

Chapter 8

The lobby was decorated with an old celtic feel. The floors and walls were cut, carved stone and large wooden beams arched up to the ceiling. The beams were decorated with elaborately carved gaelic sayings that were most likely wasted on the average patron. But Aislinn was entranced by the intricacy and the beauty of it all. There were stained glass murals high on the walls that through beautifully colored shadows across the floor from the sunlight streaming in. There were tapestries lining the stone walls and sconces holding lighting that looked remarkably like flames. It was as though she had stepped into some different city. No wonder this place gets so much attention, she thought.

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As she waited she contemplated the names of the two businesses. The name of the restaurant, Teigh-oesda, was actually "the pub" or "hotel" in gaelic. The name of the casino, Madadh-Allaidh Seobheidh, was "wolf den". She thought about Cullen's eyes and the growling. She didn't really know how to take it all. She was smart enough to make the movie world guess and jump to really insane conclusions. But she just couldn't force that thought into her head. At the same time, she thought, I wouldn't have ever believed that there were druids until I'd had to run away from their creepy culty "circle."

It wasn't too long before the woman returned and then asked Aislinn to come with her. She led the way back through the door next to the desk, passed a set of doors that waiters and waitresses were going in and out of on the wall that would have shared with the restaurant, and toward a similar set of doors farther down the hall. "This way," she said with a smile. The woman hesitated a minute and turned to look at Aislinn. Her eyes flashed with curiosity. "I'm sorry I just have to ask, how do you know, uh, Cullen?" Aislinn noted the strange emphasis the woman placed on his name. Almost as if Aislinn shouldn't have been allowed to use it. The tone reminded Aislinn of a parent pointing out to a child that she should be more formal when speaking of adults.

Aislinn had really hoped that question wouldn't come up. She cleared her throat. "He helped me out last week. Uh, he thought the guy I worked for wasn't very nice and suggested I get a job elsewhere."

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The woman looked at her as if she didn't believe what Aislinn said, but didn't press the issue farther. She just turned around and led the way through a door at the end of the hall into an office. There was a man in a gray suit shuffling paperwork at a desk. He looked up and motioned for Aislinn to come in. The woman immediately headed back out the way they had come in.

Jenna showed up at the den late that week. She was excited and waited all afternoon for Cullen to manage enough time to meet with her. For his part he had been finding as many extra things to do as he could come up with. The woman was driving him crazy. Ever since he had agreed to the mating she had been calling non-stop and making a fuss. As far as he was concerned, this was supposed to be an arrangement of convenience and nothing more.

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Brennus Teirneech, Jenna's father, was dying. He was ancient. Jenna was his only child and he wanted his bloodline to retain some power in his clan. Cullen owed the man a great deal. Brennus had been an alpha when Cullen was still a child. If it weren't for Brennus Cullen would have been killed centuries ago. But as time wore on Cullen came into his own power. He had never been interested in being an alpha, but he was more than strong enough mentally and physically to do the job. He had created clan Arneuk a long time ago and it was now one of the most powerful clans in northern America. At the same time Brennus was growing older and becoming less influential among the stronger members of the Teirneech clan. It was more than apparent that his child would not be able to succeed him and the vultures were clamoring for his throat.

Brennus's plan was simple. He called in an old favor. Here was his beautiful daughter Jenna. Cullen couldn't debate that point. The girl was attractive. Cullen owed him a favor and was more than strong enough to merge the Teirneech with the Arneuk. Brennus wanted the Teirneech name to be carried with one of Jenna and Cullen's children and when the child was old enough to rule Cullen was to give the Teirneech land to Brennus's grandchild. Brennus's only hope was that he would be around long enough to see it happen. But he had no delusions about his ability to hold his position as alpha for much longer.

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