

Magical Moonlight

Magical Moonlight

by ER Bryant

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ISBN: 978-0-557-04351-4

DEDICATION:

To Bob - my best friend

AKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

In no specific order, because my mind is like that -

I Ryon for the encouragement - Judy for being my favorite idea girl and researcher - Rob for keeping me sane - Bill for web site favors - Shawn Postoff for encouragement.

Borrowing heavily from my life and that of friends and family, not to mention 5 years of Queer as Folk, the US television that gave me the inspiration to begin writing about all the friends and family who seemed to jump out at from the television screen, I bow down in supplication. You have no idea what you unleashed.

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Falling for each other was easy for Aiden and Liam, for after all it was foretold. Living their lives without revealing the secret of their heritage to the humans around them, well that was another thing altogether.

CHAPTER 1

Vancouver in the spring sparkled. The winter rains cleared the air and cleaned the city streets.

In the foyer of the Museum of Anthropology, at the University of British Columbia, Liam Taylor, sat with his back to a wall, sketchbook propped on his knees, staring at the larger than life carving of Raven and the First Men. The carving had been created by Bill Reid out of a laminated piece of yellow cedar many years earlier. He often found himself sitting in the same spot, slightly hidden by a stone bench, bothering no one, pretending to sketch, as he pondered the carving. Were the legends true? Did Raven really open a giant clamshell and let out the Wahjee and the humans to fill the earth? Or, had they all been Wahjee once and had Raven taken away the human's powers as a punishment for going to the dark side of life, giving them over to Crow, Raven's cousin, to watch and guard.

It made as much sense as anything else he'd been told. Even more sense than some of the Wahjee

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legends that tended to be filled with innuendo and half voiced truths, told by old men with bitter voices, for the Wahjee were a matriarchal society.

While Liam contemplated the origin of human and Wahjee life, not too far away as the raven flies, in a west side diner a meeting was about to take place. The diner was situated on a busy corner of Davie Street and it was here in the heart of gay, as the residents referred to the area, that Aiden Mac Ruaidhri strolled in, his well-practiced smirk firmly in place. "What are you reading Danny?" Aiden asked as he slipped into his usual booth at the back, making sure his auburn hair gleamed under the harsh lighting. Hamburger Mary's was not known for its ambiance, but rather for its lack of such a thing.

Lisa, the surrogate mom to dozens of gay men and women, was standing near the kitchen having an animated conversation with Toby, one of the servers. Aiden signaled Lisa for a coffee only to receive a one-finger salute in return, although he knew a coffee would appear soon.

"It's a new comic book. This is the first issue. The graphics are amazing and the storyline isn't all that bad either. It's about these people called Wahjee. They're kind of like wizards or sorcerers or something. They live among us here on earth; no one knows who they are. I mean shit Aiden you could be a Wahjee." Daniel grinned. "And I'd never know. 'cause you'd be like secretive and stuff."

Aiden couldn't believe what he was hearing. He reached over and grabbed the comic book out of his

old friend's hand. The inside cover credited the artwork and story-line to Liam fucking Taylor. He should have known.

"Give that back Aiden. You're bending the pages." Daniel reached for his comic only to have Aiden pull it back from him.

"You've probably bought ten if it's a first issue." Aiden said knowing his friend. He wanted to take the comic back to his apartment and read it. That little shit Taylor was going to be in so much trouble with council when they found out what he'd done.

Aiden tucked the comic into his inside jacket pocket while sugaring his coffee. He used a small glimmer spell to change the subject. Something he never liked to do, use his magic for himself. While he let his friend prattle on about nothing that interested him, Aiden thought back to his school years when he'd first met Daniel.

Daniel had been his assignment. He had to befriend a full-blooded human and learn to live completely as a human while still continuing to attend the School of Magycs. Hidden in the attic rooms of a well-known Vancouver private school, St. Georges. Aiden had loved the whole mystery of attending a school that looked like a castle. It was at that school he'd met Liam fucking Taylor, the little brat with a head of red blond curls and eyes that were sometimes blue and sometimes violet, son of the headmaster, spoiled rotten, little suck up that he was. Despite the difference in their ages, damn near twelve years, he

was more often than not, paired up with Taylor just because the kid all but radiated magic.

Apparently their magic was compatible or some such shit. The kid had it all but oozing out of his pores due to a genetic anomaly and Aiden had much the same only more controlled. He'd always been more controlled. In fact while his magic and abilities were similar to Liam's, no one had known until he'd reached puberty he'd been so in control. It was something that had piqued the interest of those in charge. It wasn't mentioned, but it was going to be watched carefully.

"So are we going to The Odyssey tonight or what?" Daniel asked. "I told the guys to meet us there."

"Yeah I could use a good blow job or ten." Aiden drawled. "Not that I expect more than mediocre, but you never know what the night might bring."

"Right." Daniel snorted, already forgetting his comic book, just interested in what the night might bring. Aiden had always been popular and his popularity often rubbed off on the friends who tagged along.

It was almost eleven when they headed over to the dance club. Aiden had a feeling that midnight was going to change his life. He didn't know why, but it was something he could feel deep inside of him. Shaking off any premonitions that might have snuck into his brain, Aiden entered The Odyssey and let the throbbing music sink into his body just as he let the smells of men in lust, filter through to his libido.

Bob and Evan were waiting on the catwalk for the arrival of Aiden and Daniel. Bob had a look in his eye that he rarely let be seen; it was almost predatory as he searched the crowd for his quarry, Aiden Mac Ruaidhri. He was feeling lucky, perhaps tonight Aiden would let him get close.

Evan spotted them first. He stood on his toes and waved, showing off his body jewelry, his tall thin body was dressed in a sheer white tummy top over skintight leather trousers. It was like a neon beacon to the sardonic man who nodded his acknowledgement at their location. "Aiden is looking good tonight, isn't he Bobby?" Evan asked.

"He looks the same as he always does." Bob turned to the bar and ordered another beer. He wanted to keep up the pretense that he was quenching his thirst after a bout on the dance floor. It fooled no one, least of all Aiden or Daniel. Bob had once again given up before he made a move on Aiden and risking ridicule, preferring to keep his fantasies just that, a fantasy to be taken out in the dark of his lonely nights.

There was something about Bob that set him apart from the others, yet he was always there, always around watching and listening. In fact he was around so much that he had become almost invisible to them much like an old dog. And that's the way he liked it. Bob liked to think he blended in, but he was just that little bit older and dressed just a little bit like his father, to really blend with the stripped to the waist, well muscled dancing boys.

"Ev, Robert." Aiden drawled as he signaled for a beer. "How's tricks?" the smirk on his face told them he didn't really expect an answer. He claimed his drink and drained it. "Later boys, I see something interesting on the dance floor."

They watched like some kind of Greek chorus as he stalked down the stairs, his walk that of a panther, moving effortlessly through the crowded jungle of men. He found his prey and as usual, all he needed to do was stare into the man's eyes to have him follow him into the backroom.

"How the fuck does he do that?" Daniel asked, and not for the first time.

"Honey, if I knew I'd be down there giving lessons." Evan grinned. "I'm going to hit the old dance floor, Bobby do you want to join me?"

"Not now Ev." Bob pretended interest in his beer. "Daniel, why don't you dance with him?"

"I was just going to suggest it." Daniel grinned up at his friend. "Maybe this'll be our lucky night Ev."

It was almost midnight when Daniel went looking for Aiden. He had to work tomorrow, hell they all had to work in the morning. If he didn't start Aiden moving toward the exit now they'd never get home. "Aiden, hurry up." He said when he found his friend getting his dick sucked in the back ally.

Aiden smirked, though he pushed the trick away who had been administering to his cock and zipped up. The blowjob wasn't worth the aggravation he'd get from Daniel. There were times when he'd love to turn him into a toad or something. They came out of

the ally, walking a few feet to the bottom of the stairs that led back inside, when he looked over and saw him. If it wasn't the elusive Liam fucking Taylor, all grown up, untamed golden red curls and everything.

Their eyes met and Liam knew Aiden had recognized him. He threw down his cigarette that was more for a show of bravado than for the nicotine and continued to lean against a parking meter. He thought it was rather a romantic touch and he let mist roll in around him, framing him under the streetlights. Even with the harsh sodium vapor light, it was still an impressive scene as far as Liam was concerned.

Aiden had reached him. He put one hand on the parking meter behind Liam. "Nice touch brat." He whispered. "What the fuck do you want?"

"You." Liam shrugged. "Why not?"

"Go play with your little friends, you can't handle the big boys." Aiden said, but he didn't move away, there was something about Liam that hadn't been there when they attended school. Of course the kid was damn near a baby then.

"Aiden, hurry up, I have to get home. Some of us work you know." It was Daniel whining.

"I could turn him into oh, maybe a rat or something." Liam offered.

Aiden glared at him, took his arm and dragged him over to the Lexus. "Get a ride with Bob. I'm claiming this one." He all but threw Liam into the Lexus and roared off, coming close to running over Daniel's toes.

Liam threw back his head and laughed as he gestured with his hand making their seat belts fasten. "Safety first Aiden." He laughed. This was much better than school had ever been.

"Fuck you." Aiden mumbled as he sped toward his apartment. He should have known Taylor would show up. It was the fall solstice and he'd had so many warnings but he'd ignored them all.

"Actually I was hoping you'd fuck me. It is my eighteenth birthday as of ten minutes ago." He grinned at Aiden. "I'm officially a man."

"Why don't you go home and let the family have their little coming of age thing?"

"It isn't until tonight." Liam said, sinking back in the seat with satisfaction. "I promised myself this birthday present the day I first saw you."

"Shit, you were what, two?" Aiden looked at him, eyes wide.

"What can I say, I was precocious." Liam blew him a kiss. He sat forward in his seat and looked out the rain-streaked window. "Are we there yet?" he asked.

"Yes," Aiden slammed into his parking space with a slide and squeal of brakes. "Now get your ass up stairs. I want to discuss this little piece of crap with you." He pulled out the comic and waved it in the air.

"Oh that." Liam shrugged. "I rather liked drawing it. Did you notice that the hero has a striking resemblance to you?"

"I haven't read it yet. But I've had a brief run down. Are you completely out of your fucking mind?"

"And the name Fury, suits you too." Liam grinned and hopped from the car. "Cause you're sure infuriated." He ran up to the door that opened without him touching it. "Well are you coming in out of the rain or not?" he asked sweetly.

Aiden locked the Lexus and headed for his building. This night wasn't shaping up the way he'd planned when he'd headed to Hamburger Mary's earlier. He let himself through the door and walked to the elevator where Liam was waiting somewhat impatiently for him. He was all but bouncing up and down on his toes with excitement.

"Would you calm the fuck down, you're giving me a nervous itch." Aiden grumbled, not surprised when the elevator rose swiftly to the top floor without either of them touching the controls.

Liam was inside his apartment touching things and generally being nosy within seconds of the elevator stopping. "This place is so cool." Liam said, taking off his leather jacket and shrugging out of his blue jeans and tee shirt. He'd already kicked his sneakers off just inside the door.

"Will you keep your damn clothes on." Aiden said through clenched teeth. "I'm not fucking you."

"You have to; it's my birthday and you're what I want for my birthday." Liam grinned. "Do you have any cold water, I'm thirsty."

"In the fridge, get it yourself." Aiden stomped toward his bedroom. But when he reached it Liam was in front of him all naked and shiny like a fresh new penny. His eyes were entreating with a look that

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would be better served if he were a spaniel. "Liam." Aiden began as he waved the crumpled comic book in the air.

"Aiden." Liam breathed. "It's my birthday." And Aiden's shirt came off. "Please." His pants puddled at his feet. Liam leaned forward. "One kiss, you can't say no to one kiss."

"Ahhhh Brat, yes I can." And Liam found himself on his back on the bed. Aiden's grin was feral. Aiden pounced, he was in panther mode and Liam, and well Liam was a snack.

"This is about twenty times a hundred wrong, but what the fuck." Aiden mumbled as his lips claimed the virginal ones that pouted up at him. Blue neon flickered on with the first touch of their lips. Aiden began to trail kisses down Liam's torso, enjoying the flickering sparks he was making as his lips contacted skin that had never before been kissed. It was everything he could have imagined and made even more delicious by the utter wrongness of the seduction. Liam Taylor after all, was meant for far greater things than Aiden Mac Ruaidhri ever had been. And the highest position in the Wahjee hierarchy was to be maintained by one pure of body and mind and that meant virginal, no sex, no ass plowing, no touching with the big bad Mac Ruaidhri cock. Aiden grinned as his mouth sought Liam's entrance.

The phone rang.....and rang.....and rang.

"Uh Aiden, the phone." Liam panted, barely able to speak.

"I don't want any phone." Aiden mumbled. "Just you."

His cell phone began to vibrate in chorus with the landline. "GREAT FUCKING BALLS OF HELL." He said leaping off of Liam and shouted into the receiver. "WHAT DO YOU WANT, I'M FUCKING BUSY?" he looked at Liam, "Or is that busy fucking?"

"Asshole, Vanessa's in the hospital. She's making me call you, the baby is coming." Rosalie gritted her teeth as she spoke. "Apparently she wants you to see the baby." She hung up before Aiden could say anything else.

"Aiden, uh Vanessa, she's Wahjee?" Liam asked.

"No. Human."

"Uh Aiden, what part of the 'don't fuck the humans and procreate' didn't you understand?"

"I didn't fuck her." Aiden grinned. "It doesn't count if you jerk off in a cup."

"Yeah, right, I'll mention that to the High Council when they're cutting your balls off. I'm sure they'll get the whole jerking off in a cup versus squirting up her twat difference." Liam drawled. "This is one fucked up birthday. I suppose we have to go to the hospital now."

"We don't have to do bugger all. I'm going to the hospital." Aiden was looking for his clothes only to find that Liam had made sure the two of them were dressed. "Good trick, you should show me how do that. It would save a lot of time." He hid the fact that he was uneasy. What had been almost a compulsion

nine months before had in fact been wrong and he knew it. If he'd been out of his mind, there might be an excuse, but human alcohol didn't affect Wahjee, he drank because it was expected of him and he kind of liked the tingle and burn in his mouth and throat. No he'd done this thing all by himself with no help from his friends. He was fucked.

"Don't you do any magic?" Liam asked. He had them in the elevator now and it was plunging quickly to the fifth depth of hell as far as Aiden was concerned.

"No, and would you stop fucking with the elevator; I think I pissed my pants." Aiden mumbled, suddenly in the driver's seat of the Lexus.

"God damn, you're a worse drama queen than that little human shit you hang around with." Liam said, getting in beside him.

"Speaking of which, we have to pick up Danny. Call him will you."

"I'm sooooo not speaking to him." Liam looked disgusted. "I'll dial though, you talk."

Aiden explained to Daniel what had happened and by the time he finished, they were in front of Daniel's apartment. "Can you get him out here without him having a stroke?" Aiden asked, already seeing the advantage of using Liam's magic. After all he couldn't get into trouble if he didn't use it for himself. Or could he? Aiden wasn't sure of the niceties at the moment.

"Yeah, but I'd rather he had a stroke." Liam grumbled. Daniel soon found himself standing beside the Lexus and staring into Liam's sparkling blue eyes.

"What's he doing here?" Daniel whined.

"Not sitting in the back with you." Liam smirked "Get in or stay out, I don't care."

Aiden gunned the engine and Daniel jumped into the back seat, not quite sure how he got there, it was all a blur. He glared at the back of Liam's who only laughed. The ride to the hospital was uneventful; all the traffic lights cooperated, turning green when they approached each intersection. As they pulled into the parking lot, Aiden looked at Liam who grinned. They raised their hands in a friendly high five, clapping them together with glee. Daniel glared from the back seat not understanding what was going on with Aiden and this trick he'd picked up.

Aiden and Liam were still riding the high from the fast ride through rain-slicked streets. They raced through the hospital halls, Daniel following, with unerring accuracy to Vanessa's room. Everyone came to a stop when the room was in sight and the gravity of the situation took hold. Aiden placed his hand on the small of Liam's back steering him into the room.

Vanessa was sitting up in bed holding a blue wrapped bundle. "Aiden." She said, her voice soft, shutting out the fact he'd arrived with Daniel and a trick. "Come and meet your son." She held out the baby.

Aiden hesitated for a moment, now it was Liam's turn to urge him forward with a touch to his arm. He

picked up the baby and looked down into his face. Liam watched carefully as the baby looked up at his father, his new born eyes blazed bright green with flashes of gold before morphing back into deep blue, as suited most newborns. Aiden looked at Liam who mouthed 'oh shit' at him, making the older man flush.

"Look Aiden, he's just like his daddy." Liam snickered. "Isn't that special?"

"No kidding." Aiden muttered.

"We're going to call him William." Vanessa began "Isn't that right Billy?"

"His name is Seamus." Liam spoke with authority, causing all eyes to focus on him.

"Of course he's Seamus." Liam continued. He leaned in and whispered to Aiden. "You might save your ass if he's named after your grandfather. 'Cause this sure isn't going to go down good."

"What did you say?" Rosalie demanded of Liam.

"I was just commenting on how much the baby resembles his father." Liam answered back. "Especially his eyes. His grandfather has eyes just like his, Seamus is named for his grandfather." Liam let a small bit of calming magic fill the room, hoping to quell the arguments that were on the tongues of both mothers.

"Babies' eyes all look the same." Rosalie snapped as she took Seamus back from Aiden, returning him to Vanessa. "Ouch" she said, her hand went to her head.

"What's wrong?" Vanessa asked.

"I don't know, I gave you the baby and I suddenly felt a pain in my forehead, like a knife jab." She shook

her head and glared at Aiden as if he had something to do with it.

Seamus smiled up at his father, his grin wide, showing his toothless gums. Aiden shook his head at his son as if cautioning him. "We'd better go." He said to Vanessa and Rosalie. "You need to rest." He leaned down to kiss his son's forehead. "Behave yourself Seamus." He cautioned.

"Aiden, he's only a baby, what can he do?" Vanessa laughed.

"You never know." Aiden smiled wryly as he took Liam by the hand and left the room.

"Aiden, where're ya going?" Daniel asked.

"Home."

"I got a couple of pictures of you and the baby." He ran to catch up, Aiden and Liam were moving quickly toward the exit. "Why's he here?" he asked again.

"We'll drop you off at your place. Thanks for coming Danny." Aiden turned to his friend. "Give me your camera, I'll download the pictures." He wasn't going to take the chance that Shay's eyes would glow on the picture, or worse. Newborn Wahjee didn't always look the way they were perceived in person when filmed. And Seamus Mac Ruaidhri was more than Wahjee, he was Zyndaix and forbidden.

"Aiden, you did manage to get some lessons in during school didn't you?" Liam asked. "I mean, I heard that you spent most of your school years pretty much out of it, between drinking, drugs and partying.

Of course all that shit isn't hard on Wahjee, but you sure are a great faker."

"What the fuck do you know about it? You weren't even around when we were in school." Daniel roiled at Liam. "Aiden had a bad home life. If he acted out after school, well he deserved it."

"Wipe his ass too, do you?" Liam snarked back.

"Now boys, play nice." Aiden pinched the back of Liam's neck. "Yes, I paid attention in school and after school as well. I just temporarily forgot that Wahjee breed true. I was high at the time I agreed to jerk off in the cup." But he hadn't been and Liam knew it. The last was whispered quietly in Liam's ear and not heard by Daniel. "At least I haven't written and illustrated no less, the life and times of the Wahjee, including that little shit Zane."

Liam shook him off. "It's my birthday, shut the fuck up about that." His words were hissed and his eyes gave off sizzling flashes of burning sparks. Aiden jumped back away from any damage Liam might do to him. He'd forgotten that Liam had inherited the ability to channel the fire element, which included electricity when fire didn't do the job of intimidating.

"Still the spit fire you were when you were two."

Aiden laughed and pulled him in for a quick kiss. "You drive Danny, Liam and I have things to discuss in the back seat."

"Yeah, right." Daniel said, but took the keys. It was what he usually ended up doing when Aiden picked up tricks. He waited until they were settled

before starting the Lexus and roaring off into the traffic.

"Careful Danny, if you hurt the Lexus I might not be responsible for what Liam might do to you." Aiden snickered. "He's funny about his toys and mine."

"You don't even fucking know him." Daniel spat. "You just met him tonight."

"I met him when he was two. My how he's grown." Aiden reached for the front of Liam's pants.

"Did you take something?" Liam hissed.

Daniel attempted to watch the back seat antics from his rear view mirror, "What did you say?" he asked, his voice slightly hysterical.

"I'm high on Witch Boy." Aiden sang out, burying his head in Liam's neck.

"Fuck Aiden, you idiot." Daniel looked at his friend through the rear view mirror. He hoped they'd get to Aiden's place quickly. Aiden's head sank from view as he decided to look up at Liam from his lap. And if Liam's dick fell into his mouth, well that was even better.

He was nuzzling at the red head's crotch when the Lexus suddenly veered from one side of the road to the other.

"Holy fuck what was *that*?" Daniel asked, barely getting the vehicle under control.

"FUCK DANIEL." Aiden's sat up and glared at his friend. "What in hell do you think you're doing? Trying to kill us?"

"You should have seen it. It was the biggest fucking dog you've ever seen and it was walking on

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its back legs." Daniel was pale and shaking. "It jumped right out at me. I thought it was going to jump on the Lexus."

Aiden looked at Liam who shrugged in an attempt to look innocent.

"Maybe it's you who've had too many drugs." Liam snickered. "Cause you just described a werewolf and everyone knows they're just comic book characters."

"I know what I saw." Daniel said, shaking so much he had to pull over. "Give me a minute. You guys didn't see his red eyes, or those teeth, they were like knife blades."

This time when Aiden pulled Liam over to chew on his neck, he managed to hiss into Liam's ear. "Think you're pretty damn funny don't you, making him see something like that?"

"All's fair in love and war." Liam said his voice smug. "I want everything to be perfect when we make love."

"Fuck, when we fuck." Aiden said, resigning himself to the inevitable. "Danny, get driving. I have to work in a couple of hours."

"I can't move." Daniel said. "I didn't know there were werewolves in Vancouver."

"Hey, maybe Vancouver is a hell mouth like Sunnydale." Liam piped up.

"Sunnydale is a figment of Josh Whedon's imagination." Aiden drawled.

"It could happen." Liam said. "I mean, what if that comic book Daniel had is a real story."

"How did you know about that comic book?" Daniel asked, turning around to look at them.

"Aiden showed it to me." Liam said with a shrug. "It looks kind of like Vancouver and don't you think Fury looks a lot like Aiden?"

"I never thought about it." Daniel looked at Aiden. "But Fury is always doing things for gays in Vancouver. Aiden just let's them suck his dick or he fucks them."

"Gee it's nice to see you know your friend so well." Liam snorted. "Time to get us back to Aiden's." He waved his hand out of Daniel's sight and the Lexus began to move, Daniel driving attentively.

"What part of staying unobtrusive to humans don't you understand?" Aiden whispered as his friend sped through the night.

Daniel soon had them at Aiden's loft. "I'll pick you up in time for work." He said as Aiden and Liam got out of the car.

"Be early, the kid has to go to school." Aiden said just before Daniel left.

"I do not." Liam protested. They were walking to the main door of the Bradley Building.

"Yes you do." Aiden said. "I just remembered, your birthday isn't for another two months so don't give me any shit about it being your birthday. You have to go to school."

"We're still going to fuck though, aren't we?" Liam asked. "Because meeting like this took a hell of

a lot of arranging. I don't want to have wasted my time."

"I should just kick your ass to the curb. I'm going to be in enough trouble with the council about Shay."

"So you might as well fuck me. I mean if you're in trouble anyway, I do have connections with the High Council, considering my dad is the grand wizard."

"Sounds like he's head of the KKK." Aiden muttered, but he opened the door and led Liam to the elevator. "Now where were we?" he asked, one hand on either side of Liam's head, his forehead resting against the red head's. "You do know that I'm not the only one going to get his ass in a sling when I take your virginity?"

Liam shrugged. "I like to live life on the edge. Besides, you're incredibly hot. I marked you as mine when I first saw you fifteen years ago." Liam pulled Aiden's shirt up and placed his fingers against a small heart shaped mark just slightly below the pulse spot on Aiden's throat. It was something Aiden rarely thought of, he'd had it so long. It only pissed him off when it turned fiery red, which rarely happened and then, only in times in severe emotion. He'd learned to ignore it and deny it existed if anyone had the nerve to point it out.

"You did that to me?" Aiden's eyes grew black.

"Yeah, sorry about that. I was only two. How was I supposed to know how to harness my powers?" Liam held out one hand to show Aiden sparks dancing from finger to finger. "I thought love him and zap, you

got hit with my love bite." He looked chagrined. "My mother was really pissed. That's why she took me out of your environment. I think we're supposed to never meet again. I'm not sure. I'm still working out the whole story. No one ever tells me everything."

"And making that comic book is sure to get them to trust you with stuff." Aiden shook his head. He'd heard the rumors as well about him and someone high up. But he'd dismissed them as he did all rumors. "You're lucky I'm in a good mood. It isn't every day I become a father."

Liam opened the elevator gate with magic, letting the two of them back onto the landing. Aiden continued to hold onto his captured boy, though the thought of who had captured whom flashed through his mind.

Before Aiden knew it they were back on his bed, exactly how they'd been when Rosalie had phoned. "The discussion isn't over." He whispered more to himself than to Liam. He could see the copy of Fury, his face blazoned on the front, obvious despite the mask, resting on the floor where he'd thrown it.

Liam's fingers began to trace the outline of Aiden's face, continuing down his body. He let tiny sparks, more heat than pain, come out of the tips of his fingers in an effort to turn the older man away from any negative thoughts he might have.

Aiden growled deep inside of him, he'd never been so turned on in his life. But Liam was a virgin; he had to regain control because despite what

everyone might think, he did care. He cared very much and with Liam, he cared more than usual.

"Stop being a twat and let me show you how to be the man you want to be." Aiden's voice was tender and seductive. He chased the words with soft kisses and gentle bites. He knew he was successful when Liam's back arched with uncontrolled bliss as Aiden's kisses found their goals.

"Condom, you have to use a condom." Liam gasped.

"I plan to." Aiden pulled a condom from the bowl beside the bed. "Put it on me and no sparks. Sparks and latex don't mix."

Liam's fingers shook as he rolled the condom down Aiden's shaft that somehow looked bigger and more dangerous now that he was so close. "I'm nervous." He confessed. He wanted to sound like an adult, but inside he was feeling like he had at two when his eyes had first found the green and gold ones of Aiden.

"I know, it'll get better." Aiden assured him. He opened the tube of lube with one finger, an expert at this game, sure of himself in the role of teacher. "This is going to be cold, you might want to use some of that heat on this part of your body."

Liam's eyes shut, he desperately wanted to watch everything, but his senses were on overload. His body was frantic for the release he knew was coming. He could feel Aiden's fingers, as first one then two, were inserted inside of him. He arched his hips wanting more, needing more of what, he wasn't sure.

Uncertainties rolled through his mind, was he clean, had he brushed his teeth, was he sweating too much.

And Aiden knew. He knew what he was doing, the small heart Liam had placed on his body so many years ago throbbed with a feeling so intense it was hard to ignore. But this was Liam's night. Birthday present or not, this was for Liam and truthfully; it was for him as well.

Taking it slow and easy, Aiden watched as he began to take the virginity of the young man under him. He'd placed Liam's legs on his shoulders, his cock at the entrance of Liam's hole, liking the warmth the lube has assumed once it touched Liam's body. His cock slipped past the first ring of muscle and Liam's eyes popped open in surprise at the sharpness of the pain. Aiden paused, "It's normal." he whispered.

"Deeper, I want more." Liam said, though his eyes said differently. He needed to lose his virginity tonight for a reason he wasn't about to tell Aiden. But it was more painful than he'd realized.

"Relax, let yourself relax and then push out, it'll get better." Aiden bent and kissed Liam's eyes, closing out the pain he saw there. It wasn't long before Liam did as he was instructed and soon Aiden rocked forward and back. His cock enveloped in Liam's warm tightness pulsed and felt better than anything he'd ever felt before.

Liam writhed in pleasure; it was better than any drug he could possibly take, this whole concept of sex.

Magical Moonlight

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The enjoyment Liam was taking in fucking inspired Aiden to greater heights until finally, both of them were cuming in unison, their gasps of pleasure filling the night air.

Aiden collapsed, his breathing ragged. Liam's arms grabbed him and held on tight. "Don't move." He managed to say. "I want to feel it all. To feel everything there is to feel."

"Liam," Aiden paused. "Shut up."

CHAPTER 2

A few hours later, Liam lay awake listening to Aiden sleep. He was tingling all over, doing his best not to spontaneously combust. Not that he'd ever gone combustible, but it was something that had haunted his dreams when he was younger and less sure of himself. He couldn't stop smiling, grinning actually. He hoped he could do better than that, but he suspected he'd be grinning for a long time. The last few hours were amazing, better than amazing.

It was easy to dismiss the pesky problem of one baby warlock, complete with powers and one more than pesky human, complete with built in whine. Especially when one was basking in the afterglow of being thoroughly and completely fucked in more ways than one. His father and the high council were not going to be happy campers. His last fifteen years had been in training to take over his father's position. Father being the euphemism for the man who raised him. He idly wondered if his so called father really had been celibate all these years and if he was still a

virgin. And then the question of just who his real father was and why he had allowed such a prick to raise him drifted through his mind. The thought was quickly dismissed almost as if it hadn't been there. Liam was unaware that he had nothing to do with the questions leaving his mind.

His fingers itched to draw Aiden's likeness in every position. His brain had captured each pose forever to bring up on paper or canvas when the mood struck. There had to be some advantages to being born Wahjee besides the obvious magical ones.

The comic caught his eye, crumpled as it was on the floor next to Aiden. It had been a gamble, the drawing and writing of the thing. But he'd needed to find Aiden and warn him of what was going down in Wahjee circles. He'd tried every other way he could think of to contact the man, but his mother was powerful, her spells were powerful. He'd needed the unusual to get around it. The book was a great idea, plus it was bringing in money, something he hadn't thought about. Not that he needed money, but it was nice to earn some rather than just take it. When the school requested some kind of project that involved a mock publication, Liam knew immediately what he was going to do.

The comic wove the story of Zane and how the high council had destroyed his father before he'd been born. And it told the story of Aiden, of course in a way that didn't reveal all there was to know about the man. But one that did tell the story of a good man with a heart of gold, in the perfect disguise. Liam thought

of the second issue he'd write and illustrate. Perhaps it was time for Fury to meet Liam and Shay on the pulp pages and in living color.

"Stop thinking and go to sleep." Aiden mumbled, rolling over to pull the younger man into a warm tight embrace. "You'd better have been thinking of a way to explain that stupid comic book, or how many times you're going to blow me in the shower."

"In your dreams, Wahjee boy." Liam snickered, but his eyes closed and he was soon sleeping, whether from his own exhaustion or perhaps a certain Wahjee wizard who might have planted the suggestion.

Morning came too fast for both Aiden and Liam. It was only the realization that Liam was snuggled close to him that brought Aiden awake. Liam didn't want to wake up. He loved being held by Aiden. It had been so long since he'd had close contact with another person, he'd forgotten how nice the feeling was.

"Fuck, I have a son." Aiden sat up abruptly. "I'm so in shit."

"No kidding." Liam said, still grinning. "Come on, we need to shower. Your friend is on his way here."

"How do you know?" Aiden asked. "Don't answer, I don't want to know."

"Then don't ask." Liam stepped into the shower; he'd turned it on when they were just getting out of bed. "Now isn't this nice?" He asked letting the water, adjusted to the perfect temperature, wash over his face, moving slightly to let Aiden get wet as well.

"It is nice." Aiden said, reaching for a condom.
"Now turn around, we're going to have the next lesson, shower sex 101."

"Nice." Liam grinned, turning around.

Daniel couldn't believe his eyes when he got up to the blaring of Aiden's car alarm. The whole side of Lexus had been caved in, large hairy foot shapes stood out in the dust and the headlights broken. What scared him more than anything, were the very obvious claw marks that raked the hood, as if something, large, heavy and very pissed had climbed the car. Fucking Werewolf. He was so going to never drive alone at night. And walking at night, forget it. Aiden wasn't going to be happy. The anticipation of Aiden's wrath made him drive slower than usual toward his friend's house. It allowed Aiden and Liam to discover the joys of shower sex before emerging wet and sated from the bathroom.

"Danny." Aiden said when the door to the loft opened.

"Right on time." Liam muttered, wiggling his ass so Aiden would remember what he'd been doing.

"What's he still doing here?" Daniel asked.

"I told you, we're taking him to school." Aiden smirked and then kissed the end of Liam's nose.

"Well hurry up, I don't want to be late for work."
Daniel grumbled, not liking how at home Liam appeared.

"Hey it's okay, my broom is parked at the corner." Liam joked, only to have his ass smacked by Aiden.

"In the Lexus, witch boy." Aiden muttered.

"Wizard." Liam breathed as he swished ahead of Aiden and his friend.

"You sure got yourself a weird one this time." Daniel shook his head. "Good luck on shaking him. He seems kind of deranged every time he looks at you."

"Maybe I don't want to shake him." Aiden said, enjoying what he was seeing. The heart shape on his neck throbbed with pleasure/pain.

Liam, reaching the front door in the lobby first, saw Aiden's Lexus. He giggled that his spell had worked so well. Without thinking, he mumbled a few words and the Lexus was back in the same pristine shape it had been in when Daniel had left them last night. No reason to let his new found lover know he'd been a brat.

Aiden held the door for Daniel. He stepped into the fresh air and smiled. Danny must have washed the Lexus; it shone in the morning sunlight. He held out his hand for the keys.

"Aiden, about your Lexus. I couldn't help it. I mean Werewolves, who even knew they existed."

"Danny, you're babbling." Aiden unlocked the doors. "Back seat, witch boy." He said as he jumped behind the steering wheel. "Get in Danny, I'm not going to be late because you're on the rag."

"B..bb..Aiden." Daniel stuttered, afraid to touch the Lexus's door handle.

"Cat got your brain Daniel?" Liam smirked. "I mean tongue." He leaned forward to kiss Aiden's ear.

"Seriously Aiden, don't take me to school. I can get dropped off anywhere."

"I like to make sure all my red head boy ass tricks get to school on time." He leaned over and opened the door. "Get the fuck in Danny."

Daniel got in, his whole body shaking. "Aiden, your car. I was sure it was...." His voice trailed off.

"My car was what? Out of gas, dirty?" Aiden looked at his friend puzzled. He turned it on and threw it in gear, roaring out into the morning traffic. Since the top of the Lexus was down there was no point in carrying on any kind of conversation. Aiden and Liam exchanged looks in the rearview mirror. It didn't take a rocket scientist to know that Liam had something to do with whatever happened to the Lexus. The red head was much too smug sitting in the rear seat, his short red curls unruffled despite the wind.

He winced when Aiden turned down the street to The Royal. He was in his senior year and he hated every second he had to be there. But it was a Wahjee requirement that all of their children be schooled in human schools, while at the same time attending private Wahjee academies after school and on weekends. They all did it, including Aiden, though his school had not been as upper crust as the Royal.

The one major rule that could never be broken no matter what provocation was the rule about using magic or any inborn abilities while on the school grounds. It was a rule that was strictly enforced on all

Wahjee children and not one to be taken lightly even by the most rebellious.

"Gee thanks for the ride." Liam said as he got out of the Lexus.

"No problem, little boy." Aiden's voice was a caress.

"When will I see you again?" Liam asked. "Tonight?"

"I thought you had something else to do tonight." Aiden smirked, "Oh right, someone was telling a little fib about his birthday." He leaned in and kissed Liam. "You'll see me in your dreams witch boy."

Liam flushed with a combination of embarrassment and pleasure. He turned to run into the school, ignoring the catcalls of his fellow students.

Aiden was pissed that he'd allowed himself to out the boy just for the sake of claiming his lips once more. Without thinking, he raised his hand and instantly all the ones yelling obscenities at Liam became silent, just before they began to vomit up their breakfasts. It was a mean trick, but one that would give them something other than Liam to think about. Liam might not be able to defend himself, but nothing was stopping Aiden. He'd long ago left school.

Daniel didn't notice anything. He was still upset about his mistake regarding the Lexus. He'd never before had hallucinations like this. He must have ingested something; maybe there was something in the juice at home. He had after all, taken a trick home last night. Maybe the bastard had slipped something in his juice after Aiden had called to go to the hospital.

When he saw that Aiden was close to London Drugs he said. "Wait, let me out here. I. I don't want anyone to know I'm gay." For some reason thinking that Liam's outing was going to continue, though Aiden had driven him to work hundred's of times.

"Getting a ride in a Lexus with a male friend makes you gay?" Aiden put his head back and roared with laughter. "You're pathetic Danny." He slammed on his brakes. "Out you go, your queer friend doesn't want to get too close to London Drugs." he continued to laugh at Daniel's outrage at having to walk three more blocks.

At the school, Liam ran inside. He had only minutes to appear in his uniform, so he ducked inside the boy's washroom to appear seconds later dressed in a freshly pressed uniform. He knew it was wrong, but after the night he'd had, nothing mattered to him. Aiden Mac Ruaidhri was worth any kind of shit he might get into with his father.

"Liam, Liam, wait up." He looked over to his friend Dakota who was running down the hall.

"Hey Dakota." He smiled at her; she was one of the few people he could count on as a friend.

"Your mom is looking for you." She said as she checked over her shoulder. "She said you were out all night."

"My mom is right." He grinned. "Do I look any different?" he turned around.

"Oh my gawd, you did it." She squealed and then clapped her both hands over her mouth. "Your mom is going to be sooooo pissed." Dakota was human, but

she'd been Liam's friend long enough to have heard endless lectures about keeping himself pure in all aspects, body and mind. Dakota figured it was because she and Liam were so close and spent a lot of time in either her bedroom or his.

"Only if you tell her." He said as he turned the lock on his locker, scooping out his backpack. "I can't talk now, I have history class. I'll meet you at lunch."

"Okay, but what am I going to tell your mother. She always manages to find me. I don't know why she can never find you."

"It's a mystery." He smirked. "See you at lunch."

History class was more boring than usual. Liam was almost holding his breath as he waited for the bell to ring signaling that the class had ended. He had an open period next that lasted slightly more than an hour. There would be enough time, if he was fast, to fix something. Something he should have done last night but in his excited anticipation of losing his virginity, he'd forgotten.

The problem was, once in school it was next to impossible to skip out. Both The Royal Academy and the Wahjee council had seen to that. He was going to have to enlist the aid of his human friend Dakota without her realizing he was Wahjee. It was a game he'd played with her since he was three. Most Wahjee were assigned a human friend when they hit puberty like Aiden had been. In Liam's case, because of his inborn abilities, he'd been paired with Dakota at the age three. He often wondered if she was his Wah cat, she certainly purred when she was happy.

It helped to teach them to live with humans without detection. It was easy to fool strangers, but much harder to fool a close companion and friend.

Liam headed for room 203, Dakota's English Lit class. He walked past twice before she noticed and asked to be excused to go to the bathroom.

"Liam, what are you doing?" Dakota whispered as they walked quickly down the hall.

"I need to get out of here. I'll be back by lunch; we can meet by the big tree. But I have to have a diversion to get out of here. You know how they watch the entrances."

"What do you want me to do?" she looked at him. "Is this because of last night? Was he really that good? Because you can get into big trouble."

"It is because of last night." He said, "I just need to do this."

"Okay, but be back here at noon."

"Thanks Dakota, I owe you one." Liam gave her a quick hug and she playfully punched him on his shoulder having long given up any hope of there being more than friendship between them.

"Damn right you do." She said as she disappeared into the girl's bathroom. She counted to fifty, knowing Liam would ready to make his move through the door by then. Stealing herself for the drama that would follow, Dakota began to scream, working herself into hysteria knowing it wouldn't be long before the office staff would hear her and come running, leaving the monitors on the door unattended.

The moment Liam heard Dakota start to scream; he counted to five and then slipped through the main door, opening it just barely enough not to snag his uniform. Once outside the building he was able to duck behind a tree the minute he stepped off the school grounds. Using magic, something he couldn't do inside, he ended up near Saint Paul's hospital. It didn't take much effort to find him outside of Vanessa's room. He was in time, Vanessa was dressed and holding her son. Rosalie was nowhere to be seen.

"Hey." He said stepping inside. "I'm Liam from last night. I wanted to see the baby again. Is he alright?"

"Of course, Liam." Vanessa was as polite as her upbringing had taught her. But she had no idea why one of Aiden's tricks wanted to see the baby. "You helped name Seamus."

"It's a good name," he said with a smile that disarmed her. "He's beautiful."

"He is, isn't he"? She smiled down at her son.

"Can I hold him for a minute?" Liam asked in his most entreaty manner.

"Just for a minute, we're getting ready to go home." Vanessa handed Liam her baby.

Rosalie walked in, recognizing Liam. She was about to say something when Vanessa asked her a question about the check out time. They began to discuss the homecoming so Liam took the opportunity to do what he had come to do.

"Shay," he said, his voice pitched so only the baby could hear him. "I know you're all excited about

being born into this world again. But you've been born to a human family. Your daddy is Wahjee, but your mommies are human. I'm going to put a binding spell on you until you're just a bit older and can control your urges to use your talents." He leaned down and placed a kiss on the baby's forehead, muttering the words of the spell. And then to bind Shay to him so that he would forever be the boy's protector, Liam placed a small almost imperceptible heart shaped mark, identical to his father's, just below his pulse point. Vanessa would notice, but she'd think it was something Aiden had passed on to his son. "From this point on, you are under my care and protection from all that is human and any who are Wahjee who wish you harm."

The baby looked up at Liam, his eyes flashed like they had the night before, only this time they settled back into baby mode faster than ever. He was human as far as anyone, human or Wahjee was concerned and therefore safe for now from the high council's detection. And if Shay was safe, Aiden was as well, at least for now. Liam had accomplished what he'd set out to do.

He turned to the two women. "Thanks for letting me see the baby again. He's the youngest human I've ever seen." He handed Shay to Rosalie. "You know if you ever need a babysitter, I'm your man. I have a younger sister so I know what to do."

"We'll keep that in mind." Rosalie said, puzzled about Liam but choosing not to question anything this morning.

Liam quickly left the room. He didn't dare use any more magic. His parents weren't stupid, they'd figure out eventually that he'd over used. There was always someone willing to tattle. He checked his pockets; he had enough money for bus fare. It was going to take all his left over time to make it back to The Royal by bus. Sighing heavily, he resigned himself to the long bus ride as he ran to catch the first of many.

Meanwhile Dakota had calmed down. She had convinced everyone that she'd been chased up onto the sink vanities by a herd of rats. Though most of them thought she was seeing things. After all, no rat would dare enter the hallowed halls of The Royal Academy let alone a herd of them. She was in the nurse's room lying on the cot while they decided what to do with her. Checking her watch, Dakota figured she had about fifteen more minutes to endure the sideways glances of Nurse Sweeny before she could stage a miraculous recovery and meet Liam outside for lunch break.

Liam transferred to the last bus that would let out near his school. It had been interesting traveling by bus rather than by car. He had grown used to driving the little Mazda he'd received for his birthday last year. But he'd left it down near Davie Street last night and hadn't had time to retrieve it.

The lunch hour was in full swing when he stepped off the bus. The small pop he made in the air moving from behind the bus stop to the tree where he was to meet Dakota didn't even register to those who

monitored such things. It was a tiny bit of magic that he hoped would go unnoted. He'd barely sat down with his back to the tree when Dakota appeared with two lunch bags. She threw one to him before sitting down beside him. "You sooooo owe me." She said shaking her head. "They think I'm on something. I had to pee in a cup, how humiliating."

"I really needed to get away." Liam said. "I'll do something nice for you some day I promise."

"Well, are you going to tell me what you were doing?"

"Just had to fix up something." He shrugged. "Hey, you brought cheese sandwiches again."

"What can I say, I'm in a rut." She looked in her bag. "I made us cupcakes." She held out hers triumphantly.

"Cool." He looked at the cupcake. "Rainbow sprinkles, how apropos." He took it and licked off the icing. "I love your cupcakes."

"You just like anything sweet." She laughed. "So are you going to tell me about last night? Was he as good as you thought he'd be?" Dakota knew Liam had been searching for the ideal man to lose his virginity to.

"He was aaaammmmmaaaazing." Liam drawled. "No, really he was better than amazing." He leaned back against the tree. "His son was born last night. I helped to name him."

"His son, I thought he was gay." Dakota looked confused. She handed Liam a cheese sandwich and he began to eat absentmindedly.

"He is, he jerked of in a cup or something." Liam finished the first half of the sandwich.

"Ewwwwwe." Dakota turned up her nose.

"I know, kind of weird, but I guess it worked."

Liam looked away taking inspiration in the clouds.

"I'm going to draw him naked in a thousand different poses. It's like he's a god or something when he's naked."

"How big is he, did it hurt?" she asked, her curiosity aroused.

"You're rude." He giggled. "Yes it hurt and he's big, bigger than I thought. But it was a nice hurt. I can still feel him."

"I'm not sure if that's gross or good." Dakota munched her sandwich. "I can't wait to meet him."

"I went back to the hospital again. That's what I was doing. I wanted to see Shay, did I tell you I named him Seamus, Aiden let me." He sighed. "Shay is going to be famous some day. I can tell."

"You're on glue. Seamus is so not a cool name." She laughed. "Hurry up and eat your lunch, I need some help with my art project."

"Okay." Liam always regenerated in the art room. He was feeling tired from his work out the night before. He could use a boost of energy. "Can you give me a ride to Davie Street after school. I left my car there

"No problem." Dakota stood up. She held out her hand and pulled Liam to his feet.

"Hey Taylor, where'd ya go during spare?" Dakota and Liam turned to where their classmate and self proclaimed enemy stood.

"What's it to you Brad?" Dakota said.

"Oh, Taylor needs his bitch to talk for him." Bradley Chambers chortled to his buddies.

Liam could feel electricity broiling through his body wanting to fry Chambers and his friends into crispy critters. He dampened the feeling down and turned away. But not before smiling sweetly and blowing them a kiss. Something guaranteed to enrage the group who charged forward intent on doing harm to Liam and Dakota.

"In a hurry Mr. Chambers?" Drawled Aiden. He'd been walking into the school intent on finding Liam.

"Who are you, how do you know my name?" Brad asked as he slowed to a stop. There was something almost scary about this man dressed in Armani.

"Bullies are always known." Aiden said. "Closeted ones even more so." He ran a fingertip down the side of Brad's face not quite touching, but close enough that the boy felt the heat from him.

"What's he talking about?" one of the other boys asked.

"I don't know." Brad huffed and turned away from Aiden. It was better to leave now than to continue his confrontation with Liam and Dakota. He wasn't stupid, he knew when to retreat.

Liam watched Brad and his friends leave before he and Dakota walked up to his last night adventure. "Aiden, what are you doing here?"

"You do know that Brad Chambers father is Zane Chambers?" Aiden asked.

"I know."

"Not someone you want to annoy." He looked at Dakota. "I'm Aiden and you must be...?"

"Dakota Stoeder." She said with a blush. "It's nice to meet you Aiden."

"So, why are you here?" Liam asked again.

"I wanted to say thank you. You risked a lot this morning to save my ass."

"Oh, you found out." Liam shrugged. "I didn't mean for you to find out Aiden. I did it because I wanted to, not because of anything else."

"I know that, it makes it even more important to me." He looked away and then back at Liam. "No one has ever done anything like that for me. Ever."

"Oh." Liam smiled up at Aiden. "Hey, can I come over tonight?"

"Don't push your luck witch boy." Aiden purred as he turned around. "Later."

"Why did he call you that?" Dakota asked when Aiden had driven away.

"What?" Liam watched the Lexus turn the corner.

"Witch boy." She laughed.

"Oh, he said I must have put him under a spell or something." Liam shrugged. "It's a gay thing Dakota."

"I think it's kind of cute." Dakota grinned. "It sooooo suits you."

"Freak." He laughed and pulled her into the school. "I thought you needed my expertise."

As he drove back to his office, the captivated Wahjee thought about his morning. Aiden had been surprised to receive the call from Vanessa. She usually didn't call him at work knowing how he felt about that kind of thing. But this morning, once she was home with Shay and Rosalie had left for her job, Vanessa had called.

"Hello Aiden." She began. "Your trick from the night before appeared at the hospital this morning. Do you have any idea why?" her voice was syrupy sweet.

"Who, Liam?" Aiden asked. "He isn't a trick, he's a friend."

"Well whatever he is, he stopped by to see Seamus this morning." She said. "I'm not sure, but our son was a bit different after he left. More baby like."

"Hmm, my son is less than twenty four hours old and his mother is whining that he's like a baby." Aiden laughed out loud. "Good one Vans, are sure you haven't been channeling Rosie?"

"Aiden, it's hard to explain. And Seamus has the same mark on him that you have. A teeny little heart just below his neck."

"He is my son Vanessa, the fact he has a similar birth mark is hardly unusual."

"But I'm sure he didn't have it before. I mean before Liam came."

"Of course he did. I mean how would Liam mark him. I bet you never took your eyes off of them for a second." But Aiden knew, he understood what Liam

had done. He'd put a binding spell on Shay, no doubt to keep his heritage secret as well as his mark binding him to Liam. Aiden touched his fingers to his own mark that bound him to the young man.

"Vans, what do you think of Liam?" Aiden asked, his voice hesitant. "He's young but incredible, don't you think?"

"I'm not sure what you're asking Aiden. He seems very nice if a little strange. He is still in school, you know that don't you? This relationship you've forged between the two of you, well frankly Aiden, it's not right."

"Don't get your knickers in a knot." Aiden said. "Liam and I don't have a relationship; we have a budding friendship perhaps. And the fact he's young in years doesn't mean he's young emotionally. He's a talented artist by the way. I would have thought you'd have seen something in him, something special."

"Aiden I haven't spent ten minutes alone with the boy. All I know is that he seems infatuated with you and he's very good with Seamus."

"There, he can't be all that bad. He obviously has good taste." Aiden huffed. "Don't worry about shit you can't change. I don't."

"You act like you haven't a care in the world, but you have a son now Aiden."

"A son who your partner wants me to give up my rights to."

"Of course, you agreed."

"Well I've changed my mind." Aiden said. And he had changed his mind the moment he'd held his

son. It had nothing to do with the fact that Shay was Wahjee through and through, but it was something else. Something he hadn't expected until he held him in his arms. Something he couldn't explain and wasn't about to explain to Vanessa. And thinking about it, he knew that he had never intended to ever give up any of his parental rights. It wasn't done among the Wahjee. And now that Shay was born, he could finally admit that being Wahjee was his heritage.

"Rosalie isn't going to be very happy." Vanessa began.

"Yes, well that's too fucking bad. Looks Vans, I'm at work. When I'm here I like to actually do work. I'll stop by the house and see you and Shay this evening." Aiden worked hard as a financial adviser and mortgage broker for one of the larger financial institutions in the city. He was one of the top five executives working for the company. Something he was pleased to have accomplished without using any of his Wahjee abilities. Relying instead on good old Irish charm and his genuine intelligence.

"I'm not sure Aiden..." Vanessa began. "Rosalie may have plans."

"Which she can interrupt for the ten minutes I'm seeing my son." Aiden disconnected, finished with the call not caring for the upset he was feeling with the suggestion that he couldn't see Shay when he wished.

He worked for another few minutes and then, not being able to stand it, got up to leave for lunch. Usually he stayed at his desk but today he needed to see Liam. As he drove to the school for the second

time that day, Aiden wondered just when seeing golden red curls and laughing violet eyes, had become so important to his day.

CHAPTER 3

Later that day, Liam and Dakota left school as soon as the bell rang. They wanted to avoid Brad and his friends at all costs. The last confrontation had ended in a week's worth of detentions.

"I'll drive you to Davie Street, but can we stop and get something to eat?"

"Sure, I parked near Hamburger Mary's. I had a great burger there last night."

"I wonder if they have milk shakes?" Dakota asked, getting in her car. "Hurry up; I'm starving."

"You're always starving," Liam laughed. "I'll share a milkshake and burger with you."

"And fries. We need fries," she laughed.

It didn't take long to find Liam's car and stash his school bag. He and Dakota walked the half a block to Hamburger Mary's, both of them thrilled to be walking on the colorful street.

"Here it is," Liam pulled open the door of the diner and held it for Dakota.

"Come on in kids and have a seat. I'll be with you in a minute," Tanya called from the rear of the diner where she was busy filling sugar containers.

Dakota and Liam sat at the counter near Tanya. "We know what we want," Liam said. "Take your time."

"Oh, this isn't rocket science kids, but it needs to be done before the dinner rush. I'm Tanya by the way."

"I'm Liam, and this is my friend Dakota."

"I love your costumes," Tanya grinned.

"They aren't costumes," Dakota giggled. She was trying to decide if Tanya was male or female. "We just got out of school, and we're starving to death." The server was dressed for success in a 1950s style waitress dress, complete with perky hat, white nurse's shoes, and white nylon stockings.

"Well then, I'd better feed you," Tanya grinned. "You look like a bacon cheeseburger and fries kind of girl."

"And a strawberry shake," Dakota grinned. "We're sharing." She cocked her head, "Where do you get white nylons these days?"

"Sweetie, down here you can buy pretty much anything you want," Tanya laughed and twirled around. "These ones are seamless, but I have ones with seams too. I get them off eBay actually, but I think there's a store two blocks over that sells them, probably from their original stock. The owner is about a thousand years old."

"Sharing is good," Tanya said, writing up their order. "I'll have the burger cut in two. You'll need lots of room for our fries. They're real potatoes, not those frozen things."

"Hey, where's Ma?" Daniel breezed in the door, interrupting Tanya and ignoring the kids at the counter.

"Hi, Daniel. She stepped out to get her nails done," Tanya called as she headed for the kitchen. "Have a seat; I'll get your usual."

"If it isn't Danny, Aiden's bestest friend in the whole world," Liam drawled, turning around on his stool.

"Don't call me Danny." Daniel glared, sitting in the back booth. "What the fuck are you doing here?"

"Slumming?" Liam asked.

"Asshole," Daniel mumbled, reaching for a discarded newspaper, hoping to ignore Liam.

"Who is that?" Dakota whispered.

"He's Aiden's friend. He has a thing for Aiden; I can tell. He was sure pissed that we were together last night. All night." The last he said in a voice loud enough to make sure Daniel heard it.

"Don't flatter yourself kid; you're only a fuck to Aiden. He does this all the time." Daniel pretended interest in the paper he'd grabbed.

"But Liam, Aiden—" Dakota was going to ask about Aiden coming to the school earlier.

"Dak, he wouldn't want anyone to know that," Liam whispered to his friend. "It's between us." He

looked up as Tanya delivered their food. "Thanks Tanya. It looks good."

"I brought two glasses for the milkshake," Tanya said, placing the burger and fries between them as well as giving each one a side plate and silverware. "Enjoy."

"Thank you, Tanya," Dakota said as she reached for a fry."

Liam and Dakota ate their after school snack, talking in the code that two friends develop over a long relationship and giggling over nothing. Every now and then, Tanya would join them. All of them ignored Daniel's glares from the corner.

Finally finished, Liam paid the bill while Dakota leaned over the counter. "Tanya, your eyelashes are amazing," she whispered, having finally decided that Tanya was a man dressed as a woman.

"Thanks sweetie; I do try my best." Tanya looked at Dakota. "I love the uniform."

Dakota giggled. "It's kind of cool. Doesn't Liam look hot in his?"

"Not bad, but you look pretty hot in yours as well." Tanya winked, making Dakota giggle again.

"Come on, Dakota, stop flirting with Tanya. It's time to go," Liam called from the front door.

"Wait," Tanya called. "I want to ask you a favor."

"Sure." Liam turned back, intrigued.

Tanya pulled out her large purse from behind the counter. "I bought this the other day. You are the Liam Taylor who wrote and drew it, aren't you?" She pulled out a plastic-wrapped comic. "It's the first issue

from the first printing. Would you autograph it for me?"

"You want my autograph?" Liam was pleased.

"This was just a school project for extra credit."

"I bet you got an A," Tanya said. "I love this story line, and I love the character Fury. He reminds me of someone. Someone from around here who does things for the community and for individuals but who never lets anyone tell that he helped." Tanya looked into Liam's eyes, telling him that she suspected Fury was Aiden.

"You could be right," Liam said and actually flushed, though he hated when this betrayal by his body happened. He picked up Tanya's plastic-wrapped book. "Do you have a pen? My book bag is in my car."

"Are you doing another issue?" Tanya asked.

"Because Liam, honey, this is just what the community needs: a superhero for us."

"I wasn't planning on it when I first had it published. But my publisher has issued two more reprints. He said it's been picked up all over the country. So I'm going to do another issue. In fact, I'm working on it now."

"I sure hope you continue with this." Tanya smiled as she looked at Liam's autograph.

"Oh, how sweet?" she blushed at the words he'd written. "You come back here anytime."

"Oh, I'll be back," Liam said. "How can I resist?"

He winked at Daniel, who was listening intently to everything that they said.

Daniel couldn't believe that the twink had done what he'd always wanted to do: write a comic—a comic that was catching on and could become famous.

Liam had been gone for an hour when Lisa came into the diner. "Hi, Daniel," she said, bending to kiss him on the forehead. His mother worked occasionally at Hamburger Mary's, but she was there almost every day for one reason or another. There were a lot of lost boys and girls on the streets of Davie and Denman, and Lisa was a surrogate mom to a good many of them.

"Ma, you're late."

"Honey, I stopped punching a clock a few years ago," she laughed. "Tanya, you can take off now if you'd like," she called out.

"Lisa, take your time. I'll bring you a coffee. Daniel, do you want another soda?" Tanya asked as she bustled around.

"Thank you, Tanya, don't mind if I do." Lisa sat back in the booth, put her feet on the seat opposite, and relaxed. She pulled out a comic book from her rainbow-colored bag. "Did you see this Daniel? The whole beauty parlor is talking about it."

"Put it away; I know about it."

"Oh, you bought *Fury*. I have one too." Tanya looked at the one in Lisa's hand. "You have a second printing one. I have a first issue, and—you'll never guess—I met the boy who wrote it and did all of the illustrations. He autographed mine for me."

"He's just a fucking trick of Aiden's. No one special." Daniel muttered.

"He's a fucking brilliant artist," Tanya snapped back. "Aiden Mac Ruaidhri better be nice to him."

"Holy shit, what's going on?" Lisa asked, looking from Daniel to Tanya. "It's just a fucking comic book."

"It's that twink. He somehow makes everyone he meets like him. Like he puts a spell on them or something."

Lisa looked at Daniel. "He didn't put a spell on you." She shook her head. "I think you're just jealous. Snap the fuck out of it." She drained her coffee and stood up, but not before punctuating her statement with a snap to her son's ear. "Go home, Tanya; I'll take over."

Daniel grabbed the comic book his mother had left on the table and began to leaf through it. He hated the fact that it was Liam who was responsible for what he'd always wanted to do. But he loved the story and the drawings were amazing.

CHAPTER 4

As Liam drove home; he knew he was going to have to face his mother sooner or later. He might as well get it over with now.

Dakota honked and waved as she drove past him on the way to her house. Liam turned into his driveway, parked and reluctantly got out of his car. His mother opened the door before he had a chance to touch the handle.

"Liam Taylor, you are in one heck of a lot of trouble." She began.

"Hi mom, how was your day?" he said as he toed off his shoes and hung up his school jacket. "Let me get out of this uniform before you start on the lecture." He ran up stairs ignoring his mother's entreaties, shrugging out of his shirt as he ran.

Morgan Taylor followed her son. He was somehow different. It wasn't something she could put her finger on, but it was something. "Liam, you know you can't stay out all night and not face some

repercussions. You have no idea how hard it is to keep this from your father."

"Mom I'm sorry. I told Meredith I was going to be out and I didn't know when I'd be back. You and dad weren't home and it wasn't something I wanted to write on the message board. Didn't Meredith tell you?"

"Yes she told me. But that isn't the point. You're seventeen years old and you were out for the entire night without letting me know where you were."

"I was safe. I have my cell phone. What was the point of waking you up at midnight? This way you and dad got a full nights sleep and I... well let's just say I had a good night too."

"Liam you know the rules Wahjee have to live by. I hope you haven't done anything to jeopardize your position with the council."

"Mom the council's ideas are old fashioned. It's not fair that kids are expected to follow rules made by a bunch of people a thousand years ago. Times change. People change." Liam was laying his schoolwork out on his desk. "I have homework to do."

"Do you want something to eat, dinner isn't for another couple of hours."

"No Dakota and I stopped for something after school." He looked up at his mother and smiled. "Call me when dinner is ready." He didn't dare risk using a glimmer spell, but he did his best with old-fashioned puppy dog eyes. It worked.

Morgan hesitated for a moment and then closed his door. She wasn't going to get anything out of him.

He'd always been a private boy. But she worried about her son. He was in line for the high council leadership and he didn't seem to fully appreciate the honor or the status it would bring his family.

Liam watched his mother close his door. He waited for her footsteps to fade before he sent an electrical impulse toward the door, securing the lock he'd installed. He pulled out his largest sketchbook. He wanted to record his night. His fingers had itched all day for a pencil, a piece of charcoal, chalk, anything that would let him put Aiden's image down on paper. But first he picked up the bright turquoise and white cat that had been with him since birth. It was heavier than it looked and he'd always used the stuffed toy as a confident of sorts. He'd had teddy bears and other stuffies, but his pretend Wah cat Betty, had been his favorite. Liam tucked Betty between his bed pillows before settling down to sketch. He never noticed the twinkle in Betty's eyes. But then he never did.

When Liam's mother called him for dinner, he couldn't believe that two hours had passed. He'd lost himself in the memories of the night before as he recorded his time with Aiden. Page after page told the story, not in order, but rather as the memory lived in his mind or touched on his body. Liam sat back pleased with what he'd done. A few of the sketches would make great paintings. A few would find their way with some slight alterations, into the next issue of Fury.

Dakota called him at seven. Liam was back in his room supposedly doing homework, but actually working on the next issue of his comic book. "Hey Liam, are you going back there tonight?" she asked.

"No." he sighed and stretched. "I'm staying home. Do you want to come over, I'm working on a second issue of the book."

"Cool, I'll be right over." Dakota hung up. She'd been worried that with Liam's change of status virginity wise, that he might somehow be different and forget her. They'd been friends so long she didn't know what she'd do without him.

Morgan was pleased to see Dakota. Liam was going to be okay if his friend was still part of his life.

"Come in Dakota, Liam is upstairs in his room."

"I know, we're going to work on a project for school." Dakota said. She didn't feel she was lying. The original comic was a school project. She held up a bag. "I've got cookies."

Morgan laughed. "I'll bring up some cold milk for the two of you."

"That's okay, I can take it up." Dakota offered. She knew Liam wouldn't want his mother to see what he was doing.

"Open the door Liam." She kicked it gently with her foot. "My hands are full."

"Cool, you brought food." Liam opened the door, looked out and then locked it behind Dakota. "I've done some great sketches of Aiden. Want to see?"

"I thought we were working the second issue of Fury."

"We are, think of these as preliminary sketches." He grinned at his friend. He sat on the floor, his back against the footboard of his bed. Dakota took her place beside him, folding sinuously while she held cookies in one hand and a tray with two glasses of cold milk in the other. "Smooth move." Liam had always admired his best friend's grace and agility.

"A thousand years of dance practice will do that." She snickered. "I see Betty likes Aiden too." The stuffed cat was at the end of the bed leaning over.

"And you look so young." He nudged her with his shoulder. A quick movement of one finger stopped the milk from overflowing the glasses. "This is Aiden in all his glory." He did glance at Betty, but never thought about how she'd moved. It was something that had always happened and Liam had never really thought it unusual. There was more to Betty than just pretty fur that demanded to be patted.

"Geeze Liam, I so did not need to see him like that. I'm never going to be able to look him in the eyes again."

Liam snickered. "I know the feeling and he has such cool eyes, but damn he's got an even cooler dick."

"Perve."

"Of course." Liam wiggled suggestively as he thumbed through his sketchbook showing Dakota his various impressions of Aiden.

CHAPTER 5

Aiden, are you waiting for someone?" Daniel asked after watching his friend stare at the entrance to Celebrities for the umpteenth time.

They were having a couple of beers before heading to The Odyssey.

"No, why do you ask?" Aiden turned back to lean on the bar.

"You keep looking at the door."

"It pays to check out the action Danny, I would have thought you'd know that." Aiden pretended non-interest in the door after that. He couldn't believe he'd been so obvious that Danny had noticed. He wondered where Liam was and why he hadn't come by.

"You know that kid you picked up was in the diner to day." Daniel said as he sipped his beer.

"Liam?" Aiden asked.

"Yeah, Liam. He was there with some girl. Just as bold as you please sitting in the diner. He even has Tanya fooled into thinking he's great."

"Tanya?" Aiden wondered where this was going.

"Yeah, Tanya, she even had him autograph that damn comic book. Can you imagine, autographing a stupid comic book."

"Well it is a good comic book." Aiden shrugged. "Hell Danny, you've gotten autographs on comic books."

"But they're actual celebrities. Those guys are like famous."

"In your mind maybe. I don't think they're any more famous than say Liam is. I mean they've all written comic books."

"You know what I mean." Daniel defended. "Hey, where are you going?"

"Home." Aiden had slammed his empty beer bottle on the bar. "Home Danny."

"But we're supposed to go to The Odyssey."

"Not tonight, I have an early meeting."

But Aiden didn't go home; instead he drove to Rosalie and Vanessa's place. He wanted to see his son again.

"Aiden, it's late, why are you here?" Rosalie asked with a glare.

"I couldn't sleep without kissing you goodnight." He lunged at her and she jumped back.

"Asshole, Vanessa's asleep."

"I'm not here to see Vans, I'm here to see Shay."

"He's sleeping too."

"No he isn't, I can see him from here." Aiden walked past her and into the living room where Shay lay in a bassinet. He walked over and looked down.

He leaned in and picked up the baby, holding him carefully, close to his chest.

Aiden sat on a rocking chair with his son. He let his index finger trace the boy's face and then he looked for Liam's mark, finding it where he knew it would be. Somehow seeing the mark, he felt better. He knew that no matter what, Liam would always protect his son. It was reassuring to know that the boy would have that protection. That he'd have someone out there who cared because god knew, parents weren't always perfect. Wahjee or human, they weren't always perfect.

The binding spell Liam had used was a strong one. Aiden couldn't feel any Wahjee in his son and that was a good thing for now. There were too many variables. Not the least of which was the fact that Shay had been born of a human mother.

He sat and rocked his son, binding them together in the old fashioned way, through the magic of love, strengthening with each breath they took as he rocked, singing an ancient lullaby that had somehow come to mind.

Rosalie wanted to protest, to throw the man out. But even she didn't have the heart to take the child from Aiden's arms. Instead she turned off the lights and walked upstairs to her wife. Shay was in good hands for now.

A week later, Liam and Dakota were sitting in the sunshine in a local park. It was a beautiful Saturday. Dakota sat on a swing while Liam sketched her from his place against a nearby rock.

"Liam?" he looked up. It was Vanessa and Rosalie, Shay was in a stroller.

"Hey." He said and bounced to his feet. "Hey Little Guy, you're looking good." The baby gurgled in pleasure at seeing Liam. The bond between them was strong.

"I'm surprised to see you here." Vanessa said.

"Dakota," he nodded to where his friend was swinging. "And I come here a lot. It's a great place to sketch when the weather is good." He held up his sketchbook for Vanessa to see.

"You're very good." She said with surprise in her voice. "Oh, Aiden." She blushed as she noticed the graphic detail of the sketch.

Liam took the book back. "You have to admit he makes a great model." He grinned at her.

"You should put some of your work in the GLC show we're having. The money raised will go toward the running of the place. Your work is good. I'm sure it would sell."

"Cool." Dakota had bounced up to them. "Do it Liam."

"I don't know." He hesitated. It would bring him more attention than he wanted at the moment.

"Please, we could use some saleable art. And it is for a good cause." Rosalie had been watching the way her son kept Liam in sight at all times despite his age. "I think you've made a fan of Shay."

"Shay is special." Liam said, he placed a finger in the boy's hand, laughing out loud when Shay brought it to his lips almost as if he was kissing it. He looked

at Rosalie and Vanessa. "I'll do it. I'll put a few of my things in the art show. Who knows, maybe they'll bring in a couple of dollars. "

"What changed your mind?" Vanessa asked.

"Shay, how could I refuse him"? Liam laughed, kissed his finger and touched it to the boy's forehead.

"He does have a way of making you take him into your heart alright." Rosalie agreed. "Even Aiden seems taken with him and that's something I never thought I'd see."

"He's his father." Liam said. "There will always be that connection no matter where life takes them. Aiden is a good man, Shay could have done much worse for a father."

"Do you see much of Aiden?" Vanessa asked. "I mean..." she looked at Liam's sketchbook.

"No, I haven't seen him since the day after Shay was born." Liam smiled. "But then, I'm in high school and Aiden isn't. We don't actually hang out with the same people."

"Oh, we thought you and he..." Rosalie began.

"Yes, Aiden and I have a relationship of sorts in an undefined sort of way." Liam replied. "But we do have our own lives to live. Perhaps I'll see him at your GLC show."

"Aiden never goes to those kind of things." Vanessa dismissed the idea.

"I think he'll be there this time." Liam smiled.

"Dakota and I are heading to the diner for a soda. It's not far, do you want to join us."

"Not today, we're on our way home, we've been shopping." Vanessa pointed to the bags stashed in the tray under the stroller. "But maybe another time. Let me give you the number of the person to contact for your submissions."

"I can find it, don't worry about it." Liam smiled and taking Dakota's hand, walked away leaving the two women to stare after them.

"He's very confident." Rosalie said as she watched Liam and Dakota disappear. "And Shay seems to like him."

"I like him too. I'm not sure why, but there's something about him that reminds me of Aiden." Vanessa looked puzzled trying to understand something she wasn't sure of.

Liam was pleased with the meeting. It had gone according to plan, his plan, not that he'd ever let Dakota know. The thing about Aiden was, that if he wanted him to be interested, he had to pretend disinterest to a point. It was all about knowing when to hold back and when to give in. He had also been pleased to see Shay. He'd never before had a connection with someone younger than himself. It was a responsibility he'd not wanted to take on before because it was a life commitment.

"Are you really going to put your work in the show?" Dakota asked.

"Yes I am." Liam smiled content with his lot in life for the moment. "I'm not sure what yet though. You'll have to help me decide. Let's stop in at the GLC on the way to the diner."

"Okay," Dakota was enjoying herself. There was something kind of sinful about being on Davie Street. It was all bright colors and same sex people. Street vendors and small shops filled with interesting things she'd never see anywhere else in the city. "Hey isn't that Betty in that window?"

They'd managed to find their way to Bulge, an eclectic and fun shop managed by Evan. It sold everything from clothing to accessories for the discriminating queen.

Liam stared in the window at the display of spandex and torn jeans, sequins littering the window floor. In the center of the display was very definitely a turquoise and white plush cat. "Sure looks like Betty." He grabbed Dakota's hand heading for the entrance to the store.

"Why goodness me, what brings you two in here?" Evan bounced over, exuberant as ever, his tall lanky body posed unconsciously as if he was in a photo shoot.

"We were wondering about the stuffed cat in the window." Liam said after releasing himself from Evan's long armed hug.

"Cat, we have a stuffed cat in the window?" Evan snickered. "This isn't that kind of store. We're more a clothing boutique, not a toy store, though we have been known to accessorize with toys that can be stuffed in places." He giggled.

Liam ignored him as he looked in the window display. Where he'd been sure he'd seen the cat was a fanciful draped turquoise and white cashmere sweater.

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"I must have been seeing things." He shook his head and reached out to touch the sweater. "Cool sweater though."

CHAPTER 6

Aiden was going crazy. He'd taken to driving by The Royal Academy at eight thirty in the morning and three o'clock in the afternoon, like some kind of pervert, hoping to catch sight of Liam. But the boy remained elusive to his sight. Twice he'd see Dakota and more times than he cared to, he'd seen Brad Chambers, who always sent a glare in his direction, but never Liam.

Everyone else in his world of family and friends had seen the boy. Daniel bitched that he was always in the diner. Vanessa and Rosalie told stories of Liam's artistic abilities as well as sang his praises as a babysitter. Even Evan had run across the boy in Bulge. Aiden was reaching a point of desperation, something that was completely foreign to his nature. If he didn't know better, he'd swear that the kid had put a spell over him.

Finally unable to resist, Aiden dialed the number of Liam's cell phone. It was seven on a Saturday night and while Aiden would go out later, now was that

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quiet time when he found himself at a loss for something to do. Oh he could check his email, or surf the net, read something, or channel surf, but nothing appealed; when all he could see was flashing blue and violet eyes and all he could feel were fingers tingling with electricity tracing circles on his skin. Liam's cell number hadn't been an easy one to get. But the week before he'd seen it on a piece of paper on Vanessa's fridge. She used it to call him for babysitting duties.

Aiden didn't have to look for the number, he knew it by heart. The phone rang once, twice and then Liam said. "It's about damn time Mac Ruaidhri." And Aiden could hear the laugh in his voice.

"Witch boy, what are you up to?" Aiden drawled, he could feel the tightening his groin at the sound of Liam's voice.

"Nothing special." Liam grinned to himself.

"I can fix that." Aiden couldn't stop grinning. "I'll pick you up in fifteen minutes."

"Tell you what, why don't I just drive to your apartment. That way I'll have my car and I won't have to listen to my mother when she sees you."

"You have a car?" Aiden asked. "Why didn't someone tell me?"

"Did you ask?" Liam laughed. "I bet you've been your usual silent self."

"Shut up and come over here." Aiden wanted Liam in his arms, not on the phone. Now that he had his number, there was a lot of time for phone sex. For now, he needed to hold him.

When Aiden had called, Liam had only been a block away from the loft. He was going to surprise the stubborn man. That Aiden had broken first, was great as far as Liam was concerned.

Liam let himself into Aiden's building. He took the stairs two at a time and then let himself into the loft. "Hey." He grinned at Aiden's startled look. "You did invite me over."

"What did you do, fly on your broom?" Aiden shook his head.

"I was driving near here. It didn't take long." He shrugged out of his jacket and kicked off his shoes. The shoes and jacket disappeared into the closet by the door.

"Make yourself at home." Aiden laughed. "Want to watch a movie?"

"Maybe after we've made love." Liam began to remove his shirt.

"Fucked Liam, we're gay, we fuck." Aiden said the words slowly and carefully. But he said them without the usual force behind the words.

"Okay, fuck. I don't care what you call it to get you through the day. I'm horny and I'm seventeen, did you really think I wanted to watch a movie?" Liam laughed, wiggled his ass and disappeared into Aiden's bedroom.

"You have done something, haven't you?" Aiden asked as he followed the boy up the three stairs.

"I've attended school, babysat for Shay, worked on a project or ten, hung out at the diner and generally lived my life Aiden. It's something I do and have done

for almost eighteen years. Oddly enough I've done most of it without any contact with you." The rest of his clothes were on the floor and he now lay in ethereal whiteness on shadowed grey velvet, lit by twinkling blue lights. "Now stop thinking so hard and come and join me. I'm ready for lesson two in how to be the best homosexual I can be." He grinned up at Aiden, his smile lighting up the room and dispelling any shadows that might have lingered in the corners.

"You're driving me crazy." Aiden admitted. He felt a shiver of cold air wash over him and he looked down, he was standing naked in the room, his clothing neatly folded on a chair. Aiden looked from his clothing to Liam's, which littered the floor. "Why did you fold my stuff?"

"Cause I knew you'd freaken well would do it yourself instead of coming to bed. It saves time." Liam stroked his hard cock suggestively.

"Let me get the lights." Aiden said, but before the words were out of his mouth, all the lights, with the exception of blue flashes, were out.

"Anything else? You want a drink of water? Perhaps a cookie?" Liam asked. "Will you get on the damn bed."

"I'm the one in charge here." Aiden said as he moved to the bed. "Not you. It's my place." As soon as he said the words he found himself wound up in Liam's legs in a small single bed, in a room decorated with posters from art shows, the desk littered with books and a glowing computer screen with Aiden himself as the screen saver.

"Now you're in my bed." Liam whispered. "But it would be a lot more fun if we were in yours. After all, my mom is just two doors down, not to mention my little sister is in the room beside us."

"Freak, get me back to the loft." Aiden looked around as if expecting the two women to walk in any moment. Momentarily startled by a bright turquoise and white stuffed cat with twinkling eyes, he took a breath and then found himself back in the loft bedroom. "Showing off your magic is considered bad form." He huffed. "You don't see me doing shit like that."

"Considering you're supposed to be my equal in the magic department according to the stats in the high council library, you're not very good at it." Liam wiggled until he was straddling Aiden. "But I don't mind teaching stuff. We'll trade."

"I can do as much or more than you witch boy. I'm just not interested in that shit. I never have been. I've seen what it can do; my father and mother are perfect examples of power corrupting. I don't need that kind of shit in my life."

"It's only bad if you let it be bad. I mean you have to know moderation." Liam explained. "You have to have moderation in everything you do with your life, from drinking, smoking, bad language and yes, magic. Anybody with an ounce of brains can tell you that. I never use my magic to hurt anybody even when I would dearly love to. For instance, your friend Danny would make an awesome wallaby or something. And that fucking Brad Chambers, five-

day-old road kill would be too good for him though I haven't actually entirely dismissed that idea."

"Shut up witch boy and show me some magic that I can relate to. Like perhaps it's time to see what kind of a blow job you can do."

"Hmmm, sounds like a plan." Liam moved lower until he was between Aiden's legs. "I'll even leave out the magic and do it the old fashioned way, after all I wouldn't want to spoil you so early in our relationship."

"I don't do relationships." Aiden muttered before he lost the use of his voice when Liam's mouth began to work on his cock. Who knew your voice was connected to your cock was all he could think of before other sensations took over his mind.

CHAPTER 7

Later that night, "Where's Aiden?" Daniel asked, looking around Celebrities. "He said he was going to meet us here."

"I don't know, it's early, give him a few minutes before you send out the dogs." Evan laughed and waved his Cosmo. "I feel especially lucky tonight." He twirled around to show off his outfit. "Do you like it? It came in today at Bulge and it had my name on it. I had to buy it." He was wearing a see through black shirt that showed off his diamond-dusted pecs to perfection.

"It's kind of sleazy." Bob said. "But it's all you." He was dressed in his usual polyester shirt and pants. Perhaps a bit tighter than what he'd wear to work. It was his concession to clubbing.

"Of course it's all me Bobby." Evan gushed. "You know, I bet Aiden is all wrapped up in that little red head who's been hanging around."

"They're never together." Daniel said, "Why would you think Aiden even cares about him?"

"That's the whole point. They're avoiding each other. There's something up with the two of them, mark my words." Evan sipped his drink as he watched the boys playing pool.

"Aiden is hardly interested in doing someone more than once, let alone a twink. He likes his men more mature." Daniel said as he watched as well. He finished his drink. "I'm not waiting around here all night. Let's go get Aiden out of his apartment. He's probably working or something. He needs a night of fun."

"I don't think that's such a good idea Daniel." Bob cautioned. "You know how Aiden hates us to come over uninvited."

"He said he was coming out tonight, so that's almost like inviting us to come and get him." Daniel rationalized.

"Works for me." Evan said, having had just enough to drink to lose all sense of what was right or wrong. "Shall we walk, or should we take a cab."

"We can walk, it isn't far." Daniel threw some money on the bar. "Aiden'll drive us back. Are you coming Bob?"

"No thanks, I want to keep my balls thank you very much." Bob laughed. "I'm heading to The Odyssey."

Daniel and Evan walked out of the bar arm in arm. They had a purpose, to find Aiden and bring him out to play.

In the apartment, the love making, fucking or whatever you chose to call it was something beautiful

to see. The only light was blue shadows reflected from the buildings on the street, but the sparks from Liam's skin as it touched Aiden took on a different blue hue edged in gold. That made both men surrealistic as they moved from one position to another. Taking pleasure in everything they did to one another. Liam was learning and Aiden was as well. Liam, how to be loved as a gay man, by a gay man. Aiden was learning to give pleasure for the sake of another rather than just him. It was a wondrous sight.

"You should ring him first." Evan said. His Cosmo high was fading.

"He gave me a key for a reason. Because we're friends and so he doesn't have to let me in." It was actually in case of emergency, but wasn't this an emergency. It was studs and suds night after all.

Daniel and Evan rode the elevator. At the top floor Daniel made a production out of taking his key to Aiden's place out of his pocket, like it was some kind of Holy Grail. He turned the key and opened the door. Music filled the air, Daniel couldn't remember Aiden having a sound system that surrounded the apartment, but it was kind of nice. The music that played was like nothing he and Evan had ever heard before. The beat steady like that of a heartbeat, yet somehow sensuous and passion filled. Light flickered like candles here there and everywhere, from ceiling to floor, on walls and over doors and window.

Evan and Daniel stood there open mouthed at the display. Slowly they walked inside, ecstasy filled moans of pleasure drew them like moths to a flame.

More lights flashed in Aiden's bedroom, ozone filled the air. Daniel was somehow filled with fear and apprehension at the same time as he looked inside Aiden's room. Liam and Aiden, both on their knees in the center of the bed were kissing and touching, sparks everywhere. On their skin, the duvet, the head board, in the air. The air stunk of sex and something else that Daniel couldn't name. All he could think of was that Aiden was in danger of getting burnt. He was sure there was an electrical fault, perhaps from the blue lights that glowed even brighter than usual. Without thinking, Daniel launched himself at Aiden. "YARRRRRGGHHHHH." He screamed as he grabbed Aiden and pulled him away and onto the floor with a thump that sounded louder than it should in the sudden silence of the loft.

"DANNY, WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU DOING IN HERE?" Aiden screamed as he tried to pick himself up off of the floor.

Liam who lay on the bed wrapped in the duvet, convulsed with laughter. He was laughing so hard he could barely breath. "Oh I fucking think I pissed myself." He finally managed to choke out. Aiden by now was pacing around looking for a cigarette that he didn't have. Daniel still lay on the floor. Evan had run out of the loft screaming he was going to be late. For what Aiden had no idea.

"Would you stop laughing please?" Aiden said, his voice calm.

"I can't, I can't believe your pathetic little friend broke in here and jumped on you." Liam giggled. "I was about to have like the best orgasm of my life."

"You're seventeen, what do you know about orgasms?" Aiden laughed. "But I admit, it would have been a good one."

"Aiden, he was going to kill you. I saw the flames. I saw them." Daniel began.

"What flames Danny, do you see any flames? I don't even have a candle lit." Aiden resisted the urge to kick his long time human friend. "Get off my fucking floor and tell me what the emergency was that you had to break in on me."

"I know what I saw." Daniel had his bottom lip out. He glared at Liam who was stuffing the duvet in his mouth to keep from laughing. "What's he doing here?"

"He's laughing." Aiden deadpanned "And if he doesn't stop, I'm going to kick his ass."

"Promise?" Liam said and batted his eyes before diving under the duvet and laughing again. He was seventeen after all.

Aiden rolled his eyes and then turned to Daniel. "Get out Danny but give me my key back first."

"Aiden, he was hurting you." Daniel started again.

"Danny, did I look like I was having a bad time?" Aiden said as if talking to a child. "Liam and I are consenting adults, well one of us is more adult than the other. We were fucking. Maybe you don't

understand because you don't do it often enough. But trust me, that's what were doing."

"Making love, we were making love." Liam's head popped up out of the duvet. "Call what it is lover boy."

"Oh puleeze." Daniel sneered. "Give me a break. Aiden fucks, he doesn't make love."

"He doesn't do either with you so how the fuck do you know?" Liam snickered. "I'm thinking wombat, or maybe one of those fuzzy little rats with the long skinny pink tails." He looked up at the ceiling, the epitome of innocence.

"What did he say?" Daniel looked puzzled.

"He's a kid, he rambles." Aiden began to steer Daniel out of the bedroom. "Get out of here Danny. It's late. I don't want to deal with you right now."

Daniel walked down the stairs and looked around the loft. "Where did the music go, did you turn it off?" he asked Aiden.

"What music?" Aiden looked puzzled.

"The music, there was music playing when we came in." Daniel said as he looked around the loft. "There were lights all over in here. There's nothing now."

"It was an optical illusion Danny. You probably heard the music from next door. The walls are thin. And the lights were just reflections of the city lights through the windows."

"Oh, that makes sense." Daniel agreed. He handed Aiden his key. "I really did think you were in danger."

"I know Danny." Aiden sighed. "I guess we all have to grow up sometime. I don't need anyone rescuing me anymore."

"But what about that kid, that Liam."

"What about him Danny." Aiden asked as he pulled the door open.

"He's staying around, isn't he?" Daniel's voice was sad.

"No doubt he is." Aiden agreed. "We all need someone special in our lives. Liam is my special person for however long he wants to stay."

"That sucks."

"And not in a good way, but that's the way life is Danny." Aiden leaned forward and kissed Daniel tenderly. "Later."

"Tonight at The Odyssey?" Daniel's eyes brightened.

"No, tomorrow perhaps at the diner. I don't know." Aiden closed the door on his friend and carefully locked it.

He felt rather than heard Liam come up behind him. He sank back against the smaller man when Liam's arms wrapped themselves around his body. "A vole, he'd make a good vole." Liam whispered.

"Brat." Aiden huffed a laugh and turned around in Liam's arms so that they were now facing each other. "That was damn awesome sex."

"It was stupendous." Liam giggled. "Especially the ending."

"I hope you didn't piss the bed." Aiden said.

"It's all clean if that's what you're worried about." Liam said as he looked up into eyes greener than he'd seen before. "You know we're good for each other. We bring out things in one another that have been somehow hidden." He touched the corner of Aiden's eye. "Like your eyes, they've become more green each time we make love."

"Fuck."

"Whatever." Liam smiled, his smile hidden as he buried his face in Aiden's neck. "You inspire me to paint in different mediums, to sketch in more detail, to think of things I've ignored."

"All that and we've only been together twice." Aiden tried to joke, but he knew exactly what Liam meant. There was something that happened to him with each meeting. Some kind of inner strength that built up more and more. And he supposed that had he been interested in working magic, something he wasn't. He supposed it would be more powerful than before and perhaps his magic was more powerful. He hoped he never had to find out. He'd been born into a Wahjee family, that didn't mean he had to like it.

"Come back to bed. We'll hold each other and sleep when we can."

"Sounds rather lesbionic." Aiden muttered, but willingly followed Liam back to the bedroom.

"It sounds normal Aiden. It's what lovers do no matter what sex, no matter human or Wahjee. It's what lovers do." Liam settled himself under the duvet and waited for Aiden to get under with him. The older man thought about it for a moment and then climbed

in too. Liam moved over and Aiden held up his arm for Liam to cuddle closer. It was an automatic gesture, not one Aiden was familiar with, but one that seemed right when it was Liam who moved into the position.

Two weeks later found Liam and Dakota on the way to the GLC. "Are you excited?" Dakota asked, wiggling in the driver's seat of her car. "It's like your first show."

"Dakota, it's for charity. I'm not going to get anything out of this." Liam laughed at her excitement.

"Sure you will. You'll get recognition for being a great artist in the making and your mom will see you have more talent than she realized." She clamped both her hands over her mouth, letting go of the steering wheel. "Oops." She grabbed the wheel again. "Sorry, but she asked too many question. You know I can't lie."

"Please tell me you didn't." Liam buried his head in his hands. "Not my mother."

"She only wants what's best for you." Dakota began.

"She wants me on a short leash Dakota. You have no idea. I'm not supposed to even go over to Davie Street. I'm sure as fuck not supposed to have a boyfriend. And I'm absolutely not supposed to lose my virginity, any virginity. No fucking, sucking or hard kissing. Those are the rules."

"Well you've pretty much broken all of them, what can she do?"

I could spend my life as toad. Liam thought to himself. "You have no idea what she can do." He muttered. "And not just to me, but to Aiden as well."

"I think you're being a drama princess." Dakota scoffed as she turned into a parking spot near the GLC. "I can't wait to see which ones you decided to put in the show." They had chosen ten a few weeks before and out of those ten; Liam was putting in five, four sketches and an oil. He was hoping the oil would bring in some serious money for the Center.

Liam wanted to scream and shout and generally have a hissy fit. But instead he got out of Dakota's car and hoped for the best.

"Liam, the work you've donated is amazing." It was Vanessa on her way into the building.

"Thanks Vanessa." He smiled. "Can I hold Shay?" he asked. The baby was doing his best to leap out his mother's arms and into Liam's, despite his age.

"He seems to want you to do just that." She laughed and handed her son over. They continued on up the stairs and into the Center. "Rosalie should be here any minute, she had to work late."

"She works hard." Liam said as he made faces at Shay who giggled and cooed. "Aiden does too."

"Yes, Aiden has always been a hard worker. He had a hard life, put himself through University and everything." She smiled. "That's where we met."

"Didn't his parents pay? I mean I would have thought..." his voice trailed off. Wahjee parents

always made sure their children were educated. What in hell was going on?

"He had a math scholarship, but I don't know why his parents didn't help him. He didn't really talk about them. I'm not sure he even sees them now."

"No kidding." Liam was puzzled. He'd have to find out what was up with Aiden and his parents. Shay gurgled and smiled up at Liam, waving his hands in the air. "He's really getting big."

"I think he'll be tall like his father." She said.

"Liam, there you are." He turned at the sound of his mother's voice. "Hello Dakota."

"Hi mom." He smiled. "This is Seamus and his mom Vanessa. Vanessa, this is my mom."

"Hello." She smiled at Vanessa and then looked enquiringly at Liam who still held Shay. "Your son is quite handsome." She said.

"He looks a lot like his father." Vanessa said.

"Oh, is he here?" Morgan looked around the room. It was now crowded with people looking at the artwork.

"Oh, I'm sure Aiden won't come. He never supports the GLC. I'm sure he thinks it's beneath him." Vanessa smiled. "Oh there's my wife." She waved at Rosalie who had just come in the door.

"Your wife?" Morgan looked from Liam to Vanessa, to Dakota and then to Rosalie.

"They're lesbians, mom." Liam said. "Aiden is a friend. He donated his sperm to make Shay."

"Yes, he did it in a cup." Dakota shivered dramatically. "It's so gross."

"Interesting." Morgan said. "I'd like to see your work Liam. You never show us at home."

"You're never interested." Liam said. He handed Shay back to Vanessa after kissing him on the forehead and then on the end of his nose, making the baby giggle. "Later Lil' Guy."

"It's over here." He nodded toward a part of the wall where a crowd stood admiring the artwork.

"Oh, my, you have a lot of people looking at it." Morgan was pleased. She knew her son would succeed at being an artist. She began to stroll over, Liam following reluctantly.

"Oh, that's a lovely picture of Molly and her doll." Morgan said. "I'm surprised you got her to sit still long enough. And there's Shay and his mother. You really should give that to Vanessa."

"It's a sale for charity mom. I can't give them away."

"Liam, did you do this?" Morgan stood in front of two sketches, both of nude males. One was of Brad Chambers when he stood in the locker room at school. Of course Liam had made sure nothing would identify him. He did want to live to see eighteen. The other one was Aiden, sleeping after a passion filled few hours of sex. There was no mistaking who that one was if you knew Aiden Mac Ruaidhri.

"It says Liam Taylor in the corner. Unless there's another one, that would be me."

"Watch your mouth." Morgan hissed. "I'll talk to you later about these two sketches."

Liam tried to steer her away from what she would see next around the next corner. "Look, there's some nice landscapes over there." He nodded to a far wall.

"Liam, I'd prefer to look at these works on my own thank you very much." Morgan patted his cheek. "Don't worry dear, I can see you're very talented. Your father doesn't have to know about the subject matter of your sketching."

"He's not my father." Liam mumbled. For of course Cecil Taylor, the celibate Grand Wizard of the High Council, was not only celibate, but also supposedly virginal as Wahjee law dictated. Liam was determined to find his real father, but that was something he kept to himself. It was strictly forbidden.

"He is your father for all intents and purposes." Morgan replied. "I'll not have you saying anything else." And then she stepped around the room divider and was faced with a painting that already had been sold for an incredible donation of five thousand dollars. It had been purchased by a wealthy gay couple that was planning on it being the focal point of their collection in their new home.

His mother stood silently in front of the large canvas. She was unable to speak, so powerful was the painting in on the wall in front of her. It told her far more than it did anyone else in the room, this surrealistic swirl of blues and sparks of yellows and golds surrounding the two men who faced each other on their knees. So close it was hard to tell where one began and the other left off. No faces were visible just the impression of love and sex and something more.

Something that couldn't be defined, but was felt by everyone who saw the painting. It was almost magical in the way it brightened the faces who gazed at it, hardened their cocks, made their pussies drip and filled them with desire, both men and women alike.

"Liam Taylor, you didn't." she finally managed to say, her voice so low it was hard to hear.

"But he did." Aiden drawled. He'd appeared from nowhere draping his arms around Liam, leaning forward and kissing the red head's ear. "Mrs. Taylor I presume. I'm Aiden Mac Ruaidhri."

"I've heard of you Aiden, your parents are Margaret and Jack, aren't they?"

"So I've been told." He had flinched at their names, though Morgan didn't notice, but Liam did. Liam knew every heartbeat of the man he loved and movement of his body. He could read how he was feeling from across the room. Having him pressed against his back made it even more obvious.

"What have the two of you done?" she shook her head. "The high council is not going to be pleased."

"Don't tell them." Liam shrugged. "I'm happy, Aiden makes me happy. I'm working on my art, I graded in the top two percent of the Provincial exams, why rock the boat."

"Because your father..." she began.

"The man who calls himself my father, who had nothing to do with actually fucking you." He replied. "Mom, those rules were laid down so long ago no one even remembers why or when. Times change. Even

Wahjee have to get with the program and change. It's called progress."

"But to be so... blatant." She nodded at the painting, ignoring his comment about the man who featured in his conception.

"Mom, no one has any idea what it's about. It's just something that makes them feel good." Liam found Aiden's hand and threaded his fingers through the other man's. He wasn't sure if he was offering Aiden strength or accepting strength. What ever it was, he needed the contact.

"So this is where you disappear to, this Aiden?" Morgan asked, making Aiden's name sound like a curse word.

"Hmmm, you must have been talking to Danny's mom, she called me *this Aiden* for the first ten years I knew her." He looked at Liam, turning his face to his. "Do you think it's going to be ten years before your mother drops the *this*."

"It had better be less than ten minutes or you're getting a 24/7 room mate." Liam glared at his mother. "And don't try to stop me from seeing Aiden. I'm a lot stronger than any of you realize." He shimmered briefly to show his mother what he meant. Ozone was in the air and Morgan looked down at her feet.

"Liam, this isn't over." Her voice was quiet. "Aiden, you're older and from the Mac Ruaidhri clan, you should have known better."

"Morgan, I'm not sure what your life has been like, but when a piece of sunshine comes into it, bringing with it feelings and emotions that you never

knew existed let alone thought you'd feel, let me know how you said no to it, preferring the darkness to the light." Aiden turned Liam around and kissed his lips thoroughly as if staking his claim on the red head for anyone who saw them.

"Hey, did you guys see that awesome sculpture?" Dakota asked as she bounced up to the three of them. "Hey Mrs. Taylor, aren't Liam's pictures cool? The blue one made lots of money for the GLC. Vanessa and Rosalie said they're going to be bugging you all the time for art donations."

"Swell." Liam laughed glad of Dakota's interruption. "I'm starving, let's go to Hamburger Mary's. Mom, do you want to come? I'll let you pay."

"Liam... I'm not sure..." she hesitated, wondering at this boy who was her son. He seemed to have grown up over night.

"You'll love Hamburger Mary's." Dakota said. "The food is great and the atmosphere is really cool. It's only down the block. They have the best cheeseburgers and real milk shakes, not the kind that come out of a machine."

"How could I resist that?" Morgan laughed. "Aiden, are you coming with us. I'd love to get to know you better."

Liam squeezed Aiden's hand gently. "It'll be fun Aiden. My mother's not too bad most of the time."

"Why thank you dear for the vote of confidence." She laughed. If anyone saw her with Aiden, she could always say it was research. "Dakota, lead the way. Aiden and Liam will catch up with us." She wanted

her son to have a few moments alone with the man he so obviously desired.

"Will your mother cause problems?" Aiden asked.

"I think I've done that myself." Liam shrugged. "I never intended to follow their celibacy shit. I think it's stupid. I had always planned on challenging the law."

"You want to take your place on the High Council?" Aiden asked. "Because frankly Liam, I don't want any part of Wahjee politics. I've avoided it all of my life and don't plan on changing any time soon."

"Aiden, I'm seventeen. I have a lifetime of things to experience before I start challenging a bunch of old wizards for my rightful place on the council. When the time is right you can make your decision then, if you want to be with me as my partner. But for now, let's just keep on as we are. We're learning about each other and growing in our lives. Both of us have a lot more of that to do before we make any kind of more permanent decision. Wahjee mate for life and I don't plan on challenging that particular rule."

"It isn't a rule witch boy, it's a fact of life. Wahjee love for life whether together or apart." Aiden put his arm around Liam's shoulder and began to lead him to the door. "By the way, when did you do that sketch of me?"

"How did you know it was you?" Liam teased.

"Brat." Aiden laughed.

"Aiden, you came." Vanessa stopped them before they reached the door.

"Hey Shay." Aiden picked his son out of Vanessa's arms. "Of course I came, Liam's work is being shown. I see it all sold." He leaned forward and kissed her cheek. "I bought the one of you and Shay for you. I thought you might like it. Makes you look rather Madonna like."

"Wonderful. I was admiring the picture and disappointed when I saw it had sold."

Shay was reaching out to Liam. "My son has a thing for you witch boy." Aiden laughed, handing the baby to Liam.

"I have a thing for him." Liam put his face down and blew kisses into the baby's neck. "Shay, you are growing and learning more and more each day." He looked at Vanessa. "I think having a child is a wonderful thing. You make a great mom." He smiled at her. "Of course having a perfect child helps."

"Such a flatterer." Vanessa laughed. "I see why you're taken with him." Her eyes twinkled with happiness when she looked at Aiden. There was something almost softer about her friend since he and Liam had been together.

"We're going to the diner for something to eat." Aiden announced. "Give my son back to his mommy, your mommy is waiting."

"Aiden Mac Ruaidhri is having dinner with his mother in law." Rosalie said coming up to them. "I never thought I'd see the day."

"Liam's mother is hardly my mother in law." Aiden snapped. "Liam, hand over my son."

"Your daddy is such an impatient man." Liam said to the boy. "I'd better give you back to your mummies before he throws a tantrum." He handed Shay to Rosalie. "I read you won the Walker case. Not bad." He said. "In fact it was darn good."

"Thank you. I didn't know it had been reported in the paper." Rosalie actually flushed that someone knew her work.

"It wasn't, it was on the net. I understand that the ruling will mean a lot to families in the future."

"Thank you." Rosalie said, pleased with the boy. "You should try and keep this one Aiden."

Aiden huffed a non-committal laugh, while leading Liam out the door. "Time to stop the bullshitting. Mommy and hag await their stalwart men."

CHAPTER 8

Will the meeting of the High Council come to order"? Cecil Taylor stood at the front of thirty-five council members. He was on a raised dais made from a solid piece of rose quartz. He waited for the murmur of voices to quiet and all attention was focused on him.

"It has come to my attention that Zane, black wizard of lower Vancouver, has broken his convenient with our council and allowed his son to be trained in the dark arts." Cecil paused for effect.

"We are meeting here to come to a decision about a suitable method to deal with this event. Brad Chambers, the son of Zane will soon graduate and be released into the world. We don't want a repeat of what happened with Zane five years ago."

"The fact is Zane Chambers parents were killed by the previous council." Someone stood up, shouting this fact into the air. "It stands to reason that Zane Chambers is within his right to demand retribution."

"But to defy the council, that cannot be allowed."

Cecil began.

"The council had made decisions based on wrong information." Someone else shouted. "And the result was the death of two of our talented witches. It is time that this council takes the blame for what its predecessors did."

"I disagree, as the Grand Wizard of the High Council, I feel that Zane Chambers and his son should be stripped of their powers." Cecil began.

"Since you are unable to control your own son, allowing him to seek pleasures with one Aiden Mac Ruaidhri, son of Jack and Margaret Mac Ruaidhri of the clan Mac Ruaidhri..." the words resonated through the room bringing everyone to silence as they realized that Cecil Taylor had no idea what they were talking about.

"EXPLAIN YOURSELF." Cecil roared his displeasure, shaking the walls and bringing an icy chill to the air.

"Liam Taylor, the child you have raised as your own, is no longer a virgin in any way or manner. He no longer can assume the role as Grand Wizard should he qualify in when the time comes." The words were spoken in the silence that had followed Cecil's outburst.

"He is the lover of one Aiden Mac Ruaidhri, the son of Jack and Margaret. He came to the attention of the council ten years earlier when he refused to assume his position, disclaiming all things magic."

"Aiden Mac Ruaidhri has had many lovers, he never keeps them long." Someone laughed. "If Mac Ruaidhri has taken young Taylor to his bed and kept him there, then Taylor is one interesting young man." Everyone laughed.

"Young Taylor has said that he will challenge the requirements for Grand Wizard when he is ready for the position."

"You are either virgin or you're not." Someone said.

"That's the point. Who cares? Virginitly does not increase one's powers."

"That remains to be seen doesn't it?" The question hung in the air.

The meeting continued, Cecil Taylor's temper was at the boiling point but he remained outwardly calm. He found it hard to believe that Morgan was not aware of what her son was up to. That meant not only was Liam deceiving him, but so was his wife. Their marriage might be in name only, but it was still a marriage by the laws of Wahjee. Perhaps he should have looked more closely at who had fathered the spawn he'd been forced to raise. "ENOUGH," Cecil Taylor roared, silencing for a moment his audience that consisted of the Grand Council as well as senior warlocks, for Wahjee were a long lived race, almost twice that of humans. "The boy known as Liam Taylor will do as he is told." The words spoken quietly, yet heard through out the vast meeting hall.

"He's no longer virgin." A voice spoken from the back pointed out. "He cannot assume his rightful place at council."

"And I'm to think that you buffoons are all celibate." Spoken with a definite snicker in tone, the room silenced as all eyes turned to Aiden Mac Ruaidhri who stood tall, impressive in his formal black silk robe, an aura of power haloing his entire body.

"Mac Ruaidhri, you aren't welcome here. You made it clean a long time ago that you wanted nothing to do with Wahjee politics." Cecil didn't hide the sneer he felt at the sight of the man who had desecrated his ward and son.

"I go where I wish Taylor, no one can keep me from attending a Wahjee council meeting should I wish to do so. I'm here to warn all of you to keep away from Liam Taylor. He is under my protection, the protection of the Mac Ruaidhri's, the rightful Kings of all Irish folk, be they magic or human or even Wahjee. Know this well, my father may have fucked up his heritage, but like all fuck ups, it came back to bite him in the ass three fold. Gentlemen, you're looking at the result. I WILL PROTECT WHAT IS MINE UNDER THE LAWS OF WAHJEE AND WHITE LIGHT." The words reverberated in and around the hall as Aiden faded from view. He didn't need a puff of smoke or other theatrics; his power was felt by all of them. A power that until now had been kept away from their knowledge. Of course the very oldest and wisest of the Wahjee knew, it had

not only been foretold centuries before, but something they had been waiting to see before they allowed themselves to return to the dust of the earth.

CHAPTER 9

In the weeks since Liam finally became involved with Aiden, he discovered that his newfound love came with a number of friends that couldn't be ignored. Which was strange for the young Wahjee as he'd never been particularly fond of anyone other than Dakota. He viewed his interaction with the entire gang, much like he would any kind of science experiment.

It was one thing to develop a relationship with Rosalie and Vanessa; they were after all Shays' mothers. Danny was an annoyance because he was the human equivalent to Dakota, though far more irritating. Lisa came hand in glove with Danny; she was his mother after all and had been of some benefit to Aiden as he grew up. But then there was Evan and Bob. Shay actually liked Evan. He liked the man's ever-positive outlook on life and his unapologetic fashion sense. So he was understandably confused when he wandered into one of the many Starbuck's expecting to have a few moments to himself when he

discovered Evan nursing a latte that was being watered down with his tears.

"What's up?" Liam asked sitting on the sofa next to his friend. "Can I help?"

"No one can help." Evan sniffed. "Bob and I went to get tested and I think I'm positive."

"Ev, you aren't positive." Liam could speak with authority. While Wahjee couldn't do anything about human diseases or illness, they could see when someone was affected if they concentrated on the person. Evan's aura showed no sign of illness.

"You can't know that." Evan sniffed. "Bobby was called and he was told he was negative, but when the clinic called me, they left a message for me to come in on Monday." He almost wailed.

Liam looked around hoping they weren't causing a scene, he was in enough trouble with everyone as it was. "I'll get Aiden to check it out now. He doesn't need to wait until Monday."

"No." Evan shook his head. "I don't want anyone to know. I'm so ashamed of myself, I was sure I'd always been safe, but somehow I must have slipped up."

The only thing Liam could do for his friend was to be there for him and hope the man would get through the weekend. He tried to be upbeat, after all Evan wasn't sick, unless you count his messed up brain.

On Monday, Liam found himself in Bulge sharing Evan's mixed set of emotions. "Evan, you have to be true to yourself." Liam was sitting on a high stool in

Bulge watching Evan unpack a new shipment of shirts.

"But I might have been positive. It was so close."

"No it wasn't close. You're always safe. The fact that the receptionist has a crush on you has nothing to do with your health. The man is a freak to have scared you. But you really should have listened to the rest of the message. He did ask you to call him at home and he did give you his cell phone as well."

"It was a sign and besides Liam, I made an agreement with God." Though Evan had to admit, way down deep, that he really should have listened to the rest of the phone message. His weekend would have been a lot more fun.

"You made an agreement with a mythical figure." Liam sighed. "If there is a God, do you think he or she would want you to be anything less than what he made you in the first place?" Liam asked.

"I don't know." Evan sighed with all the drama he could muster. "What about you, how do you feel about the whole being gay thing?"

"What's there to feel about it?" Liam asked. "I'm gay, I've always been gay. I've liked boys since I first saw Tommy Miller's peepee when I was eighteen months old. When I was two I saw Aiden Mac Ruaidhri, he was fourteen and all gawky and geeky, but damn, I thought he was the most beautiful boy in the world."

"Oh my sainted aunt, you saw Aiden when you were two and set your sights on him." Evan fanned

himself with a nearby hat. "Tell me everything." He leaned forward.

"It was at a kind of school my step father was in charge of. I wasn't really supposed to be there, but for some reason he decided I had to attend even if I was only two."

"Oh, like a church school. I went to one when I was three." Evan said as he clapped his hands.

"Something like that." Liam shrugged. "Anyway Aiden was there. He was on the carpet for something he'd done or refused to do, I'm not sure what. And he was in my father's office getting told off in no uncertain terms by the old man and a couple of his henchmen." Liam giggled. "They were all old farts as far as I was concerned."

"What did Aiden look like?"

"Kind of aloof. I mean he had this face on him that showed no emotion at all. His eyes were focused on something across the room and it was apparent to me, and I was only two, that he wasn't listening to one word that was being shouted at him."

"Oh I know that face." Evan giggled. "I've seen it lots of times."

"Yeah, I've seen it to." Liam giggled. "Especially when he doesn't get his own way about something." He looked at Evan, "The point I was trying to make is that you are either gay or you aren't."

"But I made a deal." Evan said. "I'm negative."

"You're weird, that's for sure." Liam giggled. "And you're flaming to put it mildly. But you aren't

straight, not even close, no matter what kind of deal you made."

"But I can stop being gay." Evan tried looking away for a moment. "I really can try at least. At the meetings they say that all of them have been able to straighten out." In his distress, Evan had found a group called Emissaries of the Divine, a group that swore they could "straighten out" men and women who were gay.

"What they meant was that they've all developed a technique for living a lie and making a mockery out of their lives. No doubt not only ruining their own lives but the lives of everyone even remotely close to them." Liam shook his head. He got off the stool and walked over to Evan, putting his arms around the taller man and hugging him close.

"Evan, I'm not going to tell you what to do. No one can do that and I mean no one, including your little Emissary groupies. You have to decide for yourself if you want to be Evan Lilly, flaming queen, or some heart broken shadow of your real self." He kissed Evan tenderly but with all the skill he'd learned from Aiden. "Let me know what happens." He said before slipping out the door, leaving Evan breathless from the kiss and envious of Aiden Mac Ruaidhri.

Liam walked down the street, aware of the members of the high council who had suddenly taken an interest in the shops on Davie Street. Like he was too dumb or young to realize that they were spying on him. He'd effectively blocked all of their attempts to magic him off the street. He was more talented than

any of them and they now had it confirmed. His mother had called him today at school and suggested he stay away from the house for a few days. His father, or rather Cecil Taylor, was on the rampage. He'd found out about Aiden and he wasn't a happy wizard.

Unable to concentrate, Liam had skipped school. He'd stopped at Bulge to visit with Evan and hopefully convince his friend that gay was the way to stay. Aiden was on a business trip to Toronto so he was temporarily out of reach by both Liam and the Wahjee freaks. Liam figured he could hide out at Aiden's apartment without either Aiden or his father finding out.

Aiden, who proclaimed to rarely if ever use magic, had secured his apartment with an effective locking spell. Effective to most, but not to Liam, who laughed when he discovered the spells, right before he removed them. He was going to have to bring Aiden up to speed with some of the more modern methods of safekeeping spells.

It was rather exciting to be in the apartment by himself. Liam moved around making changes as if the loft was his and not Aiden's. He figured he could change it back before Aiden came home. First he relocated the television and then not liking that, he used a bit of magic and made the screen larger until he was satisfied that it suited the space better. The sofa was next. It had to be one of the hardest damn sofas Liam had sat on in his life. He had to wonder about the Italian asses who sat on their Italian designs. They

must have some kind of padding that American butts didn't have. But he liked the lines of the sofa so he made it two feet longer and in place of the foam that was inside, he had memory foam appear covered in duck down. It took a couple of different spells to make it thick enough for his satisfaction. Now he could spread out in comfort. He added three down filled, silk covered throw pillows.

Liam threw himself on the sofa, head on a plump pillow and surfed the channels on his large screened plasma television. This was much better. There was a chill in the air though. This apartment was always chilly. Liam sat back up and looked around. If he put a direct-vented chimney up through the ceiling, cleverly disguised to match the support beams in some way, he could have a modern looking fireplace, perhaps one that could be viewed in both the bedroom and main room. Liam jumped up to search the Internet for the design he wanted and the specs for installation. Magic was one thing, but stuff as important as a gas fireplace that could burn down the building or worse, needed to be magicked properly.

Finally satisfied with what he'd chosen. Liam placed a fireplace in the wall of windows that divided the living room from the bedroom. He made sure it was properly installed and even had a gas fitter and inspector in to check it out. Both were fellow Wahjee and didn't mind the interruption of their day. Anything to please young Liam Taylor and piss off Cecil Taylor, the much-disliked Grand Wizard.

"Thanks guys." Liam said, beaming with pleasure. It would be something that Aiden could keep if he wanted to. He hoped the man would understand the advantages to having something as practical and romantic as a fireplace.

A fire lit, clad only in one of Aiden's silk wraps, a bit on the large size, but one he'd worn recently so there was the advantage of scent, Liam lay on the soft sofa and watched the fire flicker behind the glass protector. He was nodding off when a knock on the door followed by a key turning and the door sliding open, had him jumping to his feet, clutching the robe to his chest.

"Oh Liam, I'm sorry, I wasn't expecting you." Vanessa stepped inside, Shay in her arms. "Seamus has a bit of a fever and I wanted to ask Aiden some family medical history before I start to worry." She laughed nervously and looked around. "There's something different about the place."

"Yeah, I'm here." Liam grinned. He held out his arms for Shay and kissed the boy's forehead. "I suspect he's teething. He's the right age. Did you check his gums to see if they're red or swollen?"

"No, I never thought..." she looked embarrassed. "You think that's all it is?" she asked.

"I don't know. Hey Shay, do your gums hurt?" he asked the baby.

Shay smiled a lopsided grin and gurgled a response. He took one of Liam's fingers and pulled it into his mouth biting down hard.

"Ouch." Liam laughed. "I guess that's his answer. He's teething. I bet some baby Tylenol will help. Your mommy will make things all better L'll Guy."

"Can you stay with him while I run to the drugstore. He's been crying non-stop for hours, but for some reason as soon as we got on the elevator, he stopped. It was almost like he knew we were coming here."

"Sure, I'll watch him." Liam smiled down at Shay. He watched Vanessa walk out the door and slide it shut. "Okay Shay, I need to get some pants on if your mommy is going to be hanging around here." Liam carried the baby up to the bedroom placing him on the center of the large bed. Shay laughed out loud when Liam made a light show on the ceiling for him to watch as he found a pair of Aiden's sweats and slipped them on. He was going to use the bottoms of the silk robe, but he'd tried them earlier and they were too long and looked ridiculous. The sweats at least were meant to be baggy.

"Okay, that's done. Now what?" he looked at the baby. "I know, we'll rock in the rocking chair in front of the fire." He laughed. "Oh, we need a rocking chair, something that your daddy will accept, nothing too granny like." Liam picked up Shay and carried him back to the living room. Shay watched him intently.

"Now let's see." Liam was at Aiden's desk, searching for rocking chairs on the Internet. "We need something Italian in design, ridiculously expensive and uncomfortable. Your daddy will like that best. I can fix the comfort part, don't worry."

When Vanessa returned, she found Liam rocking gently in a white leather designer chair in front of a fireplace. Shay was sleeping soundly, his small hand clutching one of Liam's fingers.

"You two look so comfortable." Vanessa said, taking her coat off. "I never knew Aiden had a fireplace and a rocking chair." She sounded surprised.

"It's been here awhile." Liam shrugged. A couple of hours must count as awhile. Shay seems to like it. I think his fever is down a few degrees."

"Rosalie is out of town. I just didn't know what to do." Vanessa looked away, she wasn't quite telling the truth. She thought she and Aiden could have a mother/father bonding moment over Shay who wasn't feeling well.

Liam looked hard at her and she knew that he knew what she'd planned. "Aiden is out of town for a couple of days on business. You should have called him, I'm sure he has his cell phone with him."

"Oh, I never thought..." Her voice trailed off. "What are you doing here if Aiden is out of town?" her voice accused as she tried to turn the tables on Liam.

"I'm staying here for a week or so." Liam said. "Aiden knows." Well he didn't know, but he was sure to find out once Vanessa had a minute to herself.

"You're only seventeen, you should be at home, not staying with a man twelve years your senior." She began her rant.

"Just a minute. I'm eighteen on Saturday and frankly it's none of your business if I'm staying with

Aiden." He smiled to take the sting out of his words. "Aiden needs someone in his life who cares about him. And he needs to have someone to care for. It works out for both of us. And don't worry, I know all about his hang ups and his stupid rules that he thinks he lives by." He snickered. "I think he's broken every one of them in the few months since we met, at least once."

"Please don't hurt him Liam." Vanessa pleaded. "Aiden, Aiden doesn't love easily. He's never loved anyone before. If he does fall for you, he'll do it with everything he has."

"The last thing I want to do is hurt Aiden in any way." Liam continued to rock Shay, kissing the baby's head every now and then. And then looking at Vanessa with eyes that were wiser than his years, Liam said. "I've wanted Aiden for almost as long as I can remember. It's kind of a family thing. I've needed him for my own safety and sanity. I desire him for my emotional well-being. I love him for that which is truly Aiden Mac Ruaidhri, the part of him that no one sees and few know. We may hurt each other emotionally every now and then, but it is our destiny to be together. I will always love him as he will always love me." Liam let the words he spoke sink into Vanessa's subconscious self, before muttering a few words of a forgetting spell that would make her forget he'd spoken them, but would allow her to know the meaning of the words in his relationship with Aiden and perhaps knowing this, she would cut them some slack.

"I think it's time to take Seamus home." Vanessa said, taking the baby from Liam's arms. "When you talk to Aiden tell him we're sorry we missed him." She smiled, placing a small cap on Shay's head. "Would you and Aiden like to come over on Saturday, we could have dinner."

"I'll talk to him. I don't know his plans for the weekend." Liam stood up, his arms felt empty without Shay in them. The buzzer rang and Liam went to answer. "Hey."

"It's Dakota and I have food." His friend called up.

"Come on up." Liam beamed at Vanessa. "I guess I get to eat tonight. I think I need to go grocery shopping, Aiden doesn't know what that big steel box in the kitchen is for. He thinks it's a water cooler."

Vanessa laughed. "I think it has to do with his childhood. From what I gather, his mother wasn't exactly motherly and they never had much in the way of food around. She'd buy what they needed on a day-to-day basis, if she remembered. His father thought that the three basic food groups were rum, rye and beer."

Liam laughed. "I guess it's up to me to show him that we can keep actual food in there."

"You know Liam; I think you may be good for Aiden. He needs to have someone around who really cares for him and not just in a sexual way, but his physical and emotional needs as well."

"Thank you Vanessa." Liam flushed with pleasure. "I'm going to do my best. I may be young,

but I know what I want and better yet, how to get it and value it when I do."

Once Dakota arrived, Liam locked the door and then put a spell on it so that no one could get in despite having a key. He wanted to relax with his friend in front of the fireplace without interruption.

Dakota was already kneeling on the floor with the pizza she'd brought. Liam added some paper towels for napkins and grabbed them both a cold beer from the fridge, grimacing at the fact it was some kind of imported crap that Aiden thought tasted good, but as far as Liam was concerned tasted like piss. At least it was cold. "So my little stud muffin, what brings you up to my apartment?" Liam drawled in his best imitation of Aiden.

Dakota snorted beer and laughed when she recovered. "I knew you'd be hungry and thought I'd visit. Besides, I've always wanted to see what this place was like." She looked around. "It's kind of cool, sort of like an old movie set. Hey you never said you had a fireplace."

"All the better to fuck in front of my dear." Liam said while wiggling his eyebrows. "I think I need a furry rug there though." He made a mental note to add one as soon as his friend went home.

"I can't stay long," Dakota began still giggling. "My mom thinks I'm at the mall. It is a school night you know."

"How could I forget." Liam sighed. "It's not like I don't have half the free world reminding me. You'd

think none of them were ever seventeen and horny before."

Liam was more than ready to relax when his friend finally left. A wave of his hand disposed of the left over pizza and grease covered napkins. It was time to make spend some moments daydreaming about his favorite warlock.

Kicking off Aiden's sweat pants. Liam grabbed a bottle of beer from the fridge and headed back to his comfy sofa. He lay down and then made sure all the lights were turned off and down. It was a little thing but he liked to use his magic when he could. At home it was impossible to use any. He was always being watched for signs of how powerful he was becoming. To confuse the issue, Liam rarely if ever used magic anywhere near any of his family.

To amuse himself and to add to the atmosphere, he sent some dancing sparks to play near the shadowed ceiling. Head back, he relaxed allowing himself finally to think of Aiden who was busy in Toronto, no doubt misbehaving at some club by this time of night. Liam grinned to himself. Aiden could fuck or be sucked by anyone he could find, but he'd never be able to get Liam out of his mind. It hadn't been a magicked glimmer that bound them together. But rather a binding spell someone close to both of them had put in place before either one was born.

The phone rang and Liam contemplated not answering it. After all he wasn't supposed to be there. And then he thought why not. "Mac Ruaidhri residence." He said trying to sound official.

"Well if it isn't my witch boy in his new persona as my personal house boy." Aiden drawled.

"Ahh, Vanessa must have called you when she hit the street." Liam sighed and lay back on his silk pillow.

"Yes dear, she did." Aiden mimicked Morgan Taylor. "And to my surprise, I find not only do I have a house guest, but a fireplace now. Any more surprises, or is that it?"

"Maybe a couple more. I'm just trying to make it more comfy in here. You have to admit it was early hotel room décor. Very impersonal."

"Liam, don't you dare mess around with my apartment. It is just the way I want it to be." Aiden enunciated clearly.

"What are you doing in Toronto?" Liam asked, changing the subject.

"Working, what are you doing in my apartment?"

"Relaxing, you should try it some time." Liam laughed. "When are you coming home?"

"Why?"

"I was going to cook something for you. I think you eat too much take out."

"Just what I always wanted, a little wife with a big dick, barefoot in the kitchen." Sarcasm dripped from Aiden's voice.

"At least I'm not pregnant." Liam snickered. "And thanks for the big dick part. I expect it'll get bigger the older I get. I mean your dick never actually stops growing, same as your nose, it continues to grow too."

"Strange conversation we're having witch boy."

"Come home, I can have a much stranger conversation with you." Liam's cock was hard and he began to stroke it.

"I understand you were wearing my black silk robe."

"Yeah, I like it, that's why we needed a fireplace. Silk isn't exactly warm and cozy."

"We didn't need a fireplace, you did." Aiden huffed.

"What can I say, I like heat."

"Yes, we've already established you're a delicate flower. Now get your ass home and out of my apartment and make sure you set the locks again. "

"I'll get right on that." Liam grinned and hung up the phone. He stretched and shut his eyes, imagining Aiden in Toronto. He knew that the man was there to look over the job situation. Not that Aiden had told him this, but he wasn't stupid and he'd heard the phone calls between Aiden and various Toronto agencies.

In Toronto, Aiden held the phone out and stared at it. The little shit had hung up on him. He would have liked to have done something impulsive that involved using magic, but damned if he was going to let Liam get to him any more than he already had.

Instead he walked to the closet and pulled out the club clothes he'd brought with him. Maybe throbbing music, hot sex and recreation drugs were the order of the night. It would relax him and maybe let him work his way through the dilemma he had found himself in.

The cab ride to the club was fast and uneventful. Aiden got out, paid the driver and walked to the front of the line with the confidence of a true stud. He didn't need to use any more magic than his own personal charisma to jump the line and walk into the club without paying a cover charge.

He stepped inside expecting to see a club much like The Odyssey, instead he found himself in a space that just being inside was an experience in itself. The walls were floor to ceiling fish tanks, some round cylinders, some oblong, it depended where they were. The fish, all larger than anything Aiden had seen before in a tank, were brightly colored tropical varieties they seemed to dance to the beat of the music as they swam in and around intricate columns of crystal and floating plants.

The dance floor was crowded and so was the area in front of the bar. A flash of pink hued naked flesh drew Aiden's eyes to the center tank that was based in the middle of the dance floor and just slightly out of reach of the dancers. Inside the cylinder of heavy glass, dancing provocatively were two dancers, one so black he was almost the color of coal and one so white his skin luminesced when the light hit it a certain way. Both were very well endowed if the thong swimwear was any indication.

They continued to the beat of the music, and Aiden did his best to figure out how they were able to breathe beneath the water, until he caught sight of a breathing tube, just out of eyesight from most of the dancers.

He ordered a beer and leaned against a support pole to watch the display in the water. None of the other patrons seemed to notice or care, having seen it all before. Both water dancers were well muscled. The flash of red and yellow fish dancing with them, almost laughing with them, was one of those one of a kind type experiences.

And then, just as Aiden was about to turn away, the white boy moved into a position that gave Aiden a better view. He looked like Liam. In fact he looked so much like Liam that Aiden spit out a mouthful of beer, earning himself a dirty look from the guys dancing closest to him. "Sorry." He mumbled an apology as he slipped through the dancers on the dance floor hoping to get close enough to the cylinder to confirm that the red head was Liam. But the closer he got, the more immense the structure became. Standing close allowed no view of the tank. Reluctantly he moved backwards, stumbling into dancers, but refusing to take his eyes off of the red head in the tank.

It couldn't be Liam, he'd spoken to him only an hour before. Aiden pulled out his cell phone and dialed his home number again. "You're still there." He said when Liam answered.

"Apparently." Liam yawned. "Why?"

"Just taking a survey." Aiden said. It was hard to hear over the noise of the club. The red headed tank dancer was still doing his thing. "Do you have any relatives in Toronto?"

"Probably." Liam shrugged. "Why?"

"Just asking." Aiden thought for a moment.
"Goodnight Liam."

"Goodnight Aiden." Liam giggled. "Hey do you like to swim?" he hung up the phone.

"Fucker." Aiden said as the red head in the water wiggled suggestively and gave Aiden a very deliberate wink. It was then Aiden noticed the dancer's eyes, they were so violet they were almost neon. It wasn't Liam.

Liam couldn't read minds, but he could read Aiden. And he wasn't deaf; he could hear the sound of club music. Aiden had to be at Waters, a club in Toronto that featured boys dancing in tanks. His cousin was one of them. Not that Liam had ever been there, but he did talk to his cousin all the time on MSN. He'd have to ask if the guy had seen Aiden.

Two more beers later, Aiden was on the dance floor when a pair of pale arms snaked around his body and someone kissed his ear. "Hey, are you Aiden Mac Ruaidhri?" the boy asked.

Aiden turned around. It was water boy. He did look a lot like Liam, but he was taller, almost as tall as Aiden himself. "Yes." Aiden said.

"I'm Frances Taylor, Liam's cousin. I was sure surprised to see you out there. I mean, Liam never said you were coming to Toronto."

"It wasn't generally known." Aiden drawled, studying Frances carefully. It was disconcerting have someone look so much like Liam, but be so much older. "I'm here on business."

"Oh, you're probably looking for work. I mean that's what I figure. Liam probably does too. I mean, who wants to stay in Vancouver with a talent for selling mortgages like you have. This is where it's happening in the real estate market."

"How do you know what I do or don't have?" Aiden asked.

"Liam talks about you all the time. Hell, I probably know you better than you know you." Frances laughed. He drained a bottle of water and then held it up. "I know, I like water and I'm sure as fuck not going to drink the stuff I swim in." he danced a bit with Aiden. "I'm off in an hour, do you want to go somewhere after?"

"I'm not going to fuck you." Aiden said. Somehow the idea of fucking a relative of Liam's, who looked so much like the boy, was slightly off putting.

"Great, because unless you have a pussy in those jeans, I'm not fucking you either. I'm straight. I just dance here 'cause the money is good and I like it. I'm a law student. This is a great way to unwind after a week of torts and I don't have to put out. It's a win, win situation. Not to mention my wife would have my balls if I played around. It's kind of a thing with us Taylors. We mate for life and we're true to that mate. You did know that, didn't you?"

"I never thought about it." Aiden said, inwardly wincing about Liam. He'd mentioned something, but Aiden hadn't been paying attention. "I'll be here if

you want to go for coffee or something after your shift."

"Great, I have one more set to do and then I'll shower and meet you back here. I know a great coffee place that serves awesome desserts. I need a sugar boost after this gig."

Aiden nodded his agreement. This was becoming a more interesting evening than he'd planned.

In Vancouver, Liam fell asleep on the sofa, thoughts of Aiden in his head. While he slept, his cousin Frances popped into the loft, found a quilted silk throw and covered up his cousin. He looked around, pleased that Liam had fallen for a man with such great taste. He'd been surprised to see Aiden at Waters, but pleased by the fact that the man had turned him down in a way, and that he so far, hadn't headed for the back room with anyone. Satisfied that Liam was going to be okay, Frances popped back to the club where he undressed, ready for his last set. He was glad to have this chance to get to know Liam's Aiden. It might help his cousin when the shit finally hit the fan about his status as a non-virgin. He'd already heard rumblings that the council knew, which was no doubt the reason why Liam was at Aiden's place.

Aiden watched Frances' last performance. He couldn't believe how long the man could hold his breath, let alone gyrate to the music that pulsated through the room and the water without using any Wahjee powers.

His groin stirred with desire, not so much for Frances, but for the red head that lay sleeping in his loft. He almost wished he could use the magic he'd been born with to pop in and visit Liam for an hour or so. But he wasn't going to compromise his principles even for Liam's red headed boy ass. It just wasn't worth it.

"Glad you waited around." Frances said as he approached Aiden.

"I'm heading back to Van tomorrow, no work, don't need to get up early." Aiden's words were clipped. He was tired and he wanted to get back to his loft and his life. Toronto wasn't what he expected. He wasn't sure he was prepared to give up his life to be part of sales team for one of the major Canadian financial institutions. There were some advantages to being in a smaller company.

"Great. I have a late class tomorrow." Frances walked out of the club with Aiden, many of the regulars wondering how the tall dark stranger had scored when no one else had been able to. "The place I'm thinking of isn't far from your hotel. We can take a cab or walk, it doesn't matter."

"How do you know where I'm staying?" Aiden asked as he stepped out in the street to hail a cab.

"Duh, wizard boy here." Frances laughed. "You really had to ask?"

"I don't use that shit." Aiden mumbled.

"You might want to reconsider that decision." Frances paused. "It's hard to recover your full abilities, even the ones you were born with, if you

don't use them. It's like any part of your body. If you don't use it, it atrophies."

"Precisely why I fuck a lot." Aiden smirked, holding the cab door open for Frances to get in first. "It's the only part of my body I truly would miss."

"Liam said you were focused on your dick. He never said just how much." Frances laughed, before he gave the driver directions to the coffee house.

The drive was a short one but long enough for the two men to become acquainted. Aiden paid for the cab and they got out in front of run down looking coffee shop. "This is it?" Aiden asked. "It doesn't look like much."

"You know it really is true that all fags are label queens." Frances giggled.

Aiden shrugged and laughed. "You know you're the first straight boy I've known who actually has a sense of humor." He held the door for Frances.

"And you're the first gay man I've met with a sense of chivalry, a true gentleman." Frances smiled, walking through the door.

"Hey Frankie." The barista behind the counter called. "Your order will be right up."

"Double that, I've brought a friend." Frances walked to a booth in the back and slid in. Aiden sat across from him.

"Welcome to my decompression chamber." Frances smiled. "After work I like to regroup here before heading home. My wife will be sleeping and she has to be at work at eight. It somehow doesn't seem fair to wake her up."

"How often do you perform at Waters?" Aiden asked.

"Only three times a week. It's enough to pay the rent on our place and buy groceries. I have a full scholarship for school. We do okay."

"Liam says you two haven't met in person, but only on the net."

"Well that's not entirely true. I've seen Liam a lot of times. I'm kind of his watcher. He just hasn't seen me. He was assigned to me when he was two." Frances paused. "I'm ten years older than him."

"But you're in school now?"

"It's just the way things worked out." Frances shrugged. "I took a long time to grow up. It happens."

"Why were you assigned to be Liam's watcher and does he know you are?" Aiden asked, his curiosity piqued. He smiled his thanks to the server who had placed a large cup of coffee in front of him as well as a piece of freshly baked apple pie with a scoop of ice cream.

"I know you don't eat this kind of thing in the middle of the night." Frances grinned. "But it won't hurt you this once. To answer your question, Liam is kind of like royalty in a Wahjee way. It's traditional he be assigned a watcher. Usually that watcher lives nearby and the two of them become friends. But Liam isn't someone to take kindly to that type of thing. I'm sure you know how he is. He's unpredictable. So no, he doesn't know that I'm his watcher. Or at least I don't think he does. We've been close Internet friends as well as cousins. It works for us."

"Do you have to report to anyone about his activities?"

"No, of course not. I suppose I could be asked, but no one has and besides, I wouldn't tell them a damn thing. I'm afraid I'm one of those Wahjee who think it's about time they remembered what century we're in." he looked away and then back at Aiden. "I do pop in and check on him though. I like to know he's safe."

"I like to know he's safe myself." Aiden said, his fork playing with the pie and ice cream.

"I know you do. I can tell you have feelings for him." Frances leaned forward. "Aiden, you don't have to be afraid to have these feelings. Liam loves you."

"But I don't want him to love me." Aiden began. "I want him to like me. I know we can have a great time together. But love, no, not love. Love is for other people, not for fags. I don't actually think there is such a thing as love. Not the way it's described in books and poetry. It's a four-letter word, like all the rest of the four letter words. It has no meaning other than in the moment the word is spoken."

"You don't believe that. So why are you saying it?" Frances asked

"You don't know what I do or don't believe." Aiden glared. "I know what works for me. What helps me survive."

"Like I said Aiden, times change. What got you through the day a year ago, isn't going to work now." Frances sipped his coffee and ate some of his dessert.

"Why does life have to be so damn complicated?" Aiden asked not expecting an answer. "I was happy with my life. I had friends, some of whom were like family. I had a good job, better than good and along comes this underage twink with red hair and eyes that can see into your soul and my world has never been the same since. It makes no sense, no sense at all."

Frances put his head back and roared with laughter. "If I could answer that, I'd be the Grand Wizard of the High Council instead of that pompous ass Cecil Taylor. And by the way, you and Liam have been on the council's agenda, so keep an eye on our young friend."

"I always do." Aiden sighed and ate a forkful of messy apples dripping with melted ice cream.

"I know, when Liam first told me about you, I looked you up. Your family is one of the oldest Wahjee clans."

"So I've been told." Aiden drawled, back to his old self.

"They have often been in close alliance with the Taylors' over the centuries. I was surprised to find that there appears to be a rift in the relationship, going back thirty years or so."

"I don't know anything about that." Aiden said. He looked at his plate, astonished to find he'd finished the dessert. Shaking his head as if to clear it of such an anomaly, he reached into his pocket for his wallet, taking out a business card. "Here's my card. You might as well keep in touch with me the regular way."

If you've heard about me, you know I don't use magic. I prefer telephones and the net."

"Yeah, what's up with that?" Frances asked, looking at the card before putting it in his wallet. "I mean I know we have to keep things secret from the humans, but hell man, magic is cool and convenient."

"And it's mind controlling, and makes things too easy. Why learn anything if you can just wiggle a finger and have what ever it is you want appear."

"It doesn't quite work like that and you know it." Frances laughed. "I wish that it did or I used to wish that when I was a kid in school. Hell, why bother to attend the University of Victoria if I could just wiggle my finger as you say and pop, I'm a lawyer."

"My point exactly. What's the point?" Aiden shrugged and stood up. "I won't ask why you're attending a University on the other side of the country and not Toronto where you work. Or should I say why you work in Toronto and live in Victoria. I have to go. I'll walk to the hotel. It was nice to meet you. Great act you have. Say hello to Marcie for me." He grinned at Frances who knew very well he'd never told Aiden his wife's name. But Aiden had a natural gift for looking into another's mind. He rarely used it, but did occasionally. It wasn't magic, it was just him, Aiden Mac Ruaidhri.

Frances sat for another hour in the coffee shop, sharing his night with his friend who owned the place. He didn't mention Aiden other than to say he'd gone back to his hotel and his friend knew better than to ask any questions. While they talked, Frances couldn't get

the fact that Aiden had known Marcie was his wife's name, or where he lived, out of the back of his mind. He was going to have to ask Liam about this part of Aiden that no one knew about. No one, including the high council.

Frances stepped into an alley before he popped home. It was almost time for Marcie to wake up. He liked to have an hour to cuddle before she had to go to work and he had to sleep for a few hours. It was not the ideal way to live, but it worked for the both of them for now.

Back in Vancouver, Liam stirred on the sofa. He could almost feel Aiden's lips on his. It wouldn't be long until his lover arrived back in home. He'd call him later and ask which flight he was taking.

He sat up, the silk quilted throw puddling on the floor. He looked down at it, not sure where it had come from, but glad he'd had it. He'd kept the fireplace on low and the loft was comfortable, but Liam had been all but naked. He looked at the phone, hoping Aiden would call again before padding in the direction of the shower. He had school today. There was no point in antagonizing his parents by skipping school.

While Liam was showering in Vancouver, Aiden lay in his hotel bed in Toronto, eyes shut, but not sleeping. He thought about some of the things he'd talked to Frances about earlier. Almost getting up and calling either Frances or Liam to clarify a few things.

His days in Toronto had been productive, but not what he'd expected. That in itself was unsettling in its

own way. Danny had left twenty or so phone messages on his cell phone, all about the infamous Edward Jackson the Third, his latest heartthrob. Aiden couldn't stand the man, and didn't want to get involved. But apparently he was going to have to, if for no other reason than to get his friend to stop calling him every time he has some kind of imagined crises as Mrs. EJ3.

Liam was for some reason, staying at the loft. Kimberly, his secretary or executive assistant, depending on the day of the week, was barely speaking to him because he'd taken the week to go to Toronto. And Liam informed him that Bob had taken up with some crystal queen. There were moments like this when he'd like to hide under the duvet and never get out of bed. Aiden sighed dramatically in the empty room. And there was Vanessa and her petty ruse with Shay to get him more involved with the boy's life. Much like some kind of happy hetero family. He wondered if she was suffering from some kind of post partum delusion.

Of course there was also the problem simmering on the back of the stove with the fucking High Council, as if he didn't have enough to worry about. Aiden rolled over and screamed into the pillow over and over, letting out his pent up frustration.

"Aiden, are you okay?" He felt Liam's cold wet hand on his back and rolled his head over to look at a wet Liam, who was dripping water on his bed.

"What the fuck?" Aiden blinked.

"Sorry, I was in the shower when I heard you screaming. I didn't wait to dry off." He looked down. "Or dress." He shivered and Aiden lifted the covers. Liam slipped inside.

"I'm okay." Aiden said, his voice quiet. He pulled Liam into his arms. "You came to me?" he couldn't believe it.

"Of course." Liam snuggled close. "You needed me."

"Witch boy, I don't know what to do about you." Aiden sighed and kissed Liam's forehead.

"You could love me." Liam said, one hand cupping Aiden's head. "That would work." He kissed him with every ounce of passion and love he had, as he faded back to Vancouver, leaving Aiden's arms empty, but his heart full.

CHAPTER 10

When Aiden woke the next morning, he had come to a realization, either consciously or subconsciously, he wasn't sure, which, but he knew without doubt that moving to Toronto wasn't going to be the answer to his restlessness. Maybe it had been when Liam had rushed to his rescue, though how he thought he'd be able to deal with anything too harsh, naked and wet, Aiden didn't know. But it was the thought that counted and Liam did have youth on his side.

Doing something he never thought he'd do, Aiden checked out of his hotel, cancelled his appointments for the day and his flight for the next day, and then popped across the country to his apartment.

Because of the three-hour time difference, Liam was sound asleep when his lover arrived. Aiden stood beside the bed for a few minutes memorizing the beauty of the man who slept wrapped in the duvet, a stuffed turquoise and white cat in his arms. His red gold curls sun kissed from the morning sun, Aiden

couldn't help but reach over and touch the silk of them.

"Hey" Liam stretched at Aiden's touch, not really surprised to see the man he loved standing beside him. Neither one noticed the stuffed cat disappear. Liam because he hadn't known it was there, Aiden because he was so used to it being around the red head, he rarely noticed it. "You popped." He giggled.

"Actually witch boy, when I teleport, I don't make any audible sound." Aiden was removing his suit, taking time to do it slowly and suggestively. "Unlike others I know."

"Not me." Liam threw back the duvet and wiggled his eyebrows. "Come and join me, its all warm and snuggly."

"Don't mind if I do." Aiden slid in beside Liam; he might as well give in to what ever it was that was that was pulling the two of them together. Goodness knew when he'd feel this way again. Or if he even wanted to try and find someone other than Liam. The kid had a point, they were destined to be together, if for no other reason than the fact that everyone was trying to keep them apart.

Aiden was barely home twenty-four hours when he was being harassed by Lisa to release Daniel from an imaginary bond. Why he had to be responsible for Daniel's fantasies was beyond him. On top of that he had Liam firmly ensconced in the loft and not about to move. Finally to get Daniel's mother off his back, he agreed to have a party for him, his mind working a

million miles an hour as he planned how to release Daniel from his imagined thrall.

"Aiden, I think having a party for Daniel is a good idea. But having a party for Daniel and being a bitch to him is a bad idea." Liam was sitting on the kitchen counter, his legs folded in front of him in the lotus pose.

"Do you have to sit on the counter?" Aiden asked. He was at his desk making phone calls to arrange his friend's surprise party.

"Yes." Liam sighed. "Are you going to invite anyone from Daniel's work? I mean it's his 30th birthday party, maybe he has some friends there."

"Good idea." Aiden smirked. "I'll invite his little buddy Susan."

"See, that's being nice." Liam was pleased. "Are you making up official invitations or just calling people?"

"Calling them." Aiden said, dialing the phone again. "You should go home to your mommy. You've been here long enough."

"You know you like me here." Liam said as he moved off of the counter. "I give good head."

"So you tell me." Aiden smirked. "But you're still an amateur."

"That's not what the guys on the football team say." Liam threw himself down on the sofa, still in its comfortable state. Aiden hadn't objected too strenuously to the change.

"Tell me you didn't." Aiden sighed.

"I didn't. I just wanted to see what you'd say."
Liam grinned and flipped on the television after magicking the remote from its place on the floor.

"Don't you have homework to do?" Aiden asked.
He winced when the remote hit Liam's fingers.

"Did it." Liam turned the television off. "I'm bored. I want to go dancing."

"Have at 'er." Aiden replied, making a notation on his computer. "There, everything is all set for Friday night." He looked satisfied as he sat back in his chair.

"I'll bartend." Liam offered. "I make a great martini."

"Whatever." Aiden sighed. "I'm having the caterer set up Friday at six. Everyone should arrive starting at eight."

"I'll be here." Liam stood up and stretched. "Are you going to The Odyssey tonight?"

"I don't know." Aiden looked at Liam. "You do know that we're not in any kind of relationship, don't you?"

"Whatever." Liam drawled, imitating Aiden as he turned and headed for the bedroom. "I'm going out." He announced, looking in his section of the wardrobe for something to wear to the club.

"Not on a school night dahling." Aiden laughed. "But good try."

"I go out on school nights when I'm at home."

"Then go home." Aiden huffed, heading for the kitchen. "You're too young to be in a relationship of any kind. You're in high school and I'm not. I'm

damned if I'm going to ask you to go steady. I'm just not that kind of girl." He swished for a couple of steps making Liam burst out laughing.

"You know, when you're here and not with the gang you're different." Liam appeared in the bedroom doorway dressed in a spandex sparkle tummy shirt that was tight and provocative. There was six inches of glowing white skin, an obvious pierced nipple complete with golden ring and then slung low on his hips were worn blue jeans, inclusive with highly priced, but well placed slits in the material. It was apparent he wasn't wearing any underwear.

"Jesus Christ Liam, what the fuck are you wearing?" Aiden managed to gasp.

"Duh, club clothes." Liam picked up his jacket off of the stool he'd draped it on and slipped on his shoes. "Don't wait up."

"There's no fucking way you're going anywhere dressed like that." Aiden began.

"Aiden, you aren't my keeper." Liam tried to reason. But he'd gotten the reaction he'd wanted to get.

"You are living here in my loft. I think I should have some say over what you wear when you're going out." Aiden began realizing how ridiculous his words sounded, but unable to take them back.

"Yes daddy." Liam giggled. He walked up to Aiden and put his arms around him, resting his head on Aiden's chest.

Aiden's arms pulled the boy even closer and he kissed him twice on the top of his head. "I know that

sounded stupid." He said quietly. "You're driving me crazy."

"Good." Liam wiggled. "Now do you want to go dancing?"

"The answer is still no. You have school tomorrow."

"Who says we have to go out." Liam moved out of Aiden's arms and twirled around. "I have it on good authority that someone has a state of the art sound system."

"I've heard that too." Aiden smiled, going along with Liam. "And some not bad music as well."

Liam nodded toward the sound system and music filled the loft. It was something close to the steady beat of a club mix, but better sounding in the loft space. Another nod and the lights disappeared, to be replaced with Liam's trademark electric sparks dancing on the ceiling and up and down the walls. He turned the fireplace on low and began to move as only someone with years of dance lessons and a love of music can.

"Shit Liam, you know I don't use magic in the loft." Aiden began as he started his own version of dancing.

"But I do." Liam grinned and leaned in to lick the side of Aiden's neck. As he danced closer, his legs rubbed up and down Aiden's in his own version of dirty dancing. A version that had Aiden sweating with the heat the young boy managed to create between the two of them as the music wrapped around the room. "You are some dancer." Liam whispered against

Aiden's neck. He put his one arm around Aiden's neck, so that they were both face to face. Aiden laughed and claimed Liam's lips for his own.

The music continued, only now they could feel it deep inside them both as they moved to the beat, Aiden following Liam's lead, hands roaming, fingers touching, hardened cocks with a life of their own, rubbing against fabric. They were both lost in each other when the phone began ringing. Aiden ignored it. Liam nodded and the phone stopped ringing. Aiden slapped his ass, but kept dancing. The dance was now less a dance and more a seduction.

The phone rang again and this time it gave a puff of smoke and exploded quietly in a hundred pieces. Aiden shook his head and laughed. "Witch boy, you're buying me a new phone."

There was a barely audible pop and Frances and his wife Marcie were in the loft. They saw Liam and Aiden dancing. Always willing to dance, Frances pulled Marcie into a well-rehearsed dance, complete with intricate dance steps.

Aiden was the first to notice the intruders. "Apparently we're having a party." He said to Liam and turned the red head so that he could see his cousin and his wife.

"I didn't invite them." Liam said. "I want to fuck you, tell them to go home."

"Ahhhh, witch boy. I'm going to fuck you, cousin or no cousin." Aiden began to dance Liam toward the stairs leading to the bedroom.

Suddenly there was silence, the lights were back on and Frances walked over to the Aiden and Liam. "Sorry to drop in on you like this, but I did try and call, twice." He looked at Liam. "Hey cousin, you're looking good. You too Aiden."

"Hi I'm Marcie, it wasn't my idea to barge in on you guys." She looked embarrassed. "He's usually much more polite."

"Hi Marcie, goodbye Marcie." Aiden put Liam over his shoulder and headed up the stairs to the bedroom. "Make yourselves at home and then go away, we're busy." He shut the bedroom door, only to find himself and Liam back in the living room. "No fucking magic in my home." He glared at Frances. "It's bad enough that witch boy doesn't take no for an answer, but damned if I'm going to let anyone else get away with it."

"Aiden we didn't come here to dance or to annoy you."

"And yet you've done both."

"I thought you should know that the High Council is on the warpath about Liam's status. Rumor has it that they have put out a, well hit, for a lack of a better word."

"What the fuck are you talking about?" Aiden asked, his body suddenly cold. He headed to the bar and poured himself a drink. "Liam will get you something to drink. He likes to play hostess." Aiden waved his glass and sat down on the chaise, preferring it to the soft comfy sofa.

"I told you there was talk. Well, there is a faction of the High Council who frankly doesn't like Cecil Taylor. Liam was in line for the position his father holds. It's a hereditary position, though matriarchal. And of course the candidate must have stronger powers and abilities than the rest of the council. You should know all of this, you are Wahjee after all."

"I try to forget." Aiden mumbled. "It doesn't seem to be working." Liam was walking past him, having given his cousin and his wife each a drink. Aiden pulled him down so he was holding him on his lap.

Liam snuggled close. "Frances, I've told you before, I can look after myself. There isn't anything they can do to me no matter how hard they try."

"I've heard that Brad Chambers has taken the contract. You know he's the son of Zane Chambers and you know that Zane Chambers has always been slightly crazed."

"Brad can't do much to me at school. Even he has to live by the rules there. I mean every spell turns back on the spellbinder three fold. I don't imagine it would be pleasant from some of the stories I've heard." Liam shuddered remembering.

"I agree, he won't try anything at the school. But Liam you aren't always at school. For instance you're here with Aiden right now and could be vulnerable."

"Frances thanks for the warning. Marcie, it was nice to meet you." Liam stood up and walked over to where the other two sat. "It's time for you to pop back to wherever you came from. And Frances, a warning

here from me. After you leave I'm putting an enclosure spell on the loft. It wouldn't be a good thing to try and pop back in. Unless you like being reduced to muck and floating in another dimension until someone cleans you up."

"Liam, don't do spells you aren't ready for." Frances cautioned. "You don't know what harm you can do."

"I know just what I'm doing cousin. I think you and the rest of the Wahjee have underestimated me." Liam smiled. "Call and use the elevator the next time you come." He blinked three times and muttered something Aiden couldn't quite catch. The smell of ozone was in the air and Frances and Marcie were gone.

"Well wasn't that special?" Aiden drawled. "It's always nice to have the relatives over."

"Now where were we?" Liam asked, returning the room to its former darkness. He made his clothing disappear as well as Aiden's before launching himself into Aiden's arms with a triumphant yell.

Aiden laughed, catching his naked red headed witch just in time. "We need to talk." He muttered.

"Later." Liam suggested.

Aiden must have agreed because he began to carry Liam to the bedroom. There would be time later for a discussion on how to protect the man in his arms. For now all he wanted to do was to make love to him.

CHAPTER 11

Things were touchy between Aiden and EJ3 as Aiden referred to Daniel's boyfriend. But knowing he was doing what had to be done, Aiden made the effort to personally invite the guy to Daniel's surprise party. It was the least he could do. His old friend was going to need some support.

Liam contented himself with running interference between the caterer and Aiden, making sure that there were no major arguments. While at the same time, attending school and doing his best to avoid Brad Chambers. It wasn't easy on all counts.

Aiden was bitchier than usual. Liam hoped it was just work, but he suspected that Aiden was worried about him despite his assurances otherwise. It hadn't helped when Morgan Taylor had appeared at Aiden's office the day before to confirm that Brad Chambers indeed was out to get Liam and insisting that Aiden keep him close. Not that he wasn't going to, but somehow having Liam's mother order him around, made the idea less desirable.

To make the week more tense than usual, the preparations for Daniel's surprise party were causing problems. Aiden had invited some of Daniel's coworkers and Liam had discovered through Lisa, Daniel wasn't out at work. He tried to get Aiden to cancel the invitations, but the older man refused. It was then that Liam began to get suspicious, that Aiden was planning on outing his long time human friend.

"Just make the drinks and keep out of it." Aiden said. He was pacing around the apartment adjusting the decorations and generally annoying Liam. "I know what I'm doing." And he did know, but he was nervously uncertain that his plan to disenchant Daniel might have been better had he just used good old-fashioned magic.

"Sure you do." Liam snorted. "Hey did I tell you that fuckin' Chambers set fire to my locker?" He had planned on keeping the information to himself, but Aiden needed to focus on something other than the arriving guests.

"WHAT THE FUCK?" Aiden turned and faced Liam, his anxiety over the party forgotten for a moment.

"Don't have a hissy, I lost a bunch of stuff that's all." Liam shrugged. "Dakota got them all on video though, so she turned in her camera to the principal and they're all suspended. They might even be kicked out. I mean the school could have burned down. Brad could lose his year."

"It's going to make things worse." Aiden paused. "Fuck, he's going to make this all your fault. Assholes

like that always do." He ran his hand through his hair making it stand on end. Liam reached over and smoothed it back in place.

"I'll deal with him." Liam stood on tiptoe and kissed Aiden on the nose. "Your first guests are arriving."

The party was well advanced. Music played loudly and Aiden was feeling the affects of too much beer and not enough oxygen. Liam was busy behind the bar, but not too busy to keep watch over Aiden as he made his way through the crowd of dancing and talking people, playing the ever-attentive host. Daniel had arrived earlier, pretending surprise. It was apparent that Bob and Evan had let him in on the surprise.

Liam knew things were going too good. He wasn't sure of Aiden's plan, but no doubt it was going to be a big and bad one. The downstairs buzzer sounded over the music. Liam was about to answer when Aiden appeared from nowhere and spoke into the intercom.

Expecting to hear a drum roll, the red head watched the loft door. And then things began to unfold in slow motion. It was weird, Liam watched Susan appear, Daniel greet her, Aiden wrap his arms around Danny and kiss him, Susan's shocked face, EJ3 punching Aiden. It all happened too fast and too slow. Liam debated whether he should interfere but then decided it was the Aiden Show he'd stick around and pick up the pieces. What had taken hours and days to prepare was over in minutes. The room cleared

quickly, each person willing to jump on Aiden and give him a verbal kick. Liam watched and made himself a chocolate martini. He was going to need one or maybe more than one.

Aiden stood silently watching them all troop past him. He barely moved. It was just so surreal. Daniel was a human, not Wahjee, but still he'd been his best friend for more than half of his life. And now it was over, all to make him give up the idea that they would ever be together. He should have done something about Daniel's fixation years ago, but he hadn't bothered. He was a selfish son of a bitch for caring so little about the feelings of the human who had been so close to him. And now he'd virtually destroyed him. Again he wondered if perhaps magic would have been the better answer.

When the last person left, Liam closed and locked the loft door. He made a motion and muttered a few words making the loft presentable again. It wasn't rocket science and he knew Aiden wouldn't notice the magic. The man in question stood in the same place he'd been standing when everyone left.

Satisfied that the loft was returned to normal, Liam put his arm around Aiden and led him to the sofa, sitting him down, but saying nothing. There really wasn't anything much to say. Liam had to agree that Aiden's methods worked. Daniel no doubt, would turn to his new boy friend, too stupid to realize just what Aiden had done for him. Lisa would conveniently forget she'd been begging Aiden to do

what he'd done and the rest of the gang would forget all of the good things Aiden had done.

There was a knock on the loft door. Aiden didn't move or acknowledge the sound. Liam sighed but went over to the door to answer it. "Hey" he said to Evan, who stood in the hallway.

"I couldn't leave you two with all the mess." Evan began. He looked around at the immaculate loft. "Oh, it's been cleaned."

"I work fast." Liam said and shrugged. "Why are you really here?"

"I want to talk to Aiden." Evan looked sad. "Do you mind if I come in?"

"Come on in." Liam stood back. "Aiden's on the sofa, but he's not saying much."

Evan walked over and sat down on a chair he'd pulled close to Aiden. "Aiden, honey, I know I'm the last person you'd expect to do this. But I consider you a friend. I may be flaming and seem like I don't have a care in the world, but I see what you do for all of us. I don't say anything. I figure you have your own reasons for keeping things quiet. But I see. I see how much you care and how good you are." He reached out and put his hand over Aiden's. "I know what you did tonight, you did for your friend. It was probably the only way he'd wake up and smell the coffee and get him a life. I know it and you know it. Hell, probably anyone who really knows Daniel will figure it out eventually. I just wanted to tell you that you did good. Sometimes a little pain is needed." He got up

and kissed Aiden's cheek while he gave him a quick hug. "I'll leave now."

Liam walked Evan to the door. He could see that Evan's eyes were wet and he gave the man a hug. "Thanks Evan. Aiden isn't himself right now, but I know he'll appreciate what you said."

Liam waited for Evan to get into the elevator before he shut the door to the apartment and securing it once again. He turned to where Aiden had been sitting but he wasn't there any longer.

"Aiden?" Liam questioned, looking around.

"I'm in here." Aiden lay on the bed, the book he'd given Daniel open on his chest.

"Here, give me that. You don't want it getting all sweaty." Liam laughed and put the comic back in its plastic sleeve.

"It doesn't matter." Aiden sighed. "If I was doing something good for him, why do I feel like a shit?"

Liam resisted rolling his eyes; instead he crawled up from the bottom of the bed and pushed into Aiden's under arm, wrapping his body partially over the taller man's.

"What are you doing?" Aiden asked.

"Cuddling you." Liam said. "Making you feel better."

"I don't cuddle, but it does make me feel marginally better." Aiden admitted.

"Daniel will come around soon. You guys have a lot of history."

"I don't want him to come around. I want him to get a fucking life. If he wants Edward Jackson the

third then let him have the bastard. It won't last, but then what the fuck does?" Aiden pushed away from Liam and sat up, his feet on the floor.

"Aiden, come to bed." Liam knelt on the bed, wrapping his arms around his lover.

"I don't want to." Aiden stood up and walked into the bathroom. He stood for a moment looking into the mirror, not liking what he saw there. And then he was gone. Breaking one of his hard and fast rules, Aiden Mac Ruaidhri had used a spell to disappear from the loft.

"Fuck." Liam said. He had no idea where in hell Aiden could have gone. The man never used magic. He hadn't used it in years. How did he even know a transport spell? How did he know one well enough to be sure that he'd actually appear somewhere and not be partially in some fucking wall?

Liam looked around the bathroom, looking for something that would give him a clue as to where Aiden might have disappeared. There was nothing, not even hint of Aiden in the air. Only the very strongest of wizards could transport without leaving a tell tale sign of some kind in their wake. He was impressed. There was more to the man than he'd realized.

"AIDEN, WHERE THE FUCK DID YOU GO?" Liam shouted in the air as he turned around and around in the marble walled room.

"Liam, is there a problem?" Frances was standing beside him.

"Fuck, I thought I put a spell on so you couldn't do that." Liam griped.

"You did, but I cancelled it." Frances shrugged. He looked around. "Where's hubby?"

"Aiden is gone, vanished, vaporized, disappeared, transported." Liam kicked at the vanity and stalked out of the room.

"Oh is that all." Frances followed his cousin. "How did the big party go?"

"It sucked. Everyone is pissed at Aiden and he thinks he's lost his best friend."

"Well, he's probably gone somewhere that would make him feel better. Any ideas?"

"Duh, if I had any ideas, I'd be there." Liam paced like a caged lion. "Go back to Toronto or Victoria or where ever the hell you go, I'm not in any danger, I'm just choked with Aiden."

"I know you are." Frances put his arm around Liam. "Why don't you go to bed? Aiden will turn up sooner or later."

"I just don't think he should be alone right now." Liam threw himself on the sofa, putting a pillow over his face. He sighed with all the drama a teenager could muster.

Frances smothered a snicker. It was apparent that Liam wasn't in any danger, he was going to head back to his wife. "Cousin, let it be. Aiden needs some time to come to terms with what he set in motion."

"Why do I hurt inside? It was Aiden who came up with this stupid idea. He should have realized it was going to hurt him." Liam moaned.

"Because you love him. It comes with the territory." Frances put his hand on Liam's shoulder and squeezed. "I'm heading back to Marcie."

"Yeah, thanks for stopping by and if you don't mind, put that spell back and double it. I don't need any other Wahjee dropping in."

"What about Aiden?"

"He can let himself in. It's his place. You know spells won't work against him."

"Just checking." Frances grinned before he too, disappeared with an audible pop.

Liam stared at the spot his cousin had been. He was good, but still there had been the usual sound of him leaving. Aiden hadn't even made a small sound. Liam wasn't sure even he could transport himself somewhere in complete silence. "Stupid man." He mumbled looking around the room. And then he had an idea.

Taking a chance, Liam transported himself to Shay's bedroom. The room was in darkness, with only the smallest of night-lights glowing low on the wall. Liam saw a baby monitor on a dresser near Shay's crib. It had a silence aura placed on it. Sitting in a corner on a rocker too small for his large frame, was Aiden. He was holding Shay wrapped in a blanket, rocking silently in the room. Their eyes met. "I was worried." Liam whispered, his voice barely audible.

"You needn't." Aiden replied, just as quietly. He continued to rock his son, his hands larger than life as they held the bundle of warm sleepy baby. "It's funny, the feelings that I have for this small bit of Wahjee. I

didn't think it was possible to feel like this." He looked at the baby and then at Liam. "Do you think my parents felt even half of what I feel when they held me? And if they did, when did they change and begin hating me?"

Liam had no answer for that question. He couldn't conceive of any parent hating their child. "We should go, Rosie or Vans could come in here any minute."

"I know, I just needed to be with him for a few minutes." Aiden stood up and laid the baby back in his crib. "I didn't mean to run off like that."

"You did what you had to do." Liam shrugged. "It wouldn't have hurt though to let me know where you were going?"

"But you found me." Aiden smiled. "I knew you would." He bent down and kissed Shay on the forehead. "Come here."

Liam walked over and let Aiden wrap him in his arms. He saw Shay smile up at the two of them, the spell vanished from the monitor and then he found himself washed over with the familiar tingle when he transported.

"Hey, you transported me at the same time?" Liam laughed and looked around. "Where are we?"

Aiden hated to remove his arms from around Liam, but he did. "We're in a favorite place of mine. Somewhere I used to like to go to when I was a kid. It hasn't changed a lot. It's one of those places that seem to be in some kind of time warp."

"With a little help from a certain Wahjee." Liam added and snickered. "I can feel you all around me."

"Perhaps." Aiden shrugged. They were in a grotto of sorts, formed by the twining of thick and thorny blackberry vines. So thick that even in the winter months, Liam knew that they'd be invisible when inside. It was rather comfortable considering where they were. A fallen tree provided a perfect backrest when sitting. Aiden pulled Liam down so the red head was sitting beside him. "I found it when I was six. It was smaller of course then, but so was I, it was the perfect hiding place. There is an entrance just small enough for a kid to crawl through over there. Believe it or not, we're only a few hundred feet from the house I grew up in. The house backs on a ravine. This is part of it."

"How often did you come here?" Liam asked. He leaned against Aiden, shivering in the night air.

Aiden magicked a thick fleece comforter and wrapped it around the two of them. "I was here a lot. Day or night, it didn't matter to me. No one could find me no matter how hard they tried. And believe me, both my parents tried. Neither one of them had any idea that I could transport. In fact, I doubt they even know now." He grinned to himself. "When they were at the end of their rope, I'd make sure I was found in my bed sleeping. It drove them crazy, each one blaming the other one for not checking my room. That was before I learned to defend myself against them. I suppose some Wahjee or another had a good reason to make sure Wahjee children couldn't use their abilities

against their parents. But there are parents that should never be parents."

"You figured a way around it didn't you?" Liam asked. Impressed with the amount of natural ability Aiden had in him at such an early age. No wonder Shay showed it to him a few hours after he was born. He was his father's son after all.

"Yeah, I did." Aiden chuckled. "I wasn't very old. I think it was a self protection instinct that broke me away from Wahjee inborn tradition." He looked down at Liam. "Are you still cold?"

"No, it's nice here. Weird but nice." Liam looked around. "It's kind of like a closet or something. Lots of kids hide in closets."

"Not at my place they didn't." Aiden shuddered. "Closets weren't what I'd call friendly places."

"I used to hide in the closet at the bottom of the stairs." Liam said. "I could move right into the back where all the old coats were, you know the ones that no one ever wears any more. I made a little nest out of them."

"Other than the obvious reason, why were you hiding in a closet." Aiden asked.

"Let's just say Cecil Taylor is a bit of a freak. It was better to hide than to submit or worse, turn him into the roach that he is. I knew I could do it too. I used to practice when he was sleeping." Liam yawned, doing his best to smother it. "This place is so cozy it makes me feel all relaxed."

Aiden laughed. "It relaxes me to the point of sleeping too."

Liam waved his hand and the grotto was lit with dozens of tiny electric sparks. "It's prettier this way."

"You know, I'm beginning to like these flying bugs you throw around." Aiden loved to tease Liam; he knew what buttons to push each and every time.

"I don't use bugs." Liam laughed; he knew what Aiden was up to. "Take us home. I'm going fuck you silly tonight."

"Poor little witch boy is delusional." Aiden huffed. He turned Liam's face up to his. "Thanks for being there for me tonight. Don't think I don't know how you kept things from combusting." He sighed. "I probably shouldn't have done it the way I did, but shit Liam, Danny needs a safe to fall on his head before he wakes up and smells the coffee."

"I'm not going to tell you that you shouldn't have. You're a big boy; you have to make your own decisions. But I will tell you this. I'll always be there to pick your ass back up. It's my destiny." He sighed with drama to take away some of the seriousness of what he said.

"Some how Liam Taylor, I kind of like that idea." Aiden leaned down and kissed Liam with tenderness. As he kissed him, he transported the two of them back to the loft, landing with a thump outside the apartment door. "Shit Liam, you put back the protection spell." He rubbed his ass.

"Sorry, but you do have a key." Liam giggled.

"Not with me." Aiden glared.

"Well open it with magic."

"No, you know my rules."

"It didn't stop you a couple of hours ago."

"That was different."

"Oh for crap sake, you're such a big baby." Liam stood up, mumbled a cancellation spell. "Come on, we have like forty five seconds to get through before we vaporize." He dragged Aiden inside and shut the door.

"Are you out of your mind? Vaporize?" Aiden looked at him with horror and then back at his door.

"It was just figure of speech." Liam tried to look convincing as he walked to the kitchen. "Do you want a water?"

"No, I don't fucking want a water." Aiden was pissed again.

Liam knew it wasn't him the other man was mad about. It was the whole Danny birthday thing that had raced back into Aiden's mind the moment he walked through the door. "Take him his book tomorrow. He'll forgive you."

"No, I don't think he will." Aiden looked sad. "Come on, let's get some sleep."

Following Aiden, Liam entered the bathroom. "Are you going to shower tonight?" he asked.

"Yes." Aiden stripped off his clothing while he waited for the shower to warm up. "I need to think." He'd once told Liam that he did his best thinking while standing under warm water.

Liam brushed his teeth while watching Aiden in the shower. Seeing the look of quiet despair on the older man's face as he stood with his eyes shut under the spray, Liam knew he had to do something to make Aiden feel better. He couldn't really change things

that had already happened. But he could do his best to make sure Aiden and Daniel found their way back to the friendship they'd shared.

He took off his clothing, not caring where they dropped and then stepped into the shower with Aiden. "I'll wash your hair." Liam said, knowing that his lover enjoyed the attention.

Not saying anything, Aiden tipped his head back to allow Liam easier access. He sighed deep inside when Liam's fingers began to massage the shampoo into his scalp. His cock stirred as it always did when Liam touched him. Aiden smiled, he couldn't help it. Tension in his body seemed to melt with each second. "You have talented fingers." He murmured. "You aren't using magic are you?"

"No, it's all me." Liam kissed Aiden's shoulder. "Move back, I'm going to rinse the shampoo out."

Liam was well aware of Aiden's arousal, he was aroused himself. But he didn't want to do anything in the shower. He preferred to make Aiden cum when they were in bed. He knew that with what Aiden had drunk tonight would act as a tranquilizer, as well as all the other emotional upheaval, the man would be asleep as soon as he came. He rinsed off the shampoo and then took the soap and lathered up Aiden's back washing him all over. "I love this." Liam said "I love doing this for you." He giggled. "It makes me want to purr."

"You're a freak." Aiden chuckled, but he leaned into Liam's touch. "I'm exhausted." Aiden admitted.

"You should find yourself someone younger to pamper."

"I don't want to." Liam trailed kisses across Aiden's chest. "I love you."

"Let's not go there." Aiden huffed, turning and rinsing himself off. But he picked up the soap and began to soap Liam down. "This won't take long, there isn't much of you, just your butt."

"Fuck off." Liam said, but he grinned up at Aiden. "I'm only eighteen. I happen to know that when you were eighteen, you were tall, skinny and decidedly geeky looking."

"I've never been geeky looking." Aiden laughed. "How do you know what I looked like when I was eighteen?"

"I saw you. I saw you at the Summer Solstice celebration. You were smoking dope and got kicked out of the temple."

"Ahhhhh, the good old days." Aiden snickered as he turned off the water and stepped out of the steamy stall. "I never could figure out why the smell of burning marijuana drove the old warlocks bat shit. I'll dry you off."

"I can do it." Liam laughed. "You're the one who needs help. You are much, much older after all."

"You know witch boy, you should count yourself lucky that I don't do magic in the loft." Aiden dried Liam's hair and then moved lower. "I could find myself with a nice little red headed dog."

"You'd miss my kisses." Liam laughed, turning to Aiden and wrapping his arms around him.

"Perhaps." Aiden laughed. "But my puppy would kiss me."

"But would I do this when I'm all furry?" Liam sank to his knees taking Aiden's engorged cock in his mouth.

Aiden sucked his breath in. "I hope the fuck not." He managed to gasp.

CHAPTER 12

Jack, if what you say is true, we'd know about it." Margaret Mac Ruaidhri was in the kitchen making dinner. While her husband sat at the kitchen table, a bottle of cheap whiskey and a half filled glass on the table in front of him. "There has been no liaison between Aiden and any other Wahjee, something like that would be hard to keep quiet."

"I'm telling you, I felt it." Jack glared at his wife. "It was the same feeling I had when Mary's kids were born. Though I have to admit I don't feel anything now. But for a few hours, maybe two, I knew there was another of the Mac Ruaidhri clan in the world."

"Do you think you should be drinking?" she asked to change the subject. He was one of the few Wahjee who suffered from the affects of alcohol. She hoped Aiden hadn't inherited his father's trouble with human substance abuses. She wasn't sure what Aiden was up to, but whatever it was, he didn't need his father's interference. Jack had done enough damage to the boy when he was growing up.

"What the fuck does it matter if I drink? I'm dead either way." Jack shrugged before swallowing the contents of the glass and pouring more. "You'd think with all the Wahjee's abilities, they'd have come up with a cure for this evil disease. He was referring to the cancer that ran rampant through his body.

Margaret sniffed and turned back to the stove where she stirred the pot of stew she was making. Jack had, as usual, conveniently forgotten the fact that you get back three times as much evil as you put out. His cancer was just retribution, as it was the Wahjee way to make sure evil was repaid. Not that he'd admit anything. He was too stubborn or too stupid to do that. "Mary and the children will be here for dinner, put that drink away."

"I'll drink what I want and when I want in my own house, woman." He grumbled. "I want you to find out what your son is up to and why I felt the presence of another Mac Ruaidhri. He won't talk to me."

"And you think he's going to suddenly have a change of heart and talk to me?" her voice was filled with scorn at the idea. "Aiden is no fool. He lives by his own set of rules. No doubt you were drunk the night you had the feelings of another Mac Ruaidhri being born. Even the high council has no knowledge of such a birth. I know you've checked."

"They wouldn't tell me shit if their mouths were full of it." Jack pushed back his chair with a screech of wood on linoleum. "I'm going to the garage."

"Fine, go to the garage. Maybe you should stay there while Mary and the children visit. They don't need to hear your drunken ramblings about our son."

"Our son?" Jack spit on the floor. "I fucking wish he was never born. It's because of him the high council won't allow me the use of magic."

"You did that yourself, Aiden had nothing to do with it. You abused the privilege of magic and you know it."

He looked at her slyly. "I will have my power back sooner than you think, old woman." His laughter was evil, sending chills to all who heard it, as he stalked to the dark garage, a place where he liked to hang out in and meet with the few friends he still had. Jack chuckled to himself as he thought of the plans he and Zane Chambers were making. Zane was powerful, he'd restore Jack's power and together they'd show his good for nothing son just who was the power behind the Mac Ruaidhri clan. The moment Aiden had been born, the balance of power had shifted, though it had taken Jack almost ten years to realize this. Goodness had been born of evil, creating a force more powerful than any evil power Jack could summon. It hadn't sat well with Jack at the time and it still didn't. He constantly looked for any way he could to reduce Aiden's status in the eyes of high council. So far he'd been able to discover nothing and it pissed him off.

Margaret watched him disappear through the door. She waited for a few minutes to make sure he was genuinely gone before she allowed herself to relax. He needn't worry about her shedding a tear

when he finally succumbed to the cancer that was eating away at his insides. She too had felt it when Aiden's son had been born. That it was a son, a grandson, was something she wasn't prepared to ever reveal to the man she'd been forced to marry. Or the fact that Shay was Zyndaix. And how that son had been made to disappear from Wahjee watchers, that in itself had told her someone powerful was watching over him. For she knew her grandson lived, she knew that deep inside of her. She sent a silent prayer to the powers that be, that her son Aiden and his son would continue to be under the care of the person who loved them both. Adding as she always did, that she hoped someday to meet her grandson and the person Aiden loved. And that her son would forgive her for his childhood and understand that she'd done her best to keep him alive until he'd reached the maturity of his powers and was able to fend for himself. It hadn't been easy, but she knew it had been worth it.

Across town, Aiden and Liam were sitting on the sofa in the loft staring at Shay who was sitting precariously on the floor surrounded by pillows. "He looks like he's going to fall over any minute." Aiden whispered, as if somehow speaking out loud would knock the boy backwards.

"He just needs to get his sense of balance." Liam assured him. "It says in the book that he should be able to sit on his own at five months. That doesn't mean the moment he turns five months old he can immediately do it." Liam wiggled his fingers at Shay who smiled at him and gurgled.

"But he's my kid, I'm sure I could sit up by myself at his age." Aiden leaned forward, prepared to catch the baby should he fall.

"How would you know?" Liam giggled. "No one can remember what they were up to at that age."

"No one wants to. I mean all the kid does is eat, sleep and poop." He stuck his tongue out at Shay who blew bubbles back at him.

"He does more than that." Liam laughed. "Don't you Shay?"

"Da." Shay answered.

"Did you hear that? He said Da." Aiden crowed.

"I heard." Liam smiled at Aiden, lightly punching Aiden on the arm. "I wish I could have let him keep his powers. It would have been great to see how he'd develop them at this age."

"It would have been too dangerous for him." Aiden's face was unreadable. "When I think of what could happen to him, I'm sorry I agreed to Vanessa's demands. But when he's here, in this apartment, I can't imagine my life without him. How fucked is that?"

"Fuck" Shay looked at Aiden; the green in his eyes clearly showing the fact that he was a Wahjee child and one with considerable inborn power.

"The kid has a round ass and can't sit up without pillows, but he can repeat words?" Aiden snorted. "It figures my kid would have to be different."

"Shay, you have to listen to me." Liam was on his knees in front of the baby. "You can't say things or do

things like that anywhere else but at your daddy's house. It has to be a rule."

"K" Shay grinned, pushed himself forward until he lay on his belly. "Da." He reached for Aiden's foot.

Aiden looked up at Liam as he picked up his son. "This can't be a good thing can it?" he asked Liam. "Why is the kid talking?"

"Probably because he can." Liam shrugged. "I know I could at his age. I just didn't do it around people. He probably trusts us. Don't worry; the penetration spell around the apartment building is pretty strong. Anything he does here won't be monitored by anyone. I've made sure of it."

Aiden didn't say anything. He knew Liam had done his best, just as he had reinforced the spell so that Shay was always protected no matter where he was, the apartment or at home. It was one thing to not actively practice his craft, yet another to put his son in danger just for a principle that really meant nothing to anyone other than himself. "Hey there Shay." He kissed the boy on his nose. "He's one smart kid." He said to Liam. "Takes after his daddy."

"That he does." Liam stood up. "I should go. I have homework to do and I was going to Dakota's to work with her."

"It's leather night at The Odyssey, I was hoping you could watch Shay for an hour or so."

"Like you'd be only gone an hour." Liam snorted. "Isn't leather night kind of not your thing?"

"Everything is my thing" Aiden laughed. "I really won't be long. I thought I'd stay for a couple of

drinks. It's always fun to watch Bob parade around bare ass in leather."

"Ewww, a visual I didn't need." Liam pretended to shudder. "No problem. Shay and I'll get along just fine." He went up on his toes to reach Aiden's cheek and kissed him. "We'll order in pizza and beer. Isn't that right Shay?"

The baby laughed out loud and waved his hands. He reached for Liam who took him from Aiden's arms. "Li." The baby gurgled. "Da, Li"

"Come on big boy, we're going to give you a bath and get you ready for bed while your daddy gets all beautiful for the men at The Odyssey." Pretending not to see Aiden flush with pleasure at the compliment, Liam and Shay headed for the bathroom. To make extra sure that Aiden would notice what he was missing, the red head pulled off his tee shirt before starting the bath. He made sure his skin was rosy under green-eyed scrutiny.

Shay clapped with pleasure as he was lowered into warm bubbles.

"He can't even sit up and you're putting him in the tub?" Aiden couldn't help commenting.

"He isn't alone. I'm here. I won't let him go. That's why my shirt is off. Shay tends to splash a lot in his bath."

"You've bathed him before?"

"One of my favorite things is naked and wet Mac Ruaidhri men." Liam giggled at the look on his lover's face. "I've bathed him lots of times. Who do you think the girls get to babysit."

"I never thought of it. I've actually never thought about them ever leaving him alone."

"They never do. But they wanted to do work out in the yard and he's a bit too little to help. As he expertly washed the baby, Liam missed the smile of recognition and giggle Shay gave at the arrival of a certain turquoise cat. The cat smiled at the baby, looked around to assure himself that all was well, before popping away.

"Look, maybe I should stay home." Aiden began.

"No, go out and play with your little friends. We're fine here." Liam grinned and then popped Aiden to an alley near the Odyssey.

Aiden had been gone an hour. Liam and Shay had both eaten and were now sitting on the sofa together, the baby nestled in Liam's arms, but sitting up, both of them watching television. The room became darker than usual, a green mist swirled around behind Liam, but he didn't notice, as he was caught up in the movie on television.

Shay could feel something wrong. He wiggled to catch Liam's attention. But Liam only kissed him on the forehead and continued to watch the television. He hated that Liam and his daddy had put restrictions on what he could do. Didn't they know he had to protect the two of them? They thought they were in charge, but they weren't. So many things were happening in the world that he knew about but they didn't. He didn't like being so young. He couldn't speak properly and had no control over much of anything he wanted to do.

Green mist began to climb the walls. Shay knew it was something sent by someone who meant his daddy harm. He was sure of it. He turned in Liam's arms, moving so that he was facing the back of the sofa. Liam pulled him up on his feet and let him hang on as if standing on his own. That's all he needed to mutter a few words in the ancient tongue that effectively banished the evil green mist.

"Shay, were you talking old Wahjee?" Liam asked, turning the baby to face him. "I'm pretty sure you aren't supposed to do that."

Grinning at Liam and using all the charm inherited from his father, Shay tried his best to look cute and make Liam forget what he'd heard. It helped that the buzzer sounded on the intercom.

Liam jumped, not expecting anyone. He stood up taking Shay with him. "Mac Ruaidhri residence." He said into the speaker.

"Where's my Boyo?" a drunken man slurred into the speaker. "Let me in."

"Sorry, Aiden isn't home." Liam answered. There was something about Jack Mac Ruaidhri's voice that told him not to let him in even if the man managed to get up to the loft.

"Who are you?" Jack asked.

"No one." Liam said into the intercom before walking away, ignoring the buzzer that bleated over and over again.

He turned the television up loud, but still the buzzer could be heard. Liam sighed; he hated using magic in Aiden's loft. The man always knew when he

did it. Just as he was about to zap the buzzer and silence it, the damn thing exploded into dozens of pieces. Shay laughed with glee, his one hand out pointing to the intercom unit that used to sit on the wall by the door. "Bang." He giggled. "Gone."

"Shit Shay, I can't believe you did that." Liam's eyes were big. "I thought I had all this magic stuff covered as far as you were concerned."

"Bad man." Shay said, laying his head on Liam's shoulder. "Da?"

"Your daddy is out playing. He'll be back soon." Liam assured the baby. He was unnerved by the combination of Aiden's father demanding to see his son and Shay's abilities that forced themselves out despite his strongest spell to keep them under wraps. It was as if he'd done nothing, but he knew he had.

"Shay you are an interesting baby. You have to stop doing these things though. It'll freak your mommies out. They're human you know and you are Wahjee through and through." He carried the baby up to the bathroom to wash him and change him for the night. Soon the baby was clean and dressed in midnight blue footed sleepers. The Calvin Klein logo was on the chest. Liam couldn't help but grin at Aiden's need to dress his son in designer clothing. He carried him back to the kitchen while he heated up a bottle. Turning the lights on low, as well as the fireplace., Liam settled on the rocking chair to give Shay his last bottle of the night. He set a few of his twinkling electric sparks to dance for the baby to the lullaby he hummed. It was quiet and peaceful, too nice

to think of anything mean or evil that might be outside the loft wanting to get in and do either of them harm.

The baby had finished his bottle and Liam had him with his head resting on his shoulder as he rubbed his back to make sure any air bubbles cleared. When the apartment door opened, and Aiden walked through, his father stumbled in after. "Ten minutes old man, that's all you're getting out of me." Aiden said. When he'd felt his son and Liam were in danger, he'd immediately popped back from the Odyssey. It was the truth, but he'd also felt that he shouldn't leave his family tonight, now he knew why.

Liam could tell Aiden was tense and so could Shay. The baby had been close to sleep when the door opened. Liam felt him tense up when Jack Mac Ruaidhri's presence was felt by both of them.

Not sure what he should do, Liam mumbled a quick invisibility spell. He knew that Aiden's father shouldn't see Shay, he'd know as Liam had known, that Shay was Zyndaix.

Jack Mac Ruaidhri stepped into the loft. "Not a bad place you have here Boyo." He said gazing around. "You live here alone?"

"No, I have someone living with me." Aiden found two bottles of water in the fridge and handed one to his father.

"Don't you have something better than that to give to your old man?" Jack asked looked at the water as if it were poison.

"No." Aiden opened his bottle and took a drink. "Now what the fuck did you want to say to me that you had to come here in the middle of the night?"

"Where's your room mate, he answered the intercom?" Jack was walking around peering into corners.

"No doubt he's asleep." Aiden said pleased that Liam had hidden himself as well as Shay. He saw the rocking chair move slightly and he knew where they were. It was time to get his father away from the fireplace. "You've got five minutes left before I throw your ass out the door."

"I've got cancer." Jack blurted out. "I'm dying."

"What do you want from me, applause?" Aiden turned away. He turned back having made a decision, "I'm gay and we're all dying sooner or later."

"You're a fucking faggot and I'm the one dying?" his father spat out. "This isn't how I planned my life. You were never supposed to have been born for fuck sake."

On the rafters above a turquoise stuffed cat glared down with red eyes. Below Aiden could see the spot where Liam and Shay were beginning to glow red. He knew his young lover was pissed and might even reveal that he was there. "That's it dad, you had your chance. Get out of my fucking home." He took Jack by the arm and pushed him through the door. "I'm sure my mother will let me know when you're gone." He said as he slammed the door and locked it. He put a protection spell on the lock just in case. Aiden

leaned his forehead on the cold metal of the door while he tried to gather himself together.

Liam and the baby watched from their place by the fire. He wanted to run over to Aiden, but he knew that he had to give the man a few minutes. He dimmed the lights again that Aiden had turned on and began to sing the lullaby he'd been singing to Shay earlier. His voice clear, the notes true, with just a hint of calming magic in them, barely perceptible but still there. He projected his voice so that Aiden was included in the lullaby, making up the words as he sang. His eyes trained on Aiden, his arms full of baby, Liam watched as he sang. First Shay relaxed under the combination of music and love, and then Aiden too began to relax, he could tell by the set of his shoulders.

Seamus, lulled into sleep, his belly full, his daddy close, was content for now and he nestled into Liam's arms. Liam stood up and placed the baby in a crib that had appeared earlier in the night. Aiden's bed was large, but the red head knew the man wouldn't sleep properly with Shay between them. When he was sure the baby was safely settled, he walked over to Aiden.

"Hey." He said quietly, knowing Aiden had watched him with the baby. Without waiting for Aiden to answer, Liam took his hand and led him to the bedroom.

"Thanks for keeping Shay from him." Aiden shuddered. "He did his damndest to ruin my life, I don't want him touching my son in any way." Slowly he removed his clothing. He felt that he was in some

kind of slow motion dream, but he couldn't make himself move any faster.

"Was the leather ball fun?" Liam asked, his clothes gone quickly. He stood naked in front of Aiden.

"Not really." Aiden shrugged. "It was interesting, but I wouldn't say it was fun. Something was missing."

"Oh?" Liam asked, batting his thick red lashes and making sure Aiden could see into his violet blue eyes that twinkled with mischief. "Me?" he wiggled his ass suggestively as he wrapped himself around the taller man.

Aiden laughed, his previous dark mood gone when his arms filled with a warm and naked red headed boy. "Perhaps." He answered. "I couldn't put a name to what was missing, perhaps it was you." He quickly lifted Liam off his feet and swung him around so that when he stopped, Liam's legs were pressed against the bed. Another lift and the boy found himself in the center of it, the midnight blue velvet duvet a frame for his luminescent body. "Fuck, you look beautiful." The words a prayer whispered in the night.

He knelt on the bed for a moment, before straddling Liam, making sure the weight of his body didn't rest on the younger man who looked almost fragile, as he lay surrounded by down filled velvet.

Green, with gold-flecked eyes, darkened with lust and something more, stared down into twinkling blue and violet eyes reflecting back everything that Aiden was feeling. Aiden leaned forward and kissed Liam's

eyebrows and then each eye, his lips tender as he slowly made his way, pausing between each kiss, to claim every part of the other man's body. There was no urgency in his ministrations though he knew Liam wanted things to move more quickly. The red head's body was hot with pent up emotions, flushed with desire, moist in all the right places as he succumbed to Aiden, giving himself up to the man he loved with all the love an eighteen year old boy could possibly have in him and the promise of more.

He gasped when Aiden's tongue, warm and moist licked thick precum from the end of his cock. Making his breath otherwise warm was now cool on Liam's engorged organ. No words were spoken in the darkness. But sounds of quickened breathing, gasps of pleasure, moans, torn from deep inside, when the pleasure became more intense than their bodies, their minds could handle.

And in the darkness, a few feet away on the other side of the wall, a small baby lay in his crib, more aware than a five-month-old human child would be. The baby smiled to himself in the darkness. His daddy was happy and so was his Liam. The baby waved his small hands in the air in an imitation of the red headed boy who watched over him; letting sparkling, twinkling, dancing electric sparks make a multi colored light show over his crib. He had the lights dance to the rhythm of the men in the other room while he giggled softly to himself.

CHAPTER 13

Living with Aiden was a lot of fun, but it was also somewhat precarious. The man had lived alone all of his adult life. And until Liam had come along, he'd never even had a fleeting thought of anyone living with him.

Generally Liam was able to avert most drama queen moments and semi hysterical crises with well timed sex, or perhaps a bit of magic strategically worked in the background.

But he suspected it was going to take much, much more than a well-timed blowjob to fix whatever had happened when a month later Liam parked down the street from the apartment and noticed a police car parked at an angle to the curb lights flashing. Interesting, he thought as he made his way home, for the apartment was his home now for all intents and purposes. As he approached the elevator, two policemen got off. Liam's curiosity was definitely piqued. It seemed the drama that revolved around he and Aiden was never going to stop.

He took the elevator instead of the stairs for once, but one look on Aiden's face as he stood in the doorway made him want to turn around and head back down the stairs. "Hey what's up?" He asked looking from Aiden to Daniel, who stood there looking smug.

"WHAT'S UP IS SOMEONE DIDN'T SET THE ALARM. WHAT'S UP IS THAT ALL MY STUFF IS GONE. WHAT'S UP IS I'VE BEEN ROBBED." Aiden shouted in his face, furious that his precious apartment had been desecrated. He knew he was being unreasonable, but an unfamiliar black haze filled his mind and he couldn't think straight.

"But" Liam began as he looked around. "It can't be." He'd set the spells himself. And no one could break them, no Wahjee that was. It didn't feel like Wahjee, the damage was too random and what was stolen really wouldn't interest any of the Wahjee. After all, they could pretty much have what they wanted if they were inclined that way. No, it had to be human and he hadn't set any spells against humans. But he had set the alarm. It was the one thing he made sure of before he left for school each day.

"Get your shit together and get the fuck out of my apartment and my life." Aiden's words were so deadly; they might as well have been bullets. "Nothing of yours was stolen." His voice was bitter. The whole time his mouth was moving, he knew he was wrong, yet he couldn't stop himself from saying the cruel words.

It was as if everything they'd been through had been only a figment of Liam's imagination. Tears

sprang to his eyes, but he refused to let Aiden see them. Instead he walked with dignity into the bedroom. It was there he saw the ravages of Aiden's closet. "Fucking asshole." He muttered. "It was just a few fucking suits. Get your fucking priorities straight."

He magicked a piece of paper and wrote down neatly:

5 designer suits + 10 pairs of designer boots or shoes + sundry electronic shit = one man who loves you for yourself and not for what you have or who you are.

He pinned it to the closet door with the gum he had in his mouth, knowing Aiden would hate that. In less than three minutes he managed to gather together things he'd need to survive out of the loft. He contemplated taking a clean school uniform and then realized it was unlikely he'd go back there right now. But he did take Aiden's favorite sweatshirt out of the laundry basket. He'd worn it the day before at the gym and it smelled of Aiden in a good, if funky, way.

Aiden refused to look at him when he walked past. Instead, the man pretended interest in the phone call he was making to his insurance company. Daniel on the other hand, gloated. Liam couldn't resist, he muttered a quick spell of impotence on the other man. It would only last for a couple of weeks and wear off gradually, but it would give him something else to think about.

Taking the stairs down to ground level because he wanted to delay leaving as long as he could, Liam's

mind was reeling with what had happened a few minutes before. He couldn't believe how quickly his life could change. It had always been like this. He shouldn't be surprised. If it wasn't one thing, it was another.

At the street, Liam looked one way and then the next. He couldn't decide where he should go. Dakota was always an option, but his old home was definitely not an option. He made a quick decision and headed in the direction of Vanessa's place. He needed to say goodbye to Shay before he left town. It was really the only thing he could do. Maybe Aiden needed some space to find out just what in hell he wanted. Liam knew what he wanted, he wanted Aiden. But he also knew that Aiden was going to have to fight for him in order to appreciate him. It wasn't going to be an easy battle and the red head hoped they both managed to survive it.

"Hi." Liam said when Vanessa answered the door. "I'm going to be away for awhile, and I was wondering if I could see Shay before I leave."

"Of course you can Liam." Vanessa held the door open. "He's in his room. It's almost time for him to wake up from his nap." She looked at the boy curious and had to ask. "I thought you were staying at Aiden's."

"I was, but he kicked me out." Liam shrugged. "His apartment was broken into. He blamed me for not setting the alarm. I did set it, but he wasn't about to listen, or to believe me for that matter." He sighed. "It doesn't matter. I love him, but we do have twelve

years difference in our ages. I think it bugs Aiden more than it bothers me. I mean right now it seems like a lot. I'm eighteen. But when I'm twenty eight, it won't be as bad."

"Interesting theory." Vanessa laughed. "You are rather young Liam. You have so much ahead of you before you should even think about settling down with one man."

"I know, I hear that a lot." Liam's voice was bitter. "I'll just go up to Shay, I think I hear him talking."

"He does that a lot." She smiled. "I don't understand him, but he seems to spend a lot of time in conversation with his toys."

"He's smart like his dad." Liam said. "I bet Aiden talked a lot when he was Shay's age. He must have gotten it out of his system. Now he only talks when he's at work doing a presentation. He hardly says anything at home."

"Aiden has always been somewhat taciturn." Vanessa agreed. "If you don't mind, change Shay's diaper. I'll get his bottle ready."

"I'll change him." Liam agreed as he took the stairs two at a time. "Hey Shay." He said, walking in the door.

The baby was sitting up in the middle of his crib. "Li." He laughed and held out his arms to be picked up.

Liam picked him up out of the crib. "Boy, you do need a change of pants." He laughed. "Shay is all stinky." He put the boy on his change table and began

the process of changing and cleaning him up, talking to him all the while. "It's like this buddy, I have to go away for a bit. I'm thinking maybe Toronto. I mean it isn't far and it's a big city, kind of easy to get lost in." he wiped Shay up with the baby wipes, powdered him and slipped him into a clean diaper. "I thought maybe I'd check out the art scene. I've always liked the museums there. It's not like I won't graduate or anything. My grades are in the top five of the school."

"Da."

"I know, I hate to leave him, but he's being kind of a bitch right now. You'll understand when you're older. Don't worry; I'll still keep an eye on you and your dad. I mean I might be gone for a while, but I won't completely desert you. I am your watcher of the first order. We're bonded for life Shay." He kissed the boy on the cheek and picked him up holding him close. "Your mommy is making you a bottle of something. Let's go down and see what she has."

"Ba" Shay said and grinned. "No Li" he looked sad, reaching out to touch Liam's face.

"I'm probably going to stay with my cousin at his Toronto place or at least somewhere near him. It's not like I'll be all alone." They'd reached the bottom of the stairs just as Vanessa was coming from the kitchen. "Here he is, all sweet smelling and clean." He handed Shay to his mother. "Later Vanessa. I love you Shay." He kissed the boy again and then wiped a tear from the corner of the baby's eye. "Don't cry little man. I'll always be there for you."

With those words, he disappeared out Vanessa's front door and managed to pop himself to Toronto and to land in front of his cousin's condo. Liam had learned he had an identical one in Victoria. No one noticed, not Vanessa and not anyone in the big city.

It didn't take long for Aiden to hear about it. He'd been sitting at his bar attempting to make a list for the insurance company; Liam's note engraved on his memory and folded up in his wallet, when Vanessa and Shay walked in the door. "Not closing the door anymore?" she asked sweetly, handing her son to his father.

"Da." Shay beamed. "Li ba"

"What?" Aiden looked around.

"He keeps saying that. I think he's saying that Liam is gone. Which, no thanks to you, I suppose you are well aware of. He's gone to Toronto to do gawd knows what. Aiden, he's only a boy."

"He's an adult, he's eighteen. He can look after himself." Aiden was taking off the layers of clothing Vanessa seemed to always have his kid wrapped in.

"You threw him out on the street Aiden. I thought you were better than that." She took the baby from him. "It's cold in here."

"So shut the door." Aiden stood up to find some coffee; Vanessa was giving him a headache.

"Aiden, you have to do something. You have to bring him back. Seamus misses him, I miss him."

"I'm not his fucking keeper." Aiden muttered. "He let someone steal all my stuff."

"That's a lot of bullshit and you know it. Liam is very responsible. I really don't believe he left the apartment unprotected and I think you know it. You're just using this as an excuse to push him away. He was good for you Aiden and believe me, I wouldn't say that about just anyone."

Aiden's next encounter with demands that he find Liam happened later that night. He and Daniel, Bob and Evan were at Celebrities before heading to The Odyssey, when an irate Dakota walked through the door and up to him, punching him soundly in the arm.

"You shit, you made him leave. He's gone to Toronto to be a go go dancer. You have to bring him back."

"What the fuck are you talking about?" Aiden demanded as he rubbed his arm, though he knew full well what she meant.

"Liam, you have to bring him back." She said before bursting into tears and wrapping herself around Aiden.

"Would you stop it? You're getting snot and tears on my new silk shirt." Aiden clumsily patted her back as he looked into his friend's eyes, helpless for once.

"Serves the little shit right. He left the apartment unlocked, Aiden lost all of his stuff." Daniel began, only to find Dakota in his face, her fist clenched.

"You, you, dickless weasel, you know darn well Liam didn't leave the apartment unlocked. I bet it was you. He said you were always over there snooping in Aiden's stuff. I bet it was you who left the place that

way." She kicked him in the shins and stomped out of Celebrities, leaving all of them staring after her.

"Is that true Danny, do you go over to my place when I'm not there?" Aiden asked, his voice so low that Daniel barely heard him.

"I go there sometimes. But it's not like you think. I mean I have a key, I know it's for emergencies, but sometimes things come up and I need a place to rest."

"But you don't have a key, I took it back if you'll recall. My place isn't that far from yours Danny, why don't you just go home?" It was obvious to them all that Aiden was pissed. He knew immediately that Danny had made copies of his key. It was time to change the lock.

Evan and Bob looked at each other. "Well, I do believe I hear the call of The Odyssey." Evan waved his hands. "Tally ho Bobby." He grabbed his friend by the arm and pulled him toward the exit.

"Daniel it was you, wasn't it? It was you that left the door unlocked and you let Liam take the blame." Aiden had never been quite so angry in his life and that was saying a great deal. "You were my best friend. I trusted you Daniel. I trusted you with a key to my apartment, my home. I trusted you not to lie to me and I trusted you not to hurt someone I care about." Aiden turned on his heel, ignoring Daniel's pleas to wait. In seconds he was out the door, striding down the crowded street. He needed to think about what he could do to make things right. To make things right between him and Liam. Aiden Mac Ruaidhri didn't do

apologies and he didn't do regrets. He guessed it was time he learned how.

CHAPTER 14

Liam looked up at his cousin's building trying to decide if he should go up. Finally making a decision, he turned and signaled a cab. He was going to Church Street. There would be more to do and he really didn't need to listen to any I told you so's.

It was somehow freeing to be on his own. He knew Frances could find him if he wanted him badly enough. But Liam wrapped himself in a spell that would make things harder for anyone to find him even his cousin. He wanted at least a week to think about his life and to let Aiden make a few decisions of his own. Which was why he came to Toronto and didn't go to Victoria. Distance was better as far as the pissed off red head was concerned.

Getting out of the cab, Liam shouldered his backpack and headed for the nearest coffee shop. He bought a latte and then sat outside at a table. People watching was a favorite past time. He pulled out a small sketchbook to record some of the sights.

"Hey, can I share this table?" Liam looked up. Standing by the table was Frances.

"Fuck, can't you leave me alone?" Liam grumbled. "How did you find me?" He sipped his latte and glared at his cousin, all the while wondering why the spell he wrapped himself in hadn't worked. He knew his magic was stronger than Frances'.

"Watcher here?" Frances laughed. "I have my ways. If I get my own latte, will you stay here?"

"Would it matter?" Liam said.

"No, but I would hate to spill my high priced coffee." Frances reached out and squeezed Liam's shoulder sending a stay spell through his body.

Liam waited for his cousin to get in the line up before he shook off the spell. To prove a point, he moved to a table in the far corner of the roped off patio, leaned back in his chair, his feet on the chair opposite.

"Point taken kid." Frances said, knocking Liam's feet off the chair before sitting down. "I know you're more powerful than I am."

"Apparently you and everyone else seem to forget that little fact." Liam picked up his sketchbook. "What do you want?"

"Why don't you stay with Marcie and I?" Frances asked.

"That would be a no." Liam sighed.

"Why not?" Frances sighed. "I know your feelings are hurt. I mean Aiden jumped to conclusions without knowing all the facts."

"I knew what he was thinking." Liam said. "He has a tendency to believe anything his stupid friend Daniel says."

"Yet he loves you?" Frances looked away.

"He does, but he doesn't know it. He has issues. He'd rather do anything than admit his true feelings. Though he does admit them when he thinks I'm sleeping." Liam's smile was filled with nostalgic memory. "It's kind of sweet actually."

"But you ran away?" Frances shook his head. "You didn't trust Aiden to come to his senses."

"I didn't run, I decided to leave Van so Aiden can get his priorities straight. I don't have to really worry about school."

"It sounds to me like you're making excuses." Frances looked deep into Liam's eyes. "Maybe you should let yourself be found by Aiden sooner rather than later. So he can drag your ass back home."

"I'm not interested." Liam said. "I need some time on my own."

"But Aiden and Shay aren't safe with you here. I'm telling you this in confidence. Zane Chambers has vowed to take you down in payment for his parent's death."

"What the fuck did I have to do with that?" Liam was truly puzzled.

"You didn't, but you're Cecil Taylor's son, or so Zane figures. And Cecil Taylor was responsible for their deaths."

"That has nothing to do with Aiden or Seamus."

"But it does Liam. You love Aiden and you love Seamus. He knows he can hurt you through them. In fact he and his son Brad have it all figured out. They go after Aiden and Shay and you'll come out of the woodwork in their defense. Brad has bragged that he has twice the power you have. He's using the fact he has you on the run to prove it. Something about a fire in your locker and your fear to do anything about it."

"Brad is full of shit." Liam spat standing up. "I'll be around." He started to walk away.

"Liam, don't let the Chambers win."

"This isn't a fucking game Frances. It's my life and Aiden's." he huffed. "And between you and I, Shay has more fucking power at his age than Aiden and I will ever have. That's why Chambers wants him. He figures he can bring Shay to the dark side." He looked hard at his cousin. "It isn't going to happen. Shay is well protected. And how Chambers found out about him I don't know, but when I do find out who broke the covenant, that person will be well and truly sorry." He leaned forward. "And that my dear watcher, is a promise I will die keeping."

Liam left the coffee shop, disappearing from site almost immediately. This time he made sure Frances couldn't find him. He hadn't been too concerned before, but there was something off about his cousin. It wasn't something he could put his finger on, but it was curious how the Chambers clan seemed to know so much about him not to mention Aiden and Shay.

He was almost regretting being so open about his admiration and love for the older Wahjee and his son.

And then with a shake of his head, he told himself he wouldn't have it any other way. He loved the man as stubborn and pig headed as he was.

CHAPTER 15

Aiden wasn't surprised when he arrived at Hamburger Mary's for breakfast the next day, to find Lisa on the warpath. She'd had almost a full day to stew about Liam's disappearance.

He grabbed the morning paper off the counter and headed for the back booth, moving into the seat next to the wall followed quickly by Evan and Bob and then finally Daniel.

"I'm not interested in hearing from any of you. Especially you Danny." Aiden glared.

"Asshole, what's this I hear about you throwing Liam out onto the street." Lisa demanded.

"Ask your son about that." Aiden drawled, pretending interest in the paper. "I'll have a coffee and some whole wheat toast, no butter."

"When are you planning on getting the kid back?" she demanded, hands on her hips.

"He's a big boy. He'll come back when he's ready." Aiden stood up, throwing his paper on the table. "I'm sick of all of this. Daniel, you're just as

responsible as I am for Liam leaving. No one's riding your ass."

"Well what in fuck bit him in the ass?" Lisa asked, dumbfounded at Aiden's outburst.

Aiden heard her, but ignored her words. He was worried sick about Liam, both because the boy had disappeared and because of what he'd said to send him away. And he was worried about Shay. Each time he'd driven past Vanessa's house there was an aura of danger around it, yet it stopped twenty feet all around the house including the roof. Aiden knew that it was Liam's doing, keeping whatever it was away from his son. But he couldn't help but wonder if Shay would be in danger when he wasn't in residence.

It was time to retrieve his drama princess. He needed him close. He needed him for himself, for his heart and soul and he needed him for Shay, for his safety. He knew he was in Toronto, there was no reason why he should, it was a feeling he had.

Not waiting to pack or fly to Toronto, Aiden did what any Wahjee would do who was soul connected to another, he walked behind the restaurant and disappeared, unseen by prying eyes.

Aiden didn't need any kind of link or map or address written on a piece of paper. All he needed was the inborn bond he had with Liam. The one that told him they were meant to be a couple, even if his stubborn mind couldn't make the connection. He appeared in the main room of a luxury suite in some Toronto hotel. There was no immediate sign of Liam other than a half eaten club sandwich and an empty

margarita glass. Aiden, sure he could feel Liam close, walked into the bedroom of the suite. Sure enough, the red head was spread out on his stomach sound asleep. Aiden stood watching him, there were tear stains on his cheeks and every now and then he'd make a kind of hiccup sob, much like Shay did. Aiden sighed and shut his eyes for a moment. Had he ever been so young that he'd cried himself to sleep? He hadn't done anything like that in his teens, at least not as old as Liam was. Aiden turned off the lights in the suite, hung a do not disturb sign from the door and then removing his clothing, crawled into bed with Liam, pulling a blanket over the two of them. Liam gave a half sob again, but didn't wake; instead he wiggled and moved until he found Aiden, wrapping himself around the older man with a sigh of relief.

Aiden wanted to be angry; he wanted to hold himself tense and aloof while Liam slept. But he couldn't. Instead all he could do was pull him in closer, kiss red haired silken curls at the top of his head, and rub small circles on a too thin bare arm.

As he lay with Liam in his arms, Aiden let his mind wander over the last few days. Something had happened to him since Liam had wandered into this life. He'd changed the order of things as Aiden had known them. And oddly enough, it felt good having Liam around. Even the day or so he'd been gone, had been enough to show Aiden that the red head was a necessary part of his life.

"Aiden?" Liam stirred.

"Shhhhh, sleep, we'll talk in the morning."
Aiden's voice was a whisper.

"I'm sorry." Liam began.

"Don't be." Aiden sighed and he kissed the top of Liam's head again. "It takes two to fuck up. We appear to be good at it."

"How profound." Liam giggled sleepily. He sniffed, buried his head closer, immediately falling asleep.

Must be nice to be young, Aiden thought smiling to himself. And be able fall asleep like a baby without any cares in the world. As soon as the thought went through his mind, Aiden knew that it was wrong. Shay, young as he was, cared. Liam, Liam cared too much about him, about Shay, about things he shouldn't have to care about at eighteen. He needed time to be a child, to learn, to grow. He might legally be an adult, but he was still young enough to cry himself to sleep.

CHAPTER 16

Where did Mac Ruaidhri go?" Bob asked Evan.
"He was here just a few minutes ago."

"He left, I'm not sure where, he didn't say." Evan reached over and picked up the toast that had been delivered for Aiden. "I really wish the man would at least let Lisa give him some peanut butter." He took a bite out of the toast.

"That's Aiden's." Daniel began but his voice trailed off. Aiden was pissed with him at the moment, there really wasn't any point in protecting his toast.

"Where's the boyfriend?" Bob asked to change the subject.

"He had to go back to Victoria. His wife is having some problems. Ex wife I mean." Daniel mumbled.

"Where did that asshole go, his car is parked in two spaces." Lisa stood by the table hands on her hips. "He's just lucky I don't have it towed."

"Ma, don't do that. Aiden can't be far." Daniel stood up to check on Aiden's Lexus. Not that he could

do anything, but had to see for himself that Aiden wasn't in it.

Evan and Bob watched Daniel leave the diner. "He really doesn't give up does he?" Evan mused. "I mean Aiden is never going to fuck him."

"No he has that hot little red headed number at his beck and call." Bob laughed. "Which, considering his age is kind of verging on the creepy side."

"Jealousy doesn't become you Bobby." Evan patted his friend's hand. "I'm sure Aiden has his reasons for keeping Liam close."

"Yeah, his bubble butt."

"Perhaps." Evan shrugged. "I like to think that Aiden Mac Ruaidhri has found the love of his life."

"You have delusions." Bob laughed.

"Well at least Aiden isn't trying to reform a crystal queen. You know Bobby that just isn't going to work. He damn near killed you."

"It wasn't his fault." Bob looked away. "I'm dealing with it." Now it was Bob's turn to stand up. "I have to go." He threw a few dollars on the table and walked out of the diner.

"Where did everybody go?" Lisa asked coming back with a pot of coffee.

"Vanished on the wind, honey." Evan smiled and held out his coffee cup for a refill.

CHAPTER 17

When Aiden woke up, he was alone in the hotel bed. He sensed Liam was close; rolling over he wasn't surprised to see his lover sitting in the lotus position on the dresser. He was eating ice cream from a pint carton. "Hey you're alive." Liam grinned around a spoonful of ice cream. "I was getting worried and then I remembered your age."

"Brat." Aiden smiled though, Liam looked so comfortable sitting up high. "Why in hell are you perched on the dresser?"

"I can see you better." Liam said and ate another spoonful. "I like to watch you sleep. It's kind of my thing."

"And the ice cream, is that your thing as well?" Aiden propped himself up on one elbow.

"No, that's because I like ice cream." Liam jumped down from the dresser, unfolding himself like a sinuous cat before landing on the floor. "Want some?"

Aiden laughed. "I don't think so. You do know it's hardly the right time for eating that shit."

"There's always time for ice cream." Liam was now straddling Aiden; he loved it when his bare ass touched the other man's skin.

"Keep that shit away from me." Aiden protested, but not too strongly.

Liam put a spoonful of the cold mixture in his mouth and then leaned forward to kiss Aiden and share his ice cream. He kept his lips on Aiden's as they both swallowed, turning the taste into a kiss filled with giggles. It set the pace for the next few minutes as they took turns with ice cream kisses.

When the last spoonful was eaten, Aiden flipped Liam over on his back; it was his turn to take over the seduction. For seduction was what it was. Gone were the worries they both had about things that were unfolding in their lives back in Vancouver. All that was left was the touch of their bodies, hot with passion. Their nerve endings, so sensitive that the least breath, the tiniest of whisper, and the moisture their bodies produced, all were felt, relished and enjoyed.

"Is this your way of apologizing?" Liam asked, lowering himself on Aiden's latex clad organ. "Cause it's a good one if it is."

"No." Aiden gasped, his cock buried balls deep inside Liam. He gasped again when Liam clenched. "Maybe." Aiden admitted.

Rising back up on his knees, but keeping the end of Aiden's dick firmly in place, Liam leaned forward and kissed lips swollen from ice cream kisses.

"Mmmmm, sweet." He whispered, falling back down his own cock becoming even harder with the sharp intake of Aiden's breath. Liam alternated his rhythm with kisses to lips, nips on rigid nipples, all the while riding up and down. He was fascinated with the array of emotions that Aiden's face portrayed. More than he ever thought possible and more than Aiden was aware he was showing. Aiden Mac Ruaidhri had lived his life keeping his emotions in check. But when he was with Liam, in the quiet of the night, or the throes of lovemaking, Aiden Mac Ruaidhri revealed his inner most self. It was a secret Liam treasured and one he'd never share with the man he adored. He was sure Aiden had no idea.

"Liam." Aiden finally gasped, his eyes wide open letting the red head see deep into his soul. "LIIIIAAAAMMM."

His own balls tightened and he shot his load all over Aiden's chest at the same time as Aiden himself came. Liam collapsed forward.

Twenty minutes later, Liam felt Aiden's cock slip out of him. Aiden managed to remove the condom and tie it off discarding it on the floor for the trash later. He kept one arm on Liam to make sure he didn't move. It was not something he would have admitted out loud, but he did like to hold the red head after they'd had sex. Wet and sticky wasn't really a problem. After all, wasn't that what showers were for?

"Aiden, I had to get away. I knew you'd find me if you wanted me." The words were spoken and hung

in the air for Aiden to listen to and take whatever meaning out of them he wanted.

"You know I want you." Aiden began. "And you knew it was Daniel who left the loft unlocked and the alarm off. Yet you said nothing."

"What was I going to say?" Liam shrugged. "He's an ass."

"I suppose, but he's human, you can't expect a lot." Aiden brushed Liam's hair off his damp forehead. "Why didn't you go to Frances?"

"I thought about it." Liam tried to turn his head away. "Aiden, I'm sick of having someone watch every move I make. It's been like this as long as I can remember, though I suppose with Frances he's a little less intrusive than some watchers."

"I've never had anyone care enough about me to assign a watcher." Aiden replied. "You should be happy that you're loved."

"I know I'm loved in a way. I mean my mother probably loves me and maybe my sister. Dakota too I suppose." He looked at Aiden through his eyelashes.

"I'm not taking the bait Liam." Aiden snickered.

"My father assigned a watcher to keep me a virgin."

"Apparently that didn't work well."

"No it didn't, but that wasn't Frances' fault. I'm pretty good at making myself lost when I want to. You only found me because we have a connection that's stronger than any magic. Whether you want to admit it or not."

"I want you to come home." Aiden said changing the subject. "We'll put this all behind us."

"And what?" Liam asked. "I have school and I have responsibilities to Shay. I can't risk Zane Chambers taking you or Shay from me because I want to fuck you and he has some perverse idea of revenge. Revenge for something that happened so long ago that who really cares now. Not to mention it had nothing to do with me."

"You think shit like this hasn't happened before?" Aiden held him tight. "Of course it has, same shit different names. If you're uncomfortable living with me, why don't you stay with Lisa for a while? It'll confuse the hell out of everyone. You and I, we don't need to actually use the front door if we don't want. We'll still see each other."

"Aiden Mac Ruaidhri is suggesting he use a spell or two for his own gratification. What is this world coming to?"

"It's not for me, it's for my son, for you, for the people around us. I'm not going to give up the first thing that's meant something to me without a fight." Aiden couldn't resist leaning forward and kissing Liam's nose, which led to kissing his mouth, his cheeks, and finally rolling so the he was leaning down over the red head, his eyes saying more than his voice, but knowing Liam could read every unspoken syllable.

Liam, eyes closed to better feel every tiny bit of emotion Aiden was emoting, sighed in contentment. One part of his mind continued to worry about Brad

Chambers and his family, but the rest was devoted to his lover as he continued to do his best to make himself unforgettable to the overly sensitive, stubborn Wahjee.

CHAPTER 18

But Ma, it's my room." Daniel threw himself down on a kitchen chair, looking a lot like he had when he was six. He glared at his mother who stood at the kitchen sink filling the coffee pot.

"It was your room until you moved out." She patted his shoulder. "Now it's the spare room. Aiden says Liam needs a safe place to stay. And really, what safer place is there than my house."

"He can stay at Aiden's."

"No he can't Danny." Aiden drawled. He'd walked into the house unnoticed. He kissed Lisa's cheek. "Where is he Lis?" The door was rarely locked when someone was home, but locks had never stopped Aiden before. This home had been a refuge of sorts to him, human though it was, as he grew up.

"Upstairs settling in. It's going to be nice having a boy in the house again. Richard is looking forward to cooking breakfast for someone who'll actually appreciate his skills." She laughed. "I'm too busy to eat in the morning. It drives Richard crazy." Lisa

shared the house with her brother, and had for years, ever since his life partner had died.

"Well we can't have that." He looked around. "Where is Rick?"

"He's with Liam. I thought it would be nice to let them get to know each other without everyone hanging on to every word."

"In other words, Rick is quizzing him about me." Aiden laughed. "Liam won't say a word. If you and your brother want to know something just ask."

"And would you answer?" she laughed patting his cheek with her palm, more a loving caress than anything else. It was rare that her surrogate son let her hug him.

"Of course I would." Aiden said tongue in cheek. "Liam and I are friends, good friends. We fuck, we suck and we occasionally talk, watch movies, eat meals and do all the things friends do when they're together. That's it." He turned to walk up the stairs. "I think I just might do one of those things right now."

"Not in my fucking bedroom you aren't" Daniel stood up, all but bristling like some kind of rabid dog.

"Gawd no, my dick would fall off. Luckily though, it's Liam's room I'm heading for." With that said, Aiden ran up the stairs taking them two at a time. He stopped outside of the room to listen.

"It looks like you've settled in Liam." Richard stood in the middle of the room. "Are you going to be okay here?"

"I don't know, Aiden wants me to try it." Liam shrugged. "I like Lisa."

"And she likes you." Richard paused. "Liam, about you and Aiden, be careful, don't hurt him."

"I'd never do that." Liam almost shouted. "Fuck, he's my... I don't know... we're kind of connected. It's hard to explain."

Aiden walked in the door. He gave Richard a one armed hug. "Rick, I'm a big boy. I can look after myself. And trust me on this one, Liam is the last person on this planet who would ever hurt me."

Liam glowed with the words that Aiden said and didn't say. "Hey Aiden. Except for getting a decent Internet connection, I'm all settled in." he looked around. "Oh and the wall paper sucks, but if I keep my eyes squinted in a certain way, it looks almost abstract."

"I used to smoke up in here with Danny, it looked great the more weed we smoked." Aiden sighed. "Of course 90% of the time we weren't stoned, I learned to ignore it."

"You don't have to sleep in here, not to mention do home work." Liam was close enough to lean his head on Aiden's arm. "But that's okay, Lisa said I could change it if I want. I might, I'm not sure."

"We could have a paint party." Richard laughed. "Not the kind of party I'm used to, but I'll make do. Liam, maybe you could invite some hot young studs to help you paint."

"I don't want to encourage your lecherous thoughts old man." Liam teased. "But I'll tell you what, you can watch me shower any time you want."

"No you can't." Aiden said, aghast that Liam would even suggest such a thing.

Richard burst out laughing, patting Aiden on the ass. "Damn, you still can't take a joke." He snickered, leaving the room chuckling.

"Did I mention you're a brat?" Aiden asked, flicking his hand and closing the door across the room so quietly it wasn't heard downstairs. He mumbled the words of a spell that would keep the door firmly closed until he was ready to leave.

"Naughty boy, you used magic." Liam said as he began to remove Aiden's shirt, his lips on warm skin as soon as it was exposed. "I'm taking you to the dark side."

"I've been there and came back a long time ago Sunshine." Aiden pushed Liam backwards until he fell across the bed. He flicked his fingers in an intricate pattern and Liam found himself naked. The fact he was hard had nothing to do with magic, unless it was the magic his body felt when he was alone with the man he adored.

The combination of a naked Liam, being in Danny's old room, a room that had held a certain amount of safety when he was growing up, and the fact that he was hornier than he'd been in a long time, had Aiden throwing himself down on Liam, roughly grabbing his hair as he mouth sought solace in Liam's taste. Liam's legs wrapped around Aiden's waist, he wanted Aiden as much as Aiden wanted him. It was their destiny to be together.

Downstairs, Daniel continued to sulk. Richard was at the kitchen counter making sandwiches. "Settle down, they'll be here in a minute." He said. He looked over at his sister. "Do you want some of my coconut cake?"

"Of course, make sure you cut a big piece for Liam, he's a growing boy." She smiled and patted Daniel's hand. "Do you want some cake too, Baby?"

"No, I don't want any damn cake." Daniel said pulling away and standing up.

"Daniel, you leave those two alone." Lisa cautioned, but Daniel was already half way up the stairs.

He tried the door handle on his old room only to reel back, shaking his hand. It was so cold he couldn't touch it. "Aiden, open the fucking door." He yelled, kicking at it.

The door opened slowly. Aiden and Liam were fully clothed and sitting on the bed. "Hey Danny." Aiden drawled. The smell of sex was ripe in the room. Liam's face had evidence of whisker burn, his lips were swollen and his smile self-satisfied. "What in hell is your problem, kicking the door in? You know Lisa is going to be pissed."

"You two were fucking in my room?" Daniel glared, stepping inside. "And you locked the door. Ma doesn't let anyone lock doors around here."

"Do we look like we were fucking?" Aiden laughed as he stood up. "And damned if I can see a lock on the door Danny. Maybe you've been working too hard at London Drugs."

"No shit, he has to carry that closet he's in around with him all day. It's probably heavy." Liam snickered.

"Fuck you." Daniel glared.

"Not even if you paid me." Liam snickered. "My ass belongs to one person."

"Who is that?" Aiden pretended not to know.

"Some guy I met. He's hot, not too bright about a few things, but damn he's hot." Liam jumped up off the bed. "I'm starving, Rick said he was making food." He moved quickly past Daniel. "I'm heading downstairs. You and Danny boy can relive old times."

Liam fell into a routine over the next couple of weeks. He drove to school each day, sometimes with Dakota and sometimes on his own. They would go to Hamburger Mary's after school and spread their homework out on the back booth, working and eating whatever it was Lisa decided was good for them.

Liam was surprised at how relaxed his was. He didn't see Aiden often, but they did manage a night or two during the week. Not that anyone was aware of their visits. There were some advantages to being Wahjee. The weekends were the best. On the weekends Aiden was able to have Shay for the day, either Saturday or Sunday, thanks to Liam's helping hand. And Liam was free to visit Aiden officially at his apartment. He liked to think of it as playing house. A term Aiden hated. But one Liam used to tease the older man when he thought he could get away with it.

Tonight was different; tonight he had a lot on his mind. Dakota had asked him a question that was driving him crazy.

"Okay, spit it out." Aiden said. He was sitting on his sofa, relaxing in the softness of it. Liam was stretched out, his head on Aiden's lap. Shay lay on Liam's chest sleeping peacefully.

"Spit what out?" Liam asked, his voice lazy. He rubbed circles on the baby's back. He loved being with Aiden and his son.

"What in hell has been bothering you all night?" Aiden sighed. "Liam, I don't have to use my Wahjee senses to know you've got something on your mind."

"It's Dakota."

"Dakota?" Aiden was surprised. "What about Dakota, is she in trouble or something?"

"No, she kind of wants me to take her... to make love to her... to you know, do her the first time."

"Does she understand the meaning of gay?" Aiden snorted. "Surely to god you aren't thinking of doing this?"

"I don't know what to do. I mean she has this boyfriend, she really likes. And she's thinking of having sex with him, maybe on prom night or something. She figures I could kind of teach her what to do."

"Like you're so good at hetero sex." Aiden bit his lip to keep from laughing. "I mean if I was going to have anyone deflower a young virgin, you'd be the first one I'd ask."

"Oh shut up Aiden, I know it's stupid." Liam smiled. "But hey, maybe I'm bi."

"Of course you are. That's why there are so many female nudes in your sketchbooks. Oops, sorry, there isn't even a female hand, or eye or tit."

"So I specialize in men." Liam sighed. "I don't like to disappoint her, but shit I don't have a clue what to do to a woman to make her get off. They do get off don't they?"

"You're right about the not having a clue." Aiden smirked. His fingers had been combing through Liam's hair. Before he'd never thought of red blond curls as being especially intoxicating. He knew the legends, only the most powerful Wahjee had red hair, one of the reasons he'd been concerned about the deep auburn of his son's hair. Mentally giving himself a shake Aiden continued to comb and twist silken curls.

"Maybe I should read up on it and then do a whole seduction scene. Kind of like on our first time together."

"Riiiggghhhht." Aiden huffed. "Maybe you should rethink that one."

"Da, Li, night." Shay raised his head.

"I think he wants us to shut up." Liam giggled and leaned in to kiss the top of the baby's head.

"You do know, it's more than a little unnerving having the kid talk." Aiden looked at his son, love in his eyes.

"It could be worse, he could be talking in full sentences."

"Me do that." Shay said and giggled.

Aiden rolled his eyes. "Oh for crap sake Shay, you're supposed to be a baby."

"He is a baby, a precocious baby who had a bit too much of dear old dad in him." He held on as Shay pushed himself up until he was sitting on Liam's chest.

"Da silly." Shay agreed. He held out his hands for Aiden and then before Aiden could pick him up, he popped into Aiden's arms. "Pop." He said and giggled again. "Shay pop."

"Shay is supposed to not do shit like that." Aiden tried to be stern. "Your mummies wouldn't like it. They'd freak."

"Shay no do shit stuff at mama's" Seamus pulled on Aiden's nose and then leaned forward to kiss his nose wetly.

"We need to work on your form." Aiden laughed. "Sloppy kisses are only cute when you're a baby."

"Oh I don't know, I happen to know Shay's daddy likes sloppy kisses." Liam laughed.

"You aren't helping Liam." Aiden laughed, leaning over and giving Liam a very sloppy kiss indeed and making Shay laugh at the same time.

The next day, Dakota met with Liam in the park. "Well, what did you decide?" she asked. They were sitting on swings, idly moving back and forth.

"Are you sure you want to do this Dakota?" he asked. "I mean if the guy only wants you because he thinks you're going to put out, then you don't need him in your life."

"It's not like that. I mean I really like him."

"The thing is Dakota, it's different with guys. I mean guys only really want one thing and they don't care how they get it. I'm gay and I know from listening to them in the locker room at school that the straight guys are just as focused. They want their dicks to be buried in some girl's hot pussy."

"Ewww." She flushed and turned her head.

"I know it sounds... well crass, but that's the truth. It's all they talk about. I mean I could tell you each and every girl who puts out at school, how often and who they do it with. These guys are pigs."

"Glen isn't like that. I mean I'd know if he was."

Dakota defended.

"Glen used to go with Jane Seals last year. I know she has a triangle shaped tattoo just over her hipbone. I know she likes anal sex and I know she spits it out when she gives a blow job." Liam looked hard at his friend. "I know this because I've heard it talked about."

"Glen?"

"Yeah," Liam shrugged. "I told you they're all pigs."

"If you were with a bunch of gay guys, would you guys tell each other about your conquests?"

"I wouldn't, but I know some who do. I mean Daniel and Evan and even Bob share stories all the time."

"What about Aiden?"

"He doesn't say much. I don't think he cares about his tricks enough to remember them one way or another."

"That's weird. I mean he's liked done a zillion guys."

"Gee thanks for reminding me." Liam laughed.

"He doesn't do too many these days."

"Do too many what?" Aiden asked, appearing behind the two friends. "Hey Dakota." He kissed her cheek and then kissed Liam, pulling him back on the swing making his legs go out from under him.

"Handstands." Liam lied and snickered when his lover winked and blew him a kiss.

CHAPTER 19

Spring had arrived and with it the excitement of the school year ending. In this case there was the added anticipation of graduation for Dakota and Liam. Liam knew he would be attending a local university and Dakota still hadn't decided on staying close or going out of state to school. Now the prom was the focus of their attention.

Liam couldn't care less about yet another dance. They were boring and the jocks generally got drunk, making them more annoying than usual. Which sucked as he couldn't use magic and turn them into the pigs they really were. It required more strength of will than he wanted to expend just to spend a few hours with bad dance music and Dakota.

Of course he hadn't reckoned on Lisa, a romantic of the highest order.

"I'll take you." Liam said to Dakota one sunny afternoon. "Lisa insists I go and we've been friends forever so why not go with me."

"Well if you put it like that, how can I say no." Dakota punched him on the arm. The two of them ended up wrestling on the sofa in Lisa's living room.

"Break it up you too." Richard yelled from the kitchen. He was happy though that Liam had decided to attend his prom. He suspected the boy secretly wanted to go with Aiden. But that never would have happened.

"It's Aiden's birthday in a week, he's going to be 30." Liam confided in Dakota. "I think he's freaked about it."

"You would be too." Dakota laughed. "What are you getting him for his birthday?"

"I've thought about a lot. I mean Aiden doesn't even acknowledge birthdays much, he says he celebrates achievements and being born is the luck of the draw."

"He won't be happy then if you give him something for his birthday." Dakota leaned back on the sofa. "What do you think Richard, should Liam get Aiden something for his birthday?"

"Aiden has always been funny about birthdays. Even when he was hanging around here as a teenager, he would never let Lisa make him a cake. Birthdays are usually important when you're young, not so much when you get older."

"Thirty isn't old." Liam defended. "Aiden has had a bunch of shitty birthdays when he was a kid. I'm going to fix it if I can."

"How can you do that? I mean you don't have a time machine." Dakota snickered. "You don't, do you?"

"Sure, it's in the basement."

"So that's where I left it." Richard chuckled. "I want to go back to when I was twenty one and no cares in the world."

"Sorry Rick, only Aiden gets to ride on my machine." Liam wiggled his eyebrows up and down.

"Ewwwwwe. You're so gross." Dakota said.

"Well I know that Daniel and the gang plan on giving him a surprise party complete with gravestone cake. I'm baking the cake." Richard looked at the two kids. "It's a surprise so don't say anything."

Later that night when everyone in the house was asleep, Aiden popped into Liam's room and snuggled close. "Hey there." He whispered to the sleeping red head. "I wanted to say goodnight and let you know I have to go out of town for a couple of days on business."

Liam moved so that his head was under Aiden's chin. "Do you remember your first birthday?" It wasn't an unusual question, for Wahjee had excellent early childhood memories.

"Yes, a bit." Aiden sighed. "I remember a cake, I think it had blue icing and it looked a lot like a lopsided bear."

Liam giggled. "What about your second birthday?"

"I was staying at my grandmothers. She was a miserable old bat. I remember my mother phoning and

wishing me happy birthday. It was the first time I'd ever talked on the phone. No cake that year, blue or otherwise."

"What about when you were three, do you remember that birthday?"

"What's with the questions, my childhood wasn't all that pleasant, I don't particularly want to remember it."

"I just want to get to know you better. I mean you never tell me anything, but you usually answer direct questions." Liam kissed him under his chin.

"I don't remember much about birthday number three, except I had it in my head that I was going to get a kitten for some reason. Which was ridiculous, as I might as well have asked for leopard. There was a hell of a fight between my parents about it. I think a neighbor family had kittens to give away. I liked an orange one. I think it was a male."

"Of course it would be a male." Liam snickered. "You would have been the right age for a Wah cat."

"Don't bother asking about the rest of my birthdays. From that point on there were no acknowledgements of my passing age." Aiden shuddered. It was barely perceptible, but it was there nevertheless.

"But you must have known when your birthday came around. Did you ever maybe kind of hope for something?"

"Fuck Liam, I don't want to talk about it." Silence filled the small bedroom. "I remember when I was five I just wanted my mother to tell me she loved me

and maybe kiss me goodnight or something. When I was six I lusted after a car, one of those ones that transform into something else. At seven I wanted a book, one about Egypt. At eight I was determined to get a dog. One who could defend me and bite Jack's head off. The bigger the better." He snickered. "I spent a long time weaving fantasies about that. I even went so far as to try and entice any dog that wandered by to come into the house."

"At nine I was back to books, at ten I discovered the joys of pulling on my dick, so I didn't really want anything that year. Other than privacy to play with my toy." Aiden kissed Liam on the forehead.

"At eleven the other altar boys proved interesting, at twelve I wanted to get picked for the soccer team, at thirteen, I panted in my room after Tommy James, he was the captain of the soccer team. By the time I was fourteen, I gave up even thinking of my birthday other than when Lisa or Danny bugged the shit out of me about it. It was a constant battle to convince them I wasn't interested in a fucking birthday cake or useless gifts that I couldn't bring home even if I wanted them."

Again silence filled the room, Liam felt a tear drop onto his forehead. "I'm sorry I brought this up Aiden." He whispered.

"No, no it's alright. I do it a lot you know. Think of my early years. It keeps me honest. It reminds me of what I've become and how I got there."

"You are one of the kindest, most gentle men I know." Liam said. "Are we going to have sex tonight?"

"I think I'll just hold you until you go to sleep." Aiden whispered. "It isn't my birthday, but that's what I want to do tonight."

"I love you Aiden." Liam wiggled until he was wrapped under Aiden, the older man's legs over his.

"I know you do." Aiden sighed. "It's the only thing that gets me through the day." His eyes shut as did Liam's and they drifted off to sleep.

Aiden was gone when Liam woke up. It was always like that. He'd come in the shadowed night and disappear back to his loft lair before dawn, like some kind of Wahjee vampire. The boy felt more anger for Aiden's parents than he did pity for his lover. It strengthened his resolve to make Aiden's 30th birthday something special.

"Hey Rick, something smells good." Liam said as he bounced down the stairs already dressed for school.

"I made waffles with raspberry sauce." The older man put a plate of waffles on the table. "I noticed you haven't seen much of Aiden lately. Is everything okay between the two of you?"

"Yeah, I have school and stuff and Aiden is busy with work. I'm seeing him on his birthday though. He'll need to be rescued from his well-meaning friends. You know how much he'd hate what they're planning."

"I know, but after Danny's party, I think this is a kind of get even thing."

"Well it sucks and I don't like it."

"What Aiden did for Daniel sucked too Liam."

Richard's voice was quiet.

"He was trying to get your stupid nephew to grow up and admit who he is. And to stop mooning over what he's never going to have."

"I know, but there could have been a better way."

Richard sat down at the table, putting a full mug of coffee in front of Liam and one for himself.

"Yeah, any ideas?" Liam snickered. "I don't want to fight Rick. Aiden is important to me. I think sometimes I'm the only one who really gets what he's all about. There's a lot more to him than what everyone sees."

"Hey, any waffles left for me?" Daniel asked as he walked in the front door. He looked at Liam, "Don't you have to get to school?"

"I'm eating my breakfast." Liam was almost finished, but he slowed down just to annoy the other man.

"Uncle Rick, have you got the drawings for the cake?" Daniel asked, ignoring Liam.

"Bob brought them over the other day." Richard confirmed. "It seems a shame to make something I know no one is going to actually eat."

"I'll eat it." Liam grinned.

"You aren't invited Brat, this party is adults only." Daniel sneered.

Liam threw his head back and laughed. "I wouldn't dream of being part of your scheme to piss Aiden off about his age. But I will be glad to eat

Rick's cake. He's the best cake maker I've ever known and trust me, my family are kind of cake nuts, I've had cakes from famous bakeries all over the world."

"That's some compliment." Richard was grinning ear to ear. "Thanks Liam."

"Just telling the truth." He got up and grabbed his backpack. "See you after school Uncle Rick." He kissed the older man on his cheek.

"I put your lunch in your bag." Rick said as Liam ran out the door.

"You make his fucking lunch?" Daniel was outraged.

"Why not, he has to eat you know." Daniel's Uncle began to clear away breakfast. "Don't you have to go to work?"

"I'm on the late shift. I work until nine tonight." Daniel mumbled. He was eating the left over waffles.

CHAPTER 20

Liam had spent his time since Aiden's revealing visit on research into the man's early years. It was easy when you were Wahjee; well it was easy when you were Wahjee with talent and had some help from an unexpected source. He knew that the birthday night wasn't going to be all that Daniel and gang thought it might be.

Watching from his room at Lisa's through his abilities as Wahjee, Liam felt rather than heard the outrage Aiden was feeling. He had to commend the man. He never used an ounce of his Wahjee abilities or even a touch of magic. Had they done something like this to him, he would have had a box of toads hopping around the apartment.

He rolled his eyes when Aiden was dragged to a funeral home and chucked in a coffin. It was at that moment; Liam could tell his lover was about to explode. He waited for everyone to leave the room. He knew their schedule; they were bringing in the cake. It was then that Liam popped Aiden out of the

coffin and into the apartment. "Hey." He said wrapping his arms around the confused man.

"Magic, loft, no." Aiden began.

"Magic, loft, occasionally." Liam grinned. "Thirty is a birthday that kind of marks a rite of passage. I want this to be special for you."

"Finding myself in a coffin isn't special enough for you?" Aiden huffed. He strode into the kitchen looking for a bottle of water. "What's all this stuff?" he asked surveying a table full of carefully wrapped gifts.

"Your life." Liam bounced over to him and handed him a bottle of cold water. "Now sit down and humor me."

"Will it get me laid later?" Aiden huffed, Liam always made him smile.

"Many, many times." Liam took his hand and led him to the sofa. "This is about your life and in a way it's about another persons as well. I took the liberty of borrowing, with her permission, this book." He handed Aiden a well-worn book.

"With whose permission?" Aiden asked, turning the book over and over in his hand.

"Your mother."

"I'm not reading anything that bitch has written."

Aiden threw the book on the table.

"Fine, I'll read it. I went to a lot of trouble to get her to admit this even existed and to let me read it. You do know she's quite powerful; you get your own powers from her side of the family. If she didn't allow us access, there isn't a chance in hell you could even

open the cover." He looked at Aiden who was sitting on the sofa, arms crossed tightly on his chest, bottom lip out in a definite pout.

Ignoring him, though he couldn't help but smirk slightly, Liam sat as close as he could to Aiden, so close that Aiden was forced to put one of his arms around Liam's shoulder.

1970 - April 5th

Aiden was born an hour ago. He's everything I dreamed of in a baby. Jack of course, has no idea the strength my child has. And he never will, at least not while I have a breath in my body. Aiden will be the good in the Mac Ruaidhri clan. Jack can never find out.

I know that in order to keep Aiden's abilities to myself, I am going to have to make some hard decisions. I love this boy with my whole heart and soul. I will die before I will allow Jack to turn him to the dark side so my tears will remain hidden as he grows. I can't allow Jack to know how much Aiden means to me.

This will be my gift to my child, should he want to receive it.

Aiden, your birth was an easy one, you were placed on my chest, moments after you took your first breath and I looked into your eyes, seeing all my hopes for you reflected there. You have flashing green eyes and the most beautiful hair, thick and wavy with a hint of red that surely comes from my side of the family. I know that you will be even more powerful than I had imagined. I have to put a small spell on

you, just to make sure you don't show your father the strength you have inside your sturdy body.

Liam reached out and patted Aiden's knee before continuing:

1971 - April 5th

My darling baby, you are one-year-old today. How you've grown. I made you your first and I'm afraid your last birthday cake. It was a mistake to show Jack this love I have for you. I thought he'd be away long enough for you to enjoy the blue bear. I love you dearly and I will not have him attempting to harm you before you are able to defend yourself. I will never put you in this position again. Tonight when I placed you in your crib, my heart broke, for I'll never again see the joy you'd shown at the sight of your birthday cake. My birthday wish for you is for you to grow strong and be filled with goodness and light.

1972 - April 5th

My brave boy, having to be with that bitch of a mother in law, but I'm ill with this next pregnancy and can't cope with life itself. At least she's blind as a bat and will not notice your powers. They are developing nicely and though I have you in a binding spell, I know they are stronger on this anniversary of your birth. Perhaps with the birth of your sister, it will take some of the attention off of you. Your father occasionally looks on you with suspicion. It's sometimes all I can do to deflect his thoughts. I was so surprised when I called to talk to you tonight, that you were able to project your thoughts to me. Much as I would love to help you develop this talent, I must

suppress it for now. We can't allow any Mac Ruaidhri to know. My birthday wish for you is to grow strong and be filled with goodness and light.

Aiden pulled the book from Liam's hand and began to read the words himself. His heart was filled with something he'd never expected to feel. He'd always wanted his mother's love and had been envious of Daniel and Lisa. He had to read for himself what she'd written.

1973 - April 5th

Aiden, you are three today. Imagine that. You are tall and so very strong. I tucked you into your bed tonight without the kitten I know you wanted. You are Wahjee after all and all Wahjee should have a familiar by the age of three. But of course, with the Mac Ruaidhri's as evil as they are, I don't dare allow it. It would be too easy for them to work their blackness through your golden kitten. My birthday wish for you is to grow strong and be filled with goodness and light.

Aiden looked at Liam and then at a parcel on the table that began to wiggle and move. "What the fuck Liam?" he asked. He picked up the box and the top fell off. Out jumped an orange kitten about 7 weeks old with a tag around his neck. "My name is Tyrone F Horn Eye" Aiden burst out laughing. It was a name from his favorite seventies show, Laugh In. Liam hated that show, but Aiden had all the seasons on DVD and watched them to relax. The kitten jumped up on Aiden's shoulder and settled down, draping himself there like it was his favorite perch. "So I now

have a cat and a Wah cat no less. I want to hear how you managed that." Aiden grinned. He never thought of himself as a pet person, but Tyrone seemed somehow right.

1974 - April 5th

Aiden began to read; each birthday there was an entry. Some of them were long and some were short, depending on what was happening in their lives. With each birthday, another gift he'd wanted appeared on the table in front of him. There were transformer cars and books. On his eighth birthday, another of the gifts began to wiggle. "Fuck Liam, not another cat." He sighed and reached forward.

"I believe you were after a big assed dog that would perhaps eat your father." Liam giggled. "Meet your dog." The dog wagged his tail and jumped up on Aiden.

"Uh Liam, he's got giant feet for a puppy." Aiden leaned down and patted the dog on his head. "What in hell is he and what's his name?"

"He's a poodle." Liam admitted. "I thought maybe you might have a name for him."

"I was going to call my dog Killer." Aiden looked at the puppy. "I'm not some kind of a fag that wants a fucking poodle."

"He's a standard poodle. He'll end up about a hundred pounds and he's real smart, aren't you Killer." Liam scratched him under the chin.

"A fucking poodle Liam?" Aiden shook his head. "You do know this isn't going to work don't you. I'm not capable of looking after Ty here much less Killer."

I do work, long days by the way. I don't want to come home to dog shit and piss all over the apartment. Even if I did agree to keep him." Killer was now on back on Aiden's lap. Ty leaned down and patted the dog's foot that was sticking up close to him.

"I have that covered." Liam laughed. "I made him a run out on the roof. He can do his business there and the best part is, no more unwelcome guests in the loft. Between him and Ty, no one would dare come through the door unless they were invited."

Aiden decided to ignore the now sleeping dog and continued to read.

"I didn't know how to do much about your penchant for masturbation, so I got you some stroke books." Liam said when they'd reached his eleventh birthday.

Aiden snorted with laughter. He leafed through to the last page.

2000 - April 5th

Today Aiden's friend came to see me. He knew about this book. I suppose it's because he's Wahjee and that he loves my son. Aiden, if you've read these pages I want you to know. There isn't a day that goes by that I don't think about you. Liam tells me that you have not only become what I wished for you each birthday, but much more. I am so proud. My birthday wish for you is to grow strong and be filled with goodness and light.

Aiden was silent for a few moments. "I'm going to read this again." He whispered.

"All the way through, there's some interesting stuff when you were in your teens. And once you left home, she never missed your birthday. Your mother has always loved you. She just wasn't able to show you. Not because she didn't want to, but because she was protecting you."

"But why let you have this now?"

"Maybe because Jack is damn near dead. Maybe she feels safe." Liam shrugged. "I think it's something you should talk to her about."

"Not today." Aiden sighed. "Liam, when I was eight, a dog was a great idea. What in hell am I going to do with him at thirty?" he'd been rubbing the dog's tummy while it slept on his lap. Ty was now draped around the back of his neck. Aiden turned to Liam, "Really the only thing I needed was this." He held up the book.

"Killer is cute, can't we keep him?" Liam asked, batting his eyelashes.

"We?" Aiden snorted. "You don't even live here."

"That's not my fault. That was your decision, not mine." Liam stood up. "Let's take Killer up to the roof. And don't worry, I made sure that the outside stairs are safe and that the puppy won't fall through."

"I'm worried about you and I falling through." Aiden eyed the long window that led to the iron railed fire escape. It went both up to the roof and down to just above the bottom floor. "What's to stop Killer from going down instead of up."

"He's smart and Ty won't let him. Ty's in charge of his training."

"Maybe it's escaped your notice, but Ty is a cat, a small cat." Aiden smirked. The cat was still perched on his shoulder.

"Watch. Oh, I had to put up a kind of ramp for now. Killer is too short for the steps, but he'll grow fast."

Aiden and Liam watched as the puppy sniffed around and then walked up the short ramp to stand at the dog door Liam had built into the window. Ty jumped down from Aiden's shoulder to land behind Killer, he stuck on paw out nails extended and the dog jumped through the door. Ty following, he and Killer ran up to the roof.

Aiden stepped through the window and then turned to hold out his hand for Liam. "Maybe we should put a door here instead."

"We can do that." Liam mumbled a few words and there was a door in place of the window.

"Magic, loft, no." Aiden said shaking his head.

"Ahhhh, it's your birthday." Liam whined in imitation of Daniel.

They reached the roof and looked around. Liam had put in a grassy area. There were a couple of lawn chairs and some interesting things for the animals to investigate. Aiden noticed that the red head had thought of placing a fence around the roof in case Killer was tempted to jump over the side. He knew Ty would be fine. The cat was one he recognized from a line of Wahjee familiars. He'd known a number of

others with cats from this particular strain. "How did you manage to get one of the Wah cats?" Aiden asked. "I thought they were spoken for at the birth of their owners."

"They are. You have the one that was to be yours as a child. Of course not actually the one, but you were still on the list, if there's a list. I don't know how this kind of thing works."

"Why don't you have one?" Aiden asked.

"Not everyone gets one. Your mother made sure you were going to get a Wah cat, mine didn't." Liam shrugged. "I'll share Ty." He had to giggle. "I sort of do have one. I have a turquoise and white stuffed cat. I pretend he's a Wah cat. I've had him forever."

"I don't think they share well." Aiden laughed. "I can't believe I have two damn animals in my life. You certainly make things interesting Brat." He did recall seeing the turquoise cat off and on. In fact it was almost unnerving when he popped into Liam's bedroom to see its glittering eyes watch his every move from its various perches.

"I aim to please." Liam pulled Aiden down onto the sturdy lawn chair and then sat on his lap. "Look, you can actually see a few stars if you squint in the right way."

"I only see one." Aiden was gazing at Liam. He wiggled his eyebrows making Liam laugh. "I have to admit this was a damn good birthday, or parts of it was."

"Hey you didn't get any cake."

"After seven - carbs." Aiden began.

"Shut up, it's your birthday." Liam kissed him.
"Should we go to the cake or have the cake come to us?"

"I suppose I won't hear the end of it, we might as well find the gang." He looked over at his new roomies and said. "We're going out - the two of you behave. Ty, keep an eye on Killer and remember he's young and a dog." Ty was the same age as the dog, but he was a Wah cat after all.

"Shit, they brought the cake back to Lisa's." Aiden and Liam stood on the porch after Liam had magicked them to the cake.

"Might as well get it over with." Liam walked into the house, his hand in Aiden's. "Hey guys, hope you saved us some cake."

"WHERE THE FUCK DID YOU GO TO ASSHOLE." Daniel shouted.

"You didn't invite Liam. I had to find him." Aiden drawled and walked inside. "Nice cake Rick."

"It isn't everyday someone turns thirty." Richard laughed. "Liam, after licking the icing bowl and eating the left over cake batter, I'd think you'd be tired of it."

"No way, I love it." Liam sat at the table, his eyes on the cake. "Come on Aiden, sit down. The birthday boy should cut the cake."

Aiden rolled his eyes, but he had to admit, after Liam's birthday surprise, he was rather enjoying the attention. He had been loved all these years, somehow knowing that, made him accept the love from others much easier.

Daniel watched, eyes closed in slits of anger. Evan was happy to find plates for the cake. Bob was looking for ice cream.

"Where did the girls go?" Liam asked.

"They figured Aiden had disappeared for the night, they went home." Evan answered. "But I knew that he was going to find his Liam."

Liam glowed with the words. "Aiden always knows where I am."

"That's because you're a fucking stalker." Daniel mumbled.

Liam grinned at him and stuck out his tongue before turning to his plate. "Hurry up and cut the cake." Liam urged Aiden.

"Don't you have to fit into a tux tonight?" Aiden laughed as he leaned forward to cut the cake. "Dakota is going to want her date to look good."

"I always look good." Liam smirked. "I still think you'd look amazing in a tux, especially if you showed up at the prom."

"Not going to happen Brat, Aiden doesn't need that kind of shit and publicity. He does work you know." Daniel glared.

"No shit." Liam leaned his head against Aiden's shoulder. "You would look amazing." He whispered loud enough for them all to hear.

"You'll do just fine with Dakota." Aiden said. He forked up a piece of cake and placed it in Liam's mouth. "One for the road."

The next day as Liam was getting ready for the prom, he began to feel uneasy. He wasn't sure why,

but with each advancing minute, the uneasiness increased. He called Dakota but she was full of bubbly excitement about the upcoming night, so he didn't say anything. Whatever it was had to be nerves, or at least that's what he put it down to.

He spent the day getting ready. Not so much for Dakota, but for his anticipated night with Aiden. He knew that while the man had no intention of showing up at the dance, he'd still plan something great for the rest of the evening. He and Dakota spent the day having pedicures and manicures and generally being pampered. But try as he might, he just couldn't get rid of the feeling of impending doom. Even the weather wasn't cooperating. Heavy clouds dark and forbidding rolled around the skies, making the day seem grey and heavy. The air smelled of city fumes that couldn't escape because of the cloud cover and everywhere he went, tempers were frayed.

But it was prom day and Liam was determined that his best friend would have an amazing time. He'd actually convinced himself that it was a fitting end to the school year, being with his best friend. After all that's how they'd begun, as two kids attending kindergarten hand in hand.

The evening for Liam seemed to happen like a slow motion movie. He picked Dakota up and they arrived fashionably late at the hotel where the dance was being held. He parked close to the hotel entrance and walked her inside. The atmosphere was heavy outside, but it didn't carry into the brightly lit hotel.

Once inside it was easy to forget and let the magic of the evening overtake the two of them.

They danced and laughed for almost two hours when the music seemed to fade and Liam turned to see Aiden walk in, as handsome as he'd imagined. No one noticed red glowing eyes that sparkled like rubies here and there throughout the room. No one noticed that the clock was showing five minutes to midnight. All eyes were on Aiden and Liam as they took to the dance floor to weave a special magic all of their own. And they were magical in form and reality as they swayed and moved to the music in a waltz that was both ageless and new. The two of them made their declarations to each other and the world that they were well and truly a couple from now until eternity.

The music faded at the same time as the two hands of the clock reached midnight. Brad Chambers, eyes red with fury and hate made the first move, and then, the slow motion camera in Liam's head, became even slower.

The room turned dark, as dark as the inside of a cave. Red flashes appeared, eyes wide with despair and fear as people moved without their own violation toward Liam and Aiden. In a flash, Liam lit the room with his sparks, throwing them toward anything red, knowing that what lurked inside the people, wouldn't be able to stand the goodness of what he threw back at them.

Aiden's hands gripped Liam's shoulders as he tried to shield him from what was happening in an attempt to protect the man he knew he loved. They

turned around and around in the semi darkness doing their best to avoid the onslaught of what was being cast in their direction by Brad Chambers and his henchmen.

Girls and boys were screaming in the darkness shouting for the lights to be turned on. But they were barely heard over the loud music, a cacophony of evil sounds that had begun to play the moment the time reached midnight.

Aiden tried to envelope the two of them in an invisibility spell, but nothing seemed to work for him, or worked but for only moments.

And then it was over. The lights were on; Liam was slumped in his arms, his head covered in blood. Brad Chambers lay beaten on the floor where one of Aiden's bolts of energy had actually connected.

Liam's unconscious weight pulled him from Aiden until the other man had to let him lay on the floor while he shouted for an ambulance. He knew that, that which was Liam, had been pulled somewhere else thanks to Brad Chambers. But he could say nothing. He could only allow the humans to care for Liam's body while they determined his injuries real or imagined. It was always this way with the Wahjee. Their minds were more vulnerable than the rest of them and only that which was Wahjee could fix things when they were broken.

It was now Aiden's turn to be caught in the time warp camera as he waited for Liam's body to be transported in the ambulance. As he held a cold still hand, doing his best to rub life heat into it, not hearing

the sirens screaming. He watched in slow motion as Dakota moved to him as he sat in the hall. He held her tightly as she cried, but he didn't shed a tear. There was no time for tears. No time for recriminations. No time to be still while family and friends milled around waiting to hear how Liam was. No time for police and useless questions. No time for anything other than Liam.

Aiden stood and walked through the crowds and then through doors closed and supposedly locked. He ignored tugs on his arms as he made his way to where Liam was being kept while they tried to stabilize his body. Inside the room he bent over and kissed lips that were just barely warm with the life that continued to glow inside a heart that barely beat. "Later" he whispered to the man he loved.

It was time for Aiden Mac Ruaidhri to embrace his Wahjee heritage and get his man back.

CHAPTER 21

Where did my master go?" Killer asked the golden kitten. He was sitting on the floor watching the kitten push silken pillows on the floor from the high white mountain that he would later learn was a sofa and not to be jumped on.

"He's busy." Ty panted. It was a lot of work making sure this stupid dog had a place to sleep. "There that's the last one. Now you can sleep here. Aiden will have a bed for you soon."

"You don't have a bed." The puppy sniffed the cushions before putting one of his saucer sized paws on it. It slipped and he fell forward, legs askew. "Very dangerous." He muttered as he clambered on.

"I am Wah, I sleep where I please." Ty said jumping back up to the sofa to stare down at the curly puppy.

"That's not fair." Killer whined.

"Having to look after a stupid dog is not fair. I'm not whining about that." Ty glared before settling

himself on the soft white sofa, his ends tucked under. "Go to sleep."

Aiden waited until nightfall of the day after Liam's prom, before he made his first move. He'd been back to the apartment for a few minutes to make sure Killer and Ty were fed and to explain to Ty what had happened. He needed the cat to be aware that his guardianship of the loft was more needed than ever. Killer at his young age was more like a typical, rather dumb dog. Being fuzzy black and larger than he should be wasn't helping his image any.

Ty had dragged a few cushions off of the sofa for Killer to sleep on. At least the dog wasn't able to climb on the bed yet. For that Aiden was grateful.

He changed into black jeans and a black tee shirt before grabbing his leather jacket and heading to Shay's place. He needed to reassure himself that his son was safe and that the security precautions were in place to keep him that way.

"Aiden, how's Liam?" Vanessa asked when she opened the door. It hadn't taken long before all of Davie Street and most of Vancouver knew about the attack that was being described as a gay bashing.

"Still the same." He said stepping into her house. "I want to see Shay before I head back to the hospital."

"He's in the living room." Vanessa looked at her friend. "The radio station says no one knows what happened. They can't get a clear statement from anyone, just a lot of garbled thoughts. There's speculation it was some kind of prank that went

wrong." She lowered her voice not wanting to speak the words out loud. "Could it really have been a gay bashing?"

"I wouldn't know. Things happened too quickly for me to tell what was happening and why." Aiden lied as he picked up Shay from the swing he was in. "Hey there Pumpkin, it's been a busy couple of days."

"Li?" Shay asked in a small voice.

"I'm looking after it." Aiden whispered to his son as he nuzzled the baby's neck. "I want you to stay safe."

Just then the doorbell rang and Vanessa went over to answer it. "Mrs. Mac Ruaidhri." She stammered, not quite knowing what to say.

Aiden knew immediately that his mother was there to protect his son. She was a powerful part of the Wahjee people, though until a couple of days ago he hadn't realized just how powerful she was. "Mom, this is Seamus, we call him Shay." Aiden said handing his son to his mother. No words were spoken between them. Vanessa was human and they couldn't discuss what was needed in front of her.

"Hello." Margaret said to the baby. "I'm your Nanny Margaret." She kissed his cheek. "I'm sorry to drop in on you unannounced, but Aiden insisted." Margaret said to Vanessa.

"I forgot to mention you were coming over, mom." Aiden said. He turned to Vanessa. "If you don't mind, mom would like to spend some time with Shay. I have to get back to Liam."

"But..." Vanessa began confused as to why Aiden's mother was there. She'd been under the impression that Aiden didn't get along with his mother, and here she was and Aiden was fine with it. But her WASP upbringing took over and Vanessa smiled. "Would you like a cup of tea Mrs. Mac Ruaidhri?"

"That would be lovely dear." Margaret said. "I think Shay and I will sit here on the rocking chair. What a delightful room you have, from here you can see every entrance and still look out the windows." She smiled and sat down. "Aiden, you run along and see to Liam. He needs you now. Shay will be fine, he is, after all, your son." And then she said something Vanessa thought was weird. "With each generation of hearts filled with white light, the light increases and thus does the power. That is your gift to your son."

Aiden flushed, kissed his mother on her cheek and his son on his forehead before moving to the door. "I'll call you when I know something, Vans." He said to his friend.

CHAPTER 22

Liam, his mind trapped in a body that was stuck in a hospital bed, broken and aching, raged silently, eyes shut. He'd been blindsided by Brad Chambers and he knew it. By letting his guard down for a few seconds to show Aiden the love he felt for him in the presence of the humans that he'd attended school with. He couldn't believe he'd made such a stupid mistake. He should have known things were going too smoothly.

He could hear sounds that indicated he was in a hospital. It made sense. To a human, he'd look like he'd been assaulted. His head hurt, no doubt where Brad Chambers had lobbed the spell to kill him. If he could have laughed he would have. Brad must be pissed. Liam was protected by more than just his own hereditary powers, he had Aiden and Shay aligned with him now. Love alignments were more powerful than any other kind. Not that it was doing him a lot of good right now. Of course being alive was a good thing. Being alive and in a state resembling a coma,

was a bad thing. Liam wondered how he was going to get out of this. Or better yet, how Aiden was going to get him out of this mess. He knew without a doubt that Aiden would be doing everything he could to find Chambers and reverse what had been done.

"Li, Li." The words filtered into his conscious mind, relaxing him slightly. It was Shay. "Li, don't be sad, Da fix." He heard. "Shay sing sleep song for you." And then Liam began to hear the words of the ancient lullaby he'd once sung to the baby. The words accented correctly, though the voice was only learning how to speak. A haunting melody woven with healing power filled Liam's mind. The red head that had discovered the love of a child at such a young age, gave himself up into the baby's hands, knowing he'd be safe while he slept.

In the waiting area near Liam's hospital room, Lisa arrived with lunch for anyone who might be there. She was hoping that she'd see Aiden; she knew how much he must have been beating himself up over what had happened. Liam's bashing, for that's what it was now being called, had affected a lot of people in the community.

A quick peek inside Liam's room told her he was alone except for a stuffed toy, a turquoise cat on the pillow by his head. She'd been surprised right from the start that his mother wasn't around. Lisa had a warm feeling for the young boy lying in the sterile room. She couldn't leave him in there alone. Looking back over her shoulder to check on the others, Lisa slipped inside. "Hey there Baby." She spoke softly,

afraid to make any noise. Though the machines that beeped and groaned and sloshed didn't have the same fear.

Lisa pulled a chair up beside Liam's bed and took his hand in hers. "You're doing good, well pretty good. You've given us all quite a scare. Aiden is out trying to be his usual super hero self, you know how he gets. Richard is going home soon to bake. I bet your nurses will get sick of all the cakes and cookies he ends up bringing in." she smoothed Liam hair back off of his forehead and then leaned in to kiss him gently. "Your temperature is fine." She smiled and sat back down. "You sleep baby and get better, let your body heal. I'll just sit here and watch over you."

She ignored the tear that ran down her cheek as she began to pray the prayers of her youth. While she prayed, she was sure she could hear singing in a language she didn't know. The words were somehow comforting. They made her feel safe and secure, though she wasn't sure why. The words of the song wove in and around her, making the room seem like it was filled with cotton wool, and Lisa's eyes closed, her head lay on the bed beside Liam's hand. She slept the sleep of the just, knowing she was safe, though from what she never knew or even wondered about.

Aiden realized as he made the rounds searching for Brad Chambers, that this fight between the Chambers' and Liam was going to be something that wouldn't end now or easily. The best he could hope for would be to find Chambers and secure him enough

that Liam's body and mind could be released from the thrall the kid had put him into.

He was walking out to his Lexus, Killer on a leash, when Daniel seemed to appear out of nowhere. "Hey Aiden." Daniel said. "Mom said not to worry, she's staying with Liam today."

"HEY, WHAT THE FUCK IS HE DOING?" Daniel looked in horror at his pant leg that was now firmly in Killer's mouth, a deep very grown up growl coming from the large puppy.

"Biting your pant leg." Aiden drawled as he looked down. "Hey Killer, your job is inside not outside." The dog stopped what he was doing and looked up at Aiden. "I'm not worried about Liam, he's in good hands." He bent down to pat the dog. "I have to take Killer for a short walk and then I have things to do."

"Who owns the dog?" Daniel asked, walking well away from sharp puppy teeth.

"He's mine."

"You don't like dogs."

"I like you, why wouldn't I like dogs?" Aiden asked.

"You've never had a dog before."

"I have one now."

"Where did you get it?"

"What is this, twenty questions? He was a present from Liam." Aiden had walked the dog to a grassy area down the block while Daniel followed along.

"I should have known." Daniel sounded pissed.

"Don't go there Danny." Aiden warned. He leaned down and cleaned up after Killer before turning to head back to the apartment. His stride was long, but the puppy kept up. He might have been young, but he didn't mind running after his master.

"Aiden, have you spoken to the police yet?" Daniel continued as he ran after his old friend.

"About what?" Aiden asked, of course he knew about what, but he wanted Daniel to say the words.

"About Liam's bashing. I mean you could have been hurt or even killed. I don't understand why you went there anyway. I mean, it was just a dance with a bunch of kids. You didn't even go to our prom."

Aiden could see Liam's point. There were certainly times when Daniel would make a great toad. "Can't talk now, Danny." Aiden said, letting himself and Killer into the building and then doing something he wouldn't normally have considered. He put a quick spell on the door making it unable to open for two minutes. Long enough for Daniel to become discouraged and leave.

"Hey Ty." Aiden said, once he and Killer were inside the loft. The cat had jumped up to his shoulder, his favorite perch. Aiden wasn't sure how the small cat managed to do this trick without him feeling claws, but it was rather reassuring once he was there. He felt a momentary sadness that he'd been unable to have a Wah cat when he was eight, but glad he had one now. "I know for sure now that it was the Chambers family who poisoned their son's mind against Liam. And because of that Brad felt he should

do something to destroy the boy. I'd like to think he hadn't meant to use enough force to kill him, but I don't know that for sure. If Shay hadn't intervened by warning me, there might have been an all out war declared. It isn't how I've lived my life. I've never knowingly harmed anyone and I don't plan on starting now. I need some help from you Ty, in figuring out how we're going to handle this. I need Liam back and I need him back now and in good shape."

Aiden found talking to Ty somehow comforting. He was glad Daniel wasn't around to see or hear him. He'd think he'd lost his mind. There were times he wondered himself if he hadn't done just that. Times when he held a red headed boy twelve years his junior with laughing blue eyes and an insatiable desire for sex and wondered how he'd come to love him. Aiden shook his head to clear it.

He sealed the door to his loft and headed for the shower. For what he had to do, he needed to be prepared. His knowledge of spells and magic and all the other rigmarole that went with being a wizard of the highest order was nothing he'd ever needed lessons to learn or an apprenticeship to fill. Things like that were for those who knew bits and pieces of Wahjee lore, not really understanding that there was truth in legend.

Aiden Mac Ruaidhri was from a long line of powerful Irish based Wahjee. Some even said that the Mac Ruaidhri's had been part of the first High Council and leaders of the little people, the elves and leprechauns, fairies and pixies. It didn't matter to

Aiden right now. He knew what he'd been born to do. What his mother had wanted for him from the moment of his birth and perhaps even longer than that. He was meant to keep Liam Taylor safe and out of harm, for the young red head was meant for great things in his lifetime. And he was to do so, by using white light and white light only, nothing that would harm Zane Chambers or his son Brad. He needed to find a way to turn the evil Brad had unleashed back on the boy, for it would return doubled or more.

Brad Chambers would be stopped by his own hand, not by Aiden Mac Ruaidhri or Liam Taylor's.

And so began Aiden's all night vigil on the roof of his apartment building. Tonight, like every night for the next twenty-one days, Aiden showered, cleaning his body. When he was done, he and the two animals would walk up to the roof under the cover of darkness. Killer would pace around the grassy area three times before settling down just right of center. Aiden was sitting directly in the center of the grass, his legs folded in the lotus position. Once they were settled. Ty would make the circle counter clockwise seven times, taking care to stop and listen at the four points, north, south, east and west, before he would walk to Aiden and sit on the cross his legs made.

On the other side of the city, Shay would be rocked in his grandmother's arms while she, and in turn he, would sing the protection lullaby that kept his mother's calm and accepting of the nightly visits from Margaret Mac Ruaidhri and his Liam safe. Two things that were necessary for his father to pull in white light

from himself and from Liam to form a barrier to return that which meant harm to Brad Chambers and his henchmen.

And each night for twenty-one days, Liam lay sleeping in his hospital bed, a turquoise toy on guard, its eyes sparkling. His superficial injuries healed, but he was still trapped inside himself, unable to speak or even open his eyes. He could hear the care and concern in the voices of those who continued to visit him day after day. He knew they were worried that he wouldn't regain consciousness. And he knew that one and all were unhappy that Aiden didn't appear to ever visit the hospital.

But he wasn't, because each night, just before midnight, Aiden popped into his room to kiss him goodnight and tell him he was loved. He would rub lip-gloss into his lips and smooth lotion into his skin. It was only the barest of moments, but it was enough to keep Liam from lapsing into despair, as he knew his Aiden was taking care of him.

Twenty-one nights of sitting naked under the star strewn sky, in all weather. Protected by those who loved him, guarded by a young dog, that by the twenty first day had tripled in size. And by a Wah cat, golden and sleek, eyes as green as glass, mentally connected to Aiden, and in turn with Liam, as Aiden's true love. In this time, with the help of Wahjee all over the world, Aiden focused on Liam until finally on that last day, he'd located the exact point where the black forces Brad Chambers had used, were hidden inside Liam's still body.

Aiden used all that he had to get around the hidden spot, not noticing the clouds above his head that threatened to come lower and eventually smother the life force from his body.

Killer was the first to be aware of the evil pressing down. He might not have magic in his body. Or be from a long line of Wah cats. But he was a dog and dogs throughout time, have forged a bond with their pack, of which Aiden was the leader. He gave one quiet woof, uttered low enough not to startle Aiden, but loud enough to warn Ty. Ty had grown as well during the past three weeks, but not to the same extent as his roommate. But he'd grown inside as well, developing his inborn powers so when the dog warned him, he was able to ward off the evil that threatened to envelope them all.

All this drama in the city of Vancouver was taking place while life around them went on. The defeat of the heavy evil above the Bradley building snapped back to the lump of evil placed inside of Liam, causing it to vibrate with such strength that in seconds, with Aiden guiding it, the evil ricocheted back to Brad Chambers. It exploded around him with enough force that he'd be dogged by bad luck in all aspects of his life for the next seven years. All brought on through his jealousy of Liam.

At dawn, Aiden rose to his feet. He shook off the stiffness in his body, smiling when he saw Killer and Ty doing much the same. "I'm going to get my boy back." He announced to the two animals.

Killer loped around the roof jumping and hopping like some kind of multi jointed clown dog. He was so excited about hearing Liam was returning. Ty watched him for a few minutes and then lifted his leg to wash the base of his tail. The dog irritated him some of the time.

Sun peeked over the treetops facing Liam's hospital room. As it gained in strength, the positive rays shone in the window, touching his skin. Closed eyes fluttered open to stare into hazel eyes filled with longing. "Hey there, Liam. It's time to come home." Aiden leaned down and claimed his lover's lips. He never noticed the absence of Liam's guardian stuffed toy.

"Aiden." Liam murmured. "I knew you'd save me."

"I had to. You know I can't sleep without you beside me." He joked.

"But you have Ty." Liam grinned a wobbly grin.

"I'm just not into pussy." Aiden laughed. "I think I should call someone to come and check you out. I want to take you home as soon as I can."

"I want to go home." Liam said quietly. He looked into Aiden's eyes, "That is if the loft is my home?"

"For now it is." Aiden sighed. "After this latest attempt by Chambers, I wouldn't feel right to leave you at Lisa's. For both of your sakes. You know how these black lights work. If they can't get to the one they want, they get the one's close to the one they want."

"That sounds too complicated to think about." Liam rubbed his head. "Fuck, I have a scar."

"It adds character to an otherwise too perfect twink face." Aiden said as he kissed the scar.

"Asshole, you'd be screaming if it was your face." Liam grumbled as he snuggled closer to Aiden. "My head hurts and I'm starving to death. Don't they feed you when you're in a coma?"

"No such thing as coma burgers." Aiden rang for the nurse. "He's awake and hungry." Aiden announced when she walked into the room.

"Mr. Taylor, do you know what day it is?" she asked.

"How would I know? I've been in a coma." He looked at her with suspicion. "I want out of here. So get me unhooked from all this stuff." He indicated his lap, where he had a catheter.

"First your doctor has to see you. After that, he'll give me instructions for your continued care." She bustled around.

"When is he coming? I don't want to wait." Liam wiggled in the bed and then fell back. He was weaker than he realized but didn't want to admit it to anyone, least of all the nurse. He could tell by her eyes that she knew.

"He'll be in before eleven." She said. "But I'll call him and see if I can remove some of the more intrusive things."

Aiden held onto Liam's hand, squeezing it gently. "Don't be so impatient Brat. I want you home fast too. You have no idea how much trouble those two

birthday presents are. You deserve half the fun of looking after them."

Liam looked at Aiden and saw he was being teased. "You love it and you know it." He giggled. "I can't wait to see Killer. I bet he's gotten huge. Did you know that standard poodles are really, really big dogs?"

"Oh, is that what's wrong with him. I thought you'd put a spell on him or something witch boy. The damn dog is bigger every time I see him. I swear he grows an inch or more a day."

"I love you." Liam whispered.

"I know you do." Aiden smiled and kissed the top of the red head's head. "Don't change the subject. Why did you get me a dog that is going to grow to be as large as a small moose?"

"He was cute and he needed a home. I found him at the pound. Even though he was a purebred, he'd been surrendered because he chewed up some kind of designer shoes. I mean, who puts a dog in the pound just because he was being a dog?"

"Apparently someone who doesn't own a Wah cat. Ty would beat that dog's ass if he did anything like that in the loft." Aiden huffed. "I've seen him do it."

"I've missed a lot." Liam looked downcast. "How is Shay?"

"Shay is doing just fine." Aiden walked over to the window and looked out. "And so is my mother. You do have a way of making things happen don't

you? Even if you are unconscious. You're good, damn good."

"Of course I am, I'm kind of an apprentice High Council head guy."

"Hmmm, is that the official term?" Aiden asked with a laugh. "All joking aside, mom has been keeping Shay safe. There had been some idea by Chambers to do something to the kid. But she's on the top of her game and headed off anything dark, redirecting it back to the originator."

"Hey, is Vanessa okay with your mom hanging around?"

"She doesn't seem to mind." Aiden shrugged. "I suspect that either Shay or mom has something to do with the ease of her being there."

"Good, I'm glad." Liam looked thoughtful. "Aiden, your son is going to be very powerful when he comes of age. More powerful than either of us."

"I know. That's why I need you to recover, to help keep him safe. He's going to be a handful growing up. We have to keep him from harm until he's able to realize what he's going to be." Aiden sighed. "Now, can I trust you to behave while they see if you're going to implode? I promise you that I will take you to the loft immediately, once you're released."

"And fuck me?"

"Maybe." Aiden smirked. His long legs took him back to the bed and in seconds Liam found himself thoroughly kissed before seeing Aiden disappear

through the door on his way to what ever it is that he felt he needed to do.

"Thank gawd he's gone." Liam said to no one in particular. With a few choice words, considerable wincing, he managed with the help of his powers to remove all the bells and whistles that were attached to his body. It was just a small bit of magic and lots of grit and determination, but it still took a lot more out of Liam than he'd planned.

"Mr. Taylor, what have you done?" The nurse was back and not very happy. She couldn't believe her eyes. He was free of everything that had kept him going for the past 21 days. "You had no authority to do this."

"I didn't need any of it." Liam said and tried to smile the smile that generally made most human women swoon.

"Don't start that with me." She glared at Liam. "You of all people should know better than to subject yourself to scrutiny from humans."

"Wow, you're good for Wahjee, I didn't even notice." Liam looked at her with more care.

"I'm not Wahjee, I'm human, but I'm married to a Wahjee." She glared. "And you need not bother to gloat. The High Council knows it. There are exceptions upon occasion for humans and Wahjee to join together. Because of one thing or another, times like this for instance, it is necessary to have someone safe in case some smart ass kid decides he can do what he pleases because he's thinking with his dick and not his brain."

"I am not." Liam was indignant. "I'm just sick of being here."

"Well, too damn bad." She glared back. She'd been busy putting away everything Liam had removed and tidying up the room. "You're here. You were attacked. You'll be leaving here soon enough, but not soon enough for me. You have no idea how hard it was to make sure you remained safe here on my ward. If it wasn't some evil thing sneaking along the ceiling, it was creepy crawlies under the floor. And I'm not Wahjee, so I had to put up with this shit while pretending it wasn't there. I could hardly scare the other nurses to death. I'm not even going to start with that damn stuffed toy that sat by your head no matter how many times we put it in on the shelf. It freaked everyone out." She looked around the room. "Did Aiden take it, I don't see it here?"

"Wow, no shit." Liam looked around. "I don't see anything."

"Your Aiden took care of things. Him and a couple of others, no doubt the stuffed cat as well. You're quite the celebrity."

"Oh?"

"Yes, you've had all kinds of visitors, both human and Wahjee. Though I must say your human friends are a lot nicer than the Wahjee ones."

"I don't have any Wahjee friends." Liam looked away.

"You have Aiden." She finished with his room. "I don't know what your story is. But rest assured, Aiden Mac Ruaidhri loves you. He wasn't here much, but he

was here. He usually just popped in and out, if you know what I mean."

Liam giggled. "I know." He looked at her. "Can I get something to eat?"

"I'll see what I can find." She sighed. "I'm serious about you not trying anything. The doctor is going to be pissed when he finds out you've taken yourself off of everything."

"What's he going to do, arrest me?"

"No, but you shouldn't draw attention to yourself."

"Point taken." Liam threw himself back on the pillows. "I need a shower."

"Relax or I'll give you a shot." She flounced out of the room.

Liam sulked for an hour, smiling only when an omelet appeared on a tray in front of him as well as a steaming cup of coffee and a glass of orange juice so fresh he could smell the oranges. It had appeared out of nowhere, so he was sure the nurse didn't have anything to do with it. Not wanting to take any chance that it would disappear, Liam began to eat his breakfast. He was surprised to find that he really couldn't eat everything that had been put in front of him. He contented himself with drinking the juice, eating a couple of bites of the omelet and sipping the coffee.

Hating to admit everyone was right, Liam fought sleep, until he couldn't keep his eyes open any longer and fell into a full and contented sleep, fantasies of Aiden dancing in his head.

It was two days later before Liam was finally able to go home. He couldn't help but smile when Aiden insisted on carrying him into the loft. "I can walk you know." He griped, not too much though, as he leaned in closer to Aiden's shoulder.

"Out of the way Killer or I'll drop Liam on your pointy head." Aiden was trying to walk to the sofa despite the antics of the young, but considerably larger dog who wanted Liam's attention. The dog was wagging his tail so hard; he kept losing his footing on the shiny hardwood floor.

"Where's Ty?" Liam asked. "Oh." He said with a smile when Ty landed effortlessly on Aiden's shoulder. "I should have known he'd be close."

"Apparently he thinks he's a fucking parrot and I'm Long John Silver." Aiden deposited Liam on the sofa. Ty moved with his human as if glued, with barely a ripple of his fur. "I'll get you something to drink."

"I want a cold beer."

"Bottle of water it is." Aiden smirked.

Liam was sure Ty had stuck his tongue out on him. He returned the gesture.

"Feeling a tad juvenile?" Aiden snorted, seeing what had gone on.

"Shut up." Liam grinned, his lap full of wiggly, fuzzy black puppy, the size of a medium sized full grown dog. "What in hell have you been feeding Killer, he's huge?"

"Little boys." Aiden lunged over the sofa and landed on top of Liam, making Killer bark with

excitement and causing Ty to jump to the floor. Aiden laid full length on Liam, his arms supporting most of his weight. "And now it's my turn."

"I'm not little."

"But you are a boy."

"Man."

"Potato, patato." Aiden said before kissing first, Liam's nose and then slowly, tenderly, his lips. Nipping soft flesh between his teeth, probing with his tongue, tasting and savoring everything he'd missed for so long.

What are they doing? I don't want to bite Aiden." Killer was worried. He paced back and forth, nails clicking on the floor. "I think he's biting the young one. Oh, oh he is biting him."

"Oh for heaven sake, you are stupid, you dog you. They are breeding, anyone can see that." Ty sat on the top of the nearest bookcase, staring down. "Leave them alone."

"But, but, the young one is making funny noises, he needs my help, I know he does." Killer whined as he put his paws over his nose.

"Stop hiding and watch. See, Aiden is ready to breed and so is the other one."

"He's doing it wrong, Aiden is doing it wrong." Killer crept closer in an attempt to warn Aiden. "Too late, I'm too late." Liam was on his back, legs wrapped around his partner's waist, Aiden was balls deep inside his favorite twink. "I'm going to bite, I am so, I'm going to bite. You can't stop me. He's doing it wrong." Killer leapt forward, Ty jumped down on

Killer's back, sending the black dog racing around the room.

Aiden lay exhausted on Liam, while they both caught their breath. "What the fuck is wrong with the animals?" He managed to gasp. "Ty is riding Killer all over the fucking loft."

Liam giggled. He could imagine what had happened. No doubt Killer was going to do something the Wah cat hadn't wanted him to do. "Forget them, they're just playing. That was fun, now how about we try it again in our bed."

Aiden didn't comment on the use of the possessive regarding the bed. He rather liked the idea it was theirs and resolved to make sure he never tricked at home again. Liam let his fingers trace circles on Aiden's back. Neither one of them really wanted to move from the sofa.

Knocking at the door startled the both of them. "Now what?" Aiden asked. "No one is supposed to even know we're here."

"Ten bucks says it's Daniel." Liam giggled.

"Nope, it's me. I was knocking to be polite." Frances drawled as he appeared beside them. "So that's how it's done when you're gay. Interesting."

"Fuck off Frances." Aiden mumbled as he removed himself from Liam, not caring that they both reeked of sex. He stood up naked in the sunlight. Frances zapped a robe around him and one for Liam as well.

"Cover up guys, you are so not doing it for me." Frances snorted.

"Would you mind telling me why you're here?" Aiden headed for the kitchen and a cold beer. "You two stop it." He raised his voice slightly at the animals that were now growling obscenities at each other.

Killer and Ty looked at Aiden for a second and then continued.

"Apparently the dog thought you were doing harm to Liam. Something about the sounds he was making while you were breeding him." Frances snickered. "Which one would be the mother?"

"Fuck you." Aiden glared again. It seemed to be all he ever said to Liam's cousin.

"Well not Aiden, he'd freak if he had to lose his boyish figure." Liam snickered. "Why are you here?"

"There have been some rumblings in the council. No one was aware your partner was not only talented, but had latent power. And they were also unaware of his considerable allies. Though they are unable to name even one of them. Whoever aided Aiden in turning back the spell on Brad Chambers, is keeping well hidden. The Council doesn't like having things hidden from them. I wanted to warn you both."

"You had to pick now to do it?" Aiden huffed.

"Better now than when you two get into trouble next." Frances snickered and Aiden could see Liam in the snicker, which softened his view of the other man.

"Fine, you warned us, now leave. Liam needs his rest." Aiden's arm was around Liam's shoulders, in a proprietary way.

"You didn't seem to think so fifteen minutes ago." Frances returned. Seeing the look on Aiden's

face, Frances decided that retreating was the better part of valor and popped back to Toronto.

"Quick, I think I need to breed." Liam laughed and ran for the bedroom. He was still not as strong as he'd like to be, but he was young and it wouldn't be long to get back to being better than he'd been before.

CHAPTER 23

Mom I'm not going." Liam lay on the sofa; his mother stood over him glaring down at her stubborn son.

"Of course you're going. It's his first birthday. You have to be there for him as well as his father. You are, in effect, his Wahjee godfather. It is up to you to see that his age progression is suitably honored for what he's accomplished in the previous year."

"It is also up to me to make sure he lives for another age celebration." Liam closed his eyes. The past few months had taken a toll on him. The Chambers clan never seemed to give up in their quest to take down anyone Liam loved. "I'm not so sure my being there for his birthday celebration is going to help accomplish that."

"Liam, this is not negotiable. You will be at Shays birthday." Morgan Taylor knelt down beside her son. She was no sooner down when Killer bounded over from his observation post on the steps up to the bedroom. He had grown taller than most

dogs. His long legs seemed almost foreign to his body and Liam was sure he had an extra joint in them. He was a gentle giant though and was under the impression he was the size of Ty. So he constantly did his best to sit on anyone who paused long enough.

"Killer, go sit down." Morgan said with a smile. She waved her hand to magic him tenderly back to his perch. Killer thought of this as a game he could play with Liam's mother, so he rarely stayed long wherever she put him. "You know Liam, Aiden should take that dog to obedience school."

"You tell him, he won't listen to me." Liam rolled over on his stomach. "Don't you have something to do? I mean, better than hanging around the loft bugging me?" The buzzer sounded and Liam groaned. "I bet that's Dakota to take over nagging. You can leave now."

"Liam, that's no way to talk to your mother." She walked over to the intercom to see who wanted in. "Hello."

"Hi, can Liam come out and play?" Dakota answered, way too bubbly for Liam's taste.

"Come on in, Dakota." Morgan laughed. "Would you like a cup of tea or something Liam?" she asked, heading for the kitchen.

"Mom, what is with this penchant for hanging out here?" Liam sat up exasperated. "I mean I don't see you for weeks and then all of a sudden, I can't move without tripping over you."

Morgan laughed. "I like to see you Liam, you are never available. Aiden suggested that I beard you in your den so to speak."

"Aiden, you asked Aiden?" Liam's mouth hung open.

"Of course I did. He is your partner after all." She put the kettle on to boil.

The man in question walked through the door that he'd had built on the far side of the loft, Ty perched on his shoulder as usual. It was barely noticeable and led not only up to the roof, but to a private and rather hidden office area. "Hey Morgan." He kissed her cheek. "Is the Brat giving you any trouble?"

"No, of course not Aiden." She smiled up at him not, surprised when he headed for the loft door to pull it open to a surprised Dakota who'd been about to knock.

"Dakota, what a surprise." Aiden smirked. "I see Morgan has called in reinforcements." Aiden and Morgan had been working on Liam to attend the birthday party for the last couple of days.

"For what?" Dakota asked, looking at Liam and then back at Aiden and Morgan. "Liam, you said we were going shopping. You aren't even ready."

"That was yesterday Dakota. When you blew me off for some guy, I figured you didn't want to go."

"Get over yourself." She snorted. "You know I had to do that project with Sean. You could have helped."

"I have my own projects." Liam did bounce over and give his friend a quick hug, before turning and

giving Aiden one of his famous smiles. "Okay, I'll go to Shay's birthday party."

"Just like that?" Aiden turned to Morgan who shrugged.

"Cool, we're going to a birthday party." Dakota clapped her hands. "When?"

"This afternoon. It's for Shay, he's one today."

"Oh my gawd, I can't believe he's one year old already." Dakota beamed. "Did you finish that..." she didn't get any further before Liam had claimed her lips with his to silence her. "Are you out of your mind?" she asked, wiping her mouth with the back of her hand.

Aiden snickered and Morgan shook her head. "He's young and impetuous." Aiden offered.

"He's crazy." Dakota, her original thought forgotten. "You know Aiden, it's kind of weird how you let that cat sit on your shoulder all the time."

"I agree." Aiden said with a shrug. "But have you ever tried to teach a cat to not do something? It's damn impossible. Ty decided from the start that this is where he should sit when I'm home. It was cute when he was younger and smaller, but I swear now he weighs twenty pounds. I'm going to be permanently lopsided."

"Why doesn't he sit on Liam?" she asked, scratching the cat under his chin.

"Because he's my cat." Aiden smiled as if his words explained everything. "So Dakota, do you want to come to Shay's party with us?"

"Sure, but let me go and find him a present first."

"He's one, he won't care if you don't bring him anything." Aiden said.

"But I'll care." Dakota looked over at Morgan. "What do you think he should have at his age?" she asked.

"Well, that depends I suppose, on the child." Morgan looked thoughtful. "I bought him a game to develop his motor skills."

"Liam and I have something for him that he'll grow up with." Aiden smirked. "But you'll both have to wait until its time for presents to see it."

"You guys are no fun." Dakota pretended to pout. "I'm going to get him a book. Kids like books."

"You'd better find a book with an interesting story. I think he's gone through all his real baby kind of books." Liam laughed. "He's like ready for War and Peace."

"Slight exaggeration there Sunshine." Aiden ruffled Liam's hair.

Three hours later everyone trooped into the backyard of Shay's home. The party was in full swing. Evan, dressed in his best idea of garden party finery, was fluttering around making sure everyone had drinks or food.

"It's about time you got here." Rosalie started.

Liam gave her a quick hug. "Sorry we're late Rosalie, but we really couldn't help it."

"DA, Li" Shay shouted from his place on the grass where he'd been playing with bits of paper and ribbons. He stood up on uncertain legs and began to toddle toward his two favorite men.

"Hey there Sonny Boy." Aiden smiled as he watched his son make his way to him. He squatted down, but made the boy walk all the way on his own. Shay needed the practice. Shay finally made it and threw himself into his father's arms.

Aiden lifted him up and swung him around. "One year old Seamus my boyo. Imagine that." He kissed him on the forehead, making the child giggle.

Liam leaned over and kissed his young friend. "Happy birthday Shay." He touched the heart shaped mark he'd placed a year ago, reinforcing the protection power for another year. "You will be safe and you will be loved." He murmured. His ward laughed with the warmth that flowed through his body at Liam's touch. Aiden flushed with pleasure knowing Liam felt about Shay the same way he did.

"Nanny." Shay said, wiggling in Aiden's grasp.

"Hello Master Shay." Margaret Mac Ruaidhri said, walking up to Aiden and Liam. She kissed her grandson and issued his birthday blessing, her words fast and sure in the ancient language of the Wahjee. Seamus was twice blessed on this special day. Aiden relaxed for a moment knowing his son was sure to be safe for another year.

"Mom, you were able to get away." Aiden said.

"Nice to see you Mrs. Mac Ruaidhri." Liam kissed her cheek. Aiden, despite the past year and his knowledge now of his childhood and the part his mother played in it, still had some issues not resolved.

"Liam." She smiled. "I wouldn't have missed this birthday blessing for anything. I understand you and

Aiden have gifted Shay with his own Wah cat. When is the gifting ceremony?" she looked around. The yard was filled with humans. No gifting ceremony would take place this afternoon.

"Good question." Aiden glanced over where Vanessa and Rosalie were arguing about something. "What's their problem?"

"I'm not sure." Margaret glanced their way. "They've been rather testy with each other all afternoon. It didn't help that the two of you were late."

"Blame our lateness on the drama princess here." Aiden hip checked Liam who laughed. "Go diffuse the moms, why don't you Liam my boy."

"Aye, aye Captain." He saluted before heading in the direction of the food table and Rosalie and Vanessa. "Hey guys." He said. "Nice party." He reached for a plate and began to put some of the food on it.

"Liam, thank you for the painting." Vanessa gushed. "It's brilliant."

"Not bad Liam." Rosalie admitted. "Though I'm not so sure about the cat in it. We don't have one."

Liam suppressed a groan. He should have known the new Wah kitten would assert his presence as soon as he'd been chosen. Cats have no idea of discretion. "I'm glad you both like it." The painting had been a family portrait done from a series of photos. It was of Rosalie and Vanessa with Shay and apparently, the damn Wah kitten.

"I really can't stand cats." Rosalie shuddered. "They're so sneaky."

"Shay loves Ty." Liam tried. "The two of them play all the time. They even seem to talk to one another."

"It figures Aiden would have a sudden urge to fill his loft with animals." Rosalie glared. "He probably knew Seamus would want to have his own menagerie eventually."

Liam sighed; this afternoon's gifting of the Wah cat was going to take some doing. And then there was going to be the little problem of Rosalie. "A child should have something to care for and love." He began...

"Don't give me that shit." Rosalie snorted. "Aiden Mac Ruaidhri just wants to make my life miserable." She turned and walked away.

"That was pleasant." Liam smiled, helping himself to a sandwich. "Yum, egg salad" he bit into it.

"Don't mind Rosalie, she never had pets when she was growing up." Vanessa began. "Well neither did I. I'm not so sure having a pet would be a good thing for Shay. We aren't around to look after it much."

"Cats don't need a lot of looking after." Liam defended. "I mean, look at Aiden. He's like the poster boy for being a workaholic, but he has Killer and Ty."

Vanessa giggled. "I still can't believe you got him a poodle."

"Killer may be a poodle, but he's a big one." Liam grinned up at her. "And he's good for Aiden. He gives him something to think about besides himself

and forces him to take a bit of leisure time that doesn't involve heavy drinking at The Odyssey."

"Liam, Vanessa." They looked over at Morgan who had joined them.

"Hey mom." Liam said.

"Morgan." Vanessa smiled. "I'm so glad you could come. It's important that Shay has all of his family around."

"He looks like he could use a nap." Morgan observed. Shay had his head on Aiden's shoulder, his thumb in his mouth.

"It's been a busy day." Vanessa admitted. "I should maybe put him down for an hour or so."

"Let me. I don't get to see him that often." Morgan offered. "You stay out with your guests."

Vanessa was content to allow Morgan to put Shay down for his afternoon nap. With one thing and another, she didn't notice that Aiden and Liam, as well as Margaret Mac Ruaidhri, all disappeared into the house with her son.

In Shay's room, once he was changed and made ready for sleep, the Wah cat gifting ceremony began. Part of that ceremony would be the naming of the kitten. But that could only be done by Shay.

The birthday boy sat in his crib, interested in the proceedings. One by one everyone came up to him and blessed his birthday with their wishes for him. Then they formed a circle with Shay and his crib as part of that circle. The room darkened and then in the center of the circle, seven Wah kittens appeared with their mother.

"The joining of Wah cat and Wahjee is a special rite of passage. It can only happen once in one's lifetime and must be equally the choice of kitten and child. Rare exceptions have been made, but in this case the power of Wah has come to request a gifting to this child of the Mac Ruaidhri clan." The words were whispered through the room, though not by anyone who stood there.

Aiden glanced at the mother cat wondering if, strangely enough, it was the cat that uttered the words.

"Seamus, will you choose your life companion." The words resonate through them all.

"Wah, step forward." The kittens all stood up and began to walk to small boy who watched them with big round eyes.

"Dawg." Shay said and waved his hand. One of the kittens immediately appeared in his crib. "Dawg." He hugged the kitten to him. He had named his kitten Doug, but to those watching, it sounded like Dawg.

"Dog, he called him dog?" Aiden looked at Liam who shrugged. They looked down but all the Wah cats and kittens were gone.

"Seamus, you made a wonderful choice." Morgan said. "But to call him Dawg."

"Girl kitty." Shay grinned. "Dawg." He lay down and closed his eyes; one arm around an orange kitten that looked satisfied with her new person. The kitten watched them for a moment before closing her eyes. Though from the tilt of her small head, it was apparent she was in guard cat mode.

CHAPTER 24

Vans, where's your better half?" Aiden asked. He was sitting on the bleachers that had been put up for the annual Pride Parade. Vancouver's parade was usually more than three hours long, Aiden knew to stake out his claim on relatively comfortable seating early. Liam had disappeared in an attempt to get them a cold bottle of water and he was waiting somewhat impatiently. He smiled at Shay who was sitting in his stroller. He had a stuffed version of Dawg in his hand.

"She's in the parade." Vanessa tried to sound upbeat. "On that damn motorcycle of hers."

"Ahh, yes, the famous Dykes on bikes." Aiden grinned. "Rosie going topless?"

"I don't know."

"Why aren't you with her? I mean, isn't your place to be with your hubby?"

Vanessa thought for a moment. "Yes it is." She picked Shay up out of his stroller and handed him to Aiden. "Here you go daddy." She picked up the

stuffed kitten. "And here's Dawg 2" she snickered. "I still can't believe we have a kitten at the house."

"Have fun." Aiden waved. "Wave at mommy, Boyo. She's going to show her tits to the world. It's an annual ritual that all lesbians do."

Vanessa rolled her eyes heavenward, but said nothing as she went to find Rosalie.

"Shay, how cool." Liam had found his way back to Aiden.

"Li." Shay held out his stuffed version of his Wah cat. "Doug." And instantly the stuffed cat was a real one, purring loudly.

"Shit." Aiden mumbled trying to shield his son from prying eyes. "Do something Boyo."

"Uh Shay, that was really cool. But parades aren't a great place for Wah cats. Dawg should stay at home, just like Ty does."

Two pairs of innocent looking eyes looked back at Liam. One pair green with gold flecks much like his father's and one pair gold with green flecks. "K." Shay said. He put his nose on Dawg's and whispered something to the cat. The cat appeared to answer him back and then a small pink tongue appeared to lick the end of his boy's nose, a small pop was heard, and Shay was once again holding the stuffed version.

Aiden looked at the stuffed cat with suspicion. "Liam, did he just talk to Dawg and did the damn cat answer back?"

"Uh, looked that way." Liam said, also eyeing the stuffed version with suspicion. "Uh Aiden, how come

this toy has the exact same eyes as Dawg? Where did you find it?"

"I didn't get it for him. I thought you got it for him." Aiden was poking the stuffed cat with his finger.

"Da, no poking." Shay pulled his toy away. "Doug hates poking." He bent down and kissed where Aiden had poked. "All better."

"Please, please tell me it's a toy." Aiden asked no one in particular.

Liam giggled and patted Aiden on the arm. "Hey good one Shay, can I see Dawg?"

"No." The boy cuddled his toy. "Shay loves you." He batted his eyelashes, making Liam giggle.

A roar of motorcycle motors moved into their hearing and soon all three, or is that four of them, were enthralled with the intricate movements of the Dykes on Bikes as they roared up and down, around in circles and generally performed for the audience. "Ma, Mamma, tits." Shay yelled out, waving Dawg.

Liam glared at Aiden who snickered. But he said nothing as they watched the parade.

Shay stood on his father's knees, content that his father would hold him steady and safe. No one moved in front of them, thanks to a bit of Wahjee influence, so their view was unobstructed of the parade and its participants. When the PFLAG contingent rounded the corner. Liam kissed Aiden and ran out to join his mother.

"Da, Uncle Danny." Shay pointed to the well disguised Daniel dressed in full drag. "Looks funny."

He said as he waved his hand and Daniel, still in drag, looked decidedly like himself. There was no chance he wouldn't be recognized by any and all who saw him.

To make things worse, the unsuspecting Daniel ran up to one of the parade watchers and kissed him thoroughly, before laughing and running back. "Shit, Danny is going to be pissed." Aiden mumbled, though he couldn't help but grin. His son was definitely interesting to be around.

Lisa laughed and continued to parade with her son. She hadn't noticed any difference, because she had always seen him as he really was. Liam had noticed immediately what had happened. He continued to grin and snicker for the rest of the parade. It was a great day.

Later, when the parade was over, Liam joined Aiden and his son in the park. Shay was content to sit in his stroller holding tight to his toy while watching all the action. The giant sized Inuksuk that faced English Bay fascinated him. There would be stories told later about how the Inuksuk seemed to form a face that smiled with benevolence at the happy crowd of parade watchers. Shay was content once the spirit of the living rock had smiled at him.

Liam pushed the stroller and Aiden walked beside him. They stopped and chatted with friends and Aiden bought Liam a hot dog. Shay didn't want one for which Aiden was grateful, Vanessa would have killed him.

They found Daniel sitting at a picnic table surrounded by his mother and other PFLAG ladies. He looked miserable. "What's up Danny?" Aiden asked.

"Hey Aiden." Daniel looked at Liam and Shay, but didn't acknowledge them. "I want to go home and change but I can't get away from them." He nodded at the women who were all talking at once.

"You look kind of cute." Liam said. "Stick around dressed like that. There's going to be a dance later."

"Fuck off." Daniel growled.

"Watch your language Danny, Shay is here." Aiden drawled. "Pretty brave of you coming out like you did."

"What are you talking about?" Daniel asked, looking from Aiden to Liam. "I'm not out at work."

"You are now. I mean kissing your boss kind of did it for you." Liam snickered. "Talk about cool."

"He won't know who kissed him." Daniel sneered. Liam pissed him off. "Hey, the kid is sleeping on that toy. He reached forward to take the toy cat away from Shay. "Holy shit, the thing bit me." He shook his hand, staring at his finger.

"Good one Danny." Liam laughed. "A biting toy cat." He reached down and tucked the kitten in closer to Shay and folded a light blanket around them. "Every kid should have one."

"I'm telling you, it bit me." Daniel looked at his finger, but Aiden had removed the small spot of blood. "I know it did."

"Daniel, Daniel." He turned to see who was calling him. It was Susan from work.

"Fuck." He whispered, looking around to see if there was any way he could hide.

"Hi Daniel. You look pretty good dressed like that." She gushed. "Boy, was the boss surprised when you kissed him." She giggled. "I hope he liked it."

Daniel buried his head in his hands. But then looked up surprised when Susan grabbed one of his hands and pulled him to his feet. "Come on Danny, let's get something to eat. I should be so lucky to look as good as you do in a dress." She looked around, spotting Lisa with a camera. "Is that your mom? You look like her, can she take our picture?"

Before Daniel could say anything, he found himself posing with Susan, Liam and Aiden; his mother beaming like she'd won the lottery.

Later that night, Aiden and Liam walked down a crowded Davie Street. The street has been closed off earlier to traffic and was filled with vendors under white tents happy to sell everything from food to plastic rainbow hued beads. Music filled the air and people were dancing in the street in front of Celebrities. "I don't think I want to stay much longer."

Liam began. "But you stay and have a good time."

"Too much excitement for you, magic boy?" Aiden twirled Liam around to the sound of the music.

"You dance funny." Liam laughed.

"Perhaps." Aiden hunched down to kiss the man he knew he loved, not that he'd admit it. "But right now I want to dance funny with you."

"Me?" Liam asked, but he could see the truth in Aiden's eyes and his heart filled with joy. The night was filled with the magic and excitement of gay men and women heady with the day. He let himself be swept up in Aiden's arms as they swayed and moved to the music. Liam threw up a handful of his sparkling electric puffs to crown the both of them, for they were truly kings tonight.

It was one of those special nights when dark shadows could be forgotten, when red eyed strangers glaring from deep recesses of mist filled alleys could be ignored and dismissed as tricks of the mind.

Liam and Aiden both knew that they were living a dream that could be turned into a nightmare at a moments notice. But with Davie Street surrounded by music and filled with goodwill and love, it was easy to forget for a moment or two.

Unaware that they were covered in a web of protectiveness, the two men danced as if it were only the two of them alone on the noisy street.

Perched on a ledge that was sheltered by three well placed and rather ornate black cast iron flower pots filled with red geraniums, it was Davie Street after all, sat Ty, ends tucked in, ears alert and listening, eyes, round, missing nothing. A beautiful picture if someone should glance up. But what was unusual, was sitting tall and regal, most definitely a tad royally, was a larger than life turquoise and white cat, his eyes golden with violet sparks, his lips curved in a definite smile while he directed the protection spell he held in place around two dancing men. There

was a certain satisfaction in the smile, for the two men had been bound together from the time of their births, though others had done their damndest to keep them apart.

"The master and his prince dance well together." Ty ventured, not sure of his place when Regis, the high king of all Wah cats, showed himself in person, rather than the toy version who watched over his red haired charge.

"As twin flames should." Regis acknowledged, his head nodding in satisfaction. His tail flicked and another hidden in black shadow vanished. "The dark forces are out in strength tonight." He sighed. "I suppose it was inevitable, happiness causes them pain."

"And the child?" Ty asked, not sure if he should remind the high king of Aiden's kit.

"The child is well guarded tonight, as he is for all nights. My daughter sees to that." A brief glare from gold and violet eyes told Ty he'd over stepped his bounds.

"Your Highness." Ty bowed his head in apology. He looked up, not surprised that the high king had vanished. He was being tested. It was up to him to guard the two lost in each other as they danced.

CHAPTER 25

Hey." Aiden said a thousand different things in that one small word when he looked at Liam. He slipped into the booth where his lover was sitting. It was Liam's favorite, the one at the front of Hamburger Mary's where the windows could be rolled back in nice weather exposing the diner to the street.

"I didn't expect you here today." Liam said, leaning into Aiden's shoulder.

"Yeah, well I had a free lunch hour and figured you'd be here. Did you know that Rosalie proposed to Vanessa?"

"Proposed, like in asking for her hand in marriage?" Bob asked. No one had noticed him come in. He didn't ask, just sat on the bench seat opposite Aiden and Liam.

"Or her twat." Aiden drawled.

"Nice, a wedding. I wonder if they'll let Even do the catering." Bob was always trying to promote his friend.

Aiden looked around. "I don't suppose we can get some service here? I need coffee and some food would be nice too."

"You can share mine." Liam offered.

"I want to live without clogged arteries." Aiden drawled, but turned and kissed Liam. "Good coffee needs more sugar." Liam had just taken a sip of his coffee.

"Get your own coffee, don't you dare put more sugar in mine." Liam put his hand over the top of his coffee mug. "Hey guys." Daniel and Evan had walked in.

Daniel grunted something and Evan smiled, blowing a kiss in Liam's direction as they sat down.

"So Robert, why so gloomy?" Aiden asked, ignoring Liam.

"Nothing." He looked at Liam, not wanting him to say anything.

"I think Bob needs a change of pace. He needs to move forward with his life. I mean just because he isn't working, doesn't mean life should stop. What do you guys think he likes to do best to relax?"

"Wack off." Evan, Daniel and Aiden said together. "Wack off to porn." Evan looked at Liam. "Bobby has the biggest porn collection ever. He even has some eight-millimeter stuff, not to mention Beta Max. You know, ones where the guys wear black socks and masks."

"Black socks and masks?" Liam looked at Aiden. "You guys are kidding, right?"

"We kid you not." Evan grinned. "Oh Bobby, you have to invite Liam over for some old porn viewings. No gay boy's life should be without."

"I didn't know there was really old gay porn?"

"Depends on what you mean by really old." Aiden said. "Gay boys had movie cameras just like the straight boys. Makes sense that they'd make porn."

"I never thought about it." Liam admitted. "Can I come over and see some of the old stuff. Maybe I'll learn something."

"Sure you can come and watch." Bob shrugged. "But you already have an old boyfriend, I'm sure he's taught you everything you need to know."

Aiden contemplated zapping Bob with some kind of spell that would make his dick shrink, but before he could do anything Liam elbowed him in the side. "Play nice Aiden." He whispered.

The food that had been ordered was delivered just then. Aiden managed to order a salad and while he waited for it to arrive, he began to eat Liam's fries.

Daniel watched in astonishment. "Aiden, you're eating French fries." He finally managed to say.

"No shit." Aiden snickered.

"But you don't eat fries."

"I don't?" Aiden looked at the fry in his hand and then popped it into his mouth. "Oh."

Liam, one hand under the table, sent a fast itching spell toward Daniel's crotch while looking innocent. He let his fingers stroke Aiden's cock. "I think I like Armani." He said to Aiden. "The material is so thin, it's like you're wearing nothing much at all." He

looked over at Daniel who was squirming uncomfortably. "What's up Daniel?" he asked.

"Nothing." Daniel said wiggling around.

"If you have to pee Daniel, just go." Liam shook his head. "You shouldn't put so much pressure on your bladder. You'll regret it someday."

"I don't fucking have to pee." Daniel spat.

"Then sit still." Aiden answered. "You're jiggling the table."

"Daniel dear, if you've got crabs or jock itch, I have just the thing. My great aunt Milly used to say that the down under critters just couldn't handle a mixture of white vinegar and baking soda. You make up a paste and spread it around. I bet I can get Tanya to make some up for you right now."

"SHUT. THE. FUCK. UP." Daniel screamed, silencing the entire diner. He was wiggling even more. One hand was obviously scratching furiously below the table.

Aiden looked at Liam and shook his head. Liam flushed red and withdrew the spell. "You were saying something about playing nice?" Liam asked innocently.

"You just wait until I get you home young man." Aiden grinned and shook his finger at the red head.

"Ahhhh, do I have to wait?" Liam whined in a perfect imitation of a certain someone who was now slumped in his seat, relief on his face, one hand in his pants. He did not see his mother descending like the gorgon from hell on her hapless son.

It was two weeks later when Aiden asked. "Where are you going?" Liam was heading out the door.

"I told you before. I'm going over to Bob's to watch porn." He held up his messenger bag. "I'm bringing the popcorn." He looked at Aiden. "You know what's kind of weird though, Bob hasn't stopped watching, well except for very brief bathroom breaks, for almost fourteen days. I mean how many blow jobs can you watch?"

"Apparently a lot of them." Aiden was sitting at the table using his laptop. Ty was perched on his shoulder and Killer was stretched out on the floor, so large and flat he looked like he'd been run over. He turned around. "I don't think it's good to encourage him."

"I'm not. I was sick of the stuff after the first hour. Do you have any idea how many trolls make porn?" Liam shuddered. "Trust me, a lot more trolls than hot guys. I've seen so many weird looking dicks I could write a fucking book. And don't get me started on assholes."

Aiden snickered. "So what pray tell are you doing going over there and bringing popcorn?"

"I'm trying to get him to focus on something else. I mean if he has to eat popcorn, maybe he'll stop pumping his dick. The place reeks and he never has the drapes open."

"Buttered popcorn?" Aiden asked, getting up to wrap his arms around Liam.

"Gross, don't even think it." Liam laughed. "Seriously, Bob has a problem."

"Maybe we all should go over and have an intervention." Aiden suggested.

"I don't know." Liam doubted having Aiden and the gang over would do much for Bob other than piss him off. "Give me today to see if I can convince him to stop watching porn."

"Maybe you should take Ty with you." Aiden's hand went to his shoulder and he stroked the cat.

"Why?" Liam asked. He had never had his own Wah cat. He'd never needed one, his powers were strong enough or at least that's what he'd figured. No one had explained why he didn't get one. It was a question he was going to have to ask his mother eventually.

"Ty suggested it." Aiden shrugged. "He's a cat, how do I know why?"

Liam snickered and looked at Ty. "Why do you want to come with me? I mean, it's not like I can just walk down the street with you perched on my shoulder like some damn budgie."

"I'll come with you, Ty can sit on my shoulder." Aiden made a move.

"No, that's okay, I'll take him." Liam opened his messenger bag for the cat to jump in. "Don't put any cat hairs on my mints."

"Don't put loose mints in your bag." Aiden laughed. "Watch him Ty."

"Can I drive your car?" Liam asked. "There's more cat room than mine."

"No." Aiden huffed, kissed him on the nose and moved back to the table. "Don't be late, we're going to the girls' for dinner."

"Yum, dinner after dealing with the jack off king." Liam snorted. "I have learned some cool techniques though."

"Somehow the thought of Robert's jack off techniques doesn't really intrigue me." Aiden laughed. "Go young man, go and complete your mission."

"Ha, funny, ha." Liam laughed and left the loft. He pounded down the stairs, landing with a thump at the bottom. "Oops, sorry about that Ty." He said to the disgruntled cat.

"Watch it kid." The cat muttered to himself. He didn't notice that Liam snickered. One of Liam's inherited abilities allowed him to understand animals. He tried to block it out most of the time. Animals tended to depress him; they didn't have the greatest of lives. But he'd always listened to Ty and Killer. Not that he'd ever let them know it. Perhaps that was why the Wah cats had refused to allow him to have one of them.

"Okay, I hope you don't mind cars. I don't want to take the bus or walk. Bob's place isn't far, so it won't be a long ride." Liam unlocked his car and placed the messenger bag on the passenger seat. "Make yourself comfortable."

Liam ran around to the driver's side. By the time he was belted in and ready to go. Ty was sitting in the rear window, watching the world. "Damn, I wish I got

out more." The cat muttered to himself. "This is better than watching that stupid dog day in and day out.

The red head snickered as he started the car. "Hey Ty, want a quick tour of English Bay before we head over to Bob's?"

Ty, being a cat, refused to answer directly. But he did jump into the front seat to stand up with his front paws on the dash, watching as Liam drove the four blocks to a riverside park.

Parking under a low hanging willow tree, Liam smiled at the cat's excitement. "Cool tree, eh Ty?" Liam commented. The cat jumped onto the passenger seat and put one paw on the window release button, in seconds the window rolled down and Ty jumped up into the tree. "TY YOU DUMB CAT, WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS SHIT." Liam hollered getting out of his car.

"Fuck off." Ty hollered back in cat. He'd been watching trees on movies and television for months. This was his first real tree. His little foray to Davie Street had been work, this was for fun. How could he resist? Ty scampered higher and higher. The air was filled with scents he'd never processed before. There was a heady river smell of rotting vegetation lightly scented with fish, both dead and alive. It was intoxicating. He ran to the top of the tree and back down again over and over until he was dizzy and panting and grinning ear to ear. On his last trip down he jumped into the window of Liam's car.

"You are one really, really weird cat." Liam grumbled as he got back into the car. "Cats can't just

run up and down trees in the park. Something could get them."

Ty glared at Liam and put one leg up over his ear and began to wash the base of his tail. The cat answer to someone who pissed them off.

"Now that you've got that out of your system, we're going to Bob's. He actually could use some kind of distraction. Maybe if you have a session of the cat crazies at his place he'll stop pulling his dick. It might fall off." Liam snickered. "Now that would get his attention."

The car started its journey again. Ty, satisfied with his adventure, preened on the front seat. Anything else that happened today would be gravy as far as he was concerned. He'd climbed a tree, reached for the sky over and over. Life was good for this Wah cat.

"Hey Bob." Liam said when he walked into his friend's place. The apartment was dark as usual, lit only by the glow from the television set.

"Hey." Bob answered, barely looking over at Liam. The kid had been there on and off for a few days, maybe a week, he wasn't sure, but he was used to having him around.

Liam picked up some of the garbage on the island counter top before putting his messenger bag down. Ty poked his head out and looked around. His whiskers twitched at the funky smell. "This human is a pig." He merowed.

Liam smothered a snicker. "Bob, you have to stop watching the porn. It isn't good for you. Besides, I think it's time you found yourself a project."

"I can't stop watching. It's fascinating, almost magical." Bob leaned forward. "It's, it's kind of like potato chips, you can't eat just one."

"I don't know whether you've noticed or not, but your dick is kind of looking not so good. I mean you have damn near rubbed it raw." Liam shuddered. "How are you going to explain that to your doctor?"

"I'll be okay, it's nothing a hot bath won't cure." Bob turned up the sound and the room was filled with simulated sex sounds.

"Uh, speaking of basic hygiene. You could maybe use a boost in that department." Liam looked down at Bob. "I'll run you a bath."

Bob waved him away. Liam shook his head and headed toward the bathroom. If he couldn't get Bob back to relative normalcy, he was going to have to resort to magic.

Ty strolled over to where the smelly human sat. He jumped up on the arm of the chair, shaking one foot when he stepped in something unpleasant. Watching Bob for a moment, the man's hand always moving. "You are one sick human." Ty said clearly, enunciating in case Bob didn't understand him. "I mean that in a very definite way. You are supposed to be intelligent and yet you sit in the dark and watch humans breeding over and over, while they make sounds that are not real. It makes no sense. A cat, if unable to do something the cat desires, finds another

way to find completion even if it is supervising the learning of a stupid overly large dog."

Part way through Ty's scolding, Bob had stopped moving. He continued to stare at the television, but he saw nothing as his eyes glazed over with something close to fear. Slowly Bob's head turned to the arm of his chair to stare directly into the round eyes of an orange tabby cat. He didn't have a cat. He didn't have a talking cat. He hated cats, in fact he couldn't stand them, they were sneaky and sly. "A cat, there's a cat." His voice was squeaky and filled with fear as he tried to make himself smaller.

Ty stood up and bushed himself out in full bristle, his tail like a bottlebrush. He grinned at Bob showing all of his teeth. "Get your act together you stupid human. I have better things to do than get my fur dusty and sticky in this cave you live in."

"AAAAARRRRRRGGGGGHHHHH." Bob screamed as he leapt up and ran over the top of his chair to the bathroom.

"What the fuck is wrong?" Liam asked looking around, not sure what to expect.

Bob ran around to hide behind Liam. "There's a cat, a cat in my apartment. He talked to me."

"Riiiiiight." Liam said while he was thinking he might strangle Ty. "Cat's do that a lot, talk I mean. Hey, your bath is ready."

"Yeah, yeah, I need a bath. Could you call my cleaning service? The place is a mess." He started to strip off his robe all the while looking left and right for the talking cat. Maybe he'd been hallucinating.

Maybe he was sicker than he'd thought. "I've been thinking, maybe I could start up my own porn site. I mean I sure know enough about what would sell. It can't be that hard to learn how to build a web site."

"Good idea Bob. I'll make that call. Let me know what happens." Liam was backing out of the bathroom not wanting to see any more of Bob's naked body than he had to. "I'm heading home. Should I feed your cat?"

"I don't have a fucking a cat." Bob looked around; there had been a tinge of hysteria in his voice. "Make sure the door is closed tight. Maybe it got in somehow through a window or a door or something."

"You never know." Liam shrugged. "See you later Bob." He wiggled his fingers as he left the bathroom. A quick phone call to the cleaning crew and then he scooped up Ty and headed to the car. "I'll take you to another cool place as a reward for getting Bob off his ass." Liam said. "But you have to promise to behave and not act like an idiot cat."

"You mean not act like a dog." Ty snickered in cat.

Liam ignored him as he drove outside the city. He figured Ty might like the chance to hunt field mice and the day was a great one to sit out in the sun and sketch. Aiden wouldn't miss him because he'd figure he was still with Bob. So he wouldn't have to worry about his usual Irish watchdog. He laughed to himself. "Hey, I'll get us some take out at Mickey D's, you'll love their filet of fish or would you prefer chicken?"

An hour later, Liam and Ty lay on a blanket in the sun. They'd established themselves in the middle of a field filled with tall sweet smelling grasses, daisies and some yellow flower that made Liam and Ty sneeze. There was a tree beside their blanket that spread a canopy of green over them, shading them from the sun.

Ty and Liam's bellies were too full, but it was a nice too full. They'd eaten more than they should of chicken and burgers, fries and apple pie, each one having a milk shake to top it off. Life was good.

Ty could hear the rustle of field mice not too far away. He rolled over on his belly, eyes like slits while he contemplated hunting, but his full tummy and the warm sunlight, lulled him to sleep.

Liam too rolled onto his stomach, his sketchbook in front of him as he sketched the long length of lazy cat, asleep with buzz of bees and other insects serenading them both. His eyes began to drift shut, his hand relaxed and the pencil rolled along the sketchbook. Soon the sound of the cat and Liam, both snoring lightly could be heard above the grasses.

As they slept, curious inhabitants of the field moved closer and closer to look at the interlopers. Only to be surprised when with a pop, another human and a great huge, black fuzzy dog appeared.

Aiden had been waiting for Liam to return from Bob's and when he didn't return with Ty, he began to worry. Only after an hour or so of worry, did he realize that all he needed to do was to concentrate and he'd be wherever Liam was. He hoped it was

somewhere that no one would notice his appearance. Just as he popped to Liam's location, Killer leaned into him, his head on Aiden's knee. So they both ended up sitting in the grass and staring at Liam and Ty sleeping on a blanket, debris from MacDonald's tidily placed in a large bag at one end.

Aiden watched for a moment. Liam and the cat were unbelievably relaxed; too relaxed actually, they should have noticed him arriving. Killer whined, knowing something wasn't right. Ty would normally have been berating him for making a noise or breathing or something. The cat was a thorn in his paw as far as Killer was concerned. He inched forward until his nose was almost touching the cat's nose. Still there was no sign that the cat was anything other than sleeping, but it was a sound sleep, far too sound for a cat.

"Liam?" Aiden put his hand on the red head's shoulder shaking him slightly. But there was no sign that he was heard. Not even a flicker of an eyelash. "LIAM." He said louder, shaking him harder. The pencil he'd been using rolled off the sketchbook and onto the blanket, then into the grass.

Liam was deeply asleep. He dreamed he and Ty were walking side by side down a winding cobblestone road. The landscape was almost surrealistic, looking slightly not quite normal. Perhaps it was the purple sky, or the deep orange yellow of the sun, or maybe it was the fact that a small oddly dressed men accompanied them on either side.

He registered the fact that Ty was walking on his hind legs and was wearing a vest of some kind. "Why are you dressed?" Liam asked the cat.

"Why are you dressed?" the cat answered back with a sneer. "Hurry up; we're going to be late."

"Late for what?" Liam looked around, there didn't seem to be any end to the road they were on, though the number of small people had increased. "This is kind of Alice in Wonderland like. Did we eat something or smoke something we shouldn't have?"

"Cat's don't smoke."

"Cat's also don't walk on their hind legs, wear vests or talk. You seem to be doing all three, so why not smoke?" Liam snickered. "I think we should find Aiden."

"We're going to Aiden now." Ty looked at Liam with curiosity. "I thought you knew that. He's the High Kind of the Fairies."

Liam snorted at the title. "Sounds like Aiden alright." He snickered. He looked around. "Everyone is going to see him?"

"Yes, he is their Royal Highness."

"Riiiiiiight." Liam shook his head. "I wonder if he has a crown and if he'll let me wear it when we fuck."

"You always did before, why wouldn't you now?" Ty humphed. "You aren't very respectful of the High King, but then you never were."

"I've never been here before." Liam looked at Ty sideways. "I think I'd remember if I had."

"You did have Brad Chambers in your head. He does have tendency to block out reality." The cat was reasonable in his answer.

"This is hardly reality." Liam snorted. "There's got to be a few hundred of these little guys, they don't even come up to my ankle."

"Leprechauns, you know they're leprechauns and there are six hundred and ninety three. There used to be seven hundred, but seven died during the war with the Chambers." He shook his head. "It was a very sad day indeed, but the king had to do what he had to do to bring you back to the living." The cat pretended to wipe a tear from his eye, but it was apparent he really didn't care.

"How much further do we walk?" Liam asked. "I'm getting tired."

"Oh we're here, Aiden's here and wouldn't you know it, he brought that great hulk of a dog. Six dozen leprechauns could live in his fur and he'd never know it. You should consider giving him a hair cut." The cat shook his head. "Cats know better than to grow their fur to such ridiculous lengths. And did you know he doesn't do any more grooming than the occasional lick at his front feet, that is when his nose isn't buried in his crotch. Disgusting dogs."

"Hey you do that all the time." Liam snickered. "You can't talk about ball licking."

"At least I don't suck on the ends of pillows and shoot my seed all over."

"Ewwwe, tell me he doesn't do that." Liam's nose turned up.

"Of course he does, I'm always having to magic it away. Why King Aiden would be horrified if he knew." The cat shook his head.

Aiden leaned over and put his lips on Liam's in a kiss that was meant to bring him back to life. Liam blinked and rolled onto his back. "Like any fairy tale, the Prince wakes the princess with his kiss." Aiden laughed, happy to see Liam awake. He'd been desperately worried for a few minutes. The turquoise cat perched in the highest branches of the tree, nodded, satisfied his suggestion had worked, before disappearing. The kiss of one's soul mate to ward off evil spells was a tried and true fix.

"I was having the weirdest dream." Liam smiled up at Aiden. "But I'm glad I'm awake now. How come you're here?"

"I could ask you the same thing." Aiden stretched his long legs out so he was lying beside Liam.

"Mmmmm." Liam answered. He reached over and pulled Aiden's face close to his. "Take your clothes off."

Aiden rolled his eyes, but instantly was hard. The wind was soft and warm and they were hidden from the road by the grasses. He looked around and a slightly disgruntled Ty was glaring at Killer who had just licked him in the face, dog slime stuck to one ear.

"I can do that." Aiden laughed, burying his nose in Liam's neck, inhaling the scent of musky warm red head. His clothing disappeared and so did Liam's, to be folded neatly on a corner of the blanket. Summer wind swept over them, rippling the fine hairs on their

skin, making them both shiver though they weren't cold.

"Aiden..." Liam whispered, his head still full of the dream he'd had, or was it a dream, it had been so real. "Aiden." The name sent an emotional rush of heat through Aiden's body, his cock hardening, his nipples erect. "Aiden..." Liam gasped; unable to form a coherent thought when Aiden's lips began to trace their way down the side of his face, over his jaw to the sensitive spot just under his chin.

Killer watched with interest, not sure if he should join in the game. Ty put one paw on Killer's long floppy ear to tell him to stay quiet.

Aiden's lips moved lower, he wanted to taste all of sun kissed Liam, so sweet and salty at the same time. Liam's hands wandered over Aiden's back and down lower to cup his hard buttocks, the muscle firm from exercise, and strangely beautiful to Liam's artistic eye. He looked up, his eyes captured by the look of loving vulnerability in the eyes that looked back at him. This wasn't just a quick fuck, or a casual romp, but something more. Something neither man wanted to really admit out loud. So instead they let themselves speak without words. To feel their emotions through heated skin and sensitive finger tips as slowly and tenderly they made love under the watchful eyes of a cat and a dog; not to mention six hundred and ninety three widely grinning leprechauns hidden behind tall grasses and sweet smelling flowers.

CHAPTER 26

Days passed uneventfully for most of the people in Vancouver. Oh there was always some kind of drama happening on Davie and Denman Streets, but that in itself was uneventful. Liam had immersed himself in his studies at UBC, or that's the impression he gave. He still found time to drop in and visit Shay daily, if only for a minute or two. Because of Shay's penchant for breaking through all the various and sundry binding spells Liam, Aiden and his grandmothers continued to come up with. Liam found a few minutes of grounding the boy was essential for his peace of mind and Shay's safety.

It was the time of year when sunshine and great weather had the real estate market in a tizzy, so Aiden was also kept busy maintaining his status as top mortgage broker in the city. Which meant working long hours every day of the week. It left Liam time to interact with Aiden's friends that seemed like most humans, gay or straight, to have interesting day-to-day lives. Interesting that is to a Wahjee.

Even had begun a relationship with an older man, one who was rumored to be wealthy. Bob was busy with his new business venture, and Daniel, well Daniel continued to work for London Drugs, his status elevated among the women now that it was known he was gay. The men on the other hand stayed well away from him.

In an attempt to complete a school project, Liam was trying to reason with Ty and Killer. Aiden was at work and Liam needed two more things for his class. He was attempting to do a portrait of the animals but they were not cooperating. "Ty I'm telling you for the last time, sit still. You tell Killer that if he doesn't behave I'm freezing him solid and I can do it."

"He's embarrassed." Ty grumbled. "You shaved his fur off and made him look stupid." Ty had given up the pretense that Liam didn't know what he was saying.

"I wanted him to look like a classic standard poodle."

Liam had to admit the dog did look rather ridiculous, but the painting was a take off on one done that he'd seen years ago in a museum. "Killer you look okay, see here's a picture of another poodle. See he's got the same hair cut." Liam tried to show Killer a picture in a book about dogs.

But Killer refused to look. He was humiliated and he just knew that his human was going to laugh at him. He wasn't going to go outside ever again. Or at least until his fur grew back. Ty had assured him his fur would grow, but he didn't know that for sure.

"It'll grow back Killer." Liam cajoled. "I really need you to sit up properly."

An audible pop and Frances was in the studio with Liam and the animals. "Shit Liam, you humiliated him. He's never going to live this down. What are all his doggy friends going to say?" Frances snickered.

"Who invited you?" Liam asked. He looked at the dog. "Killer doesn't have any doggy friends. He lives in an apartment for fuck sake, where's he going to meet someone."

"Maybe that's the problem. You need to introduce him to a nice girl doggy." Frances looked around. "How did you get Aiden to let you build a studio in his precious apartment?"

"I didn't, this is a compacting spell enlarged. When Aiden comes home it goes in my messenger bag. Just a basic spell, nothing fancy." He shrugged. "Aiden doesn't know."

"Yeah, right he doesn't know." Frances couldn't find anywhere to sit so he sat on the floor. Killer immediately came up to him and buried his head in the crook of Frances' arm. "He's hiding." Frances laughed.

"Dogs are stupid. If they can't see, they think they can't be seen." Ty stretched and jumped up onto a nearby bookcase. The magic of the studio meant nothing to him. "But even I, as a Wah cat, have to admit he looks uglier than usual."

"I'm not interested in your comments." Liam was at the end of his rope. "I can't believe what a drama

dog he is. And Ty isn't helping matters any. He keeps telling Killer how bad he looks."

"I think you should just put his fur back." Frances offered. "Paint the picture in your own style, furry poodle and everything." He looked at Killer's tail, complete with pom pom end that flicked once and then tucked itself under the trembling dog's belly.

"I can't put his fur back. I didn't magic it off. I actually took him to a dog groomer." Liam ducked his head to avoid Frances' look of incredulity.

"Does Aiden know about this?" Frances asked.

"My man knows nothing." Ty snickered. He rolled on his back and stretched the length of top shelf, knocking something off and onto the floor that bounced and rolled coming to a stop by Liam's foot.

Liam bent down and picked it up. "What is this?" he asked.

"It is the amulet of Wah." Ty said jumping down "It's been lost for centuries."

"Apparently it wasn't lost, just misplaced and I doubt very much Aiden has lived here for centuries." Liam turned the black jade amulet over in his hands. The carving was amazing. He couldn't imagine how the artist had managed to carve a single piece of jade into something that was as filled with mystery as what he held in his hand. It was a perfect sphere and inside that sphere was another and another and another. From what Liam could tell, each one had the same engraving on it. He needed a magnifying glass, but the last tiny sphere looked to have a tiny piece of something that pulsed with light.

"Can I see it?" Frances asked.

Liam thought for a moment. It had obviously been hidden and hidden for a reason. He had no idea why, but he did know that he couldn't let it touch anyone other than himself, Aiden or Shay. Why he knew this he wasn't sure. "I don't think so Frances. It's kind of personal." His voice was a whisper. "If you are my watcher, you'd know this."

Frances was still. Killer backed up until he was a foot away from the man. Ty jumped down and stood beside the dog. Their eyes never left the man sitting on the floor. A rumbled growl began deep in the back of Killer's throat belaying the foofy nature of his haircut. Ty stood on the end of his toes, his back arched, his fur fully extended on all parts of his body. Frances looked at the two animals and then at Liam. "I've been looking for the amulet for a long time Liam. Give it to me." His voice held a challenge in it, bravado that he didn't feel under the circumstances.

"Why Frances, I thought you were my friend, my cousin, my watcher." Liam shook his head. "I've allowed you access to this loft."

Frances tried to move but Killer's sudden urge to smile with all his teeth showing, combined with his growl, kept the man still. He might have had a stupid haircut, but he was still a formable sized dog and he wasn't happy. "Nothing personal Liam, but that amulet has a lot of power attached to it. The one who holds it can rule the world if they want to. My friends figured it would show up sooner or later, what with the stories that have been told about you."

"It's just an amulet. A nice carving of black jade."
But Liam knew his words were empty. He could feel the power pulsing through his body from the carved black sphere. "What friends, what stories?" he asked more as a distraction than to know the answer.

"If that's all it is, you can give it to me." Frances held out his hand only to have Ty rake his claws over the palm. Frances looked at the streaks of blood. "Fucking Wah cat." He mumbled. He reached out again, only this time with the mumbling of a spell on his breath, but before he could complete the sound, Killer launched himself at Frances, the man's throat in his mouth cutting off any words. His growls could turn anyone's blood to ice. The dog weighed almost seventy pounds. He wasn't a dog to fool around with.

"Hey, the dog is fast." Ty looked at his large friend with admiration. "Now rip out the prey's throat." He commanded.

"I don't think so." Liam said quickly, glaring at the cat. "No throat ripping in the loft."

"Take him up to the roof and then rip out his throat. We can drag him by his throat." Ty grinned with glee at the thought. "Let him run for a few feet and then jump on him."

"No playing with the bad guy either." Liam said. He folded up his studio and tucked it into his bag, leaving them all in the center of the loft. Aiden was due home at any moment. He also put a sealing spell on Frances' mouth. He didn't need any surprises.

Taking out his cell phone, Liam dialed. "Hey Mom, what's new?" he asked when his mother answered the phone.

"Liam, I was thinking about you." Morgan smiled as she talked. "I was wondering when you and Aiden could come to dinner."

"Yeah, well I'm kind of busy right now." He looked at the amulet in his hand. "What do you know about a black jade amulet?"

"Amulet?" Morgan said, her voice suddenly shaky.

"Yeah." Liam sighed. "And no lies, I can tell you know something."

"Just that it's been lost for centuries, or kept well hidden." She sighed. "It belonged to the first king of Wahjee, that's when we had kings. You know royalty has been gone from Wahjee society for a long time. The amulet was handed down, father to son, but there were rumors that the black forces of evil had seeped into the Royal family. Because the amulet contained considerable power, it was stolen by someone close to the family, perhaps even a family member, who had a pure soul and couldn't bear to have the heirloom descend into darkness." She paused. "Why do you ask?"

"No reason, the subject just came up." Liam didn't like to lie to his mother, but something told him to say nothing about the thing in his hand. "Uh, mom, about Frances. Are you sure he's my cousin?"

"Of course I'm sure. He's my sister Leanne's son."

"Well, I think he went kind of strange. He's here right now, but he's kind of psycho. I'm going to have to do something drastic."

"Liam, you know that the High Council won't allow you to do anything to him. He's family after all, and he has been assigned as your watcher from the beginning. It's against Wahjee code to harm one's watcher."

"Apparently it's okay for the watcher to try and fry my ass though." Liam's voice was bitter. "Sorry mom, but I have enough to worry about with the Chambers group without worrying about my damn family. Frances' ass is grass as far as I'm concerned."

"Liam, don't you dare do anything that will put you in front of the High Council. You know Cecil is just waiting for a chance to take you down."

"Yeah, well Cecil can bite me." Liam glared at Frances who was trying to wiggle out from under Killer. Killer hadn't bitten down on the throat he had in his jaw, but he didn't release it either, saliva dripped to the floor. Ty kept hitting Frances with his paw, one lethal looking claw extended. He liked the way the man jumped.

He said his goodbyes to his mother and closed the phone. "I can't have you cluttering up the place. Killer would like to actually kill you. Ty is all for it and frankly, I'm leaning that way myself. But I suspect I'd lose my white light status if I did." Paced up and down a few times listening to both Killer and Frances whine.

"Okay, I've made my decision. Frances, I need to place you where I can keep an eye on you. But I'm not

allowed to remove you from this realm. Soooo, I've decided that I need a cousin in a cage." He conjured up an elaborate looking Victorian birdcage. "It's not too comfy, but the other alternative is that box over there and I might forget to feed you if I put you in there. This way I can make sure you're up high enough that Killer can't get you but accessible enough for Ty to keep you under control." He zapped Frances into the cage. "Oh, and don't bother trying anything. The cage has a force field around it. No magic can come out, but trust me, I can put lots in."

Killer looked around for the prey that had been in his mouth. He whined and began to look everywhere, under the sofa, the table, and chairs. "Stupid dog." Ty grumbled. He reached into the cage to bat Frances, but the man ran to the other side. Ty ran around and reached in again. "Hey, this is going to be fun."

"Sorry cat," Liam laughed. "Though I should let you play with him for a few minutes." Liam stood on one of the kitchen stools and hung the cage from an overhead beam. He'd no sooner finished than Aiden walked into the loft.

"Honey I'm home." He said, tossing his brief case onto the sofa.

"I can see that." Liam said kissing Aiden thoroughly.

"What's wrong with the dog, his fur fell out." Aiden looked carefully at Killer. "For fuck sake Liam, isn't it bad enough he's a poodle. I mean we could pretend he was something else, a mutt or something,

but not when his hair is cut like some freak clown dog."

"It'll grow back." Liam began.

"What's he doing?" Aiden asked. "He's looking for something, maybe he's looking for the asshole who shaved his fur off."

Ty had jumped onto Aiden's shoulder, leaning into his master, rubbing his chin on Aiden's neck.

"Merow" he said and then snickered.

"Did the cat snicker?" Aiden pulled him off his shoulder. "Am I in some kind of bizarro world? Maybe I should go out and come back in." It was then the birdcage caught his eyes. "Fuck no Liam, I don't want another pet. And I detest caged birds." He walked over to the cage. "Oh, it's Frances. Frances?"

"Uh about that." Liam said. "Let's fuck." Usually Aiden could be distracted.

"That would be a NO." Aiden looked from the caged Frances to Liam and back again. "I went to work and actually had a decent day. I come home and what do I find?"

"There's an explanation." Liam began, running his hand over Aiden's chest. He'd unbuttoned his shirt.

"I'm sure there is." Aiden drawled as he removed Liam's hand. "You can start with mini Frances. And make that damn dog stop snooping around, he's driving me crazy."

"He's kind of looking for Frances. He had been planning on doing him some damage."

"NO TY, DON'T." Liam hollered. Ty had jumped from the kitchen island to the cage and was now clinging to the wildly swinging cage. Frances was screaming for help and hanging on to the opposite side.

Aiden lifted the cat off the cage. "Ty, don't play with the bird." He turned to Liam. "You're right, we need to fuck first and talk later. Because if we talk first, I might want to put you in with Frances. This way I get to have some pleasure out of the evening." He grabbed Liam and threw him over his shoulder, planning to carry him to the bedroom.

Ty watched from his perch back on the kitchen counter. He had all night; he'd just watch his prey for a while.

Killer continued to look for his prey, finally going to the roof, maybe the prey had slipped out the dog door.

Aiden threw Liam on the bed. Liam grinned, he had time enough to think of something good, Aiden was in for the ride of his life.

"Young one, do not interfere with Prince Liam."

Ty jumped, his fur instantly bottle brushed. Liam's turquoise toy had once again become the High King of the Wah cats.

"Sir, I wasn't expecting you." Ty bowed. He was beginning to lose his fear of the High King.

"I am here when the Prince is here." The regal cat stood up and stretched, his arched back almost reaching the ceiling from his perch on the rafters. He walked over to the hanging birdcage and looked

down. "Frances is a disgrace to his family." The words were muttered and sounded more like a series of chirps.

"Liam and my master are in the small room breeding. They do that a lot." Ty shrugged as well as a cat could. "I think it's kind of strange, but whenever my master is upset with Liam, they breed."

"Are you cat's talking?" Frances asked as he looked from the orange tabby to the strange turquoise and white stuffed cat. He couldn't puzzle out why Mac Ruaidhri would keep a toy on the rafters.

The Regis reached down and flicked the chain holding the birdcage, sending it rocking. "That will keep him busy." He snickered as he and Ty watched the tiny man figure roll from side to side.

Ty grinned in appreciation. "The tiny Wahjee wanted Liam's amulet. He was too stupid to see that the amulet belonged to the Prince." His head cocked. "But I thought it was in the Mac Ruaidhri clan, this black toy."

"And is not the Prince part of King Mac Ruaidhri in every way?"

Ty figured the question was rhetorical and didn't answer.

CHAPTER 27

For the third night in a row, Liam found himself walking with Ty along that endless road under violet skies. Each night Ty wore a different vest, they were all rather elegant and this one was no different; fashioned as it was out of gold and silver fabric with ribbons of purple and pink. It complemented his fur color and brought out the shine of his eyes. "We've been walking forever and I still don't know where you're taking me." Liam began as he had for the last three nights. He looked down and saw he was wearing not much of anything; his feet were clad in silver sandals though. He rather liked the way they glittered despite the dusty road. "I'm pretty sure Aiden isn't going to be at the end of this road." He knew those particular words would elicit a response from the Wah cat.

"The King is, of course, at the end of the road. But he's surrounded by, well challenges for lack of a better word. It's going to take a Wahjee of

considerable strength and talent to actually get to him and capture what is rightfully yours."

"No shit." Liam continued to walk while he thought about what the cat said. "Why do you always get good stuff to wear and I never get anything but shoes?"

"This is the land of Wah, of course I'd have a choice of clothing." Ty waved his hand at the six hundred and ninety three Leprechauns who surrounded them on either side of the road. A black cloud rose on the horizon and all eyes turned to see it.

"Don't worry, it happens all the time. If it isn't one thing it's another. Everyone wants a part of King Aiden, but they don't see the real King, only the King they want to see and when they do, well it hurts him deep inside. The cloud is just a part of it. It seeps inside of his heart."

"That's the first thing you've said that makes kind of sense." Liam sighed. "I fucking hate how everyone has the wrong idea about Aiden."

"Liam, Liam, wake up." Aiden nudged him and then kissed his lips. "Hey Sleeping Beauty." It was almost sunrise, they had at least an hour before they had to start their day, but Liam's mumbling in his sleep had woke him up.

"Aiden." Liam smiled and rolled into the warmth of his partner. "What's up?"

"You were talking in your sleep." Aiden pulled him closer and kissed the top of his head. He smiled when Liam nuzzled into his neck with small kisses.

"I was dreaming." Liam wiggled until he could throw one leg over Aiden, cock to cock. The warmth of their bodies almost steamy in the coolness of the morning dawn. Killer groaned. He was sleeping at the end of the large bed. "Your dog takes up a lot of room."

"He doesn't seem to understand that his bed is on the floor." Aiden smiled. He didn't really mind Killer wanting to be close. Though he preferred him to stay out of the bedroom when they had sex. The dog watched with such interest, Aiden was sure he was taking notes.

"Aiden, I was wondering something?" Liam began.

"It's too early for one of your philosophical conversations." Aiden almost groaned and wished he'd moved out of the bed sooner.

"It isn't anything like that." Liam had his bedmate pinned. He knew the man hated talking about anything too serious. "Have you ever seen this?" he reached under his pillow and pulled out the black jade amulet.

"No, what is it?" Aiden asked squinting, because Liam was holding it too closely. He captured the red head's hand to hold it still. To Aiden, what he saw was only an intricately carved sphere. He didn't see the many spheres' inside. He didn't see the small speck of golden power. "Weird, you found a black pendant." He shrugged and dismissed the thing in Liam's hand.

"It's an amulet." Liam replied, confused at Aiden's answer. "Can't you see the beauty and power of it?"

"It's a fancy pendant, rather feminine if you ask me. Though I suppose with the right chain, maybe a black satin cord or something heavy and platinum, it could work."

"Doesn't it mean something to you? I mean don't you feel something when you look at it?" Liam moved so he was staring into Aiden's eyes. There wouldn't be chance of the man hiding anything from prying blue eyes.

"Does annoyed count? I mean it's too early for these kind of talks. All I want to do is piss and then fuck you or fuck you and then piss."

"Ever the romantic." Liam sighed. "Ty knocked this down from the bookcase by your desk."

"So it's a cat toy." Aiden pulled Liam on top of him. "Throw it to the cat."

"No." Liam said, putting the amulet back under the pillow before allowing himself to drown in Aiden's morning love making. The touch of Aiden's lips didn't take away from the heat of the amulet that he could still feel on the palm of his hand. Or from the pulse of the inner golden spark of force that matched the beating of his lover's heart.

Killer stood up and shook his head making his ears flap. It was a morning ritual. He watched for a moment the antics of the two men in the bed. Another morning sleep ruined by his master's incessant breeding habits. Sighing heavily, he jumped onto the

floor. Maybe Ty would play with him, or perhaps even let him sleep close. Since the red haired one had made his fur funny, he was cold.

Ty was on the rafter directly over the birdcage that held Frances. He laid full length, one paw hanging over the side, idly hitting the chain, making the cage swing gently. Inside Frances groaned as he lay on the floor of the cage wrapped as best he could in a thick red facecloth Aiden had put inside for a blanket.

"Whatcha doin'?" Killer asked, his front paws on the kitchen island hoping for a better look.

"Nothing." Ty answered with a yawn. "Just relaxing."

"It looks like you're playing with the prey." Killer observed. "Aiden said no playing with the prey."

"Ah, but I don't think of it as playing. I'm guarding the prey, it could escape."

"Okay." Killer said jumping down. "I'm going outside; do you want to come?"

"Maybe." Ty laughed as he jumped from the rafter to the cage to the counter top and then to the floor. This left the cage swinging wildly and Frances screaming. "It's boring up there."

The dog door slapped shut. Aiden was finally able to get out from under Liam. Sex always put the red head to sleep. Actually, almost anything put the red head to sleep. He reached under Liam's pillow and pulled out the black sphere, studying it closely. It did look familiar, but he wasn't sure why or how. He

rolled it over and over in his hand, but nothing came into his mind though it was damn cold. Shrugging, he placed it back where he'd found it. Maybe he could look it up on the net or something. The carvings looked like some kind of language.

There was no sign of either Ty or Killer for a change, no doubt they had both headed for the roof. Aiden padded into the bathroom and relived his bladder, thankful that for once he didn't have a doggy audience. His next stop was the kitchen and the coffee maker. He stopped short for a moment when he saw the birdcage. "Shit." He muttered and continued on to the kitchen.

"Aiden you have to be reasonable. You can't keep me in here." Frances shouted as he leaned through the bars.

"Actually I'm not keeping you there. You did it to yourself. You know as well as I know that you would never have been in the cage if your magic hadn't been able to turn back on you. Liam is good, but he has no desire to turn to the dark side. He merely turned what you did to yourself back on you." Aiden finally managed to get the coffee maker to work. "I'd make you a coffee, but I don't have a thimble."

"You can't keep me here. I'll starve to death or that damn cat will eat me. You've no idea what he's been doing to me all night."

"Okay, maybe I'll find something for you to drink some coffee out of. You look a bit stressed." Aiden rummaged in the refrigerator for something to eat. He'd forgotten to pick up the bagels Liam had

requested the day before. It was ridiculous, the kid expected him, Aiden Mac Ruaidhri to actually go to a grocery store and shop. What was wrong with take out? It had served him well for years.

"Hey." Liam stumbled out into the kitchen. "I'm starving." He opened the refrigerator, stared inside and closed it again. "Aiden, you have to pick up groceries. I emailed you the list three times."

"I don't eat them, why should I pick them up?" he asked, trying to be reasonable.

"Because you're the daddy." Liam smirked. "It's the daddy's job."

Aiden rolled his eyes. "Then as the daddy, get rid of the damn bird. He stinks and it's hard to feed him. Not to mention, I'm not changing his fucking litter."

"Birds don't have litter." Liam snickered. He stood on a kitchen stool to look in on Frances. "Hey Frances, sorry about this but until I figure out what to do with you, I kind of have to keep you around."

"Liam, I'm sorry. I didn't mean things to go as far as they did. I had no idea the Chambers were going to be so vicious."

"The thing is Frances, when you threatened me it was one thing. But I've been checking with some friends. You and the Chambers clan had Aiden and Shay targeted. You crossed a line and can't go back. I will not allow either of them harmed either mentally or physically. If Ty has a bit of fun with you, I'm not going to lose any sleep over it. Not now, not ever. I'll talk to my mother and to Aiden's mother, we'll come up with something to better your lot in life."

"My wife...." Frances began.

"Yes, that's a problem." Liam sighed. "I'll talk to mom and let you know."

"What are you saying to him?" Aiden asked. He'd been checking on the animals on the roof.

"Just commiserating with his problem." Liam jumped down off the stool and into Aiden's arms. "Yum, you smell like a fresh morning sunrise with coffee breath."

"I understand it's an aphrodisiac." Aiden replied, sweeping Liam up in his arms. "Let's check it out."

"Aiden, I'm hungry." Liam whined, but he wiggled in anticipation in Aiden's arms.

"We'll go shopping together." Aiden sighed. "I can't believe I've offered to do that, but for you I will."

"You mean for you. I notice you eat everything I make." Liam laughed. "I want to go to Hamburger Mary's. I want some waffles."

"What are we going to do about the bird? We can't leave him to starve. I'm sure someone must be worried about him."

"You mean beside you?" Liam stared up at the cage. "I'm going to talk to my mother about it and maybe your mom. They'll have some ideas, they always do."

Getting to the diner took longer than Liam had anticipated. A wet and naked Aiden, fresh from the shower, demanded that they change that status. And sweaty Aiden was always fun.

"Why did the one with fire hair give the tiny man a piece of my food?" Killer asked. He hated it when Liam and Aiden left him alone in the apartment with Ty. But today at least they had the caged man to add interest.

"I don't know." Ty lay on his back in a patch of sunlight. He could keep warm and watch the cage at the same time. "Come over here, I want to sit on you."

"Okay, but don't suck on my ear fur. It makes it stick and the fire hair one hurts me when he brushes it."

"I don't suck on your ear fur." Ty tried not to look guilty. He loved the long soft black curls on the dog's ears. Sometimes he pulled an ear over him like a blanket. It was a guilty pleasure.

Aiden and Liam were pleased to find the diner almost deserted. Aiden slouched into the corner of the rear booth, one leg on the bench seat. Liam laughed and sat opposite him, but not before nudging Aiden's foot back to the floor.

"It's peaceful in here." Liam sighed.

"Give it time, it's early." Aiden snapped his fingers to get the attention of the waitress, Tanya. "Coffee sooner rather than later." He called.

Liam flushed. "Don't pay any attention to his majesty. He thinks he's a King."

"Oh don't worry dear, I've learned a long time ago that Mr. Mac Ruaidhri is all bark and no bite." Tanya placed coffee mugs on the table and then filled them. "The breakfast special is nice this morning. "Two eggs, bacon, sausage, two pancakes and toast."

"Geeze, heart attack on a plate."

"I'll have it, but I want an order of blueberry waffles too. Aiden likes his toast unbuttered, and we'll have an extra plate for when he takes part of my breakfast. Oh, and two glasses of orange juice, the fresh squeezed stuff not the frozen stuff."

"Is that everything dear?" Aiden asked in a falsetto voice.

"For now." Liam smirked as he brought his foot up and put it in Aiden's lap.

"Good morning." Evan bounced into the diner, followed by an older gentleman. "Aiden, Liam, I'd like you both to meet my very good friend Jimmy." He took the other man's arm and snuggled close.

Liam and Aiden both recognized James as Wahjee, though neither one could remember seeing him around. "James." Aiden said with a nod of his head.

"Hey James." Liam smiled. "Are you two here for breakfast? Why don't you join us? I'll move over and sit with Aiden." Liam immediately changed places, freeing up the seat. Evan slid in followed by James.

James too, recognized Aiden and Liam as Wahjee. The two of them were almost legends in Wahjee circles. The daring move Liam had made to lose his virginity to Aiden, when he knew full well he was to remain virgin. It had been unheard of to defy the Grand Wizard and to do it so blatantly and with the son of Jack Mac Ruaidhri, James still chuckled about it. When he'd last seen Liam Taylor, he'd been barely two weeks old. His curiosity regarding the boy

whose fate he'd bound with that of Aiden Mac Ruaidhri in the weeks before Aiden had been born, had taken him to the park where Morgan Taylor walked her son.

"You kind of look familiar." Liam said. "I don't know why. I'm pretty sure I've never seen you before."

"Perhaps when you were a child." James smiled. "I have met your parents on a number of occasions." He didn't say at Wahjee functions, but Liam knew what he meant.

"I suppose." He leaned against Aiden. "How did you and Evan meet?" he asked, surprised when James flushed.

"Oh, Jimmy was one of my best ever fans." Evan wiggled. "He finally got up the nerve to get in touch with me. And what can I say, it was love at first sight." He kissed James' cheek. "Isn't he the best guy ever?"

Aiden groaned and Liam elbowed him in the side. "Sure Evan." Liam laughed. "Of course I have the best guy ever, but I suppose it's a matter of semantics." He giggled when Aiden beamed his approval. "You're such a compliment ho." He said as he kissed under Aiden's chin.

"So James, what have you been up to all these years? I thought I knew all of the A-gays." Aiden asked. He leaned forward to hear James' story.

"I'm afraid when I was younger, I allowed a manipulating woman discover something about me that she held over my head. I ended up marrying her to

keep her quiet. I know now I should have gone to someone." His look at Aiden told him more than he was saying. It was obvious to the other man that the woman was human and had somehow discovered he was Wahjee. James looked lovingly at Evan. "When I saw this beautiful young man, I knew that at this time of my life, it was time to start living it."

"What do you mean?" Liam asked. "I mean if she knew about you, how could you..." he looked at Evan.

"I guess, a little bird made it possible." James grinned. He put his arm around Evan and gave him a squeeze.

"Hey, do you still have that bird?" Liam asked. "Cause we have one too that's kind of cluttering up the place. Maybe we can make a deal, share custody or something." There were no flies on Liam, he knew immediately what James had meant.

Aiden snorted.

James looked startled. "I still have the bird." His words were cautious. "Occasionally it's necessary to have the thing at company functions, dinners at the mayor's, etcetera."

"And you can control this bird?" Aiden asked. "Because we can't do that with ours, he must be a different breed."

"I can control my bird, or its back in the cage with her."

"What in the world are you boys talking about?" Evan looked confused. "Jimmy, I don't remember you having a bird."

"It's ugly, I don't keep it out much." James patted Evan's hand.

"And Aiden, you have a dog and a cat and now a bird. I never thought I'd live to see this day." Evan fanned himself. "My, my, that perfect apartment with all those pets."

"The bird is temporary." Aiden glared. "And Killer and Ty know better than to make a mess."

"Well, perhaps the dog does. I mean no dog intentionally makes a mess. Once they learn what's expected of them that is. But a cat on the other hand answers to no man. Cats do as they please." James smiled. "Or at least that's what I've found over the years. I can appreciate how you wish the bird to be temporary. Believe me, if I knew of any way to make mine temporary, I certainly would."

"Breakfast boys, we need sustenance." Liam waved Tanya over. "Food Tanya, please."

"It's all under control. Don't worry, your food will be up in a second or two." Tanya bent close. "Word of warning, Lisa is on her way in."

"Thanks." Aiden smiled. "But we're used to her."

"Not since her precious baby threw over his dear boyfriend." Tanya snickered. "You'd swear to god the world had ended."

"Danny and EJ3 were never really meant to be." Aiden answered. "She'll figure it out eventually."

"Until then, your ass is grass." Tanya laughed, heading to the kitchen.

"How can Lisa blame you?" Liam asked.

"Honey, no one knows how Lisa's mind works." Evan patted Liam's hand. "Oh my goodness, what a delightful breakfast." Tanya served Liam, Evan and James the same food Liam had ordered. Aiden received a refill of coffee and a plate of dry whole-wheat toast.

"I thought you looked hungry Evan." Tanya simpered. Evan was one of her favorite friends.

"You thought right. A boy needs to keep his strength up."

Aiden rolled his eyes as he stole a piece of bacon off of Liam's plate. "Did you hear, Rosalie and Vanessa are getting married."

"I know, it's kind of exciting." Evan wiggled. "I wonder where they're having the ceremony?"

"Who knows, we're not privy to the arrangements." Aiden shrugged. Liam fed him a piece of blueberry waffle, kissing the extra whipped cream off of Aiden's lips.

Lisa waltzed through the door. She was about to open her mouth to say something when Liam mumbled a few words before popping a bite of his breakfast into his mouth.

Nothing came out of Lisa's mouth but a squeak that appeared to say. "I've lost my fucking voice."

"What's that Lisa?" Aiden asked, biting his tongue while pinching Liam's thigh.

"My voice, I've lost my voice." She managed to croak out, though they could barely hear the words.

"Shit Lisa, you should go home and rest. It's probably overwork." Liam stood up and led her to the

counter and stool. "Tanya, get Lisa a cup of coffee, she's a bit under the weather."

"Hon, I'm sorry, but I can't handle Sunday morning alone. Will you be able to work even for a little bit?" Tanya asked.

"I can work, I just can't talk." She managed to croak. There were a thousand things she wanted to say to Aiden who was sitting there with a smirk on his face, but every time she tried to talk her voice was progressively less. She just didn't dare use it for anything except the very important things. Reaming Aiden out right now wasn't one of them.

"Good one witch boy." Aiden whispered. He caught James' eye who winked at him.

Evan and Liam were busy eating. "I wonder if it will be a white wedding." Evan sighed. "I love white weddings."

"Hmmm, doesn't that mean she should be a virgin?" Aiden asked. "Because I don't think either of them qualify."

"These days weddings can have any color scheme." James offered. "My own daughter had a black and white wedding."

"You have a daughter, how cool." Liam said. "Aiden has a son."

"Well my daughter isn't my biological daughter." James began. "Mixed births are frowned on in my family. And my wife, well she just wasn't one of us. Apparently though, the pool boy at the time was more to her liking. I knew I was gay from an early age. I

might have been blackmailed to marry the bitch, but damned if I was going to actually fuck her."

"Now Jimmy, that just sounds too bitter. You need to get that kind of negativity out of your life." Evan kissed the older man's cheek. "Now eat your breakfast, I'm not the only one who needs keep up his strength."

"Honey, this breakfast is everything I'm not supposed to eat." James laughed. "As good as it looks, I'm going to have to pass. Though perhaps I'll nibble on the egg white."

"What's wrong James?" Liam asked.

"Not much Liam, just old age creeping up on me." James sighed. "I'm afraid I indulged too often when I was younger. Now I realize that wasn't the best plan. Especially now that I've discovered my love." He took Evan's hand in his and squeezed it.

"Aiden, Aiden, you have to help me." Everyone turned to look at a distraught Vanessa followed by her fiancé Rosalie, who held Shay in her arms.

"Li." Shay leaned forward, making Rosalie release him into Liam's arms.

"Shay." Liam kissed him on the nose.

"Da fix momma and mommy." Shay said, leaning across and kissing Aiden's cheek in a sloppy kiss. "Da fix everything."

"Yeah Da." Liam giggled.

"Since you've interrupted our breakfast, feel free to sit down." Aiden nodded. "Grab a couple of chairs and bring them over."

"Aiden, the hall where we were having our wedding cancelled on us. They were double booked and they said we were second." Vanessa wiped a stray tear.

"Why don't the two of you have the wedding at my place?" James offered. "I'm sure between Evan and I, we could manage a wedding."

"Oh that would be so exciting." Evan grinned. He took James' still full plate and passed it over the back of the booth to put on an empty table. "Now girls, tell us everything." He leaned forward.

"Tell you what, you ladies can plan the wedding of the century, and Liam, Shay and I will finish our breakfast at the apartment." Aiden pushed on Liam with his hip.

"Oh, yeah, we need to get home anyway. Is it okay if we take Shay with us?" Liam asked. "Aiden had a car seat installed in the Lexus."

"He did?" Rosalie looked at Vanessa. "I suppose it's okay. But don't feed him any junk. He's used to a balanced diet."

"Shay hungry." Shay declared, reaching out and taking a piece of Liam's waffle and popping it into his mouth."

Liam laughed and kissed the whip cream away. "Hey, you're a lot like your daddy." He grinned as he stood up with the baby in his arms. "Let's go find Killer and Ty. We can maybe take Killer for a walk in the park."

"He's big enough to put a saddle on him for the kid." Aiden joked.

"Shay ride Killer." The boy clapped his hands and jumped up and down in Liam's arms.

"Gee, Killer is going to be so happy with that suggestion." Liam shook his head at Aiden.

Liam headed out the diner's door, Shay waving bye over his shoulder and Aiden following with a grin.

"We should actually feed the kid before we head to the loft." Aiden said as he strapped Shay into his seat.

"You mean before we pick up groceries." Liam laughed. "How cool, the two daddies and the kid going grocery shopping."

"Ever wondered what the world would look like as a frog?" Aiden asked getting into the Lexus.

"Very funny. Ooops." The Lexus was filled with hopping frogs. Both men glared at Shay. "SHEAMUS." Liam shook his head no.

"K, Shay likes frogs." The grinning baby made them all disappear except one. Another glare and that one disappeared as well. Instead he waved his plush cat Doug. "Doug likes frogs."

"Dawg probably eats the damn things." Aiden mumbled.

"We can go to the Farmers Market. There'll be good things for Shay to eat and we can pick up groceries." Liam had caught a glimpse of the sign advertising the market.

"I'm not lugging him around the market." Aiden began.

"Use some of that pent up Wahjee ingenuity and zap up a stroller." Liam suggested. "It's not like you'll actually need it again. It would be a one time thing."

"Or, I could pull into this store and actually buy a fucking stroller." Aiden parked the Lexus. "Do you boys want to come with me, or do you want to wait in the car?"

"Shay go with Da." Shay popped himself and Doug into Aiden's arms.

"Liam, I thought you put some kind of binding spell on this kid." Aiden struggled out of the Lexus, his arms full.

"I did, can you just imagine what he'd do if I hadn't."

Aiden and Liam walked into the store. "Trust you to find a designer baby store." Liam muttered. "And on the spur of the moment."

"It's a talent." Aiden smirked. He plunked Shay down in one of the strollers on display. "We'll take this one."

"We haven't even looked at any. Maybe there's something nicer."

"This one costs seven hundred dollars. I doubt there'll be one nicer." Aiden wheeled Shay to the counter and took out his platinum card. "Don't bother to wrap it, we're taking it as it is."

"But sir, that's the floor model, we don't sell the floor models." The startled storeowner began.

"Of course you do." Aiden shrugged. "It's all money. Write up the sale, we have a hungry kid to feed."

"But sir." She began.

On cue, Shay began to cry, while looking hungry." He wailed loudly but not before winking at Liam who snickered.

"Yes sir." The woman began to write up the sale before the other patrons of her store left, not being able to concentrate over the noisy kid.

Shay stopped crying as soon as the cash register opened. He stuffed Doug's ear in his mouth and chewed on it to smother a grin. "Shay hungwy." He declared. "Banana."

"We can do bananas." Aiden agreed. He nudged Liam. "You can push the kid."

"I figured." Liam snickered. "Are we going to walk to the market?"

"It's only a couple of blocks. I bought this thing because of the carrier baskets hanging all over it. You can buy all the veggies you want." Aiden all but strutted. He was proud of his purchase and truthfully, owning the stroller didn't make him less than a man. It made him more of a father.

"Killer." Shay said and Aiden found himself holding the end of a rainbow hued leash attached to a matching collar around Killer's neck. The dog looked startled for a moment and then in the way of dogs, accepted that this was normal, since his pack leader was with him.

"Shay, you can't keep doing shit like this." Aiden hissed as he looked around to see if anyone noticed that he suddenly had a dog on a leash. A damn ugly

dog with its cartoon haircut, as Killer pranced along at his side, his mouth in a wide self satisfied grin.

Liam bit his lip; he didn't want to point out that Ty and Dawg were now sitting in the rather oversized stroller beside Shay. And they weren't plush versions of Wah cats, but the actual real life, orange furred, purring things. One had a slightly wet chewed on ear.

The market was proving to be interesting for both men. Neither one paid any attention to the fact that their little family group was noticed where ever they went. That is until...

"Aiden, I wasn't expecting to run into you here." Michael France stopped in front of his top employee.

"Michael." Aiden nodded.

"Aren't you going to introduce me?" he asked looking at Liam. "I wasn't aware you had children."

"My personal life, is just that, personal." Aiden started.

"Hi, I'm Liam Taylor." Liam said, holding his hand out to Michael France. "You must be Aiden's boss. He speaks of you often."

"Nothing bad I hope." Michael said shaking Liam's hand. "And who is this little guy?"

"Shay." The baby replied. He made a motion to do something, but Ty leaned over and smacked him on the hand with a merow.

"That cat hit him." Michael said stepping back. "Why in hell do you have cats in with a child? Everyone knows that cats are dirty animals." He no sooner said the words, than his nose began to run copiously, dripping mucus down the front of him.

Ty's eyes were slits. Shay laughed out loud; Doug kept looking from Ty to the dripping man.

"Apparently cats aren't the only thing dirty." Aiden drawled. "I'd find a tissue or something if I was you Michael." He smirked to himself as Liam pushed the stroller deeper into the outdoor market, Killer growled low in his throat as they moved past Michael France who was doing his best to cover his dripping nose, without much success.

Later, Liam lay with his head on Aiden's lap. Shay slept surrounded by the two Wah cats, who like guardians, flanked him on either side, alert, their legs tucked under, tails wrapped tight. Killer lay on the floor in front of Shay's bed on his back, stretched full length, so long his feet reached past the ends of the bed. "Today was a good day." Liam sighed. "I loved the market. That's the first time I've ever been to an outdoor market. I don't know how I missed it."

"It was a first for me." Aiden stroked Liam's hair off the red head's forehead. "Shay had fun, though why he has to drag the damn cats with him I don't know."

"I think it's cute." Liam sighed. "If I'd had one when I was a kid, I would have taken him everywhere. I used to pretend I had a Wah cat. I called her Betty. You've seen her, she's turquoise and white."

Aiden snorted. "Now why doesn't that surprise me?" he checked the time. "Where in hell are the moms?" He wondered why Liam didn't have a real Wah cat. It wasn't like he had bad parents, and he certainly loved the furry things.

"They're probably caught up in wedding plans. Did you notice the day they want to get married is the day you were planning on going to the Palm Springs?"

"I did notice." Aiden leaned down and kissed Liam's nose. "I thought you and I were going together. We've never been anywhere like that before, I mean together."

"I know you thought we'd go together, but there are other things more important than a weekend of sex." Liam sighed. "Though I'm not sure what." He looked up at Aiden. "Just joking Aiden."

"I know you were joking." Aiden smiled. Liam wasn't like him; he had compassion and feelings for others. Aiden had the same default, for he often thought of it as a default, but he was able to control it better. It wasn't in the cards for him to let anyone other than Liam and perhaps Shay, know that he had a heart.

"You know, we could go to the wedding and then fly to Palm Springs. So what if we miss a bit of the orgy, it's not like we're missing anything we can't have at another time."

"We could do that." Aiden agreed.

"You'd do that for me?" Liam sat up, quickly straddling Aiden's hips so they were face to face.

"Only if you've figured out what to do with the fucking bird. I don't need to come back to a dead bird and it's not like we can get Danny to feed him."

"I'm going to talk to mom about him tomorrow. He's more her relative than mine." Liam leaned in to

kiss Aiden. "The cats and Killer are busy, so we can fuck without anyone watching."

"Throw a towel over the bird cage and I'm yours." Aiden laughed. He let one finger trace the edge of Liam's face.

"You're mine and I'm yours, remember that Mr. Mac Ruaidhri." Liam melted into Aiden's embrace, all thoughts of blocking the view from the hanging birdcage gone from both of their minds.

Frances groaned and rolled himself in the facecloth while trying to stuff his fingers in his ears. He suspected he was in hell and now he knew it.

CHAPTER 28

So birthday boy, what do you want to do tonight?" Aiden asked as he traced circles on Liam's bare skin. Had it really been more than a year since their first night together?

"Recover from my birthday morning?" Liam laughed. He loved it when Aiden touched him.

"No, I was thinking of something else." He looked over Liam's shoulder. "Ty, why don't you go find Killer and stare at him for a change instead of the bird. You can watch him grow."

"He's not going to grow anymore."

"Promise?" Aiden asked with a laugh. "Because he can reach things off of the counters in the kitchen without even straining."

"I kind of like how he rests his head on the table when's he's sitting on the floor." Liam giggled.

"I don't." Aiden glared. "Now back to tonight. Vanessa and Rosalie have some kind of idea that they want to take you to a concert being held at UBC. I was

thinking that maybe you and I could go with the girls."

"You mean like on a date?" Liam's eyes were wide. "A double date?"

"I'm not into classifying things by stereotypical words." Aiden looked away, much like Killer did when he didn't want to admit he was wrong.

"So we're just going to be going to a concert, something you aren't remotely interested in, nor am I, with Rosalie and Vanessa. And coincidentally, it's my birthday."

"That's right and maybe, because it's late, we'll all have dinner at a restaurant a tad classier than Hamburger Mary's." Aiden huffed. "I mean I should feed all of you since we'll be out late."

"Of course, I'd expect to be fed." Liam bit the inside of his lip to keep from laughing.

"I thought maybe mom could watch Shay, that way we don't have to worry about him." Aiden looked up at the ceiling.

"A concert really isn't a good place for a child." Liam agreed. "Especially a child who tends to pop things in and out of the air just for fun."

"So you'll go with me?" Aiden asked.

"How could I resist?" Liam giggled.

"We could go shopping this afternoon and find something hot to wear tonight."

"Whose birthday is this?" Liam laughed. "Yours or mine? Cause shopping is kind of your thing."

"But I'd be shopping for you." Aiden laughed. "And since it's your birthday, you can't refuse."

"I was hoping for a rent boy with a bow around his dick." Liam joked.

"I considered that, but thought I'd save that for an alternate universe Aiden and Liam."

"Good plan, big boy." Liam nuzzled Aiden's chin before he began to work his way lower down the older man's body.

Later that day:

"How did we end up with Shay again?" Aiden asked as Liam pushed the heavy stroller into the men's store. "Not that I'm complaining." He peered under the stroller's hood to reassure Shay with his smile that he didn't mind having him.

"The girls wanted some quiet time and since we're all going out tonight, they didn't want Shay to be left with a sitter, even your mom, most of the day."

Shay sat in his plush designer stroller, Doug tucked safely at his side. He chatted and giggled with his feline companion, explaining the amazing things they were seeing.

"Oh, I like that." Blue cashmere, the color of Liam's eyes when passion overtook him, was displayed on a manikin.

"We'll take it." Aiden signaled to the hovering sales clerk. "And one just like it in black. He looks hot in black."

"Two?" Liam's left eyebrow raised.

"It's your birthday." Aiden justified as he held up a pair of fine woolen trousers, a perfect compliment to either sweater. "Silk boxers under these and you're all set."

"You mean you're all set." Liam laughed. "Wool makes me itch if it's next to my skin."

Aiden sighed with drama. "I'm not buying polyester."

"We have something very similar in a wonderful linen." The sales clerk volunteered. "And there are some rather nice fine cottons."

It took them almost an hour before Aiden was satisfied with Liam's birthday clothing. Liam vetoed almost everything he was shown and only the stubborn set of Aiden's jaw and the flash of anger in his eyes, made the red head agree on a few of the man's choices.

Shay and Doug watched the proceedings with interest, only commenting to each other in a rather secretive way that made Liam slightly suspicious though he said nothing.

Aiden paid for their purchases ignoring his son and Doug. He'd been listening to the two of them though he hadn't wanted to alarm Liam. Apparently they were planning on visiting Ty and Killer at the loft and were plotting how to get them all there. It didn't sound good. Shay was barely a year old and his judgment wasn't the best, working as he did more on impulse and less on good sense. "That's it for shopping." Aiden began, immediately sorry he'd spoken, as they were all popped back to the sidewalk in front of the apartment. He hoped the sales clerk hadn't noticed their disappearance.

"Shay." Aiden began from his position directly in front of the stroller. "If you want to go to the loft, you

only have to ask. I've explained that we can't use our powers just for any old thing. They are too important to waste on unnecessary things. There might come a day when you'll need all the strength and force you've ever possessed. You don't want to find yourself running on empty."

"Da, Doug and I want to go to the apartment." Shay grinned up at him. His Wah cat had a similar grin on its furry face.

"Did you hear what I said?" Aiden tried to make his voice gruff not to mention ignore the fact that his son spoke without his usual baby lisp.

"Yes Da, Doug and me heard you." Shay smiled, indulging his father. "We luv you, grouchy Da. No more popping." He made his eyes go sad, but the twinkle in the corners gave him away.

Liam snickered, leaned over and kissed the top of Aiden's head. "I'll go back and pick up the Lexus." He offered. "You two can have a daddy, son bonding moment."

"Bye Liam." Shay waved. "Bring ice cream."

"No, don't bring ice cream." Aiden said. He looked at his son. "No popping ice cream into the apartment."

Liam waved as he jogged down the block. The Lexus wasn't that far away. He'd stop and get some frozen yogurt. It wasn't defying Aiden, it wasn't ice cream.

Upstairs in Aiden's apartment, he settled, cats, dog and child at the kitchen table. Shay had his own specially designed chair that was a combination high

chair and dining room chair made to match the rest of the adult sized chairs. Doug took up the chair next to Shay and Ty preferred to settle on a bar stool, it made the birdcage easier to see inside of. Killer was content to lie on the floor under the table, his head next to Shay's chair.

Aiden sat down opposite his son. "Seamus, I want to have a serious talk with you." He began.

"Da?" Shay said and stuck his hand in his mouth.

"Don't give me any of that baby crap, I know you understand more than you want me to know. You can't keep using your powers indiscriminately. Popping the cats and Killer here and there whenever you want them is not allowed."

"But Da, Li needs help. Bad things in the air, black things, teeth things. Dawg and Ty can see them, even Killer can see them. I know they're there, but I can't see them. Nothing comes close when Dawg and Ty and Killer are with us." He sighed. "Regis has to watch Li now 'cause he's all by himself."

"Who in hell is Regis?" Aiden asked. This was a new one as far as he was concerned.

"Regis isn't real, he's a figment of myth and magic. He's supposed to be the High King of all Wah cats and immortal. He only appears every seven centuries and then only to guard a Wahjee meant for greater things." Frances was leaning out of the birdcage fascinated by the fact that Shay at little more than one year had such a vocabulary. Something wasn't right with this kid.

"Shut up bird." Aiden barely glanced up. "Is what he says true Shay?"

"Kind of." Shay admitted. "But not the part where he isn't real. Ask Ty, he knows he's real."

Ty wasn't about to admit to anything with the small man within hearing distance. He leapt up on the cage, setting it swinging wildly, throwing Frances out so that the man was holding on for dear life to one of the struts.

Aiden stood up, grabbed the screaming Frances and shoved him unceremoniously back into the cage. He reached for Ty, but his cat for once refused to perch on his shoulder, preferring to continue his climb to the sit on the rafter over the cage, one arm dangling as a threat of things to come.

Aiden was about to say something when Liam bounced in through the door, a brown bag in his hand.

"Hey guys, the weirdest thing just happened." Liam placed the bag on the counter. "One of those big old maple trees by the Sylvia Hotel, decided to fall right where I was standing, except just as it was falling some asshole bumped into me and knocked me backwards into the hotel doorway. I could have sworn it was Betty, but she's in the same place she was when we left. Not to mention that this thing was damn big."

"Two things, why were you walking by the Sylvia Hotel, and who the fuck is Betty?"

"I like the frozen yogurt they make in their restaurant and Betty is right there." Liam pointed to the rafters where his stuffed turquoise cat sat.

"Though I'm not sure why she's there, but she's been there for days."

CHAPTER 29

His birthday day was turning out perfect. Liam's breath quickened when he walked down the steps from the bedroom. He'd never seen quite the openness of Aiden's soul in the man's face before. To make him smile, Liam turned around, modeling his outfit. "Do you approve?" he asked with a smile.

"You'll do." Aiden shrugged as he struggled to keep from ripping the clothes off the young man who stood a foot in front of him.

"That's it?" Liam laughed. He leaned up and kissed Aiden quickly before moving to the birdcage. "Hey Frances, any ideas yet about what we should do with you?"

Frances was lying on a makeshift bed fashioned from a pile of tissue. He was eating pieces of apple and watching a movie on Liam's iPod. "Keep the fucking cat away from me." He said with a glare.

"I let you visit with your wife."

"She's pissed with me. She had no idea what I was doing, so don't bother bringing her here again."

Frances refused to turn from the movie to talk to Liam.

"Okay, fine with me. It was a pain in the ass anyway." Liam turned. "We're going out. I'm sorry, but Ty will be guarding you."

"That fucking cat is psychotic. It spends hours staring up at the cage from the counter or down at the cage when it's in the rafters. It's just weird."

"It's a cat thing. He knows he's not supposed to eat you. So get over it and think of this stay as a short, but not too comfy, vacation from real life."

Liam linked his arm through Aiden's. "This date thing is kind of cool. Have you decided where we're going for dinner?"

"Of course I've decided. I made the reservations myself." Aiden couldn't resist and swept Liam into his arms for a mind-melting kiss that left them both breathless. "Maybe we should stay home." He whispered his voice husky, but he knew he wouldn't. This night was all about Liam. "Come on witch boy, your night awaits." He pulled open the door to the apartment to let them both out. Closing and locking the door, Aiden made sure to put a spell to keep out any intruders. Magic was occasionally justified.

When the two couples arrived at the concert, you could almost smell the excitement in the air. Neither Aiden nor Liam were particularly interested in a stringed instruments concert. But the whole idea of a night out, as a date with Vanessa and Rosalie, was what kept the excitement up.

"The guy with the flamenco guitar thinks he's pretty damn special." Aiden snorted behind his hand to Liam who shushed him with a look. They sat in one of the better seats in the small concert room at UBC. It enabled them to have a clear view of the stage, though Aiden envied the ones who had managed to get seats behind the support pillars. At least they could sleep.

The concert was longer than the boys wanted. Liam amused himself sketching the guitarist on the edge of his program. At least he looked interested which was more than Aiden did. The man didn't even pretend he was listening to the concert. Instead with closed eyes, he quietly snoozed the evening away.

When the concert was over, Liam said. "How did you do that?"

"Do what?" Aiden asked puzzled.

"Sleep without sleeping and wake up the moment everything is over."

"Ahhhhh, years of practice when I was forced to attend my mother's version of worship of her imaginary friends at the local Church." Aiden laughed. "I could catch up on my sleep and yet play the role of the dutiful son."

"You were a brat, it's a wonder she still puts up with you." Vanessa laughed overhearing Aiden and Liam. "I'll have to ask her what you were like as a small boy. No doubt Shay is like his daddy."

"But he's tempered with you." Rosalie smiled and kissed Vanessa's cheek. "So he won't be all that bad."

"Gag me with a spoon." Aiden muttered. "We have dinner reservations."

"We can't leave now, we need to talk to the guitarist, Ashley." Vanessa said.

"Who in hell is Ashley?" Aiden asked.

"Ashley Hicks, the guitarist." Liam giggled, sending shivers down Aiden's spine. "Remember, we were at his concert."

"Oh, him. He's hinky." Aiden dismissed the artist.

"Hinky?" Rosalie snorted. "Meaning he isn't interested in you?"

"No, meaning there's something about him that gives me an uneasy feeling." Aiden glared. "I don't like him."

"You don't even know him." Rosalie began; they didn't notice that Liam was talking to the artist in question.

"I saw you watching me." Ashley began.

"I was drawing you." Liam showed him his program.

"Hey, you're good." Ashley beamed. Everything was unfolding the way Brad Chambers had predicted. The red head was under the spell of his guitar music. Ashley smiled, his smile filled with evil, but an evil that Liam couldn't perceive. Zane Chambers was a powerful Wahjee and while he'd been banned from using his powers on humans or Wahjee, he hadn't been banned from using it on things such as guitars.

"Can I see that?" Ashley asked, reaching for the program. Chris had told him it was necessary to get a piece of Liam's art, preferably something he'd done while under the guitar's spell. Liam put his heart and

soul into any artistic endeavor. Zane's spell would be more powerful if he had a piece of the red head.

"It's just a few doodles." Liam said as he handed the program to the musician. "I can do better."

"I like it. Can I keep it? It's the first time anyone has cared enough to put my face on paper." Ashley was already tucking the program into his guitar case, not waiting for an answer.

"Sure." Liam shrugged.

"I've come to claim my boyfriend." Aiden said, his voice smug as he put his arm around Liam's shoulder. His eyes found Ashley's and he almost said something when he looked into the blankness that was the musician's soul.

"Aiden." Liam beamed, his smile lighting up the room. Aiden had called him his boyfriend. He'd never done anything like that before. The black magic that had been woven with Ashley's guitar music retreated under the onslaught of Liam's joy. "Ashley, this is Aiden." He introduced.

"Lee, your music was rather interesting." Aiden said between gritted teeth.

"Ashley, Ashley Hicks." The musician glared.

"Whatever." Aiden steered Liam around away from Ashley. "Time for dinner, birthday boy." He kissed Liam thoroughly, feeling the glare of hatred on his back from the slimy banjo player.

Liam could never resist Aiden's mouth; all thoughts of guitar music left him as he melted into the older man's mouth.

"There you two are." Vanessa said. "Rosalie and I were looking for you. Aiden, didn't you say something about reservations."

Aiden looked up from Liam's lips., his trademark smirk in place. "I'm ready."

"Me too." Liam said, but it was apparent that what the two of them were ready for wasn't dinner.

"You two can do that anytime. I want to eat. And Liam, it may be your birthday, but you should expand your horizons to more than Aiden's cock." Rosalie's acid words didn't bother Liam, he was used to her.

"I would like to finish this date." He said looking up at Aiden. "I'm not sure when I'll get another one."

The four left the concert room. Rosalie, Vanessa and Liam, unaware of the glare of hatred from the guitar player. Aiden on the other hand, was all too aware. He was going to have to keep an eye on his witch boy, because for some reason, Liam had no clue how dangerous Ashley Hicks was. But in time he would find out.

Two days later, Liam took a short cut through the music building on his way to the main office of UBC. He hadn't been planning on seeking out Ashley Hicks, but as soon as he crossed the threshold, the haunting strains of guitar music caught his attention, pulling him up to the second floor to stand in the music room door and watch the young musician play.

"Hey." Ashley said with a sly smile when he caught sight of Liam. "I wasn't expecting to see you today."

"I wasn't expecting to be here." Liam grinned. "I liked what ever it was you were playing."

"I was thinking of you. You inspire me." Ashley let his hand linger on Liam's arm.

Liam shivered and moved away. There was something strange about the man.

Ashley couldn't help but be pleased that his guitar had once again worked its magic on the beautiful red head. He hadn't believed Brad Chambers about this magic stuff, but now he did, or at least now he somewhat believed. Magic was a thing of fairy tales and bedtime stories, not real life.

Real life consisted of pain and anger and drunken abusive parents who did their best to sap the very life out of him. He'd hungered for serenity when he was a child; only discovering as he approached his teens that he could become lost in the mysterious music a guitar was capable of. Taking music as an elective in his ninth grade had introduced him to the power that could be woven with the right talent and touch.

On his way to the music scholarship that had led him to UBC, Ashley Hicks had lost all ability to love, to be kind, to even care about anyone other than himself. If getting ahead and becoming rich and famous, meant stomping on Liam Taylor and destroying him, then so be it. That's what would happen. The Chambers family had guaranteed that Ashley would have the richness and recognition he so desperately craved.

"We could go for coffee." Ashley began, his voice suggesting much more than the black liquid. "I

know of a good place that's quiet, we could talk and get to know each other."

"Yeah, right." Liam looked at him curiously. "You did notice my rather handsome boyfriend the other night didn't you?" He asked. "I'm not so sure Aiden would be all that thrilled with our getting to know one another."

"Oh, he controls you does he? I mean in this day and age, most young men, as talented and good looking as you are, would certainly be able to speak for themselves." He shrugged and turned away. "To each his own." He muttered.

"Aiden doesn't tell me what to do." Liam glared at the guitarists back. "I'm my own man." He thought, well sort of, I just don't like to piss Aiden off, much.

"Then we can go for coffee." Ashley beamed, though the smile never reached his eyes.

Liam, who noticed everything about everyone, it was the artist in him, wondered how someone could walk and talk and breathe and have eyes as dead as two pieces of coal.

And yet there was something that made him want to stay. He knew that Ashley wasn't Wahjee, so it couldn't be magic. "Uh look, I have to go." Liam began to back out of the room. Maybe we'll have coffee another day."

"If your daddy lets you." Ashley mocked.

Liam only shrugged, turned and walked out the door. He wanted to run fast, just to get away from the man in the music room. But he refused to show he was unnerved.

Aiden knew something was wrong as soon as Liam walked through the door. He didn't say anything; Liam was unable to keep secrets for long. He knew it was only a matter of time. "Hey." Aiden said from the treadmill where he was just cooling down. "You have a parcel."

"I do?" Liam headed for the counter where a brown paper wrapped box sat. "What is it?"

"Much as I'd like to have x-ray vision, I don't." Aiden huffed.

"Asshole." Liam muttered absently as he studied the package.

"Open it." Aiden commanded.

"I'm going to. What if it's a bomb?"

"Considering it's from the hotel we stayed at when we were at the White Party in Palm Springs, I highly doubt it. They'd never get return guests."

Liam glared at him as he carefully removed the tape that closed the ends of the parcel. "Oh cool, it's the bouquet I caught. You told me it was lost."

"Well it was lost, but sadly it's been found." Aiden turned away from the red head to hide his smile.

"You have a fucking wedding bouquet?" Frances snorted. Ty was lying on top of the cage, perfectly relaxed, an arm dangling inside only inches from Frances. Since Aiden had ordered the cat to not injure their captive, Frances knew he was safe. A Wah cat never disobeyed its owner. "What a waste of flowers, two men don't get married."

"Well, we could, it's legal in Canada, we could have a marriage ceremony like Rosie and Vans." Liam volunteered, dreamy eyed as he stared off into space.

"Don't hold your breath cousin. Aiden Mac Ruaidhri is not the marrying kind no matter what the High Council might demand of him." Frances stood up to pace the length of his cage, but a cat claw tapped him on the head making him sit down again.

"No one tells me what to do." Aiden glared, taking the bouquet from Liam's hand. "Who the fuck do you think asked the hotel to find this and send it to Liam? I knew it was important to him. It represents an ideal that he and yes, me, that we need to have to live in this crazy world. I don't know if we'll ever be married, but I do know this, we'll always be together. We don't need rings or public vows of devotion to love one another."

"You love me?" Liam asked in awe.

"Just what the fuck is love Liam?" Aiden asked as he turned the bouquet over and over in his hands. "Can it be found in a bouquet of flowers, or two bands of platinum?" he shook his head. "Love is so deep inside you it's part of your genetic make up. You either have it or you don't. It's like hearing or seeing. Only it's small, so small it can't be seen and it needs to grow into something. It needs nourishment while you grow into a man; it takes years of soft touches, kind words and all around peace to grow from that tiny spark. Some of us aren't so lucky. We don't have that in our lives and the spark of love almost dies out, in some cases it does and once it's gone, it can't ever

be lit up again. My spark was dying when I met you Liam, though you tell me I'm wrong. All I know is that since you came into my life, I find I am capable of love. It might not be a raging flame yet, but it's a hell of a lot bigger than an almost extinguished spark."

Liam stood stunned and then he ran and threw himself into Aiden's arms. "I am so happy I think I might explode." He whispered into Aiden's neck.

"Don't explode, it would be messy." Aiden teased, but his arms went around the boy and he held him tight, as if afraid he would disappear.

"Give me a fucking break here." Frances yelled from the cage. "I want to go home. I don't need to watch this endless soap opera that's your life." Ty yeoweled. "And get this fucking cat off the cage. He knows he's not supposed to be this close to me."

"Right, I forgot about you. Mom said she'd keep you for a while. After all, you're more her relative than mine." Liam snuggled closer to Aiden if it was possible to be closer. "She'll come and get you later. I think she's taking you back to your wife. After all the two of you did exchange vows, you know, for better or worse, tiny dick or big one." He snickered. "Don't worry, mom's working on a spell that will keep you quiet and out of my hair. And then she's going to go to the council about the watcher system. You do know they aren't supposed to kill the Wahjee that they're watching, don't you. Because apparently you managed to get the rules wrong."

Aiden snapped his fingers and turned on some music. He dimmed the lights in the loft as he began to

dance Liam around. Catching on to what Aiden was doing, Liam let his small spark lights loose like he had on the last night of the White Party; when together; they'd caught the bouquet.

"Remember that night?" Aiden asked, his lips close to Liam's ear as they danced to the beat of familiar music. "You were radiant all in white. Who knew silk gauze fabric could be such a turn on?" he licked Liam's ear before kissing it, followed by a nibble.

"I thought you were an angel." Liam grinned. "I'll never forget how you looked in those white linen trousers. Your cock was outlined perfectly. All the guys there wanted to taste it like it was some kind of lollypop." He snickered remembering. "And you said that it was my lollypop for that weekend, no one else's. Which when you think about it, was kind of a romantic thing to say, considering."

"Or I wasn't thinking right because of the booze."

"You weren't drunk Aiden. You never get drunk, you can't get drunk. You pretend you do, but you really don't. Cause if you did, you'd be like your father and you refuse to be like him. I do know your secret identity."

Aiden continued to dance with his red haired boy. What Liam said was true, but Liam was the first and only person to actually discover his act. What did that say about the family and friends who had been around him since he was a teen? "You know what witch boy?" Aiden purred into Liam's ear. "If anyone is

going to know my secret identity, you are the one I'd want it to be."

CHAPTER 30

Hello Frances dear." Morgan had let herself into the loft. "Killer, you are such a good boy." She let the exuberant dog wag his tail in greeting until she was sure it would fall off as she scratched behind his ears. "Such a good boy you are, guarding the loft from all the bad guys."

"The mutt sleeps most of the day." Frances said. "If anyone guards anything, it's that stupid cat."

Ty, who had been sleeping on a cross beam in the ceiling stood up and stretched. First his front legs, followed by a back stretch and arch finalizing in rear legs and tail. It was a ritual he loved. His days of guarding Frances were over and he was glad. The man never shut up. He was constantly trying out spells in an attempt to get out of the cage. At first it was amusing, but after awhile it was like the buzzing of bees, annoying to the tenth power. He jumped onto the cage setting it rocking wildly before daintily landing on the kitchen counter. "Meroww." He said and butted his head against Morgan's hand.

"You are such a bad boy." Morgan laughed. "I'm taking your prey with me, my furry little friend." She unhooked the birdcage from the ceiling. "I'm taking you to Victoria. I'd let you out Frances, but after what you were up to, I really can't take the chance."

"Morgan, you can let me out of here and make me large again. You know my powers have been reduced if not taken away. I'm your relative for crap's sake."

"Yes you are dear and you were going to attempt to destroy my son. So I'm not really inclined to give in to your pleas. In fact, if I was given the choice, you'd be setting up camp in one of the out villages on one of the planets in the next universe." She chuckled. "Unfortunately my sister objected."

"You're a very hard woman. I can't believe you told my mother about this." Frances said. "Liam, well, I wouldn't have killed him."

"We'll never know how far you'd have gone, now will we." Morgan said pulling a cover over the birdcage. "If I were you, I'd keep quiet until we reach your home. If I hear one word from you, I'll truly make you into a bird, perhaps one of those nasty little green ones." She glanced around to make sure everything was in place. Killer looked somehow guilty sitting where he was in the bedroom doorway. "Killer, what are you up to?" Morgan asked. "You look guilty about something." She walked across the hardwood toward the dog that lay down with his front paws over his eyes. "Don't hide from me Killer, I know you're up to something."

Morgan had to step over the dog in order to get into the bedroom. She stood still looking around, nothing seemed out of order. Killer crawled along the floor until his nose rested on her foot. "What is it?" she asked the dog. And then she saw it. The tell tale glow in a dark recess near the head of the bed. "Oh my gawd." She picked up the amulet. "Liam, when did the amulet find you?" she asked out loud. The black jade was warm in her hand, she could feel the pulse of the heart of thing and she knew it would be matched to her son. Yet the amulet was supposed to belong to Aiden. Everyone knew that.

"Killer I wish you could talk. I'd sure like to know when this happened. Morgan placed the amulet under the pillow she knew was Liam's. "This is an interesting development."

She leaned down and patted the dog. "Thank you for letting me know. I'm sure it was hard for you to do this to Liam." She patted his head again and Killer whined softly. "But you have to understand. Liam didn't find the amulet. The amulet found Liam." She'd known immediately that Liam was linked with the amulet. It had his aura all over it.

"We need to let the amulet do its work in bringing Liam and Aiden together. I'm sure that's what's happening." Though Morgan wasn't sure. The amulet had never been out of the Mac Ruaidhri Clan's line, yet here it was apparently linked closely to Liam.

She picked up the cage and making sure the animals were inside the loft, Morgan left. She was still working out what she was going to do about Frances.

And the first thing was to get the little rotter out of the loft.

Not too far away, Aiden read a report he'd received from the legal department at his firm. He'd asked them to have one of their investigators look up Ashley Hicks. He hadn't trusted him from the moment he'd first met him. And he especially didn't like the way Liam seemed pulled in each time he heard the banjo player's music. Considering he wasn't Wahjee, Aiden ruled out magic.

According to the investigators preliminary check, Ashley Hicks was a student on a full music scholarship. His parents had both died in a fire a month before he'd graduated from high school. The fire investigation had shown arson and while the house was insured, as were the lives of the parents, the insurance companies were still looking into it.

So if all goes well, little Ashley Hicks will be rather wealthy. Aiden pondered the idea. Maybe he should look into the fire and also find out some information on Hicks' parents. He'd ask legal to check into their background as well.

He was startled when Daniel walked into his office. "Hey Aiden." He threw himself into a chair.

"The door was closed. When a door is closed it means you either knock, or you stay the fuck out of the room." Aiden glared, closing the file folder in front of him and carefully placing it in his bottom drawer.

"Aiden, I think that as your friend, your best friend since high school," Daniel began, ignoring

Aiden's previous words. "That you need to stop doing what you're doing and get your life back. It isn't right, what's happening."

"Danny, I don't have any fucking idea what you're talking about." Aiden stood up. "I have a meeting in five minutes. I'll talk to you later."

"But that's just it, you won't talk to me. You say you will, but you won't."

"You need to get a life Danny. I know you and the boyfriend aren't a couple anymore, but you need to find yourself someone."

"That's just it Aiden. It's always been you and me against the world. Since Liam came along, you've forgotten your family, your friends. You've forgotten what we mean to each other."

"I remember everything Danny. I know vividly what you and the family think about me and what I want and need. And I know what Liam knows about me. See there's a difference. He knows me Danny, knows me and he has since the first night we were together."

"Fuck Aiden, what does he know? He's just a damn twink who doesn't know enough to go home. He's using you. He should have damn well died. At least you'd have gotten over it." Daniel's last words faded and he found himself face down on the floor of something that was rocking wildly. He thought it was an earthquake and looked for Aiden, only to find himself in a strangely round tent that reminded him of a birdcage, staring into a face that looked a lot like an older Liam.

"Welcome to my world." Frances said with a giggle.

"Where am I?" Daniel stammered, holding on to a support wire in his rounded prison.

"Beats me." Frances grinned. He wasn't going to make things easy for the human. He was Wahjee after all. The stink of fear permeated the birdcage. "What were you doing last?"

"I, I was talking to my friend, Aiden, in his office. Am I dead? Was there an earthquake?" Daniel looked around. "This place, it smells like my mom's old canary cage."

"Interesting that you'd know what a canary cage smells like." Frances snorted "And to think that until now, I managed to go without that knowledge."

Morgan felt the added weight and smelled the slight smell of ozone when Daniel had appeared. She knew that it wasn't going to be something good. Cautiously she peeked under the cage cover. It was Aiden's friend that had been slung into the cage. She pulled her car over and jumped out. She didn't need to be overheard when she called the handsome boyfriend of her son.

"Aiden, it's Morgan Taylor." Morgan began. "You didn't happen to have zapped your friend in with Frances did you?" she tried to smile, but it wasn't showing in her voice.

"Shit, I'm sorry Morgan, he just pissed me off and I reacted. I know better." He paused. "How did you find out?"

"I'm taking Frances to Victoria, I thought you knew."

"Shit," he repeated. "I'll zap him out of there. Sorry."

"I suggest you do so quickly. He is chatting with Frances."

"I'll do it. And Morgan, thanks for the warning. I don't suppose you can keep this quiet can you. Liam will never let me forget."

These words made Morgan smile. Aiden did care about what Liam thought. "I always found dear, that keeping secrets never works out. I'd suggest you tell him when you get a chance."

"Point taken. Thanks." Aiden hung up, sighed and leaned back in his chair before concentrating and zapping Daniel back to where he'd been sitting.

"Daniel, I don't want to hear you say shit like that again. Liam is important to me and if you want to stay my friend, you'll remember that fact." Aiden carried on as if nothing had happened.

Daniel, sprawled on the chair he'd been sitting on, looked around Aiden's office, terrified. He jumped up and turned around, his voice squealing deep inside of him like some kind of wild teakettle boiling on the stovetop.

"What the fuck is wrong with you?" Aiden asked, doing his best to look concerned. "Are you having some kind of seizure?"

"I was in a birdcage." Daniel began. "With, with that cousin of Liam's."

"Daniel, when was this? Last night? This morning?" Aiden's voice was soothing.

"NO, NOW, I WAS IN A BIRDCAGE AND IT WAS MOVING AND LIAM'S COUSIN WAS THERE AND IT SMELLED LIKE MOM'S OLD CANARY CAGE."

"Jesus, when you flip out, you don't fool around."

Aiden got up and went to his friend. "Maybe you've been staying up too late getting the comic book store off the ground. Do you want me to call Rick or someone to come and get you?"

Daniel shut his eyes and allowed himself to be steered back to the chair he'd been in. He sat down gingerly; his ass still ached where he'd landed on the floor of the birdcage. "I was there Aiden, it really happened."

"Daniel, you've been in my office for the last fifteen minutes ranting about my boyfriend."

The word boyfriend was enough to distract Daniel. "You don't do boyfriends." He began.

"Actually I apparently do." Aiden was satisfied he'd changed the subject. "Liam is my boyfriend, though I do think that since I'm long out of high school, another descriptive word could be found. Though I'm not sure I like partner; it sounds rather business like, and what I have with Liam is much more fun than business." He grinned at his friend.

"But he's so much younger than you are." Daniel began again, all thoughts of birdcages faded from his mind. "He's a kid, for gawd sake."

"He's mine." Aiden's words were final. He walked around his desk and sat back down. "I'd suggest you remember that Danny." The warning again was made very clear.

When Daniel finally left, Aiden sat back in his chair and closed his eyes. He never used magic for just the reason that had happened. He'd learned at a very early age that he was more powerful than most Wahjee and the forces he could summon to do his bidding were potent.

Daniel headed to the diner when he left Aiden's office. He was still shaken from his daymare, as he was beginning to call what had happened to him. Bulge loomed ahead so he stopped in to see Evan. His friend was always cheerful and full of life.

"Hey Daniel." Evan cooed as he gave him a brief kiss before hanging up something bright and purple with red streaks. "My, don't you look a fright. Sit down and take a load off, Evan is here and willing to listen."

"I just saw Aiden." Daniel began. "He says Liam is his boyfriend."

"Interesting, but old news." Evan picked up another shirt to hang, this one see through and bright orange.

"He doesn't do boyfriends." Daniel grumbled.

"That's because he never found anyone interesting enough to be his boyfriend." Evan grinned. "Though there were plenty in the wings waiting, moi included." He pointed to himself. "Ah well, a gay boy can but dream."

"I was in a birdcage." Daniel blurted out. "With Liam's cousin."

"Oh, really?" Evan looked at Daniel and shook his head. "Dear, you shouldn't do drugs from someone you don't know. You just don't know what's in that shit."

"I didn't." Daniel looked gloomy. "I was in Aiden's office and we were talking and the next thing I know I'm lying on the floor of a stinking bird cage and then I'm back in the office."

"Sounds like some bad acid to me." Evan shook his head. "I heard there was some going around, but I didn't think you actually took acid. Who knew you were so daring." He smiled and patted Daniel's shoulder.

"It fucking happened." Daniel's voice had taken on an air of desperation.

"Of course it did." Evan gave his friend a hug and rolled his eyes. "Now why don't you go to the diner and get yourself a nice cup of tea. I'll stop in on my break and we'll talk."

"Okay." Daniel stood up and headed out the door. "It did happen." He mumbled to himself.

By the time Evan was able to break away from Bulge, Daniel was in full voice at the diner. He walked in to hear. "And I was in this giant birdcage with Liam's cousin. He was all covered in feathers. I could feel the cage swinging; it was almost like being on a ride at the carnival. And then the next thing I know I'm back in Aiden's office on the chair." He paused for breath.

"Hi Bobby, I see Daniel is telling you about his little adventure." Evan pushed into the booth beside his friend. "Lisa." He smiled up at the waitress who was looking at her son with concern.

"Daniel honey, maybe you should take some time off." She began. "You've been working too hard." She felt his forehead.

"Boys." Aiden said as he strolled through the door. "Lisa." He kissed her cheek. "Move Danny, I want to sit on the inside."

"Why do you always have to sit there?" Daniel whined like he always did.

"Because I've been sitting there for sixteen years, why change a good thing?" Aiden drawled, settling himself. "The usual Lisa." He ordered.

"Aiden, did you notice anything unusual when Daniel was in your office?" she asked.

"Other than he had a spaz attack, no." Aiden leaned forward. "And you have to admit guys, that isn't unusual." He chuckled.

"This isn't funny Aiden. It really happened." Daniel looked on the verge of tears.

"Of course it did Danny." Aiden patted his hand. "Now can we get some lunch here? I don't have all day." He was sure Liam would never let him live this day down and wondered just how long the news of Danny's visit with Frances would take to reach his lover's ears.

CHAPTER 31

So Jimmy, what do you think?" Evan asked his older boyfriend and love of his life, as they lay entwined on James' large bed. It was his favorite time of the day, when they would take turns telling each other about their daily exploits.

James was glad Evan couldn't see his face; he'd known immediately what had happened. Everyone was talking about Frances in the birdcage and no one quite knew what to do about it. Liam hadn't broken any Wahjee laws, but Frances had. There was the possibility of a tribunal to settle the whole thing. "I'm sure your friend thinks he was in a birdcage Baby, but really, it isn't all that likely."

"I know, but to have a nervous breakdown, well to think he was in a birdcage," Evan didn't know what to say.

"Strange things happen to the mind when one is under stress." James patted Evan's shoulder. He thought of his own wife and smiled to himself. Some women learn their lessons and some don't.

"Jimmy, you're so good for me." Evan sighed. "I can well and truly say, that the time I spend with you is the best ever."

"I wish it would never end." James' voice was sad. "I'm not getting any younger, I'm afraid I won't have much time with you."

"Don't talk like that." Evan shivered. "My old auntie always said to never look a gift horse in the mouth. And I for one don't plan on it. You are mine for as long as we have together. I expect it will be a lot longer than you think."

"Baby, you are such a romantic young thing." James smiled as he pulled Evan closer. "I wish we'd had years and years together. I've been waiting my whole life for someone like you."

"I'm glad you waited." Evan smiled. "We make a lovely couple, don't you think?"

"Yes we do." James couldn't help but think how much he'd missed with the boy in his arms. "I'll look after you even after I'm gone Baby, don't you worry about anything."

"Jimmy, you know I'm not with you because of your money don't you?" Evan sat up slightly to look at his lover directly. "I could never do something like that."

"I know Baby, and that's what makes you special. You're the one person in my life who loves me for me." He reached out and cupped Evan's chin. "That's why I want to make sure you're looked after. I have so much money, there's going to be one hell of a fight after I'm gone. I've transferred a few things into your

name now, just to be on the safe side and I want to give you this." He took a chain from around his neck that held a key.

"The key to your heart?" Evan joked.

"The key to the real me." James said. "I want you to have the house and its contents. This key is to the front door. The address is inscribed on the key. I've made all the arrangements for the place to be in your name. When I'm gone, I want this place to be the refuge for you as it was for me. No one other than you knows about this, well my lawyer, but he's been a friend since childhood. If there are any problems, you be sure to contact him."

"Jimmy, I don't like you talking this way." Evan's eyes were filled with tears as he fingered the key.

"Just take it. The place meant everything to me and so do you. I want you to have it. If you're not comfortable going there now, wait until I'm gone. And then when you want to feel me, you'll be able to do so at our special place." James smiled a lopsided smile and kissed Evan's tears away before placing the chain around the younger man's neck.

"Let's dance Jimmy, I want to dance and forget all of this talk about leaving. I'll never leave you ever." Evan jumped off the bed and headed for the entertainment center.

"I'll always be with you too Baby, even if it's from another plane." James wrapped his arms around Evan as they swayed to the music.

In Aiden's apartment the conversation wasn't going the way he wanted it to. "Aiden, why did you put Daniel in with Frances?" Liam asked. "Mom about had a cow."

"He pissed me off. It seemed like a good idea at the time." Aiden leaned forward; he was shaving and hated being distracted by a certain naked red head.

"Well he's freaking all over about it." Liam continued to dry off, making sure he was extra slow, knowing Aiden was watching him through the mirror.

"Would you stop that?" Aiden asked after an especially suggestive wiggle that resulted in a razor nick. He turned and glared at Liam, who went to him and hugged him tightly, his tongue licking the spot of blood. "Don't do that, it could be dangerous."

"You're negative." Liam purred. "I saw your last test results and you've only been doing me ever since. I'm negative because I've only ever done you."

"That's not true." Aiden began.

"Which part, me or you?" Liam asked, his hand now cupping Aiden's balls, tugging on them gently.

"Both." Aiden gasped.

"I don't fuck around Aiden." Liam's tongue circled Aiden's nipple, nipping at it, causing him to shiver. "I don't want to, so I don't. Besides why have someone less than the best when I can have the best. I do have the best."

"You're very sure of yourself." Aiden moaned, his head back, his cock rock hard and thrusting forward; eager to be surrounded by Liam's hot mouth or even better, his ass.

"I know you." Liam said as he sunk to his knees, taking Aiden's cock into his mouth at the same time. And he did know his lover, more than the green eyed Wahjee could ever imagine. He knew that from the moment they came together, it would only be them from that moment on. He knew that Aiden was slowly coming to realize this and was frightened. He knew it put both of them in danger more so than he was willing to tell his lover, who King of the Mac Ruaidhri clan or not, really was naïve about a lot of things.

CHAPTER 32

Ashley stood on the corner across from Hamburger Mary's diner and played his guitar. He didn't need to be a busker, but it was a great way to let his musical instrument find Liam. If the red head was anywhere in the vicinity, the music would find him.

The atmosphere was especially good for sound to travel and it did with the help of the magical spell the Chambers family had placed. Music drifted up and around, overcoming traffic and other city noises. It travelled a block, even two, until it was able to work its way into the open window of the top apartment in the Bradley Building. Eventually finding Liam's ears as he knelt on the floor, Aiden's cock in his mouth.

Aiden knew immediately that something was wrong. He didn't hear guitar music. But rather, he felt an evil miasma fill the room. Liam stopped what he was doing and stood up, his eyes glassy. He could hear the siren call of the guitar. "I've got to go." He

mumbled, turning away from Aiden. "I, I need to go to the diner."

"Liam, stop." Aiden put his hand on the red head's shoulder. He knew Liam was under a spell, though he couldn't figure out how in hell anything had reached him, now and in the penthouse apartment. And then he noticed the open window and Ty and Killer, both staring at it and growling deep in their throats. Leaving Liam, he ran over and slammed it shut. "Liam." His voice soft, but strong.

"Aiden?" Liam said looking confused, as he stood in the bedroom, naked, the taste of Aiden's cock in his mouth. "Why are you over there?"

"We need to talk." Aiden said. He looked over at Killer, who was pacing back and forth in front of the window, unsure of how to guard his owner against the evil he could smell and taste. Ty glared from his perch on the window ledge, on guard as always, but unable to act against an invisible foe.

Ashley growled a primeval sound when he felt the string of persuasion snap and his music reeled back toward him. He stopped playing in a cacophony of wild sound, earning him glares from nearby walkers. Not daring to linger, in case he'd been discovered seeking Liam out, Ashley quickly gathered his things and prepared to leave.

"Oh Ashley, did we miss you playing?" It was Vanessa and Rosalie, pushing Shay in a stroller.

Shay glared up at the guitarist. "Bad man, hurt my Liam." He said clearly, though as usual, everyone ignored him except his Wah cat. Doug bristled,

prepared to defend his young charge against this evil human. No one noticed that the stuffed toy Shay had been carrying was now alive and on guard.

"I like to practice with an audience." Ashley said.

"This works for me. I can practice and earn a couple of dollars at the same time. I never did thank you Vanessa, for coming to my recital the other day.

"We were going to come anyway, but it was Liam's birthday, the red head we were with, do you remember him?"

"Of course. Liam attends UBC with me. Well not really with me, since I'm a music scholar and he's an artist."

"You're both artists in your own way." Vanessa smiled.

"What a cute kid." Ashley said, leaning forward to touch Shay.

Doug reached out, slashing the man's hand with all of his strength, claws extended. What happened next was almost too fast for anyone who was observing.

Ashley reached out to grab Doug, his hand dripping blood, his voice filled with venom. He accidentally knocked Shay to one side, while Daniel, who'd come out of the diner, began to talk to Vanessa and Rosalie, distracting them from the melee. There was an audible pop and all was silent. Doug stuck her pink tongue out and licked Shay's finger, shaking her head no. Ashley and his guitar were gone. Doug went back to being a toy and Shay began to cry. He'd been bad and he knew it. His daddy was going to be angry.

"Oh baby, what's wrong?" Rosalie asked, picking her son up to comfort him. She looked around, "Ashley must have had to leave." She said, though Vanessa wasn't really listening; she was too busy checking Shay over.

"He's very fast, I didn't see him go." Vanessa looked at Daniel. "Daniel, did you see Ashley leave?"

"I think Shay sent him away." Daniel looked at the child. "I bet he's in some birdcage. It's been happening a lot lately."

"Very funny, Daniel." Rosalie glared. "We don't need your sarcasm." She looked at Vanessa. "I told you he wouldn't work."

"Wouldn't work for what?" Daniel asked, looking from one to the other. "Hey, what's wrong with the kid? Why's he screaming like that?"

"He's crying not screaming. He's upset about something."

"Ma would give him a smack." Daniel said. "She always did for me. Daniel, if you're going to cry you might as well have something to cry about." He laughed.

"Reason number two why it won't happen." Rosalie said. "Don't you have to be somewhere Daniel, hassling Aiden or something?"

Putting a now hiccupping Shay back in the stroller with his stuffed cat, the two women headed for the diner, leaving Daniel standing on the sidewalk beside a rather shabby looking empty guitar case.

Ashley slammed onto his back, doing his best to protect the guitar he held now in both hands. For a

moment he was dazed, then he looked around. "Where am I?" he asked.

"For fuck sake, this is getting old." Frances muttered. "Is this the only thing you guys know how to do?" He screamed in the direction of the ceiling of the cage.

"Where am I?" Ashley repeated. Wherever it was, it was strange. He could hear a car motor and the room felt like it was moving. It was round and there looked to be bars closely spaced around the circumference.

"Where do you think?" Frances giggled, slightly hysterical. "You're in a fucking birdcage where all the boys who piss off Mac Ruaidhri and his gang go."

"What the fuck are you talking about?" Ashley stood up, though the floor he was on was tilted slightly. "Who are you? How did I get here? I have some pretty powerful friends. You better not be fucking with me. When my friends, the Chambers find out I've been kidnapped, you all are going to be sorry."

"Oh, you know Brad Chambers and his father Zane?" Frances almost laughed. "It fucking figures."

"Frances dear, if you're trying to talk to me, I really can't hear you over the motor. You'll have to wait until I stop the car." The words were loud in the small cage.

"Who is that?" Ashley whispered, looking around.

"That would be Liam's mother." Frances snickered. "My auntie Morgan. She's taking me back to Victoria. Hey, can you play that thing?" he pointed

to the guitar. "Play me a tune. It's fucking boring in this cage."

"I'm not some freak who plays on demand for just anyone." Ashley glared, his bravado in full force. "I don't believe you that we're in a bird cage. For one thing I'm five foot ten, I wouldn't fit."

"Five foot ten, in your dreams banjo boy. Five seven maybe, in heels." Frances snorted. "So ever seen Victoria?"

"Of course I have."

"But have you ever seen Victoria from a bird cage?" he snickered. "The facilities are meager I have to admit. And other than swinging on that swing up there, there isn't much to do unless you can talk someone into loading movies into the iPod. I've seen the one in there at least a dozen times. I don't recommend it."

"There's no bathroom." Ashley looked around. "There has to be a bathroom, every apartment has one."

"What part of bird cage didn't you understand?"

"I refuse to fall in with your delusions." Ashley turned up his nose and stood, looking away from his fellow captive.

Morgan, suspecting something, pulled over at the next rest stop. She was almost afraid to look. This undertaking wasn't supposed to be fun. But she shouldn't have to be faced with humans being popped in and out of the damn birdcage. When she got back, Liam and Aiden were going to feel the wrath of her tongue. She didn't want to look under the cover so

instead she listened. Sure enough, there was definitely someone in there with Frances.

Her lips set firmly closed in displeasure. She once again got out of the car and called Aiden. "Aiden Mac Ruaidhri, why is there someone else in the damn birdcage with Frances. This is not funny."

"Morgan, I have no idea what you're talking about." Aiden still had his hands full with a confused Liam. He'd been trying to explain to the red head that someone was still out to get him.

"Then I need to find Liam. Obviously he wasn't satisfied with just making his cousin's life miserable."

"Morgan, he's right here with me. Neither one of us has gone anywhere. Even Ty and Killer are here watching us as usual."

"I don't understand Aiden. There truly is another person in with Frances. I don't know what to do. I think he's human too. I get no feeling of Wahjee from him."

"What does he look like?" Aiden asked, his curiosity aroused. He hoped Daniel hadn't somehow managed to get popped back with some kind of weird human ricochet effect he didn't know about.

"I'm afraid to look." Morgan admitted. "This is becoming too much for me. Perhaps I should just bring them back and let the two of you deal with what ever or who ever is under the cage cover."

"Morgan, please look, but be careful. It could be a trap that Frances has somehow set."

Morgan sighed heavily to show her displeasure. Aiden grinned to himself. No doubt Liam had

received his drama queen tendencies from his mother.
"Hold on, I'll look."

It wasn't going to be easy, so Morgan thought to herself fuck it and ripped off the cover, to find herself looking down at a screaming hysterical young man with a guitar, lying on his back and an amused nephew.

"Good one Auntie." Frances giggled. "Now I'm stuck with an even more annoying asshole than before. You might want to mention to Liam that he's going to get into trouble if he keeps doing this."

"Bite me Frances." She said, covering up the cage again.

"Aiden, there's a scruffy looking young man inside with some kind of fuzz on his chin. He's holding a guitar and he's not taking it well that he's in the birdcage. I did mention he was human, didn't I?"

"Fuck that's Ashley Gold, he goes to UBC with Liam." Aiden looked down at Liam who was wrapped around him listening to the phone conversation. "Did you put him in the cage?"

"When would I have done that and better yet, why would I?" Liam was confused.

"Morgan, we'll have to get back to you on this. I hope your nephew's wife doesn't mind two birds. At least this one can make some kind of music." He snickered. "If you don't mind cat squalls."

After he hung up., Aiden said to Liam. "As much as I'd like to fuck you, I think we'd better go find out why the fiddler is in with Frances. It doesn't make any sense at all."

"I know it doesn't, but let's face it Aiden. If we spend half an hour fucking, what difference will it make to Ashley and we'll both be in a better frame of mind to be detectives." Liam looked at him and batted his eyelashes while wiggling suggestively against Aiden's towel wrapped body.

"Good point witch boy." Aiden swept him up in his arms to Liam's delight and carried him to the bed where he dropped him.

"Hey, you could break me dropping me like that." Liam protested.

"I never break my toys." Aiden's grin was mischievous. He pounced on Liam like he was Ty.

"They're doing it again." Killer said to Ty, looking up for the cat that seemed to haunt the rafters. "Hey where are you?"

"Right here." Ty jumped down from the back of the sofa. "For a dog, you aren't very observant." He looked toward the bedroom that was filled with deep moans and heavy breathing. "Want to have some fun?" he asked Killer.

"Okay." Killer was always ready for something to break the boredom of living in the loft.

"Shay is coming to visit."

"Oh I like Shay, we play horsy." Killer's ears perked up and he ran to the loft door and back again.

"Calm down, you stupid dog. He's not here yet. Doug says he was the one who put the bad guy in with Frances."

"You talked to Doug, where is he?" Killer began to search, nose to the ground. Ty rolled his eyes before finding a patch of sunlight to lie down in.

Killer, finally convinced there wasn't another cat in the loft, lay down beside the now stretched out cat. "If you're done making an idiot of yourself, I'll continue what I was saying." Ty said with a sigh, his eyes closed, he loved the warmth the sun brought in.

"Shay and his mothers are on their way. They'll be here any minute. I thought we should unlock the door and let them watch those two." He moved his head toward the bedroom. "It should be fun."

"I can't unlock the door." Killer said, his black fur absorbed the heat quickly, he spread himself as long as he could on his belly, rear feet behind him, front ones extended. In his favorite frog pose. "I don't know how." He sighed. "I don't think it's fun watching them breed. They do it all wrong most of the time and the little one never gets to be the top dog."

Ty climbed on top of the now hot dog fur and stretched full length on him. He was useful as a heat source and Ty rather enjoyed it when Killer cooperated as a mattress.

"I can unlock the door. Shut up and watch and listen. And don't move. It's only Shay and his mummies coming through the door. Top dog" he muttered under his breath. "Dumb dog is more like it."

"Why aren't they answering?" Rosalie asked. "I can hear them in there."

"Maybe they're busy." Vanessa leaned over and tried the door. "Oh, the door's unlocked, we might as well go in."

Shay put his hands over his eyes. Didn't they know his daddy was having private time with his Liam.

He was wheeled over the threshold and he looked up for the familiar birdcage to see if both his little men would be there, fingers spread but still over his eyes, but the cage was gone. Eyes wide, he knew he was in big trouble, worse than before.

Vanessa, being especially dense about the noises coming from the bedroom, walked up the stairs. "OH MY GAWD" she squealed, running back down, but when she did, she turned toward the window, stepped on Killer's tail and fell against the large cat covered dog.

Rosalie stood there stunned as she watched Aiden and Liam, both naked, sweaty and panting, run down to see why Killer was ki yiking, Vanessa was screaming, and Shay was bawling.

Aiden removed all of Ty's claws from Vanessa, patted Killer on the head, patted Vanessa on the shoulder and walked back to the bedroom to find some pants.

Liam picked up Shay, realized he was naked, thrust the baby at Rosalie and bolted for the bedroom to find pants. Both Aiden and Liam stared at one another as Aiden fumbled to remove a filled condom from his now half-mast cock. They stared back at Shay who was crying loudly and pointing to the empty

hook that had held the birdcage and Frances. He used to like to play with his little man toy.

"SHAY." They shouted as the realization hit that it was Shay who had somehow managed to put Ashley in with Frances.

Dressed, they strolled down to the still crying baby and slightly hysterical Vanessa, Ty and Killer who stood glaring at each other. Rosalie had an open beer in her hand, already half gone.

Aiden picked up his Wah cat. Liam picked up Shay.

"So Ladies, what's new?" Aiden drawled as he placed Ty up on top of the bookcase.

Shay leaned into Liam's neck. "Bad man hurt my Liam, me put him in bad man cage." He whispered. "Me sorry."

"That's okay little guy." Liam smiled, pleased with the strength of force his protégé had and his instinctive good. Rather than make Ashley a grease spot on the pavement, his little Wahjee had chosen to do something less harmful. Liam kissed baby's forehead. "Liam and Daddy will fix things."

"We want Liam's sperm." Rosalie managed to say between swallows.

"Oh." Aiden looked at Liam who looked back at Aiden. "Oh." Both were speechless.

CHAPTER 33

Aiden, I love Shay to death, but I'm not ready to be the father of anything. You did notice I don't have a Wah cat, you do. Did you ever think that maybe it's because I'd make a lousy caregiver?" Liam looked up at Ty who had moved to his favorite spot on the rafters overhead. He almost wished he could be up there with him.

The girls had left an hour before, leaving Shay with his father. Liam knew it was to make him want to have a child of his own. They said nothing more after explaining just why they had picked Liam to father a child with Rosalie, feeling that Liam needed a few days to think about their proposition.

"Liam, sit down." Shay said. "Make Shay wiggly." He patted the sofa where he had been sitting, watching Liam's dramatics.

"Make Aiden wiggly too." Aiden grinned. "And not in a good way."

"Shut up." Liam said and then sighed. He'd used every argument he could think of but all he got from

Aiden and Shay were identical foolish grins. "Okay I'll do it, but you and I both know that mom will shit bricks when she finds out. Wahjee are NOT supposed to mix with humans. Look what can happen." He pointed at Shay, who was now playing with his Wah cat Doug.

"I admit my superior genetics helped make a great kid that you no doubt won't be able to match." Aiden leaned over to kiss his son, only getting a mouth full of cat ear instead, making Liam giggle. He went to push Doug to the floor but stopped when the cat growled and put her ears back to let Aiden know what she thought of that idea.

"Hey Sonny Boy, control your cat." He looked up at Ty. "Ty, I thought you were supposed to watch over me. You were going to let this little girl cat scratch me up?"

"Da, no touch Doug." Shay laughed as he pulled the cat's ears making her purr. He pushed Doug to the floor himself and stood up on the sofa so his eyes were level with Liam's. "Li, make baby for Shay; Doug says make baby for Shay."

"Dawg says that, does she." Liam laughed. "I'm your own personal baby maker kind of guy so you can have some one to play with." He rolled his eyes and laughed again.

"Maybe you should practice baby making later on me." Aiden whispered and wiggled his eyebrows.

Liam at first looked startled and then beamed Aiden a smile that was blinding. "I'll see what I can do." He said solemnly.

In Victoria, Morgan finally found a parking space. The commotion inside the birdcage had settled down. The two hours spent on the ferry to Vancouver Island hadn't been pleasant for any of them. She had to give Frances some credit for helping. Perhaps she could make his life a little more pleasant. Maybe a larger birdcage or perhaps a dollhouse of some kind with working facilities. Morgan was sure she'd seen something like that somewhere. She'd talk to Frances' wife about it.

Not sure if she should approach the woman with the birdcage in hand, Morgan headed up to the house, leaving it in the car.

"Aunt Morgan." Marcie opened the door. "Where is Frances? I've been worried sick. Liam called and said he was hung up and couldn't come home for a while. And then he told me some rather bizarre story."

"I'm sorry, I need to talk to you about that." Morgan stepped inside the tidy house. "I'm afraid that Frances was rather naughty and let his love of money supersede his love of family." It took Morgan nearly an hour to make Marcie understand what had happened and why Frances was now being held in the birdcage. "I know Frances will appreciate you watching over him."

"Aunt Morgan, I still don't understand why my husband would do something like this. He knows the consequences of going to the dark side. It doesn't make any sense."

"Well dear, you'll have a lot of time to ask him. And Marcie dear, please don't reverse the spell Liam has placed on him. It wouldn't bode well for either of you. The position of watcher is one that has been established and revered, Frances did forsake his vows. Liam is the next in line for Grand Wizard no matter what; Cecil was merely acting in his place until he came of age. Grand Wizard is a heredity position. Cecil has overstepped too many times. I've long suspected he was siding with Zane Chambers."

Marcie was unnerved by what Morgan had said. Married to a watcher of someone as high up as Liam Taylor, she was well aware that what a member of that family said and what actually was meant were often two very different things. They were all masters of the understatement. She feared for her foolish husband's life. Liam would never go to the dark side and take Frances' life, but he'd make him miserable enough using white light and magic. It was all in the interpretation.

"Aunt Morgan, I'm not sure what you expect of me. I apologize for my husband's actions. I want you to know I had no idea whatsoever what he was doing. I like Liam and I like Aiden. I think they make a great couple no matter what the High Council says."

"Marcie, I wouldn't bring Frances back to you if I thought otherwise." She sighed. "So often messes are left to the women to clear up. It's like that with Wahjee and I suspect it's like that with humans." She paused. "And there will be another small complication. Apparently one or the other of my boys

has managed to give Frances a companion in his captivity. A human companion who doesn't understand the complexities of Wahjee punishment. I haven't heard the whole story behind this small complication, but I'm afraid you will have two birds to contend with. Will you be able to handle it?"

"A human, Aunt Morgan. Isn't that forbidden?" she looked over her shoulder expecting to see a member of the High Council listening.

"Yes of course it's forbidden, but I can't picture either of the boys doing this unless there was a good reason. It's going to be up to you and perhaps Frances to discover that reason. You might talk to your husband, it would be a way of redeeming himself if this human has been up to no good with Liam in mind."

"I like that." Marcie beamed. Perhaps she could spring her husband from his caged hell, with his help.

"Now about the two in the cage, do you want me to arrange for something larger, less austere than what they have?" Morgan was all business.

"Oh, I can do that. It'll be like when I was a little girl playing dolls."

"Keep in mind Marcie dear, these dolls can bite." Morgan laughed. "Come on out to the car and get them. I need to return to Vancouver and have a talk with my son."

CHAPTER 34

Liam preferred to ignore the talk around him as Rosalie and Vanessa hashed out the ins and outs of his sperm donation with Aiden. Instead he and Shay sat in the kitchen while Liam drew his latest Fury storyboards. He was using Daniel's story about the birdcage in this issue. He'd even assigned Daniel the position of super hero sidekick; Zand was the name he came up with. Maybe when Daniel realized he was a sidekick, he wouldn't mind the birdcage story.

"Unca Danny." Shay grinned and pointed to the page Liam was drawing. "Unca Danny in cage like bad man. Bad man hurt my Liam. Shay fix."

"Yeah, about that Shay. Don't put any more guys in with Frances. The cage wasn't meant to hold a bunch of guys."

"K." Shay smiled. "Me play wif them."

"No, Grandma Morgan took them to Victoria. You can play with Ty and Killer though. And my friend Dakota is coming over this weekend. You can play with her too."

"K." Shay was satisfied for a moment. "Liam make baby wif Mamma now?"

"Eweee, that would be a no." Liam shuddered. "But I suppose I will one of these days."

"I heard that." Vanessa laughed. "Seamus baby, it's a bit much for you to understand. You'll know more when you're older."

"I doubt he'll want details." Aiden drawled. "That is unless he takes after Liam and in that case, he'd be nosey as hell."

"Or she." Rosalie laughed. "The baby could be a she."

"The baby is still a figment of your imagination." Liam began. "Don't count your chickens or your babies before they're conceived." Liam was beginning to feel like he was only there because of his sperm "You never did explain why Aiden's little swimmers wouldn't work."

"I know it sounds strange, but I had a dream about the children. They grow up together, very close, so close they remain together as adults. I'm not sure if this dream means anything, but my grandmother always said, better safe than sorry. I'd rather that the children be raised as siblings, but not genetically actually be siblings." Rosalie flushed and looked embarrassed about what she'd said.

"I'd always heard that those of the Jewish faith were a tad superstitious." Aiden said. "But then so are the Irish. So I can't argue with you on that one." He stood up. "Come on witch boy, time for bed. You

need to save your strength for the big jerk off session."

"Aiden, don't be disgusting." Vanessa said with a shake of her head.

"Well I suppose he could do it the old fashioned way." Aiden grinned an evil grin.

"Fuck off Mac Ruaidhri." Rosalie muttered under her breath.

"Fuck off, fuck off, fuck off." Shay chortled, pleased with himself. "Why dat da?" he asked.

"That's one for your mommies." Aiden laughed as he picked up his son to kiss him goodnight. "One for Liam too." He leaned the boy over to kiss Liam.

"And Doug, da kiss Doug."

"I'm not kissing a damn cat." Muttered Aiden though he picked up the cat gingerly and handed her to Liam.

"Why are you giving her to me?" Liam asked as he cuddled Doug close, smooshing his nose into her fur. He loved cats, especially Wah cats.

"Because you like pussy better than I do." He smirked. "Your friend Dakota is a point in fact." He looked over at Vanessa. "I have to watch him like a hawk. Every time I go away on business, I come home and find the two of them in bed, curled up like kittens."

"Ah, how sweet." Vanessa beamed at Liam. "It's lovely that you and Dakota are still so close, even though Aiden is so much a part of your life."

"How else would I be able to keep sane, having Aiden as a boyfriend? I can whine and bitch to

Dakota, not to mention, discuss him in detail." Liam ducked as Aiden took a playful swat at him.

Doug climbed to Liam's shoulder and glared at Aiden daring him to try it again.

When Liam and Aiden were driving home later, the red head was uncharacteristically silent. Finally Aiden pulled over in front of Hamburger Mary's. "Why are we at the diner?" Liam asked looking around. It looked different at this time of the evening. Moonlight filtered down from the sky and the streetlights had halos around them. "There's hardly anyone on the street."

"All good little fags are tucked safely in their beds." Aiden joked.

"Hardly, it's barely nine." Liam snorted. "Are you hungry?" his hand was on the door handle.

"No. I wanted to talk and I wanted your undivided attention." Aiden stared in to Liam's eyes, knowing that words he'd spoken would definitely get Liam's attention. He rarely volunteered to talk.

"What's up?" Liam asked, his hand creeping up Aiden's shirt, buttons being released so he could touch the fine hairs on Aiden's chest. He loved those auburn bits of silken thread.

"I want you to be one hundred percent sure about doing this thing for Rosalie. I know we've kind of snowballed you into it. But I have a feeling it's an important decision on your part."

"An Irish thing?" Liam asked.

"No, a Wahjee thing." Aiden's hand captured Liam's wandering one. "I want you to be sure. To do

this for you and only you. I want it to be your decision and no one else's. It's a big undertaking, with more consequences than either of the women know."

"Is that what you did, take your time and think about making Shay?" Liam asked.

"I thought about it a lot. For many reasons and not just because I'm Wahjee and Vanessa is human. The fact that it's forbidden didn't really bother me. Usually things are forbidden by the elders to benefit the elders and no one else. I knew that if I had a child, I would have to be part of its life and I didn't know if I was capable of loving someone other than myself. Fuck, I don't even love myself that much."

"That's okay, I love you." Liam snuggled as close as he could considering they were in the Lexus. "I just keep thinking about what Rosalie said about her dream and what Shay said. I keep thinking about why it's forbidden to mate with humans. Let's face it, no one ever actually says why. They just say we can't. I think about the future, the future of the world and whether we should even bring another child into it with the state things are among the Wahjee, not to mention the human race. I mean look at you. Do I want my kid to think his or her father is no good because he's gay?"

The Odyssey is all but a tea house right now, thanks to Johnson." Liam paused for breath. Johnson was the Dutch Canadian Social Credit Premier.

Aiden laughed. "Tell me how you really feel." He teased.

"I'm going to do it." Liam said in a small voice. "I can't help but think that maybe if enough good Wahjee, the ones who have generations of white light behind them, mate with humans, that maybe, just maybe they can change the world for the better."

"Watch it witch boy. There have been a lot of dictators in the world under the same delusions. Maybe not Wahjee, but still you know what I mean. Breeding a better human race." Aiden tilted Liam's chin up with one finger. "Is that what you're thinking?"

"No, not that." Liam paused, was he thinking such megalomaniacal thoughts? "I'm not sure what I'm thinking. I just know I want to do this. I want to do it for me and for Shay."

"And the girls?" Aiden asked, looked deep into the blue depths of Liam's eyes.

"The girls are human. I'm not doing it for them in particular." Liam admitted. "I can't help but feel this birth will benefit Wahjee. And if Wahjee are benefited, then humans will be too, it only makes sense."

Aiden pulled him into an embrace. He wasn't sure he agreed with Liam's logic, though there was a certain amount in sense in what he had to say. "Let's go home." He whispered.

Liam let himself be held. He always felt a rush of pleasure deep inside of him when Aiden called the apartment home. "I'd like that."

"And better yet, we don't have the fucking budgie." Aiden said turning back to drive.

Liam snickered. "Mom sure is pissed about Ashley."

"I doubt Leah is too pleased either." Aiden hesitated. "We need to talk about that too. Shay did it. Shay sent the banjo player into the birdcage."

"I talked to him about it already. He thought he was sending him to the apartment. He didn't know Frances was being moved. Shay was under the impression that when someone is doing something bad that we deal with it by sending them to the birdcage in our home. You have to admit, for his age, its pretty good reasoning."

"Whatever." Aiden was lost in thought. "We're going to have give him some instruction. Are you sure you have him in a tight enough spell to control him?"

"The thing is Aiden, if I control him any more, I risk ruining his development. As it is, I have already hindered him with what I've done. If he was being raised Wahjee, this wouldn't happen."

"Well, it's not possible. He's in a human household. We'll think of something."

CHAPTER 35

I think it's disgusting." Rosalie said when another deeply sexual moan could be heard from the spare room.

"Well it certainly isn't my cup of tea either." Vanessa had her pillow pulled and pressed against her ears.

"We're just pandering to Aiden's perversions by allowing this to happen under our roof." Rosalie began but quickly stopped speaking when both men shouted each other's names. "At least Margaret has Shay for the evening. He doesn't have to listen to this."

"Do you think they're always this noisy when they have sex?" Vanessa asked. "I mean they never stop. I can't believe it feels that good."

"Men are very physical and apparently very vocal." Rosalie snickered. "Thank gawd they're done. Oh my gawd, they're at it again." She sighed dramatically and pulled the duvet up over her head.

Half an hour later, Aiden wandered into their bedroom. "I've got what you guys wanted." He smiled a self-satisfied smile. "It wasn't easy doing it with the two of you listening. Liam was rather reticent but then I suppose we all have to make some sacrifices."

"Well, where is it asshole?" Rosalie demanded.

"Here you go." Aiden dropped five well-filled condoms on the bed, all tied off nice and neatly. "They're numbered in sequence. I rather liked number three, but feel free to use them all." He turned on his heel and left the room.

"Five, he did it five times?" Vanessa looked with disbelief at the condoms.

"Hey, sorry guys, Aiden forgot this one." Liam bounced into the room with another one to add to their collection. "Have fun making a baby." He blew them a kiss. "Aiden, hurry up, I want to do it in the backroom before it gets too skuzzy tonight." He called out to his boyfriend waiting at the bottom of the stairs.

"He's going to kill Aiden." Vanessa said.

"With any luck at all." Rosalie replied, her voice dry.

Two hours later, Aiden and Liam were dancing, foreheads together, oblivious to the rhythm of the music, caring only for each other when Liam grinned. "It took. I made a baby."

"It's awesome isn't it?" Aiden grinned back. "I remember what it was like with Shay. Of course the hardest part is waiting for a couple of weeks while the girls figure it out."

"Humans are so slow sometimes." Liam agreed.
"I'll buy you a drink."

"Water for you witch boy." Aiden pulled Liam's body closer for a searing kiss. "The boys are up on the catwalk. Let's take them somewhere to celebrate."

"Where?" Liam asked as they made their way to where the gang was standing.

"Hamburger Mary's." Aiden snickered, "Where else?"

Liam giggled and rolled his eyes. "Carbs after seven."

"It's past midnight, so we're working on the next day's carbs." Aiden reasoned.

"Aiden, I'd like you to meet Stan." Daniel introduced Aiden to the large, overly pec'd man who stood possessively near Daniel.

A flash of recognition between the two men and then Aiden held out his hand. "Hi Stan, this is my faithful companion of late, Liam Taylor."

"Nice to meet the both of you. Liam, aren't you the creator of Fury?" Stan looked closely at the red head. "I'm impressed with your story lines as well as the art work. You've got yourself quite the comic book."

"Thanks, I can but try." Liam blushed. "I'm working on the third issue right now. It should be printed by the end of the month. I just have a couple of things to work through storyline wise. And the first issue, as well as a couple of shorts, are coming out in hardcover in two months. Apparently there's a market for it."

Aiden beamed, proud of Liam's success. "And he gives great head too." He bragged, making Liam flush an even deeper red. "Oooph" he gasped when Liam's elbow connected with his side.

"Be nice Aiden and I might let you practice your blow job techniques later." Liam said sweetly. Evan laughed with joy, Bob looked appalled and Daniel horrified. "Aiden and I were wondering if you'd like to go to Hamburger Mary's with us. We're celebrating an achievement."

"What achievement?" Daniel asked with a glare.

"On being celibate for the last thirty minutes." Liam said sweetly. "Oops, sorry Aiden, I can't wait." He began to drag Aiden away by his belt loops.

"Damn and I was wanting that cheeseburger." Aiden protested. "Can't you wait?" he pretended to whine as Liam dragged him toward the backroom.

Liam and Aiden both turned to look at the faces of the guys they had just left. The looks were priceless and instantly cracked them up to the point they were almost doubled over with laughter.

"What did you take?" Daniel demanded of Aiden. "I know you've taken something."

"Well I did take Liam's cock up my ass a few times this evening. I guess it makes me giddy." Aiden snickered.

"I'm hungry, I want to celebrate." Evan declared, not wanting to go where no man had gone before, though apparently Liam had. "Let's go to Mary's."

Laughing and jostling one another, the group of friends all left The Odyssey. Stanly wasn't sure he

was expected to go along with them, but Daniel took his hand and led him with the gang out the door and down the street to the diner. All of them oblivious to the envious stares of the unlucky masses that weren't part of the A team on Davie Street.

When they tumbled into Hamburger Mary's and found their places at the largest booth in the corner, Daniel dared to ask again. "What are the two of you celebrating? I mean it has to be pretty special for Aiden to eat something this late at night."

"Life Danny, we're celebrating life, its beginnings and its middle. We refuse to think of its end." He crushed Liam to him, kissing him until the others groaned.

"Are they always like that?" Stanly asked Daniel.

"Most of the time, when they aren't fighting or fucking." Daniel sighed. "It's sickening."

"Now Daniel, don't be like that." Evan cooed. He waved his hand in the air, loving the way his bracelet sparkled in the diner's lights. "If Jimmy was here, we'd be giving them a run for their money."

"Ewwe, old people sex." Bob teased.

"Bob Schmidt, I can't believe you said that." Evan looked at his friend and glared. "Jimmy isn't any older than you in his mind. Years don't matter, it's what's inside that really matters."

"Baby, don't worry about it." James had appeared beside their table.

"JIMMY" Evan squealed. "How did you know we were here?"

James exchanged a look with Aiden who winked. "I have a sixth sense when it comes to you Baby." James sat beside his lover. Bob stood in front of the table, not sure how he'd gotten there, he didn't remember moving.

"Bobby, sit down." Evan laughed; his face was flushed with pleasure at seeing his lover. "I thought you were in Toronto."

"Things happen." James said. He looked at the rest of them. "I hope you boys don't mind, but I'd like to take Evan with me now."

"Oh, where are we going?" Evan asked.

"To our place." James whispered to Evan who blushed at the implication.

In a few minutes Liam and Aiden found themselves alone. Once Evan and James disappeared, Daniel and Ben decided they needed to spend some alone time. Leaving Bob alone with the celebrating couple. It didn't take long for Bob to find his way out the door. "I feel like we've got some kind of germ or disease." Liam said. "Everyone disappeared so fast."

"No kidding." Aiden grinned. "So you're going to be a dad."

"Yeah, it's kind of cool." Liam relaxed into Aiden. "Aiden," he began hesitating to say anything.

"Of course I'll be your daughter's guardian." Aiden smiled.

"You know she's a girl?" Liam laughed. "I thought I wouldn't know for at least another couple of weeks."

"I know. It's a gift, what can I say." Aiden laughed. "We'll go over when the girls confirm the pregnancy has taken and I'll put my seal of protection on her."

The food they'd ordered arrived. "I feel somehow older and wiser." Liam joked.

"Oh, and why is that?" Aiden asked, reaching for one of Liam's fries. "I mean all you did was fuck me way too many times."

"I told you, it only works if I'm the top." Liam batted his eyes and tried to look innocent.

"Now I know why you're feeling older and wiser." Aiden reached his down and gave Liam's cock a squeeze. "Don't think I didn't know what you were up to Witch Boy."

While Aiden and Liam were in the diner, James and Evan had taken a cab to their hideaway home. Evan had never been there before. There'd been no need; he was content to just know that it was there.

"Do you have your key?" James asked when they arrived.

"Always." Evan patted his chest before taking the key out from under his shirt. "Jimmy, this place is amazing. Is it really ours?" Evan stood on the walkway looking at the large white house in front of him. The landscaping was filled with plantings that would be incredible in the summer.

"Open the door, it's all yours you know. It's in your name."

"I own all this?" Evan turned around. "I never realized this is what you meant."

"I want you to be comfortable when I'm gone." James looked down. "I don't want to worry about you. You'll see that the kitchen has been made to commercial standards in case you decide to pursue your dream of having your own catering business."

"Jimmy, you remembered." Evan sniffed and wiped away a tear.

"None of that Baby, inside, I don't have much time and I need to show you a few things."

Inside the house Evan was taken aback at everything that he saw. He trailed through the various rooms, not noticing that James wasn't with him., finally ending up at what had to be the library or den. "Jimmy, where are you?" he called out, looking around for his lover. All he found instead was a letter with his name on it.

Evan walked slowly toward the desk and sat down in the leather chair, his eyes never leaving the letter. He reached out to touch it and then pulled his hand back. The emptiness he felt deep inside of him told him more than that letter ever could. His grandmother had always said he had the 'sight'.

Tears fell silently wetting his shirt, as Evan grieved for the man he loved. As the sun cleared the horizon indicating dawn, he reached for the heavy vellum paper, slowly opening it.

My Darling Evan:

When you read this, you'll know I'm no longer living. Tonight was a night of beginnings and endings. A new life began for one of my kind and my life has ended. By now I'm sure you've realized that it wasn't

really me with you this evening. But rather it was my love for you that allowed me those precious moments with you to say goodbye and to show you what I've left you.

You are the trustworthiest and most honorable human being I have ever met. And because I love you unconditionally and you have given me the best time of my entire life, I leave to you my journals. Read them, guard them. You'll understand what I'm saying and things will make more sense to you when you do.

Your friends Aiden and Liam will need your support and friendship. Watch them carefully

Evan Baby, don't allow anyone know what I've written and believe me, there will be people around wanting to know how close the two of us were. You are a good man, with a good heart and I love you with all of mine. Take what I have left you and enjoy it, knowing that it will give me pleasure from wherever I am when you do.

Your loving man - Jimmy

Evan didn't need any kind of official notification of James's death. He'd always known that there was something special about the man and the fact that he'd visited him the night he'd died, wasn't so far fetched to Evan Bunce of Alberta. Raised as he was on tales of even stranger happenings.

He didn't begin reading the journals right away. First he called Bulge and resigned, apologizing for not being able to give notice. And then he called his best friend Bob Schmidt at a time when he knew the man would be out of the house to leave a message that he

was fine, that he knew of James's death and that he'd be unavailable for a week or two.

No, the first twenty-four hours Evan walked through the house from the basement to the attic, seeing, touching and feeling the love his man had put into making the place perfect for him. Everything was as elegant as money would allow. Everything was the best of the best, far more than Evan would have accepted had he known about the construction of the home. He could see James's hand everywhere and every now and then he'd find a little handwritten note explaining why this was used instead of that. Or how James had matched something to Evan's eyes, or how his smile had inspired something else.

It was a house that love had built and it was Evan Bunce's. On the second day, a lawyer came to the door. Not the lawyer that James used for his company business, but one who had been a personal friend and one time lover of the man for the past fifty years. He assured Evan that the house was indeed his and much more and that it would never be touched by any family, wives, or general money hungry vultures who were now flocking to pick the Vanderhaven Estate clean. He left after having Evan sign more papers than he thought possible. It had been a mind-altering afternoon.

Evan had to sit in the solarium at the back of the house for the rest of the day; he held the small plastic covered passbook from a national bank. The small insignificant pieces of paper and plastic held a king's ransom in the numbers on the pages and Evan was

stunned speechless. He'd never want for anything again. James had seen to that. His Jimmy had loved him enough to protect him from the grave.

He cried a few tears and smiled and laughed at things James left him. They'd had a short time together, but it had been a good for them both. On the third day after James's death, Evan began to read the journals.

CHAPTER 36

Liam and Aiden were walking through the park on the way to visit Shay. For a Vancouver winter day, the weather was relatively mild and not raining. "I think that's Vanessa and Shay." Liam pointed toward the swing.

"It's not a bad day for swinging." Aiden commented but began walking a bit faster. He enjoyed playing in the park with his son. "Hey Vans." He shouted to get her attention.

"Aiden, Liam, how nice to see you two." She smiled as she shook her hair from her face. "Look Shay, it's daddy."

"Daddy, Daddy," Shay shouted obediently, waving his arms.

"He said Daddy not just Da." Liam grinned. "How cool."

"That's my Boyo." Aiden beamed. "Little chilly to be out here on the swings, isn't it Vans?" Aiden asked.

"We had to give Rosalie some peace. Your son insists Rosalie is pregnant with a girl." She shook her head. "You know how superstitious Rosalie is, we haven't had a confirmation that she's even pregnant. For the last few days, well ever since the night Liam donated, Shay has been happy as a clam with the upcoming birth of his sister." She rolled her eyes. "I was sure we'd never discussed anything regarding getting pregnant in front of him. I don't understand how he found out we were trying."

"He's always been smarter than the average bear." Aiden was smug.

"Liam, Mama has baby growing in her uterus." Shay patted his belly indicating where.

"Uterus?" Aiden mouthed at Vanessa who shrugged.

"He's been like this for the last few days. It's like he's swallowed a dictionary." She laughed. "It's actually a tad unnerving."

Shay held his hands up for Liam to lift him out of the swing. "Up Li, up." He demanded.

Liam pulled him out of the swing and twirled him around making the child laugh. He walked a few feet away from Aiden and Vanessa so that he could talk to him. "Shay, it's nice you're going to have a baby sister." Liam began. "But your momma is human and she won't know for sure for a few more days."

"Human?" Shay asked and then thought for a moment. "Doug says dat too."

"You should listen to Dawg. That's why you have a Wah cat, so that you have someone to talk to and

guide you when your daddy or me aren't around. You should do what the Wah cat says and not talk about the baby just yet."

"But me like my baby." Shay's bottom lip quivered. "Baby like me, baby talks to me." The last was said in a whisper with Shay looking over his shoulder at his mother. "Baby is growing and growing. Baby looks funny, but will be pretty one day."

"How do you know what the baby looks like?" Liam asked, rather curious. He'd had no idea about Molly when she'd been conceived.

"Books." Shay laughed. "Mamma's books on table." He clapped his hands. "Big books, don't touch Shay, books." He giggled. "Shay touch."

"Books are a good way to learn things. Liam agreed. "I used to read my parent's books all the time." Liam kissed the boy's forehead. "Just don't believe everything you read. What you are reading are the ideas of the author who wrote the book. It's up to you to form your own ideas."

The child looked at Liam and then leaned forward and kissed Liam's forehead. Liam smothered a grin. "Okay Liam, Shay knows that." He snuggled into Liam, tucking his head under Liam's chin. "Me sleepy."

"Liam, let's walk Vanessa and Shay home." Aiden suggested. "I want to see Rosalie."

"You do?" Liam asked, eyebrows rose. "Okay."

Aiden and Vanessa walked ahead of Liam and Shay. Vanessa pushed the empty stroller and Liam

carried the now sleeping boy. He was heavy but he wasn't, in that special way someone you love becomes weightless at times such as these. Of course having Wahjee strength also helped.

The park was barely a block from their home so it didn't take them long to arrive. Doug was waiting patiently at the door for his boy to return, merrrowing in her quiet indoor voice when she saw her person was asleep. "I'll take him up to bed." Liam whispered.

While Liam was putting Shay in his crib, Aiden sat in an easy chair, stretching his long legs out in front of him. "Hey Rosalie." He said when she appeared in the kitchen doorway. "How are you feeling?"

"Why do you ask?" she looked at him with suspicion.

"It's conversation, small talk, the kind of thing friends do." He explained with a shake of his head.

"That might work if we were friends, but we aren't." she turned and headed back to the kitchen. But Aiden knew, he could see the aura of Wahjee life that surrounded the small woman. Liam and Shay were both right, she was pregnant. Not that he'd doubted them or his own inner feelings for that matter, but it was nice to know for sure. He stood up, following her into the kitchen. Placing his hand on her belly he said. "Any sign of a baby Liam in there?"

Rosalie slapped his hand away, not sure if he'd meant to give her a small shock or if it was an accident. Either way, she didn't want Aiden Mac

Ruaidhri's hands on her. Aiden turned away. It had only been a second or two, but it was enough. He'd branded the new life with his mark of protection, a small star shape that would appear as a birthmark in the same way Liam's mark had appeared on Shay. Only this time, the baby would be under his protection from here on in. He knew that he needed to offer this safeguard now and not wait for the child to be born.

"Ready to go?" Aiden asked Liam when he walked down the stairs.

"Go?" Liam looked confused. "Didn't we just get here?"

"Yep. Now it's time to go. Shay is sleeping." Aiden took Liam's hand and pulled him to the door. "Later Vans, Rosie." He said, disappearing out the door.

"What in hell was that all about?" Liam glared at Aiden, barely able to keep up with his long strides.

"The kid, the baby, it's barely three days old, barely more than a fingertip full of cells. But she's strong, she's powerful. Liam, for fuck sake I think you performed Zyndaix. You've made a pure Wahjee with your sperm, there's nothing of Rosalie in that baby. She's all yours, each and every cell. Fuck Liam, there's going to be hell to pay when the High Council finds out. She'll be put down like a fucking injured dog. Why did you do it? You know it's forbidden; it's like ten times forbidden. It's so forbidden no one even knows anyone who'd ever done it or if it's just a fucking legend." Aiden was terrified for Liam and his daughter. And he was terrified for Shay for he realized

something he'd been denying to himself since his son was conceived. Shay was also Zyndaix. He'd done the forbidden as well and had no one to blame but himself.

"Are finished with your rant?" Liam's voice was quiet.

"No." Aiden glared.

"Aiden, think about Shay, come on, really think about him. He's Zyndaix too. I knew it, your mother knows it. Why the fuck didn't you know it. I thought you realized that's what we were doing. I mean, there is no such thing as a half breed Wahjee." He took a breath. "I don't suppose you ever gave it any thought as to why Shay is a perfect miniature of you. Of why there is nothing of his mother in him."

"He's a baby, how should I know what babies look like." But the words sounded false in the air, even to Aiden.

"You seem to have some idea about mine."

"That's different, you're different, I l., I care for you."

"You know for someone with strong Wahjee control over the force of life, you're kind of stupid." Liam shook his head.

"So all that talk about half Wahjee, half human was what, talk?" Aiden walked backwards; the better to see Liam's face.

"Aiden, I had to know. I had to know what you knew. This stuff that's happening. The babies, it's all been foretold. You know the legends as well as I do. I had to really know what you were thinking. Our lives

depend on it, the lives of our children, and our children's children."

"I thought you knew me. I thought you said you could read me."

"I do and I can, but not all at once Aiden, not all at once." Liam looked miserable. "And we never really talk. I mean we talk but not really. You know what I mean."

"No Liam, no I don't know what you mean." Aiden was pissed. He'd thought Liam loved him, trusted him, knew him. He thought he'd finally found a man who could see through his brash ways to what he was inside.

Snow was beginning to fall; the night skies had chased away the hazy winter daylight when the men entered the deserted park.

"Aiden, stop." Liam called to Aiden's back.

Aiden heard him but didn't stop. He needed to think, to reconsider his relationship with Liam.

"AIDEN, STOP." Liam called out and this time a ring of small dancing flames sprung around the taller man.

Aiden brushed them away, not caring if they stung. Liam was powerful, but he was too. He prepared to move when suddenly Liam stood in front of him larger than life, his skin blazing with a glow so warm, Aiden could feel the heat melt the snow that had landed on his shoulders. "Aiden, I love you. I would never do anything to jeopardize that love." Liam put a hand out to touch Aiden's cheek, but Aiden pulled away. "You are my heart, my breath, my

life." He whispered. "I thought you knew Shay was Zyndaix. I thought it was just something we wouldn't talk about because it was dangerous. I didn't have any idea you didn't know. I mean fuck, you made him. If you think about it, you'll know I'm right, you'll know you performed the ritual just like I did the other night. You said nothing then. I thought you were part of it. YOU FUCKING NEVER SAID YOU DIDN'T KNOW." Liam cried out, tears washing over his face.

Aiden shut his eyes, he couldn't look at Liam knowing the red head was in pain because of him. He didn't know what to say or how to act. This was all new to him. He needed to talk to his mother. Now that was something he'd never thought he say or do. "I need to talk to my mother." Aiden's voice was quiet.

"I know you do. I need to talk to mine too." Both women were powerful in their own way. Both women would protect their children and their grandchildren with everything they had.

"Liam," Aiden said, this time looking deep into Liam's eyes. He needed to see into the other man's soul. "What have we done?"

"We've loved." Liam's voice was quiet. "Wasn't that part of the Legends of Wah, that two powerful Wahjee would come together in love. In a love so powerful it would transcend time. Didn't you ever wonder why the legends said they would make Zyndaix children when it was forbidden? The legends say that the Zyndaix children will mate and become rulers of the planet and the planet will prosper in peace and health for many generations. The black arts

will perish and be forgotten and those practicing them will be banished, stripped of their abilities."

"I didn't listen to that shit." Aiden admitted. "I was too busy keeping away from my father's fists and when I was older, too busy making money."

"Well, wake up Aiden. The legends have a basis of truth. You and I are it. There's no such thing as either you or I becoming pregnant, but we can make Zyndaix and we have." He looked gloomy for a moment. "I think maybe we should have actually given it more thought."

"No fucking shit." Aiden slumped in his jacket, looking vulnerable and almost scared. Something that was foreign to his nature. Liam let himself drift into the welcome embrace of the older man. "I guess we need to talk more Witch Boy."

"I think that's going to be a reoccurring theme in our lives." Liam smiled into Aiden's chest.

CHAPTER 37

Marcie was actually enjoying having Frances and Ashley six inches tall. Well Ashley wasn't quite that tall. For one thing, while Frances had been a great husband, he still had expected her to be the dutiful wife and pretty much agrees to everything he said. It was a Wahjee thing she figured. She couldn't imagine human women thinking subjugation was a good idea.

Ashley on the other hand, while interesting in that he at least gave Frances some company while she was working, was a little bit irritating. For one thing he whined a lot and then there was his incessant guitar playing. It hadn't taken her long to figure out that his guitar had been magiqued. No doubt to do something to Liam, though she wasn't sure what. He was human which meant that there had to be a Wahjee out there who had done the deed with the guitar. It wasn't a good thing to mix human and Wahjee badness.

The first thing she had to do was provide some kind of toilet facilities for the two of them. She was

damned if she was cleaning up shit no matter how good a husband Frances had been. It was then she discovered a wonderful store in Victoria that catered to miniature everything for elaborate dollhouses that functioned as well as full sized ones.

Since money wasn't really a problem, Marcie bought an already constructed mansion that was delivered intact. She loved it. It was everything a woman who was a kid at heart could want. Connecting the plumbing and electric took a bit of ingenuity and a touch of her powers, but it was soon done.

"Moving days my sweet little birdies." She cooed when everything was set up in the spare bedroom. She wondered if maybe she should get a train set and some of those cute little cars for them.

"What are you talking about?" Frances muttered. He was heartily sick of living in the birdcage with banjo boy.

Ashley said nothing; he was in funk because his magiqued guitar seemed to be out of order. He didn't realize it was tuned to Liam Taylor, no one else. Even Brad Chambers and his father weren't stupid enough to have Ashley Hicks be some kind of pied piper with a guitar. It was enough they'd tried to fix Liam.

"Smile guitar boy, you'll have a whole house to sulk in soon. With running water and everything."

"Fuck off." Ashley mumbled. His whole life was ruined because of Liam Taylor. He was missing competitions and school. He was never going to graduate and he was going to be forgotten in the music world. He fucking hated Liam Taylor.

"Marcie, I want you to contact the High Council. I know Cecil Taylor would never condone my treatment. Everyone is entitled to a mistake. I made one and now I'm sorry."

"I'm sorry Frances, but unless Auntie Morgan says it's okay, I'm not going to talk to anyone in the High Council. I still can't believe you'd try and hurt your own cousin." She turned and stomped out of the room.

"Hey, what about moving day? What about a new house?" Frances yelled.

"Forget it man, even I can tell when a woman is pissed. The next time you might at least wait until she moves us before you piss her off." Ashley looked at his guitar and sighed. He wasn't even in the mood to play.

"But she's my wife." Frances protested.

"Actually you're her Ken doll." Ashley snickered. "And even Ken was at least eleven inches tall. I don't think you're much more than half that. Hell, I've seen cocks larger than you." Ashley snickered at his joke. Frances glared at him.

While Marcie was having her problems with Ashley and Frances, Aiden and Liam were also having problems. "I just wanted to relax, to dance, to have a fucking beer." Aiden fumed as he paced in front of yet another club with a closed sign on the front door. "What the fuck is happening here?"

"That guy Johns is closing the queer community down." Bob replied in his dry way that pissed Aiden off even more. "I'm going to a friend's place."

"Oh, how is Evan doing?" Liam asked.

"I don't know, he hasn't called."

"I thought that's where you were going." Liam looked away.

"Evan isn't my only friend." Bob said as he turned and left.

"Aiden, do you want to come with Stan and I, we're going back to my place."

"No, I don't think so. It's time to have a little chat with Jim Johnson." Aiden put his arm around Liam's shoulder. "Liam's coming with me."

"What are we going to do Aiden?" Liam asked as they walked back to the car.

"I'm not sure, but I think maybe Jim Johnson needs to spend at least a week as an out and proud nelly queen."

"But he's married with kids." Liam laughed. "I don't think it would work."

"Sucks to be him. He won't be the first gay man stuck in a miserable hetero relationship." Aiden's step was light as he worked out the spell that would effectively change Jim Johnson's life for a week.

Aiden knew he had a meeting with Johnson in the morning. He'd place the spell then. It was Monday, a great time to start a new life. The thought of a gay Johnson was making him horny. "I want to fuck you." He said in a lust filled voice.

"It's damn cold, let's go home, we'll fuck there."
Liam was shivering in the car despite the heater blasting full on.

"Can't wait," Aiden said as he pulled Liam in for an icy embrace. "Fuck, your nose is cold and wet."

"It is not wet." Liam laughed and wiped it on Aiden's shirt. "I told you it would be better at home."

"Pucker up Witch Boy, let's see what those cold lips can do for my big warm cock."

"Better yet, let's see what you can do for mine."
Liam laughed as he wiggled around, placing Aiden's hand on his tenting jeans. Aiden put his head back and laughed. Liam beamed because of the free and happy sound. It wasn't often Aiden was relaxed enough inside himself to make such a contented noise. "We'll go home." He nuzzled Liam's neck.

Monday morning, Aiden uncharacteristically made a coffee for Jim Johnson, smiling to himself as the other man sat at the conference table and drank it. Dressed as he usually was in a tightly buttoned collar and a no nonsense business suit or an undetermined color, Aiden couldn't wait to see the man loosen up.

The bank President and his fellow executives as well as Kimberly filed into the conference room. "I see you two have started without us." The President nodded toward the now empty coffee cups.

"Aiden, the wonderful man makes amaaaazing coffee." Jim lisped as he waved his limp wristed hand in the air.

Everyone stared at him, the room was silent.

"Yes, well," David Reinhardt looked around. "Shall we begin?" he handed Jim a folder that contained the proposal for the latest condo project Jim Johnson was involved in.

"Oh dear," Jim said as he leafed through the pages. "This is a just a tad harsh, isn't it." He looked at Aiden. "Aiden, dear boy, we can't close down all of the night clubs on Davie and not close the ones in the rest of the city. Besides, it's not like it's the 20's and prohibition is the law. These are just people trying to relax after a hard day."

Their meeting lasted into the afternoon, with David Reinhardt and Kimberly, his assistant becoming more and more confused the longer Jim Johnson was in the room with them. Aiden pretended to notice nothing. As Johnson was being ushered from the conference room toward the elevator later, he leaned in to Aiden. "Aiden, why don't you take a break for the day. I understand there is a rather nice place near here that should be quiet in the afternoon. We can discuss my project."

"I'll have Kimberly clear my calendar." Aiden said. "Where are we going?"

"A place called Celebrities. I'm sure I heard mention of it somewhere, I'm not sure where, but I understand it has a wonderful ambiance. Do you know it?" he asked.

"I've been there a time or two." Aiden admitted. "It should be quiet this time of day."

"Wonderful, I'll have my driver take us there." Johnson beamed.

Two weeks later, Liam was lying on the floor of the loft watching television with Dakota who stretched out on the sofa. Ty laid full length on Dakota and Killer was cuddled close to Liam. It was one of those winter days that held a hint of spring in the sunlight that played with dust molecules in room. The phone rang and Liam reached for it lazily. "Hey." He purred into the receiver.

"Liam, is that you?" Vanessa asked.

"Oh, hi Vanessa, sorry." Liam's attention was still on the movie.

"Congratulations Liam, you're going to be a father." Vanessa all but shouted.

"Cool. Thanks for telling me. Do you want to call Aiden or should I?" Liam asked. He wasn't all that excited, after all he'd known from the first cell division.

"I'll call Aiden." Vanessa hung up, rather disappointed with Liam's attitude. She didn't know what she was expecting, but she figured he should have been a little more enthused.

"Who was that?" Dakota asked.

"Vanessa, Aiden's friend." Liam reached for a handful of popcorn.

"What did she want?" Dakota was a female and curiosity abounded.

"Oh, she just wanted me to know that Rosalie was pregnant with my baby." Liam put all the popcorn in his hand in his mouth. "This needs more butter."

"WHAT THE FUCK DID YOU SAY?" Dakota shouted, jumping up from the sofa, dumping a slightly

pissed off Ty to the floor and barely missing Killer's tail. "YOU MADE A BABY WITH ROSALIE?" she burst into hysterical tears.

That's when Aiden walked in. "Uh, what's up?" he asked Liam, who shrugged.

"Vans called, Rosalie is pregnant."

"Duh, rah, rah." Aiden said as he pulled off his jacket. "Thank gawd that part's over with. I was beginning to think Shay was going to bust a gut keeping his mouth shut after your little chat." He nodded at Dakota. "And this affects your cheering section how?"

"Beats me." Liam tried to put his arm around Dakota who pulled away from him, glaring daggers in his direction.

"IF YOU WANTED A BABY, IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE ME WHO GAVE YOU AND AIDEN ONE, NOT THAT DYKE BITCH." She screamed and sobbed, barely making herself understood.

Liam's eyes grew wide. "Holy shit." He muttered looking helpless.

"Dakota, Princess." Aiden wrapped the smaller woman in his arms and she melted into his body. He had that effect on anyone he held. "This baby isn't for Liam and me, it's for Rosalie and Vans. Liam didn't even want to do it. I had to talk him into it. If the day ever comes when we want to raise a child, we would be honored if you were the mother. I couldn't think of anyone else I'd want. You're cute and funny and not too damn bad looking for a female."

"Really?" she sobbed, though her sobs were less.

"Really." Aiden said, biting his lips when Liam rolled his eyes and threw himself on the sofa. Ty and Killer both jumped on the red head. They hated women's tears. It made them nervous.

Dakota leaned over and punched Liam's arm. "Sorry, but I always have wanted your baby, ever since I was four."

"Four?" Liam laughed. "Fuck, at four babies were the last thing in my mind."

"You aren't a girl."

"Thank gawd for that." Aiden laughed. "They have pointy knuckles when they punch. You realize Liam will have a bruise for days." He let go of the girl and stepped back. He was afraid she was beginning to like being in his arms.

"So you really didn't want to do it?" Dakota asked. "Did you do it in a cup like Aiden?" Liam had discussed Aiden's attempts at fatherhood at length with Dakota.

"Nope, I fucked Aiden and gave them the condoms." Liam grinned, laughing outright when he saw Aiden's face flush bright red. "Six times." He held up fingers and counted them off, just to make the point.

"Ewwwwwe." Dakota was impressed but she knew better than to let Aiden know it. "I hope it's a girl." She looked at Liam, her head cocked to the side. "You'd make a cute girl."

"Thanks I think." Liam didn't like the way the conversation was going. He'd had enough teasing from Aiden the night before.

CHAPTER 38

T HE ODYSSEY RAIDED- JIM JOHNSON UNDERCOVER

Liam snickered at the headline in the paper. He'd seen Johnson at the club the night before dancing with his shirt off, high on E. Twice the man had let himself be dragged into the backroom. It was when he was in there the last time, the police raided the club to close the room where so much fun could be had. Imagine their surprise when they found their Premier, pants around his ankles, bent over and taking it up the ass. Liam about had a seizure laughing when he heard.

"Did you see this, apparently Johnson was undercover last night." Liam waved the paper at Aiden.

"I heard." Aiden removed his suit coat and threw it on the back of the sofa rather than hanging it up right away. He was tired from his day dealing with the repercussions of Johnson's little walk on the wild side. Not that he hadn't been expecting it; he did, after all, wield the spell that put the man there.

"How long is Johnson going to be gay?" Liam asked. He kind of enjoyed the way Aiden had turned the human's deeply hidden fears against him. It was rather ironic that what Johnson feared the most was what he was now. He was lucky he hadn't feared spiders or rats.

"He's always been gay. He just repressed it." Aiden shrugged. "It makes things rather interesting don't you think, considering his stance on all things even slightly rainbow colored."

"Interesting is good." Liam agreed. He stood up to wrap his arms around Aiden. "You look kind of down."

"I resigned."

"You resigned what?" Liam was confused.

"I resigned from Vancity." Aiden rubbed his fingers through Liam's hair before tipping up the red head's chin to kiss him on the end of his nose. It was something he did often when he wanted comfort rather than passion. But it was just as much a turn on to Liam as the most passionate of kisses might have been.

"Okay." Liam replied, not actually sure what he was supposed to say to those words. "Uh, what did your boss say?"

"Not much." Aiden sighed and held Liam a bit closer. "It was time Liam, to leave there. I couldn't be the man I was meant to be, working for such a large corporation. It was good while it lasted and hell, I've made a lot of money. I'm good at what I do without

having to resort to any Wahjee ways. It was important to me to know I could succeed without them."

"Okay." Liam said again. "I guess that means we'll have more time together." He looked up at Aiden and smiled.

"Or not, Witch Boy." Aiden walked over to his desk. "I've been thinking about this for awhile. I'm going to start my own business. We're going to start a business."

"We?" Liam looked confused. "I'm a school boy remember?"

"You're a Wahjee school boy. You can multi task. Look at this. We can set up our own mortgage brokerage."

"And I want to do this why?" Liam wasn't really interested in working at anything other than his schoolwork.

"Because you're my love slave." Aiden snickered "And you need to redeem yourself for shrinking Frances."

"Hey, that wasn't just me." Liam leaned into Aiden. "You kind of helped."

"I'm not sure how you rationalized that, but what ever floats your boat." Aiden indicated his computer monitor. "Now look at this; what do you think?"

"I think the name sucks and the logo needs work." Liam sat down and began to work the laptop keypad. "There, what do you think of that?" On the screen were the words Mac Ruaidhri & Associates in a deep blue.

"I like it." Aiden grinned. He knew he could get Liam involved if he put his mind to it.

"Yes, it has a good ring to it. I'll design some business cards and stationary. You should think about having the name registered and buy the domain. You'll need a website." Aiden retired to the bedroom where he changed before throwing himself on the bed to relax. The day had been filled with stress. But now Liam had things under control and Aiden could relax.

He could hear Liam clicking away in the other room, deeply involved in designing a website. He was sure by now that the kid had bought the domain and registered the company. It was amazing what he could do on a computer. Hands behind his head, the older man let his mind relax while he thought about what the next few months were going to bring the Mac Ruaidhri Taylor household.

His relaxation was short lived because with a loud and very audible pop, Morgan Taylor was in his bedroom, hands on hips and standing beside her was his mother, Margaret Mac Ruaidhri. Aiden opened one eye and stared at the two very pissed women. "Where is he?" Morgan managed to get out.

"Well, he's not here." Aiden could tell that Liam must have somehow managed to pop himself anywhere but here, leaving him to face the mothers.

"We are aware that he left rather suddenly Aiden. Neither of us are amateurs." His mother's voice was clipped. "I can not believe that you allowed him to make Zyndaix."

"Uh moms, I don't have control over the lad. He's Wahjee and a Wahjee Prince on top of everything. It's not too damn likely he's going to listen to me." Aiden sat up; he didn't like the feeling of the women standing over him. "Besides, check your history. He's only doing what's been foretold."

"What has been foretold is a story, a legend. He didn't have to make it happen. You didn't have to make it happen." Morgan glared at him. Ty jumped on the bed and faced her, his fur at full bristle. Killer slowly crept up the stairs, fangs showing, a low growl in his throat.

"Seamus is my responsibility. And frankly, I didn't give it much thought at the time. I didn't plan on making Zyndaix. I'm not even sure it was all my doing. I've thought about it a lot and I'm sure there was some other hand in the whole Zyndaix thing."

"Aiden, only you could have done it. It isn't a group participation thing." Morgan smiled. "I would have thought that Liam might have mentioned that little part."

"Liam and I deliberately worked Zyndaix on his child." Aiden admitted. "It was apparent to both of us that Shay was and we knew the legends. He needs a partner."

"You're taking a risk making a female partner." Margaret said quietly. "I mean you and Liam wouldn't appreciate it if either one of you were female."

"Shay wanted a sister. Who were we to argue with him. You know how powerful the boy is." Aiden

took a chance and moved past the mothers to get to the kitchen. He needed something to drink.

"Aiden, don't you run away. We need to discuss how these Zyndaix children are going to be supervised as they grow. You know that the High Council will be doing what they can to euthanize them."

Aiden turned and faced the women. Ty was on his shoulder and Killer by his side., all of them glaring. "MARK MY WORDS NOW, NO ONE, NOT WAHJEE OR HUMAN WILL THREATEN MY CHILD OR MY PARTNER'S CHILD." He slapped his hands together, forming a ball of energy. "There will be no easy life as a six inch tall doll, they will be gone from this planet." The ball of energy expanded until Aiden released it through an open window, a falling star for the uninitiated.

"There was no need for theatrics Aiden." His mother chided, her voice soft. "We were merely relaying what we know to be true. Your child, your children will be in danger until they are able to control the power that is part of them. And even then, danger will stalk them the rest of their lives." She nodded at Morgan, who continued.

"I'm not sure the world is ready for these two yet. But yes, we both, as mothers, knew with your own births that the path leading to this point had been set." Morgan paused. "It isn't something a mother wants for her child. Children live longer, quieter, easier lives when they stay under the radar of those with a hunger for power."

"Aiden, Morgan and I will be doing what we can to have your Zyndaix children remain cloaked from the views of those who mean them harm, and from those who will wish to latch onto their coat tails as it were, for Zyndaix children are mighty."

"There hasn't been any in centuries, surely it's been forgotten. Legends are just stories your grandparents tell you before bedtime. They are supposed to be true. They were never supposed to be true. When Shay was born and I held him in my hands, it was only then I knew that he was special, that he was different and that he had nothing human in him. It was only then the legends came rushing into my mind and I knew in that instant that he was Zyndaix. I racked my brain for indications that I had said the words, done the ceremony when he was conceived, but damned if I can remember doing anything other than jacking off in a cup."

When Liam had popped out of the loft he hadn't had any particular destination in mind. Instead he let his heart take him wherever it would and ended up in front of Vanessa's house. Shrugging, he walked up to the door and rang the bell. "Hey Vans." He said with what he hoped was an engaging grin, "just thought I'd stop by and say hi."

"I shouldn't be surprised." Vanessa laughed. "Shay said you'd be tucking him into bed tonight. I think he may be psychic."

"Nah, little kids get ideas, though I heard they're kind of in tune to people they love. It wears off as they

grow up." Liam followed Vanessa inside the house.
"Where's Rosalie?"

"She's laying down. This pregnancy is having a rather calming effect on her. I really don't understand it and I never actually thought it would happen." She smiled. "Shay, Liam is here."

"Liam." Shay tottered over to Liam and grabbed him around the knees. Doug, sitting on the back of the sofa watched the boy, an indulgent smile on the small cat's face. "Gramma's mad at Da." He giggled.

"They aren't too happy with me either." Liam whispered to the boy as he picked him up for a hug.

"Mamma sleeping." Shay settled on Liam's lap. Doug draped herself over Liam's shoulder. "Phoebe says Mamma needs to rest. So mamma rests."

"Phoebe?" Liam looked up at Vanessa who had come into the living room with a tray of drinks and cookies.

"Yes, Shay insists the baby's name is Phoebe." She laughed. "If Rosalie does have a girl, no doubt we'll call her Morgan Rebecca to honor your mother and Rosalie's. We could call her MR for short or maybe Becca."

"Mom would be pleased." Liam beamed.

"Phoebe says no." Shay shook his head. "Phoebe likes Phoebe." He smiled his winning smile so much like his father's. "Liam is Liam, Daddy, is Daddy, Mommy is Mommy, Momma is Momma, and Phoebe is Phoebe. Me is Seamus." He tried to get his mother to understand.

"Hey Lil' Guy, let's just wait for the baby to hatch." Liam grinned. "We'll decide then."

"The decision has been made." Vanessa's voice was firm. "Much as I love Shay's input, it's really Rosalie's decision as to the baby's name. Besides, it could be a boy just as easily as a girl. I can't imagine a boy answering to Phoebe." She laughed.

"Seriously, how is Rosalie doing?" Liam asked.

"Not bad." Vanessa smiled. "It's her first child and she is over thirty, there's always a risk. But it's early and she has good prenatal care."

"Phoebe will watch her." Shay whispered in Liam's ear. "Don't worry."

"Seamus, you know whispering isn't polite." Vanessa admonished. "If you have something to say, you can say it out loud or keep it to yourself."

"Yes Mommy." The boy said but he didn't volunteer to tell her what he'd whispered to Liam.

Later that night when the house was quiet and everyone was sleeping, well the adults were sleeping, Shay and Doug quietly crept out the bedroom window and onto the roof of the back porch. Slowly the boy crawled toward the big oak tree with branches that lay against the top of the porch. He'd done it before and he found each time it was easier to do. Doug led the way, for he was a Wah cat after all and had no problem seeing the way. Shay, who by now was almost three, didn't hesitate to make his way deep into the heart of the oak, losing himself among the branches and leaves.

Only when he was satisfied that he was hidden from the view of anyone who might for some unknown reason glance in the back yard of his home did the boy relax. Liam had, without realizing it, placed his spell without making it clear that Shay should be restricted in his magic anywhere, not just the house. It was a loophole that the boy used to his advantage whenever possible. Holding Doug close to his chest, Shay popped himself to the roof of the Bradley building. He landed as he always did, in the center of the small deck Liam had built. Ty and Killer, who had been sitting to the side waiting, quickly joined the other Wah cat and his person.

"The fire fur one is preparing for bed, master is closing down the box with sound." Killer volunteered.

"Then we're just in time." Shay was satisfied. His father and his father's partner were powerful in different ways, but more powerful than most, if any, other Wahjee. When they combined that influence during the moments before sleep, when they wrestled on the bed, it increased by ten, sometimes even more, forming a power point cone exactly where he sat now. Ty had told him about it more than a year before. The other Wah cat had often come to visit him in his room. Or perhaps to visit Doug who was a rather beautiful female Wah cat. "Phoebe has my father's protection and that of her own father, but she fears it won't be enough. Too many know of us and that we are Zyndaix."

"Young one, only your fathers and the mothers of your fathers know you both are Zyndaix." Ty said. "It

is a small circle and one that is protected by their very lives." The large orange cat wound his way around the child, joined by Doug who did the same, their noses meeting in the front, their tails in the rear of the boy who sat cross legged and stiff backed in a pose that radiated his inborn power and majesty.

"Phoebe requests this spell." It was all that was necessary to say. For in a matriarchal society, the word of a highborn priestess, even one in the womb, was something to take note of and obey when possible.

Killer, sitting on guard at the edge of the small deck, tried not to whine, but a small sound escaped from his throat. He hoped the cats didn't notice. Being the dog and just a regular canine occasionally put him at a disadvantage in their company. But not now, not at night when the smells of the city could come up to this secret lair without hindrance and the sounds, even that of the smallest mouse, were easy to detect. No cat, Wah cat or otherwise, had a better security system than Killer's big black nose or his floppy ears covered in black curls. He was rather proud of this.

Shay stood up in one fluid motion that belayed his age. The cats remained in place only now if looking down from above, one could see how the furred creatures formed a circle of protection around the small child. He raised his hands to the sky and moved them as if wiping the shadows from the moon and allowing the moonlight to wash down on him, spotlighting his performance.

Words in a language that hadn't been heard in a thousand years were whispered in the night sky. Killer's hackles stood on end as he felt forces from above and below as well as each side, move to the child, enveloping him in a soft glow of energy. The amulet, its black jade carvings alive with movement, appeared in Shay's upheld hands from where it had been hidden by Liam. Killer could hear sounds matching what the child whispered, coming from the scary thing and he wanted desperately to cower, but didn't, because he was dog and he took his duties as dog seriously.

Colors fluoresced and pulsated until gradually, one by one they came together, eventually fading from view. Shay sank back down in his former cross-legged pose, the amulet returned to where it usually rested, his hands on the heads of both Wah cats, fingers kneading their fur. It was then that Killer noticed the purrs of the cats matched the child's heartbeat and he realized that his heartbeat as one as well. His tongue lolled as he grinned, happy to be part of this wondrous group who allowed dog to be dog and accepted him for that.

"You did well young one." Ty said with a merrorow. "Your fathers and Phoebe will be safe from those who wish them harm at this time."

"The one with red head fur is coming." Killer warned.

Shay blew Killer a kiss and with a pop, he and Doug were back in the oak tree.

Killer lay down where the boy had been and began to roll around on his back, the better to dissipate the slight smell of ozone that would betray the recent magic. By the time Liam cleared the top step, Killer's head was on his front paws in an imitation of rest. Ty sat on the edge of the roof, a red gold pillow of watching fur. "Hey guys, you can't stay up here all night. We want to lock up now."

Liam looked around, something seemed different, but he wasn't sure what. "What have the two of you been doing?" he asked, not really expecting an answer, before turning and heading down to the loft and Aiden's arms.

Back home, Shay and Doug made their way back to his room. He had only just crawled under the covers and shut his eyes, when his mother looked into his room. She tiptoed over and closed the window and then pulled the duvet up over his shoulders.

"Was he sleeping?" Rosalie asked.

"Yes, but I closed the window. I really don't like to leave it open even if we are on the second story. It's dangerous with a small child."

"I don't think Seamus can even reach it." Rosalie patted Vanessa's hand. "I miss the days when we had the monitor in there."

"I do too. I can't understand why they keep breaking. We'll have to find a better quality one when the baby comes." Vanessa snuggled into Rosalie's arms, one hand protectively over the growing child. "It's funny, for some reason tonight I feel so safe and

loved. I mean more than usual. It must be the nice weather we're having."

In Aiden's apartment, Liam crawled into bed with his lover, snuggling close.

"Fuck Liam, I was just about asleep. Your feet are like ice. Where did you go?"

"I was checking the doors, the animals were on the roof." Liam wiggled to get closer. He was cold. "I wonder what they do up there for so long."

"Piss, shit." Aiden mumbled. "Commune with the stars. How the fuck do I know."

"You're such a poop head." Liam giggled sleepily.

"Poop head, how three year old of you." Aiden lifted an arm and pulled Liam closer, kissing his forehead. "Now let me bask in the glow of that last fuck, you're ruining the mood. Go to sleep."

"Poop head." Liam whispered. "Times two." Liam could feel Aiden's grin and he shut his eyes preparing for sleep.

CHAPTER 39

You picked him up, didn't you?" Liam asked. He was laid out on the hardwood floor in the center of the loft. Ty was on his belly and Killer was for some reason perched on the back of the white sofa, almost reaching from end to end, he was stretched out so long. He was referring to Bob who had been through three months of rehab trying to get his life together.

"Yep." Aiden kicked off his shoes, doing his best not to ask what in hell Liam was doing. "Evan was there to welcome him home."

"Do you think he'll persuade him to go to the Fairie retreat with Daniel and him?" Liam asked, his eyes closed, enjoying the feel of the cold wood on his back and the warm cat on his belly

"Not likely. I can't think of a more unlikely place for Bob to go. It's cold, smelly, bug infested and attended by fruitcakes dressed in funny clothes with even more ridiculous names."

"Wanna go?" Liam asked.

"Not a chance in hell." Aiden snorted. He began to look through the mail he'd picked up.

"It would be fun, the ad on the Internet says it's a magical place."

"Anything is magical if you eat enough of the right mushrooms."

Ty reached out with one paw and touched Liam's nose with his paw.

Aiden had to ask. "Why are you naked on the floor?"

"I'm a rug for the cat." Liam explained.

"Well you certainly qualify for the role of fruitcake who would head to the fairie wilderness to get your ass bitten off by mosquitoes."

"So, are you going to come with me?"

"I always come with you." He snickered.

"It's just that I have this awesome idea to fuck with Daniel's head and it would be cool if you'd go along with it."

"Danny's my friend."

"And your point is?"

Liam put Ty carefully to one side before standing up. "If I can make you cum just by kissing you, will you go with me?"

"I'm thirty.....ish, it's not too damn likely, but sure, why not, do your best witch boy and speaking of that, no witch moves."

"I don't need magic to make you cum." Liam grinned as he stepped closer.

"Are we going to the bedroom?"

"I don't need the comforts of the bedroom, but if you'd like to, we can go to the bedroom."

"The dog is watching, I'm never going to cum."
Aiden snickered, figuring he'd won the bet already.

Liam only smiled as he reached up with one hand and cupped the back of Aiden's head. He let his eyes twinkle, knowing that Aiden was watching, and then slowly lowered his lids halfway as he fell into the spell that was Aiden Mac Ruaidhri. It was something that happened every time they kissed. The man who touched him, whom he touched, enthralled Liam.

A slight hitch in his breathing was all it took to match the breaths he took to the beat of Aiden's heart. His lips touched Aiden's softly, tenderly, as his eyes asked permission for more. The older man's heartbeat sped up, his skin flushed, as he read the love in Liam's eyes. His lips craved more, but this was Liam's show and he resisted pulling the red head closer.

Liam's lips became more insistent, his tongue began to move of its own violation, searching, touching, feeling. Aiden could feel the younger man's fingers on the back of his head, moving ever so softly, warm, firm, strong. The very touch somehow comforting, filled with the secure feeling of love. Liam broke the kiss, barely, and he nibbled on Aiden's bottom lip, his body, his cock, thick with desire, pressing against Aiden's body leaked precum, warm and sticky, a low moan of desire, uttered unconsciously from Liam's mouth and Aiden, hard as he tried not to, gave himself up to the lips of the man he loved, no matter how hard he tried not to admit it.

"Fuck Liam." Aiden breathed, his knees weak. "How do you do this to me?" the question didn't need an answer, he knew that he was lost, or was he found? It was a something he couldn't answer, as his body responded to Liam lips, to the other man's breathing, to his smell, to his touch. And as the kiss intensified, he let himself release the orgasm that had been building. Not because he couldn't hold back, but more because he loved the man in his arms and would do anything to make him happy, even attending a stupid weekend fairie farm.

"I want to get there before anyone else." Liam breathed, once he could speak.

"Why?"

"I have plans."

"What does one wear to this kind of place?"

"Oh don't worry, I have that under control. Remember, we're going to fuck with Danny's head."

"I can't wait." The words were dry with sarcasm.

"No problem." Liam grinned and popped the two of them.

Aiden looked around. "Where the fuck did you take me? It looks like I'm in a tree."

"You are. We're at the fairy retreat."

"Liam, you have fucking wings on your back and you're naked."

"So do you and so are you." He giggled.

"HOLY FUCKING CRAP, WE'RE FUCKING FAIRIES."

"Of course we are." Liam giggled as he tested his wings and hovered somewhat like a pale well-

endowed hummingbird. "Don't you just love how your cock feels in the breeze?"

"No." Aiden was trying to pull leaves over himself, but they were in a willow tree and the leaves were narrow and rather sharp. No one was going to see Aiden Mac Ruaidhri with fucking wings. "Would you kindly reverse this spell please, before I kill you?"

"Fairies don't kill, remember Tinkerbelle? I mean Tinkerbelle is a gentle fairy, like you and I. Not something out of a Tim Burton movie." Liam flitted from branch to branch enjoying the freedom of flight, flying past Aiden every now and then to kiss him quickly, even though the older man did his best to elude him on each pass.

"If this fairy gets his hands on you witch boy, you are fucking dead." Aiden's teeth were gritted as he did his best to control his temper. He had a lot more sympathy for Frances now that he was even smaller than the six-inch man. Ashley he didn't give a shit about; let him stay small.

"Don't be a bitchy fairy." Liam made himself twinkle. "Come on, fly with me. We've got a few hours before Daniel and Evan get here. It'll be fun."

Liam flew close and Aiden lunged for him, falling off the branch. He started to scream when his wings fluttered and he was flying. And just in time, because he'd almost landed on some guy's head. The man swatted at him. Aiden glared and flew in front of the bearded man's face. "Look asshole, this is a fairy retreat. I'm a fairy and retreating, so lay off." The look of horror from the bearded man before he fell

backwards in what only could be described as a swoon, had Aiden laughing out loud.

"See, I told you it'd be fun." Liam laughed. "Come on, let's go find the rest of them."

Aiden, getting the hang of flying, chased after Liam, catching him up in his arms, they kissed, arms tangled but still flying. Not noticing that they were attracting attention from some of the campers before they disappeared in a flutter of wings deep into the leaves of the willow tree.

"Did you see that?" someone asked, rubbing his eyes.

"I think I did." Another person answered with a laugh. "This shit you gave me has a righteous high."

Willing to accept the high from the drugs as an explanation for what had happened, the retreat organizer went back to checking the campers in for the weekend.

In a down filled birds nest, Aiden kissed Liam. "You are a rotten little shit and I'm going to punish you like you won't believe." He began.

"Promise?" Liam laughed, "But after the weekend." Not waiting for Aiden to answer, Liam pulled him closer. There was something almost wickedly sinful and definitely fun about being naked outside in the evening twilight. Sex should be amazing.

Evan and Daniel had been driving for two hours, been lost three times, found their way again and now that it was dark, had a suspicion they were lost once again. Neither one was speaking to the other.

Finally Evan said. "I really don't understand why you think we should both spend the weekend here. I don't want to be here and neither do you. Let's just turn around and go home."

"We can't even if we wanted to. I'm almost out of gas." Daniel's voice was bitter. "We're almost there, I saw a sign about five minutes ago."

"You never said one word." Evan glared, not that Daniel could see him.

"This is the turn."

It took them almost an hour to check in, be assigned a place to stay and to reluctantly put together their costumes that were to reflect their inner fairy. By then they were both exhausted and agreed to sleep and deal with the retreat in the morning.

Aiden left Liam sleeping in the nest at the top of the tree. He hoped it was a deserted nest not wanting to deal with the aftermath of what might happen should the owner appear. Liam had a rather bad temper when disturbed from what he figured was much needed sleep.

He would never admit to the red head that he rather enjoyed being able to flit around like a bird. He watched Evan and Daniel arrive and the looks on their faces entertained him as they became initiated in the rights of the fairy retreat. He followed them both inside their cabin, sitting in the rafters watching and listening to the two of them.

Daniel held up the clothing he'd chosen. "I'm glad no one I know is going to see me in this. I hate drag."

"But you look lovely in drag." Evan simpered as he modeled what he'd chosen. "It's all in the genes. You carry yourself very much like a lady. Your mommy would be proud."

"Whatever." Daniel looked over at Evan. "Are you going out? It's late. I thought we'd just go to bed and check things out in the morning."

"Jimmy would have wanted me to have some fun. I know he's attended one or two of these soirées in his time. I've read about it in his journals. He loved these weekends. He could spend a whole 48 hours being the man he longed to be. If he can't attend, then I'll do it for him." Evan put the final touches to his fairy costume before heading for the door. "You really should come out too. I mean your beau would want you to have some fun."

"I'm not so sure about that. Stan wasn't all that interested in the weekend."

"So that's why all the doom and gloom, you wanted the delightfully buff Stanly to come. Well honey, there's no time like the present. Why don't you call him and tell him what he's missing. Maybe he'll come up tomorrow."

"I doubt it, he has a seminar tomorrow." Daniel threw himself down on the rather hard camp bed. "Ouch, this bed is like sleeping on the floor."

"Exactly why you need to find yourself a nice soft manly mattress." Evan giggled, disappearing quickly out of Daniel's sight. As soon as the door shut behind him, all semblance of mirth disappeared. He missed his Jimmy with a desperation he wondered if he'd

ever get over. Everywhere he turned he was reminded of the man. He knew he needed to let go. Even Jimmy's journals had told him that. But try as he might, he just couldn't. Now that he knew about Wahjee, he kept watching everyone for signs that they might be from that race. He was pretty sure Liam and Aiden were Wahjee, but he wasn't sure how Shay came into the picture and now Rosalie was pregnant. James said that humans and Wahjee didn't interbreed. Maybe he'd be able to ask Aiden some day.

CHAPTER 40

Rosalie put her hand on her belly. She was three months pregnant and showing more than she thought she should be. "I look ridiculous." She glared into the mirror.

"No you don't, you barely have a bump." Vanessa laughed as she made their bed. "I've put some nice clean sheets on the bed. Why don't you lie down and rest. Your ankles are a bit swollen."

"I need to go into the office." Rosalie declared, pulling a loose fitting sheath over her head. "My clothes look stupid with this belly."

"You look beautiful." Vanessa wrapped her arms around her wife. "There is no reason to go into the office on a Saturday. Everything will still be there on Monday and you know the doctor said you ought to take it easy."

Phoebe was tired of this human mother's constant whining. She could feel the stress pulling at her tiny body and she didn't like it one bit. It was time for some gentle persuasion.

All of a sudden Rosalie felt an overwhelming rush of fatigue and the desire to lie down became too much to resist. "You know, maybe I will have a short nap." She said, lying on top of the duvet.

"Naps are nice." Vanessa beamed.

"It's almost time for Seamus to have his, why don't you bring him in here. We'll be company for each other." Rosalie could feel her eyes getting heavier.

"I'll see what I can do." Vanessa pulled a soft woolen throw off the end of the bed and covered her wife before tiptoeing out of the room.

Shay looked up from the computer game he was playing. He was three and rather frighteningly bright as far as Vanessa was concerned. Doug, his cat, lay stretched out on the desktop, watching everything his person was doing. Rosalie and Vanessa often joked that it was almost as if the cat was taking notes so that she could do what the boy did. They didn't know how close to the truth they were. The game he was playing was a drawing game, testing his skills as a budding artist.

"It's time for your nap, buddy." Vanessa said as she approached his desk. "What are you making?" she asked, unsure of what she was seeing.

"Daddy and Liam are fairies." He giggled. "They fly in the trees. See, they have wings like a butterfly."

"Uh Shay, they have no clothes on. Don't fairies wear clothes?" She wasn't even going to go into the fact that he'd made his father a fairy.

"No clothes, just skin." Shay shrugged. "Fairies don't like clothes."

"The fairies in your books wear clothes."

"Those are pretend fairies, these are real ones."

Shay made his picture fairies sit in a bird nest before climbing down from his desk. "Nap now mommy."

Doug jumped down beside him. "Sleep with momma and Phoebe."

"Shay please don't call the baby Phoebe, you know it annoys momma." Vanessa had given up trying to make him stop calling the baby Phoebe around her. Even though she was sure the baby was a girl and would be named Morgan Rebecca, she was beginning to mentally call her Phoebe as well.

"Okay." Shay agreed. He didn't need an annoyed Momma; she wasn't very nice when she was irritated with him. She'd tried to spank him once the week before, but Phoebe had made her arm hurt before she started. Shay hadn't forgotten his shock at the realization he was about to be physically struck. Phoebe was a good friend to him already.

The boy was pleased that his momma was already asleep. He climbed up on the big bed with his blanket, laying his head on a pillow. Doug jumped on the bed and settled between Rosalie and his boy, stretching out long and lean. Shay carefully covered her up, leaving only the tip of her nose uncovered. He shut his eyes, happy to be close to Phoebe. It wasn't often he could be this near. "Phoebe our daddies are being silly fairies today." He whispered, his voice soft as a summer breeze and almost as quiet.

"My daddy is having fun." She agreed. "Your daddy is too, but he doesn't want my daddy to know."

"Daddy's are funny." Shay said quietly. He sighed. "Sleep now Phoebe." His small hand rested on the mound that was Rosalie's tummy, the warmth of his hand felt by the small one tucked safely inside.

Phoebe turned over and over in her watery space, thinking about what the world would be like when she was born. She worried about her mother's inclination to work too hard and her refusal to eat properly. She worried about Shay and his safety, for she could feel black forces pressing down on the house, despite the fact that her father had her brother in a protection spell. It would be another almost six months before she could be born, though she supposed if she had to, she could do it in five although it might leave her too weak physically to be much help to Shay.

The calming lullaby sung by her Grandmother Morgan filtered into her haven. One or the other of her Grandmother's always knew when she was anxious and wove a spell of song for her. Shay's grandmother knew songs from ancient times, and her grandmother knew the newer ones. They were all good. Phoebe let herself relax; she needed her rest as well as her mother.

At the fairy retreat, Liam woke refreshed from his nap. Aiden was nowhere to be seen, but he wasn't worried. He suspected the older man was enjoying the freedom of flying. He shivered, it was colder than he'd expected. To warm himself up, Liam took to the air flitting here and there keeping out of sight of the

other campers but observing them carefully. He was hoping he'd find Aiden but instead he found Daniel peering out of the door of one of the cabins.

Flying low, Liam could tell that Daniel wasn't happy to be stuck in the woods. He was shivering and dressed in a kilt. Liam laughed out loud as he flew higher. Daniel heard the sound and turned toward him, his eyes bugging out at the sight of a red headed winged human. "Holy fuck, it's a fairy." He whispered, trying to trace where the Liam flew, but he was too fast. "I saw a fucking fairy." Daniel ran outside to tell someone, but everywhere he turned and anyone he told, wasn't interested. They were in a fairy retreat after all. Of course he saw a fairy.

Evan didn't hear any of this. He was sitting deep in the woods in a secluded glen, his back to a large rock, smoking a joint he'd brought from Jimmy's stash. He was well and truly high. He watched Aiden fly into the open glen and then he watched as the man sat on his shoulder. "Hey Aiden." Evan said as he took another hit.

"Hey Ev." Aiden leaned in, hoping for a residual high from the fumes. "What's up?"

"Not much. I miss James." Evan sighed. "Oh, and I know you and Liam are Wahjee, but I won't tell."

"I'm a fairy, a figment of your doped up mind." Aiden said. "Blow that smoke my way, would you."

"No problem." Evan blew smoke over his shoulder. "So why the fairy wings?"

"Liam's idea of a fun weekend." Aiden said when he let the smoke out of his lungs.

Evan found this funny and started to giggle.

"Hey don't laugh, I could fall off." Aiden was high.

"No you couldn't, you'd fly." Evan giggled, this time offering Aiden a toke. It wasn't easy, but he managed to suck in another lungful of the powerful weed.

"Fuck, that's either good stuff or it works better when you're three inches tall."

"I think size does count." Evan laughed "Though for a fairy, you're not badly hung considering it's damn cold out here tonight."

"Yeah, no shit. Liam and his fucking ideas. Do you have any idea what it's like to fuck in a bird's nest? I mean the fucker could come home any minute and mistake us for some kind of naked bug."

"It is kind of a strangely ironic idea, I mean you and Liam as fairies." Evan sighed. "I envy the two of you. You have so many years left for you to spend together. My Jimmy and I had such a small amount of time."

"He loved you Ev. He still loves you. I mean look how he trusted you with a secret that meant everything to him. Wahjee take the knowledge of their existence seriously." Aiden sucked back some more smoke. "Of course you aren't having this conversation with a fairy either."

"That's true." Evan sighed. "I mean if I was going to have you as a figment of my imagination, I think a full size Aiden Mac Ruaidhri would be more fun than one big enough to put in my pocket."

"In your dreams Evan. Don't tell Liam, but I'm a one man fairy." He giggled. "It's a secret."

"Your secret is safe with me."

Daniel stumbled into the small Glen. He slumped down beside Evan. "I think I'm having a bad trip." He closed his eyes and leaned back, but not before nodding to Aiden.

"Have some smoke." Evan offered. "It's pretty good."

"Can't, I'm seeing things." Daniel sighed. "I know it's not good when you start hallucinating."

"Oh, seeing anything interesting?" Evan had to ask, knowing full well what the other man was referring to. Aiden was now leaning against Evan's neck, thoroughly high.

"I saw Liam."

"Oh, I didn't know he was here this weekend. Was Aiden with him?"

"No, I saw Liam flying. He was a fairy."

"Oh."

"I see Aiden too."

"Really?"

"Yeah, I think he's on your shoulder. I think he's high. I recognize that look he gets."

"Oh." Evan paused. "Is he a fairy too?"

"Of course he's a fairy. He's been a fairy all his life." Daniel huffed. "I'm a fairy too. But not as much as Aiden. I suck at being a fairy. I don't know my inner fairy." He started to cry.

"Oh for fuck sake, Danny. Get a grip." Aiden stood up, his legs wobbly. He flew over to Daniel and

kissed him. "You're fucking useless." Then he flew away.

"Fairy Aiden kissed me." Daniel sighed. "I'm tired, really, really tired. I'm never doing any kind of drugs ever again in my whole life."

"I want what you had. Fairy Aiden didn't kiss me." Evan laughed.

"It sucks when you can feel and hear your hallucinations." Daniel sighed, leaned his head on Evan's shoulder and fell into a sound sleep.

Evan looked up at the star filled sky. "Jimmy, I don't know if this is what usually happens at these retreats, but I think this will be my last one. I hope you understand." He smiled when the stars began to twinkle much like his Jimmies eyes used to.

CHAPTER 41

The next couple of weeks seemed to escalate with violence against gays along Davie and Denman and especially along the Stanly Park stroll, a piece of land leading into the heavy primeval forest that was part of the park. It had become bad enough for Aiden, who normally ignored human in fighting, to take notice. At first he thought it was the weather generally pissing off everyone. Incessant rain tends to do that.

"Aiden, I don't want you going out there." Liam stood in the front of the heavy apartment door. Aiden was dressed all in black from head to toe. It wasn't club clothing, but rather what he referred to as ass kicking clothing, though he wasn't usually violent.

"I know what I'm doing." He slipped into his leather jacket. "I won't be late."

"You aren't a fucking comic book hero, you aren't Fury." Liam's hands were on his hips, his voice shrill with fear for what Aiden was doing.

"Liam, move away from the door. Miss Demeanor is my friend. I'm not standing by doing

nothing when the punks that bashed her go unpunished."

"You wouldn't let me join the Davie Devils. You said they were nothing but wanna be thugs. But it's okay for you to go there looking for trouble."

"I'm not fucking dressed in a red fucking shirt, head shaved like some kind of white supremast asshole. I'm an out and proud gay man who will not be intimidated by these homophobic freaks. I thought we were finished with this shit when Johnson was corralled. Apparently not. I'm not looking for trouble, but I'll tell you this once and only once. I'm not backing down from it either."

"It's okay for you to walk around like some kind of super hero, but it isn't okay for me to go out with a bunch of guys just because we wear red shirts." Liam slumped, he knew he sounded stupid and he didn't like it. Though the shirts were hot and had a great graphic of a faggy devil on the front, his tail on the back, hindquarters actually, but there was a tail.

Aiden put his hands on Liam's shoulders and moved him to one side. Then he lifted Ty off of his shoulder and put him on the counter. Killer he shoved with his hip, the big dog wasn't all that anxious to make a point of keeping his master inside. "Killer, get your leash, you're coming with me."

"Woof." The dog was pleased to be included. He loved going for walks with Aiden, especially lately. They got to chase people and sometimes he got to jump on them, making the people fall to the ground

while he pretended he was a pitt bull. It was a lot of fun.

"You'll take Killer, but you won't let me go?"
Liam's feelings were hurt.

"Witch boy, I want you safe. I don't want to have to worry about you." Aiden leaned forward and kissed him soundly. "Don't wait up."

"You can't tell me what to do, you're not the boss of me."

"Gee Lia, do you want some cheese with that whine?" Aiden laughed and left the loft, making sure to spend a few seconds to put a captivation spell on the loft door. Liam would have to work pretty hard to get the door to open, if he could do it all.

Liam kicked the metal door over and over until he couldn't feel his foot. Then he sat down and screamed, throwing a temper tantrum the likes of which hadn't been seen in years.

Ty sat and watched in silence, fascinated by the almost human reaction. Wahjee were supposed to be more stoic. He flashed the scene in his mind to Shay's Wah cat, Doug. They had become close over the last few months and were rewarded with an answering amused purrrrrt.

Liam finally picked himself up off the floor and headed for the shower. There was no way he was going to allow the man he loved to risk his life without some kind of back up protection. Killer was good to a point, but he was really just a large furry pussycat as far as Liam was concerned.

Emerging fifteen minutes later dressed as Aiden had been, in black, Liam headed for the roof. His boyfriend was good, but he also underestimated his red headed partner. Liam was of the moon as the Wahjee liked to say. He'd been born on the night of the new moon and since then, that shining skyclad orb had regulated his life. Nothing could stop him when he was exposed to its light.

Near The Odyssey, Aiden and Killer sauntered between light and shadow. He nodded to friends and acquaintances. Watching and seeing everything and anything. Killer smiled his toothy doggy smile, not really understanding why everyone backed away. He was showing his teeth like his red haired master did. But instead of showing their teeth back at him, they jumped and cringed, hugging the walls.

Aiden didn't mind, it saved him from actually having to talk to anyone. Killer may look at first glance like a curly haired friendly, overly large dog with a bad haircut that was slowly growing in. But when he smiled, he lost that huggable look. When they rounded the corner at the far end of the block, they had to walk past two bathhouses. Aiden could feel the hair on the back of his neck rise. Something was wrong. Killer felt it too. Gone was the prance of a standard poodle, replaced by the stealthy and careful glide of an ancestral wolf.

He held back, staying in the shadow of a downtown city tree. And then they saw it. Two Wahjee and three humans bent on trouble. Brad Chambers at the front of the pack, for it was a pack of

predators like any other in the city jungle. Looking for prey to take down and destroy.

Aiden had other ideas. Three men came out of a bathhouse arm in arm. Laughing over the antics of the evening and talking about what they were going to do next. To Aiden's astonishment, Brad magicked the group into large heavy Neanderthalic thugs. This was not acceptable. No wonder no one was able to identify the bastards who were bashing gays in the city. The rules about using magic near humans so that they were aware of it were crystal clear and even Chambers knew that little fact.

The Chambers gang pounced on three men. Aiden and Killer quickly followed. The tall pseudo Rage had the advantage of knowing that the look of the attackers was merely a façade. He was holding his own, when all of a sudden Liam was beside him, Ty on his shoulder. The Wah cat leapt onto Chambers, his Wah cat abilities more than a match for the evil Wahjee.

At his home, Shay dreamed a nightmare. He was dreaming of the fight between Chambers and his gang along with his father and Liam. Not realizing that his dream was real, he unconsciously gestured just as Chambers and the other Wahjee with him joined their black forces in preparation for killing Aiden. The two men had raised their hands, a mass of black energy going unnoticed by Aiden and Liam in their efforts to ward off the humans bent on doing them harm. But Killer saw the dark mass. He was a dog after all, a heredity offspring of wolves who had once walked the

very spot he stood on. He leapt toward the two Wahjee, just as Shay reduced them to the size of mice, his mouth open, Killer's teeth closed over them,; ignoring the black swirl of evil, his teeth bit down and despite the bitter taste, he chewed once and swallowed.

Shay, in his sleep, crowed in triumph. Phoebe, who had leant her power to her brother, did the same as she flipped over and over in her watery home.

Killer tried to spit out the bad taste but only burped up a black slime that slithered into a grate near the curb. He whined, looked around and found a puddle of water to rinse out his mouth.

"What are you doing here?" Aiden asked when he could catch his breath. Liam had returned from chasing one of the humans.

"Hey Aiden, thanks for being here." One of the gays from the baths was nursing a black eye.

"No problem Terry." Aiden glared at Liam to let him know that it wasn't over. "Hey Jake, you okay?" He helped another one up off the ground.

"I'll live." The man looked at Aiden who now had Ty on his shoulder. "Man, is that a cat or what. Did you see him rake that bastard who had me down?" he reached over and scratched Ty behind the ears. "Cool cat Aiden, though isn't it kind of weird to have him on your shoulder like a parrot?"

"No." Aiden answered as he dusted off the knees of his jeans. He looked around for Killer who appeared to be dry heaving into the gutter. "Hey boy, you okay?" Aiden asked the dog.

"He must have eaten something that didn't agree with him." Liam rubbed the dog's back. "Hey, did you see where Brad disappeared to?" Liam asked Aiden. "Or that other guy he was with?"

"No." Aiden looked around. "Go home brat." He whispered in Liam's ear.

"Fury needs a sidekick." Liam snickered. "And not one with fur."

"Fury is a figment of your imagination." Aiden scoffed as he continued on his patrol. Liam and Killer had to run to catch up with him. He didn't want Liam to get over confident, but he'd been glad to see him. If he'd had to face the attackers any longer, he might have had to resort to Wahjee powers and that wouldn't have been smart.

"Yes, but there's always truth in what I draw." Liam put his hand in Aiden's, pleased when the older man threaded their fingers together. "You've got to send Ty home, he's kind of attracting a lot of attention. I mean cats aren't usually part of your wardrobe." He snickered at Ty's glare in his direction.

"I suppose we could call it a night." Aiden glanced down at Killer who looked miserable. "Killer doesn't look well and frankly, all this activity has made me horny."

"Everything makes you horny." Liam laughed. "Home it is Fury." And with that he popped them all to the rooftop garden. "Sorry I can't do more, some asshole put limits on my powers once I'm inside."

"Hmmm, I wonder who that could be?" Aiden pulled Liam down so they lay on the small plot of

thick grass under the moonlight. Ty jumped over to his favorite spot on the ledge. He liked to keep an eye on everything when the two men forgot the world in favor of each other.

Liam rolled over until he straddled Aiden. "Moon boy remember, I can get the best of you under its light."

"Duh, why do you think I drag you up here all the time?" Aiden asked with a laugh before pulling Liam closer.

Liam laughed and made their clothes disappear, cool air washed over their bodies.

Seeing that the men were suitably occupied, Ty jumped down to stand near where Killer sat, huddled in a mess of dog misery. "Uh dog, you ate two Wahjee. It isn't an acceptable thing to do."

"I couldn't help it." "Killer was miserable." "Do you think the master will be angry?"

"Of course he will be dog. You don't eat people; for one thing they taste bad and for another, they'll make you sick for days." "He looked around." "I, uh, have had some experience in accidentally eating things that don't agree with Wah cats."

"What am I going to do?" "Killer whined and put his paws over his nose.

"Don't eat any more of them for one thing." Ty said. He leaned back and began to wash the base of his tale, looking up for a moment as he left hind leg pointed to the moon. "I mean they were only small like a mouse, who'll miss them?"

"Yah, nobody will care." " Killer smiled, feeling better until his stomach rumbled and he burped.

But they were missed immediately when they stopped breathing. For Wahjee were all part of one and even though they strived for good, those that had turned, affected them all. When Brad Chambers and his friend died, each and every Wahjee alive on the planet felt just a little bit of elation. Few knew why, for the idea of black arts didn't occur to many. But the ones who had allowed blackness to steal into their souls, they knew that their number was fewer by two and it worried them.

Liam and Aiden heard that Brad Chambers, as well as his friend Jason, were missing. They didn't really have time to dwell on it because their own lives were filled with enough drama.

First, there was a dramatically staged take down of Johnson and his henchmen. Solving a murder or two that had taken place during the course of the man's reign was all part of it.

While this was happening, Aiden worked at opening his own agency. He barely had time to acknowledge Liam's presence, let alone anything else. The man was more stubborn than anyone Liam had ever run into. He refused to use any Wahjee magic or allow Liam to use any during the set up.

Even Shay and Phoebe were kept too busy to intervene in their father's lives. Rosalie was proving a less than ideal host for Phoebe. The baby's forces, combined with Shay's, were constantly being used to keep Rosalie from eating the wrong thing or

overworking. Only by planting the threat of Aiden and Liam in Rosalie's mind, did the woman slow down enough to listen to her inner self, which happened to be Phoebe.

And now, now there was this. Aiden lay on his back on the bed. Liam lay beside him, both of the staring at the ceiling. There were no dancing lights or even mysterious shadows. Ty sat on top of the dresser staring down at the two men. Killer, unable to stand the tension in the room, had retired to the roof top garden where he stared at the moon, hoping for some kind of advice.

"Just have it checked out tomorrow. That's all I'm asking." Liam said more to the ceiling than to Aiden.

"I don't need this shit right now." For Aiden knew, without doubt, that the lump Liam had found on his right testicle was more than just a cyst or scar tissue.

"I'll go with you to the doctor." Liam offered.

"I'm a big boy. I don't need you to hold my fucking hand."

"Don't be an asshole just because you can. I want to go with you." Liam rolled over to put his head on Aiden's chest. "Whatever it is, we'll deal." He whispered.

"I'll deal. It's nothing to do with you. It's my body."

"I'm not even going to comment on that statement." Liam said as his finger traced circles on Aiden's bare chest.

A week later they knew that Aiden had cancer. He was scheduled for surgery almost immediately. It was then Aiden realized just how strong Liam was, something he was grateful for. Many times over the next few weeks he vowed he'd repay Liam somehow.

"Hey, you packed my silk pajamas." Aiden was looking in the small case he was getting ready for the hospital.

"Yep." Liam handed him his toiletry kit. "You know how hot you're going to look against cheap white cotton hospital sheets dressed in black silk? They'll be talking about it for years."

"Hello - they're removing one of my fucking balls." Aiden glared at him.

"All the more reason to say fuck you to the world and insist on wearing black silk." Liam kissed Aiden on the cheek. "You are Aiden Mac Ruaidhri and nothing is going to ever hold you down. You have more sex appeal in your little finger than 90 percent of most men. Losing a ball won't even dim the appeal enough to notice." Liam reached up and patted Ty. "When you get out of there, I'm taking you to Spain for a couple of days to recover from the surgery. You won't be starting radiation for a week or two, you might as well do it with a nice tan."

"I can't take time off to go to fucking Spain. I have a company to run."

"You also are a great manager and having an amazing team in place. Two weekends and five weekdays away from Mac Ruaidhri and Associates isn't going to matter."

"You think you have an answer to everything. It's not your fucking body." Aiden knew he sounded like a child but he couldn't stop himself.

"No, it isn't my body, it's yours." Liam paused; he moved his hand down to Aiden's balls, cupping them despite his lover's flinch. "But the problem is, I love you. I know you don't believe in love, but I do. I love you and part of loving someone means that everything they feel, you do. Only you know what, loving someone so much, you feel what they do even more. Because not only do you feel their pain, their sorrow, their fear, you feel your own because you love that stubborn, annoying, beautiful person more than life itself. So shut the fuck up. I'm with you through this every step of the way, just like you'd be with me if the roles were reversed."

"I don't want anyone to know about this." Aiden said after a long pause. His arm had crept out from under Liam to hold the red head close.

"No one will know anything from me."

"I'm serious, this is between you and I." Aiden sighed. "Liam, I'm not used to sharing my...." He hesitated. "My pain with anyone."

"I know." Liam reached up and kissed Aiden tenderly. "I know."

Liam also knew that his lover needed to be in charge so he didn't argue when Aiden organized their stay in Spain. Instead he quietly packed their vacation bags and researched just what Aiden was going to need for his week of recovery, making sure that everything was ready. He knew that the plane ride was

going to take its toll on Aiden, but he'd already checked with the man's doctor, who agreed it was the best thing for him. Psychological healing helped physical healing more than people were aware.

While Liam didn't use his Wahjee powers lightly, he made sure that he had full access to Aiden before and after the surgery. They didn't talk, there was nothing much to say. Instead he quietly held Aiden's hand, letting his thumb rub his feelings for the man deep into his soul. When he was wheeled down the hall, Liam walked with him until he couldn't go any further. And then he stood vigil, inches from the swinging doors, until he felt the surgery was over. Only then did he head back to Aiden's room to wait for his return.

Kimberly knew that Aiden wasn't taking time off just for a vacation. He'd drop dead from overwork first. So she knew whatever it was, was serious and she was going to do her damndest to make sure her employer and friend was able to take the time without any kind of interference from work or his friends and family. No matter what.

"I want to talk to him." Daniel repeated for the fifth time. He'd already tried to barge into Aiden's office, surprised to find it locked.

"He isn't here." She said patiently, once again.

"Hey Daniel." Bob said as he rounded a corner. He handed a sheaf of papers to Kimberly. "These go in Aiden's office when you have a moment. But could you look them over first. You know how he hates it when I over do things."

"Sure Bob." She smiled and took the papers from him. Ever since Aiden had hired his old friend, he had a loyal to the death employee.

"Bob, I need to talk to Aiden."

"Sorry Daniel, but he's away for a few days. I'm sure he'll call you when he gets back."

"No one's answering the phone at the loft." Daniel said, his voice accusatory.

"Of course not, they're away." Bob was always patient with Daniel.

"Liam went with him? Who's looking after the animals? I mean, they need to be fed and watered."

"I'm sure they're fine." Bob shook his head and turned to go back to his office. "I have work to do Daniel, I'll see you at the diner later."

But Daniel wasn't going anywhere without finding out where Aiden was. It was his right as his best friend to know.

"I need the number where he can be reached. His cell phone isn't working."

"His cell phone is working fine. I spoke to him this morning." Kimberly was running out of patience. "You are just going to have to wait."

"But Liam can't be with him. Rosalie is due to have the baby any day now. And what about Shay? What if something happens to Shay? Doesn't Aiden even care?"

Kimberly stood up, her sudden movement menacing. "Get out of this office. If Aiden had wanted you to know where he was going, you would have been told. And don't you ever, and I mean ever, imply

that Aiden doesn't care about Shay, or Liam about the new baby. Their lives do not now, nor have they ever, revolved around you."

"You can't talk to me this way." Daniel flushed.

"OUT - OF - THIS - OFFICE - NOW."

Kimberly had Daniel by the arm as she marched him to the front door. "And don't bother phoning." She said as the door shut behind him.

"Wow, remind me not to piss you off." Bob laughed from the door of his office.

Shay was quiet during the day of his father's surgery. Liam had explained what was going to happen, but he was still worried. He knew he wasn't supposed to talk about it to his moms so he only had Phoebe to listen to his worries. It was a lot for a small boy to process, even if he was Wahjee. He didn't understand why his daddy couldn't just use his powers to make this thing go away. It didn't make any sense to him that human illness could also affect Wahjee. He was going to make sure it didn't when he grew up. It was one of many promises Shay had made to himself.

He lay on his mothers' bed, his eyes shut. They liked to think he was sleeping. Rosalie lay there with him, her eyes fixed to the pictures on the wall. She hated this whole pregnancy thing and couldn't believe she'd allowed herself to be talked into it. Never again had become her mantra that she whispered to herself constantly. Her hands were at her sides; she refused to touch the bulge that was the baby. Hoping that if she didn't feel it, it wasn't there.

Phoebe knew everything the woman was feeling and she couldn't help but dislike her for it. It was something she'd worried about and had talked to Shay about when she'd been able to. He didn't understand why anyone wouldn't love her. He was filled with such love for everyone and everything. Which was why he was hurting for his father and for her father as well. All she could do was listen to him and wish she was out of this now tight and confining jail so that she could hold him close. As Zyndaix, she had been conceived with ancestral memories as had Shay. They knew things children shouldn't need to know and things they should. It was another reason Zyndaix were taboo.

This thing with her father and Shay was worrying, there wasn't a lot she could do other than perhaps calm Aiden's mind. So she and Shay began to sing the ancient lullaby that comforted both of them. To Vanessa and Rosalie the words were nonsense words, but the melody was pleasant. To Aiden as he succumbed to the drug that would render him unconscious, the words filtering through his mind were oddly comforting and reassuring that he would survive this day to rule his kingdom once again. Six hundred and ninety three leprechauns joined the children's song, adding their own touch of calming magic for their King.

Liam spent the hours waiting for Aiden, reassuring his mother and Aiden's mother. If Aiden had thought for one minute either of the two women wouldn't have known about the cancer, he was crazy.

Liam figured he done good keeping them away as long as he had. Aiden was freaking enough without the two women trying to out mother each other. The women finally agreed to let Liam handle everything within minutes of Aiden being wheeled back to his room.

"Hey, you look great." Liam grinned when Aiden was settled in his bed and they were alone for a moment.

"Fuck off."

"No seriously, you look amazing. I mean you're breathing and everything." Liam leaned over the bed and kissed Aiden's lips thoroughly. "Operation breath, but not bad."

"Fuck off." Aiden shut his eyes, but there was a hint of a smile.

"So the doctor said if you're not doing anything weird, and if you can walk on your own even slowly, I can spring you out of here. He'll give me legal and good drugs to keep you from having the screaming meemies until we reach Spain."

"You got him to agree to this?" Aiden huffed a laugh, his eyes still shut. "I fucking have my ball cut out of me and you're all for dragging my ass onto an airplane to fly to Spain. Are you trying to kill me?"

Liam started to giggle. "Of course I'm not taking you to fucking Spain. I just let you work with Kimberly to keep you busy. We're going to a nice little place that's comfortable and out of the way, but not far. We can go to Spain some other time."

"You fucker." Aiden bit his lip to stop smiling.
"You fucker."

Liam put the side of Aiden's bed down and crawled in with him. "Move over a bit."

"Fuck Liam, I just had surgery. I fucking hurt."

"No you don't, you're on drugs. You're just being bitchy. Put your arm up, I want to cuddle."

"I don't fucking cuddle." But Aiden's arm went up and Liam slid under, his head in its usual spot on Aiden's chest.

"That's okay. I do." Liam all but purred. "You know I think you're incredibly sexy when you have bed head."

"I'm not going to comment." Aiden sighed, his left arm pulling Liam closer. "So when can I get out of here?"

"Tomorrow by noon." Liam sighed and fell asleep. He'd had a hell of a day.

Half an hour later a nurse came in to check on Aiden. He held his finger to his lips to shhhsh her. "He's had a rough day, let him sleep." Aiden whispered.

"But Mr. Mac Ruaidhri, weren't you the one having cancer surgery?" she asked as she checked his vitals. "It was rather an emotionally stressful type of surgery."

"I know, look at him, it's taken a lot out of the boy." Aiden kissed Liam's forehead. "He'll be okay with a couple of hours sleep."

"But Mr. Mac Ruaidhri."

"I know he should have his own bed, but he just can't sleep alone." Aiden sighed. "When do I get another shot of the good stuff?"

"Another two hours." Her lips were pursed. "And not a minute before."

The next day Aiden needed to use all the inner strength he had, to sit in the wheel chair dressed in black silk. True to his word, Liam had sprung him from the hospital with a list as long as your arm of instructions, a bag filled with prescriptions and a hug from the doctor. Aiden's mind was still working its way around that one.

He allowed himself to be helped into a rather comfortable limousine. It took more out of him than he realized it would and he sighed when he was able to relax back on the leather seats. "Where are we going?" he asked the driver. Liam was saying goodbye to the nurse who had accompanied them.

"Shy Valley Ranch." The driver grinned. "It's a nice place. Rather exclusive, I'm sure you'll like it."

"A ranch?" Aiden asked.

"It isn't really a ranch. It's more like a place to rest and recover your equilibrium if you've been under the weather."

"Well I guess I qualify."

"Hey Aiden, how are you feeling?" Liam asked, as he slid in beside his lover.

"Just peachy." But his color was bad and his voice strained. Liam knew they had to get to the ranch as soon as they good.

"Lean on me and rest, the drive will be over soon." Liam smiled as Aiden did as he was asked and leaned against Liam's strong body. He took strength from the red head and he wanted the drugs he'd taken to smooth out the pain. Which they would, if he could relax.

Aiden couldn't actually believe he did as he was asked. But something about Liam made him feel safe. He shut his eyes and relaxed into Liam's body. It might have been the drugs or it might have been something more. He wasn't sure.

The drive to Shy Valley Ranch took thirty minutes. Liam was glad that he'd arranged for the limo, as the ride was remarkably smooth. Aiden actually fell into a light sleep and Liam was able to relax. He wasn't sure he was doing the right thing, keeping Aiden's illness quiet, but it was what Aiden wanted.

"We're here." Liam whispered in Aiden's ear. The next few minutes used up what was left of Aiden's strength. Liam helped him out of the limo and into a cabin that overlooked a lake. It barely registered to the sore man.

What he did see was a king sized bed. He made a beeline for it while Liam settled with the limo and carried in their bags. Sinking into what had to be a feather mattress and pulling up a light as air down filled duvet, Aiden closed his eyes and was immediately asleep.

Liam paused for a moment in his settling in to check that Aiden was doing okay. He put everything

he'd need to care for the operation site in the drawer next to the bed. He doubted Aiden had even thought of the fact that the dressing would have to be watched and kept clean.

Slowly Aiden's face smoothed out, from pain filled wrinkles, Liam wouldn't mention that part, to the smoothness of a cocooned sleep. He kissed him tenderly on the forehead and then went to see that the food he'd ordered had been delivered. The cabin was complete with kitchen. Liam knew that Aiden would not want to go to a public dining room. Besides, this way he had the man all to himself.

A quick email to Kimberly to let her know things were okay, the woman wasn't stupid, she'd known it was serious. And then Liam allowed himself to relax. He stripped his clothes off and climbed into the bed beside the man he loved.

CHAPTER 42

Rosalie knew the birth of her baby was going to be within the next few days. It was a feeling she had deep inside, like she was going to lose something she hadn't realized she was going to miss.

Only now did she occasionally caress her belly. As if suddenly realizing that she had a baby growing inside of her. "Where is Liam?" she asked Vanessa. "He hasn't been around lately."

"He was over a couple of days ago." Vanessa said as she finished making supper. "He said something about taking Aiden somewhere for a week of rest and relaxation. You know how hard Aiden's been working since he started his company."

"Blah, blah, blah. The great god Mac Ruaidhri has to work hard." Rosalie snorted. "Crap, what is that taste?" she asked, spitting into a tissue. She didn't notice Shay sitting nearby. He'd filled her mouth with the taste of dog poop because she was talking mean about his daddy. Rosalie leaned over the kitchen tap and tried to rinse out her mouth, spitting wildly.

"What in heck is wrong?" Vanessa was concerned.

"I don't know, but mouth feels like it's full of dog crap."

Shay giggled and buried his face in Doug's fur to smother his laughter. He'd wanted to use that spell for a long time. Even Phoebe thought it was funny.

Rosalie was now swishing Listerine around in her mouth while Vanessa stood near her wringing her hands. "Maybe it's a pregnancy thing, some kind of side effect or hormonal imbalance. We should call your doctor."

"Leave me alone." Rosalie waved her hand behind her.

Just outside of their cabin, Aiden sat on a lounge chair, his chest bare and glistening with sun tanning lotion as were his face and legs. He was wearing a pair of cherry red silk boxers in deference to his wound. The sun felt wonderful on his face and body. Even though it was barely 48 hours since his surgery, he had to admit Liam's idea had been a good one. He could sunbathe on their private patio while watching Liam lolling in the hot tub. They'd have to come back when he could use all of the facilities. But for now it didn't matter. He was able to relax while receiving admiring glances from the staff. Which certainly didn't hurt his ego.

It had been hard to accept Liam as his resident nurse, who checked his wound and changed the dressings, emailing pictures to the doctor for further instructions. Apparently the doctor had been smitten

by the red head. But once he'd gotten over the squick of it, everything went okay. He'd even managed to reduce the amount of pain medication. It was somehow easier to manage things in such a pleasant environment.

"You look toasted, I think you should roll over." Liam was standing beside him.

"I didn't notice you getting out." Aiden smiled up at the red head. "I did the other side already. I guess I'll go in."

"Okay. I'm going to shower, join me?" Liam wiggled his bare ass. Bathing suits were an option in the hot tub.

"I'll wash your back." Aiden smirked. He lifted himself up off the soft chaise slowly. There was no point in pretending to feel any different than he did. Liam was on to him and had been for a long time.

"I'd like that." Liam put his arm around Aiden. "Who knew that coconut oil could be an aphrodisiac." He giggled, sniffing at Aiden's chest.

"Brat." Aiden swatted his ass and then pulled him close. "Recovering from surgery here."

"I can't help it. You're sexy and I'm horny." Liam wiggled, his hard cock bouncing in front of them.

"Show off, my cock has been traumatized and you wave yours around." Aiden leaned over and kissed Liam's ear. They joked and teased one another on the way to the shower. It wasn't going to be their usual kind of shower, like the ones presurgery. Aiden couldn't really get the surgical site wet with soapy

water, but they made do and managed to not only become clean, but to get Liam off as well.

Liam was drying Aiden, enjoying the chance to do something for his man that Aiden didn't object to, when Ty popped into the bathroom. "Merrroooow."

"Hey cat." Aiden laughed and braced himself for Ty's leap up onto his shoulder. He barely flinched when the cat landed. "Now that you've seen I'm alive, pop your cat self back to Killer, you know he hates being alone."

"Hey Ty." Liam laughed as he headed to the bedroom. "Will it wait for another few days?"

"Will what wait?" Aiden asked, following Liam. He put Ty on the bed before laying on it himself. Liam quickly changed the small dressing to a dry one, pleased at the way the wound was healing. It was done without comment as if everything was normal. Aiden rather liked the efficient way Liam had of dealing with things.

"Rosalie is about to pop." Liam laughed. "Ty was just giving us the heads up."

"I'm not even going to ask you how you know this." Aiden sighed and shut his eyes. Liam pulled a soft sheet up over him and kissed him on the nose.

"She's going to be having a few more days of cramping before she goes into serious labor. Or so Ty seems to think. He wanted us to know."

"I'm supposed to believe this?" Aiden huffed and rolled over to bury his head in the soft pillow, luxuriating in the bed that seemed to wrap itself around him. Not quite as good as Liam's arms, but he

knew they would soon appear. Liam couldn't let him sleep alone for any length of time.

Ty jumped up to sit on the pillow by Aiden's head and began batting him on the ear with his paw. "Go away." He pulled the sheet over his head. "I'm recovering."

"You're doing fine. Pat your damn cat. He's come a long way to see you." Liam crawled between the covers, snuggling close to Aiden. "He's not staying. I think his story about Rosalie was just an excuse to check on you. Ouch." Liam hissed. Ty had leaned over and bit his ear. Aiden snickered.

It was almost twenty minutes before Ty had been placated enough to leave. Aiden sighed. "I can't believe the stupid cat was worried about me."

"Ty is a Wah cat, hardly stupid." Liam wiggled until he was under Aiden's arm, his head on the man's chest. "You're doing way better than most people after surgery."

"It's my nurse." Aiden smiled. "And the individual attention."

"Thank you, but it has a lot to do with you and your outlook, not to mention that when you do decide to relax, you don't hold back."

"I like to think I do everything to the best of my ability, including relaxing." The smirk was evident in his voice.

"Good thing you don't have a big ego." Liam snorted. He let his hand caress Aiden's face before moving lower over the man's body. "I got an email from the doctor."

"So did I." Aiden shut his eyes; he loved the sensation of Liam's fingers tracing lines on his body. "They got everything. As soon as I'm healed, they can do the mapping for the radiation. I'll be tattooed."

"It's just a pin prick. No one will notice."

"I suppose not." Aiden sighed. "I'm not looking forward to the radiation stage."

"I heard that if you smoke up, you don't get the full nausea thing. And it's legal."

"No kidding. I'll be first in line." Aiden chuckled. "I'll share."

"I was hoping you would." Liam was now fingering Aiden's cock. Playing with it, running his fingers through the fur at the base. "It'll be nice when all parts of you work again."

"Maybe they never will."

Liam snorted. "Let me get my pity towel out. Of course you'll be fucking me sooner than you think. You're Aiden Mac Ruaidhri for fuck sake and... drum roll here. You have the hottest red haired boyfriend in Vancouver."

Aiden was almost asleep. There was something somehow comforting about Liam's refusal to believe anything bad. He wished, and not for the first time, that he'd found the red head years before.

CHAPTER 43

For fuck sake Marcie, I'm not some god damned doll." Frances struggled against his wife's hand as she picked him out of the house she'd bought.

"This is kind of fun." Marcie was taking his clothes off. "Almost kinky in fact."

"Leave me alone. And do something about the banjo player; I'm seriously going crazy. If he doesn't stop with the maudlin guitar music, I'm going to kill him."

"He's okay." She smiled. "Look at the cute things I made you." She showed him a pair of pants and a shirt.

"Thanks." He quickly dressed. He hated being miniature. "Have you talked to the council about getting this spell reversed?"

"Yes, but they think it's rather appropriate." She giggled. "And said you have to be this way for thirty days. Also when the spell is reversed, you lose your watcher status. You're going to have to get a regular job."

"I was working and you know it." He turned away. "Look Marcie, I'm not proud of what I did, but I was thinking of the Wahjee. You know Liam was supposed to follow in his father's footsteps so to speak. Wahjee traditions are centuries old."

"And therefore it's about time we got rid of some of them. You know as well as I do that the celibacy thing was a crock of shit and always has been."

"I don't know that."

"Well if you didn't, you are stupider than I thought." She picked him up and all but threw him back in the dollhouse before stomping out of the room.

"Lover boy was thrown back like the toy he is." Ashley laughed and played a riff on the guitar.

"Fuck off." Frances glared. He put out his hand and made a small flame appear. He'd been practicing small bits of magic, slowly regaining his powers. It wasn't something he wanted known though, and he regretted immediately showing off to guitar boy. But the temptation to burn the fucking noise box was strong.

"I bet Marcie would like to know about your little tricks." Ashley smirked as held his guitar close. "You touch my guitar and she'll know."

"You can't threaten me." Frances made himself stand tall and bristle. He felt like a Wah cat, trying to show how intimidating he could be. It wasn't working as far as Ashley was concerned.

"Fuck off, I've got nothing to lose except my guitar - once that's gone, I don't really give a shit

about anything. I'll tell Marcie in a heartbeat." With that said, Ashley headed for the part of the house he'd claimed for himself.

CHAPTER 44

Liam knew when Phoebe was going to be born. He was closely tuned to his child, his baby, just as Aiden was tuned to Shay. He wasn't surprised when Aiden started to pack their things a day early. "It's time." Liam said, his voice quiet with barely suppressed excitement.

"I know." Aiden smiled over his shoulder at Liam. "We have time."

"I'm nervous." Liam laughed at his shaking hands.

"Welcome to my world witch boy." Aiden closed the suitcase. "I'm still sore, but I'm walking better. I don't think anyone will notice."

"I'll tell them I spent the week fucking your ass raw, everyone will understand." Liam grabbed the suitcase. "The limo is here."

"I am Wahjee. I could pop your ass in with banjo boy." Aiden laughed.

"Just smile pretty for our friends and look shy. It'll be over before you know it." Liam laughed. "Besides, the doctor said I could fuck you in a week."

"Like hell he did." Aiden shook his head.

"Sure he did." Liam grinned as he rubbed his hand on Aiden's ass. "It's mine, all mine."

"Fucker." Aiden laughed. "I'm the one supposed to be traumatized by all of this. You're my partner, you aren't supposed to look on my misfortune as an opportunity."

"Yeah, but you have to admit, if your cock isn't working, your ass is still available. You wouldn't want me to do without. I mean a good loving partner would be accommodating."

Aiden climbed into the rear of the limo. Liam followed behind him. They sat for a moment on either side of the big rear seat. And then Aiden lifted his one arm, Liam grinned and scooted over finding his place, under the protection of the man he loved.

They managed to arrive within minutes of Phoebe being born. Shay was sitting in the waiting room with Vanessa, his cat Doug, in toy form clutched tight to his chest. "I don't remember it hurting so much when I was born." He whispered to Liam.

"It's about time you got here. I wanted to be with my wife." Vanessa glared at the two new arrivals.

"It won't be long." Liam whispered back ignoring Vanessa.

"But she's being squeezed and squeezed." Shay said as one tear rolled down his face.

"That's the way it works Boyo." Aiden patted him on the head.

Shay sighed. "She's out." He crowed with triumph and then clapped his hands over his mouth, looking around to see if anyone heard him. But Vanessa was busy on her cell phone, shutting them all out of her mind as she called her friends.

"I think we're in for a wild ride." Aiden laughed as he kissed Liam. "Congratulations daddy."

"Hmmm, I could come to like being called daddy." Liam giggled. "Are you my pretty boy?" he asked Aiden, batting his lashes.

Aiden laughed; Shay looked at them in puzzlement. They all turned to the nurse who was coming to tell them that Phoebe had been born.

"Mr. Taylor, Ms. Hamilton, you have a daughter." The nurse said with a smile. "Her mother is just being tidied up and your daughter is being examined by the pediatrician, everyone will be ready for a visit in about half an hour."

"Is there a problem with the baby?" Liam asked. "I mean she's being checked out by a pediatrician." Vanessa was hurrying across the hallway toward them.

"Nothing really, but..." the nurse looked around hoping she wouldn't be heard. "When the baby was delivered, well it sounded like she talked. I mean we all know babies don't talk, but it was so loud and distinct, I mean considering her pallet that's still developing.... Her voice trailed off.

"Huh, what exactly did she say or not say?" Aiden had to ask. Liam clutched at his lover's arm, fingers clenched so tight, Aiden was sure he'd have bruises for days.

The nurse looked over her shoulder again and then leaned close. "That freaking hurt." She shook her head. "I know it doesn't make any sense. But we all heard it. Her eyes were kind of, oh I don't know, golden, and then she looked at her mother and smiled. Babies don't smile that young, it had to be gas.

"Vans, you're a mom again, the kid is out and it's a girl." Aiden gave her a hug shrugging off Liam's grip. He hoped Vanessa didn't hear what the nurse had to say. Liam was going to have his hands full with this little spit fire. "Go find your wife, or is she your hubby. Tell me again why you weren't in there with her?"

"You asshole, you know Rosalie is funny about things like that not to mention who was going to watch Shay, certainly not either of the two of you." She punched Aiden in the arm before hugging Liam. "Thank you, thank you, thank you." She whispered before turning to the nurse. "I'd like to see my daughter and my wife."

"You can wait in their room. It won't be long." The nurse was slightly offended by the tone of voice Vanessa used. You could practically see and hear the young nurse dressed in scrubs mumble the word bitch.

"Vanessa isn't going to win any brownie points being a bitch to the nursing staff." Aiden said to Liam.

"Dad, Liam, we need to help Phoebe... NOW." They looked down and Shay was standing firmly in front of him, Doug at full bristle and very much a live Wah cat. At the same time Liam heard his daughter in his mind. "Father, quickly,"

"Fuck something's after Phoebe." Liam said as he popped himself to where his daughter had been only milliseconds before. He paid no attention to the fact that Aiden, Shay and both Wah cats were now beside him.

"I can't hear her." Liam whispered. "I can't feel her."

"Well I can feel her." Aiden said running from the small examining room. "Thank all that's holy that I put my protection spell on her."

As he ran down the hall toward a swinging door that led to the stairs, he placed an invisibility illusion on himself and Shay and the Wah cats. Liam, he knew would do the same. They didn't need humans interfering with the evil that had the baby.

When he passed Rosalie and Vanessa's room, he could see them cooing over a baby wrapped in pink and held in Rosalie's arms. He knew it was a changeling and not Liam's daughter and his heart broke for his young lover.

Shay at three was taller than most children his age. He had generations of Wahjee power and ancestral memories in his young body. And he was pissed beyond what could even begin to describe how he felt. His sister, his love, his twin flame had been

stolen within minutes of her birth and silenced by a spell with considerable power.

The black things slinking along the ceilings and under the floor, the henchmen of those who had chosen the dark side, were plentiful making Shay believe that Phoebe hadn't yet been removed from the hospital building.

He was about to say something when with a flash; all of them were pulled from the space they were in, into what felt like a cave deep underground.

Liam and Aiden stood side by side, Shay in front of them, Ty and Doug flanking the child on either side. They all carefully looked around, not sure where they were in the shadowy velvet of the room. Slowly in front of them, a glow appeared, gradually becoming more and more bright until it spot lit one end of the room, silhouetting a grand throne like piece of turquoise green crystal. And then on the throne, a figure, a mere wisp of mist solidifying little by little into an older, much older, man who looked a great deal like Liam, only his red blond curls fell to his shoulders, rather than the tightly clipped hair of what had to be his son. He held a larger than life cat, very familiar to all of them as it sat in its turquoise and white fur looking as regal as his name.

A baby's cooing prattle was heard from nearby.

"My son." The man nodded at Liam. "And his mate." Aiden was graced with a glance that made him smolder in anger. And wondered who this asshole was introducing them to or was just a statement to show he knew who had appeared.

"Who are you? Is that Betty?" Liam asked. "And why have you taken my daughter?" His eyes roamed, trying to pierce the hidden mysteries of the shadowed mists that swirled and kept the vast room in motion.

"The fact that don't acknowledge what is obvious, tells me you aren't ready to raise this Zyndaix child." Stephen Taylor the sixth responded. "My grand daughter was moments away from vanishing to the lair of those who have been waiting for just such a child's birth. You can thank Regis here for her life and safety." His hand smoothed turquoise and white fur.

"Betty" the cat snorted, heard only by Liam and the other two Wah cats. "I am Regis, High King of the Wah."

"I save my Phoebe." Shay said as he stepped forward. "She is mine for now and for evermore. The story has been told since the beginning."

"You Zyndaix child, show respect to your King. You have been perilously close to returning to the elements since you were conceived. My son's penchant for freely giving love has kept you breathing, but that can change."

"Look you son of a bitch. I don't give a flying fuck who you are. Think long and hard before you threaten my child or the child of my partner. I may have chosen not to over use my powers for the last few years, but that can change in a heartbeat." Aiden in one stride was beside his son, Ty jumped on his shoulder, eyes flashing, ears back. Doug too, jumped on Shay's shoulder and took a defense stance.

If things hadn't been so serious, Liam would have smiled at the two of them so much alike and willing to risk all for each other and Phoebe. From the look in the King's eyes, it was time for Liam to step forward as well.

"Father, if that's who you are, and by the way, anyone can have red hair, I'm much better looking than you are." He smiled to show he was joking, relieved when the look in his father's eyes softened. "Zyndaix is such a harsh word to describe, the son of my heart. He is kind and loving and yes mischievous, but then he is only three and his powers have not been allowed to develop at a normal pace. We've had to keep him bound as much as we could, living as he does with human mothers."

"Rather than put blame on my partner, or threaten our children. Perhaps it would be better to explain just exactly why you are hiding here in a cave, rather than taking your place on the High Council as the leader of the Wahjee. As for Shay and Phoebe, what is done is done. It was foretold, it happened, let them grow in peace. Allow them to learn and develop as they should. Perhaps the legends were right and these two are needed."

"A valid argument, but one you are too young to appreciate. It was never intended that a Zyndaix couple be deliberately conceived. That sort of thing is for the dark ones, not someone who has been formed and molded in the way of all things good and of white majicks." The King began only to be interrupted.

"You know, not to be a bitch here, but you are sounding rather racist." Liam looked around the room again still nothing could be seen.

"I won't dignify that statement with an argument except to say there is white light and goodness in the darkest skinned Wahjee, as there can be the smallest black heart in the fairest of our kind." The King glared down at the three. "As you well know my son."

Liam had been summoning up all of his power, as had Aiden and Shay during these innocent few moments of conversation. Ty and Doug were prepared to act against their own High King Regis if that was required of them. Not every Wah cat had to make a choice between Wah and Wahjee, but if choices were to be made, you can be sure Wah would side with their Wahjee partner every time. For hadn't they made that choice when they agreed to become that partner?

In a well-coordinated move, Aiden popped behind the King, placing his most powerful binding spell on the man. Ty and Doug, stood over their own King, ears back, eyes as dark and forbidding as the blackest coal. Liam immediately focused on the sounds of Phoebe cooing and materialized beside her rather ornate and stately cradle, clearly built for a princess.

Ignoring the rather large and intimidating guards on either side of the bed, Liam reached in and for the first time picked up his daughter, cradling her in his arms. She was beautiful and very much his with her bright red curls. Phoebe opened her eyes startling Liam with their golden yellow irises. "Where did those eyes come from Baby Girl?" he asked with a

whisper as he bent and kissed her forehead. "You are beautiful, no wonder Shay is in awe."

"Father." The word was soft and barely heard. Phoebe sighed in contentment and wiggled closer to the man who held her.

It was then that Liam looked at the guards. "If you're guarding my daughter, why didn't you stop me from picking her up? What kind of guards are you? I could have been anyone."

"No actually you couldn't have." One of the guards said. His voice high, almost feminine despite the greatness of his size. "There is a spell on the room that allows only her true family to enter." He glanced at the open doorway where splotches of dust and debris littered the floor. "As you can see, others have tried to cross the threshold." Shrugging, "They didn't qualify."

"Ah, Jubli, Jubla, I see you've met my son." The King walked through the door, his robes brushing over the dust piles.

"Where is Aiden and Shay?" Liam asked.

"Staging a coup in the throne room. I'm sure it'll keep them busy for a few minutes until they realize that I'm not actually there." He giggled, much like his son did on occasion. "I'll teach you that little trick, it does come in handy when it's necessary to be two places at the same time." He reached over and tickled Phoebe's chin making his granddaughter smile and coo.

Liam wondered if he was the only one who his daughter could talk to, or if he'd been imagining it.

"Why have you taken her here? I mean really, not all that crap you were trying to spout out in the throne room. You know she was protected in the delivery area. I would have been there in a heartbeat, in fact I was once I knew the spell had been broken."

"But you weren't fast enough, luckily Regis was watching closely." It was then Liam noticed the turquoise and white cat in his daughter's bed, once again a toy.

"Betty." Liam shook his head. "I did have a Wah cat all along. Why didn't someone tell me?"

"A story for another time, you ask too many questions. The point is, you weren't able to get to Phoebe in time, those who have gone to the dark side where waiting when the doctor took her into the examining room, something you failed to anticipate. One of the darklings had his hand within inches of our girl when Regis popped her to me. Had he touched her when in her first hour on earth, he might have changed her heart too much for us to ever get her back. It has been known to happen, which is one of the reasons Zyndaix are forbidden and generally euthanized immediately upon being discovered. There are many out there who would jump at the chance of taking our Clan down by doing just that and I don't mean only darklings."

"And the child I saw with Vanessa and Rosalie?"

"Ahhhh, yes, I understand her name is Morgan Rebecca, Becca for short." He smiled his smile soft in remembrance. "Becca is what's known as a changeling. I'm sure you've heard the term. Your

partner knows all about them if you don't. He is after all King of the Mac Ruaidhri clan and ruler of Ireland's 'little people'. Can't you see the damn things, ever since Regis popped Phoebe here, I've been over run with them." His arms swept wide and sure enough when Liam looked closely there were all 693 Leprechauns perched here and there in the room.

"I thought your spell would have kept them out." Liam glanced at the piles of dust at the doorway.

"Apparently you have no idea about your partner's gifts. His people are his family, his family is your family. Be careful or you'll be up to your ass in fairies, brownies, sprites, elves and these damn strangely dressed leprechauns. You have no idea how much work they are, the little buggers never seem to stop eating. And rearranging furniture and rooms, I swear they are all determined to win decorator of the year awards."

Just then Aiden, Shay and the two Wah cats tumbled into the room. "Asshole." Aiden muttered in the King's direction.

The King giggled. "Damn I love that spell."

"Enough of this crap. I want to know what's going on?" Aiden had walked over to Liam and taken Phoebe into his arms, confirming that his protection mark was there and reissuing his pledge to keep her safe. He smiled when his Leprechauns all nodded their agreement to honor that pledge as well.

Bending down, he handed the five pounds of girl to his son, who beamed his pleasure as he too added his pledge of forevermore to each cheek. Immediately

a sprinkling of barely there freckles appeared lending light blush to her alabaster skin. "Phoebe." He whispered to the girl in his arms. "Finally."

The baby smiled and reached up to touch Shay's nose before grinning a toothless grin a lot like her father.

"You overstepped making an Zyndaix child so early in your lives. I'm speaking to both of you. The young are so impatient, not like in my day." He muttered more to himself than anyone else. "The thing is, young Seamus here is strong, he has the protection of his father's clan and people. And he's had your protection and that of your mother Liam. But he's only one child. Now there are two and I'm afraid that word has leaked of not only Shay's existence, but also Phoebe's, though Phoebe is still a rumor not yet confirmed."

Liam took Phoebe back from Shay who was looking tired; he was only three after all. "Am I to let my child grow here in these caves without benefit of her family?" he shook his head. "I don't think so."

"You have a choice and only because you are my son do you have this choice. It is too soon to tell you about my life and why I live here. And by the way, here is not as how you perceive it. We are under my palace; there is sunlight and flowers on the upper floors. It has been under an invisibility spell for generations, so many generations that other than my staff, you and yours have been the first newcomers since the day of your birth. You were born here,

though I pray that you never have to live under such secrecy, you have managed quite nicely until now."

"You said I have a choice?" Liam asked.

"Yes, you can allow Phoebe to learn to be all that she can be, live and love and grow under my protection and that of your partner's small minions, can't seem to get rid of them." He shook his head. "At the same time raise Becca as your own. In return I will allow you and your family, meaning King Aiden and Prince Shay, to visit as she grows in safety."

"And the second choice." Aiden asked, not sure his lover could speak.

"Ahhhh, that one, if you refuse to allow young Phoebe this opportunity, you all will be banished from this palace and it will disappear from your sight. With it all contact with Phoebe will also disappear. And I do mean all contact; even Aiden's small helpers will be kept from contacting you. I might not be able to rid my place of them, but I can certainly silence one and all."

"And if I agree to the first choice?" Liam asked, his tongue thick.

"You must do so without ever giving anything away, not to your mother, your mother in law, to friends, to Becca, or her mothers. No one and I mean no one can have any idea that Phoebe lives. It will be a life promise that all of you must make, Aiden, Shay, Liam and your Wah cats as well."

"I agree." Liam really had no choice. He didn't know this man who called himself his father. He had no idea just what the man was capable of. But he did

know that he had to keep his daughter safe until he could learn more. He could feel that she was safe here wherever here was.

"I will agree as well." Aiden said, his mind taking in everything while he silently communicated with the head of his Leprechaun King's Guard.

"I will do as my Da says." Shay put forth, his hand touching the top of Doug's head, scratching, "Doug is with me."

"It goes without saying that Ty will do as I request." Aiden patted his shoulder inviting his Wah cat to join him.

Instantly Liam, Aiden and Shay found themselves standing in front of Rosalie's room. Shay clutched Doug, now in toy form. Ty was gone, no doubt to the apartment and Liam held Betty, his turquoise and white cat, obviously a gift to the new baby. And a watcher of the first order for all of them.

"Come in, come in and meet your daughter." Rosalie laughed. "She's only twenty minutes old, but darn she's beautiful."

No doubt the old King and placed them back in time, there was nothing dark lurking near the ceiling, nothing slimy squirming under the floor. Sun was shining into the room where Rosalie lay cradling a pink wrapped bundle. Only minutes had passed as far as the women were concerned since the men had last been with Vanessa.

"Liam Taylor, I never thought you'd be too shy to meet your daughter. And Seamus, you've plagued us for months about your sister. Come and meet Morgan

Rebecca, Becca for now." Vanessa gestured to them to move.

Liam using all the strength he had, his arms still aching for his daughter, his lips still feeling the soft skin of her forehead, walked the endless walk to stand beside his friend's bed. He leaned down and looked at the baby who stared up at him. Her hair was golden with the slightest tinge of red and standing straight up all over like fine cat fur. She blinked at her father, violet eyes not sure of what she was seeing and then she smiled. It was the smile that did it, melted Liam's heart. He held out his arms and took Becca up to his cheek. She smelled of new baby and promises. Aiden reached over and touched the baby's nose. She grabbed his finger holding tight.

Shay sighed and stood on tiptoe to get a better look. She was all right. He could use a friend and wasn't every Wahjee supposed to have a human to keep them grounded. "She's kind of small." He ventured. "Hey Becca, welcome to the world."

January 8, 2009

Of course we can't leave it like this - watch for the sequel *Shadowed Magic*.

www.erbryant.com

Welcome to my world. I invite you to see some of the magic and mystery of what goes on in my imagination. I am not a formula writer - no two stories are quite the same - as no two woven tapestries are the same. I weave bits of romance and love, sex and fantasy, improbable and probable. I throw in a bit of pathos, a touch of grief, not too much blood and gore, though it has been known to appear in some of what I create. But most of all, I believe all of this can take place no matter what one's sexual persuasion is.

A parent to many and a friend to all, eribryam lives in central British Columbia along with a partner of more than thirty three years, one dog - Harry Dawg, and one cat - Spock. All three feature prominently in eribryam's writing, though cleverly disguised.



Being for each other was easy for Adam and Liam, for after all it was forbidden. Living their lives without revealing the secret of their heritage to the humans around them, well that was another thing altogether.



*Magical
Moonlight*



ER Bryant