

“She’s going to kill you,” his old friend muttered.

Conn Kayrs raised an eyebrow, cutting his eyes to Kellach from across the scarred table. He hadn’t been in Shea’s tavern in a century, yet the tables were the same. Beaten and solid. “She can try.” Damn, he hoped she tried. For no other reason than the excuse it gave him to put his hands on her. Finally.

After all this time.

Kell tipped his ale back, his dark gaze remaining steady on the tavern door. “She’s coming.”

That she was. The air thickened as if in anticipation of a lightning strike— or a witch’s temper. Conn relaxed in his chair, stretching his long legs to cross at the ankles. His boots caught on worn grooves in the wood. “You might want to make yourself scarce.”

Kell tied his dark hair back at the nape, his shoulders tensing. “You may need backup.” He glanced at the row of patrons lining the bar on hand-carved wooden stools centuries old. Mostly witches, maybe a couple humans. People who lived on the northern coast of Ireland, happy in the knowledge most of the world didn’t know they existed. “Though we should clear everyone else out.”

Conn fought a grin. His friend sounded almost ... concerned.

As a fierce witch and a dangerous warrior, the enforcer for the council was trained in witchcraft and traditional war. Kellach’s main job was to protect the leading council, the Coven Nine. He feared no man. But a woman? Well now, that was another story.

“Your cousin isn’t that dangerous, Kell.” Though what did Conn know? Moira had been training for a century. Her skill set might be deadly. If so, they needed to get a couple things straight. Several folks lining the bar cast wary glances over their shoulders. Even in this day and age, vampires were a scarcity in the north, so Conn kept his fangs hidden. He didn’t want to spook them— although his metallic eyes probably gave him away.

Watching carefully, he wondered if anyone would challenge him. He’d never battled a witch. They’d been allies of the Realm for centuries, though he often wondered about that. Witches kept their powers shrouded in secrecy. Not even his king knew the full extent of what magic allowed them to create.

Kell’s lips tightened in his rugged face. “Moira is the seventh sister of the seventh sister. All power. You have no idea what you’re doing, my friend. She told you not to come to Ireland, and you should’ve listened. You shouldn’t be—”

The door swept open on a gust of wind. Electricity crackled through the room. Moira stepped inside, her green gaze hard on Conn. His heart seized. How had he forgotten her beauty? Her power? Her tiny size?

Conn scraped back his chair and stood. "Hello, mate."

* * *

"Treason is a matter of perspective." His gaze dropped to her lips and back up. "How many of your own have you taken down, Enforcer? For practicing magic?"

His minty breath made her stomach roll. "That wasn't magic. That was the manipulation of matter to harm. The laws exist for a reason." So the whole damn planet didn't blow up. "Laws change along with leadership." With a dark gleam in his eye, he placed a kiss on her lips. She bared her teeth and snapped.

He darted back, barely missing her sharp bite. Regret flashed across his handsome face. "I'm sorry I won't get a chance to break you, Seventh." With a shrug, he sidled back to the window. "I guess the Kurjans get all the fun this time."

"Do they know?" As hard as she tried, she couldn't keep the tremor from her voice. "Did you tell them about the phanakite?" Having the witches' biggest weakness become public knowledge was frightful. The repercussions were unfathomable.

"No." Trevan's breath fogged the glass. "My lady talked me out of that. Guess you owe her." Apparently his woman was a whole lot smarter than he was. No way the Kurjans wouldn't turn that kind of information against him. "Tell me who she is so I can properly thank her."

He laughed. "Well, while the Kurjans are ripping through your genetics, I'll have some fun with your little sister here." His autocratic head tilted toward Brenna. "I'll still need leverage with the Coven Nine. For a while."

Brenna bared her teeth, and a gray vein appeared along her smooth forehead. Her eyes were bloodshot. "I'm going to boil your heart to mush inside your body."

While Moira appreciated the sentiment, the fact her sister's skin was becoming translucent from the collar clutched fear in her throat.

Trevan squinted into the night and then straightened his shoulders. "Looks like it's showtime."