

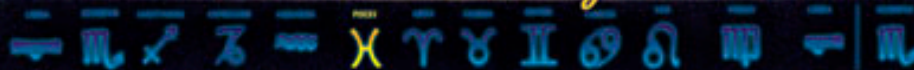
ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS

MANDY M. ROTH



Pisces
PHENOMENON

Planetary Passions



An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



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Pisces Phenomenon

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PISCES PHENOMENON

Mandy M. Roth

Dedication

To my editor, Nick, for managing to stay sane while dealing with me yet again. To Michelle for being an ever-ready nonstop crisis hotline each and every time my neurotic self decided this scene just wasn't quite right and needed to say it out loud to be sure. Sorry for putting your number on the wall of the men's restroom at the bar that one night. Tell Bubba I said hi. Last but not least, to Shane, for supporting all that I do and for volunteering to be a research "dummy" should I need one.

Prologue

Sirius Baron stood in his bedroom, tired from a long day's work. He pulled his shirt off and did his best to ignore his stiff muscles. It wasn't bad enough he'd spent the night chasing five juvenile vandals hell-bent on tagging their way down a set of parked freight cars, but then he'd ended up having to do his real job—guard the portals to his home realm. Another damn abduction had taken place less than an hour after he confronted several rebel warriors near the Diamond District's portal. He'd been forced to use a great deal of power to mask their presence from humans. The last thing he needed was for humans to realize they weren't alone on the planet.

He stretched his sore shoulder and froze when the hairs on the back of his neck stood on end. Something was close. Turning his head, he tried to sense exactly what was there. When he realized the presence was not only female but also belonged to the one woman who held the power to turn his world upside down, Sirius' cock hardened. The smells of bergamot, vanilla and a light floral scent surrounded him, making his entire body react. His fists clenched as his pulse raced.

How had she managed to find him? Sure, it was only her essence visiting him or perhaps even an astral projection he could not see, but it was still a feat he'd not expected her to be able to reach.

Sirius hissed as the feel of her hands moved over his shoulders. He wanted to see her, talk to her, know she was really there but it didn't work that way. The mere fact she was able to reach him at all proved how strong their bond was.

Her nails lightly traced a path down his back and, for a second, he could almost feel her naked breasts pressed to him. It was easy to picture her nipples scraping against his skin, following the same line her fingernails had taken. Gods he wanted her. Wanted to

sample her skin, taste her cream and know if she was truly as glorious to fuck as his mystical run-ins with her seemed to be.

She grew bolder, sliding down the length of his body and stopping at groin level. Sirius couldn't hide his surprise as he watched his belt buckle coming undone of what appeared to be its own accord. He knew better. He knew it was *une zeena*, his mate, and if nature took its course, she would one day be his wife.

The minute she opened his jeans and reached in to free his erection, her presence dissipated. Sirius took his cock in his hand and cursed every god he could think of. He needed to rest before he had to be back at the station but he'd never sleep until the tension in his cock was released.

"You will be the death of me, *Slatkiska*."

Chapter One

Setting her towel down beside her on the wooden bench, Phoebe Fisher glanced at the twenty-inch television mounted in the corner of the locker room. It had always seemed oddly out of place to her, seeing as how this particular dance studio was geared more towards classical dance and ballet than any other forms. She sighed as the newscaster launched into another breaking story about the “Zodiac Zone” in New York’s theatre district. The area had earned the nickname over the course of four weeks. In that time, six females had been abducted from the area, making it a media hot spot and law enforcement nightmare. It also made it damn hard to work when the seats weren’t being filled in the theaters. Sure, she wasn’t the main attraction but being a backup dancer paid the bills.

“Police are advising women to utilize the buddy system and avoid being out in the area after dark, if at all possible,” the anchorwoman said. How wonderfully disturbing it was that a person who made news her life seemed devoid of emotion. It was probably like other jobs that dealt with sensitive and often violent topics. The woman most likely had become desensitized to the harsh realities she reported on. That or she never cared to begin with. The latter thought made Phoebe cringe only because she often found herself leaning the same way. Shutting herself off from the violence around her was so much easier than sensing the pain.

Keeping an objective stance was all she could do. Besides, until recently, the Zodiac Zone abductions hadn’t hit close enough to home to be much more than news to her. It didn’t take a genius to figure out that if the abductions continued, the show she’d only just managed to land a job dancing in would close. Finding a good paying spot in a show was hard. Losing this would set her back more than she could afford, not only financially, but emotionally as well. She’d worked too long, too hard to let this stop her.

Not to mention, it wasn't exactly sitting well with her that six women from the surrounding neighborhoods were missing. Each of them had someone, family perhaps, looking for them, missing them, worrying about them.

Phoebe folded her ballet shoes and wrapped the ribbon around them, tucking it neatly inside one shoe. Stuffing them into her bag, she sighed and did her best to stay positive. It was difficult considering rent was coming due and she needed to work to cover it. Thankfully, she'd kept her job waiting tables or else she'd be short—again. Heather, her roommate, cousin and one of her closest friends, was a singer so she tended to understand when a short month came up. The reverse was true as well.

The only reason Phoebe had even ventured out alone was because she felt fairly confident in her ability to protect herself. Not only had her father insisted his children learn the skills necessary to defend themselves, but Phoebe and her family weren't exactly human. She wasn't sure what she was but it was safe to say that anyone foolish enough to select her to abduct would be getting more than they bargained for.

A slight buzz surrounded Phoebe, leaving her biting back a smile. With the advent of the Zodiac Zone abductions, the presence she'd come to think of as a not-so-imaginary friend with perks of the carnal kind had been contacting her more than normal. It used to be he'd peek in two maybe three times a month. He was now up to several times a day. He seemed to take great pleasure in the simple knowledge that she was fine. As of late, he was simply taking pleasure. Since he was sure to give it in return, Phoebe didn't complain.

The buzz, or power, trickled over her skin, caressing it gently. Her nipples puckered as her breathing grew shallow. It felt as though hundreds of fingers were caressing her. They brushed over her breasts, down her torso and traced her inner thighs. For one brief, but all too enjoyable, second, the power pushed into her core, fingering her pussy and leaving Phoebe grabbing onto the bench to try to center herself. It didn't help. Her breathing was erratic as her climax neared.

Mmm, I can imagine that tight little cunt wrapped around my cock.

The deep, rich male voice pushed through her mind. It had the slightest hint of an accent but she couldn't place it. His lilt alone could make her come if he spoke to her long enough, whispering sweet nothings and reminding her she was all woman and he was certainly all male. She shivered with delight, pleased everyone else had left the rehearsal studio for the evening. They'd think she was crazy, smiling and reaching semi-orgasmic peaks, especially since no one but Phoebe could sense or hear him.

Do want to be possessed by me, Slatkiska? Do you want to know what its like to have me dominate? Do you?

She shifted on the bench as the energy rubbed her clit, causing moisture to pool at the apex of her thighs. Phoebe bit her lip to keep from crying out as her inner thighs began to quiver. The last thing she wanted to do was give in so soon but the man's "touch" was too much. Pure bliss.

Don't hold back, Slatkiska. Give in to the pleasure. I want to hear you scream.

Phoebe moaned, doing her best to keep it to a minimum even though she was alone in the building. She lay back on the bench as the energy cradled her, encouraging her to give it even better access to her body. The minute her back met the bench, the energy thrust into her pussy. It felt as if a cock was buried deep within her still-clothed body. Not just any cock. This one filled her to just this side of pain, yet brought her so much pleasure as it hit that magik spot deep within her body.

So tight, Slatkiska. Give in. Come for me. He drew in a sharp breath. No. Damn it. I'm sorry.

As quickly as the feeling of being fucked came, it went. Phoebe sat up fast, her body mourning the loss of the sweet mystical invasion. It took everything she had not to yell at him. This wasn't his first time offering endless passion and then ripping it away. At first she assumed he was toying with her, teasing her but when she realized his mystical pull on her lightened right after anything sexual occurred, Phoebe began to suspect he couldn't finish that way. Perhaps it drained him too much to maintain a connection. She

wasn't positive. She knew he wasn't finished because she could still sense his hunger and she knew he hadn't yet come.

Slatkiska, tell me you're well. I need to know you're unharmed, he said, his voice weaker than before. It only served to add to her theory in regards to him. *Some day soon we'll be together. We'll touch as we were born to touch one another and our passion will know no bounds.*

Maybe sooner than he thought. The previous night had been filled with erotic images of a man with bronzed skin and jet-black hair that was tousled on top and short on the sides and back. The visions had started as just that—visions. She'd seen him standing in a darkened bedroom taking his shirt off and had been unable to resist the urge to touch him. Never before had a vision become interactive. The man had called to her on a level she couldn't explain. He felt familiar and seemed to radiate the same energy the man who spoke in her head often did.

He was too good to be true and the idea of the mysterious voice in her head belonging to not only a real person but a man who looked like a god was too much. He had everything she found attractive in a man. A squared face and stubble-covered jawline. Short, shaggy black hair. Piercing blue eyes. Tattooed bands on his upper arms that wrapped the entire way around his biceps and a body that was chiseled to perfection.

Deliciously incredible.

Phoebe's time with him had been brief but memorable. The dream man seemed to fully understand she was there but kept begging her to show herself. Since it was only a dream, most likely brought on by her deep-seated desire to put a face with the man who seemed to be a constant in her life, Phoebe didn't dwell on it.

When she'd awakened, she had felt empty, as if something vital had been taken from her. Her fingers ached to touch the man's steely body once more. To be allowed one more second with him. As the energy continued to buzz around her, she could almost feel him there with her.

Slatkiska, talk to me. I love the sound of your voice. If I were closer and you were willing, I could just read your thoughts.

Now, as she sat, sexually frustrated but thankful to have had even that tiny bit of contact with him, she smiled. “That’s not my name. You’re not even close. You’d think after twenty-two years of guessing, you’d be closer than that.”

A deep chuckle greeted her. And you would think after twenty-three years – you always forget to count your first year of life – you’d stop bothering to speak out loud and use our link instead. If you used it, too, our bond would strengthen tenfold.

“Tell me why you keep calling me *Slatkiska* and I’ll think about humoring you,” she said, slipping her lightweight, zip-front sweatshirt on. Phoebe pulled her hair to get it unstuck from the back of the sweatshirt and let it fall over one shoulder in damp waves. Her muscles were only slightly sore after rehearsing for two hours. She’d spent a good deal of time in the hot shower, letting it work the kinks out.

If you’d tell me your name I wouldn’t have to refer to you in such a manner.

She let out a soft laugh as his power slid over her rib cage, tickling her as it went. “Mmm-hmm, somehow, I think you’d still call me *Slatkiska* or the other name you like to call me so much. How do you pronounce it again?”

Ah, une zeena?

“Yes. That one. You didn’t start calling me that until I turned eighteen. What language is it? I’ve ruled out French, German, Italian and Spanish.”

I’ve told you before, it’s my native tongue. That of the Constellaziogēns. You just chose to ignore me and keep trying to guess. He sighed and wrapped his power around her, making her feel safe. Ease an old man’s mind, Slatkiska. Tell me you’re unharmed and somewhere safe.

Phoebe glanced around the studio and shrugged. “I’m safe and unharmed unless you count a slight cramp in my lower back which isn’t life-threatening. Just annoying. And stop calling yourself an old man. I told you that I get the sense your magik is old but you’re not.”

I get the sense you're lying about being somewhere safe. You're close. I can always feel it when you are. That means you ignored my warning and came to me anyway. It's not safe right now. In truth, it may never be.

She huffed as she pushed the exterior door open and walked out into the cool spring night air. The door shut and locked behind her. "Listen, buster, I didn't come this way for you, so get over yourself. I came because I wanted to be here not because I was hoping to meet the voice in my head."

He laughed and the sound did what it always did, it wrapped around her. *I love how you don't fear me.*

"Why would I? You'd never hurt me."

Something moved in the shadows in the dimly lit alley. Phoebe stilled, not wanting to be scared but unable to help it. "Of course they'd tag this as part of the Zodiac Zone," she whispered, doing her best to joke off her fears.

Zodiac Zone? Une Slatkiska, tell me you're just trying to get a rise out of me. You can't be that close. I'd have sensed it if you were in this city with me. Hell, I'd know if you were even in the state.

She didn't answer. Phoebe wasn't like normal women. Even without taking the voice in her head into consideration, she was different, powerful, and at times she scared even herself. Normally, her extraordinary gifts were limited to sleeping hours or times when her emotions ran to the extremes. Since the visits from the man in her head had increased, so had her abilities. It was as if he somehow intensified them. Amped them to the point they were noticeable in waking hours.

Something's wrong. You're scared.

Phoebe turned and visually scanned the alley. "Who's there?"

Slatkiska?

She mentally stayed the voice in her head as she tried to focus on her surroundings. "Someone's here. I can...umm... I know you're here." It was on the tip on her tongue to say she could sense them there but she'd managed to hold back. Her sister had been

overt about the gifts she possessed and the state had tucked her safely away from mankind, deeming her a threat to herself and others. Mentally unstable. The desire to follow that path wasn't in Phoebe.

"Aren't you a talented little human," a deep voice said from the shadows.

She tried and failed to locate the direction it came from.

An eerie laugh sounded. "You will not see me until I am ready to be seen, *une zeena*."

Phoebe stifled a scream as she heard the stranger utter the name she'd grown accustomed to hearing from another. "No. How do you know that name?"

"What, *une zeena*? It simply means mate, wife." Something brushed past her shoulder and she shuddered. "For that is what you are, Phoebe. You are my mate. I selected you because you are a Pisces and tied to our race. As a mate should be. You may not have been selected by the Fates to be mine but they have been wrong before, as they are now. The others who agree with me have selected the mates they wish to have. Some have collected their *une zeenas* already."

What is happening? You're terrified.

Then stop messing with me and I wouldn't be scared. Why in the hell would you be calling me your mate all these years? Your wife? And why pretend to not know my name? You just said it plain as day.

The familiar, safe power she'd come to know as the man in her head enveloped her. *I'm not there. I can't come to you unless you call for me. You know this. I've explained it before. You have to come to me or invite me to you. How do you know what *une zeena* means?*

Before Phoebe could answer, a man stepped forth from the darkness. At five ten she wasn't short by any means, but his height unnerved her. Six feet five inches of well-oiled man stood about ten feet from her. Auburn hair went to his broad shoulders and his light gray eyes seemed to see through her, leaving her feeling naked before him. The dark navy robe he wore hung open in front, showing off a set of abs that rivaled those of the man from her dream. The matching pants weren't like anything she'd ever seen a

man wearing. The style was unique to say the least. Made of leather and open on the sides but tied with laces, the pants made the man look like a stripper. The robe took that straight to the crazed stripper category. Never good.

“Fear me not, *une zeena*. I have simply come to collect what is owed to me.” He smiled and it made her skin crawl. “I have come for you. The Gatekeeper was foolish to think he could keep you a secret for all eternity.”

“The Gatekeeper?” she asked, backing up slowly.

Gatekeeper? Who the hell is talking about a Gatekeeper? Run! Get to a place with a lot of people! Better yet, tell me your name and give me permission to come to you! Do that and I can track you. I can help.

Fight or flight kicked in. The man was huge and taking him on wasn't something Phoebe wanted to do if she could help it. Turning, she ran towards the main street. The man was suddenly in front of her, blocking her path. She stopped so fast she slipped and landed on her backside. “Who are you?”

“I will be your husband soon enough but you may call me Xipil.” His gray eyes locked on her and she immediately began to crab-walk backwards. “Such spirit in one so young. I will enjoy bedding you.”

“Enjoy bedding me? What the hell?”

Tell me your name! Give me permission to come to you!

Every instinct Phoebe had told her Xipil was deadly. Her instincts didn't feel the same way for the mysterious man in her head. She trusted him. Exhaling, she nodded. “And you can call me Phoebe, not *une zeena*,” she said to Xipil in hopes the other would be able to use the information to help. “That name is reserved for someone else. He's welcome to me, you're not.”

The tug of her invisible lover's power increased, coating her while she pushed to her feet and made another attempt at running. Xipil reappeared in front of her. This time, Phoebe didn't fall backwards out of fear. Taking a fighting stance, she brought her fists up to protect herself, bent her knee and kicked him in the chest. Dancing

professionally left her legs strong and her ability to kick off the charts. Being raised by parents who were convinced the skies could open up and allow supernatural warriors to walk through them at any given moment meant she was taught to defend herself, so she did.

His gray eyes widened as he staggered backwards. Phoebe didn't stop. She rushed at him out of a need to get past him more than anything. Punching out, she caught him in the cheek and hissed as pain shot through her hand.

Xipil wore a look of pure shock as he brought his hand to his lip. When he came away with blood, a sick smile moved over his face. "Oh, you are a wild one, *une zeena*."

The sound of car tires screeching and shouts drew Xipil's attention. Tipping his head slightly, he licked his lower lip. "Until we meet again." In a flash, he was gone.

"Miss?"

Turning, Phoebe struck out before looking. She came into contact with something hard and realized it was a chin. The blond man she'd hit blinked once and moved his jaw around. "Ouch." He reached into his back pocket and pulled out his wallet. The minute he flashed a badge Phoebe cringed. There was no way she could tell him about a man appearing out of thin air and then disappearing just as quickly or she'd end up in a straitjacket. One Fisher family girl wearing one was too many already.

"I'm Detective Aland Werner." He put his wallet back and reached for her. "You okay? You look a little shaken."

"I'm fine."

"Aland, I can't find..."

She spun around and found herself staring at the man from her dream. Shock didn't even begin to cover what she felt. His piercing blue eyes locked on her and she took a giant step back. The second Phoebe bumped into someone else, she turned and kicked out. As her foot came into contact with the side of Aland's head, she cringed.

“Ohmygod, I’m sorry.” Phoebe went to him and reached out tentatively. “I didn’t mean to—”

“Punch me and then kick me?” He chuckled as he looked past her at the man from her dream. “Detective Baron, so good of you to join us.” The end note in his voice made it sound as if a *finally* had been on the verge of escaping. “I found this young woman looking a bit shaken but otherwise unharmed. She’s not wanting to tell me what spooked her but its clear to see something did.”

“Is it her?” Detective Baron asked. His voice sounded so much like the one in her head that Phoebe couldn’t help but sneak another peek at him.

The snug-fitting black T-shirt he was wearing drew attention to his equally black hair. Her urge to touch him was great. She wanted to run her hands over every plane on his body and know if he was as wonderful in real life as he was in her dreams. She also wanted to know how it was he came to be in her dream. Since she didn’t feel like being hauled down to the station and labeled insane, she resisted voicing the questions in her mind.

Aland moved up next to her. “You got a name, sugar?”

Glaring at him, she nodded. “Yes and no part of it contains the word sugar.”

Phoebe?

She didn’t respond. The idea of letting the detectives bear witness to her talking to thin air did not appeal to her.

Phoebe, talk to me. Give me a verbal sign. Anything. Please. I need to know if you’re safe. You’ve not fortified our bond on your end so I can’t just read you. Please. Anything will work. Look around and tell me what you see, who you’re with. I’ll know it’s you then, Phoebe.

Ignoring the voice, she glanced around the alley for her bag and spotted it behind Detective Baron. Of course the sexy one who intimidated her on levels she didn’t want to think about would be the one closest to the bag. Nothing could ever be easy. “Excuse me, Detective, but I need my bag.”

His blue gaze raked over her, heating her body as it went. “Call me Sirius.”

Sirius? Of course he'd have a sexy name to go with his sexy self. The man oozed alpha maleness and it took all Phoebe had not to offer submission. Somehow, she not only managed to hold back but she did so with dignity. He was so close and the scent of oak, cedar and musk filled her head and visions of licking her way down his body consumed her. She dug her nails into the palm of her hand in hopes the action would bring her back to her senses. While it did provide a small distraction, it did little in the way of diminishing the hunger she felt for Sirius.

"Excuse me," she murmured again, her voice as mousy as her will to refrain from touching the man.

"Miss," Aland said. "We've had a lot of problems in the area and I'm sure you've seen on the news that we're asking women to avoid being out after dark by themselves. Now, I see you rushing out of this alley, looking scared to death. I'm going to assume the worst. Could you set my mind at ease?"

As much as she wanted to keep up a hard façade, Detective Werner was making it hard to do. Something about him was soothing. Phoebe couldn't remember meeting a man who radiated that particular feeling, though she had recognized it in her cousin Heather. It tended to help calm Phoebe's irrational moments which, as of late, were becoming all too common.

She smiled. "I'm fine, Detective. Really. It was dark and my mind was playing tricks on me. That's all. I appreciate your concern. Thank you."

"It would make us *both* feel better if we got you home safely." Aland's gaze went to Sirius.

"I'm actually headed to my other job. Thanks though." Phoebe walked around Sirius, keeping her distance from him as she snatched her bag off the ground. Her ballet shoes fell out and he grabbed them before she could.

"You dropped these." He held them out to her. "You dance?"

Since he was holding her ballet shoes, she didn't feel the need to answer. Apparently, though, he wasn't accepting anything other than a direct response. "I bet you're very good."

"I'm okay."

"Modest, too." A thread of amusement hung on his voice. "Just ballet or other forms as well? Or is this just a hobby?"

"More like a passion. I've been studying dance since I was little. I've had my hand in every form from ballet to zoppetto."

"Zoppetto?" Aland asked.

Sirius' lip twitched slightly before a smile broke over his face. "It's an Italian style of dance."

Impressed by his knowledge, Phoebe found herself returning his smile. It bordered on infectious. He held her shoes out towards her and lifted a brow, almost as if in a dare. Part of Phoebe wanted to tell Sirius to keep the shoes just to avoid touching him. Something about him left her with the knowledge that one touch could drop her defenses and leave her begging him to do things to her body that she'd never allowed another to do.

The idea of her dream man being real was too much. It was both overwhelming and terrifying. Dreams in her past about people she didn't know never meant good things. They ended up hurt or dead. The idea of something happening to the raven-haired detective made her stomach clench.

"Miss...?" His smoky voice rolled over her leaving her fighting a full-body shudder. The fact he had that much power over her body stunned her. The attraction she felt for Sirius couldn't possibly be natural.

"Fisher," she whispered, unsure why she was whispering. The urge to touch him was great and she had to force her hands to remain where they were.

“Phoebe!” another male voice called out breaking the spell that had seemed to settle over her.

“Phoebe?” Sirius echoed, relief evident in his voice.

She jolted and turned to see Forest, Heather’s long-time friend and hella hunk extraordinaire, standing at the opening of the alley. His light blue gaze drifted over her before settling on Sirius. It hardened. “Phoebe, what the hell are you doing? And who is he?”

“I-I’m, umm,” she snatched her ballet shoes from Sirius’ grasp, careful to avoid skin-to-skin contact, “gathering up my things. I’m fine.”

Sirius shot Forest a vicious scowl. “I think the better question is, who the hell is he?”

Aland was suddenly next to them with his hand on Sirius’ shoulder. “Easy there, I’m sure there is a perfectly logical explanation for all of this. Relax.”

Phoebe wanted to comment but Forest picked that moment to do what he did best, beat things up. He charged at Sirius and tackled him to the ground. Aland went at Forest and yanked him off Sirius.

The fiery look in Forest’s eyes shocked her. “If you harm one hair on that little girl’s head, I’ll—”

She let out a loud laugh. “Little girl? Oh, Forest, cute. You’re what? Maybe thirty? Please, you’re hardly an old man.” Rolling her eyes, she sighed. “Do all the men in my life view themselves as ancient?”

“Exactly how many men do you have in your life, Ms. Fisher?” Sirius asked, his voice hard. He pushed to his feet and looked like he was about to go at Forest.

As much as Phoebe wanted to wring the sexy, obviously jealous, detective’s neck, she held back, deciding instead to head off any more problems. She rushed forward and put her body between Forest and Sirius. “Detective Baron, Forest and I need to be going. Thanks for your concern.”

“Call me Sirius. I’ve already told you that,” he bit out. She wanted to kiss away his harsh tone and hold him close. It was illogical so she resisted.

Forest let out a disgusted grunt. “You’ve got to be fucking kidding me. Sirius Baron? I should have known. I can’t believe I didn’t recognize you.”

“You know him?” She spun around and stared at Forest with wide eyes. Phoebe didn’t wait for answer. In an instant she was on Forest, hugging him tight. “Thank the gods, I thought I had a dream about a random person and you know how those end for me. I was terrified he was going to end up dead or something.”

“You dreamt about him?”

Deciding it was best to ignore the question, Phoebe hugged Forest closer.

Forest peeled her off him and shook his head. “Enough with the hugging. Whenever you do it, I realize you have breasts and I sort of like thinking of you as permanently six years old.”

Covering her face with her hands, Phoebe did a rather dramatic sigh. “Not this again. I’m begging you. My nerves can’t handle the ‘even though you didn’t see me, I was there when you were growing up’ speech right now. The creepy guy already freaked me out enough tonight. Gatekeepers my ass. Freak. Or excuse me, Xipil the Freak.”

All men present drew in sharp breaths. Forest grabbed her to him holding her so tightly she thought she might burst. “Phoebe, what did you just say?”

“I said freak.” She glanced at his hand on her arm and smiled. “So, it’s okay for you to touch me but I can’t touch you. Got it. Does that go for Heather, too?” She batted her eyes playfully and puckered her lips. It was almost too easy to tease Forest. “I bet you’d let her touch you.”

Forest’s face fell. “Heather! She’s close! They’ll go after her, too. Sirius, watch Phoebe for me. I need to check on my...umm...my friend.”

"I'm not staying with him. I've got a strict no-cops policy. You know that. I don't really care if you know the guy or not. Besides, I'm late for work. But I'm guessing you know that already too since it's your bar I work at."

"You work at a bar?" Sirius asked, still sounding pissed.

Phoebe ignored him and stared at Forest. Her power surfaced just enough to tell her that her cousin was extremely close. She could sense Heather's concern as if it were her own. "Heather's fine."

"You don't understand, Phoebe. If one of them managed to find you, they can find all of you," Forest said. He went to rush out of the alley and she ran after him, stopping him before he got out.

"What do you mean them? Them who? And why would they go after Heather?"

Deep in her gut, she knew the answers to her questions, she just didn't want to accept them. Phoebe and her family were special. The target had been painted on them years ago, costing her sister her sanity.

Forest touched her cheek and forced a rather non-convincing smile to his face. "Stay with Sirius. He won't let anything happen to you."

"No. You stay with him." She didn't tell Forest how she was fighting the urge to lick every square inch of Sirius' body. He'd most likely freak out again. She'd managed to go this far in life without giving in to the temptation of men but since no man had ever made her think of spreading her legs for him upon first sight, Phoebe wasn't sure how much weight that carried here.

"I need to find Heather."

Grabbing hold of Forest's belt loop, Phoebe gave him a good yank to stop it. "No, you don't. She's fine. I promise."

"Phoebe, let go. I need to find..."

A tall blonde woman with emerald green eyes barreled around the corner. Phoebe giggled. "See. I told you that you didn't need to find her. She found you."

Heather's eyes widened as she almost knocked Phoebe over, hugging her tight. "Don't ever do that again! Do you hear me? If you're going to be late. Call. Don't leave me there worried sick about you. Too much weird stuff has..." She glanced at Phoebe's hand, which still held Forest's belt loop and arched a brow. "Do I even want to know? If you're sleeping with my best friend, could you spare me details about him sexually? Thanks."

"I'm not sleeping with Forest. Eww – ahh, eww. I got a mental image and now I'm sick to my stomach."

Forest unhooked her from his pants and gave her a droll look. "Oh, I'm that bad to look at?"

"Yes," Sirius said, suddenly behind her. He slid his hand over Phoebe's lower back and fire shot through her. She yelped and Sirius rubbed the area he'd touched. "Sorry."

Sorry?

She'd have commented but Heather attacked her with kisses and hugs again. "Phoebe, I was so scared. All day I've had this sick feeling in my gut that something bad was going to happen to you and then you didn't show up for work tonight. I lost my mind. Poor Forest got screamed at to the point he bolted out of the door to find you." She glanced at Forest. "Sorry."

He winked. "It's fine. I'm just glad to see you're both okay."

"Did something happen?"

Aland cleared his throat. "That is the question of the night. We've been trying to find out what spooked your friend here but she's rather tight-lipped."

Heather shot him a hard look. "My cousin is not tight-lipped. Phoebe talks to everyone. In fact, her sister and I used to have to threaten to tape her mouth shut to keep her from talking to strangers. At least she's stopped talking to herself. And if she's being selective about men she just met, all the better."

The mention of Phoebe's sister dampened her already somber mood. Heather cupped her cheek and met Phoebe's gaze head-on. Since they were the exact same height, it made for easy eye-to-eye conversations. "Hey, don't be sad, baby girl, Sidney's fine."

No part of Phoebe wanted to discuss Sidney in front of strangers. Backing up, she went into the warmth of the body behind her and closed her eyes as large arms wrapped around her instantly soothing her. Given the fact that life had been anything but calm as of late and men appeared out of nowhere, Phoebe was a bit shocked by just how relaxed she truly was.

Phoebe, tell me why you're sad.

Peeking out of one eye, she glanced around, looking for the owner of the voice in her head. While she wasn't able to locate him, she did find Heather staring at her with a questioning look upon her face. "What's wrong?"

"I like to think since we live together and are basically inseparable, you'd tell me you were seeing someone. I wouldn't have freaked out had I known you were with your new boyfriend, Phoebe."

Boyfriend?

"My new what? I'm not seeing anyone."

Heather's green gaze narrowed as she grabbed hold of Phoebe's arm and yanked her out of the safety of the arms she'd been in. "Who the hell are you and why are you touching my little cousin?"

"No, Heather! Don't..." Phoebe didn't get it out of her mouth before Heather was smacking Sirius in the side of the head. Gasping, Phoebe jumped in front of Sirius. It took a minute to pry Heather off him but she managed. The woman was tenacious, she'd give her that. "Don't! He didn't hurt me."

"I don't really care. He was acting like he knew you a little too well for my taste."

Forest grinned. "I agree. Kick his ass, sweetheart."

The smug look on Forest's face infuriated Phoebe. She lunged at Forest, only to find herself being lifted off the ground. Moisture flooded her cunt and visions of satin sheets and the memory of endless nights of passion attacked her. She could almost feel Sirius deep within her, filling her completely while they wrought pleasure from one another. The sensation overwhelmed her senses, leaving her clinging to the arms around her waist as if they were a lifeline and silently praying she had the willpower to walk away from him.

The minute Sirius' clothed erection pressed against her ass, Phoebe had to bite back a moan. Sirius didn't bother. He grunted in her ear and gripped her tighter to him as he began rocking ever so slightly against her. She wanted to bend forward and beg the man to take her, to take what she'd saved for so long but she held back. Where she drew the strength from to resist the urge she didn't know but she was thankful for it.

"Put me down," she whispered without conviction. "I still want to smack Forest."

"Enough," Sirius said, his voice deep. "Aland, wipe the stupid look off your face. This isn't funny."

"Oh, I beg to differ, Sirius. This is the funniest thing I've seen in centuries...erm...ages. I'm thinking about going to get popcorn and coming back to watch the show. My money is on the girls. I think they could take you both."

Heat rushed through Phoebe as Sirius held her. She gasped as he pressed his lips to her ear. "I think we can all play nice here. Don't you?" he said softly.

Slatkiska, why do you keep ignoring me? Talk to me. Tell me what you want.

Phoebe tried to stop her body from showing signs of arousal but failed. Her nipples were hard and sensitive, scraping lightly against her shirt and her breathing was erratic at best. Sirius' hands seemed to scorch everywhere they touched and she immediately began imagining the various places he could put them.

Breaking his hold and wiggling out of his grasp should have been easy. It wasn't like Sirius was using force to hold her in place. He was using something else. Something she couldn't fight. He was using her own body against her. Her desire. Somehow,

Phoebe managed to break his hold but stumbled a bit as the loss of contact shocked her system. She almost went back into his arms but stood her ground instead.

“Phoebe?” Heather asked, her voice low. “You okay, baby girl?”

Her gaze went to Sirius and she nodded. “I’m fine.” She took a deep breath. “Thank you both for your concern.”

Sirius reached for her. “Don’t go. Stay with me.”

It was such an odd request from a man she’d technically just met that Phoebe was speechless. Heather, on the other hand, was not. She grabbed Phoebe’s bag and took her by the hand. “Come on. You obviously need some sleep.”

Chapter Two

Sirius leaned against the wall in the corner of Phoebe's bedroom. By all rights, he should have been sick of standing in one spot. He wasn't. From the minute he'd laid eyes on the tall, beautiful brunette, he'd been unable to rip his gaze from her. Even in sleep, Phoebe was a goddess. She made no sound and he'd twice checked to be sure she was breathing. Moving around too much could bring the attention of the other Constellaziogēn male who had been with her earlier. The one called Forest. He was close, most likely lived in the same building or a neighboring one and had been periodically scanning the apartment for signs of trouble.

Sirius had sent Aland to check on the other man, sensing something different about him right away. He'd been right. Forest wasn't human. He was like Aland and Sirius, an immortal Gatekeeper sent forth hundreds of years ago from another realm to guard the portals here on Earth, protecting against unmonitored passage between realms. Humans weren't permitted to have knowledge of their kind for good reason. They tended to panic or, worse yet, worship them as if they were gods. This was no surprise. In comparison to humans, the Constellaziogēns did appear godlike. They possessed ancient knowledge of time and space, along with powerful magik. In their realm, there were twelve sections, or legions, as his people referred to them. The humans that the first groups of Constellaziogēn Gatekeepers befriended named the signs of the zodiac after each legion.

Constellaziogēn warriors who served the King did so under a legion's title. When it came time to head to Earth, the King personally selected warriors he deemed worthy of the task of protecting not only Constellaziogēn but Earth and its population as well. It went without saying that the Gatekeepers would naturally gravitate towards humans born under their legion's sign—the time of the year when on Constellaziogēn they

would return home from the wars to celebrate and be with loved ones. Even Sirius wasn't immune to the pull of humans born under the Pisces sign. The urge to protect them was even greater than with others. It was even said that the warriors' mates were born under the sign of their legion. Only the King and his council knew all the secrets of the Constellaziogēns. All Sirius was sure of was that he would live until the end of time, serving his King and doing everything within his power to uphold his duties as a Gatekeeper.

Until recently, all had been peaceful in regards to the portals between realms. The Zodiac Zone abductions changed all of that, alerting Sirius and others like him that something was afoul. The various symbols left in the wake of each disappearance weren't random signs of the zodiac like the media made them out to be. They were very clear messages spelled out in the ancient language of the Constellaziogēns. Each one was as to the point as the rest – *This is not the first nor will it be the last. We are taking what is rightfully ours – potential mates.*

A tremor moved through Sirius as he thought back to the helplessness he had felt when he'd sensed Phoebe's fear from a distance but couldn't reach her. She'd somehow managed to keep him from being able to locate her physically from the day he realized she was even alive. Mystically, he could make contact with her for indefinite periods so long as he kept his libido in check. Prior to her turning eighteen just a few years ago, that hadn't been an issue. In fact, he'd never once thought of her sexually until then. It was as if someone flipped a magikal switch when she reached majority, bathing Phoebe in a new light. A light so erotic that it was all he could do not to come at the very thought of her.

It wasn't until the start of the abductions that Sirius had realized he had the power to pleasure her from a distance. Often he'd be forced to pull back to avoid overloading her with his magik. He hated leaving her like that but wouldn't risk harming her. Their mystical connection was strong, as was the case with mates among the Constellaziogēns. The idea of finding his mate living on Earth was absurd. In fact, he'd

spent years rejecting the idea of who Phoebe was to him. He hadn't pushed her as he should to seek him out or reveal her name to him. Sirius had actually encouraged Phoebe to keep her distance. He had also made a point to try to confine his pet name for her to *Slatkiska*—"sweet". It had been what he'd referred to her as while she was growing up. It seemed safe enough, yet lately he often found himself referring to her as his wife as well and turning his old name for her into something more.

His body had burned for Phoebe's even before laying eyes on her. Sirius had found himself mentally connecting to her more and more, out of a need to not only know she was safe but also a need to be close to her in any form he could.

Phoebe Fisher.

Her name rolled around in his head, making him smile. She certainly was a Phoebe. It suited her. Having spent the span of her short life communicating in some fashion with her, he knew her personality well. She was spunky, carefree, compassionate and so very creative. Her imagination knew no bounds.

Often, as a child, she'd told him stories to chase away the sadness she sensed in him. Each story was as vivid and colorful as the next. All left his mood lighter and a slight smile on his face. The smiling tipped off Aland, his partner in both realms, that something was different. Aland had served with Sirius as a warrior in the Constellaziogēn army for centuries before they found themselves being sent to baby-sit the portals. Sirius had long since lost track of his exact age but knew he was at the very least six hundred years old. Maybe more. It didn't matter. The portals were all that were important. Others had been sent forth as well and still others followed later, as was the case with Forest Malet.

Malet. The man's choice for a human last name amused Sirius greatly. It meant cursed or unfortunate one. Apparently, Forest had a similar reaction when he'd been informed of his duties as a Gatekeeper as that of Aland and Sirius. None had been happy with the assignment but all had taken it. Earth wasn't a place a Constellaziogēn found homey. It was polluted, loud, overpopulated and even more violent than

Constellaziogēn. Nonetheless, it was the place he'd called home for centuries. It was Phoebe's home.

As Sirius watched Phoebe sleeping peacefully, he suddenly found himself very happy he'd been selected as a Gatekeeper. Without the assignment he'd have never set foot on Earth. He'd have never been afforded the opportunity to meet his mate. A tiny piece of him wanted to make enough noise to wake Phoebe to be permitted to see her emerald green eyes staring up at him. He knew better though. Forest would sense him then and come running. He'd no doubt realize Sirius meant Phoebe no ill will but he would also understand who Phoebe was to Sirius. That wasn't acceptable. No one could know. At least not yet. The idea of being forced to take a human as a mate simply because Forest had caught wind of it wasn't something Sirius would let come to fruition.

The urge to lay claim to the woman before him was just that, a primal urge. He could fight it. He had to. The portals were too important for him to be sidetracked by the need to fuck a human even if the human was psychically advanced for her race. Phoebe had somehow figured out a way to infiltrate his dreams. He hadn't been able to see her in them, but he could feel her, feel what she was doing to him. She'd not hesitated to touch him intimately. She'd kissed her way down his body and the second she went to undo his jeans, she'd been ripped away from him.

Sirius had spent the greater part of the day with a raging hard-on and a sick feeling in the pit of his gut. He shared her cousin's fear that something bad was about to happen to Phoebe. From what he could gather, something bad *had* happened. There was no doubt in his mind that another Constellaziogēn had attempted to abduct her. She was exactly what the renegade group of warriors was after— young, beautiful, true to the Pisces sign she was born under and connected to his race mystically. She'd long since had the ability to reach out telepathically and touch Sirius' mind. That in itself was nearly unheard of for someone outside their race.

He stared down at her. The need to touch her was great. So much so that he found himself edging closer to her bed.

Just one small touch. Just to know she's okay.

It was so much more than that and Sirius knew it. He also knew he'd never be satisfied with just one touch of her luscious skin. She'd become an addiction he didn't wish to have.

I'm a warrior, bred to be strong. She's human. She means nothing to me.

Lies.

As his fingers skimmed her smooth cheek, he felt his resolve crumble and his cock twitch. Phoebe smelled of bergamot and vanilla—fresh, citrusy, slightly floral and all too delicious. He could almost taste her cunt upon his lips. Before Sirius knew it, he had his magik up and over her, caressing her as he longed to do with his hands. He used his power to magikally stroke his cock through his jeans as well, wishing it was her mouth over him or her pussy taking him deep.

She moaned and rolled onto her back. Her ample breasts heaved as she arched her back. The smell of her arousal spurred him on. How something so pure, so perfect could be his still amazed him. Sirius' magik slid over her mound, eased her velvety folds open and left his cock digging painfully into his jeans. His fingers trembled as the need to replace his magik with them struck.

"Une zeena, you have power over me like no other," he whispered. The woman slept in next to nothing, only serving to drive him mad with need. It was easy to envision her spread out before him, eyes ablaze, lips swollen from his kisses and breathing shallow. Sirius could imagine Phoebe arching her back, welcoming him into her silken depths. Her cunt was tight. He knew as much from using his magik to please her. He also knew she hungered for his touch, his body, almost as much as he hungered for hers.

Sirius closed his eyes and wished for the first time in his life that the truth wasn't what he knew it was. That Phoebe Fisher wasn't his mate. Maybe, if that were true, it would lessen the pull she had over him. Before he'd seen her, it had been hard to stay

away. Now that he'd laid eyes on her, touched her, drew in her scent, Sirius knew cutting her out of his life was impossible.

His heated gaze slid down her body and he willed himself to refrain from touching her. "*Une zeena.*"

"She's not your wife until the ritual is complete and if you aren't planning on putting her under your protection, get out of her life," Forest said, his voice so low Sirius was surprised he could even hear him. The man shouldn't have been able to sneak up on him, but he had.

Sirius drew back from Phoebe's bedside and stared at the warrior standing in the doorway. Sirius' attention had been on his mate and he'd never sensed the other Constellaziogēn male nearing. The glint in Forest's eyes told him the warrior was not pleased to find him in Phoebe's room. If roles were reversed, he'd have been equally as livid. He could attack Forest but Phoebe liked him. Upsetting her wasn't an option.

"This isn't your business. See to your own mate," he whispered, not wanting to rouse Phoebe and alert her to who and what he was.

Forest folded his arms over his chest. "The way I see it, it's more than business. If Phoebe ends up abducted or dead because you dared to tip the others off that she's your mate, my mate will suffer. That's not acceptable. Hell, I'll even be upset. Phoebe's a good girl. She deserves better than a womanizing bastard who left her to defend herself all her life."

"I didn't leave her completely alone," Sirius said, unsure why he felt the need to clarify what was between Phoebe and himself. It shouldn't matter what a third party thought. Yet it did.

Forest tipped his head, seeming to size Sirius up. If the pup wanted to go rounds, Sirius would but only as a last resort. Phoebe's happiness came first. Finding Forest battered and bruised would not please her.

"You're the voice she hears, aren't you?" Forest asked.

Sirius neither confirmed nor denied Forest's charges. He simply stood there, waiting to hear what Forest expected of him. It wasn't like he'd actually claim a human, regardless of how alluring and irresistible she was. Sure, they were good for a fuck but nothing long-term. Nothing serious.

She's your mate and you want her more than life itself.

His inner conscience chastised him in spades. Not seeming to care if the truth hurt or not. Phoebe was human. It could never last. She'd grow old and die and he'd live on, forever mourning her. It was better for all involved if he just walked away.

Forest chuckled, sounding anything but amused. "The great Sirius Baron left his mate unprotected and then thinks he can come into her life, take what he wants before leaving again."

"What do you know of me?"

"That you're a legend among the warriors. That the legends extend beyond the battlefield and into the bedroom. Tales of you with countless women are the things songs are made of back home. I know that you, Aland and others that have been Earthbound as long as you have are thought of almost as godlike by the young warriors. My father spoke of you often. Of how, if I worked hard, followed orders and applied myself, I too could be a great Pisces warrior—a Gatekeeper even." Forest took a step towards him. "I know that you turned down the chance to be the King's head councilor and a position on the Round Table."

Sirius eyed the man cautiously. "Who is your father?"

"My father's name was Talfryn of the Pisces." Sadness radiated from Forest and Sirius could understand why.

Having served with Talfryn back on Constellaziogēn for almost a century, he'd known the man well. Though, at the time, Talfryn had not yet mated or had children. A little over a hundred ten years ago, news of a rebel attack on a Pisces base on Constellaziogēn traveled to him. Talfryn and many other good men had lost their lives that day.

"Talfryn was a good man and a great warrior," Sirius said, still saddened by the fact Talfryn was gone. "I wasn't aware he had a family."

Forest showed no emotion. "That doesn't surprise me. I'm only a hundred and thirty. You've been on Earth a hell of a lot longer than I've been alive."

A hundred and thirty?

"I'm impressed. You're the youngest Gatekeeper I've come across."

"Old man, you seem to forget that you and Aland were made Gatekeepers around that same age." The smile that slid slowly over Forest's face indicated he was toying with Sirius.

"I'm not accusing you of being unworthy of the position, Forest. I was simply stating that I haven't run across anyone as young as you in a very long time." Sirius expected a verbal sparring match to take place. It didn't.

Forest stared at him a moment before speaking. "I also know that you've not physically visited Phoebe before today."

"Because she wouldn't let me." Sirius clenched his fists as the truths Forest spewed forth hit their mark. They hurt worse than he ever thought words could. He had left her unprotected. His voice was only reassuring, it wasn't something that could defend her. The fear he'd felt, knowing she was in danger but he couldn't reach her, returned. He clenched his fists, needing to ground himself. Anything to keep from ripping her out of the bed and holding her to him. She wouldn't understand his burning need.

"How the hell could Phoebe stop you from coming? I moved mountains to get to Heather." Something in Forest's eyes said there was more to the story. The man was hiding something important.

"Huh?" Sirius asked, staring at his brother-in-arms, seriously confused as to his line of questioning.

Forest gave him a droll look. "You said she wouldn't let you come to her. I want to know how she kept you away."

Sirius hadn't realized he'd spoken aloud. Phoebe had that effect on him. She made him lose himself, forget what he was trained to be, a warrior, a Gatekeeper. The young human also made his body burn with a need to not only sink his cock into her, but to see her forever safe and by his side. He glanced at her sleeping form and then at Forest. "Why isn't she waking up? We aren't going out of our way to be quiet."

Forest's lip quirked. "You really don't know anything about her...about them, do you?"

"I know that she's found a way to enter my dreams, much the same way our kind would." Sirius didn't like how much Forest seemed to know about her.

"Ah, so she really is connecting with you while she sleeps. I had a hard time believing that one when I overheard her telling Heather about it. You planning on telling her?"

Sirius didn't answer because he wasn't exactly sure if he was or not.

"See, like I said, you don't know anything about them."

"I know Phoebe."

"If you say so."

Jealously ripped at his gut. "What's that supposed to mean?"

A Gallic shrug was the only answer he got from the warrior. Phoebe stirred in her sleep and her eyelids fluttered open. He stilled as her green gaze locked on him. A sleepy smile covered her face before she drifted off again. He wanted to wake up every day for the rest of his unnaturally long life and see that smile but it couldn't be.

"Make your rights to her official or get out of her life. I'll not have you bringing down the Rebellion's wrath on her just because the Fates decided to give her to you," Forest said evenly. "You should go before she wakes up. I really don't want to have to explain what Detective Sirius Baron is doing in her room in the middle of the night."

Sirius nodded. He hated to agree with Forest but the man was right.

* * * * *

Forest watched the legendary warrior leave as quietly as he'd come. He'd known from the very minute Sirius had entered the apartment he was there. It went against every fiber of Forest's being to allow the man alone time with Phoebe but he knew in his heart who Sirius was to Phoebe – her mate. He'd seen the possessive, hungry look in Sirius' eyes and had experience the fierce need to protect his own mate that Sirius now felt. Still, it angered Forest that Sirius had taken so long to get to Phoebe.

In truth, Forest had taken much longer to reach Heather than he'd have liked. Somehow, Heather had been able to hold him at bay. He'd hoped Sirius would be able to shed light on Heather and Phoebe's situation but the warrior had been too busy struggling with his feelings for Phoebe to pay him any mind.

Forest hated the fact that he carried the power of empathy. It always seemed less manly to him than the other powers he had. He'd inherited it from his mother and had done his best to hide it from the males on his home planet for fear of being chastised. It also tended to make Heather view him as sensitive when he was anything but. Though, when he'd thought about her being alone with rebel Constellaziogēns on the prowl, it made his stomach tight and tears threaten to fall. Losing her wasn't an option. He'd spent all of her life with her in some form or another. She was his everything.

In the beginning, he was much the same as Sirius was to Phoebe, a voice, nothing more. Then he learned he could astral-project at various times. He used the ability to watch Heather and her cousins grow up. It had been innocent. The driving need to see them safe spurred him onward. It wasn't until they were attacked by a group of rebels that Forest dropped everything and moved closer to them. It was difficult to befriend Heather when she was a teenager because of the fact that he was older. Though he appeared to be only thirty and would never age beyond that, it still wasn't acceptable among humans for an adult male to be quite so friendly with such a young female – it mattered not that his intentions were only to see her safe.

After much creative juggling he'd managed to become a fixture in Heather's life. They became friends, the best of friends actually, and he watched her grow into a beautiful woman. The only problem was, she still saw him as nothing more than a friend and he couldn't seem to sway her view of him. While that hurt, it didn't dissuade Forest from being in Heather's life. Nothing ever could. He'd resigned himself to the fact he'd spend the remainder of Heather's life watching her marry another, start a family and move on. He would live long after her, always loving her and always wishing he'd been able to get her to love him in return.

Forest stared out at the sun as it broke over the horizon and then glanced back at Phoebe. She was still under Heather's sleep spell and wouldn't wake until Heather permitted it. He smiled at his mate's creativity. She had no clue he knew all about every aspect of her magik though she was aware he knew most. She was also unaware that he was her mate.

The rising sun caught the highlights in Phoebe's hair and left Forest nodding in affirmation. Just because he'd never have the happiness he wanted with Heather didn't mean Phoebe and Sirius couldn't find their own. Besides, if the legends were true and claiming a chosen mate really did mean she was immortal as well, he owed it to Phoebe to allow her a chance to live forever in bliss. Losing Sidney to mental illness had shaken Phoebe to the point that Forest and Heather thought she too might snap. If Sirius could lighten her pain, give her the gift of love, he would do it.

He sighed. It was going to be a long morning but he knew he'd figure out a way to get Phoebe around Sirius that didn't include the warrior lurking in the shadows of her bedroom. At least not unless Phoebe invited him to do so.

Chapter Three

Phoebe cast a wary glance at her cousin, wishing she'd kept her mouth shut about what had really happened in the alley the night before. For some unknown reason she'd opened up and confessed it all, sparing no detail. Now, as she looked around the precinct she couldn't stop the knot forming in her stomach. The room was full of men and women who seemed to never stop moving. Many were in plainclothes and that shocked her. For some reason, Phoebe had assumed she'd be speaking to uniformed officers. Blue shirts and badges would serve to remind her of Sidney and how the men had responded to the calls of a frantic teenage girl—by turning her over to the “nut” house. She couldn't slip up and say “crazy” things if she didn't forget about her sister.

Maybe she *was* crazy. Maybe she'd dreamed Xipil up. She'd read somewhere that mental illness could often be traced through families. Maybe Phoebe was losing her mind, too. It wasn't like she didn't hear voices in her head. That alone was enough to get her locked up or heavily medicated. Maybe both.

Heather touched her knee and smiled softly. “It's okay, baby girl. Forest set this up. He'd never send us to someone he didn't trust.”

“I know. I just don't care much for police.” Phoebe couldn't help but fondle the edge of the oversized walnut desk she sat next to. A computer sat at it along with a black wire basket full of files. Whoever was its owner was neat, meticulous to be exact. The thing shined. She wouldn't have been shocked to see her reflection in it if she looked hard enough.

The adjacent desk seemed to be in a permanent state of disarray. Files were piled high, sticky notes framed the computer monitor and two coffee cups sat next to the monitor. They didn't look like they'd been washed recently. Okay, they didn't look like they'd ever been washed.

Curling her lip, Phoebe did her best to chase the butterflies away from her stomach. She ran her sweaty palms over her thighs, smoothing out her floor-length, floral-print skirt. The tiny deep blue flowers matched the denim bustier she wore. Its adjustable straps were the only reason she'd been bold enough to buy it—falling out and exposing her chest to the world was a persistent fear. So many of her dancer friends had horror stories to tell about embarrassing moments.

“Hey, you okay?” Heather asked, setting her crocheted tote on the cleaner of the two desks. “Trust them, Phoebe.”

Yeah. Like they'd really believe a man materialized out of thin air, started spouting off about her being his mate and then disappeared before her very eyes.

Oh gods, I am crazy.

Phoebe stood and drew in a deep breath. “I need some fresh air. This place smells worse than a locker room.”

“It doesn't smell that bad, does it?” a familiar voice asked.

Phoebe's entire body went rigid as she turned to find Detective Werner standing there. She knew his partner couldn't be far behind. Sure enough, she spotted Sirius moving up through a group of officers, his royal blue gaze locked on her. “Phoebe, what's wrong? Did something happen? Are you hurt?”

In an instant he was so close to her that she had to take a step back to meet his eyes. The desk greeted her and prevented her from going too far. She'd spent the night dreaming about him being near her, touching her, worrying about her, wanting her. “I'm, umm, I'm fine, Detective Baron.”

Slowly, his eyes closed as he let out a ragged breath. “Don't scare me like that. And please call me Sirius.”

Phoebe glanced at Heather for guidance only to find her cousin looking as dumbfounded as she felt. When Heather shrugged, Phoebe looked at Aland. A cocky smile covered his face as he grabbed his partner's shoulder. “Easy there, Sirius. Give the

young lady some breathing room. She's clearly in one piece and here of her own accord."

Sirius took a step back and Phoebe shocked herself by closing the gap between them. The loss of his warmth and the safety he radiated demanded she seek more of the same. The corners of his mouth tugged slightly as if he were contemplating smiling but thought better of it.

Wise man.

I like to think I am.

She froze at the sound of her invisible lover's voice in her head.

Are you going to ignore me again?

"Yes," she whispered.

Sirius smiled and she wanted to trace the edges of his sexy lips. "Yes, what?"

"Umm, nothing. I...erm...nothing."

Having trouble, Slatkiska?

The slight hint of amusement came through his voice. Phoebe gritted her teeth and tipped her head to the side. She wanted to shout at him but managed to keep her voice low. "No."

Sirius bent down enough to look her in the eyes. "No, what?"

If she didn't know better, she'd have said that Sirius was well aware of the voice in her head. Her invisible lover's voice sounded almost identical to Sirius'. Could it be?

Shaking her head, she dismissed her foolish thoughts. "Nothing. Sorry. This was a mistake." Phoebe glanced at Heather. "Let's go."

"You need to tell them what you told me," her cousin said, not moving an inch from her chair. "You do it or I will."

"It's fine. Let's just go. Please," she pleaded. The need to avoid looking like a crazed woman was so strong she almost ran from the room. Knowing that would do little to

add to her credibility, Phoebe hesitated. The feel of familiar, safe power wrapping around her kept her rooted in place.

Slatkiska, what troubles you?

Ignoring the voice in her head, Phoebe tried to maneuver her way out from between the desk and Sirius. The power held her still. Her hand skimmed the file basket and flashes of symbols, signs, bright lights and stars moved through her. Her breathing quickened as the visions changed to images of women screaming and doing their best to break free of someone's hold. They didn't want to go towards the blinding white light. They didn't want anything to do with the men who held them. It wasn't until Phoebe recognized several of the women's faces from the local news that she realized what she was seeing. Her gifts were giving her a firsthand view of the Zodiac Zone abductions.

Terrified, she went to jerk her hand away but her arm refused to move. It seemed glued to the files. More images inundated her, leaving her clinging to something big and sturdy with her free hand. Part of her knew what she now clung to was Sirius's arm but she didn't care. For the moment, he was what she needed to keep what little bit of sanity she had left.

Slatkiska, what's happening?

She couldn't have answered him even if she wanted to. The visions were that strong. Her knees weakened and she was only vaguely aware of someone's arms slipping around her waist. The horrors of the events surrounding the abductions left Phoebe on the verge of screaming.

Make it stop. Please, she pushed out with her mind. Help me, please.

There was a momentary stunned silence from her mystical man but then she "felt" his satisfaction that she'd turned to him for help. The next thing Phoebe felt shocked her to the core. Warm lips pressed down on hers. The second a tongue feathered over her bottom lip, she gasped, giving the welcome intruder the entrance he needed. His tongue darted in and traced a slow, lazy circle around hers.

Someone moaned and it took Phoebe a minute to realize it was her. Her mind told her to pull away. Do something. Anything to break what was going on. Her body did the exact opposite, seeming to mold into the large form before her. The solace she sought was there for the taking and she knew it. The power she'd come to rely on circled her, matching pace with the swirl of tongues.

The visions receded, leaving only pleasure in their wake.

"Phoebe," Heather hissed in her ear.

Grudgingly, she pulled back from the kiss and opened her eyes to find Sirius standing in front of her. She wanted to panic. In fact, panicking sounded like the best idea she'd had all day but she didn't. A calm she couldn't explain settled over her as she maintained eye contact with him.

Whistles and clapping sounded all around them, reminding Phoebe they were in the middle of a police station. Mortified, she pressed her forehead into his hard chest. Crawling under the desk wasn't an option even though it was exactly what she wanted to do.

Sirius let out a manly chuckle and drew her protectively to his body. "Ignore them."

"I hope that hot little number knows what a loser her boyfriend is," an officer ribbed from the sidelines.

"If not," Aland snickered, "I'll be more than happy to tell her."

The teasing continued. It was lighthearted and full of offers for a better man. Sirius stiffened and growled, sounding anything but amused as he held her to him. A tiny tickle of laughter bubbled up and erupted from her. Sirius stared down at her, wide-eyed, only serving to make her laugh harder. Even Heather joined in.

"You're not mad?" he asked with genuine concern lacing his voice.

Phoebe covered her mouth in an attempt to contain her laughter. It didn't work. It did however come just in time for her to begin to snort in a very unladylike fashion prompting Sirius to laugh as well.

"Come on there, honey. Let me show you what a real man can do for you," someone off to her right said.

Sirius' laughter faded fast and his eyes grew hard. Reaching up, Phoebe placed her hand on his cheek and ran her thumb over his bottom lip. "Don't, they're only teasing, *une mukko.*"

The sharp breath Aland drew in made Phoebe glance at him. His eyes were large and focused solely on her. "What did you just call him?"

She thought about it. "I don't know. Why?"

"No reason," he said in an unconvincing manner.

Heather gave her a pointed look. "Do you think you might want to stop kissing the nice detective and tell him how a guy tried to nab you in the Zodiac Zone?"

The lighthearted tone diminished quickly. Sirius eased her into the chair again and sat on the edge of the neat and organized desk. She couldn't help but lean up and peek at Aland. Sirius touched her chin and directed her attention back to him. "Before you ask, yes, it's my desk."

She arched a brow. Somehow, she had Sirius pegged as the messier of the two. He smiled and she returned it. The man had a way of both putting her at ease and unnerving her all with just a look. He took her hands in his and held them against his inner thigh. Phoebe couldn't help but look at the bulge in his jeans. It was eye level and more than she ever hoped for from a man. Relief that he wasn't really her boyfriend crept over her.

He'd never fit in me.

A deep, warm laugh greeted her mind. Ah, but I think we would fit perfectly.

Phoebe cringed, wishing her mystical man would stop picking embarrassing bits of information from her head and remain silent, at least until she was out of the police station. She could yell at him freely then.

Where's the fun in that?

“Phoebe, tell them about the guy who tried to nab you,” Heather said, drawing Phoebe’s attention. “Ask them to talk to you somewhere private if you’re worried about people overhearing. Forest swears they aren’t like others. He wouldn’t lie to me, Phoebe. And he wouldn’t send you here if he thought what happened to Sidney would happen to you as well.”

“Sidney?” Aland asked, plopping down in the swivel chair in front of the messy desk. “That’s the second time the name’s come up. Who is she?”

“Phoebe’s older sister.” Heather gave her a pensive look.

“What happened to her and why would Phoebe think it would happen to her again, here with us?”

Phoebe clutched Sirius’ hand as she forced the breath from her lungs. She began to rock slowly at first but then increased her pace. The memory of seeing Sidney being dragged into the back of a police car came to her. The next time Phoebe had seen her sister, she was strapped to a hospital bed, unresponsive due to the amount of drugs in her system.

Heather touched her upper arm. “Sidney isn’t in our lives as she once was. She’s in our thoughts and prayers but that’s about all.”

“So, she’s deceased?” Aland asked as something moved over his face that Phoebe couldn’t read. He appeared hardened by the news.

Sirius placed his other hand over hers and rubbed her inner wrist gently.

Slatkiska, you never told me your sister passed away.

She stiffened and stopped rocking. While she managed to find her voice, it was so soft that she barely recognized it when she spoke. “Because she’s not dead. She’s locked away in a psychiatric hospital and doesn’t even know who I am anymore. They said she was crazy, shouting about men who traveled through the stars without ships but rather through portals. They said she was a danger to herself and others because she kept trying to attack one of the men at the scene. She kept claiming he was one of them and

that if they didn't let her go, he'd kidnap or kill Heather and me. The police took her away and she's never been the same."

She'd never said that out loud before. As Heather's fingers swept over Phoebe's cheeks, Phoebe realized she was crying.

Heather's smile was tight, yet still managed to reassure Phoebe. "You remember what happened, baby girl?"

Her gaze went to her cousin as she shook her head. "I don't know. Some of it. The rest doesn't make any sense. I do remember the two officers tackling Sidney to the ground and then taking her with them." She tried to blink back her tears but failed. "Heather, part of me believed she really was crazy. I don't think she is anymore. Or maybe I am. Who knows. It's why I don't..."

Heather gasped. "It's why you don't visit her."

Phoebe nodded. "I want to go. But they won't believe what I saw and they'll do the same thing to me."

Sirius was off the desk and kneeling before her in a matter of seconds. He cupped her chin. The look in his eyes was nothing short of feral. "Phoebe, no one will take you from me. No one."

"Huh?" Heather asked, voicing Phoebe's thoughts.

Aland cleared his throat. "I think what Sirius is trying to say is we won't think you're crazy, Phoebe."

"But I saw a man disappear into thin air."

Heather nudged her. "Umm, I'm sure it was just dark and he blended into the shadows. Right?"

"Right. Dark. Blended in." Phoebe nodded, understanding her cousin was trying to keep her from sounding like a lunatic. "The man had auburn hair and it hung to his shoulders. Light gray eyes. Big scary voice. He was as tall as the two of you." She cast a nervous momentary look at Sirius who remained crouched before her. "His clothing

was out of place." A nervous laugh escaped her. "It was like the clothing people would wear in my dreams when I was little. Medieval, yet not. King Arthur, yet not."

Aland and Sirius exchanged looks before Sirius ran his finger over her jawline. The second his thumb skated over her lower lip, Phoebe's tongue darted out to greet it. The action should have taken her off guard. It didn't. She nipped at his thumb and his jaw went slack. The temperature in the room seemed to rise dramatically as she envisioned his cock sliding in and out of her mouth. Thoughts of sucking him while he came in waves down her throat filled her head, momentarily clouding her thoughts and leaving her control on edge. She should have been shocked, she wasn't. Too much had happened in a short span of time to do anything other than go with the feelings. So long as he wasn't trying to rip her through some white light or claim her for all time, she was happy. Xipil had sort of raised the bar on what Phoebe would overreact to.

The cords in Sirius' neck popped as if he were straining his muscles. Her gaze dropped to his bulging shaft. Tipping her head back, Phoebe moaned as he ran the pad of his thumb over her chin and down her neck.

Aland made a choking sound, drawing Phoebe out of her frenzy. It apparently had the same effect on Sirius because he stopped his sensual caress. She bit back the whimper that wanted to come. She'd made a big enough display of herself and didn't need to encourage the attraction they evidently shared.

You're killing me, Slatkiska.

She wanted to question why but held back.

Sirius sucked in a quick breath and seemed a bit unsteady for a moment. "What was he dressed in?"

It took Phoebe a second longer to collect herself. "A navy robe. It was open in the front. His pants were the same color and were like leather but I don't think it actually was leather. They opened on the sides and tied with laces. His build was similar to yours but I don't think he was as muscular. Close though."

"Sirius," Aland said, his voice cracking slightly.

"I know." Sirius turned back to Phoebe and offered her an encouraging smile. "What did he say to you, Phoebe? Be specific. We won't think you're crazy. You have my word."

She wasn't sure why she believed him but she did. She swallowed hard before continuing. "Umm, he told me not to be afraid of him and, well, that sort of tipped me off I should freak out. I mean, come on, guys in dark alleys telling you not to be afraid. Never a good thing." A slight smile came over her even though she found the incident anything but funny.

Always keep that smile, Slatkiska.

Phoebe licked her lower lip and went on. "He said he'd simply come to collect what was owed to him – me." She locked gazes with Sirius. "He talked about the Gatekeeper being foolish enough to think he could keep me a secret and then the guy started talking about me being his mate, his wife." She shuddered. "As if I'd ever in a million years say 'I do' to that guy."

Heather leaned forward. "He told her she could call him Xipil but would be calling him husband soon enough."

"Like hell she will," Sirius bit out, his voice hard.

Aland chuckled at his friend's response and tapped Phoebe's arm lightly. "How is it you got away when the other girls haven't?"

"I think it was because I kicked him in the chest and then punched him in the cheek. I caught him off guard long enough to stun him. Plus, he was by himself, or at least I think he was. Then you showed up. I don't think I'd have been so lucky if the two of you didn't come. He was big and fast. Really, really fast." She left off the bit about him being able to wield magik.

A slow, steady laugh came from Aland. "Oh gods, if Sirius doesn't marry you, I will."

Phoebe went rigid. "What? Marry? I don't even know him and I'm never getting married. Sorry but marriage is not for me."

She expected Sirius to back her, tell his friend to shut up, do anything to signify he wasn't considering anything of the sort. He just stared at her.

Why will you never marry?

Biting her inner lip, she did her best to mumble, "Can we talk about this later?"

No.

She sighed. Only she would have an invisible lover with an attitude. It wasn't bad enough she heard voices in her head, hers had issues all his own.

If you loved a man and he loved you, you wouldn't want to spend eternity with him?

Phoebe couldn't answer him anymore without risking looking as if she were insane. Her gaze went to the files on Sirius' desk and her chest grew tight. "The other women didn't understand what they were seeing. It's overwhelming, trust me. And more than one man came for them. They did their best to fight back but were too terrified by the blinding white light that appeared out of nowhere to concentrate. None of them wanted to go."

"How do you know all of this, Phoebe?" Aland asked, his voice soft.

Sirius held her hands and squeezed them gently. "Did you see it when you touched the files?"

Her breathing halted and the urge to run was great.

Relax, Slatkiska, no one's going to hurt you. You don't have to be afraid of who and what you are.

Fear consumed her. Sirius leaned forward and again captured her lips with his own. She fed from the sweetness of his mouth and realized she was still crying. The salt from her tears mixed in. The kiss, while heated, was more comforting than anything else. A promise, almost. As if Sirius were trying to reassure her that he was there regardless of her answer. She knew she should pull away but she didn't.

Phoebe took the time Sirius offered to explore his mouth. Tiny moans escaped her as he leaned into her more. One second she was kissing him back and the next she was

literally moving backwards. Sirius' mouth left hers and she immediately mourned the loss. The feeling was quickly replaced by shock when she found Sirius on his hands and knees before her and her chair a few feet from where it had originally sat.

Aland's laughter surrounded them and the second Heather's joined in, Phoebe made sense of the scene. She and Sirius had been so swept up in their kiss that they'd forgotten her chair had wheels.

Sirius glanced up at her and shook his head. "Shouldn't I be sweeping you off your feet?"

Chapter Four

Sirius watched as Phoebe glanced around her apartment nervously. Heather had left to meet with Forest and Sirius had offered to see Phoebe home. He'd wanted to take her out to eat, somewhere nice, but she'd opted for Chinese food with the promise that they could take it back to her place and eat. His cock had hardened instantly at the idea of being alone with her. He'd considered offering to take her home to his place to assure they'd have privacy. He'd resisted for no other reason than he could read her thoughts and knew she didn't normally bring men she'd just met home let alone go off to their place. The knowledge warmed him. She wasn't the type of woman who offered herself or her trust to just anyone.

He'd caught her eyeing him when she thought he wasn't looking several times since they'd left the station. It was clear she was interested in him but she wasn't acting on it. Sirius hadn't gotten a kiss out of her again since the station but hadn't pushed either. What he wanted to do was to carry Phoebe to her room, lick her sweet pussy until she was slick with cream and then bury his cock in her. He also wanted to shout "Mine" while he was doing it, thus cementing their union and making them a mated pair in the eyes of his people.

I can't believe I want to actually complete the mating process.

"Complete the what process?" Phoebe asked as she set the bag she carried on the kitchen counter. She tossed her keys aside and glanced back at him.

He hadn't said that out loud and he couldn't help but smile. Earlier, at the station, Phoebe had called him *une mukko* which translated into *my mate, my husband*. It had shocked him and left him fighting the urge to claim her on his desk. The woman had a way of making his stance on not taking a human as his mate crumble. Still, the idea of

watching her grow old and die tore at his heart. He'd outlive her. He was immortal. She was human.

"Detective...umm, Sirius?"

He snapped out of his daze. "Sorry, what?"

Phoebe opened a carton of lemon chicken and handed it to him. "You zoned off there for a minute. Where were you?"

Thinking of making you my wife and filling your belly with my babes.

Her eyes widened and Sirius realized he'd projected his thoughts out at her again. It was wrong to keep his identity from her but her skepticism of law enforcement individuals hadn't been something he'd planned on. He'd tell her. Soon. Just not right at the moment. He needed her to get to know him a bit before he dropped a bomb like being from another realm on her.

"Are you planning on eating or staring at me with a weird look on your face all night?" she asked as a slight blush tinged her cheeks.

Sirius' magik flared at the thought of tasting her and immediately filled the room. Phoebe sensed it and took a tiny step back, visibly looking around, unsure of where it came from. He tried to draw his magik back to him but it refused to obey. Instead, it wrapped around Phoebe, caressing her body as it had done so many times in the past. She hissed and clutched the edge of the counter with one hand as her other hand trembled.

Moving quickly, he reached for the lemon chicken and caught it a second before she would have dropped it. He set it aside and stared down at the woman who had given him so much over the course of her life. As a child, she'd kept him company by telling him stories and then later, when she was of age, given him sensual pleasure beyond his wildest dreams. Now, she was here, in the flesh, before him. All he had to do was touch her and he knew she'd submit.

Walk away. It can never work.

He lassoed enough of his power to make his pager go off. He glanced at it, already regretting the lie he was about to tell. "Shit, I need to go. Sorry, work."

Phoebe's green eyes glassed over as his magik continued to touch her. She nodded. "That might be best."

She wanted him to leave?

He stilled. The thought of Phoebe not wanting him should have relieved him. It did the opposite. It kicked his inherent alpha maleness into full gear. She would want him as much as he did her. There was no question.

Slatkiska, I want to feel your cunt wrapped around my cock.

"And I'm tired of being teased. You're not real and it's high time I found a man who is." Her words were clipped and said at a level humans wouldn't be able to hear. Thankfully, he was anything but human. Leaving her wasn't an option. Not with her state of mind. He'd pushed too far. Left her unfulfilled too many times. If he walked out now, he'd lose her to another man.

His mind told him to let her go. Let her find a human to settle down with and have a family—but his body betrayed him. Closing the distance between them, Sirius let his magik run rampant around them. It pulled at their clothing as it tweaked her sensitive nipples. He knew if he dared to touch her he'd never stop. Still, he drew her into his arms and dropped his lips down onto to hers. The taste of her mouth was intoxicating. She drugged him with nothing more than her sexuality. Her thoughts slipped into his mind, alerting him to the fact she knew on some level who he was, that he was the voice she heard but that she was denying it—refusing to believe he was not only present but responsive to her. He didn't understand why she'd think he'd be anything but and he didn't care. He couldn't stop now, even if he wanted to. Knowing Phoebe wanted his cock inside her only made matters worse. If he didn't get some sort of a handle on it, he'd end up fucking her on the counter.

She bit lightly on his lower lip and moaned. "Mmm, yes, the counter will work. Anywhere will work."

Sirius smiled as they continued to kiss. She was reading his mind with no effort like a true mate did and not even realizing she was doing it. As her trembling fingers moved to his shirt, Sirius mirrored her moves, pulling up on hers as well. She got his off with ease and then seemed drawn to the markings on his biceps.

“Did they hurt? Getting the tattoos done?”

“No.” He resisted the urge to tell her that they were symbols magikally bestowed upon Gatekeepers when they accepted their destiny. She wasn’t ready for that just quite yet.

He went back to work on her shirt. The second his fingers skimmed over her stomach his cock twitched painfully in his jeans. The zipper bit at him. If he didn’t free himself soon, he very well could have lasting damage.

“We need to slow down or I’ll be to the hilt in you,” he whispered between kisses.

“Promise?”

Desire along with magik began to coat his lower regions. Thoughts of Phoebe’s legs spread open for him left his breathing shallow and his knees weakened. If he fell, he’d never forgive himself. He was more than this. A warrior. Not some randy schoolboy out for his first lay.

As Sirius stared into Phoebe’s green eyes, he knew better than that. He knew that regardless of how many women he’d bedded over the course of his unnaturally long life, she was different. Special. His.

He reclaimed her mouth as he eased her shirt up. The last thing Sirius wanted to do was lose contact with her sweet lips but it was necessary to get her shirt off. He tossed it aside and palmed her breasts.

So perfect. So soft. So warm.

Phoebe moaned. He bent down and licked her puckered nipple. She quivered at his touch and he chuckled as he drew the sweetened bud into his mouth. Her hands went to his hair and she cradled him to her bosom. The need to pull back to keep from

mating himself to a human was gone. All Sirius could think about was taking Phoebe and driving his cock into her.

“Slatkiska,” he whispered, unable to help himself.

She didn't seem to notice his slip. That or she didn't care. The smell of her arousal drove him mad with lust and left him sliding down the length of her body, pulling her skirt down with him. The tiny white thong she wore barely covered a thing and he loved it. She was slick with juice. It glistened on her bare mons. Gods he loved a cleanly shaved pussy.

Who am I kidding? I'd love Phoebe regardless of what she looked like.

Sirius breathed in the sweet scent of her cunt. How he'd ever gone so many centuries without her was a mystery. The very smell of her arousal was enough to drive him over the edge. Sinking into her depth could very well be his undoing. Still, he had to taste her. Had to sample his mate's body. The urge to part her folds and taste her was great. He gave in to it. It was divine. Like nothing he'd ever sampled before and Sirius knew he'd never get his fill. She shuddered as he swept his tongue over her clit.

“Sirius, I'm going to fall,” she whispered, her body swaying slightly.

A manly chuckle came from him as he slid one hand behind her and cupped her butt. *“I'll catch you if you do. But right now I'm going taste you. I need this, Phoebe. I need you.”*

“I need you, too.”

Sirius focused his attention back on the juncture of her thighs. Deliciously soft. Perfect. His.

Mine.

“Yes, yours.” Phoebe held fast to his hair.

His heart slammed in his chest. Had she really just accepted his claim on her? Had she acknowledged what they were to one another?

He thrust a finger into her tight channel and instantly regretted his roughness as he felt her virginity break away. Phoebe cried out and then her instinct took over. Sirius caught her clit with his teeth gently and sucked. She arched in wild response to him, fisting his hair and holding his face to her pussy. He kept going, licking, sucking, finger-fucking her and Phoebe moved against his face. Her body tensed and he knew she was close. "Let it go, *Slatkiska*. Give in to it."

She obeyed and her bliss made his already hard cock throb to the point he almost came. Sirius withdrew his fingers and stared at the slightest tinge of blood on his hand. She'd waited for him. He'd been late coming to her yet she'd saved herself for him.

Kissing her lower abdomen, Sirius' mind suddenly flooded with images of her swollen with his babe. He kissed her soft skin and drew in her scent. She ran her fingers through his hair and cupped his jaw. "Fuck me, Sirius."

He went to work on his boots and jeans, making quick time with them. The burning need to be in her was too great. If he wasn't careful, he'd embarrass himself and finish before he even started.

Phoebe's gaze dropped as did her mouth. "That will never fit in me. Ever. Ever."

Biting his lip to keep from laughing, Sirius stroked his cock as he stepped towards her. "But it will. You were made for me."

He saw the questions floating in her eyes, knew she was piecing together who he was to her and he knew she wanted him. She didn't even try to hide her attraction to him. Brazenly, Phoebe stared at his cock and wet her lips. He growled and was on her in an instant. "Damn it, woman, you're making it hard for me not to make a fool of myself here."

"Mmm-hmm, can I taste you now?"

Her innocent question had almost made him come. His nostrils flared at the smell of her cunt still fresh on his lips and he couldn't stop himself. "Get on your knees."

Phoebe's lips curled into a Cheshire cat smile. Oh, she would definitely give as good as she got. She touched his hip, where another brand of his destiny lay – a tattoo of the sign for Pisces – and smiled. "Mmm, I like this."

He stepped closer to her. "Open your mouth."

She did.

"I want to fuck you here," he said, skimming his fingers over her lips.

"How bad do you want to fuck my mouth?"

Oh gods, you're killing me here.

"No, I'm just asking you a simple question, Sirius."

She'd read his thoughts again. That combined with the sight of her on her knees ready to suck him off pushed him dangerously close to the edge. He slid his hands into her silky hair and stared down at her. "Take me. Now."

Phoebe's mouth slid over the head of his cock and he was powerless to do anything other than stand and watch as she swallowed as much as she could. He bumped the back of her throat and she wrapped her fingers around his shaft, as best she could. He guided her actions. She looked up through lowered lashes as she began to bounce slightly. Her breasts jiggled, driving him as mad as her mouth already was.

"You're killing me, *Slatkiska*."

She hummed on his cock before raking her teeth over it gently. Sirius' knees almost buckled and it took all he had to stay vertical. The woman was a minx, a goddess and she was his.

Mine.

Nodding, Phoebe continued her assault of varying licks, sucks and strokes. Sirius threw his head back and growled. She would be the death of him. Her mouth alone possessed the ability to make him submit to her every desire. She pulled off his cock and drew one of his testicles into her mouth with so much care and skill a flare of jealousy tore through him.

Fisting her hair, he tipped her head back and stared into her green eyes. "How many other men have you done this to?" There was no hiding the fury he felt. He wanted to possess her fully, not share her with ghosts of other men.

Phoebe licked her way up his shaft, never once taking her eyes off his face. She didn't appear the least bit scared or taken aback by his outburst. If anything, it seemed to incite her. She raked her fingernails down his upper thighs as she took his cock into her mouth once more.

"Tell me how many, Phoebe."

She shook her head, refusing to give in to him. It drove the alpha within him wild. The need to make her concede was too great. He took the lead, fucking her mouth with quick, deep thrusts. Phoebe relaxed her jaw, letting him fuck her face. It was too much. Too good. His balls drew up and he went to pull out. Phoebe seized hold of the back of his legs, slid her hands around and inserted a finger into his anus. She pressed it deeper and cum shot forth from his cock. A spasm tore through his legs and quickly radiated over his entire body as his cum eased down her throat.

Her low murmurs and animalistic noises seemed to keep him coming. "*Slatkiska*, how many men have you done this with?"

Phoebe released him and smiled. "How many women have you gone down on, Sirius? How many have you fucked?"

It was on the tip of his tongue to tell her that it didn't matter but he held it in. It did matter. Touching her cheek, he softened his expression. "Our past can't be changed but the future is ours, Phoebe. Just you and I. Understood?"

She had the nerve to shake her head again. "No, not until I get a wedding in a church."

"We're married according to—"

Phoebe bit his upper thigh enough to get his attention. "I understand that we're married according to your ways but I want to be married according to my ways, too."

He held his hand up and wiggled his ring finger, drawing attention to the tattooed band of Pisces signs now branded on his finger. "This is eternal, Phoebe. It will never fade from my skin and it will never be replaced by another. You are my one true mate. My only wife from now until I die."

She stilled. "You can't remarry after I pass away?"

"No."

But I'll die long before you.

Her thoughts filled his head proving she was even closer to acknowledging who they were to one another. Dropping down next to her, Sirius cupped her cheeks. "No, baby. No. I'll find a way to grow old with you. I swear it." His brow furrowed. "Wait, Phoebe, does this mean you understand who and what I am?"

She nodded as tears filled her green eyes. "You're the voice. The man who has been with me all my life. The man I dreamed about and the one who..." She averted her gaze.

He held her cheeks and stared into her eyes. "The one who is your true mate."

She nodded.

"The one who has worried each and every day about you."

Phoebe licked her lower lip.

"The one who thought his heart had stopped beating the minute he couldn't reach you. The minute he thought you were going to be abducted."

Her gaze landed on him shyly and Sirius could see the disbelief in her eyes.

Leaning forward, he kissed her lips passionately. "It's true, *Slatkiska*. I thought I'd lost you and I knew I'd die without you."

"But you don't even know me."

A range of emotions tore through him. His temper rose but he quickly calmed it, knowing she had every right to question what he felt for her. "Phoebe, I know you and you know me. Don't try to tell yourself different. You were born to be my wife."

“Huh?”

“Let me claim you fully. Let me make it official.”

She tried to move away from him but he didn't let her go. “Sirius, you're not human, are you? You're like the man who tried to take me. You're one of the Gatekeepers he talked about, aren't you?”

For a split second he actually considered lying to her but knew better. “I am. As is Aland.”

“Is Forest?” she asked, her brows pulled together.

The last thing he wanted to talk about while naked with Phoebe was Forest but she wasn't about to let it rest. He nodded and she seemed to relax a bit. “I would never hurt you, Phoebe. You have to know after all these years that I'd never —”

Pressing her fingers to his lips, she silenced him. “I know. I think I knew the minute I saw you that you are who you are. I just needed a little time for it to sink in. And I've always known Forest was different. Heather's the only one of us who chooses not to see it.”

“So, Sidney knows Forest is different, too?” He hated bringing up her sister but needed to know all he could.

Pain moved over her face and he did his best to kiss it away. “Yes. She told me the day after we met him as little girls that he was from the stars. I thought she was being silly. She wasn't, was she?”

“No. Technically, to reach our realm, Constellaziogēn, the portals travel past the stars.”

She swallowed hard. “Y-your realm?” After a long blink, she sighed. “Whoa, you're really, really not human. I thought *I* was different.” Phoebe let out a soft laugh. “My husband's got me beat.”

Husband?

His chest tightened. “Phoebe, does this mean I can claim you?”

“Well, since I was saving myself for my husband, that might be best,” she said with the slightest hint of amusement in her eyes. “Of course, you’ll have to meet my parents and tell my dad he was right all along about men who can walk through time and space. You’ll also have to pretend you like my mom’s cooking, even when she makes her specialty.”

He couldn’t help but laugh. “And that would be?”

Phoebe shrugged. “We aren’t entirely sure.”

“I think I can handle that.”

“You’ll also have to accept the fact that Sidney is special. I’m not willing to call her crazy just yet, but she’s not exactly sane either.”

Pulling her to him, he did his best to keep his emotions in check. “Phoebe, she’s not crazy. Think about it. She claimed we were real and we are.”

He could see the wheels in her head churning and hoped beyond hope he was right. Sidney wasn’t crazy but merely gifted. Not wanting to lose his chance to make Phoebe officially his, he seized the moment. “Phoebe, accept my claim on you. Be, officially, my *une zeena*.”

“What do I have to do?”

He smiled. “Accept me into your body and acknowledge my claim on you. I’ll do the rest.”

The skepticism showed on her beautiful face. “And the rest would be?”

Nothing was getting past her, that much was clear. “I’ll fill you with my seed and my magik and stake my claim on you. That’s all, sweetie.”

He thought she’d deny him the chance to bond until she lay back on the carpet. Chivalry demanded he take her to a bed and claim her the proper way. His cock had other plans. Before Sirius knew it, he was easing himself between her spread legs and aligning the head of his cock to the soaked entrance. “Mine.”

“Yours.” Phoebe clung to Sirius’ shoulders as he eased his cock into her.

He hissed and bit his lower lip. “So tight. You’re killing me.”

She couldn’t respond, white-hot pain followed quickly by the pleasure of his touch consumed her. It was so different from the times he’d taken her magikally. Phoebe never dreamed anything could be more intense than the pleasure he’d given her from afar. She was wrong.

“Relax for me, *Slatkiska*. Take all of me.”

“I can’t.”

He flicked her clit, tweaking it and driving her mad with pleasure. “You can.”

Phoebe tried to focus but her flesh was taut and her body starved for something it couldn’t possibly handle. Sirius lifted her leg and slid his shaft into her more, stretching her to the brink of pain. Her breath hitched as he began to pull out.

“Don’t go.”

A chuckle came from Sirius as he plunged his tongue into her mouth. The glorious distraction was just what he needed to allow him in. Wasting no time, Sirius thrust into her, claiming her pussy with the same fierceness with which he took her mouth. Her nails scraped over the backs of his arms in an attempt to ground herself. Wrapping her legs around Sirius’ waist, Phoebe took him deeper, swearing she could almost feel him high in her stomach.

He surged forward, taking her body and making it his own. They were one. In sync and meeting each other thrust for thrust. Mind-numbing pleasure crashed into her. She tried to buck him off, needing a moment to catch her breath and to try to stave off the overwhelming sensation building deep within her body.

“Please,” she begged, unsure what exactly she wanted him to do.

The walls of her vagina clenched his cock as Phoebe reached her summit. Blinding white light filled the room as she cried out beneath him. The slight buzz she always felt whenever Sirius would reach out through their mystical connection intensified to the

point it momentarily drowned out the sounds of their lovemaking. Sirius slammed into her, held firm as his seed filled her. It was too much yet not nearly enough. She knew he'd just shared his magik with her and in the next breath, she realized her power was surging forward as well.

Sirius' eyes widened. "What the...?"

Assuming he'd pull out and away, Phoebe was shocked when Sirius did the opposite. Heat rose between them and beads of sweat began to run down his smooth chest. Unable to help herself, Phoebe lifted her head and licked his nipple. The salty taste of his sweat filled her mouth. He growled as he pumped into her again, still hard, still wanting her.

Sirius pressed into her and began making figure eight motions with his hips instead of going in and out. His lower abdomen rubbed against her swollen clit, bringing tiny gasps from her. He cupped her ass, putting all of his weight on her but she didn't care. The action left her sensitive bud getting a full-on treatment.

He reached around more and trailed a finger down the cleft of her ass. Phoebe broke their kiss and stared at him with wide eyes. He chuckled as he ran his fingers through their combined juices. The minute he inserted a finger into her anus, Phoebe jerked beneath him. Two quick pops later and the pain she'd felt washed away, allowing pleasure to take its place. She was so full. His cock buried in her cunt and his finger fucking her ass. She knew then he was right. She was truly his. He'd claimed her completely and she loved every minute of it. She loved him. She always had.

Sirius froze and arched a dark brow. His blue eyes locked on her. "Phoebe?"

"Hmm?" she asked, her mind numb from pleasure.

"You love me?"

Her answer came in the form of a slight nod and sexy smile. Sirius' response was a bit more boisterous. "You love me? Why?"

Why? What kind of question is that? Stop thinking and finish making love to me, une mukko.

"I don't deserve you," he whispered, kissing the tip of her nose. "I never did."

Phoebe bit his chin lightly and growled. "Sirius Baron, stop sulking and start fucking me."

A shit-eating grin spread slowly over his handsome face as he began grinding in her again. Wet sounds of sex surrounded her and she could think of nothing beyond having him possess that back hole with more than his finger.

"Mmm, *Slatkiska*, I will very soon but you're not ready for that just yet." Sirius added a second finger and she cried out as her orgasm hit. His cock twitched a second before she felt him filling her with his hot cum once more. Her pussy milked him and Phoebe went limp beneath him.

Kissing her lips gently, Sirius chuckled. "I feel the same way. That was—"

"Amazing," she said, nodding.

"Phoebe?"

"Yes."

He kissed her sensually and stirred slightly. "You're not human either, are you?"

"No. Are you mad?"

Laughter erupted from him. "Mad? Hell no! I just found out my wife isn't human and absorbed my power completely before returning her own and you think I'd be mad? Do you know what this means?"

She shook her head, lost.

"It means you're immortal too, Phoebe. I don't know if you were before but the minute your body accepted my seed and my magik without a fight, you not only acknowledged you're my wife but bonded fully with me, as an immortal."

That was absurd. She wasn't immortal. She went to question him about it but he put his hand out and a tiny white light appeared on his palm. It flared and then dissipated, leaving two silver bands in its place. Her breath caught as she realized what they were—wedding rings.

“Sirius? We’re really...?”

A slight smile curved his lips as he slid his band on and then did the same for her. Another flare of white light occurred and the ring seemed to almost fuse to her finger. She watched in awe as various signs of the zodiac magikally appeared on her band. The same happened with Sirius’, though the sign for Pisces was large and on the top of his. “Why?” she asked, pointing to it.

He smiled. “Because it’s the sign you were born under and the sign I help to guard, control and serve.”

She arched a brow. “I don’t understand and I’m not sure I ever will.”

Her ring finger flared once more. Phoebe looked down to find an engagement ring butted against the wedding band. The stone in it was aquamarine and breathtaking. She stared into her husband’s eyes and realized they were almost the same color as the stone in her ring. For a split second his eyes seemed to fill with water and then it faded away quickly. “Sirius?”

“It’s okay, Phoebe. Sometimes it happens when my emotions get a little out of whack.” A slow grin spread over his face. “The knowledge that you’re my wife now sort of has my heart fluttering and my entire body on overdrive—in good way.”

Rubbing her ring finger, Phoebe kept her gaze locked on Sirius, wondering just how powerful her husband truly was. He obviously had a great deal of power considering the ring situation. It was painless but that did little to stifle her shock. “Am I dreaming? That’s it, isn’t it? I’m going to wake up and find you’re not real, that none of this is.”

“If it’s a dream, Phoebe, I hope we never wake.” He planted a tiny kiss on her nose and winked. “Mmm, how about we eat and then I take you home to show you where you’ll be living?”

“Excuse me, but I live here.”

“Not anymore, *Slatkiska*. Your cousin seems like a nice girl but I refuse to share your time with anyone else. I’ve waited too long for you. I’m not about to change my ways and learn to be nice.”

Phoebe cupped his scruffy cheek and stared into his blue eyes. "I don't want to share you either and you're the nicest man I know."

He did a rather fake growl and appeared to be doing his best not to laugh. "We need to get you out more then."

Chapter Five

Phoebe slid her T-shirt over her head and glanced up at the television in the corner of the locker room. Like clockwork, the nightly newscaster popped on, looking every bit as devoid of emotion as she did every other broadcast. She waited for whatever “breaking news” the woman had this time.

Something clanged near the showers and drew Phoebe’s attention from the television. Everyone was gone for the night. She’d have come here earlier but Sirius wouldn’t let her out of his sight. Thoughts of Xipil danced in her head and Phoebe did her best to stay calm. She’d sworn to Sirius that she wouldn’t leave her apartment without him when he’d gotten paged again to go into the station and the last thing she wanted to do was alert him through their mystical connection that she was scared. Guilt managed to ebb into her already crazed emotional scale.

They’d spent the greater part of the last two days making love to the point neither could move comfortably before Sirius had conceded that he needed to show up for work at least long enough to tell them he was taking vacation time. Since he never took vacation, he had quite a bit accumulated. He’d even gone as far as to tell Phoebe he would quit his job, that money wasn’t an issue at his age and that he only worked for something to do. While she thoroughly believed him, she didn’t want him to stop working on account of her. He liked what he did, it was plain to see and he enjoyed Aland’s company. They were closer than friends, almost brothers in a way, and Phoebe refused to let Sirius give that up.

Something made a banging noise and it sounded like the heavy exterior door to the dance studio. Phoebe’s heart leapt to her throat and for a minute she could swear the pounding in her ears would cause them to burst or alert whoever was with her of her location.

Slatkiska, *what's wrong? You're upset.*

Phoebe pressed her back to the row of lockers the minute she spotted a dark shadow moving over the wall. She held her breath and tried to mentally push reassurance at Sirius. His power wrapped around her and from the way it clamped down, she realized he wasn't buying the fact she was fine. Probably because it wasn't true. The move wasn't the brightest thing she'd ever done but it was all she could think to do to ensure Sirius' safety. Dying on account of her foolishness wasn't something Phoebe wanted to happen to him.

She took a step, thinking she could run to the door and instead found herself standing face-to-face with Xipil. His gray eyes locked on her and for a moment, Phoebe forgot how to breathe. He towered over her and looked entirely too pleased with himself for having caught her off guard.

"I told you we would meet again, Phoebe."

Phoebe, what the hell is going on?

She swallowed hard and did her best not to show Xipil how terrified she was. "You can't take me now, I belong to someone else."

Gods, no! Phoebe, tell me you're at your apartment, close to Forest!

"I'm not," she said softly.

Xipil gave her a wry grin. "You're not what?"

Phoebe, listen to me. I need you to get somewhere crowded right this instant. I'm coming.

In a flash, Xipil had hold of Phoebe's hair and was jerking her towards the back of the locker room. White light flashed all around her. It was too bright to keep her eyes open but she knew if she closed them, it would be the same as giving in to Xipil. She tried to kick out, strike anything that could break Xipil's hold on her but it was like hitting at thin air. A mischievous laugh sounded and she knew her efforts were in vain. Phoebe also knew that if she passed through the white light she'd be entering into one of the portals Sirius guarded and would not return on her own.

A hand slid over hers and she was suddenly thrust away with a growl. "You mated with him!"

Phoebe bit back a "duh" as she skidded across the floor. The man clearly wasn't the brightest Constellaziogēn rebel in the bunch. She'd already announced the fact she belonged to another. Apparently, seeing was believing.

The white light faded enough for Phoebe to open her eyes. The minute she spotted the female newscaster on the television, she breathed a sigh of relief. She'd not gone through the portal. Another shadow appeared to her right and she rolled to her feet just in time to find Xipil coming at her from the left. Dropping into splits, Phoebe narrowly missed being tackled by Xipil. Instead, he went over the top of her head and slammed into a row of metal lockers.

He turned quickly, getting his bearings faster than she'd have liked. Xipil rushed her. For a minute, Phoebe could do nothing other than stare at the powerful man moving at her with inhuman speed. Something clicked a second before he would have struck her, forcing her to roll out of the way. She pushed to her feet and charged at Xipil, delivering a rather nasty kick between his shoulder blades.

He rounded on her, his eyes hard and his intentions clear. He'd be taking her regardless what kind of fight she put up. "Phoebe, you have proven to be more work than the others. Why is that?" Xipil glanced around the room. "Do you have the aid of another of our kind? I smell his power lingering. Is that it? Have you found a way to tap into your temporary mate's power?"

"Temporary?"

He smiled. "You do not honestly think I will allow you to stay mated to him, do you? I've grown tired of waiting for the Fates to hand me what is rightfully mine. I will just take a mate."

It hit her then, Xipil had never referred to Sirius by name. All he knew was that she was destined for a Gatekeeper. Remembering Forest's response to Sirius' name, she let a

slow smile spread over her face. "My marriage to Sirius is anything but temporary. I love him and I'll be damned if I let you break us apart."

"Sirius?" he asked, his eyes growing large. "No."

"Oh yeah, and trust me when I say he's really looking forward to dealing with you and your buddies."

For a minute, Phoebe thought Xipil would flee. He didn't. "Tell me, Phoebe, when is the last time you visited your sister?"

Her breath caught in her throat. "What's wrong with Sidney?"

Xipil shrugged nonchalantly. "Nothing other than the fact she foolishly separated herself from you on purpose. With no mate present, and two powerful females in one location, you were like a beacon to us. She sensed this." He smiled. "She even managed to keep us at bay. There is even word that she managed to reach a Gatekeeper, summoning him forth to aid in protecting you."

The voice in her head. Sirius. Sidney had been the reason she linked with Sirius?

"What do you want from me? You have to realize that I'm not about to run off into the sunset with you and that my husband will kill you when he gets his hands on you."

Phoebe, get down and cover your eyes. You don't need to see what I'm about to do to this traitorous bastard.

She would have commented but Xipil picked then to do something she'd never dreamt possible. He pointed at the television in the upper corner of the locker room and the channel changed. While that in itself wasn't nearly as impressive as him floating or making humans disappear the image he managed to pull up was. On the screen was an image of Phoebe, Heather and Sidney as little girls. Their dog Copper was with them so it narrowed the time frame down considerably since he died when Phoebe was only eight or nine. Seeing the love in her sister's eyes as Sidney helped the younger version of Phoebe double-knot her shoestrings left her on the verge of tears.

"You were destined to be one of us," Xipil said as she continued to stare at what looked like a home movie. The others, the Gatekeepers, do not see what we see. The

resistance knows the truth. You and the others like you, Phoebe, are more than connected to us. You're not human like the others wish to believe. See for yourself."

Phoebe watched as the younger version of herself sat down near the sidewalk to direct Sidney on how to best make her chalk drawing. Sidney, four years older, glanced at Heather, who was the same age as her, and sighed. "How long do you think she's going to keep making us draw the same thing?"

Heather laughed. "You don't want to know."

"You're not putting all of them on there again. Why?"

Sidney gave her a droll look and pushed a handful of black hair out of her face, revealing a pair of royal blue eyes. Yellow chalk was smeared over her cheek. "Because you just keeping making up new ones so I have to draw more."

"No I don't. Lynx is real. It's just not as old as most of them. But it's really up there. It's another gate point. A secret one." The look Phoebe cast the other two girls was very dramatic. "Don't tell anyone that it's a gate point too because they'll know I visit and they'll get mad."

Sidney and Heather exchanged worried looks. "What do you mean visit?" Sidney asked, shifting a bit to face Phoebe head-on. She smiled. It was forced but warm all the same. She'd always been able to make Phoebe feel like all would be well even when it was clear, it wouldn't. "Phoebe, please tell me you're just making up more stories."

Heather nudged Sidney. The two had been the best of friends and often mirrored each other's movements. "What? You don't believe her, do you? I mean, no one can..." She stopped and bit her lower lip. "What if I told you I dreamed about this constellation?"

Sidney's gaze leapt to Phoebe.

"Ooo, want to go for real? Here." Phoebe put her hand out and the air around them began to swirl. Pink petals from the flowers near them blew around their heads giving an already intense moment an edge that left Heather and Sidney running towards her.

“Phoebe, stop! They’ll sense you! They’ll come and steal you like Daddy said they would. Stop!”

“But, don’t you want to see it? It’s very pretty. It’s like when we go to stay at Great-Grandma’s house. Lots of trees, birds—really big birds. I saw a purple one before. Honest to Gods purple.”

Several men appeared out of nowhere. Phoebe hadn’t realized they’d done that at the time. When she was eight, she assumed they’d walked up while she wasn’t looking. In fact, the entire event had felt more dreamlike than anything. Seeing it replay now helped to jar her memory and to fill in the blanks.

All the girls were tall for their age but the men still looked like giants next to them. One of the men grabbed her around the waist and she screamed out. Copper lunged at him, biting his arm, causing him to drop Phoebe.

Heather and Sidney seized hold of Phoebe’s arms. They pulled so hard that they all toppled into a pile. The men converged on them. Sidney pushed her way to the top of the pile and stared defiantly up at the men. She said something in a language Phoebe didn’t recognize and the men were instantly sucked backwards.

Phoebe had been pinned to the ground by Heather, who shielded her eyes from the horrors around them. Whatever Sidney had done looked painful for the men as they were pulled into what could only be described as a vacuum. Seeing it now as an adult, Phoebe had a whole new respect for Sidney. No longer did she see her as crazy. She saw her for what she was—someone who protected those she loved with all her heart and all her power.

Heather shook and it was clear she was terrified. Phoebe cried and Heather instantly began to sing a soothing song as the winds died down. It was at that moment Phoebe realized she was right when she’d thought of Heather’s ability to calm her matching Aland’s and Sirius’. It made sense. Heather possessed gifts similar to theirs.

She concentrated on the image before her once more. Sidney turned and faced her and Heather. She whispered something else in a language Phoebe didn’t know and

smiled, her image freezing. Xipil sneered. "Do you know what she did for you, Phoebe?"

Phoebe, get down now or so help me I will drag you to the ground! I can't use my magik until I know you're clear. I'm almost there, baby. Aland is close. He's waiting for my command to move in.

She ignored Sirius' voice in her head and focused on Xipil. "I didn't remember all of that but I do now."

"Of course not. She cast a memory spell on you and Heather. She did it so you could both still sleep at night. Though in doing so, she isolated herself, never able to talk about what had happened, what she knew was going to happen." He took a step towards her. "You see, Phoebe, your sister was well aware we would keep coming for you all. She shouldered that burden on her own to allow you, the baby girl, to live without fear. It drove her mad. You drove her mad."

She shook her head. "No. I didn't drive Sidney crazy. I didn't. Did I?"

Xipil put his hand out to her. "Come. I can fix her, Phoebe. I can make Sidney whole again. All you have to do is agree to come with me. To join me."

Phoebe, get down!

This time, she listened. Dropping down, she felt a blast of hot power shoot over her head. It slammed into Xipil and he tumbled backwards. Another man appeared out of thin air next to Xipil. The second she spotted scars on his left forearm, Phoebe recognized him from that day, long ago when Copper had attacked him. What she'd long since pushed deep into the recesses of her mind, labeling as a nightmare, now rang true. Her temper flared as did her power.

Close your eyes, Phoebe.

She didn't answer. Instead, she rose slowly, narrowing her gaze on the newest addition. He smiled and licked his lower lip. "Xipil, she is even more glorious than you said." The man made a move to come at her and she couldn't help but laugh. "You think me funny, human?"

“Very,” Phoebe replied, doing her best not to snort.

Xipil watched her closely. He was clearly the smarter of the two men and that wasn't saying much. The man with white-blond hair and the scar on his arm disappeared, only to reappear directly in front of her. “I visit your sister often, Phoebe. Shall I tell you what I do to her while she's strapped down?”

Get down! Aland wants in but he's afraid of hurting you. Whatever that man is saying is driving Aland to a point I've never seen him at. Get down now!

The newcomer reached out for her. She knocked his hand away and brought her knee up, coming into direct contact with his groin. He doubled over and she delivered an elbow to the back of his head. He went down fast. Phoebe kicked out again, hitting his groin once more. Her breathing was ragged as she glared down at him. “What have you done to my sister, asshole?”

Xipil clapped. “Well done, Phoebe. Do you have any idea how hard it is to take down a Constellazogēn even when you are one yourself? I find it nearly impossible to believe one as young as you can do it. Had I not seen it with my own eyes I would not have believed it.”

The man on the floor grabbed her ankle and yanked her foot out from under her. Something wrapped around her. It wasn't arms. Hell, it wasn't even there. It was magik. Pure. Simple. Friendly. She couldn't help but smile. “Thank you,” she whispered.

Don't thank me. I fully intend on spanking you for this later. I said get down and I meant it, une zeena.

In the blink of an eye, Sirius was there, slamming into Xipil and knocking him back into the wall. Plaster broke, leaving a perfect indent of Xipil's body. The man on the floor pushed to his feet and Phoebe's entire body tightened.

Sirius spun around and narrowly missed taking a foot to the head. The man with the scar lashed power out at Sirius and Phoebe reacted instantly, throwing her own

power out and over Sirius. Both men appeared shocked. Her gaze flickered to Sirius. "I won't hurt you. I promise."

The man with the scar grinned and tapped the force field encompassing him. "I sensed this in you when you were just a child. I knew. I told the others that you and the other girls were more than just human. I bet you're as sweet to taste as your sister. I bet your—"

A boom sounded, shaking the room as a blast of power shot past Phoebe and struck the man with the scar. He screamed out as a ball of yellow light encompassed him. What should have been horrific was oddly captivating. Phoebe watched in stunned silence as Aland walked out from behind the lockers, his face hard and his nostrils flaring. "What did you do to Sidney?"

The man shook his head. "N-nothing. I-I swear. She doesn't let anyone near her. S-she's powerful."

"You're lying!" Aland shouted, thrusting additional power at the man. "What the fuck did you do to her? You had no right to look upon her, let alone touch her! No right!"

Sirius tossed power around Xipil's unconscious form and Phoebe watched as Xipil seemed to be sucked into a long, funnel-shaped white portal that opened directly behind him. Her husband's gaze landed on her and then flickered to his friend. "Aland, don't do this. Send him to the King's dungeons to await trial. Killing him isn't the answer."

"He hurt Sidney," Aland said, his voice barely above a whisper.

"You know my sister?" Phoebe asked, shocked by Aland's response.

Sirius shook his head and directed his attention at Aland. "You can't help her if you're being held on charges by the King."

Help who?

His mate.

Sirius' answer shocked her. One, because she'd actually managed to perfect the art of communicating via their mystical link, and two, because she got the distinct impression that the mate her husband was referring to was Sidney.

Aland's expression softened slightly and a funnel much the same as the one Sirius had created for Xipil appeared behind the man with the scar, carting him away to oblivion for all Phoebe knew.

"These weren't the only rebels, were they?" Phoebe asked.

Sirius covered the distance between them and wrapped his arms around her. "No, *Slatkiska*, they are just a drop in the bucket. The rebels are getting more aggressive. Aland, Forest and I will need to visit the King to discuss the matter with him." He kissed the top of her head and exhaled deeply. It was then Phoebe realized he was shaking. "First, I'm taking you home and giving you the spanking I promised."

She gulped. Surely he was kidding.

I don't joke when it comes to your safety, une zeena.

Phoebe would have commented further but she noticed Aland staring up at the television and found a frozen image of a smiling adult Sidney on it. Reaching up, he skimmed his fingers over Sidney's cheek and closed his eyes. "I'm so sorry. I didn't know."

* * * * *

Sirius delivered another swat to Phoebe's ass cheek and followed it up with kisses as he leaned over her body. She was spread-eagle on his bed, naked and practically oozing cream. His little minx of a wife was enjoying being spanked way more than she should. He'd foolishly thought he'd be teaching her a lesson. The only one being schooled was Sirius in the fine art of how very much Phoebe had him wrapped around her finger.

Phoebe's skin was flushed and pink in the areas he'd doled out her punishment. He nibbled at the flesh of her ass playfully, loving how warm and welcoming she was. She trusted him fully, as she should.

Spreading her cheeks, he settled between her spread legs and licked the cleft of her ass. Phoebe jolted and tried to move away. He pinned her in place and shook his head while he rimmed the tiny pink rosette before him.

"Sirius!"

He chuckled into her ass, enjoying the knowledge that she was as excited as he about what was transpiring between them. The swollen lips of her pussy were so close that he had to sample them as well. Her sweet taste assailed him, driving him onward, making his already hard cock twitch with the need to sink into his wife any way he could.

Phoebe bucked beneath him and moaned as he slid his hand around to tweak her clit. Sirius used his free hand to give her ass cheek another light swat and she clawed at the sheets.

"Sirius."

He moved up and slapped her again. She shuddered beneath his touch and the smell of her arousal intensified. "No. Not yet. You were a bad girl. Now you need to learn to behave yourself." Slipping his finger into her pussy, he pulled it free, bringing with it Phoebe's natural juices. He trailed a line to her anus and pushed his finger in.

She quivered. "Yes."

"Yes, what?" Using his free hand, Sirius gave another light swat to the fleshy part of her upper thigh. "Do you want more?"

"Mmm, yes. More." She shoved her butt upwards, taking his finger deeper.

The second Sirius felt the muscles in her ass contracting and heard Phoebe cry out, he knew an orgasm was strumming throughout her body. Continuing to finger-fuck her ass, Sirius watched as his wife gave in, riding her peak to its finish.

She glanced over her shoulder and a sexy smile graced her lush lips. "For the love of dick, please fuck me!"

Smiling at her interesting twist of phrase, Sirius could do nothing more than what she asked. Inserting his tongue into her cunt, he used it to fuck her while still stimulating her ripe bud. Phoebe rubbed against his fingers as tiny animal noises came from her. It took Sirius a moment to realize he was making just as many noises as she was. She came with a start, clenching his fingers as she screamed out.

"That's it. Scream for me, *une zeena*." He lapped at her pussy, drinking down her sweet cream. "I'm going to fuck this tight little ass of yours and make you scream for me again."

Rising up and over her, Sirius held tight to his cock as he stared down at his wife's glistening ass. He didn't wait. He pushed the head of his cock into her dark channel and nearly came as the muscles of her ass bore down on him.

"Never—" He thrust into her, ramming his balls to the hilt. "—disobey me again, Phoebe."

She cried out below him, clinging to the sheets as she bucked against him, meeting him thrust for thrust. He was trying to teach the woman a lesson and she was getting off on it. Pulling his cock free of her body, he shook his head. He would not stand for this. As he went to make his "stand" he watched her tiny hole. Unable to help himself, Sirius thrust into her ass again, going to the point where he could go no more and growling.

"Mine," he whispered, reached around her and pinching her nipples. He fucked her long and hard, taking her ass like a possessed man. In many ways, he was. Phoebe owned him now. He had no doubt of that.

Releasing his hold on her nipples, Sirius slapped her ass again and Phoebe dropped lower, taking him with her. "I'm coming, Sirius! I'm coming."

And she was. The walls of her ass closed in on him even more than normal, clenching down, leaving him no other option but to give in to the pleasure as well. His balls drew up and he shot seed deep into her body, filling her completely.

Kissing her shoulder, he let out a soft chuckle. "Somehow, I think you missed the point of this, Phoebe."

"No I didn't," she said, glancing over her shoulder. The minute her green eyes locked on him, his chest tightened. "You were worried and you love me."

"Yes, I do. With all my heart."

"I love you too." She grinned. "Now, I get to spank you."

He would have argued but the thought of being at her mercy made his cock stir. Sirius nodded. "First, we shower. Then, you can have your way with me, *Slatkiska*."

About Mandy M. Roth

I grew up fascinated by creatures that go bump in the night. From the very beginning I was odd and creative—a combo every mother hopes for. After studying art all the way through school, I majored in it at college. One rather unexpected child later, I changed my major and finished with a great balance of art and business. I'm working on my MBA with a concentration in marketing but it's taken a back seat while I plug away at the keyboard.

I live in Ohio with my husband and three boys. They definitely keep me busy. Between convincing one he really doesn't need to have his eyebrow pierced, listening to the middle one's philosophy on life and pulling the youngest off the countertop, I do manage to eek in a very small amount of writing time during the day. More often than not, my writing is done from 8pm until 3 am.

If the following years are half as good as my first one in writing, I'll be a happy gal! I'm doing something I love, meeting tons of new people, have the greatest readers in the world and the support of my family. The only thing I still don't have is that hot lycan on a motorcycle. I'm working on it, though.

Mandy welcomes mail from readers. You can write to her c/o Ellora's Cave Publishing at 1056 Home Avenue, Akron, OH 44310-3502.

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