

EPILOGUE



PARANORMAL PROTECTORS: ATLAS

MICHELLE FROST

ATLAS EPILOGUE

**PARANORMAL
PROTECTORS: ON GUARD**

MICHELLE FROST

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

This is the epilogue contained in the Second Edition of [Atlas\(Paranormal Protectors: On Guard\)](#), and is not meant to be read as a stand alone.

EPILOGUE

Gavin tried to pretend it was any other morning. Once he'd climbed out of bed after the truly spectacular orgasm Atlas had given him, he showered, ate a small breakfast—his stomach was too knotted for anything else—and sat for meditation with Violet.

Meditation was one of the many things Violet and Fred had considered part of his Magic 101 lessons. They'd assured him it would help him learn control once the magic in his blood was unleashed.

He hoped so.

Ever since the night Charlotte was kidnapped and he'd seen Atlas, Lark, and Pike use their power, vivid dreams had plagued him. In the dreams, he was the mage and the searing thrill of magic flowing through him felt more like a drug than a weapon. Sometimes the dreams left him feeling as sated as an orgasm, and sometimes they wound him up so tight the only thing that helped was putting on his running shoes and pounding the pavement for miles.

Atlas usually joined him on mornings like that. He didn't try to set the pace—keeping a couple strides behind Gavin and letting him run however he needed to.

He took a slow breath, trying to empty his mind and center himself. Still, it plagued him. When the power was real and thrumming beneath his skin like blood in his veins, how would he outrun it then?

“Are you ready, Gavin?” Violet appeared in front of him, standing in a white slip dress with the ends of her purple hair dragging the floor.

He still sat on his meditation cushion, legs crossed and hands resting loosely on his knees. Looking up, he met Violet’s gaze. “I’m ready.”

She held out a hand. He took it, letting her pull him up off the floor. Once he was standing, she didn’t let go. Instead, she led him down the hall to the round room with all the doors. He should have known that’s where the ritual would take place, but the logistics of it hadn’t really been on his mind—only the outcome.

Inside, the stone firepit in the middle of the room was already lit. Pike, Lark, and Atlas stood on three sides of it, facing the fire. Violet walked Gavin forward, pulling them to a stop on the empty side. She squeezed his hand once and let go.

Looking up, Gavin found Atlas staring back at him. Atlas shot him a little smile and a wink. Lark and Pike both offered him nods when he looked their way.

“Gavin,” Violet said, voice somehow deeper than he’d ever heard it. “Are you ready to begin?”

He swallowed hard, stealing himself. They hadn’t told him the exact ritual steps, only that it was easy and the only thing he’d really have to do is accept the power that already lived within him. “I’m ready.”

Across the pit from him, Atlas moved to stand beside Lark. At the same time, Violet went to the opposite side to stand beside Pike, leaving Gavin on his own and an empty space directly across from him.

For a moment, nothing happened. The fire spit sparks up into the air. The room beyond their circle was dim, the doors lining the walls barely visible beyond the fire’s reach despite how early in the day it was.

The door directly in front of Gavin on the opposite side of the room cracked open. No light shone beyond it. A figure stepped out of the darkness. He was tall and well dressed in a charcoal

three-piece suit. He had black hair, black eyes, and deeply tanned skin. His dark eyes reflected the fire's glow, growing brighter with every step he took.

Every hair on Gavin's body stood on end. Bone deep fear ate at his stomach, making his insides twist and heave, screaming at him to run. But he couldn't run. Because there was only one person this could be. Kerak, the king of demons, paused only a second on the far side of the fire before he simply stepped up into it, walking through the flames as simply as he'd walked across the floor.

"Hello, Gavin," Kerak said as he stepped back down onto the floor, not a single singe mark on him.

"Hello," he stammered, glancing at the others. "I'm not sure what to call you."

One side of Kerak's mouth lifted. "You can call me Kerak. We are family after all."

Gavin's confusion must have shown on his face because Kerak continued, "The power living in your blood—just like every mage's power—comes from a demon somewhere in the limbs of your family tree. In your case—" Kerak reached out and pressed a hand flat against Gavin's chest. "—that demon was me."

Three sharp inhales echoed somewhere in the room behind Kerak, but Gavin couldn't look away from the demon in front of him. His...ancestor? "Who?" Gavin whispered, afraid his voice would shake if he spoke any louder.

Kerak took a deep breath and lifted his hand. "Put about six greats in front of grandfather, I think." Dark eyes Gavin now realized contained their own dancing flames, not a mere reflection, bored into his. "You have her eyes." Kerak's gaze traveled over the rest of Gavin. "She was blonde and fair as well. Some genes remain stronger than others throughout the years. Aside from my son, you're the first to carry power in your blood."

Gavin swallowed. He didn't really have any blood relatives to speak of. None he was close to anyway. Charlotte was his

family now. The family he'd chosen. "Is she—"

Kerak shook his head. "No. She was fully human and lived a human life. We were...a passing fancy to each other, although we remained close until she died. I met my mate some hundred or so years later."

Not knowing what to say to that, Gavin kept silent.

With a small nod, Kerak brought them back to the situation at hand. "Let us complete the ritual. Then, if you'd like, we can discuss your heritage in more detail."

It was Gavin's turn to nod. "I would like that, I think."

A small smile pulled at Kerak's lips. "So would I. Now, Gavin Radcliffe, are you prepared to accept the blood power living within you?"

"Yes."

A deep pulsing red spread from the middle of Kerak's eyes, swallowing up the dark pools, until the whole of his sclera was crimson and streaked through with black veins. Power crackled through the room, turning the air heavy and hot, full of an energy that pressed against Gavin's skin like a brand.

Lifting his hand, Kerak placed his palm on Gavin's forehead. The heat of it seared him, shooting from that point of contact through his entire body until he was taut and gasping, a livewire wrapped in human flesh.

He didn't realize the scream echoing off the walls came from his own throat until the sound was already dying off. In front of him, Kerak turned his head, looking off to the side. When Gavin felt like he could move his head, he looked in the direction Kerak had.

Atlas was there, face pale and both arms held behind his back by Lark and Pike.

"Easy, brother," Lark was saying. "The worst is over."

Gavin sagged at his words, relief pulsing through him. He held Atlas's green gaze and smiled. "I'm okay." Looking back at Kerak, he asked, "Is there more?"

“No. The power is alive within you now.”

Gavin wasn't sure if he felt different, body still too full of adrenaline. “I don't feel it.”

Kerak's dark gaze didn't move from his. “You will.”

ATLAS STOOD IN THE DOORWAY OF HIS BEDROOM, WATCHING the easy rise and fall of Gavin's chest. He'd fallen asleep as soon as the ritual was over and had stayed that way for the past couple hours.

Behind Atlas, the living room door opened. Without turning, he knew it was Kerak.

“How is he?” Kerak asked, not waiting for permission to step past Atlas into the bedroom.

“Asleep, as you can see. Fine, as far as I can tell.” Knowing that it was ridiculous to be irritated at Kerak didn't keep the thread of it out of Atlas's voice.

The corner of Kerak's lips lifted in a smirk as he turned his head. “Normally, I wouldn't tolerate that tone, but I understand.” Kerak looked back at Gavin. “He's your mate. Logic doesn't always prevail where they're concerned.” This time when he brought his gaze back to Atlas, his eyes were hard. “He's also my grandson. He has *my* protection as well as yours. Remember that.”

A shovel talk from the King of Demons, Atlas thought. That was a new one. Still, it was a warning he took seriously. “You're right. He is my mate. My heart is his and it will be until this body burns to ash.”

Kerak's dark gaze never wavered. “Good.” He paused and even though he was still looking at Atlas, it was obvious that something else had caught his attention, as if someone was speaking to him in a way that Atlas couldn't hear. “Please call me when he wakes and is ready to talk. I need to go see my mate.”

Something in the way he said that caught Atlas's attention. “Everything okay?”

Kerak turned for the door. “That remains to be seen. Look after my grandson.”

“Always.”

GAVIN PULLED GRITTY EYES OPEN TO FIND AFTERNOON sunlight slanted across Atlas’s face. Smiling, Gavin watched Atlas breathe, the shift of his eyes beneath his lids, and basked in the warmth filling him.

Stretching, he realized contentment wasn’t the only warmth spreading through his body. His power unfurled like a fist opening in his chest, releasing a rush of energy through his torso that sped down his arms and legs until his fingertips tingled.

A breath of wind swirled through the room, lifting the curtains away from the closed window and ruffling the hair on Gavin’s head.

“That answers that question.”

Gavin turned wide eyes to Atlas, meeting the brilliant green of Atlas’s gaze.

“Air?”

Atlas smiled wide. “Air.”

Closing his eyes, Gavin focused like Violet taught him, accepting the electric hum of his power. Another gust of wind blew through the room—stronger than the last. Gavin opened his eyes with a wide smile of his own. “That’s so cool.”

Atlas rolled on top of Gavin, slotting himself between Gavin’s thighs and bracing the bulk of his weight on his elbows. “*You’re so cool,*” he said with an eyebrow wiggle and a kiss to the end of Gavin’s nose.

Gavin laughed, delighted and overcome with affection for this man. Leaning up, he gripped the back of Atlas’s neck and pulled him down for a kiss. It stayed chaste for only a moment until Gavin nipped at Atlas’s top lip, pulling a groan from his chest and giving Gavin access to slip his tongue inside.

Atlas kissed him back while he shifted all his weight to one arm and used his free hand to rove Gavin's body. He rucked up Gavin's shirt, exposing his chest, and dipped down to suck a nipple into his mouth.

Sucking in air now that his mouth was free, Gavin writhed beneath Atlas's talented mouth, placing one hand on the back of his head and using the other to pull at Atlas's shirt.

Taking the hint, Atlas pushed himself up onto his knees and lifted his shirt over his head. He flung it off the bed before reaching for Gavin's and giving it the same treatment.

"Pants too," Gavin said, breathless. "Off. Everything off."

Atlas chuckled and reached for his belt.

Once they were both naked and pressed against each other again the frantic energy of before deepened into a scorching inferno. Atlas kissed Gavin over and over again, claiming his mouth so thoroughly Gavin felt it all the way down to his toes. The heat building between them didn't scare him. He welcomed it. Revelled in it. Atlas's touch lit up Gavin's skin the way his newly unleashed power burned through his veins. He wanted more. He wanted it all.

"Fuck me," he said, teeth dragging over Atlas's stubbled cheek.

Atlas growled, kissing him one more time before lifting up and reaching off to the side. The nightstand rattled as Atlas yanked open the drawer to dig around inside.

Gavin would have chuckled if he wasn't so impatient for Atlas to find his prize and get back to him. Raising his head off the pillow, he bit at the meaty swell of Atlas's pec, running the flat of his tongue over the pebbled nipple there. He smiled around his mouthful when Atlas cursed above him.

"Not helping," Atlas grunted even as he turned his torso the slightest bit to give Gavin better access.

Gavin did laugh then. "Having trouble focusing, big guy?"

In a flash, Atlas dropped his weight down on Gavin, making Gavin wheeze out his next laugh. Atlas smiled winningly at

him and held up a condom and bottle of lube. “You were saying?”

Reaching up, Gavin ran his fingers through the dark beard covering Atlas’s cheeks and leaned up to whisper against his lips. “That you’re the best boyfriend ever, and I can’t wait to feel you inside me.”

Groaning, Atlas took his mouth in another claiming kiss, but he didn’t stay there long. He made short work of getting them both the rest of the way undressed before he shifted to the side, tucking Gavin close to him and reaching lube slick fingers down between his legs.

One of Gavin’s favorite things was being pressed against Atlas like this—skin to skin. Nothing between them to temper every brush of the soft curls on Atlas’s chest or the hard lines of muscle molding so perfectly against Gavin’s leaner frame. He’d never be tired of the way they fit together. He was sure that taking it this one step further would be no exception.

He gasped, breath damp and warm, against Atlas’s throat at the first probing touch of Atlas’s fingers. Not because it hurt, but because he’d wanted it for so long and because somehow his newly released power coursing through him made everything feel a hundred times more intense.

Another gust of wind blew around the room.

Atlas pressed kisses to his forehead, his cheeks, his nose, and finally his lips. “Easy, love,” he said, voice low and raspy in the small space between their faces. “I’ve got you.”

“I know,” Gavin whispered back, sealing their mouths together. He kissed Atlas with everything he had, rocking down on the fingers Atlas was using to stretch him. The burn turned to pleasure quickly, repeating with every finger Atlas added, pumping them in and out, thoroughly preparing Gavin to take him. “I’m ready, I’m ready,” he finally chanted, pressing at Atlas’s shoulders until he rolled onto his back.

Gavin followed him, straddling his lap and reaching for the condom lying beside them. He tore the package open while Atlas roved reverent hands all over him. Scooting back, he slid

the condom over Atlas's length, gripping him firmly and stroking once he was sheathed.

Atlas's hips bucked up off the bed, and he threw his head back against the pillow. "You're a little tease."

Gavin smirked but released him. Lifting himself onto his knees, he added a little more lube to Atlas's cock before guiding it to his waiting hole. The first stretch was an exquisite burn. He gasped as his body yielded, sliding down a couple more inches. Atlas was a big man, but like this he felt huge.

Atlas's big hands gripped his thighs, a grounding, steadying weight, as Gavin worked himself down a little at a time until he was sitting fully in Atlas's lap.

"Gods, you feel so good." Atlas squeezed his eyes shut.

Gavin was too overwhelmed to speak. He lifted up and sank back down with a groan. Atlas's blunt fingers dug into his hips, helping steady him as he increased his tempo, riding the sparking pleasure zinging up his spine.

A cool wind broke over them, whipping around the bed and chilling the sweat building on his skin.

Atlas gasped, green eyes bright in his face. He stared up at Gavin, eyes hungry, looking from his face to the vortex building around them. With every undulation of Gavin's hips the funnel grew tighter, wrapping them in the wind's caress as pleasure built and built.

On a final thrust down, Gavin gasped, orgasm rocketing through him and cock spasming as he spilled hot and thick all over Atlas's belly. Gavin slumped forward as Atlas surged up, wrapping Gavin in his arms and flipping them without ever severing their connection. He claimed Gavin's mouth in a fierce kiss and thrust deep inside, stilling as he came.

The wind quieted.

Panting, Gavin ran his hands through Atlas's dark hair and down his back. He hummed, satisfaction making his bones warm and his thoughts syrupy.

Lifting his head from where he'd dropped it on Gavin's collarbone, Atlas looked up at him and smiled. "I think you're going to be great at this mage thing."

FLAMES DANCED IN THE PIT AT THE CENTER OF THE CIRCULAR room. Violet and Fred had conjured big, comfy couches from somewhere and set them to bracket the fire on all sides.

Gavin watched the flames and rested against Atlas's side. Charlotte sat on his other side talking to Violet. The rest of the mages and Fred were spread over the other couches.

In celebration of his becoming a mage and his air element, Fred insisted they'd needed a party. They'd had pizza, beer, and now Lark and Pike were skewering marshmallows to make smores. It had been a fun evening. Gavin leaned more fully against Atlas, enjoying the feeling of his strong arm draped around his shoulders.

"I'm sorry Kerak wasn't able to make it," Atlas said quietly.

Gavin tilted his head back enough to meet his gaze. "It's okay. He said he needed to stay with Reid for the time being. Which I get." He rested his hand on Atlas's thigh. "If you needed me, I wouldn't be anywhere else."

Warmth—more potent than any fire—filled Atlas's gaze. He pressed a kiss to Gavin's forehead before resting his own against it. "Neither would I."

Gavin took it for the vow it was. He'd learn to fully control his power. He'd learn how to be an effective mage and protector for other carriers like him. And he'd do it all with Atlas at his side.

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