaming at us, and she seems genuinely glad we’re here. When the other woman clears her throat, Belle rolls her eyes. “This is one of my besties, Chloe. She wanted to meet the two of you to make sure you aren’t serial killers before she’ll let me have coffee with you.”

Laughter dances in her eyes, and I find myself chuckling as I turn to Chloe. “Hello, Chloe. You’re a good friend looking out for her. My name is Cypian, but please call me Cy—both of you. In case you couldn’t tell from my looks, even in my human guise, I’m a dark elf.”

I gesture to my dark, almost black skin and my long, white hair. It always makes people do a double take when they see me or another of my kind. We don’t exactly blend with humans well, unless we dye our hair. My bright green eyes only add to my otherworldly look, and it’s too much for many

humans and even some supes. Let's hope it's not for either of these two women.

"I'm aware. It's part of the reason I insisted on coming." Chloe bites her lip before taking my offered hand in hers. "I'm also aware not all dark elves are bad, but I needed to make sure you were one of the good ones before I left her with you. I hope you understand."

My smile only grows as I nod. "I respect you more for it, honestly. Most people would pretend my species wasn't the reason they were worried."

"I prefer to tell it how it is. Who has time for beating around the bush?" She waves her hand in the air before turning to Jack. "Now, I hear you're *the* Jack Frost. Everyone says you're an asshole."

"I am." Jack shrugs.

Chloe shakes her head. "Nothing wrong with that as long as you're not an asshole to my girl. If I find out you were, I'll be paying you a visit. I don't care how old you are, or how powerful you are. I'll kick your ass if you hurt her. Capiisce?"

Jack inclines his head in understanding before focusing on Belle, the corner of his mouth turning up. "Belle, it's nice to officially meet you."

"You too. I'm really excited about our coffee date." She turns to Chloe with an expectant look, though her smile never dims. "Did they pass your inspection? Can we grab a coffee now, please?"

Chloe nods. "Have a good date, Belle. Gentlemen."

"That's probably the first time we've been referred to as gentlemen," I say with a snort.

Jack scoffs. "True enough."

"I'll get us drinks," I offer. "Belle, what would you like?"

She ducks her head. "Oh, I can get my own drink."

Jack reaches out to brush his fingers across her wrist. “We’re aware that you can, but let us take care of you? We haven’t had someone else to do things for in a very long time.”

She considers both of us for a moment before nodding and giving me her order. I shoot her one last smile before I move toward the counter. Honestly, I can’t seem to wipe the smile from my face. I’m so excited to be here with her—with my mate.

I take my place in line, glancing at the menu to see if I want to try something different from usual when someone scoffs behind me. I force myself to keep smiling, but ready myself for the words I know are about to follow.

“I can’t believe they let someone like him in here. They shouldn’t be allowed in our town at all. None of us wants to be around their evil. You’d think they’d know better and stay away,” a nasally female voice sounds out loud enough that her voice carries throughout the area.

The barista calls me over, and I choose to ignore her. There’s always someone hanging around, trying to bring others down. It’s fine. “Hi,” I chirp as the barista’s eyes slide between me and the woman who’d been standing behind me.

“Hi, what can I get for you?” he asks.

Before I can answer, her voice calls out again, “Vincent, you don’t have to help him if you don’t want to. I’m sure the owner wouldn’t want him here. You should just send him packing. Dirty dark elf that he is.”

My smile never falls away, even as her words hit exactly where she wants them to.

I don’t even bother to turn to look at her. That’ll only incite her more. Though ignoring her like I am right now is likely to do the same.

“And who are you to say who can be here and who can’t?”

I’m shocked to hear Belle’s voice as I finally turn around, finding Belle in the woman’s face.

“Out of everyone here, you’re the last person who should be talking, Susan.” Belle’s hands are on her hips as she stares down the woman whose name I now know to be Susan. “You act like being a harpy is any better. You and your friends are always circling everyone, trying to find out the gossip so you can spread it around town. You’re no better than a vulture.”

Susan just gapes at Belle, her mouth flopping open and closed.

“Excuse me,” the barista, who I guess is Vincent, says as he launches himself over the counter, barely missing me as I don’t move out of the way. I’m honestly too shocked at what’s going down in front of me.

“He’s a better person than you can ever hope to be,” Belle continues. “So maybe butt your nose out of business that isn’t yours?”

Vincent lays a hand on Belle’s shoulder, causing me to tense up at the familiarity. “Susan, I don’t know how many times we have to tell you this, but if you’re going to cause a scene, you’re the one who isn’t welcome here. And I can guarantee you that the owner of Serendripity wouldn’t stand for this kind of speciesism here. So until you can learn to stop being a bitch to make yourself feel better, you’re banned from Serendripity.”

“But... but... there’s not another coffee shop in Fort Veyelsa. Where am I supposed to get my coffee?”

“I guess at your house,” Vincent says with a shrug before turning to Belle, who has shrugged off his hand. “Why don’t you return to your table? I’ll help your friend get your drinks ordered.”

Belle glances back at me, and I’m a little sad to see her smile has been wiped away. I mouth a thank you to her and that has her smiling again. She

nods at me and Vincent before moving back to the table where Jack stands, waiting for her.

Vincent claps his hands and waves Susan and the women with her out the door. “The whole staff will be informed of this incident, so don’t think you can come in when I’m not on shift.”

I can hear the women complaining before the door shuts behind them. Vincent claps his hands when he turns around. “Okay, that’s all the show you get. Go back to your drinks and conversations.” He shakes his head as he makes his way back to the counter. He nods his head at me before he jumps over the counter once more, the female working at the register next to him gives him a high five.

“I’m sorry about that. What can I get you?”

I snort, placing my order. “Thanks for that, man. I appreciate it.”

“It was my pleasure. It’s not as if you’d done anything wrong. Some people just aren’t meant to be out in public.” Vincent grins. “I’ll get those drinks made for you and delivered to your table.”

I toss him my thanks once more before heading back to the table, eyes zeroing in on Belle. “Hey, are you okay?”

Her head jerks up as she shoots me a smile. “I’m fine, but are you?”

“That’s not the worst I’ve heard,” I say with a shrug. “I’ve gotten quite good at ignoring it—mostly.”

“Yeah, it’s the mostly that we’re worried about,” Jack says with a sneer. “If Belle hadn’t gone after them, I would’ve. No one gets to speak to you like that.”

He cups my cheek, leaning in to kiss me, and Belle gasps. We both turn our heads to look at her. Had we not told her we were together? Shit, I don’t think we did. Shit.

“The two of you are together?” she asks hesitantly.

Jack grimaces. “We didn’t tell you that, did we?”

“No.” She shakes her head. “I don’t mind, though. I was just surprised. If the two of you are together, why are you on a dating site?”

“We both want to find our mates, or mate, if we share one,” I say carefully because I still don’t think she knows we’re her mates.

Her brow furrows. “So, does that mean you don’t want to be together any longer?”

Jack snorts. “Oh, we have no intention of giving up the other. We might not be fated mates, but we’re chosen mates. Hopefully, our mate or mates are willing to accept that. If they’re not? Then Fate didn’t pick well for us, did she?”

“No, I guess not.” Belle smiles at that. “That makes sense.”

Jack sighs, leaning forward as he runs a hand through his white-blond spiked hair. “I don’t want to be rude, but I want to make sure we’re on the same page. I know you weren’t raised in the supe community, and I don’t know how much you actually know about it.”

“Not much,” she says with a half-smile and shrug. “My besties have been trying to catch me up on what I don’t know, but it’s a lot. I’ve only known about the supernatural for a few years.”

“That has to be hard,” I add, my smile slipping slightly. “Do you know much about fated mates?”

She shrugs again. “A bit. Enough to get by. Can we not talk about my deficiencies right now? I’d rather get to know the two of you.”

I frown at her choice of words, but don’t argue with her. The three of us spend the next hour getting to know one another, and I’m sure she has no idea that we’re her mates. It kind of sucks, but it’s not completely

unexpected. I'll have to let Derek and Nick know before their date. We don't want to bombard her with information.

"I'm starting to get a little hungry, but I'm not ready to say goodbye yet. Would you like to join me for dinner?" She doesn't duck her head this time, so I'm able to see her cheeks flush. She's so adorable that it's not even funny.

Unfortunately, my cock decides to come to attention then—who knew I was *that* into blushing? This *so* isn't the time. Jack frowns when I don't immediately answer, his eyes flashing to me. I grab his hand, placing it on my cock, which has him smirking.

My eyes go wide when he strokes it through my jeans before letting go. "We'd love to join you for dinner, Belle. We're not ready to call it a night either. Do you have anywhere in mind?"

I ignore the two of them as they carry on talking about where we should eat. I force my eyes shut, trying to think of the least sexiest things I can—grandmas in bikinis, hairy assholes, bitchy harpies with shrieks for voices.

"Cy?"

My eyes pop open at Belle's soft words, grateful that my dick has finally gotten the memo. "I'm sorry. What was the question?"

Belle giggles. "I asked if you were ready to go."

I grin, not even caring that she caught me spacing out—though I'm grateful she doesn't realize *why* I'd checked out. "Of course. Lead the way."

The three of us toss our now empty cups into the trash before heading outside. I reach for Belle's hand, hesitating for a moment. "May I?"

Her smile is shy as she looks up at me from beneath her eyelashes. She bites her lip as she nods, and I quickly intertwine our fingers.

Jack flashes us a rare smile. "It's only fair that I get to hold your other hand." He offers her his hand, and she takes it without hesitation.

“So,” I start, cut off by a sudden gust of wind that almost knocks the three of us over. We manage to stay standing, but Belle’s dress goes flying up. I’d like to say I look away, but I certainly do not. In fact, I freeze as more of the pale skin of her thighs is revealed. I get a peek of pink panties before she shoves the dress down.

“What in the world?” She laughs, still clinging to her dress even though the wind has already died down. “Where did the wind come from?”

“That’s a very good question,” Jack says, though he looks thoughtful. “Why don’t you keep a hold of your dress while we walk, though? Just in case.”

I frown at that, but Jack just shoots me a look that says to trust him. He’s damn lucky I do trust him. Because I want to know what’s going through his mind. I wanted to hold her hand, but it’s fine. We’ll have plenty of time for that later.

“Belle, why don’t you tell us about this holiday movie Christmas you want to have?” I ask as we continue down the street. Hopefully, this will allow Jack to understand what she’s looking for.

So far, I feel like the date is going well, and I hope it continues that way. Because I don’t think I can stay away from her if I tried.

Chapter Four



Belle

A blush heats my face as I try to remember the list of ideas I wanted to do with the guys I met through the website. When I first thought of this plan, I wrote down every single thing I thought I *had* to do to complete my Christmas bucket list. Now that I'm expected to tell Cypian and Jack about them, I can't think of anything.

I stare at the sidewalk in front of me, praying to whoever will listen that a hole opens in front of me and sucks me down to the Hell Realm. Not only have I flashed these guys my panties, but I've gone completely psycho on a lady that insulted Cypian, and now I've gone dumb at a very simple question. If these guys want to see me again, I'll be shocked. Hell, at this rate, they'll probably tell their roommates that I'm a waste of time.

"Belle? Did we lose you?" Jack chuckles as he bumps his shoulder against mine, drawing my gaze off the frost covered sidewalk and onto his face.

I smile up at him, knowing my face is probably as red as a tomato at this point. I'm not sure what to tell him. Admitting that I have no clue what I want to do is probably not a good idea, but I have to say *something*. I take a deep breath, hoping that with more air in my lungs, I'll be able to think of words to answer him.

"Um, honestly." I pause, I guess I don't have anything else to offer but the truth.

"I can't really think of anything specific I wanted to do. I've never really been able to celebrate Christmas, as you know. Now that the opportunity is here, I can't think of what to do. I'm open to ideas, though."

There, that didn't sound too stupid. And it gave them an opportunity to put in their thoughts. I put the ball back in their hoop or however that saying goes. Cypian is laughing now. I don't want to take offense or think that he's being mean, but my feelings are hurt just a bit.

"Don't worry, Pretty Girl." The dark elf wraps his arms around my shoulders as he smiles down at me. "I'm sure between the five of us, we'll think of plenty of things to do to give you the best first Christmas ever."

For the rest of the night, the three of us brainstorm on activities we can do. Cypian really wanted to bake cookies and go on a sleigh ride. Jack said he'd

love to teach me how to ice skate and maybe have a snowball fight. I wanted to decorate a Christmas tree and write a letter to Santa.

Of course, Jack wanted no part of the letter writing, but Cypian told him it was a Christmas tradition and said we could do it even if we didn't actually send the letter to Jack's brother. The whole night was wonderful, and I found myself really excited to meet Derek and Nick now that I know Jack and Cypian a bit better.

When I get up, I go straight to my computer. This isn't something new. I do it every single day. However, usually I pull up my social media and start working. Today, though, I open my chat on LnS and smile when I see multiple messages.

JACK: I had a great time last night. Can't wait to see you again.

CYPIAN: You know, Pretty Girl, I've been thinking. We should probably exchange numbers so we can communicate more easily.

DEREK: Did you decide what we are doing today?

NICK: Ignore Derek's grumpiness. He is nervous about our date today. I can't wait to finally see you in person.

The smile on my face feels like it may be a permanent fixture. These guys are so kind. I didn't think anyone would want me knowing where I came from and the things that I've been through. These four men, though, they don't judge me. They like me for the person I am in spite of how I grew up.

BELLE: Morning! I'm open for date ideas!

DEREK: Be ready at 5. We'll pick you up.

For the rest of the day, I try to ignore the dating site and actually get some work done. It's probably the hardest thing I've had to do in my whole life. It seems like every five minutes, my hand moves the mouse to click on the third

screen that has the dating site open on it while the other two screens on my desk hold work stuff.

Eventually, work drags my attention down enough that I get fully submerged and forget all about my date and the four guys that probably need a nap after running through my thoughts so much. The cover I'm working on is whimsical and romantic, but there is something missing and I can't figure out what it is. I try different fonts and text colors, but nothing feels right. I'm moving different images around when my alarm goes off on my phone, and I jump so hard, I knock over the glass of sweet tea that Tali brought me earlier and I forgot to drink.

I hold my breath as I watch the cup spin a bit, praying that it doesn't spill onto my keyboard again. Thankfully, it tumbles off the ledge of my desk and onto the floor. Sure, I'll have to clean it up, but I won't have to get another keyboard. My phone blares an emergency siren, and I glance between the vibrating monster that is my iPhone and the puddle of sticky iced tea. Which is more important?

I glare at my phone as I reach over to the dirty clothes hamper in the corner of my room and yank out a towel that probably should have been washed a few days ago. Once the mess is out of sight, I snatch up my phone and glare at the flashing red siren in the middle of the screen. The words scrolling across the bottom of my phone have my heart racing and my body scrambling.

Thirty minutes to be ready for date night two.

Crap! I knew I should have given myself more time!

I rush into the bathroom and stare into the mirror, trying to get a baseline for what I'm working with. The sight of my tangled brown locks makes me want to cry. There is no way I'm going to be ready in thirty minutes. Just

thinking of letting Derek and Nick down has my anxiety rushing to the front of my mind. Images of cruel words and harsh punishments flash through my mind and I have to sit on my bottom and hold my breath to make the negative worries and harsh insults flush from my mind before I can do anything else.

My hands are shaking and my breaths are shaky as they saw in and out of my lungs. Black dots float across my eyes as panic rises to meet with my anxiety in an all too familiar dance. Squeezing my eyes closed, I count to one thousand as my finger brushes against the soft rug I'm sitting on.

By the time I reach eight hundred, my breaths are even and the panic and anxiety have both gone back into the recesses of my mind, quietly waiting for their chance to pop back out again.

I skip looking into the mirror as I turn on the water and proceed to take the fastest shower in all the history of man. My hair is a curly mess when I get out, so I decide to embrace the crazy and just go all middle school, scrunching my hair with some mousse and a hand towel. I do the fastest wing liner ever and spritz my hair with some extra strong hold hairspray before rushing out to my room to get dressed. Looking at my phone, I notice that there's only five minutes until the guys get here and I don't even know where we are going.

Dialing the phone, I pace around my room and stare into my closet like the perfect outfit will somehow manifest by pure willpower. The line rings twice, but I feel like hours tick by while I wait for the ringing to stop. Finally, in the middle of the third ring, she answers.

“Lee! It's an emergency!”

I have to hold in my groan when the unicorn bitch laughs at my panicked tone. She thinks it's hilarious that I'm calling her, but I'm in a seriously bad situation right now.

“What’s wrong, Belle?”

I rush out my explanation. How I’m late for my first date with two guys. The fast shower, middle school hair, and bare minimum makeup and finally, how the guys are keeping their date idea to themselves, so I have no clue what to wear and no time to go back and forth like I usually would. Finally, the fashionista sounds just as stressed as me.

“Oh, Belle,” she moans out. She honestly sounds like she has been shot and needs immediate medical attention. “Don’t wait so long to call me next time!” She practically yells at me and I roll my eyes because ...DUH!

“Alright... this is going to be okay. A good man will wait for a woman.” Right as the words leave her mouth, I hear a knock at our door.

I shout for Tali to get it and squeak into the phone, my voice so high and panicked, I wouldn’t be surprised if a glass breaks somewhere in the apartment.

“Laoise! They are here now! And I’m still naked!”

“Okay, grab some underwear and a matching bra. The cutest set you have.”

What?! I’m NOT planning on anyone seeing my panties, so why do they have to be cute? As if the girl can read my mind, she starts talking.

“The cute part is for you. A confidence booster. Now, I bought you a pair of dark wash, distressed skinny jeans. Put those on with that cute purple lacy tank top and your black baggy cardigan.”

As if the gods above knew what I needed, all the articles of clothing she suggested are together and clean in my closet. The pants still have tags on them. I put the phone on speaker and put on the clothes. The outfit is cute and I’m eternally grateful that I have friends in fashionable places.

“Borrow Tali’s black ankle boots and you’ll be good to go. I already texted her and she should be bringing them to you.”

Tali rushes into my room and hands me my shoes, then pauses and really takes a good look at me.

“Holy shit, Belle. You look stunning.”

“Well, I don’t think you have to sound that shocked.” I snark. Still a bit flustered because Derek and Nick are somewhere in the apartment alone, waiting for me to get dressed. Tali laughs and as I stand up, she takes a picture of me. Laoise gasps as my phone bleats, announcing I have a text. Tali must have sent the picture to the group chat.

I don’t even worry about being upset about it. I thank Lee and kiss Tali on the cheek before rushing out of my room, barely pausing to grab my wallet on the way out.

My stomach is rolling with nerves, and I really hope that the guys don’t mind having to wait for me. I can already feel the blush on my face. The second date I’ve ever been on and I’m late. That is not a great omen of what’s to come.

I stop in the hall, right outside of sight for the living room. Taking a deep breath, I smooth my shirt down my hips and tell myself that everything will be okay. It takes quite a few times of repeating the mantra for it to sink into my mind. I hear a door down the hall open and rush into the living room with a smile on my face.

Chapter Five



Derek

“Nick, you’re sure this is the address she gave you?” I grumble to my best friend for the seventh time in the entire ten seconds we’ve been waiting since knocking on the door. “Because I’m going to be pissed if this isn’t even the right fucking place, dude.”

I know I sound like a grumpy shit, but I’m really nervous to meet Belle. And to go on this date. Hell, any date for that matter. The last date I went on

was... shit, over a millennium ago and things were great until I shifted into my pixie and the lady laughed so hard she pissed her pants, then proceeded to make every little dick joke known to man and a few I'm sure she created right on the spot.

I haven't even tried dating since that night. Even over a thousand years later, and it still stings a bit when I think of it.

Now, we're meeting with Belle. Online, she seems super sweet and innocent. She knows what each of us is, and she acts like she is genuinely excited to see each of us shifted. Not to mention that the whole reason she is looking for dates is just downright adorable.

Even knowing all of this, I'm still nervous to actually meet Belle. And the fact that I came up with the date idea makes me even more nervous. So, yeah, I'm being a bit short with Nick.

Nick is the most laid-back guy I know, so even if he gets a bit frustrated with my attitude, he won't be a dick back to me. He smiles at me and shakes his head as the door opens. The woman that answers the door is shorter than Belle said she was and her hair is long, almost down to her waist. She has a darker complexion and her face isn't as round as Belle's is in all of her pictures. If I had to make an assumption, I'd say this is Belle's roommate, Tali.

"You must be Derek and Nick. Belle is still getting ready. Come on in and have a seat. I'll let her know you're here."

Her phone beeps and she looks down as she holds the door for Nick and me to step through.

The apartment is bigger than I thought. The hall in the entryway opens into a large living room with two halls intercepting the junction right before the living room. When I get into the room, I can see that it's an open concept

between the living room, kitchen, and dining area. The whole back wall is glass with a sliding door between the kitchen area and the dining table that opens into a pretty green shared backyard.

Nick walks past me into the living room and over to the large bookshelves on either side of the fireplace with the TV mounted on the wall above it. One of the shelves is full of movies and CDs, but the other one is stuffed with books. Every shelf but one is full to the brim and double layered. The very top shelf only has around ten books, though. I walk over to that shelf and examine the odd books out. Their covers are immaculate, some of them are dark and ominous, some of them are minimal but impactful, and there is even one that is bright and playful. That one is my favorite. It makes me want to smile and open the book to see what it is about.

I don't touch the books, though; I know some people are very particular about their shelves and the covers so I turn around and sit on the fluffy black couch that matches the two armchairs and the coffee table in the room. Nick follows behind me and sits with me.

"You don't think she'll be too long, do you?" I lean close to Nick so nobody else in the house will hear me.

"Calm down, Der. Girls take time to get ready. This is why you didn't make reservations, remember?"

"Yeah. But what if she doesn't actually want to date us? What if she only wants to date Jack and Cypian?"

Nick rolls his eyes and turns his head to look me in the eyes. He smirks but puts his hand on my shoulder. "She wants to date us, Derek. I promise, she isn't late on purpose and everything is going to be fine. Take a deep breath and just have a bit of patience."

As the words leave his mouth, we hear a squeak in the hall and Belle rushes

into the doorway. Her face is flushed and her hair is curled around her shoulders. She is absolutely the most beautiful creature I've ever seen. The shirt and jeans she is wearing are hugging her body and the cardigan she has over her shoulders pulls the whole outfit together.

I can't ever blink or I'm afraid she will disappear.

Nick and the others swear she is our fated mate, but I'm not so sure that the fates would pair me with such a stunning, sweet girl as Belle. I'm an asshole nowadays. I'm cranky and spend more time in my shop than with other people. Sure, I make stunning furniture, but half of it I can't sell because the customers don't think I'm worth working with because of my attitude. Thankfully, Nick is willing to be the face of my company and sell my shit, because we can't fit anything else in our house.

"I'm so sorry I'm late. Please don't hate me." Belle's sweet voice sounds so worried. "I just started working and lost track of time."

"It's okay, Sweet Girl. We're not upset." I don't even recognize the voice coming out of my mouth. I can feel Nick staring at me, but the relieved huff of breath that Belle lets out distracts me from glaring back at him. "Do you want to just sit here for a second and collect your thoughts, or do you want to leave now?"

Yeah, I was just bitching about being late, but the girl looks like she could use a minute to calm herself down and nothing we have planned is on a timetable. There is one benefit to my magic being the main portion of the date, and that is, that I control when everything happens.

Belle smiles widely as she walks over to the two of us and sits down between us. She puts a shaky hand on each of our knees and leans back into the cushions of the couch. Another big breath drops from between her pink lips, and she closes her eyes.

She is so fucking pretty. I want to lean over and kiss those plump lips. I can imagine how soft her body will feel against mine and hear the soft gasp she'd make as I buried my face between those thick thighs. In my mind, I can see Nick and I laying her across this couch and making her forget being late or any other stress she may have. He'd touch her body as I ate...

"Derek."

Nick's sharp call drags me out of my daydreams. Our eyes clash, and I realize I must have been projecting my thoughts to him. The bulge in his jeans tells me he isn't against the idea; it's just not an appropriate time to be having them. He is right, but I still smirk like the cocky piece of shit that I am. Nick rolls his eyes, and Belle opens hers to look between the two of us.

"Is everything okay?" Belle is still staring at the two of us, but now there is curiosity, and maybe even a little flush on her cheeks to suggest she knows what we were just silently talking about.

"Everything is fine." Nick smiles at the girl and I can see the thoughts in her mind melt away. "Are you ready to head out?"

"Sure." The word is drawn out, like she wants to say something else, but she is forcing herself to let it go.

We all stand up and walk to the door. Before Belle leaves, she calls out a goodbye over her shoulder. Nick and I walk her over to my Ford F150 and she smiles at the hunter green paint job. I know that it's not very manly, but the gold flakes in the paint job remind me of my magic, and I love it. From the smile on her face, Belle loves it, too.

I open the front passenger door and help her climb in. She slides over to the middle and Nick climbs up beside her. I close the door and make my way over to the driver's side. The whole ten second walk, I'm telling myself to calm the fuck down. This isn't some two-bit whore Nick and I picked up in

the bar. This is our mate, and she deserves better than the dirty thoughts that are racing through my mind. I can't completely help it though. Pixies are notorious for our sexual appetites. It's one of the very few things I don't hate about my species.

I get in the truck and start the engine. I smile down at Belle because I can't help but look at her again. She was out of my sight for all of ten seconds, and it felt like ten years. My pixie is attached to her already, and I'm a bit terrified of what that means. For me and for her, if I'm honest.

"You ready to go, Sweet Girl?"

She smiles so sweetly. I swear if she keeps smiling at me like that, I'm going to get obsessively enthralled with her. She nods her head, and I fiddle with the heater so that she isn't cold, then give her my phone with my Youtube open so she can pick the music.

Belle puts on a Christmas playlist and I glance at Nick. This idea for a date is fantastic. I'm so glad I came up with it. I am a bit worried that she won't be happy with the surprise I have planned for later, but that is a future Derek problem, so I let it go and pulled out of the driveway onto the road.

The guys and I have a house on the outskirts of town. Though to call it a house is a bit of an understatement. It's more of a Victorian style mansion in the woods. We're taking Belle to a clearing that is in the woods around our house for a picnic.

On the drive over, Nick and Belle talk to each other. Belle tells us about the project she is working on. The book covers she is making sound beautiful, and I find myself strangely proud that the author asked her to make the matching set for the whole series after she did the first book.

Nick tells her about his family, the few that he still talks to, anyway. And about the Hell Realm. I speak a little about Pixie Hollow in the Fae Realm

and my sisters that plan to visit soon. Belle tells us a bit more about how she was raised, about her father and stepmother. She mentions a stepbrother a few times, but she doesn't talk about him at any great length, which makes me think he did something awful, and I'll have to find him and kill him if I ever find out what it is. Of course, that makes me want to know what the boy did to my Sweet Girl even more. Nobody hurts Belle. Not ever.

I need to calm down though, because this is a date and if I go on a murderous rampage, then I'll probably terrify the poor girl and that can't happen. I need her to like us, to want us. Because, being so close to her now, it's obvious that the guys were right. Belle is mine. She is the one girl that I've been waiting my whole life for, and I'll be damned if I have her so close, just to lose her again.

Chapter Six



Nick

Nightmares have telepathic abilities. It's not something that many people know, but we can read other creatures' thoughts. Even when we aren't shifted. That is how I know Derek has been thinking about fucking Belle since he saw her at her house. That is also how I know exactly what Belle's step brother did to her. How I know what her mother's grimoire looks like, and how I know Belle is much more than the magic-less human she

thinks she is.

Belle has seen pictures of her mother and when she thinks about her mother, the image she has seen pops into her mind. I know who her mother was, and she is powerful. Or was, I guess. Either way, there is a zero percent chance that Gilinda would have a null as a child. The more likely scenario is that she bound the child's magic. And if that is the case, then all we have to do is figure out what will break the bonds.

Derek pulls up to the tree line in front of the path we plan to take into the clearing. Belle is staring at the forest in awe, and a smile creeps across my face at just how adorable she looks. Of course, Der picks that time to send yet another image of Belle between the two of us. This time, she is sucking my cock while Der fucks her from behind and we are somehow up in the canopy of the trees.

He has been doing this the whole drive over here, and I'm going to strangle him if he doesn't cut it the fuck out! My dick has been hard the entire ride over, and now I'm supposed to see if Belle wants to ride my horse to the clearing. I'm never going to get rid of this situation in my pants. I can already tell.

We get out of the truck and help Belle, since Derek insists on everything in his life being massive. Dumb pixie. I hold Belle's hand as we walk to the tree line to meet Der.

"So, where are we?" Belle looks out at the trees again before turning to watch Der and I.

"Well," Derek smirks at her, and I smack his shoulder. Prick.

"Our house is through the woods, but that isn't where we are going."

"It's not?" Belle turns her head to the side, so that her ear is practically resting on her shoulder.

“Nope. We,” I swirl my hand around to indicate the three of us, “are going to have a picnic in Pixie Meadow, then after that, we have another surprise for you.”

Belle bounces on her toes and claps her hands. Excitement is racing through her thoughts, and I see image after image of what she imagines Pixie Meadow looks like. I have to cough to cover my laugh when the image of a typical forest clearing with Derek standing shirtless in the middle pops into her mind.

Before she can get any more wild ideas, I tug the hand she still has resting in mine.

“So, Belle,” I clear my throat, trying to shake the nerves away. “It’s a bit of a walk to get to the Meadow. Would you, uh, like to ride instead of walk?”

I’ve never, not once, allowed someone on my back. It forms a bond between the nightmare and the rider, but my stallion has assured me that Belle is our fated mate, so a bond is already formed. I trust him, more than anything else in this world or the next.

“You mean, like on your shifted form? You’d let me ride your nightmare?” Belle’s eyes are huge and I have a feeling she knows that this is a big deal, even if no one else is acting like it.

When I told Derek I was going to offer it, he just about dropped his eyes out of his skull, opening them so wide. Jack and Cypian were just as shocked. I’m not worried about it, though.

“Yes. It’s up to you, though.”

“I’d love to, if you don’t mind. I’ve never ridden a horse before.”

I should have known there was only so much Derek was going to let go before his joker side came out to play. He snorts and coughs to try to cover the laughter in his gaze and hundreds of images of Belle riding me slip into

my mind. I reach over and punch him in the shoulder, mentally demanding he cut it out and ready to harm him if he doesn't, but Belle's sweet twinkling laughter pulls us both from our mostly silent battle.

Derek and I stare at her as she laughs. Neither of us knows what to do, both of us are absolutely drawn to the sound.

"I set myself up for that one didn't I?" Belle giggles again, then walks up to the two of us and wraps one arm around each of our waists and hugs us to her soft, warm body. I'm two hundred percent sure she feels the effect she has on the two of us, but she doesn't mention it except for a soft pink blush on her cheeks.

"Okay, well." Der clears his throat and steps back, turning his body away from Belle so he can adjust himself in his jeans. "We should get going if we wanna make it before sunset."

Nodding, I step back from Belle and shift. I don't have to undress like most shifters I know. It's a trait Derek and I share. His clothes shrink to fit his pixie and my magic stores mine for when I shift back again. My horse is a massive beast with the bottom of my belly reaching up to Belle's shoulders. My mane and tail are made out of smoke and ash, and my body is coated in short slick raven hair. My eyes are red as hell fire, and I'm sure I look terrifying in this form, but all I get from Belle is awe.

I can see the image of my stallion in her mind and in the image, she is stroking my coat and somehow braiding my mane. I snort at the image and she jumps a bit. The hand she was slowly raising falls to her side and I paw the ground in frustration at myself for scaring her. Derek steps up to her back and wraps his arms around her waist, pulling her body close to his. Lucky bastard.

"It's okay, Sweet Girl. Nick won't hurt you. He wants you to touch him, to

get to know his stallion as well as the man. He can also read your mind, so if you were picturing touching him, riding him.” The last two words were spoken with a heavy emphasis that makes me want to smack the playful pixie. “Then he would know and readily agree. He can send you images as well, so if you see something in your mind that you didn’t think, it was probably him.”

I send my thanks to Derek for explaining things to Belle. I know I should have explained it all before I shifted, but I was way too nervous and excited to think of it before.

Belle steps closer and runs her hands down my side. She weaves her fingers through my mane and walks around to my front so she can look me in the eyes. Her hand runs down my snout just like people do with real horses, and a shiver runs through my body. Images are flying through my mind from Der, Belle, and my stallion. It’s hard to keep up with them all, but they are all basically saying the same thing. Belle is beautiful, and she is fearless and sweet, and so many other things.

I snort again, using my nose to nudge Belle back to my side so we can get going. Derek helps her mount, and as soon as her body weight is settled on my back, I have to keep pictures of her riding other parts of me at bay long enough to get going. The meadow isn’t actually all that far away. It’s only about a mile from where we started, so Derek walks beside me, one hand on Belle to keep her steady, as the two of them talk. Every once in a while I send them both an image or a thought to add to the conversation, but mostly I just think about how good it feels to have Belle riding me through my woods.

The souls of dead animals scurry through the foliage as we make our trek. They scurry under my hooves and disappear to the afterlife they’ve been searching for. The meadow comes into view, and I stop at the edge. Before

Belle can dismount, I shift back to man and Belle's legs are wrapped around my waist as her arms latch around my neck. Derek and I laugh as Belle lets out a cute shriek of surprise that morphs into a gasp of awe.

The meadow is beautiful. There are flowers and toadstools all over the lush, green grass. Butterflies and hummingbirds dance in the breeze and a perfect picnic is sitting on a large, flat boulder in the middle. Derek has a copse of small houses built into dead tree stumps on the outer edge of the clearing that his sisters stay in when they visit. He has a home here as well, but he never stays here unless his family is in town.

"Wow, this is... Amazing." We can barely hear the words as they fall from Belle's soft, pink lips.

Derek and I share a smirk as we walk to the picnic area. Belle clings to my back as I cross the meadow. Squirrels and rabbits skitter around my feet and make Belle laugh again. We settle down and have our picnic. Derek and I keep Belle laughing at our antics, and Belle tells us more about herself. Five minutes before the surprise is supposed to start, Belle asks to see Derek's pixie.

"We don't have time right now, Sweet Girl. But I promise to show you next time."

I'm not sure how he does it, but he keeps his voice calm. I know for a fact that he has issues with his shifted form. For Belle, though, I can see in his mind that he'll shift happily.

As Belle nods, disappointment on her face, but understanding in her thoughts, snow starts falling in the meadow. Heavy drifts of snow build up around the rock and in less than five minutes, the green field is covered in white. Belle is looking around, shock apparent on her face.

"What in the world is going on here?"

Derek and I smirk at each other again. A snowball smacks the two of us in the face as laughter rings out in the air. The surprise is here.

Jack and Cypian step out of the trees in front of us, both laughing. Belle smiles when she sees them. The two make their way over to where we are sitting. Derek is red in the face, but he is laughing as well. I'm distracted by the images coming at me from Cy. He and Jack were up to some kinky shit before coming out here, and now he is projecting those images into my mind. When he makes it over to the boulder, I nudge his shoulder and send my pleas to his mind for him to stop bombarding me with his sex life. He flushes and immediately the images stop. I can't help but laugh at the elf.

"What are you guys doing here?" Belle asks. She seems to think about how it sounds, because she flushes and quickly continues to speak. "Not that I'm not happy to see you, of course."

"We came for your surprise," Cy says.

"Yeah. We're going to have a snowball fight. Right now." As Jack finishes his statement, a snowball hits Belle in the chest, and Derek runs to the other side of the field, laughing his ass off.

Belle, Cy, and Jack all jump off the boulder in separate directions, laughing as they throw snowballs at each other. I sit on the boulder, leaning back on my hands behind me as I watch the four most important people in my life laughing and playing together. Today couldn't have been better if I tried.

Chapter Seven



Belle

“**B**elle?”
I startle at Tali’s voice, turning to glance at her over my shoulder.
“Tali? When did you make it home?”

My bestie’s lips quirk up at the edges as she tries to fight her smile. “About twenty minutes ago. I was starting to worry because not only didn’t you hear me, but you’ve been staring at your screen and not moving that entire time.”

“Oh.” I duck my head, flushing from head to toe. “I guess I was lost in thought.”

“About what? Those sexy men you’re using to have a romantic Christmas? The ones you don’t want anything else from besides their company?”

I make a face at her teasing. She knew that had been the plan from the start, but I didn’t know it would be like this. I thought I’d make new friends—and don’t get me wrong, I have. I just didn’t think I’d feel so much more than friendship toward them.

“It’s okay if you like them.” Tali’s voice softens as she comes to kneel beside my chair. “Just because you didn’t go into this looking for love doesn’t mean you can’t find it.”

I scoff. “Love? I barely know the four of them.”

She shrugs, a sad look on her face. “Time doesn’t really factor into it, does it? Sometimes you just know.”

Once again, I find myself wondering what’s going on with my bestie. I’ve tried to get her to talk to me, but she still hasn’t told me what’s going on. It’s driving me crazy. I don’t even think she’s been talking to Chloe or Laoise, which is unlike her. Usually she opens up to all three of us, or at the very least, one of us.

“Tali, is everything okay?”

She shakes her head, forcing a smile. “Of course. I would tell you if it wasn’t, wouldn’t I?”

Up until recently, I would’ve said the answer to that was yes. But now? I’m not so sure. I also know she isn’t going to open up until she’s ready, so I won’t pressure her for now.

“Good. I just wanted to make sure.”

Tali pushes to her feet before grabbing my hand and pulling me from my

chair. “Now, I want to hear all about these men who you can’t stop thinking about. Tell me when you’re seeing them again. How was the last date? Also, I was thinking we should have the girls over for dinner one night this week.”

“Sure, Tali. That sounds like a plan. As for our last date...” I quickly fill her in as she leads me into the kitchen. She listens to me as we start dinner prep, but before I can tell her I have no idea when we’re hanging out next, my phone goes off.

Pulling it out, I find a new text from Cypian.

CY: Hey, Pretty Girl. The guys and I were talking. We’d like to take you out this week so we can check off a few more things off your list.

ME: I’d love that. What did you have in mind?

CY: We thought we’d each take you out on an individual date.

CY: We know you have work, so we can take you whenever you’re free.

ME: That sounds great. Luckily, I’m my own boss so I can take time when I want.

ME: I’d say the time of day would depend on the activity.

ME: Who am I going out with first?

CY: That would be me. I won the first date.

ME: Do I even want to know how you “won” the date?

CY: No. Probably not. *winky face emoji*

ME: Okay, when would you like to go? What will we be doing?

CY: Tomorrow if you’re free.

CY: And I’d like the what to remain a secret if you don’t mind.

ME: Now I’m intrigued.

ME: But tomorrow sounds great. What time?

CY: Does 6:00 work for you?

ME: That’s perfect.

CY: Then it's a date.

ME: See you then.

Setting my phone to the side, I glance up to find Tali smirking at me. "What?"

She just shakes her head, smirk growing as she stares at me.

"Don't be a brat," I snap, wincing at my harsh tone. "Sorry. I don't know what that was about."

"Sure, you do. You like them, and you don't want me teasing you about them. I get it." Tali shrugs. "Which one was that?"

"Cy. The four of them want to take me out on individual dates this week. He wouldn't tell me what we're going to be doing, but I'm excited, Tali." I shake my head. "I'm too excited. What if it all blows up in my face?"

Tali is across the room, pulling me into her arms. "You can't think like that, babe. You went through hell for years, so it's understandable why you think that way. You're not there anymore. Not everything is going to go horribly. You deserve this—you deserve them. I'm still not sure they deserve you, but for now, I've accepted they're at least trying. Sure, if you never give anyone a chance, they'll never hurt you. But if you don't, how will you ever be happy?"

I know she's right, but I just shrug. "I'll keep trying. I'm just scared."

"And there's nothing wrong with that. Just don't give up. That's all I'm asking of you."

I give her a small smile as I extract myself from her hold and get back to working on dinner.

I'll keep trying, and not because Tali is asking me to, but because I want to. I want to see where this can go. I just hope I can keep my fears under wraps while I get to know these four men. I like them a lot more than I ever thought

I could or would. All I can do is hope that they don't hurt me. I guess only time will tell.



The next day, I'm surprised at how well I'm able to focus on my work even with as excited as I am about my date tonight. I'm surprised when my alarm goes off, telling me it's time to get ready.

I managed to get all of my promo posting done for my authors, and finish a cover I should've finished the day before. Not to mention, I started a second one that will only take another hour or so tomorrow. All in all, it's been a productive day.

I quickly shut down my computer as I've let all my authors know I have a date tonight. They were all super happy for me. I wonder what they would think if they knew I was actually dating not one, but FOUR men just like in

the books some of them write. I think I'll keep that little tidbit to myself for now.

The doorbell chimes, and I frown. I know it's not Cypian. There's no way he'd show up an hour early, right? Oh, gods... I hope it's not him. I'm still in my pajamas. I didn't feel like putting in the effort to look presentable when I knew I'd have to get all gussied up tonight.

I scamper to the door and peek through the peephole. I sigh with relief when I see Laoise standing on the other side of the door.

"Lee? What are you doing here?" I ask as I throw the door open.

"I'm here to help you get ready for your date, obviously." She holds up a garment bag and a box that I'm sure holds makeup and other beauty products. She's always bringing us new products to try.

"Come on in then." I step back to allow her inside. "How did you even know..."

I trail off at the look on her face and snort. "Of course. Tali told you. The three of you know I am capable of getting myself ready for a date, right?"

Laoise laughs, a tinkling sound I've always been jealous of. "We are aware, but why should you have to when you have us?"

Rolling my eyes, I follow my friend to my room. She quickly points to the bathroom. "Go shower. Make it quick. We only have an hour."

"Yes, mistress," I joke as I duck into my bathroom, Laoise's laughter following me.

Like the good girl I am, I'm in and out of the shower in ten minutes. I head back to my room wrapped in nothing more than a towel. I'm surprised to find that Laoise has laid out not one, but four different outfits on my bed.

She grins when she spins around to see me standing there. "Good girl. Now, sit down so I can blow dry your hair."

I sit on the vanity stool and shake my head. My three friends like to call me a good girl ever since I told them I think I might have a praise kink. They're lucky I love them, because they're kind of assholes sometimes. But I know they only do it because they love me.

Twenty minutes later, Laoise has finished my hair. I can never make it look this good with my curls falling perfectly over my shoulders. It's one of the many reasons I'll never turn down Laoise doing my hair. Maybe one day I'll get the hang of it. Until then, at least I have her.

"Before I do your makeup, you need to pick an outfit." Laoise gestures to the bed. "I had a new designer reach out to me about trying some of their clothes. I agreed, but only if I could get some for my besties as well. Of course, they said yes. I brought over enough outfits for all of your dates so you won't freak out too much about what to wear."

I laugh because she knows me so well. "Yes, four outfits are much less overwhelming than an entire closet full of clothes. These are gorgeous, Lee."

"They are. I think this designer is going to be one of my favorites. She's going to blow up fast, I think."

I run my hand over one of the sweaters, finding it super soft. Deciding it's just what I need, I choose that outfit for my date tonight. I love that Laoise has brought over dress and skirt options because I prefer them to pants. The girls like to make fun of me for it, but I find pants confining. It does mean I have to wear a lot of tights during the winter, but I'm okay with that.

"I think this is the one," I tell Laoise as I lift the soft lavender sweater.

She nods. "That's a good choice. The skirt isn't your usual style but it's going to look amazing on you, I promise. Go ahead and get dressed. There's even new lingerie for each outfit so you don't have to worry about panty lines or finding the right bra for the top."

“You think of everything.” I sigh, dropping my towel and pulling on the new panties and bra. They’re gorgeous and probably the most comfortable lingerie I’ve ever worn. Knowing she won’t let me look in the mirror until the outfit is completely on, I throw on the form-fitting sweater, sparkly tights, and the high-waisted pencil skirt. I expect there to be heels with an outfit like this, but there are some chunky ankle boots instead. Sliding them over my feet, I turn back to Laoise. “So?”

“Gorgeous, B. Simply gorgeous.” She moves to my jewelry box, grabbing a few pieces before helping me put them on. “Okay, darling, take a look.”

Laoise leads me over to the mirror and my mouth falls open. She’s right that this skirt isn’t one that I would usually choose. Since I’m a bigger girl, I tend not to get form fitting clothing that would hug my bottom and thick thighs, but instead of making me look fat, this outfit highlights my figure. Laoise tucks the sweater into the top of the skirt and it completely changes the look.

“I look hot.”

“Yeah, you do, babe. Now, let’s get your makeup done so you’re ready before Cy gets here.” She leads me back to the vanity. “I’d love to take some pictures for my blog if that’s okay. I’d really like to show that the designer knows how to design for all body types.”

I nod slowly. “I think I’d like that, actually. You’ll have to send me the designer’s info so I can get more clothes from her.”

Laoise promises to do just that as she gets to work on my makeup. It doesn’t take her long, and when she’s done, I realize I still have ten minutes before Cy should be here. Laoise takes a ton of pictures and for the first time, I don’t shy away from it. I feel amazing. I don’t think I’ve ever felt more beautiful than at this moment, and I want to share that with the world.

That doesn't mean that butterflies don't flutter in my stomach when the doorbell chimes, but something tells me that Cypian is going to love this new look. I can't wait.

Chapter Eight



Cypian

Ringing the doorbell, I wait impatiently for Belle or her roommate to answer the door. I don't understand why I'm so nervous about this date, but you'd think it was our first date.

The door opens, a smile sliding across my lips as I look up, only to realize it's not Belle or her roommate.

“You don’t have to look so disappointed,” the rainbow haired beauty says with a laugh.

“I’m sorry. I was just hoping Belle would answer the door.” I give a sheepish shrug.

She just grins, holding her hand out to me. “I’m Laoise, unicorn shifter. I’m the last member of the coven that you haven’t met.”

“It’s lovely to meet you, Laoise.” I shake her hand, but find my eyes glancing over her shoulder.

Laoise laughs again. “She’ll be down in just a second. I told her she needed to make an entrance.”

“I’m here! I’m here!”

My eyes immediately find my mate as she turns the corner, pulling her jacket on. My jaw drops, eyes going wide as I forget how to speak.

Belle is gorgeous at all times, but right now? Holy shit.

Belle giggles and I realize I’d said that out loud. My face flushes as I duck my head. “I’m sorry, Belle. I seem to lose my head around you.”

“Oh, I do like this one. You should definitely keep him.” I look up just in time to see Laoise wink at Belle causing my mate to flush. “On that note, I’ll get out of your hair so you can go on your date. Have fun, Belle. Don’t do anything I wouldn’t do.”

“So do whatever the hell I want?” Belle calls after her friend with a giggle.

Laoise glances over her shoulder, eyes twinkling. “Damn straight.”

Belle shakes her head, stepping outside and attempting to close the door behind her. Only she ends up tripping on something and goes tumbling straight into my chest.

“Oops,” she says with another giggle. “I can be such a klutz.”

I grin down at her. “That’s okay, Precious. You can fall for me any time

you'd like."

A sudden wind whips in from out of nowhere, similar to the one that appeared the night of mine and Jack's first date with her. Interesting.

I set Belle on her feet, my smile only growing as she flushes. She turns away from me quickly, lifting her keys to lock the door but she fumbles them and they go flying into a pile of snow.

"Well, fiddlesticks." Belle shakes her head. "It seems like my clumsiness just gets worse around you."

When she starts to step off the stoop and into the snow, I stop her. "Let me, Pretty Girl. There's no reason for you to get all wet."

I step into the snow, digging around until I locate her keys and holding them up to her. Belle giggles once more, and it makes being cold and wet all worth it. When she attempts to grab her keys from me, I pull them out of her reach, and she pouts.

"Since you have such butterfingers, I'll lock up for you and hold onto your keys," I tell her, leaning forward to press a kiss to her forehead. She freezes up for a second, and I worry that I've overstepped her boundaries, but then she melts into me.

"Thank you, Cy."

"It's my pleasure." I wrap an arm around her as I lock the door. Leading her toward my parked car, I pull her more firmly against my side. I love the way she fits against me. It's almost like she was meant for me. Oh, right. She was.

I open the door for her, waiting until she's seated before shutting it and rushing around to the driver's side. As soon as I get the car started, I turn the heat on full blast.

"So, do I get a hint at what we're doing for our date?" Belle asks as I pull out into traffic.

Glancing at her outfit, I grimace slightly. “The original plan was to take you ice skating, but I’m not sure that’s the outfit for it.”

Belle squeals, clapping her hands as she bounces in her seat and it’s the most adorable thing I’ve ever seen. “Oh, please, can we go ice skating? I’m sure this will be fine. I’ve never been ice skating before, but I’ve always wanted to.”

And how can I say no to that?

“Of course, Precious. Whatever you desire, I’ll do my best to make it happen.” For some reason, saying those words to her has me blushing. I don’t know what it is about this woman that makes me feel like a teenage boy again, but I don’t hate it.

“Are we going to the ice skating rink in town?” she asks, looking confused.

I chuckle. “No. Why go where we’ll have to deal with a shitton of people when we can be alone.”

She wrinkles her nose, still looking confused. “I’m all for that. But where could we do that?”

“We have a pond on our property. Jack’s going to help us out, making sure it’s frozen solid and instead of skates, he’ll make us blades on our shoes.”

“He can do that? That is so cool.” Belle glances at me from beneath her lashes. “Thank you for doing this for me.”

“Of course, Belle. It’s my pleasure. We want to make sure you get to experience everything you desire this Christmas season. We’ve each chosen an activity this week that we think you’ll enjoy, but if there’s something you’d really love to do, all you have to do is ask.”

She’s quiet for a moment as she wrings her hands in her lap. “I’m not used to people doing what I want, or even caring what I want, if I’m honest. My best witches care, of course, but before them? I’ve never had that. It’s hard

for me to believe that the four of you care that much about something that has nothing to do with you. I don't deserve you."

My blood boils. I hate that she was treated like this as a child. I'm glad she's free of the cult she grew up in, but healing from her mistreatment will take time. I can only hope that we're there to help her with it. "Oh, Precious. You had it rough growing up, I know that. Of course we care what you want. It's not completely selfless though. We like seeing you happy, and if we can help do that, we're happy to do so. And if anything, it's us who doesn't deserve you."

Belle doesn't look like she believes my words, but I don't want to push her. We spend the rest of the ride to our place in a comfortable silence.

Pulling up in front of the house, I find Jack already waiting outside. I shake my head, scoffing.

Belle tilts her head as she glances at me. "What?"

"I think Jack is a little impatient to see you again," I say with a nod of my head toward the man in question who has started walking toward us.

"Oh," Belle squeaks, flushing to the tips of her ears.

"Hello, Belle," Jack drawls as he opens her door, ducking his head down so he can see both of us. "I'm so glad Cy needed my help so I could see you tonight."

Rolling my eyes, I push open my door. "You act like you're not taking her on a date tomorrow."

"I want to see her every day," he says, sticking his tongue out at me which makes Belle giggle again.

"C'mon, Doll. Let's go get you and Cy set up for your date so I can get out of your hair." Jack reaches over and undoes Belle's seatbelt before helping

her out of the car, his eyebrows shooting up as he takes in her outfit. “Damn, Belle. You look hot.”

She ducks her head, but I can just make out the smile on her lips.

“Thank you,” she murmurs.

I circle the car and step up next to her, startling at the sudden heat. Frowning, I glance up at Jack and he shakes his head. It’s like I’ve just stepped into a bubble of heat. Jack nods toward Belle, and I wonder if this is her magic trying to manifest. We’ll need to discuss this with the others. I know Jack doesn’t think she’s magicless like she believes, but I’ve never seen this kind of thing happen before.

Throwing my arm over her shoulders, I pull Belle into my side again as Jack releases her hand. The heat slowly dissipates as he leads us into the treeline. Luckily, the pond isn’t too far from the house and we’re there within ten minutes.

Jack shoots both of us a wink before kneeling beside the pond. It’s already frozen, but I can see his magic running through it and making it completely solid.

“Your magic is beautiful,” Belle says, eyes wide with awe.

“You can see my magic?” Jack asks as he pushes to his feet.

Belle nods. “I’ve always been able to see magic. Or at least I assume I’ve been able to. I wasn’t around it until two years ago... Is that not normal?”

“Don’t sound so worried, Precious.” I wrap both of my arms around her and hold her close. “I’ve only known one other person who could physically see magic, but it’s not unheard of. It’s just not common.”

“I’ve never thought you were magicless,” Jack tells her, “and this just confirms it.”

Belle pulls back enough so she can glance between the two of us. “Really?”

But I've never been able to do magic like Tali and Chloe. Obviously Laoise's magic is different."

Jack smiles, reaching over to tap the tip of her nose. "I'm going to look into it for you. With as old as the four of us are, we have a lot of contacts. We'll see if we can't get you some answers."

"That's... Thank you." Tears glisten in her eyes, and this so isn't how I saw the evening going.

"No tears, Belle. For tonight, let's forget about your magic, okay?" Jack's voice is soft. It's not often I get to see him like this, but Belle brings out his protective nature, and I'm here for it.

Belle nods, her voice soft as she speaks. "Okay."

"Good. Let me see your feet so we can get you skate ready."

I reluctantly release Belle, but hold onto her hips to keep her steady as Jack lifts one foot at a time, adding a blade of ice at the bottom of her boots. When it's my turn, I keep one hand on Jack's shoulder as he does the same for me.

"Well, the two of you enjoy your date." Jack steps back, turning to head back to the house when Belle turns to me with a question in her eyes.

I smile, loving her big heart, before calling out to my love. "Jack, would you like to join us?"

He spins around, a smile lighting up his face. "Really?"

"Yes, really."

He runs down, smacking a kiss to my lips before doing the same to Belle. She looks gobsmacked as he rushes onto the ice, his skates forming as he moves. He begins gliding the moment he hits the ice.

I move to Belle, who still hasn't moved. "You okay?"

She looks up at me, eyes dazed. "He just kissed me."

"That he did. Is that okay?"

She nods slowly. “Yeah. I just...”

“It surprised you?”

“Yeah, that.” Belle laughs, reaching for my outstretched hand. “You won’t let me fall, will you?”

I laugh. “I’ll try, but it’s probably a good thing that Jack is here. He’ll keep you from getting a bruised bottom.”

Belle doesn’t look convinced but allows me to lead her to the ice. As soon as her skate hits the ice, she starts flailing. She manages to keep her hold on me, but her feet go in two different directions and she’s falling before I can even grasp what’s happening. What’s even worse is that she’s taking me down with her.

Belle screams, her free arm pinwheeling. Just when I think I might have lied to her, we both land in a pile of snow.

Jack skates over, chuckling. “I take it you’ve never skated before?”

“No.” Belle huffs as she tries to get to her feet, falling again. “I didn’t think it would be this hard.”

“I guess it’s a good thing Cy invited me to join you. He’s not a strong skater either.” Jack helps me to my feet, and I manage to not fall on my ass again as he reaches down to help Belle to her feet.

Belle turns to me with a pout. “You’re not a good skater and you thought taking me skating was a good idea?”

I shrug sheepishly. “I knew you wanted to do it?”

“I really do.” A soft smile graces her lips. “But I’m glad Jack is here now.”

“Everything is always better when I’m here.” Jack smirks, twirling a hand in the air until snow is falling around us. “Now, let me teach you how to skate.”

It takes a bit for Belle to get the hang of it, but eventually she’s skating

across the ice just as smoothly as Jack in a way that I'll never be able to.

I'm pouting when Jack and Belle skate up to me, each of them taking one of my hands and leading me around the pond. I guess being a crappy skater has its advantages.

Chapter Nine



Jack

After crashing Cypian's date the night before, I decide that I should share my date night with him. I even invite the others, though they both decline. Not that Belle knows that Cypian is joining us—I figured I'd leave that as a surprise.

"Are you taking me to your house for your date too?" Belle asks, bashfulness tinging her voice.

Glancing over at her, I see her watching me from beneath her lashes. “That was the plan. Are you okay with that? Do you want to go out instead because I can make that happen.”

Belle’s smile lights up her face. “No, I don’t want that. I’m not big on crowds. I love that you all feel comfortable enough to take me to your house—that you make plans for us to go there without even thinking of taking me out.”

“We might have picked up that you were more comfortable in more intimate settings.” I shoot her a wink before turning my attention back to the road. “Though, I’m not sure if we’ve been consciously planning your dates to be at the house or if that’s just where we feel most comfortable. Or even a combination of the two.”

Belle hums but doesn’t say anything else.

I’m freaking out internally as I try to figure out if I need to fill the silence with chatter, which is not my strong suit, or if Belle doesn’t feel comfortable when it’s just the two of us. Am I ruining the date before it’s even begun? I don’t want to ruin this. She’s perfect for me—for us. She might not have set out looking for romance, but I know she’s interested in us. All four of us want to turn this into something more, and I won’t be the one to ruin it.

“What are you thinking about so hard over there, Jack?”

Glancing at her, I find her head tilted to the side as if I’m a puzzle she can’t figure out. Hell, maybe I am.

“I’m afraid I’m ruining this date,” I blurt out, eyes growing wide. I had not meant to say that. Now she’s going to think I’m some kind of loser. I just can’t do anything right today.

Belle’s hand finds mine, and she intertwines our fingers before speaking. “I’m not sure why you think you’re ruining anything, but I can assure you

that you're not. I can't believe that *I'm* about to say this instead of having someone say it to me, but you need to get out of your head. Sometimes our minds like to tell us the worst case scenarios and make us believe that everything is falling apart around us when everything is perfect."

I take a deep breath, nodding as I squeeze her hand. She's right. I'm overthinking this for no other reason than I'm nervous as hell.

Luckily, we pull up to the house shortly after, and I jump out to race around to the passenger side. I open her door as her giggles fill the air. Extending my hand to her with a flourish, she lets me help her from the car.

"Oh!" Belle cries out as her feet hit the ground, something throwing her off balance and into me. Because I'm not expecting it, both of us end up taking a tumble to the ground.

I let out an oof when my back slams into the ground but make sure I cushion Belle's landing. Snow slips beneath my shirt, sending a shiver down my spine. Not that I think it's cold—not when I'm made of everything that is winter—but it was a surprise.

"Oh my goodness. I'm so sorry, Jack. I don't understand why I've been so clumsy lately. Are you okay?"

I grin up at her as her hands trail over the parts of my body she can reach, obviously checking to see if I have any injuries. "Well, I do have something that's causing me a bit of pain. I think it's definitely something you can help with."

"What? Where?" Belle's eyes are wide as she scrambles to sit her up until she's straddling me.

Groaning, I tilt my hips, allowing my hard cock to slide against her center. Belle's eyes are wide, her mouth forming an O shape as a whine falls from her lips.

She shakes her head, her hands coming down to slap on my chest. “That’s not what I meant, and you know it!”

“Oh, I definitely knew that.” My hands tighten on her hips, grin growing mischievous as I buck into her again and grind her against me. “But this just sounded like it would be fun.”

“Gods above, what are you doing, Jack?” Cypian’s voice echoes over the area and I let my head fall back.

“Busted,” I whisper to Belle, sending her into a peel of laughter as I sit up.

Cypian makes it over to us and helps Belle to her feet, leaving me to stand up on my own.

“It’s okay, Cy,” Belle assures him. “It’s actually my fault that we ended up in that position. Jack just used it to his advantage, and I was a willing participant, I promise.”

Cypian’s eyes narrow as he glares at me, but he’s all smiles when he turns back to our girl. “What do you mean it was your fault?”

“Something snagged on my ankle when I got out of the car, and I went careening into Jack. Took us both to the ground and everything.” Belle shrugs, looking back to where she’d been standing before we hit the floor. Her head tilts, a frown overtaking her pretty features. “How the hell did a vine end up there?”

Following her line of sight, and sure enough, there’s a long vine lying atop the snow there. Something definitely isn’t right. “That’s definitely odd. Let’s head inside so we can get you warm, yeah?”

“That sounds great!” Belle allows Cypian to lead her inside, though he pauses long enough to glance at me over his shoulder. We’ve known one another long enough for me to practically read his thoughts. He’s worried.

I nod, acknowledging his worry, but I don’t think it’s as serious as he’s

worrying it is. I'm fairly certain this is her magic trying to manifest. We just need to figure out why it hasn't when it should have years ago.

Still mulling it over in my head, I follow Belle and Cypian into the kitchen.

Belle lights up as she glances around the room, her eyes moving from ingredient to ingredient set out on the counter before she turns back to me. "Are you baking cookies?"

"We—as in the three of us—are, Doll. I enjoy baking so I thought it would be a good thing for us to do." I glance over at Cypian for a moment before focusing back on our girl. "I invited Cy to join us. I hope that's okay."

"Of course it's okay. I'm sure the two of you are used to doing things together, and I don't want to take away from your relationship with one another." Her smile now is shy.

Cypian wraps his arms around her from behind. "I promise you're doing no such thing."

Belle leans into his embrace, and not wanting to be left out, I wrap my arms around both of them. We stand there for a few moments, and I allow myself to think about how this could be what the rest of our lives look like. I could be content with that. No, more than content. I would be the happiest man alive.

Stepping back, I clear my throat. "We should probably get started on these. Cy, will you order us dinner while I grab the recipes? I've got three different types of cookies for us to make so we'll each mix one up. Then while they're baking, I figured we could eat in front of the fire—maybe even put on one of those holiday movies you love so much?"

"Really?" Belle squeals, clapping her hands. Once more I'm struck by how adorable she is. I love that we're the ones who are giving her the Christmas she's obviously dying to have.

“Of course, Pretty Girl. Anything for you. I’ve told you that before, and I still mean it.” Cypian kisses the side of her head before pulling out his phone and ordering us dinner.

Thirty minutes later, when the food arrives, we’ve just put in our first trays of cookies. We’re all a mess—as is the kitchen—but I’ve never seen Belle happier. I duck out to grab dinner, telling them to meet me in the front room after they clean themselves up.

After paying for the food and grabbing plates, I head for the front room to find them already sitting on the nest Cypian and I built before I picked Belle up. They’re sipping on what has to be hot chocolate based on the smell, and I spy a third cup waiting for me. There’s already a movie queued up on the screen. I can’t wipe the smile off my face as I sit beside them. The movie starts as we eat and there isn’t much talking.

I can tell that Belle and Cypian are wrapped up in the movie, but I can’t seem to stop watching the two of them. They don’t even hear the timer go off for the cookies so I jump up to take care of them. Thank goodness for having multiple ovens because they’re all done and all I have to do is transfer them to the cooling racks.

Making my way back into the front room, I find that Cypian and Belle might not have been as wrapped up in the movie as I thought seeing as they’re currently wrapped around one another. I move as quietly as I can, circling them so I can drop to the blankets at Belle’s back. I’m not sure if they hear me or not, but they don’t break their kiss. I press against Belle’s back and she startles, telling me she definitely hadn’t heard me.

“I thought we were watching a movie,” I say, running my nose along her neck.

Cypian chuckles. “We were, but then you got up and I found Belle much

more interesting.”

“Now that you’ve had a kiss, I think it’s only fair if I get one too.” I turn Belle’s head until I can crush her lips with mine.

I groan at the first taste of her, turning rabid at the first tentative flick of her tongue against mine. I drag my hands through her hair and pull her closer so I can devour her.

“You can’t hog her, Jack.” Cypian tuts at me quietly, and I reluctantly release her. “Belle, I’m sure you’ve figured out that we’re *very* interested in you, but we don’t want to do anything that will make you uncomfortable. You’re in charge here. But I think it might be best to set some limits on what you want to happen now before we get carried away.”

Belle’s face is flushed as she glances between the two of us. “No sex,” she finally murmurs.

“At all... or?” I shrug when Cypian turns to me with a glare. “I’m asking for clarification. I get that she means no dick in pussy action, but that still leaves a lot of other things that can be classified as sex.”

Belle nods slowly. “I’d like it if you touched me, and each other maybe. I’d like to touch you too.”

And that’s all the green light I need as I gently lay her on the blankets. “Can I taste you?”

“Yes,” she whimpers, her face turning an even brighter red.

I push up the bottom of her dress, running my fingers over her center. She’s wet enough that it’s dampened her tights. She wants this, and so do I—so do we.

I yank down her tights, taking her panties with them. Luckily, she’d taken off her boots earlier.

“Wait.”

I immediately freeze as Cypian speaks. Belle and I both turn to him in confusion. A wicked grin sits on his face that has Belle gasping—not in fright, but in desire.

“On your back, Jack.” There’s a command to his words that usually isn’t there. Usually I’m the one to take charge in the bedroom, but I’m absolutely willing to let him take the lead right now. I do as I’m told, lying beside Belle. Cypian makes quick work of my pants and since I don’t wear underwear, I’m immediately bare to both of them.

I glance at Belle to see her staring at my cock, and it jumps at the attention.

“Okay, Pretty Girl, I want you to sit on Jack’s face and let him get you off while I suck his cock.”

Belle gasps again, hesitating. “I don’t want to hurt him.”

“Oh, sweet thing, you won’t. I promise. Come smother me with that pussy.” I pull her over until she’s straddling my head, facing Cypian as he lowers his mouth on my dick. A groan spills from me as I yank Belle down so she can’t hover like so many women try to do. They just don’t seem to understand that we *want* them to drown us in their juices.

Belle cries out at the first swipe of my tongue, trying to pull away from me, but there’s no way I’m allowing that. My focus is split between the heaven that is Cypian’s mouth and how amazing Belle tastes on my tongue.

It doesn’t take long for her to begin riding my face, small cries and whimpers falling from her lips as I devour her. Too soon I feel a telling tingling sensation at the base of my spine, my balls drawing up.

Cypian pops off my cock and I groan into Belle’s cunt. “He’s close, Belle. I want you to come with him—with us.”

I can hear the sounds of him stroking his cock, and though Belle’s hips still for a moment, she begins to move once more—her movements more frantic.

Instead of closing his mouth around me once more, I feel Cypian's cock brushing against mine as he strokes our cocks together.

I'm so close to exploding and I want Belle to come with us, so I snake a hand around her and rub at her clit until she falls apart above me, screaming out my name. I grunt as I come hard, my cum spilling over Cypian's hand just before he follows us over the edge.

The three of us collapse to the floor, Cypian lying on top of me as I hold Belle to my side. "Not exactly how I expected this date to go."

"You're not complaining, are you?" Belle teases, giggles spilling from her as I turn to her with raised eyebrows.

"Do I look like I'm complaining?"

She shakes her head slowly. "Thank you."

"Did she just thank us for an orgasm?" Cypian asks, amusement in his tone.

I nod slowly. "I think she did."

"No." She laughs. "Thank you for showing me that it could be like this."

With those words, rage rushes through me, but I push it down. Belle hasn't opened up to us about it, but we've put together that someone hurt her badly before she ran away from the cult. One day, I'm going to find out who it is and kill them.

Chapter Ten



Belle

I lay in bed, staring up at the ceiling in my room and thinking about what happened last night with Jack and Cy. It was amazing! I never thought that sex of any kind could feel that good. The two of them are absolutely beautiful together, and *my golly* does Jack know what he is doing with his mouth!

However, now that I've had some time to let what happened sink in, my anxiety is making itself known. I really, really like all four of them, maybe even love them. But I'm not sure if they like me too, or if I'm just someone they wanted to help out. Someone they feel sorry for and see as an easy way to get laid.

As I lay in bed, going in circles with my thoughts of the guys and any feelings they may or may not have, a gust of wind swirls around my room. Papers fly off my desk and the glass of water I keep on my bedside table spills over right into my face. I bolt up right in my bed and scream.

Tali rushes through the door, her beautiful long black hair whipping around her round tan face.

“What on earth?”

Tali waves her hand through the air, but the wind doesn't do anything. Purple sparks of magic are dancing around in the air and bouncing off the walls and window in the room. I'm freaking out! Weird stuff has been happening when I'm out with the guys, like strong gusts of wind and that vine that tripped me yesterday, but nothing like *this* has happened to me before.

My heart is racing, and I stare wide eyed at Tali. She meets my gaze and her expression shifts through multiple emotions. She goes from confused to understanding, and back to confused. Then to worried before she settles on a soft, comforting expression. She walks over and sits beside me on the bed. Her arms wrap around my shoulders and she smooths my hair down on the back of my head.

“You have to calm down, Belle. That's the only way to stop the wind.” Tali's words are soft and gentle, and when I look into her eyes, I don't see the same panic I feel.

“What’s going on, Tali? I don’t understand! I’m human, I’ve always been human.”

“Apparently not anymore. We’ll figure it all out, but for now, just take a few deep breaths and calm down. Just close your eyes and think of happy, calming things.”

Reluctantly, I closed my eyes. At first, my mind is jumping all over the place, trying to figure out what is going on and how this is possible. Then, I get to thinking about what it could mean for work. Will people still want to use my services if they know I have some kind of magic? That train of thought has my mind wondering about the project I’m working on for a publishing company and my heart rate slows down. I know it’s strange, but work is my happy place, the thing that calms me down.

The wind in the room slows down as I contemplate which cover models I’m going to use for the series and if all of them should have motorcycles on the covers. Eventually, the idea for the project is solid in my mind, and the wind in the room has completely stopped.

Tali continues to hold me and pet my hair. Her soft words drag my thoughts off of book covers and my eyes blink open.

“Good girl, Belle. You did wonderful. Want to talk about what happened to have your magic acting out like that?”

Do I want to talk about possibly being in love with four men, and how the thought of them not loving me back made some bizarre magic caused a wind storm in my room? No, no I don’t. But I know that I *need* to talk about it so Tali can tell me that I’m an idiot and help me figure out where this magic came from. Plus, Derek caught me leaving their house last night and told me that his date is tonight and he will pick me up at seven. I don’t have time to

stew on it like I usually would, or I'll be late for my date and no matter how he may or may not feel about me, I really wanted to go out with Derek.

“Well, for the last couple of weeks, when I go out with one or more of the guys, weird stuff has been happening. I didn't really think much of it, but today, I was lying here, thinking about how I felt about the guys and some other stuff and all of a sudden, there's a micro hurricane in my room!”

I throw my arms up in the air and wave them around to emphasize what the wind did to all my things. The cup on my nightstand is still tipped over, slowly dripping water onto the floor. Papers are laying all over my floor and the few cat posters I have hanging on the walls are all barely hanging on by one tacked corner. My room is an absolute mess, and just thinking about having to organize the papers back onto my desk is making me sweat a little.

Tali chuckles as she reaches up and snares my arms back down. She holds my hands between hers and squeezes them so that I look at her. She is smiling wide, her white teeth on display. It's a sight I haven't seen in a while, and even if I'm the butt of the joke, I'm glad to see a lighter side to my best friend. She has been entirely too sad for the last two weeks. It's getting to the point that I've been considering an intervention, I just have to get Chloe and Lee in on it too, and neither of them have had the time lately for that kind of emotional conversation.

“Weeeelllll, there certainly is a lot to unpack in that statement.” Tali giggles and nudges my side with her elbow. “Let's start at the beginning and work this shit out.”

Tali pulls us both down so we are laying side by side, facing each other in the bed with our hands locked between us. We spend two hours laying there, talking about everything that has happened in the last few weeks and when we finally get done talking, I feel so much better about my magic, and I have

a plan to address the guys and their feelings. I just hope I'm strong enough to actually go through with it.



BBBBAAAHHHH!

BBBBAAAHHHH!

BBBBAAAHHHH!

My phone bleats out the adorable goat sound I set as my ringtone. I have an alarm set for six to stop working and get ready for my date with Derek, so I think about ignoring it so I can focus on this cover. The only people who have my number are my best witches and the guys, and what if it's Derek trying to cancel tonight? I might as well look, and if it's nothing, then I'll ignore it. Besides, this cover isn't cooperating like the other four did.

I glance down and see it is Derek texting me.

Derek: How much space do you have in your room?

Derek: Okay, I know that sounded creepy, but I'm trying to give you something, a surprise so don't ask!

Derek: Damnit, that sounded mean. I'm not trying to be mean, Sweet Girl, I'm just nervous.

By the time I get done reading the messages Derek sent one after another, I'm laughing so hard, it's hard to breathe. Derek is a gruff person, but on the phone, he seems downright hostile. I think that it's cute how he tries to be sweet to me. Nick told me that he is hilarious when he gets to know a person, but over the years, all the negative comments and bad people experiences turned him into a grumpy shithead. Nick's words not mine!

I don't see my tinker that way though. Sure he can be grumpy sometimes, but mostly, he is just blunt. He is also really sweet and funny. They are all sweet, honestly, but something about the blunt way Derek talks makes me feel like he will always tell me the truth, even if it hurts my feelings. I also know that if something he says *does* hurt my feelings, then he didn't do it on purpose.

Not wanting to keep him waiting, I answer Derek's texts.

Me: My room actually has a lot of space. It's a pretty big room, and I don't have much in it. What are you giving me?

I snicker to myself knowing that he is going to get flustered by me asking even when he told me not to. It's fun to rile him up and I'm not sure why. Usually I would be too worried about his reaction to pick at him. Tali said I let myself be more free around the guys because I trust them, but I'm not totally convinced. I haven't really known them that long, and my past makes it hard to trust people. I don't have any more time to think about why I feel so

comfortable with the guys because my phone bleats out, letting me know Derek texted me back.

Derek: I said don't ask! I'll see you tonight at seven. Text me if you need more time to get ready.

Me: See you tonight!

I go back to my work with a smile on my face. I'm so excited to see what Derek has planned for our date and I can't help but wonder what it is he's giving me. I also wonder if one of the other guys plans to crash our date. So far, all of my one-on-one dates have ended up with more than just me and the guy I was supposed to see that night. I'm not at all upset about it either. I like all of them equally, so having any of them around isn't really a problem.

Nick and Derek are no doubt as close as Cy and Jack are, although, I doubt they are together like Jack is with Cy. Derek doesn't really strike me as a guy who hooks up with other guys. Not that I think he is against it, I just don't see him doing it. Nick seems pretty laid back, more of a go-with-the-flow kind of guy, but I just don't see him pursuing more than one relationship at a time. Still, no matter if they are sleeping together or not, Nick and Derek have a connection just as strong as Cy and Jack. I kind of wish I'd seen the four of them together more so I can see if they are all that close.

My phone goes off and I half expect it to be Derek again. I'm shocked when I see a text from Nick.

Nick: Bring a bag, my date is right after Derek's tonight. It'll probably run late, so it'd be better if you just stayed tonight. Only if you're comfortable with it, of course.

Me: Sure. Sounds fun. See you tonight.

Neither Derek or Nick text back, and I go back to my work. I'm curious as to what Nick has planned, but also super excited. I know that I agreed to go

on separate dates with everyone, but having them all together just feels right. I shake off my thoughts of tonight and the guys and really start focusing on work again.

This cover is finally looking like something I would sell, and I'm super happy with it. Right as I finish up the last cover for the series, my alarm goes off to get dressed. Tali knocks on my open door and when I look up at her, she is smiling and holding a bag.

"Time to get ready, Belle. And Lee said I could play with all that hair, so go get a shower, but keep your hair dry!"

I chuckle as I get up and head to the shower. I'm once again hit with the realization that I would be lost without my witches by my side. They support me in so many ways that I'm not sure what I would do without them. Now, the guys are around, and they are starting to fall into the same category as the girls. Important figures in my life that I can't live without. I just hope they feel the same way about me, because I think I may actually be heartbroken if this arrangement we have has to come to an end.

I take a quick shower and rush out to my room covered in a towel. I know Tali is going to make me get dressed as soon as I get back into the room, but I can't quite bring myself to go out naked. Tali and I spend the next hour getting me ready for my date with Derek and the whole time, butterflies zoom around my belly. I don't think I'll ever get used to the feeling of anticipating a date with one of those four guys.

Chapter Eleven



Derek

My palms are sweating as I pace back and forth in front of Belle's door. This will be the first time we are alone together, and I'm so nervous that I haven't been able to sit still all day. Nick gave me a huge order this morning, and I tried to expel some of this energy by working in my shop. I didn't think about how mindless my woodwork has become. By this point, I can make tables with my eyes closed.

That left plenty of time for me to think about Belle and the date I planned with Nick. Yes, these are supposed to be individual dates, but I needed Nick's help for my idea. I really hope Belle enjoys what I set up. Thinking she may hate it is what has me freaking out right now.

I stare at the black door that hides Belle's roomy apartment inside and try to talk myself into knocking. It's just Belle. She is a sweetheart, so even if she *did* hate my date, she would never be a bitch about it. As I raise my hand to knock, the door opens. Belle's roommate, Tali, I think her name is, opens the door and smirks at me.

"You know, I've been watching you for five minutes waiting for you to knock. If you'd waited any longer, I probably would have called my friends to come see if you were okay."

I sneer at the girl and roll my eyes. She is such a smart ass. If she was watching me, which I fully believe she was, she would have seen me pacing and probably heard me mumbling to myself. She knows perfectly well that I'm fine and don't need a group of gossipy girls coming to check on me.

"Thank you so much for your concern, but I'm fine." Sarcasm drips from my voice, and I half expect her to be pissed at my snarky tone. Instead, she starts laughing and holds the door wider.

"I like you. It's Derek, right?"

I follow her into the apartment while we chat. "Yeah, Derek Tinker."

"The pixie. I'm impressed. Most male pixies are little slaves to the patriarchy. I'm glad you got out of that toxic shit. Then again," she glanced back at me over her shoulder and smirks, "I've always heard the Tinker family does shit differently. "

I know exactly what she is talking about. My mother had the option to be Queen, but declined because the fairies wouldn't accept that she wanted to

rule alongside my father. My parents always held true that it doesn't matter what you were born as, it only matters what you do with the gifts you were given.

“Yeah, I wasn't raised in Faerie. Mom and Dad moved me and my sister here when my middle sister was born.” I pull on the collar of my T-shirt as my face heats. I don't exactly enjoy talking about Pixie politics. “Is Belle ready?”

Changing the topic is usually the best way to avoid a conversation I don't want to have. If that doesn't work, then I'll just stare at them with a blank face until they get uncomfortable and leave. I can't exactly do that with the woman that lives with my mate, so I'm really hoping she will accept the topic change.

Turns out, I didn't have to worry about it. Belle dashes out of the hall and runs right into us. Bright green vines trail behind her in the hall and her hair is swirling around her head in a wind that seems to only affect her. Nevermind that it's windy inside of a closed apartment. Something magical is afoot here, and I'm ninety-nine percent sure that the magic is from Belle herself.

“Ugh! Tali! It's happening again!”

The panic in Belle's voice has me wrapping my arms around her. I hold the tiny girl to my chest and make soft cooing sounds into her ear. Her beautiful face is shadowed with panic and confusion. Whatever is happening right now is totally out of her control.

“Just breathe, Sweet Girl. Magic is natural, and apparently, it's a piece of you.”

She looks up into my eyes and relief mixes with the panic. Even just that little bit of calm has the wind dying down. “See, it's all about you. Close

your eyes, find the magic inside of you. You're in charge, not the magic."

Belle's beautiful green eyes snap closed, and her chest rubs against me as she takes deep breaths. Now is so not the time to get a boner, but apparently, my body didn't get that memo. Feeling Belle against my body has me reacting like any male would. Desire pools in my belly and sinks down, down, down.

"Okay, find the magic. What the fluff does magic even look like? Come on Belle, don't be an idiot," Belle mumbles to herself as her eyelids twitch. "Oh, that's new! It's so pretty! But, is there something wrong with it? What..."

As Belle's words trail off, the vines in the hall slither closer. They wrap around Belle's stocking covered legs. Now that they are closer, I can see the colors woven inside the deep green. Purple, yellow, blue, black, and red vines are all braided into the natural green. It's so strange, yet spectacular.

Belle gasps, and the vines vanish. I look back up and catch Belle's gaze. She is smiling sheepishly at me and nervously pushing her hair behind her ears. Her cheeks are the most beautiful pink I've ever seen and I'm mesmerized by the stunning girl I'm still clutching to my chest. If I could have it my way, I'd never let her go.

"So, you guys going on a date or should I make myself disappear so you can fuck in the foyer? I'm good either way, just trying to get some clarity."

Tali's words break the spell Belle's gorgeous face had me under. I glare at the admittedly pretty girl who just shrugs and waves at us. Belle takes my hand and leads me to the door.

"Don't wait up!" Belle yells over her shoulder, snapping my gaze back to her. She is smiling at Tali as she heads down the stairs.

I feel like a complete idiot because I haven't really said or done anything since Belle bum rushed me in the doorway. Clearing my throat, I take a big

step to get in front of Belle instead of allowing her to drag me along. I reach for the door handle and hold the door to my truck open. Belle looks up and up into my tall truck before glancing at my face with a raised eyebrow.

Chuckling, I lift her up into the truck and take the book bag she has into the backseat. My hands rest comfortably on her waist and her cheeks flush. I really, *really* want to roll my eyes, but I know that will make her more uncomfortable. I never understood why humans make their women feel so bad about a few extra pounds. Pixie women are revered for their robust figures. A skinny pixie means that pixie isn't cared for, and it usually means the death of the abuser.

When I get into the truck, I turn and face Belle.

“I don't know how to say this in a way that sounds all flowery like Nick or Cy would, but I feel like it needs to be said. Don't let the others catch you being so self conscious about your size or they may be offended. Hell, most supernaturals would be. Having a full figure is a good thing, so there is nothing for you to feel awkward about.”

Belle's cheeks flush a deeper red and she stares into my eyes. Hers fill with tears, and I instantly feel bad for saying anything at all. I'm struggling to find the right words to explain what I meant by that. I didn't mean to make her feel like there was anything wrong with her or that I was mad or upset by her reaction. I just don't want her to feel any unnecessary discomfort around us. Before any more words can spill from my mouth, Belle speaks. Honestly, it's probably for the best that I don't get to say anything, or I may have made it worse.

“I've never had anyone be so nice about my size. I've tried for years to lose the extra weight, sometimes hurting myself in the process. But what you just

said, it made me feel... beautiful. Thank you, Derek. I'll try not to feel so bad about my size, but I'm not making any promises."

For the rest of the ride, Belle and I chat. We talk about everything from our favorite foods to the places we want to visit. I cling to everything she says like it's needed to get my next breath. She is so animated as she speaks, I have trouble focusing on the road because I keep looking over to watch her.

We make it to the house without driving off the road somehow. Nick is already outside standing next to a huge carriage I made last week. The sleds on bottom are about as long as my truck and the two seats are stuffed as full as I could make them. They are soft velvet material and the wood that makes the body of the sled is an old red oak that I stained a deep red. The details are carved directly into the wood and depict a scene of a goddess surrounded by her four mates in their shifted forms.

This is my most beautiful piece yet. Even I'm impressed with it. Belle is staring wide eyed at the sled. I'm not even sure she's noticed Nick standing there yet. My face flushes when she looks at me, a bright smile on her face.

"You made this?"

I nod, and Belle throws her arms around my neck, nearly knocking both of us into the snow. I chuckle and hug her back. I'm so glad she likes the sled.

Belle leans back and stares into my eyes for a second, then she crushes her lips to mine. I freeze for exactly two seconds before I move my lips to match hers. The world fades and lights burst like fireworks in my mind.

This, this moment right here, is what heaven must be.

Belle pulls away and turns back to the carriage. She is bouncing on the toes of her flats and clapping her gloved hands together. Muffled patting sounds ring out around the front lawn, but I can't stop staring at Belle. I slowly blink,

half convinced that her lips won't be kiss-swollen when my eyes open again. I can't seem to truly believe that my mate just kissed me.

Nick walks over and pulls Belle into a hug, laughing when she startles. I'm still a bit shook, and I'm trying to snap out of it, but I just can't. My whole world changed in that brief second when her soft lips pressed against mine. It's like colors are brighter and sounds are louder. The snow is softer under my feet, and I swear my wings popped out and now I'm floating through the air.

"I'm so excited! I didn't know you would be here Nick, but I'm not upset about it! Do we get to ride on the pretty sled Derek? Is it powered with magic, or do you have horses? I've never seen a horse in person before, well, not a normal horse. Only your Nightmare, Nick. Eeek!!"

Belle's squeal of excitement has me and Nick laughing. She is just so excitable. It's refreshing to be around her boundless energy. Her rambling question does bring me out of my catatonic state of mind that her kiss had me stuck in. I feel proud that she is so excited for our date, and happy that she isn't upset that I asked Nick to crash it.

"No normal horses, Sweet Girl." I smile and wrap my arms around her waist, careful not to disturb Nick's hold on her. He meets my eyes and smiles over her head, his subtle way of saying thank you for not making him let her go even if it is technically my time with her. "Nick is here because he agreed to pull the sled for us. We're going on a sleigh ride through the woods before Nick takes over for your date."

"That sound alright to you, Beautiful?" Nick asks, the smirk clear in his voice.

Belle flushes bright red, and Nick chuckles under his breath. Suddenly, pictures of me and Nick sharing Belle between us in the sled parked in the

middle of the woods flashes through my mind. Once again, I'm battling my body to not react to the image, and I'm curious to know which one of them thought of that because I know it wasn't me. Judging by Belle's red face, I'd say it was her, but I didn't think the innocent little thing had it in her to have those kinds of thoughts.

"Yep. Sounds great." Belle's voice is a bit squeaky and confirms my thoughts that *she* was the one to have the steamy thought. I'm impressed with her creativity, though I think we can do it better. I meet Nick's gaze once more.

Please tell me we can make her silent wish come true.

I ask Nick mentally if he is down to give Belle the ending she was thinking about, and he nods. If she isn't trying to keep her distance, then we won't either. We aren't going to push her farther than she is willing to go, but we will grant her anything she desires.

Chapter Twelve



Nick

It takes a while to get Belle into the sleigh. She keeps stopping to gawk at all the details Derek crafted into the wood. I have to say, the craftsmanship used to build Belle's sled is beautiful. Still, the girl looked stunning in her deep-red, soft velvet long sleeve dress and green leggings. Her ballet flats are red and green plaid with the cutest little bells on the toes. Her brown hair hangs down her back in waves and her makeup is minimal

and flawless.

I had been speechless when she first got out of the car, then her mind started playing through all the naughty images in her head, and I have more to say than I could possibly get out. Now she is rambling about the sleigh as if she isn't thinking about literally every possible position the three of us could get up to inside the wooden structure.

Before I can banish the thoughts I'm getting from Belle, Derek has her situated in the middle of the front row of the sleigh. I know I need to shift so Derek can get on with his date, but I want to look at Belle for just a minute longer. She truly is the perfect match for all of us.

Regardless of what I want, I still go to the front of the sled and shift into my stallion. Belle exclaims with excitement and images of our ride through the woods flash between us. I snort, stomping my hooves and throwing my head back. My chest puffs out, and Derek laughs as he walks around to hook the bell covered holster to my chest and shoulders. An image of me hooked to the sleigh flashes into my mind, and I nip at Derek for his comment.

“It's like hell's personal sleigh ride, Sweet Girl.”

Belle laughs out loud, and I immediately calm down. Clearly, Belle is enjoying herself and they haven't even started. I wish I could talk while in this form, but I do enjoy the constant stream of mental images flowing through my mind from Derek and Belle.

Derek climbs into the sled with Belle and sends me images of the two of them cuddled together. “Okay, Nick. You know where to go.”

I take off, pulling the sled into the path Derek used his magic to clear earlier. The path wound around the property and through the clearing we had our snowball fight in. He hung up lights in the trees and asked Jack to make it snow tonight, just enough to make a beautiful ride. There are painted wooden

statues of everything from reindeer to a nativity scene. Derek made giant dreidels and menorahs. He even made the clearing into a North Pole that has tiny elf houses and a workshop with Santa standing outside of it. I'm genuinely impressed with his dedication to give Belle the sleigh ride of her dreams.

We head out of the clearing, and Derek asks me to stop under the mistletoe he made grow across the path. Belle giggles when Derek points out the plant and insists on a kiss. More images flash through my mind. They come so fast I can't be sure if they are coming from Belle, Derek, or both. Regardless, I look over my shoulder as Derek's and Belle's mouths meet in a kiss. It starts slow, but quickly, hands start exploring and the kiss heats up.

I can't take my eyes off the two of them as they pet and kiss as if they need each other's touch to survive. Derek grows brave and gropes Belle's breast. She gasps, but thrusts her chest farther into his grasp. Belle reaches for the hem of his shirt and peels it up. Their mouths separate as she takes off his shirt. Belle stares down at his bare chest and pink dusts her cheeks.

"Sweet Girl, how far are you wanting to go? I don't want to move too fast and make you uncomfortable."

I'm proud of how careful Derek is with Belle. He isn't a bad man, but I know that he doesn't usually give his bedroom friends the option, especially when they initiate the moment. Belle seems to be the exception to every rule when it comes to us though.

Belle nods, and Derek smiles sweetly at her. He sends me a message to shift, expressing his desire for a bit of assistance with this conversation so he doesn't mess it up. I don't even have to take a second to wonder if Belle will be uncomfortable with this. I'm back in my human form before Belle even finishes moving her head.

“Beautiful, we need your words. Do you want to have sex with Derek?”

Plain English. There is no way that the question asked can be taken or understood any other way than how it’s meant. Belle may be shy, but we all need to be very clear with what we want and expect from her because her past will shadow every move we make with her. It’s why I fully intend to tell her the truth before I let Derek lose his head.

“Yes. I’m ready to have sex.” Belle’s sweet voice saying those dirty words should be a crime. Seriously, there is no way I’m going to be able to get the sound of her voice saying the word ‘sex’ out of my head in this century or the next.

“Belle, before you guys do that, I think you need to know...”

Belle looks at me with wide, innocent eyes. Derek is staring at me wide eyed too, but he doesn’t look curious—he looks terrified. I know that Cy and Jack are probably going to be mad at me about this, but they can get over it. They should have told her last night, but they didn’t, and I don’t want any of us going any farther without her knowing.

“You are our fated mate. All four of us. So if you have sex with Derek or any of us, then those bonds will become more solid. Your magic will probably react, which is totally fine. We aren’t scared of you or your magic, I just wanted to let you know what will happen so you go into it fully informed.”

“Are you going to watch?”

Okay, not what I expected at all. I just told this girl that she has four mates and her magic is going to go haywire when she solidifies one of her mate bonds, and she is only wondering if I’m going to watch her fuck Derek. If I didn’t love the girl before, then I definitely do now.

“Do you want me to watch, Beautiful?”

She tilts her head, and her gaze stays locked on mine. I try my hardest to keep my eyes from showing her exactly how much I'd enjoy watching, but the mischievous smile on her round face tells me she knows. It's always been something I enjoy, watching people find pleasure in one another. I think with Belle, it will be that much better.

"If Derek is okay with it, then I think I would like that. You watching us together, I mean."

"Totally fine with me," Derek blurts the words before Belle even finishes the sentence. He clears his throat when she turns that evil little smirk his way, and I have to put my fist against my mouth to hold back my laughter at his bright red face.

Belle leans over and pushes her mouth against Derek's once again, not bothering with keeping things slow and building into the heat. She fiddles with his pants, and he groans deep in his chest. My dick is growing harder the longer I watch Belle take command of the situation. She is bold, knows exactly what she wants, and isn't afraid to go for it. I know from the parts of her past that I've seen that she isn't a virgin, but she only had sex once, and it wasn't very pleasant for her. So for Belle to be taking charge and initiating this contact is a big step. I'm so proud of her.

Her hand wraps around his dick, and Derek tips his head back. Belle's eyes are on her hand, a pink flush covering her face as she moves up and down Derek's dick. Derek is watching Belle again, while his hand travels under the skirt of her dress. I see through the fabric of the dress that he slides his hand inside her leggings. I wish I could see more, but I don't have to wait long to get my wish.

Belle stands up in the sled and wriggles her leggings and panties down her thick thighs. She is beautiful when she lays down on the cushion and spreads

her legs. Her pink pussy glistens in the waning sunlight. I can tell just how wet she is even from here. Derek pulls a condom out of his pocket and lets his pants fall to the floor of the sled. Belle's gaze is locked on his dick just like his eyes are locked on the beautiful sight between her legs. He notches his dick against her entrance and freezes.

"Are you sure?" Belle nods, but I know that won't be good enough for the pixie. "Words, Sweet Girl. I need to hear your words."

Belle groans out loud and flexes her hips, trying to force Derek deeper. He backs his hips up and rests his hand on her belly, shaking his head no. I chuckle, slowly working my dick in my hand as I watch the battle of wills play out. I know that Belle will cave first, but it's still a joy to watch her squirm around trying to get her way.

"Please! Please, I'm sure I want this, please!" Belle calls out as she digs her nails into Derek's biceps.

He pushes himself into her, and she cries out in pure pleasure. Derek sets a fast pace, and Belle holds onto his arms as she moans. Birds in the trees take flight and I match the strokes I'm giving myself to the thrusts Derek gives Belle. It's a beautiful sight, the two of them together as the snow falls down around us.

It doesn't take long before I can taste the orgasm in Belle's thoughts. My hand squeezes my dick tighter as I watch Belle's mind as she tumbles over that edge of bliss. Derek and I come at the same time, him reacting to her body, and me reacting to her mind.

I slowly make my way over to sit next to Belle as Derek uses his shirt to clean her up, then he takes off the condom, ties the top in a knot, and puts it in his pocket.

Belle's beautiful green eyes blink open, and she smiles up at me and Derek.

Her back is resting on my chest with my arms around her shoulders, and Derek has her legs tossed over his as he tries to get her leggings back on so she isn't cold. I can hear him grumbling in his head about 'annoying girl clothes'.

"Beautiful, stand up and let me help you finish putting those on before Derek rips them in half out of frustration."

Belle giggles as she gets to her feet, and Derek shoots me a glare before shrugging his shoulders.

"Yeah, that probably would have happened." Derek is unapologetic, and it makes me and Belle both laugh out loud.

I work her leggings up her thighs and settle the band around her waist, then pat her hip and move her to sit again. We cuddle on the sled for a few minutes as the two of them catch their breath, and I just enjoy being together with them.

"So, date two?" Belle blinks up at me and gives me the sweetest smile.

"Of course, dear. We're going to decorate the house for Christmas since it's next week. Jack and Cy should be back with the tree by now. Let's go."

I wave my hand and use my magic to navigate the sled back to the house, excited to give Belle another first of decorating for Christmas. She chats about all the things she wants to do in the house as we get closer to the front door and practically tramples Derek on her way off the sled. Derek and I both laugh at her pure joy as we follow her inside.

Chapter Thirteen



Belle

I can't believe I just had sex with Derek out in the open while Nick watched.

As Nick holds the door open for me, my cheeks flush once more but at least I can blame the cold for that. What we just did was amazing, and I don't regret it in the least. I just don't know where this is all coming from. I've

never been this woman before so it's odd that I'm acting this way, right? First with Jack and Cypian, and now with Derek and Nick.

Or is it?

Nick said that all four of them are my fated mates, and I'll admit that those words felt right. I don't think he was just saying them so they could get in my pants. It would explain why I feel so comfortable around them from the very first moment. I don't know quite how to feel about having four ancient mates, but I know they all give me butterflies.

Nick takes my hand, leading us into the living room where Jack and Cypian wait for us. The moment my eyes meet Jack's, an invisible wind picks up again. I try to remember how Derek had calmed me back at my place, but I can't seem to get my breathing under control. My eyes stay locked with Jack's as the wind whips around us, the house beginning to shake on its foundations.

No. No. No.

This can't be happening.

I blink and suddenly Jack is standing in front of me, his hands cupping my cheeks. "Belle, you have to get your magic under control."

All I can do is blink up at him. I can't do this. I'm not supposed to have magic.

Even as I think the words, I sense the lie in them. I've always had magic, I just didn't know how to access it. I still don't.

Instead of saying anything else, Jack presses his lips to mine. My mouth opens and he takes it for the invitation it is. He consumes me, my mind calming as his tongue brushes against mine.

He's mine. They're all mine.

My mates.

Mine in a way that nothing else ever has been before.

This is what I want for the rest of my life.

I feel the wind die down and the house stops shaking as I reel back in my magic like Derek taught me. Only then do I break the kiss.

“Thank you,” I murmur against his lips.

His lips turn up at the corners. “I’m happy to kiss you anytime, Belle.”

Stepping back, I find all four men staring back at me. “We need to figure out what’s going on with my magic.”

“Jack and I actually had a thought on that,” Cypian says with a grin. “We were going to wait until after we finished decorating, but something tells me this is more important.”

“I still want to decorate the house, but I’d definitely prefer to have this dealt with before it becomes a problem again.”

Jack takes my hand, pulling me to follow him. “We’re going to head to the basement. I have things set up down there.”

“Things set up? What kind of things?” I ask, worry threading through my voice.

“Don’t worry, Precious,” Cypian murmurs as his hand lands on my lower back. “This won’t hurt you in any way. We just need to get this figured out for you.”

I glance back at him, a tight smile on my lips as I nod. “I trust the four of you.”

My eyes widen when we reach the basement, finding books open on every available surface and what looks like a chemistry kit set up on a worktable.

“What is all of this?”

Jack spins and gives me a dazzling smile. “This is what I’ve been working on since I realized you weren’t magicless. I’ve been working out different

ways that we can try to see what's going on with your magic, and then how to fix it once we know what's going on."

Tears fill my eyes as I stare back at him. Besides my witches, no one has ever been so thoughtful before. I throw myself into his arms.

"Thank you, Jack. I love you. I know it's too fast, but I—"

I'm cut off by Jack's lips brushing against mine. It's just the barest touch before he's pulling back.

"I love you too, Belle. And it's never too early. When you know, you know." Jack cups my face in his hands, swiping away my tears .

"Also, there's the fact that we're fated mates," I say, a bit of sass in my words. I laugh when Jack's eyes go wide.

"We... uhh... I... Fuck."

I laugh, leaning up on my toes so I can kiss him again. "It's okay. Nick told me, and I'm glad he did. Suddenly everything I was feeling made sense. I'm not even mad that the four of you kept it from me. I definitely would've freaked out if you told me that right away."

That sends all five of us into peels of laughter. Once we've calmed down, I turn back to face the other three men that I'm head over heels in love with.

"I love the three of you as well. I definitely didn't expect to find my fated mates in my first go at dating, but I can't say I mind it."

Before I've even finished speaking, the three of them are rushing to me. They pass me back and forth, smothering me in kisses and their own I love yous. It's absolutely perfect. I don't think any of the holiday movies could've done it better than this. Now, let's just hope that we can figure out what the heck is going on with my magic.

"Okay, I know we're all very happy about Belle's announcement, but we really need to figure out what's going on with her magic," Jack says, echoing

my thoughts. And he's not even the mind reader.

I snort as I turn my attention to Nick. He winks, a smile gracing his lips, and I wonder if he passed along the message to Jack. He can do that, right?

Jack pulls me from Derek's hold, laughing when my tinker pixie lets out a growl. "There will be more time for cuddling later. Right now, we have more pressing matters."

Jack leads me over to a stool before helping me to sit on it. He grabs a book from the closest table, his finger running over the text before he nods.

"Okay, so I'm going to cast a spell. It looks like it's a witch's spell, so my magic might not work exactly the same. I do think it'll have the same results though." He glances up at me as he chews on his bottom lip.

"I trust you, Jack." And I do. I trust all of them with my life, and now, I guess my magic.

Jack nods once more before focusing back on the book. He begins to chant, and I have no idea what language he's using, but goosebumps rise along my skin. I can feel the magic rising in the air as his hand flies through movements, never stuttering over the words.

When he lifts his head from the page, there's a glow to his eyes that's new. I can't seem to look away as he moves closer. I can feel his magic caressing my skin as his eyes seem to delve into my soul.

"Oh," he says a moment later, tilting his head. He shuts the book, letting it fall to the floor. I wince at the mistreatment of the book, but I still can't seem to look away from Jack. His hands come up to cup my cheeks once more. "Someone put a block on your magic when you were very young. I can see it."

When he hisses, I jerk away from him. "Are you okay?"

Jack shakes his head, eyes no longer glowing. "I'm fine. The good news is I

know how to unblock your magic. I think you're going to be surprised when you find out just how powerful you are, Belle."

"Don't hold us in suspense, Jack," Derek growls, a scowl on his face. "How do we fix her magic?"

"All four of us will need to do the spell I just did so we can see the magic inside of her. The block is only meant to hold until her fated mates can release it." Jack shakes his head. "That's why it's been misbehaving. It was trying to tell us that we needed to set it free."

"Really?" I ask, my voice quiet. "That's it?"

"That's it." He bends over to pick up the book and find the spell again as all four of them crowd around me. "Would you hold the book open for us, Doll?"

I nod, taking the book from his hands and turning it around so they can all see it. All four of them chant the words while Jack is the only one who does the hand signals. As one, all four sets of eyes begin to glow. They each lay a hand on me, and I can feel each of their magic stroking my skin.

My eyes widen as I feel something release inside of me, my magic flying from its confines. The five of us are blown apart, and I find myself on my back staring up at the ceiling. Tears stream down my face as my magic swirls around me and inside of me. It's so much better than I could have imagined. My magic really does exist.

"Ummm... Belle? I think you're going to want to see this." Nick's voice is filled with awe.

I sit up slowly, trying to figure out what he's talking about. That's when I see an apparition in the middle of the basement where I once sat. It's a woman, and when it turns to face me, I can barely believe my eyes.

"My baby." It's my mom's face and voice, but I know she isn't really here.

I don't know if it's her spirit or just a piece of magic, but it doesn't stop me from jumping to my feet and crashing into her arms.

I hadn't been sure that I'd be able to touch her, but she holds me in her arms as I sob. I pull back when I hear someone clearing their throat, and that's when I remember that I'm not alone in the basement. I pull back, swiping my hands over my face to wipe away some of the tears as I glance at each of my men.

"This is my mom's..." I trail off, turning to look at my mom. "I don't know what you are. A spirit? Apparition? Magic?"

She laughs. "How about a combination of all three? I am dead, but you already knew that. I was able to trap a part of my spirit inside of you when I blocked your magic."

"But why? Why did you block my magic?" I can't help but ask.

She sighs, a sad smile gracing her lips. "Your dad killed me, Belle. He had already started seeing the woman who became your stepmother. She was already spreading her poison. I don't know if he knew he was killing me or not, but my tea was being laced with something. I didn't know until it was too late. I couldn't let either of them know you had magic. If they were willing to kill me, I didn't want them to do something similar to you. I had to protect you."

She looks around at my mates. "I knew that one day she would meet her fated mate, or mates in this case. I knew that once she met them they'd be able to protect her in a way that I couldn't. I wish that I could be here alive to meet all of you, but this is better than nothing. Belle, I'm glad you were able to escape that cult, but I'm sorry I couldn't help you over the years. I saw everything that happened to you, and it broke my heart that I couldn't help.

Watching the way that boy treated you after he took your virginity—I would've killed him if I could. But what's done is done.

“I don't have long now. I wish that I could stick around and teach you about your magic, but I know your friends and your mates will make sure that you learn how to wield it. I love you so much, and I'm so proud of the woman you've become. I love you.”

Her form begins to waver and I reach out to grab her, not ready for her to leave me, but my hand just moves through her.

“No, Mom! Don't leave me. I need you!” I scream, continuing to try to grab ahold of her as she fades more and more.

She gives me one last sad smile, and then she's gone.

My knees give out on me, and I would've hit the floor if Nick and Jack hadn't both grabbed my arms. They sink to the floor with me, wrapping their arms around me as Derek and Cypian kneel before me, each laying a hand on one of my legs. No one speaks as I sob for the mother that I feel like I've lost all over again.

Chapter Fourteen



Jack

Holding onto Belle as she grieves losing her mom all over again. I feel lost because there's not a damn thing I can do to make her feel better. I helped her unblock her magic, which is great, but now I feel like I'm the one who has caused her pain. I hate it. I wish I could bear it for her, but I know that isn't possible.

I'm doing the only thing I can—being there for her while she falls apart. Something that I make a promise to myself about—no matter what comes, I will always do this for her. I'll keep her safe when she needs to fall apart.

“We all will,” Nick murmurs, and I lift my head to meet his eyes. “She’s our world now, brother. We’ll always be there for her when she needs us. No matter what.”

Derek and Cyprian whisper their agreement as Belle lifts her head to look at us. “And I’ll do the same for you. We’ll be there for one another when things get hard, or even when things are easy. We support one another in everything. When we can’t depend on anyone else, we can depend on each other. No matter what comes, the five of us are a unit.”

“Always,” I agree.

Belle leans in for a kiss. It barely counts as a kiss, but it’s only about sealing this agreement between the five of us. Which is why Nick, Derek, and Cyprian all agree before she brushes her lips against theirs.

“How are you feeling, Doll?” I ask her as Nick and I help her to her feet.

She shrugs. “Not great. After all, I just found out my dad and stepmom are the reason my mom is dead. But I have my magic finally, and the four of you. Plus my coven of best witches. So it’s not all bad. I’m glad I got to see my mom once more. I’m glad I was able to find out why she bound my magic and everything, but a part of me wishes those questions would’ve gone unanswered.”

“Why don’t we get you home so you can have some time to come to terms with all of this?” Nick asks.

Belle frowns. “Absolutely not. We have a house to decorate for Christmas, and it’s certainly not going to decorate itself. Plus, I don’t want to go home yet. I’m not ready to talk about it with the girls. I’d rather stick to our plan for

the night, and then in the morning I can see about letting the girls know what happened.”

“Are you sure?” Cypian takes her hand in his, intertwining their fingers as she nods.

“I promise. This is what I want to do tonight. I’ll deal with the rest of it later. Tonight, I want to spend time with the four of you making this house into the best decorated house ever.”

I laugh, leaning down to kiss the top of her head. “Whatever you want, Doll. As long as it’s in my power, I’ll always make sure that it comes true.”

A smile lights up Belle’s face as she nods. I relinquish my hold on her, allowing Cypian to lead her up the stairs. Even though she’s smiling, I can see the sadness in her eyes. This never would’ve been easy for her to find out, but I know that her relationship with her father wasn’t good to begin with. If she ever decides that she wants to go back to confront him, I’ll figure out a way for that to happen with all four of us at her side. And probably with her friends as well. Something tells me they wouldn’t let her deal with something like that without the three of them.

“Wow, this is so much stuff,” Belle says as she glances around the room where we’ve dumped all the decorations we bought. We probably went way overboard, but we wanted to make this Christmas the best for our mate. “Your house must be the hit of the block every year.”

“Ummm... not exactly.” Cypian scratches his head, turning to me. “We don’t usually decorate.”

Belle frowns. “Then why do you have all of this? And why wouldn’t you decorate?”

I clear my throat. “That would be my fault. Being the brother of Santa Claus and Krampus, I’ve had Christmas shoved down my throat in various

forms for as long as I can remember.

I'm known for winter, but Christmas is all theirs. When I finally left home, I vowed to never celebrate Christmas again."

"Oh my goodness! Then why would you ever have agreed to this?" Belle looks absolutely appalled, and I don't know if it's because I don't celebrate Christmas or if she feels bad about dragging me into celebrating.

"Because, Belle, I would do anything for you—even give up my boycott of Christmas. It's been so long since I celebrated, I figured it would be nice to give it a try again." I shrug, looking around at the ridiculous amount of decorations once more. "And I might have gone a little overboard on the decorations. We all just wanted to make sure that you got to decorate to your heart's content."

"That's seriously the sweetest thing anyone has ever done for me." Belle waves her hand in front of her eyes. I'm assuming it's to combat the tears I see forming. "Happy tears, I promise. You might as well get used to it. I cry when I'm happy, when I'm sad, even when I'm angry. I just cry—a lot."

I chuckle, wrapping my arm around her shoulders. "We can deal with tears, but we should probably get started on decorating. I get the feeling this is going to be a multiple day event. Unless you can use your magic to help us out."

"That's something I can do?" she asks, biting her lip.

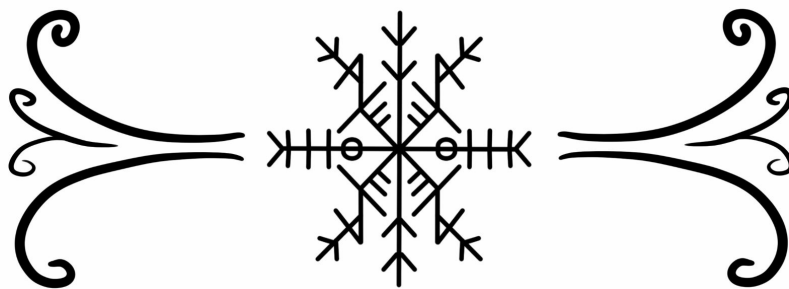
"Maybe. We don't know what your magic can do. I just know that you're powerful. I'm not one hundred percent sure on how witches' magic works, but I'm sure that's something you can talk to Tali and Chloe about—they would know." Cyprian shoots her a grin. "But that's a problem for later. First, we have to go pick out the world's best Christmas tree to cut down, since we didn't get it before like we were supposed to."

Belle squeals. “We’re cutting one down? That’s amazing. I guess it’s a good thing I never bothered taking off all my cold clothes.”

We all laugh as she takes off for the back door. “Stop laughing at me, buttheads. I’m excited.”

“And adorable,” Nick calls after her as we follow her.

I’ve never seen anyone quite so excited about Christmas before, but damn am I glad to be here with her. Having her around is like a breath of fresh air for us. For too long, we’ve been one another’s only contact. None of us have good reputations, and we grew tired of how others treated us long ago. Eventually, we just made it a point to stop trying. Who can really blame us for that? There’s only so much negativity people can take.



Hours later, we have to call it quits even though we're still not finished decorating. We managed to get the perfect tree—at least according to Belle—cut down and into the house. It's fully decorated, as is the rest of the room. We started on the exterior of the house and the front yard, but when we got too cold, we came inside and started on more interior decorating, but there's only so much decorating we can do at once.

Once we started complaining, Belle took pity on us and called it for the night. Now we're sitting in the front room with the tree while watching one of Belle's holiday movies. They might be a bit on the cheesy side, but I can see why she loves them so much. This one is really cute, but I will have to say, it would be much better with a sex scene or two. Who in their right mind falls in love in a few weeks without ever sleeping with someone? Seems suspicious to me, but whatever.

“Bathroom break.” Belle jumps up, already heading out as she calls back. “Would one of you get more popcorn going? I know we'll need to go to sleep eventually, but one more movie should be okay, right?”

None of us would have argued with her even if she'd given us a chance to. Snickering, Cypian pushes to his feet. “I'll go pop some more popcorn.”

“I'll come. You'll probably need some help carrying back the bowls.” I slap my hand down on Nick's shoulder as I push to my feet. I grab the bowl from beside his feet since Cypian grabbed the one we'd been sharing. “Cy and I get to cuddle with her for this one.”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah,” Derek mumbles, making a face as he flips me off. “You're just jealous?”

“That you were the first one to sleep with Belle? Hell, yes, I'm jealous. I'm also happy for you.”

Not bothering to wait for a response, I trail Cypian into the kitchen. He

already has two bags of popcorn in our microwaves. Yes, I said microwaves, as in plural. Sometimes we don't feel like cooking and therefore need a microwave. With four people living here, two just makes sense. I've considered buying more, but the three of them keep telling me that any more than two will be overkill.

I lean in the doorframe, just watching my lover as he moves around the kitchen. The two of us might not have been chosen by fate to be together, but I love him just as much as I do Belle. Part of that comes from having known one another for so long, but since we waited so long to meet our fated mate, I'm glad we had one another. Belle has made it clear that she doesn't mind that the two of us are together—more than that, she seems to like it. We couldn't have found a more perfect woman for us, could we have?

“Are you staring at my ass right now, Jack?” Cypian calls over his shoulder without turning to face me.

“I don't know if he is, but I sure am.” I startle slightly at the sound of Belle's voice. “If you didn't want us to, then you shouldn't draw attention to it.”

Her face flushes pink as she ducks her head. I love that she's coming out of her shell, but I know things like this are still hard for her.

Cypian glances over his shoulder, winking at both of us before turning back to take the popcorn out of the microwave. “Look all you want, Precious. I'll never deny you that pleasure.”

Reaching down, I lift her chin until she meets my eyes. “You owe me a kiss, Belle.”

“What? For what?” She looks adorably confused. “Not that I don't want to kiss you, of course...”

“Mistletoe,” I tell her, nodding to where it's right overhead, and she laughs.

Kissing someone under the mistletoe might be my new favorite thing," she whispers as she steps closer.

I smirk, wrapping my arms around her and yanking her off her feet. "And I'm glad to give you that experience."

This time I don't keep my kiss chaste. Belle's legs loop around my hips as I press her into the wall beside the door. Breaking the kiss, I trail kisses down her neck as she moans and grinds her hot core against me. We've apparently turned her into a wanton little witch, haven't we?

I smile against her skin at that thought. I don't expect this to turn into sex, but I would be a very happy man if it did.

"So that's what's taking you so long."

I glance up at the sound of Nick's voice, but quickly return my attention to the woman in my arms. Her fingers thread through my hair as she shoves my head toward her tits, and I'm more than happy to be directed.

I kiss along the tops of her boobs before pushing down the top of her dress. Before I have a chance to shove down the cups of her bra, someone clears their throat, pulling both mine and Belle's attention to Cyprian.

"As much as I'm enjoying the show, I just want to make sure that this is what you want, Belle. And if you want it to happen here," he says gesturing to the kitchen.

Belle's face burns with embarrassment as she buries her face in my neck. She takes a few deep breaths before leaning back up. "I want to have sex with all four of you—at the same time. Or... maybe not all of you inside of me at once—I don't even know how that would work. I'll definitely have to do more research on that before we can attempt that. I'm not ready for that. But I do want all of you, and I do want to try that eventually."

"Hey, Belle?" I say gently, cutting off her rambling. I wait until she's

meeting my eyes again before continuing, “I promise you we all want that too. There is no reason to be nervous. Why don’t we bring this party upstairs, and then we can see where things go from there. We’ve told you—this all happens at your pace.”

Belle smiles. “Yeah? That sounds like a good idea.”

“Good.” I turn to face the others. “My bed is the biggest, let’s head to my room.”

Before the words are even out of my mouth, the three of them have taken off for the stairs. Belle giggles as she watches them go. When she turns back to me, she presses a sweet kiss to my lips.

“Thank you.”

“For?” I ask as I start for the stairs with her still in my arms.

“For being you. For stopping my freak out. For everything, really.”

I laugh. “Well, in that case, you’re welcome. Now, let’s get upstairs before they get started without us.”

Her laughter rings out as I hurry up the stairs as quickly as possible.

Chapter Fifteen



Cypian

By the time Jack and Belle make it into the room, Nick, Derek, and I are all naked.

Belle's eyes are wide when Jack drops her onto the bed, a faint blush to her cheeks as usual. "Wow... I... I think you broke my brain."

"We just didn't want to waste any time, Beautiful," Nick murmurs as he climbs onto the bed beside her. "We'll undress you while Jack gets naked as

well.”

“I do like that plan,” she says with a shy smile.

Derek and I clamber onto the bed with me to her back and Derek on the side opposite Nick. I help her sit up, watching as Nick’s and Derek’s hands tease along the hem of her dress.

Glancing up, I find that Jack has already pulled his sweater and shirt off, fingers already working to get his pants undone. My hands skim up and down Belle’s back as I watch Jack undressing. Even after all the years we’ve been together, I can’t get over just how attractive he is. His white-blond hair stands on end and his sinewy body flexes, nearly taking my breath away.

“Fiddlesticks,” Belle breathes out, a sense of awe in her voice. “Why are the four of you so hot?”

I chuckle as I nuzzle her neck. “So we wouldn’t disappoint our mate, obviously. But he is insanely attractive, isn’t he?”

She nods hard enough I worry she’ll give herself whiplash. “But so are the three of you.”

“Yes, we are,” Derek growls as he turns her head so he can nip at her lips. “Just like you are. Now, we’re going to undress you. If you get uncomfortable at any point in time, all you have to do is say stop.”

“No,” Jack cuts in. “Not that you can’t tell us to stop, Belle, it’s just that you might say stop and not mean it. Cy and I use the traffic light system. Green means you’re good and ready for more. Yellow means to proceed with caution, and red means stop immediately. Will that work for all of us?”

Belle nods slowly. “I can do that.”

“Good girl,” Nick practically hums as he begins to slide the hem of her skirt up her thick thighs. “What color are you right now?”

“Green. Definitely green.” Belle leans back against me as Derek and Nick

slide her dress up, then I take over as they work on removing her tights. Within seconds, she's in nothing but her matching pale pink bra and panties.

Jack, now naked, stalks toward the bed until he drops between her legs. "I like this color on you, Doll."

"Thank you." Belle's voice is breathy as she stares down at Jack.

"But you know where it would look even better?" he asks with a smirk.

Belle giggles. "On the floor? That really is one of the worst lines ever."

"That doesn't make it any less true, Precious," I murmur into her neck, my hands sliding around to cup her breasts in my hands. "Gods, you have the best tits ever."

Belle ducks her head, but I can see the blush that covers her neck and chest. When she starts to move her hands toward the curve of her belly, Nick and Derek grab her hands and yank them away.

"Don't you dare cover up," Derek snarls. "I told you that you're beautiful the way you are. Don't ever hide from us."

"He's right, Pretty Girl." I press a kiss to her neck. "We love every part of you and your body."

"Okay," Belle says softly. "I'm sorry. It's habit. My stepmom regularly told me I was fat and ugly. After my stepbrother slept with me, he said the same things. It's sometimes hard to overcome their voices in my head."

I bite back the growl threatening to spill from my lips. If I ever lay eyes on her stepmom and stepbrother, I don't think I can be held responsible for what happens. That would be one instance where I lived up to the reputation of being a dark elf.

"Well, they were wrong. You're gorgeous," I finally manage to say.

"What color are you now, Belle?" Jack asks, his voice quiet as he waits for her to meet his eyes.

“Still green. I want this with all of you.”

“Good,” Nick says, his fingers slipping beneath her panties. “Then let’s get these off so we can worship you like the goddess you are.”

Nick and Jack work together to slide her panties down her legs while I unhook her bra. Derek helps her slide it off before both are thrown to the floor.

I turn Belle’s head so I can take her lips with mine. I hear Jack hum just before Belle’s body stiffens and then relaxes in my hold.

Breaking the kiss, I glance down the line of her body to find Jack’s head between her thighs while Derek and Nick work her nipples in their hands and fingers. Realizing that they have things in hand, I kiss her again. I swallow each and every one of her moans and gasps as Jack builds her higher and higher.

When she falls apart, she breaks our kiss and screams. She arches away from me, her hand going to Jack’s head as she grinds her pussy against his face. It’s one of the hottest things I’ve ever seen.

She’s panting when she falls back into my embrace, her body completely lax. I chuckle as I run a hand over her hair.

“He’s really good with his tongue, isn’t he?”

“Yes. Very talented tongue, that one.” Her words are mumbled and slightly slurred, her eyes never opening.

Jack laughs as he nips at her thigh. “And you taste divine, Doll. I think I’ll need to eat that pretty pink pussy on the regular.”

“Oh,” Belle gasps, her eyes finally opening.

“Color?” Derek demands, and I turn to him with a glare. “Sorry, Sweet Girl. We’re definitely not done with you, and I don’t know how much longer I can wait to be inside of you again.”

“Green.”

Nick lets out a sigh of relief. “How do you feel about taking me and Derek together?”

“Umm... yellow?” Belle shakes her head. “I think I’m going to need more information.”

“There are a few ways we can take you together. The easiest would probably be if one of us fucked your mouth while the other fucked your pussy,” Derek says, turning her head so she’s watching him as he speaks. “Or one of us could take your ass while the other is in your pussy. The third is we can both fuck your pussy together.”

“Oh... I.. ummm...” Belle ducks her head.

I lift her chin with my finger, and it takes her a moment to meet my eyes. “Don’t be embarrassed, Pretty Girl. We know you haven’t experienced a lot which is why we’re talking through this. If it’s too much, we can go one at a time—there’s nothing wrong with that, and trust me when I say we’ll all enjoy that. But if there’s something you want to try, we want you to feel comfortable talking about it.”

“Right,” she says, nodding herself. “I don’t think I’m ready for butt stuff, but I do like the sound of you both inside of me at once. I just don’t know how it’s possible. Can you both fit at once?”

“We absolutely will—if that’s what you want.” Nick takes her hand in his, squeezing lightly.

Another shy smile finds its way to her lips as she nods once more. “Then I’d like to try that.”

Jack chuckles. “Cy and I will keep ourselves entertained while they take care of you, Doll. After, I’d like to slide my cock inside your cunt until I’m drenched, and then Cy can fuck you while I fuck him. How does that sound?”

“Like heaven,” she sighs, eyes wide. “Yes, please.”

I kiss the side of her neck. “Then that’s what we’ll do. Now, let Nick and Derek worship you.”

I slip out from behind her as Nick and Derek move to trap her between them. Jack is laying on his back, leaving space between him and the others. I crawl over him until I’m straddling his body, our cocks sliding together as I lean forward to kiss him. When I break the kiss, I close my hand around our dicks and stroke them together.

“Lube?”

Jack grins, reaching over to his nightstand and pulling out a bottle. He tosses it to me, and I grin when I see it’s the flavored kind. That means I won’t have to keep my mouth away—just the way I like it. I click it open and drizzle some of the cold liquid over our cocks, both of us hissing at the difference in temperature.

Turning my head, I find Belle riding Nick’s cock and Derek’s fingers. It won’t be long until she’s filled with both of them. That’s something Jack and I will have to try at some point. I can only imagine what it would be like to have our cocks rubbing together inside of her tight cunt.

“How did we get so lucky?” I ask, returning my gaze to Jack.

“Well, we did have to wait millennia to find her.” He chuckles, his eyes falling to her as well. “But she is perfect for all of us, isn’t she?”

I nod. “She is.”

“Less talking,” Belle calls, and I snap my head to her. Her eyes are locked on my hand as I stroke both myself and Jack. Derek is lining up the head of his cock with her puckered hole, her mouth falling open as he inches inside of her.

I’m once again struck by her beauty, but I don’t have long to take her in as

Jack's hand laces in my hair.

"You heard our girl. She wants less talking, and though she didn't get to finish her sentence, I believe she wants more fucking." Jack licks his lips as he grins. "I need your lips wrapped around my cock, Cy. Please."

Who am I to say no to such pretty begging from my love. I shuffle down the bed, my tongue running along his length as soon as it's close enough. I lick along his slit, pulling a hiss from him before I close my lips around him. I move up and down him slowly, teasing him with my tongue until he gets frustrated and begins to fuck my mouth in earnest.

This is my favorite way to suck his dick. I love it when he loses control, and forces me to do what he wants.

Belle's cries and moans fill the room with an occasional curse from Derek or Nick. It's a sound I plan to hear over and over for the rest of my life. As much as I want to watch her come around two dicks, Jack's hold on my head won't allow me to. At least not until he pulls me off of him and jerks my head to the side.

Belle's eyes are shut with her head thrown back. Her mouth opens on a silent scream as she comes. Her nails dig into Nick's chest as he curses, his hips stilling as he comes. Derek follows right behind him, his hand slapping Belle's ass before he collapses forward onto her.

"Damn, that was hot," I say with a chuckle. "Kind of sad we weren't a part of that."

Jack nods. "Same."

Belle's eyes blink open as Derek slides from her and rolls onto his side. She winces a little, making me worry that our playtime might be cut a little short. We don't want to hurt her.

"You okay, Belle?" I ask, crawling across the bed to her.

She nods slowly. "I'm good. There's just a lot of... stuff inside of me right now. It's very messy."

"Cum, Precious. There's a lot of cum inside of you. You can say it," I tease her as she wrinkles her nose.

"You better watch yourself if you want your turn," she tells me with lifted eyebrows.

I yelp when Jack's hand comes down hard on my ass. "Be a good boy, Cy, or I'll fuck Belle and you won't be allowed to come."

Well, I certainly don't like the sound of that. Leaning over, I kiss Belle. "Sorry, Precious. I just like teasing you."

She hums. "It's fine. My limbs still feel like jelly so you'll need to help me."

We all chuckle as Nick helps her dismount his now soft cock. Jack sweeps her into his arms before laying her back on the bed. He leans in to kiss her and her legs fall apart for him. I scurry up the bed to join them.

"Color?" Jack asks as he notches the head of his cock at her center.

"Green. So much green," she says, turning her head and beckoning me to her.

"Yes, my goddess?"

Belle's chuckle turns into a long moan as Jack pushes inside of her. "Kiss me, Cy."

"It'll be my pleasure."

I devour her lips as Jack plows in and out of her. I only break the kiss when Jack's hand threads through my hair and pulls me away from my mate.

"Asshole."

"Oh, so you *don't* want to fuck our mate?"

I turn to him with a grin. "You know the answer to that."

Belle whimpers as Jack slides out of her, but I'm quick to take his place.

"Don't worry, Pretty Girl. I've got you." I kiss her again as I push inside of her. I groan into the kiss as her pussy flutters around me. She's so close to coming.

"That's right, Cy," Jack murmurs, his hand stroking up and down my back as I thrust in and out of my mate. "Make her come, and then I'll fuck the both of you."

His words have Belle fluttering around me again. I smile into our kiss, one of my hands snaking between us to circle her clit as I pick up my pace. Tilting my hips, she lets out a cry as I hit the perfect spot. With just a few more thrusts, she's falling apart around me. I slow my thrusts, continuing to circle her clit until she falls back onto the bed with a satisfied smile on her lips.

"Prep or no prep?" Jack asks, pushing his chest flat against my back as he nips at my ear.

"No prep," I decide. "I'm not sure how long I'll last with you fucking me while I'm inside of her."

Jack chuckles as he leans back. I hear the cap of the lube popping off just before it trails down my ass. Another moment and his cock is pressing against my entrance.

"Fuck," I whine, my hips pushing further into Belle.

"How does it feel?" she asks, still a little breathless.

I smile, meeting her eyes as he inches further inside. There's just a pinch of discomfort, but sometimes I like a bite of pain with my pleasure. "Amazing."

She nods. "One day, I want to watch you together."

"Anytime, Doll," Jack says as he fully seats himself inside of me. "Are the both of you ready?"

“Yes,” Belle and I moan together.

Jack’s hands dig into my hips as he pulls out before sinking back inside of me. He moves slowly at first, but slowly builds up until he’s pistoning in and out of me. He really is fucking both me and Belle at this point.

Belle leans up to kiss me, and I happily devour her every sound until I feel the tell tale sign of my approaching orgasm.

“Fuck, I’m going to come,” I practically scream.

“Not before Belle, you’re not.” Jack’s voice is firm as he slaps my ass, and I clench around his cock.

“Not helping, asshole.”

Belle gives me a soft smile. “Don’t worry, Cy. I’m close.”

Then her hand is snaking down her body until she reaches her clit. I bite down hard on the inside of my cheek to keep myself from coming just at that sight. Luckily, she wasn’t lying about being close. With just a few flicks of her finger, her back arches off the bed as she calls out my name.

“Come like a good boy,” Jack barks as he fucks into me one last time, his hot cum filling me and setting off my own orgasm. I cry out as Belle’s pulsing pussy milks my cock. Ropes of cum fill her up as I come harder than I ever have.

Unable to hold my weight any longer, I collapse on top of Belle—not that she seems to mind as her fingers run through my hair.

As soon as Jack slides out of me, I roll over onto my side and pull Belle into my arms.

“Can’t move,” I mumble, and she hums her agreement.

“I’m just going to take a nap,” she murmurs and within seconds she’s passed out on my chest. I chuckle, my eyes falling shut. Sleep sounds good.

“I’ll get the two of you cleaned up,” Jack whispers, pressing a kiss to my

forehead. “Nick and Derek are passing out too.”

“Thanks, Jack. Love you.”

He chuckles. “Love you, too.”

Chapter Sixteen



Nick

The last few days have been chaotic. Belle has been at the house more than not lately, staying over the other night, then spending the whole next day decorating and making cookies. When she went home, all of her friends were already there. The four of us had driven her home, deciding to go Christmas shopping before going back home, so she asked us all to come in and explain what happened with her magic and her mom. It was a very

long conversation that had a lot of tears and just as much cursing. I think Lee may be my favorite of her friends because that girl is vindictive and creative.

Today, Belle spent the day helping us wrap presents. All of us were in different rooms of the house, and she bounced from room to room to help us. The four of us haven't gotten each other presents or really even acknowledged Christmas as a holiday in so long. It's kind of nice that Belle is pushing us to do this. Not that any of us will tell her that. She'd start to feel bad and apologize, and none of us want that.

We are sitting down to eat, and Belle has an idea trapped in her adorable little head. She keeps debating asking us for a favor, and for a solid twenty minutes, I keep quiet and listen to the back and forth of her thoughts. She eventually talks herself out of it, but I decide to speak up. If she wants something that is in our power to do, then she will get it, even if she won't ask for it out loud.

"You know, Beautiful. I think the perfect way for us to finish off our Hallmark Christmas is by having a Christmas dinner. Do you think your friends will be able to come?"

My words have her gaze shooting up from the table to my eyes. She smiles softly, realizing that I just heard her internal debate and posed the question as my idea so she wouldn't have to face the anxiety that asking us would cause. One day, I hope that she will see that our house is her house, and she never has to ask us to invite anyone over or throw a party. Alas, today is not that day, so I'll claim her idea as my own to the guys for her sake.

"Really, you guys wouldn't mind having my friends over for a Christmas party? They may bring their mates, is that okay too? I'd really enjoy having a big Christmas dinner and getting everyone together."

Cy and Jack immediately start agreeing with the plan. The two of them

claim Belle's attention with questions about her friends' mates. Derek, however, is giving me a dirty look, and thankfully Belle doesn't see it while talking to Jack. Under the table, I kick him hard and send him a thought.

Don't be a dick, Der. Belle wants to do this, it was even her idea, but she was too scared to ask us herself. Just go with it!

Der nods his head in understanding and bends down to rub his shin where I just kicked him. He huffs out a sigh and rubs his eyebrow. He is clearly unhappy with the thought of people he doesn't know coming to the house. Giving me one more look, he addresses Belle's question.

"No, it won't be a problem. My family was asking if they could come over Christmas day anyway. I was going to ask if you'd be here to meet them, but having a big dinner just solves all the problems."

So that is the source of his frustration. He hasn't told his parents he met his mate, and they have been pestering him for the last few weeks about getting together for the holidays. Usually Derek will go to their house on Christmas Day. Sometimes I'll even go with him, but usually that is the only time of the year that he spends any significant time with his family. I'm glad that he agreed to invite them over and I hope with Belle around, she can convince him to see his family more.

Good job, Der. I'm proud of you.

Smirking, Derek flips me the bird without turning his attention from Belle. She is rambling again about her friends and their mates, asking us what we should cook and babbling about how many people we should expect to come. Derek is the only one that still talks to his family, even though Belle does ask Jack if he wants to invite his brothers. I think it bothers her that he doesn't have a relationship with Santa and Krampus, but I know that is one bridge that has been thoroughly burned.

“So, five for us. Between Lee, Tali, and Chloe, that’ll be another... seventeen or so. How many family members will be coming, Derek?”

Belle blinks her big green eyes at Derek, waiting patiently for him to answer. The grimace on his face screams how unhappy he is to be having his family over, but I don’t get why he is so reluctant. His mom and dad are a joy to have over; they are so positive and cheerful. His youngest sister is a little ball of energy, bouncing from room to room all the time. The older of his sisters and her mate are more serious, like Derek is, but they have the most adorable twin girls. They also aren’t as mean and grumpy as Derek. They have just lived in the human world long enough to understand that not everyone is as positive as a Tinker.

“Well, my mom, dad, and baby sister for sure. My middle sister should come with her mate and their twins, and I think my brother-in-law mentioned his sister is in town, so he may bring her as well. So in total, it’d be around eight for my family as well.”

“Okay, five plus nine, plus sixteen....” Belle waves her hand around in the air, doing math in her head. I want to laugh at how freaking adorable my mate is, but I know she will take it the wrong way, so I bite my lip between my teeth and stay silent.

“That gives us a total of thirty people here for a Christmas dinner. We need to figure out the menu, go shopping... Oh, and we have to make sure everyone has a gift to open. Maybe we can get the kids presents to open, and the adults can do a white elephant game. There is so much to do and only a few days to do it in. We need to get started right away.”

Belle jumps up from the table and starts rushing around the room. Her mind is racing with plans and ideas. Jack is looking at her as if he has never seen her. Derek still looks like he’d rather chew on nails than have a Christmas

party, and Cy is practically asleep at the table. I stand up and grab Belle by her arms, trying to hold her still and get her attention. Her mind is still buzzing away, so I do the only logical thing I can think of.

I push my lips against Belle's and use my tongue to get her to open up to me. Kissing her passionately is always the best way to get my beautiful mate to slow down, and this time isn't any different. Over the last few days, all four of us have gotten braver in touching her, and she has also really opened up and allowed herself to relax around us.

Breaking the kiss, I finally have her attention. "Slow down, Beautiful. You don't have to do it all on your own. We are here for you, to help you and support you in everything you do."

She nods her head, and her eyes are glassy and distant as she stares up at me. Her brain hasn't started firing again since my kiss, and now I really can't hold back the chuckle. Hearing the amusement from not only me, but Derek and Jack as well, Belle snaps out of her daze and is finally looking at me.

"You're right. I'm sorry, I did get a little crazy there, huh?" Now she is chuckling along with us, but she's finally calmed down a bit.

"Derek, I think you should call your family and invite them. I'll call my best witches and they can tell their mates. Cy, you and Jack need to go to the store and get all the food we'll need. Nickie, darling, can you help with the menu? Only the kids are going to get presents, so Derek and I will go shopping for them. The rest of you can come and get one gift for the adult present exchange. How does that work for everyone?"

Me and the boys nod, smiling at our little mate for giving up a bit of the control and trusting us to help. Derek whips out his phone and immediately begins texting his family. Cy and Jack put their heads together and come up with a menu without any input from me. Belle just lays her head against my

chest and relaxes into my arms, letting me hold her while the guys work to make her dinner a success.

Belle sits up, kisses me on the cheek, then walks over to Der and plops herself in his lap before pulling out her phone. Derek whispers something to her, and Belle starts to laugh, her head thrown back and her face flushed red. I can't get over how beautiful she is. Jack and Cy pull the two of them into a conversation about what to cook, and I lean against the wall, watching my best friends and our mate interact.

A feeling of contentment settles in my chest and I realize that for the first time in a long time, I'm actually happy. I don't have to pretend to be enjoying myself, because I truly am. I don't have to read the minds of those around me to see what they expect of me, then do it. None of them expect me to be anything other than myself, and it is more refreshing than any of them will ever understand.

This is what I always dreamed having a mate would be like. Energy, fun, and a loving heart all mixed into one person. Belle is everything I ever dreamed of and so much more. I'm so glad we met her.

Sure, her magic is crazy and her friends scare me just a bit. Her past is a mess that I plan on cleaning up soon, with or without her knowledge, but Belle is perfect despite everything she's been through in her short life.

Chapter Seventeen



Derek

I hate Christmas. I think it's official.

Before, I was indifferent to this holiday. I used the opportunity to have a set time that I have to see my family and that was about it. Now, Belle has us at this mall filled to the brim with humans, shopping for gifts for my nieces and little sister, and I can safely say that I do not like Christmas, or humans, or shopping.

I do love Belle though, so I'll suck up my distaste for everything around me and smile when she expects me to. I honestly haven't had to do anything on this trip other than follow Belle around and nod my head. Oh, and carry the bags around. Belle has already bought gifts for everyone but me and my little sister. She is fifteen and Belle keeps trying to get her makeup or hair tools, but I know that Kimmy isn't into any of that. I shake my head to yet another flat iron, and Belle throws it back onto the shelf, huffing out a sigh as she crosses her arms under her breasts.

I'm a bit distracted by the way her breasts move up and her cleavage, but when she starts talking in that pissed off voice, I quickly tear my gaze off her chest and back up to her face.

"Well, what does she like then, Derek?! I've tried about a hundred things, and you've said no to all of them!"

Belle's face is flushed red and her breath is coming out quick and hard. Honestly, she looks like we just got done with a round in the bed, and I'm having a bit of trouble keeping my mind on Christmas shopping and not on sex with my mate. I'm not stupid though, if I mention that, she will rip my head off and feed me to her scary unicorn friend.

"Come on, Belle. I saw a store that my sister would love." I take her hand and pull her out of this fashion store and down the way to the large bookstore I saw her eying when we passed it earlier.

I'm not at all surprised to find the rest of the guys in here when we walk through the doors. Nick and Jack are debating about a cover while Cy is reading another copy of the book they are arguing over.

"Hey guys. What are you looking at?"

Belle still sounds a bit annoyed and all three of them are immediately on alert. Jack is glaring at me, but I just hold my hands up in surrender. Cy

wraps his hands around her waist and kisses her neck, whispering in her ear as Nick holds her hands in both of his. Belle sighs again, but doesn't say anything when Nick asks her what is wrong. Instead of admitting she is annoyed, she looks around at the books surrounding us. A genuine smile crosses her lips when she sees the book Cy is still clutching in his hand.

“I made that cover.”

I did not expect her to say that. I knew she made book covers, but I always thought she worked with indie authors. I didn't expect her to have any covers in this store as it's a large chain bookstore. Cy looks at the cover again, and Jack flushes and looks away from Belle and the book.

Nick chuckles. “Well, Jack over there doesn't think the art is very realistic.”

Belle laughs as Jack's face turns darker. I'm smiling now too, enjoying watching Jack be humbled a bit.

“That's the point. The book is a rom-com, so the author wanted the cover to have the joking feel like the book does. I tried to convince her to let me make a realistic dragon, but she was adamant that it be cartoonish.”

“Well, that makes more sense now. I thought it was a more serious book,” Jack says, his face finally back down to a soft pink.

“So, what are you guys doing here?” Belle asks. After a second, her eyes get really big and she starts talking in a hurry. “Not that I'm not thrilled to see you because I am, I just thought you guys were shopping for Kimmy and the gift exchange gifts.”

Nick rubs Belle's arms and Cy hugs her tighter to his chest as Jack and I smile at her. None of us thought she was unhappy to see them, but it's cute how she felt the need to reassure us anyway.

“We decided to do both. Kimmy is always sneaking in books that her parents don't agree with. I think she calls them smut...” Cy starts to explain.

“Anyway, we decided to come in here and see if we could get both. Then, we got a little lost looking at all the books, though.”

Belle laughs while shaking her head. “Yeah, books tend to do that. Well, come on, between the five of us, we should be able to get her an entire series.”

Together, we follow Belle through the bookstore. Belle knows most of the books and what they are about, several of them she gives her reviews as she has read them all. We pass one table in the intersection of two pathways and Belle stops in her tracks. She picks up a book and stares at the cover. The whole series is beautiful and cohesive. The artist really knew what they were doing and since the table says it’s a bestseller, I’m guessing the content in the book matches the cover.

“This series. We need to get her this one. It is smut but mostly fade to black, so your parents,” she glances at me then stares at the book some more, “shouldn’t have a problem with her reading it. Plus, I made these covers, and I hope that will make it more special for her.”

None of us argue, we just each grab a book and toss them into the basket. Nick grabs three more copies of the first book, declaring that they would use that as their gift exchange presents.

Finally, all the shopping is over and we can get out of this hell that humans call a mall. Belle has been laughing and teasing all day, and I love seeing her like this. When we stop to get dinner, she makes sure to ask for a round booth so she can see all of us.

We talk and laugh throughout dinner, and I find myself content with my life. I don’t feel like everyone is watching and judging me. I don’t feel like I have to compensate for my pixie. For the first time ever, I feel safe just being me, grumpy and all.

I think a lot of that comes from the fact that I finally shifted for Belle yesterday, and it had gone better than I could ever have imagined. When she looked down at me with love shining in her eyes, I knew she would never judge me the way I've always feared. She's too good of a person, but more than that, there had been awe in her eyes. She thought I was beautiful.

I've spent so much of my life being ashamed of my shifted form that I never thought anyone could find it beautiful. It's just another reason that Belle is perfect for me—perfect for us.



We get back to the house and Belle spends about thirty minutes wrapping all the presents we got for the kids coming over in two days. She plays a Christmas movie, this time it isn't a Hallmark movie, but a cartoon version of *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. Belle laughs and says that the Grinch

reminds her of me. She asks Nick if we can get a screaming goat and my heart flutters in my chest.

It may seem silly, but that is the first time she ever said anything that suggests she is in this for the long haul. Usually, she would say that she wants the goat, but has nowhere to put it in her apartment, or she'd say that we, the guys, should get a goat for the yard. This time, she included herself in the plans.

Not that we are actually getting one of those things, but still.

“I love you, Belle. You know that right?” I sit down behind her where she is kneeling on the floor, organizing the presents under the tree.

Wrapping her in my arms, I sit back and pull her onto my lap. I never have enough time with her in my arms. If I had it my way, she would never leave the house, and she would spend the entirety of her time in one of our arms. Belle cuddles close to my chest and kisses me on the jaw, right under my chin. Warmth blooms in my chest at the feeling of her lips on my skin. My body reacts and Belle giggles when she feels the bulge in my pants.

“Well, somebody is feeling feisty,” she jokes as she moves around so her legs are on either side of my hips.

Her core is pressing against my jean-covered dick and my heart races. Belle rests her arms on my shoulders and presses her head against mine so that her lips brush mine when she talks.

“I need you too, Derek.”

Those fucking words are going to be the death of me!

I lick my lips, my tongue skimming over hers and a groan slips out of her mouth. I want nothing more than to flip up that little dress she is wearing and have my way with her, but Nick would murder me if I didn't double check that she wants this.

“Color?” My voice is raspy with needy desire.

“Green.”

Belle doesn't give me a chance to act. She presses her lips against mine and grinds her body down on my lap. I groan deep in my chest and I can't stop my hands from running all over her body. I hear footsteps enter the room, but I ignore them and push Belle back onto the floor without separating our lips. My hands fumble with her panties, but eventually, I get them off. Belle is practically panting with need as I drag kisses down her neck and into her cleavage.

Not wasting any time, I leave her dress on and bury my face between her thighs. Jack says she is as sweet as a sugar cookie, and I have to say I agree with him. Belle's hands tangle in my hair, pulling my face closer to her body. My tongue flicks her clit back and forth as two of my fingers make their way into her body.

“Yes! Derek, I'm so close!” Belle's breathy voice draws a smile to my lips as I press my face closer to her.

I move my fingers faster and curl them up so I can press against that perfect spot. Belle's legs start to shake around my head, and I can feel her pussy flutter when she is about to come. An evil idea pops into my head and right as she is on the brink of bliss, I stop and sit up. My dick is rock hard in my pants, so I unfasten them and let them fall from my hips.

Belle is glaring, rage boiling in her green eyes. Before she can say anything or demand I finish what I started, a chuckle from the couch draws our attention.

“If you could only hear the naughty words our sweet Belle is calling you in her head right now, Der.”

Nick is reclined on the couch with his dick in his hands. I smirk up at the

nightmare, then look back at Belle. Her face and chest are flushed, and she is squirming around on the floor. Her dark brown hair is fanned out above her head like a beautiful Halo. This woman is a literal angel. I have no doubts about that. She is just too perfect, sweet, and beautiful to be anything else.

“Don’t worry, Sweet Girl. I’ll give you what you want. I just want to feel you come around my dick. Color?”

“Green. Please Derek!”

I love to hear her beg. It may be a dick thing to do, but hearing her begging for me to fuck her is a gift I’ll never take for granted. I kiss her lips softly as I slowly slide into her. Her pussy grasps my dick and squeezes tight, and I’m close just from this little bit of friction. I settle deep inside her and hold still, allowing her to adjust to my size. Before long, she is bucking her hips under me and trying to break our kiss. I don’t let her, though. Instead, I use my tongue to push open her lips and kiss her deeper as my hips move back and forth.

I fuck Belle nice and slow as if she is a precious, breakable thing. To me, she is. She is the most precious thing in this world, and I’m so glad she is mine—ours. Belle comes around my dick just like I wanted, and as I follow her over the edge of oblivion, all I can think is that this is heaven.

I could spend the rest of my life following Belle anywhere she wants to go and die a happy man, knowing I got to have her in my life.

Chapter Eighteen



Belle

It's Christmas Day, and I am so nervous. Tali demanded that our witches stay at our apartment last night and have a friends only Christmas breakfast. I love her for that because I need a pep talk before I go over to my mates' house to get ready for dinner tonight.

Derek's family got in late last night, after I'd already left to come home. He texted me and asked if he could come stay here because his sister got them

matching pajamas and was demanding they sing karaoke. I told him I would pay good money to see it and he should enjoy this time with his sister while she still wants to spend time with her big brother. Nick did end up sending me a video of Derek and Kimmy in their matching PJs singing “Barbie Girl”. It was probably the most adorable video I’ve ever seen.

I’m lying in bed now, staring at the dozens of texts and pictures the guys have been sending me all night and this morning. They seem to be having a blast with Derek’s family and my heart swells at how happy they all seem. This is why I love Christmas so much. All the joy and togetherness of people you love.

I’m watching the video of Derek singing with Kimmy when my bedroom door flies open, and I’m bombarded with my best witches throwing themselves on my bed. Tali wraps her arms around my shoulder while Lee snuggles in on my other side with her arms around my waist. Chloe stands at the foot of the bed looking for somewhere to fit in.

I burst out laughing when she shrugs her shoulders and proceeds to climb on top of me, laying on my chest with her chin resting on her crossed hands.

“Good morning Belle. It’s Christmas and Lee made pancakes. Tali said we had to wait for you to get up to open presents, but you were taking too long, so we came in to get you.”

I can’t breathe from laughing so hard and the whole bed is shaking with my chuckles. Tali blows raspberries on my cheek as Lee snatches my phone and watches the video. Chloe is blinking up at me as if she is an innocent bystander, but I know that this assault was probably her idea.

“Okay, okay, okay! I’m up! Merry Christmas, coven. I’m so glad I get to spend another year with you all.” I smile at my best friends, and I have to fight the happy tears wanting to leak out of my eyes.

When I was with my Dad, I never could have imagined that I'd be this happy. Life in the cult was miserable to say the least and even when he tried, my dad could never understand that I was missing something in my life. Now that I'm away from all that toxicity, I know that what I'd been missing all along was love. True love.

The love of my mates and my witches is what I've always been searching for, and I'm so happy to have it now.

"Come on witches! We've got gifts to open, then we all need to get ready to see our mates. Plus, we have an awesome fucking dinner party to go to tonight!" Lee winks at me as she climbs out of my bed and pulls Chloe off of me.

The two of them leave the room, pushing and shoving each other like two sisters and giggling when they start to race down the hall. Tali hugs me tightly to her chest and rests her head on my shoulder. She isn't making any moves to get up, and I don't really mind. Of all my friends, I've known her the longest.

"Are you happy, Belle? Truly happy?" She sounds so wistful as she whispers the questions in my ear.

"Yeah, I am, Tali. For the first time in my life, I don't feel like I'm missing something inside," I whisper back to her, a soft smile on my face as I stare up at the ceiling. "What about you? Are you happy now that you have mates that really love you?"

"Yeah, Belle. I'm so happy, it's scary."

We both get up together and hold hands as we walk into the living room to have Christmas with our family.



Nick grabs my hands and pulls them up to his mouth. I've been fussing with the skirt of my dress again. Everyone will be here any minute, and I'm nervous to host my first Christmas dinner. I know, logically, that it's just my friends and their mates, but I can't seem to snap out of my nerves.

"Beautiful, you have to calm down. You already know everyone that is going to be here. Even if the turkey catches on fire or the lights go out, tonight is going to go perfect."

I stare up at Nick with a blank expression. He cannot be serious right now.

"Why would you say that, Nick Darkmere? Now I'm freaking out more!"

Panic makes my chest grow tight, and Nick looks like he doesn't know what to do with me. That makes two of us, because I have no idea what to do to calm down.

Arms wrap around my waist from both sides and I'm pressed between two bodies. Another set of arms wrap around my shoulder and chest and a thick frame cradles my back against his chest. Surrounded by all of my mates, my breaths slow and my brain starts to work right.

"We've got you, Sweet Girl. My family loves you, so do your friends and their mates. Nothing is going to happen. We won't let it. I promise."

Derek's sweet words calm me even more, and I let my body relax between them all. I take a few deep breaths and nod my head. They are right. Nothing is going to go wrong tonight because we are all together and together, there is nothing we can't do.

Then the doorbell rings.

I gasp and my gaze shoots to Nick's. He smiles sweetly at me and leans down to kiss my forehead before walking off to answer the door. Cy grabs one hand and Jack grabs the other. They lead me down the hall and into the foyer where Nick is busy greeting Laoise and all eight of her mates. I've met all of these guys before, and every time I see them, I'm a little intimidated by their size. Lee isn't a small girl, skinny yes, but she is tall. All of her mates make her look petite in comparison.

Lee rushes over and hugs me as soon as she sees me standing behind Nick. She doesn't care that my mates are all around me or that hers are standing awkwardly in the doorway. She just wraps her arms around me and tells me everything will be fine.

"Hi Belle, it's great to see you again!" Dáinn comes over and kisses me on the cheek, making Derek growl. Lee and I both chuckle but Dáinn looks up at Derek.

"Damn, Belle, you know how to find the hot ones." Dáinn winks at me, and Derek stops growling. Rory scoffs and Dáinn's brothers chuckle under their

breaths.

The whole interaction seems to have set both groups at ease, and we all turn to head to the living room where Derek's family is waiting. Before we make it, the doorbell rings again. Nick continues to lead Lee and her mates to the living room while the rest of us stay in the foyer. Cy goes to open the door and Tali walks in with her mates trailing behind her.

Just like Lee, Tali rushes over and hugs me. While she is squeezing me to her chest, she whispers in my ear. "We have *got* to talk. Tomorrow, we are having an emergency meeting at Serendripity."

I nod, and Tali walks back to her mates. She introduces my mates to hers and the big bald one, I think his name is Prince, looks up at Derek and gasps.

"Oh my goodness! You're Derek Tinker aren't you?"

Derek glances at me, then nods his head. I've never seen my pixie look so nervous before. He is side-eying the excited shifter while moving his body to half hide behind Jack. I'm biting my lip to hold in the laughter, but I pat Derek's hand and listen.

"I love your work man! Our whole house was furnished by you, except for a few things we brought from our home town. It's an honor to meet you!"

Prince steps forward and grasps Derek's hand, shaking it so hard the hair on his head is flopping back and forth. The smile on Prince's face is so boyish and full of joy. His eyes are filled with awe as they move from Derek's face to his hands and back again. The darkly tanned man steps up and clasps his hands around Prince's upper arms, then he pulls the penguin away from my pixie.

"Alright man, step away from the woodsmith. Deep breaths Prince. It's okay."

Prince takes deep breaths as Pablo, I think that is his name at least, pushes

him down the hall behind a laughing Jack. Tali and her last mate, Spike, follow the other three to the living room and Derek grabs my hand to follow, but I tug him back. Almost as if on cue, the doorbell rings again.

“I thought Nickie was the mind reader, Pretty Girl,” Cy calls over his shoulder as he moves to open the door for Chloe and her mates.

My laughter over Cy’s comment gets harder when Chloe sticks to the pattern and immediately engulfs me in her arms when she steps through the door. Unlike Lee and Tali, she doesn’t bother introducing her mates, she just drags me down the hall towards the laughter we can hear in the living room.



The night is wonderful. All of our mates get along well and Derek’s mom keeps cracking jokes about needing to find another mate or two. His dad doesn’t find it as funny as the rest of us do, but I catch him smiling when his

mate looks away. It is so easy to see just how much that man loves her, and I can only hope that when I've been with my mates as long as those two have been together, they still look at me like he does her.

When gifts begin to get opened, I hold my breath as I watch Kimmy rip open her books. We decided to wrap them all together with a tag explaining it was from me and the guys. She literally cries when she sees the series, and when I explain that I made the covers, she demands I sign each copy. The twins, who are just over a year old, seem to be having more fun playing in the big boxes than they do riding the push bikes we got them. Regardless, they are adorable as they crawl in and out of their box fort.

I should have guessed from the guests in attendance that the white elephant game the adults used as a gift exchange wasn't going to stay PG-13, but when Derek's dad ends up with a giant purple dildo that Bain brought, I can't hold in my laughter. His face flushes the brightest shade of red I've ever seen.

"This isn't funny, Belle! What the hell am I supposed to do with this?" Derek's dad glares around the room, and even though his words were angry, his voice sounds like he is trying to hold back laughter himself.

"Well I can think of a few things." Derek's mom winks at his dad, and we all lose it. Derek and his sister, Hannah, gag while the rest of us laugh or catcall at her words.

This whole night turns out way better than I ever hoped it could. Everyone is so sweet and the food turned out delicious thanks to Cy and Jack. Derek's family seems to love being around me and my friends, and I'm pretty sure Hannah and Sheila, Derek's sister and his mom, got invited to our weekly coffee dates.

When everyone finally leaves for the night, me and the guys collapse on the couch. Derek is smiling while Cy and Jack are wrapped in each other's arms.

I'm laying with my head in Nick's lap and my feet resting on Derek. None of us say anything for a while, we just sit in silence and enjoy being together.

"Thank you guys. Tonight was everything I've always dreamed of having."

"We love you, Belle." Nick bends down and kisses my head, his hands playing in my hair.

My eyes get heavy, and I fall asleep smiling. This is what life is supposed to be like. Full of love and happiness.

Epilogue



Belle

One year later

“Is the blindfold *really* necessary,” I ask my mates once again.
They chuckle before Jack pats my leg. “Yes, Doll. I promise, we’re almost there.”

“Didn’t you say that the last time I asked... like twenty minutes ago.”

Cypian chuckles, his hand squeezing mine. “That’s absolutely what happened, but this time he’s telling you the truth. How much longer, Derek?”

It’s not Derek who answers, but Nick. “Five minutes, Beautiful.”

“I still don’t understand why I have to be blindfolded,” I grumble, pulling my hand from Cy’s so I can cross my arms over my chest. Am I pouting? Why, yes. Yes, I am. I don’t know what they expect of me when they load me into a car, blindfolded, and then take me on an hour-long car ride. And on Christmas Eve at that! I still have so much to do to get ready for our Christmas dinner.

Yes, that’s right. My best witches and I decided that we were going to make Christmas dinner at my place a new tradition. Now that we’re all mated and living with said mates, we don’t get to see each other quite as often. We still make sure to get together at least once a week in person, but a lot of our conversations happen via video calls now. And something tells me that’s only going to get worse now that Chloe *and* Sienna are pregnant. Not that their mates are aware of it yet, but Chloe couldn’t hide it from us. She says they’re going to tell their mates after their handfasting ceremony tomorrow.

Yes, they’re getting married on Christmas Day because why not? It’s not like we’re busy or anything.

I might be stressing out a tad bit about how busy we’re going to be tomorrow. In the morning, Jack has promised to make breakfast before we open presents. Then we have to hoof it to Chloe’s mom’s estate for their handfasting ceremony at eleven. Then I have to hurry home so I can get dinner ready by the time everyone arrives at our place at six. Sure, Sheila says she’ll get things started for me, but it’s still hard for me at times to release control. I’m working on it, but it’s still a struggle sometimes.

Not to mention the fact that we're still learning what I can do with my magic. It's clear that I have an affinity for elemental magic. I'm able to call air, earth, fire, and water with just a thought. But with everything else? I've had issues with potions, and I swear it's because of the math involved. I've learned a few spells from Tali and Chloe, as well as from my mom's grimoire, but none of them are in English. I have to learn other languages so that I can cast them. Although, I've been working on learning to translate them so I can say them in English. They're a bit hit or miss so far, but I'm going to keep trying.

"Pretty girl, stop pouting. We have a present for you, and we wanted to keep where we're going a secret. Just relax. I promise, you're going to love this present." Cy presses a kiss to my head.

I take a deep breath and try my best to relax. When the car stops less than five minutes later, I reach up to remove the blindfold, but Jack bats away my hands.

"Uh uh, Doll. You'll ruin the surprise."

I hear car doors opening around me before Jack pulls me from Derek's truck, not releasing me until my feet hit the ground. He intertwines our fingers while someone else takes my other hand. It takes me a moment to realize it's Derek.

"Just trust us, Sweet Girl."

"I'm trying, but you aren't making it easy."

I hear all of them laughing at me as I curse them inside my head.

"Uh oh. Belle is thinking in curse words again. I think we might be testing her patience tonight," Nick says, his voice filled with glee.

I keep my mouth shut, not wanting to ruin this surprise they have for me, but I'm definitely annoyed.

Finally, we come to a stop and the blindfold disappears. I blink against the sudden intrusion of lights, frowning at our surroundings. They look familiar...

I have to bite back a cry as I realize where we are. Why would they bring me here? I have to get away.

Nick grasps ahold of me before I can bolt, wrapping his arms around me as he leans down to whisper in my ear. “Just keep breathing, Beautiful. You’re safe with us. We wouldn’t let anything happen to you, but this is something you need to see.”

“You can’t do this to us!” someone screams and my head snaps up.

I swallow against the rising bile as I take in the place where I grew up. We’re standing just outside of the house my stepmom moved us into when my dad married her. The street is filled with police cars, and I frown as I watch both my stepmom and stepbrother being led down the stairs.

“We didn’t do anything wrong,” my stepbrother yells. It takes me a moment to realize he’s had the shit beaten out of him. His eyes fall on us as the cops drag him past us, and he starts screaming. “Those are the assholes who you need to arrest. They’re the ones who did this to me, and it’s clear they’re the ones who kidnapped my stepsister!”

The cop glances at us and scoffs. “Yeah, okay. It totally looks like she’s been kidnapped. Stop making this harder on yourself.”

My stepmom’s eyes narrow on me as she passes. She’s not fighting the cops, but she snarls at me. “I don’t know how, but I know this is your doing.”

I bite my lip, watching the circus around us until my dad comes to stand in front of us.

“Hi, Belle.”

My back straightens as I stare up at the man who didn’t love me enough to get me out of this bullshit place. “What do you want?”

“I just wanted to say I’m sorry. I didn’t believe you, and that was so wrong. You were right. What your stepmother was doing wasn’t right. I’m just glad that you got away and met your mates.” My dad shoots them a tight smile. “Thank you, boys, for what you did here today. And thank you for filling me in on what that piece of scum did to my daughter—after beating the shit out of him.”

His eyes turn to me, anguish in them. “They also told me you spoke with your mother’s ghost, and she said I killed her. I promise you, I had no idea. I know I was in the wrong in that situation—I never should have strayed from your mom—but I just loved the tea that your stepmother brewed, so I bought some from her to share with her. It never occurred to me it could be hurting her. I don’t expect you to believe me, but it’s the truth.”

All I can do is stare at my dad in shock before turning my eyes to my mates. There’s no way I can address everything else that my dad just admitted. That’s something I’ll have to deal with eventually, but not today. “You did this? For me?”

Jack smiles. “We wanted to make sure your past was behind you, so you could move on to our future.”

The guys spread out around me before dropping to their knees, and I lift a hand to my lips. There’s no way... right?

“Belle, you’re what we waited forever for. We never thought we’d find our mate,” Nick says gently.

Cypian snorts. “We’d all but given up on finding our mate.”

“But then you crashed into our lives, and it was the best day of our lives.” Derek gives me a small smile.

“And we’re hoping that you’ll do us the honor of becoming our wife,” Jack finishes, holding out a ring to me.

I gape at the four of them before my eyes find my dad. There are tears in his eyes as he gives me a soft smile. I don't know if I can ever forgive him for what he forced me to live through, but who knows. Anything is possible.

Letting my eyes fall back to the guys, I nod. "Yes. I'd love nothing more than to marry you."

The four of them jump to their feet, enveloping me in their arms as they kiss me. Finally, the ring is on my finger, and I know that today is just the beginning. I can't wait to spend the rest of my life married to my mates.

The end.



Want to read Chloe, Laoise, and Tali's stories? Grab them now!

Chloe's Christmas of Cursed Chaos

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Tali's Christmas Revenge

Authors' Note

So what did you think? Wasn't Belle's story sweet—with a bit of spice obviously, because have you met us? Belle and her fated mates hold a special place in our hearts, and we're so happy to be able to share it with all of you.

Don't forget to check out Chloe's, Laoise's, and Tali's stories!! This group of besties were the best thing the two of us came up with. There's just something special about having a group of best friends who always have one another's back. More than the relationships with the female characters and their mates, we loved writing this friendship.

Also, don't forget to check out the rest of the books in the series!! We were so lucky to be able to join this fabulous group of authors to tell our stories, and we know you'll love their stories too! Plus, they're all amazing friends of ours, and we love supporting our friends.

Thank you to our betas and ARC teams. Thank you to our amazing PA team with Dragonfire. We'd all lose our heads without them. Thank you to the team at Phoenix Eclipse Publishing for helping us bring this baby to life.

Thank you to the other authors in this shared world—the support and effort put in by each one of you means the world to us. We could never forget to thank our friends and families. Without your support, we wouldn't be where we are, would we?

But most of all, thank you reader! Without your support, neither of us would be able to continue writing. So thank you for your continued support!

About Kaytie Marie



Kaytie Marie is an indie author of RH in multiple sub genres, including: contemporary, paranormal, and horror.

As a mother of three boys, she often has her hands full during the day. So, at night, she spends her time writing as an escape from those demands.

Follow Kaytie Marie

If you would like to check out more works by Kaytie, or learn more about what she's doing now, you can find her here:
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Infinity Wing book 1

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Good Girl

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12 Dates of Christmas

The Monsters' Christmas Party(co-write with Miranda May)

Published by Phoenix Eclipse Publishing

The Island of Dark Desires (co-write with G.R. Loreweaver)

12 Dates of Christmas

A Jolly Christmas Disaster

Tali's Christmas Revenge

About Miranda May



Miranda is a new author who has been writing since high school, but never considered being published until now. When she discovered reverse harem books, she knew it was time to share her stories. She has plans to write paranormal romance, urban fantasy, omegaverse, dark romance, and contemporary—all reverse harem/why choose/polyam stories.

Growing up a Navy brat, Miranda has lived in many places. She currently makes her home in Piney Flats, TN with her husband and her two adorable

corgis, Luna and Trixie. Don't worry if you've never heard of it, it's a teeny tiny town less than an hour from the Tennessee/Virginia border. When not writing, Miranda spends most of her time reading or playing Dungeons and Dragons like a true geek. She also has an almost unhealthy obsession with corgis—so don't be surprised if she brings them up.

Follow Miranda May

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