

# *Tears Of The Sea*

by  
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<http://chasethedream.net>

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For the Goodreads M/M Romance's Don't Read in the Closet, Hot Summer Days challenge.

A written description of the image that inspired the story is provided. If you'd like to view the picture, please feel free to join the Goodreads M/M Romance group ([www.goodreads.com](http://www.goodreads.com)) and visit the discussion section: *Hot Summer Days Letters*.

For Carole-Ann  
Thank you for giving me such an inspiring prompt and picture.

Dear Author,

This is David, tied up at midnight on a sultry midsummer's eve.

*[PHOTO: Almost-liquid blue light pools over the arched-back naked body of a bound and blindfolded man. Supported only by the back of the wooden chair under his shoulders, he waits in stillness. His head tilts back, neck stretched, roped hands hanging, body tense under a perfect web of white kinbaku bindings.]*

Is he magickally bound by his Fae lover; or is his vampire boyfriend playing a joke? Or is it his Master just having a normal evening indoors?

Whichever; but I hope David enjoys the outcome.

Love,  
Carole-Ann



## *TEARS OF THE SEA*

By Marguerite Labbe

“LIAM, what are we doing here?” David hovered in the doorway to the bare room. It held only one stick of furniture, a polished wooden chair sitting in the center with a closed duffle bag lying nearby and a bucket on the other side. It reminded him uncomfortably of an interrogation chamber. Not that he had any personal experience with a place like that and he didn’t intend to start now.

Liam moved to center of the room and looked up at the glass ceiling. The full moon had risen early and now hung straight overhead. No clouds marred that perfect brilliance. The light coming through the glass had a strange quality to it, a quality that tugged at David deep inside.

He turned his gaze away, uncomfortable with the way it made him feel. It had always been like that when he looked at the full moon. A sense

of aching loss and drowning need that made no sense. So David preferred not to linger on it.

“Beautiful isn’t it?” Liam glanced over his shoulder at him before turning his attention back to the sky. The moonlight limned his friend’s lean body reawakening that oh-so-familiar desire that David fought since the first moment he met Liam. That they were both married and not to each other didn’t seem to faze his baser instinct one bit. “Almost like looking at it from under the water. Not quite, but close. You ever miss that, staring at the night sky from under the water?”

“Dude, I can’t swim. You know that.” David frowned and came further into the room, letting the door latch shut behind him. Liam had driven for two hours, just to bring him to an oddly familiar empty room. And it had been impossible to get any words out of him during the trip. “I thought you couldn’t swim either. And why the hell would you want to at night? Sounds dangerous.”

“We used to, years ago.” Liam turned toward him, his eyes intent in a way that made David want to take a step back. “Don’t you remember, swimming in the moonlight in nothing but our skins?”

“Okay, now I know you’ve been smoking something. I never should’ve let you talk me into this outing. Come on, our husbands are probably wondering where the hell we are.” David had never gone skinny dipping in his life and he definitely would’ve remembered going with Liam if he had. It was time to get home before David did something he would probably regret in the morning. Liam had not brought him out all this way for a secret tryst and it had been wrong of him to even consider the idea.

“I’m not going back to Donovan. Not ever again.”

David stared at Liam in shock. The moonlight poured over his face, sharpening angles, deepening shadows and David had the strange, unpleasant feeling that this Liam was not the same man he’d gotten to be friends with in the last two years.

His eyes roamed over Liam’s face, picking out the differences since last weekend. He looked as if he hadn’t shaved since then. A thick stubble

covered his jaw and cheeks and even his brows seemed heavier than normal. The change from his usual tidy appearance to something almost untamed had provoked a wild response in David. Perhaps that was why he'd gotten into the car with him without bothering to tell his husband that he was going to hang out with Liam for a bit.

David had to look away, inexplicably torn between the urge to flee and go back to where everything was safe and normal, and the urge to stay and find out what was going on with Liam. They shared a quiet, unspoken bond. One that David had never quite understood, but chalked it up to them being married to twin brothers. Only now that bond didn't seem so quiet anymore and all those feelings that David had dammed up stirred inside of him.

"I wondered when you'd be ready to talk. Why don't you tell me what's going on with you and Donovan?" If Donovan hurt him... David broke off that thought and forced his hands to unclench, stunned by the depth of his protectiveness.

"I don't even know where to start. Him and Anthony both."

David drew back at the sound of his husband's name and fiddled with the ring on his left hand, worrying it on and off with his thumb. It had a tendency to slip free and he was forever losing it. "What about them?"

"They've lied to us, betrayed us, and took advantage of us in the worst way possible."

A cold, sick feeling settled in the pit of David's stomach at the raw anger in Liam's voice. "What the hell are you trying to say? That they cheated?" He couldn't imagine Anthony or Donovan doing anything like that. They were so controlled. They didn't seem to type to let passion rule them unless they had an underlying reason. He would stray before Anthony ever unbent enough to engage in a wild affair. It would probably do him some good.

"Worse. So much worse." Liam came toward him and once again David had the insane urge to step back. Not that he thought Liam would hurt him. He'd never do that, but something fucked up and strange moved in the

humid, summer air tonight. Liam grasped him by the shoulders, stepping close in a way that had David's heart picking up. "They stole everything from us."

David gripped Liam's biceps, giving them a gentle squeeze and holding him at bay. His friend made him dizzy when he got too close like this, always had. And David had the craziest little urges to fist his hand in Liam's short dark hair and—. He jerked his thoughts away from that route. "Liam look. Let's go to some diner and talk this out. Things will seem more normal in the morning."

He tried to extricate himself from his friend's grip. Liam shook his head, his fingers digging into David's muscle. "It'll be too late in the morning. I'll be long gone."

"Whoa, wait. Gone? Gone where? You can't go." Liam couldn't leave him all alone. An inexplicable panic rose up that David couldn't banish. And he couldn't explain either the thought or the emotion other than it held him fast. "I'm sure you're blowing this all out of proportion. Talk with Donovan. I'm sure he's got a good explanation for whatever's bothering you."

Liam cupped David's cheek with a calloused palm. His thumb rubbed back and forth along David's jaw, scattering his thoughts and filling him with confusion and longing. It seemed familiar, even though David knew that Liam had never touched him like this before. The longing he was used to, the familiarity unsettled him. He started to shift back and Liam slid his hand around to the back of his head, stopping him, and pressed their foreheads together.

"Do you trust me?"

"You know I—"

"Don't. I need you to really think about this." Liam's eyes gathered the moonlight and glinted fiercely. "Because if this is going to work I need your trust. I don't want to do this Donovan and Anthony's way."

David studied the hard planes of Liam's face: the dark almost-beard, the prominent lift to his cheekbones and the full, sensual lips. He'd never

known Liam to lie or manipulate others and whenever he'd needed him, Liam had been there with his steady presence.

"I do trust you, Liam. Now please, tell me what's going on."

"I will, I swear. I'll tell you everything." Liam stepped back and led David over to the chair. "I don't think words alone will be able to convince you. I'm going to have to show you what I'm talking about, make you feel it."

David let himself be seated in the chair and he rubbed his palms on his cargo shorts, trying to quell his racing heart. Liam crouched down next to the duffel bag, rummaging through the contents.

"What are you going to show me?"

"I'm going to tie you down, strip away everything that seems normal from you and hope that it will help you to remember who you are."

At those cryptic words, Liam rose with a length of white rope and David's heart jumped up into his throat. Liam ran it between his hands, fingering every inch of the length in a slow caress. David should be afraid and he wasn't. Instead heat stirred David's blood and he strained to look over his shoulder as Liam came up behind him. "Kinky. Why don't we have this conversation somewhere in public instead?"

"I thought you said you trusted me." Liam crouched behind him and David's pulse leapt as strong hands closed on his wrists, drawing them together.

David trusted Liam. He didn't trust his own body not to betray his attraction to his friend. An attraction that grew with every passing minute. "I do trust you, but this doesn't seem like a practical joke kinda vibe. And other than that, I can't think of any other reason why you'd want to tie my hands." The rope wound around each wrist several times and loped around into a sturdy knot. Liam had done it so fast that David found himself bound before he could really put up an argument.

Liam pressed his forehead against the back of David's head. "It's absolutely not a practical joke. I've never been so serious in my life." Fingers stroked David's hair, brushing it back from his temple and sending a

shiver along his skin. “It’s a full moon on a Midsummer’s night. It’s a time for breaking down barriers.”

“When did you get all superstitious? You’re not making any sense.”

“Do you remember how we used to play tag when we were kids?” Liam returned to the bag and retrieved a longer piece of rope. Once again he ran it through his hands as if checking for weaknesses. David would rather have those caressing hands on him instead. Maybe it was best that he was tied up because his thoughts refused to behave themselves tonight. “We’d get as close to shore as we dared and chase each other through the surf. My mum used to get so mad at us.”

“We didn’t know each other as kids. We only met two years ago.” Where the hell was Liam coming up with this stuff? It would be nice to still have one friend from childhood. It seemed like the only people he knew in the world were Anthony, his husband’s twin and Liam.

Liam stood in front of him, straddling the chair in one easy motion. David swallowed hard as that tingle of awareness went through him again. This wasn’t the first night that he’d noticed how good Liam smelled, making him want to bury his nose in the crook of Liam’s neck. It was harder to dismiss right now with Liam so close and David helpless. His friend slipped the rope around the back of David’s neck so the ends dangled down his chest.

“Close your eyes and picture it.” Liam brought the ends together and tied a knot several inches below his collar bone, another knot above his navel and a final one just over his pelvis.

“How can I do that when I have no frame of reference for what the hell you’re talking about?” It was a stupid waste of time when Liam really needed to be telling him how their husbands had betrayed them. “What does swimming or tying me up have to do with Anthony and Donovan?”

“Everything.” Liam dropped the rope with a shake of his head. “You aren’t even trying. You keep fighting it. I’d hoped you wouldn’t need this, but I came prepared just in case.” He leaned over and dug through the bag, coming up with a blindfold.

David tried to move away from him, though he couldn't go far with the chair digging into his back and his hands bound. If Liam blindfolded him he would be completely helpless. For the first time, true fear touched its cold fingers on him. "You don't need that."

"Are you sure?" Liam cocked his head, assessing him. "I thought it might be easier to imagine what I'm saying if weren't so busy watching me and wondering what I'm doing."

"Yep, see." David shut his eyes and tried to picture them swimming, but his mind kept darting about like a fly caught between a window and a screen, both taunting freedom as they kept him trapped. He hated feeling like that, like the how even the air pressed against him, holding him captive. Warm hands caged his face and David tried to pull back until he realized that Liam wasn't holding the blindfold anymore.

"Let me help you," Liam whispered, his voice warm and compelling. "Just listen to my words, don't fight it. We were about eight the first time we ventured so close to shore without our parents, filled with excitement and daring, urging each other on."

The idea of two young boys swimming in the ocean unsupervised was so incredibly ludicrous that David sighed. He kept his eyes closed though as Liam continued. "It was late at night, the moon almost set. Not a full moon that night, just a thin sliver and—"

"No wonder your mum was pissed at us." David opened his eyes and gave Liam an exasperated look. "Two boys swimming alone at night? Come on. We're both orphans. Neither of us ever knew our parents."

One of the things that had drawn David to Liam was the fact that they didn't have a family to speak of. David didn't even know if had any brothers or sisters. He found it worrisome that Liam had now concocted a whole fairytale family to replace what he'd lost.

Liam's eyes narrowed until only a glint of hard amber appeared between the slits and his mouth thinned as his lips pressed together. David shifted on the hard chair and wondered what his friend was going to do next, almost with a thrill of anticipation. What the hell had gotten into him? The

full moon was making him as crazy as Liam and the only thing that kept David from reaching for him, despite Liam's obviously delusional state, was his tied hands.

He did not expect what came next. Liam dipped his head, his mouth settling over David's. Shock rippled through him and David froze, his breath coming quicker. Warm lips moved over his as David clenched his fingers around the ropes tying his wrists together. Holy shit. Liam was kissing him. And not like a quick peck on the cheek either. His stomach erupted into mad flutters and his heart skipped a few beats as he leaned into the kiss.

David's breath caught in the back of his throat as firm lips nudged his own apart. A dizzying rush of need swept over him along with another force that David couldn't quite explain that detracted from the contact. As if phantom hands had reached inside him, gathered up his will and carried it away leaving him bemused. Liam broke the kiss, turning his face away and closing his eyes with an almost pained expression on his face.

"What is it?" David asked filled with confusion over what had happened. He yearned for another kiss, a longer one this time that he could fully explore. And his friend was acting almost like he'd regretted the brief contact. David still felt dizzy from it, almost like he'd been drugged.

"I didn't want to do it this way." Liam cast him a troubled look. "But I don't have time to fight you every step of the way."

"I don't get it." David wanted to pound his head against the wall. The more he tried to understand what Liam was doing, the more it didn't make any sense. And his answers were no help. "Look if you don't start making sense, I'm leaving."

"Try." Liam stood back, giving David room to stand up if he wished. He retreated back into the shadows, moving away from the skylights so David couldn't read his expression.

"Fine."

David set his feet under him and tried to stand. Phantom lips touched his own, smothering his intent. David stared at Liam, his jaw dropping as his

will deserted him and fury took its place. He blinked, staring up at him, his muscles quivering, straining to move and unable to do so.

“What the fuck did you do?”

Liam lifted his hand toward him and moonlight gathered between his fingers, dancing little drops of light that slid over his skin like tears. “I stole some power from Donovan. Him and Anthony kept us captive these last two years, using this magic. It takes away a person’s control, makes them more biddable. The more power that is used the more it can affect the mind. Say for instance, like rewriting a person’s entire past and making them forget who and what they are.”

David shrank back, a chill breaking through the sultry air. He wished he could see Liam’s face, but the shadows hid everything but the gleam of amber from his not quite human eyes. “Is that what you did to me? You fucking used magic to trap me?”

Liam stepped closer and David breathed a sigh of relief when he could see his features again. He couldn’t miss the honest regret in his friend’s expression and it eroded the edge of his anger. “Change your memory, no. But I did use a little, just a bit, so you would fight me less. And when this over with I’ll release you and beg on my knees for your forgiveness.”

“You can let me go and start begging now.” David struggled against the invisible bonds that held him even tighter than the actual ones around his wrists.

Liam gave him a sad smile and brushed his fingertips over David’s cheek. “Soon. We don’t have much time. I don’t have much time. You’re going to have to free yourself from this. You can do it. I have faith in you, but you have to find the answer within yourself.”

“Dammit, let me go.” David’s breath panted as he continued to fight. He was going to get out of this chair, plant his fist in Liam’s face and use his own rope to tie the other man up. Then maybe he’d get some real answers instead of Liam’s cryptic bullshit. “Fucking talk to me.”

“This is what you need to know. Anthony and Donovan have been using that same spell for the last two years to keep us with them. The rest

you're going to have to remember on your own. I'm not going to be like them and use the magic to rewrite your memories again. Who knows what that will do to your brain? You can remember if you try. I know you can. You're stronger than me."

Liam glanced up at the moon, fear and desperation on his face and the sight drained away the rest of David's anger. He sagged back into the chair with a sigh and poked at Liam with his shoe as his friend knelt beside the bag again. "You keep saying you don't have much time. What's going to happen if I don't figure out your little game before time's up?"

Liam's shoulders sagged. "Then I have to leave you behind, knowing that you're trapped here. Knowing that you can't remember us and what we meant to each other. Wondering if you're being punished for my betrayal."

David could hear the sorrow in Liam's voice and it tugged at his chest. "Then why don't you stay until I do or remember whatever it is you think I should?"

"I can feel the sea in my blood, rising and falling like the tide. Can't you hear her crying for her two missing sons?" Liam moved toward one of the windows on the other side of the room. David couldn't see the ocean from where he was sitting, but he didn't have to see it to sense it lying vast and fathomless not far beyond the windows. "It's so hard to resist her song. We've been gone so long. I'm not going to be able to help myself and once I'm home again I don't know if I'll be able to return. Not even for you."

David didn't know what to say to that, where to even begin. Half of it didn't even make sense, but the naked longing in Liam's voice sent shivers through his body. This wasn't a joke or a game that Liam was playing. Whatever it was, Liam believed it with his whole heart.

He didn't like thinking about the ocean or any body of water for that matter. He mind seemed to skitter away whenever the subject came up. He'd lived in Florida all his life and never gone to the shore. He'd never even noticed it before really until tonight when Liam kept bringing it up. Despite the windows being shut he could almost hear the surf, tugging at him, dragging him back toward sure death because he didn't know the first thing about staying afloat.

He watched in silence as Liam returned to the bag, mulling over what his friend said. Wherever he was going it had to be very far away if he wouldn't be able to come back. And that thought had a long buried voice inside of him screaming in denial. "You can't leave."

"I can't stay. I hope that soon you'll understand why. And I'd give anything to take you with me." Liam turned back from the bag with a knife in his hand and David shrank back, the slats of the chair digging into his shoulders. He tried to surge to his feet only to feel the phantom caress of Liam's mouth against his, smothering his will. He shook his head, torn between fear and anger. He glared at Liam who still knelt a foot or two away. "That damn magic feels familiar. Is it really because of Anthony and Donovan or did you do it to me?"

David tried not to flinch as Liam touched his knee. "I haven't. I swear it. But it has been done to you, many times over the last two years. And with far more power than what I used. Anthony twisted you with it constantly. Donovan did the same to me." Liam searched his face with anxious, hopeful eyes. "What else do you remember?"

"Nothing," David snapped in frustration. "You're fucking with my head."

Liam shrugged as he rose, coming to stand by David's side. "I'm sorry. But I can't think of any other way of doing this other than hurting you and I'm not going to do that. So that leaves this option."

David's heart raced as Liam sliced off the first button to his shirt. "What are you doing?"

Liam didn't reply until all the buttons had fallen to the floor and David's shirt gaped open. His friend's fingertips traced over David's collarbone and he shivered at the sparks that the light touch generated. It soothed his anxiety and for a moment he wanted to press himself into Liam's arms. David stiffened and tried to pull back. He refused to give into Liam's game. If his friend had tried to seduce him that would've been one thing, but he wouldn't accept this kind of coercion. "Are you working that magic again?"

“No, not this time.” Liam’s teeth flashed in the moonlight as he smiled. Damn, David should not find that sensual look so enticing. “Maybe there’s just more between us than what it seems like on the surface. Despite everything, deep down you still trust me. That will make it easier for both of us.”

David’s mouth went dry as the blade slipped under the cuff of his shirt and smoothly cut the fabric up to his collar. The sultry night air against his skin did nothing to help cool the heat that had sprung up between him and his friend. He shifted, trying hard to think of anything other than the fact that Liam was systematically cutting his clothes off of him. And even more so, trying to ignore the way it made blood rush to his cock.

He should not be finding this such a turn on. Instead of focusing on what was important like his predicament, Liam’s strange behavior and his absent husband. He found himself wondering what Liam would do next. How far would his friend go? Even more disturbing, how far did David want him to go?

The dull end of the blade felt cool against his skin as Liam moved to the other arm. As the tattered pieces of his shirt fell away Liam splayed his hand against David’s chest, pushing the knotted rope to the side. Heat rose up as his thumb circled David’s nipple, not quite touching the sensitive bud. It tightened, stunning David with how much he wanted that touch.

“You’re so smooth. It’s not natural.” Liam frowned, his heavy brows drawing together.

Stung, David tried to shove the chair back away from him only to realize that it had been bolted to the floor. “I’ve always been like that. Maybe you should go fondle your husband instead of staring at my bare chest. Last I saw you were all waxed smooth, too.”

He’d always wondered why no hair grew on his body except for around his cock and under his arms. He’d never had to worry about shaving, but it was just one of those things, like being allergic to shellfish. He craved it, but refrained, knowing that eating it would send him straight to the hospital.

“You saw me how Donovan wanted you to see me. They tried to remake us in their own image thinking it would tame us.”

Liam stepped back from him and tugged his shirt off over his head. David’s jaw dropped open. Smooth, dark hair swirled on his chest becoming thicker in the center as it trailed a path downward to disappear in his jeans. It was fucking beautiful and David’s hands twitched as he longed to run his fingers through it, feel the texture of it against his skin.

“Wait a minute.” David tried to shake himself free of the desire to go to Liam, to touch him, kiss him and run his hands over that lean chest. “We just had that barbeque last week. You had your shirt off then.”

“And I looked just like you. Unnatural.” Liam lifted one heavy brow. “What does that tell you?”

“What are you, some kind of werewolf?” David asked, only half joking. Normal men did not grow sexy body hair like that overnight. For some reason he was very aware of the full moon shining down, bathing him in its light. He had never believed in the supernatural before, but this had to be the strangest night of his life. He couldn’t deny that Liam had done something to him, something unnatural. Every time he thought of standing up, of fighting, that bemused feeling came over him again. Scary that magic was an actual plausible explanation for it.

“No, not a werewolf.”

“Nothing is making sense anymore.” David closed his eyes, trying to push out the wild, sexy image of Liam out of his mind. He pictured his husband, blond, steady and oh so remote in many ways. Sometimes he thought that the only person Anthony ever really connected with was his twin. Just like David connected with Liam. Like all four of them were with the wrong people.

“It will make sense soon. Just let go, relax.” Liam’s fingers brushed over his cheek and David resisted the urge to turn his head and kiss those fingertips. He worried his wedding ring with his thumb, trying to stay grounded as everything spun faster out of his control.

Hands slid up over his cargo shorts and David's eyes flew open. David gasped, his cock leaping at the sight of Liam kneeling in front of him. The sudden image of those sensual lips wrapped around his cock drove all other thoughts from his mind as Liam undid the button to his shorts.

"You cannot fucking get me naked." David tried to squirm back so Liam wouldn't feel his reaction to him. "Our husbands are going to be livid. What the hell has gotten into you? We don't need to be naked for you to do whatever it is you think you have to do. I can use my imagination just fine with clothes."

Another one of those sensual smiles flicked over Liam's lips as the zipper whispered down. Fingers grazed over his shaft, making it ache and David long for bare skin against bare skin. "The marriages we made were a lie from the beginning. Do you even remember your wedding day as anything more than a haze of senseless activity?"

"Of course I do." But when David tried to think back, tried to picture the look on Anthony's face as they exchanged vows, or to remember what kind of music they danced to at the reception all he got was a confusing blur of conflicting images. Anthony's hand fisting in his hair, his eyes burning. Them kissing and need pouring over David's body in waves. Somebody shouting in the background. He shook his head violently.

"I feel no guilt for looking at you and wanting you, even if that's not what this is about." Fingers curled under the waistband of David's shorts, jerking his attention back to this moment. "Don't."

"Would you rather I cut them from you?"

David's cock surged at the blatant, erotic image and Liam's brow rose as he stared down at the bulge pressing against the open shorts. "Well then, that answers that."

"Wait." David tried to shift his legs away as Liam picked up the knife again. "Seriously, Liam, stop fucking around. What am I supposed to wear on the way back home?"

Liam slipped the knife under the hem of his cargo shorts and began carefully slicing his way up. “If this all goes according to plan, you’re not going to need clothes ever again.”

“I am not joining a nudist colony.”

His friend ignored that statement as he slit up the thigh of David’s shorts. David dropped his head back with a groan. That was it; Liam was certifiable, only he couldn’t really bring himself to believe that. Liam’s actions may seem insane, but the man himself didn’t. He even slid the fingers of his free hand under the fabric as he sliced it open to be sure that he wouldn’t accidentally cut David in the process.

Excitement and anticipation shivered through him which was just wrong. He was married. Mostly happy with his marriage, too. Only whenever he tried to summon up his husband’s face again, Liam’s intruded instead.

Air stirred against his naked skin, the knotted rope shifting and David swallowed hard as Liam pulled away the ruined clothes, tossing them in the shadows of the corner. David couldn’t look at him. Somehow it felt too right to be sitting naked with Liam close enough to touch.

Fingers skated over his shoulder and along the side of his neck. David couldn’t help the shudder or the way his head leaned to the side exposing his throat. He had this crazy image in his head of Liam swooping down and biting him there. “What the hell are you, Liam?”

“I’m the same as you, only I remember who I am.” A warm hand cupped his jaw, turning David’s face toward him. There was a desperate hope in Liam’s expression. “Are you starting to remember?”

“It would really help if you’d just tell me what you want me to know.”

“The spell doesn’t work that way. I can’t tell you. The knowledge has to come from within you. I can nudge you. Do things to help you try to remember, but I can’t outright tell you. There’s a trap in your head. The twins planned it this way in case one of us remembered. I was able to get that much out of Donovan, if nothing else.”

“And being buck assed naked is supposed to somehow help you out in your crazy quest?”

“Do you deny that it feels more normal being in just your skin? Even if you’re tied?”

David never considered himself a nudist. Outside the bedroom or the bathroom, clothes remained on. The thought of running around naked anywhere else never crossed his mind until now. Strangely, it did feel natural. As natural as breathing. He wasn’t self-conscious at all even with Liam being able to see the hard on he had.

“If it’s so damn natural how come you’re still half-dressed?” He’d meant it as a rebuttal, not a challenge and David’s eyes widened as Liam took a step back and unbuttoned his jeans. “Wait. Don’t. Come on, Liam this is ridiculous.”

“Your point was valid, besides I feel trapped in these clothes. They make my skin crawl. If it bothers you to see me naked, don’t look.”

David couldn’t help the way that his eyes dropped down as Liam pulled off his jeans. His already hard cock began to throb as lean muscular thighs were revealed, covered with a light dusting of dark hair. Liam’s underwear followed and he turned, showing off his tight ass as he kicked the clothes away from him. To his intense disappointment, Liam’s cock showed none of the excitement that David’s displayed. It lay limp against his thigh.

He had the sudden urge to take it into his mouth, until he felt it harden and suck him off until his friend’s knees buckled. He’d like to see Liam remain unaffected through that. The thought took a hold of him and he couldn’t even blame it on the damn spell that Liam had placed on him. It wasn’t like the feeling that sapped his will when he tried to struggle. The need was raw and real, making the last two years of sexual experience with his husband seem bland in comparison.

“We’re running out of time.” Liam took David by his arms, his voice tense with urgency, and steadied him as he pulled David up from the chair. David felt the heat from his friend’s body, so close. Or maybe it was just the heat of the midsummer’s night, lying heavy on their skin. He stiffened

against the urge to lean closer and feel all that delicious texture against his own smooth body.

“What now?” David asked as a bare foot tapped against his ankle until he shifted his stance, spreading his legs wider. It left him even more vulnerable and exposed than before. He drew in deep breaths, trying to calm himself.

“I need to finish the harness.” Liam glanced up at the moon, moving across the sky as the night grew later. Every muscle in his lean body stood out tense against his skin and David’s hands itched to soothe that tension from him.

His heartbeat quickened as Liam crouched in front of him, his mouth within inches of David’s cock. An image flashed in his mind, gone so fast it was almost like the a shadow left after staring into a bright light, an image of Liam kneeling before him with love in his eyes and David’s hand in his hair. It seemed more memory than fantasy.

David’s fingers curled into his palm as he tried to reach for Liam only to remember that his hands were still bound at the small of his back. He looked straight ahead and tried to will his cock to not react to Liam’s closeness anymore than it already had. He stared so hard that when Liam’s hands passed between his thighs it came as a surprise.

He jumped and Liam grasped his hips, holding him until David felt steady on his feet again. Those beautiful, unnatural eyes stared up at him in concern until David jerked his gaze away. “I’m fine. You can stop touching me now.”

Liam rose in one fluid motion and moved around David. He pressed closer, but not close enough as he brought his mouth to David’s ear. “Beautiful liar, you’re dying for me to touch you.”

“I’m dying for you to get to the point.” To his surprise the rope at his wrists loosened and slipped free. Immediately, he felt steadier on his feet.

“Fair enough.” Liam’s mouth moved closer, his breath ghosting over David’s jaw. “Now don’t try to run or fight me. I really don’t want to use more magic against you. Okay?”

“It’s a little hard to run when your clothes are in a shredded pile on the floor. It’s not like yours will fit me.” David rubbed his wrists to give his hands something other to do besides touching Liam. Besides bending his friend over that damn chair and giving into the riot of emotion and need inside of him. “What now?”

David’s breath caught as the two ends of the rope passed between his thighs and a shiver moved up his spine. The rope brushed against his cock, slithered along the cleft of his ass in a caress that seemed to be an extension of Liam’s hands. The rope moved, teasing as Liam tied more knots along David’s spine until he finally passed the ropes through the line against the nape of David’s neck.

He looked down, following the line of knots down his body and feeling their mates along his back. The line lay slack against his skin and David shivered again. “I fail to see the purpose of these ropes. They aren’t going to stop me from kicking your ass when you’re finally done with your game and you take this spell off of me.”

“The ropes put you in a different frame of mind from what you’ve been used to in the last two years. You’re exposed, vulnerable, at a distinct disadvantage.” Liam kissed his shoulder, leaving the warm impression of lips as he moved back in front of David. “You’re turned inside out. You needed to be jolted out of your rut, just like I was. It’s the only way you’ll remember.”

David turned his head to follow Liam as he moved back in front of him, bringing one end of each rope under his arms. “Then what happened to you? What made you remember, what I apparently forgot, without the magic and ropes and friends going all weird on you?”

Liam’s face tensed as he slipped the ends of the rope between the first two knots. “Car accident. You know how they say your life flashes before your eyes? Well it’s true, only it made me remember my real life, not the fairies and sugar fantasies that Donovan wove for me.”

David’s heart jolted with fear and he reached for Liam, searching for injuries. “Whoa, wait a fucking minute. What car accident? Why didn’t I hear about it?”

“Donovan was driving this morning. I’m not sure what happened. I think a drunk hit us and our car went into the river. He was thrown free and my seatbelt trapped me.” Liam shuddered, his forehead glistening in the moonlight from what looked like sweat. “It made me remember that time I was caught in the fisherman’s net and you saved me. Don’t you remember that? Now it’s my turn to save you.”

David could picture all too well the image of Liam trapped, water pouring in as he struggled against his seat belt and it made him ill. He reached for Liam again only to have his hands batted away. “How’d you get free?”

“The seatbelt buckle finally unjammed and I swam free.”

Liam’s mouth firmed in determination and he pulled on each end of the rope, opening a diamond pattern on David’s chest. Moments later he did the same in the back, tightening the ropes above and under his pecs so that they hugged him. It jumped up David’s awareness of his predicament one hundredfold.

“Were you hurt?” David asked when Liam stood in front of him again. He brushed his fingers over Liam’s torso where some bruising had been hidden by the moon shadows and chest hair. He followed the diagonal pattern down from shoulder to hip where the seatbelt would’ve been. “Where’s Donovan now?”

“At the hospital getting checked out. He didn’t react well when I stole his magic. I’m fine other than a good sized cut on my scalp. Bled everywhere, but it was okay once I got it to stop.”

Liam tugged on the ropes again, opening another diamond over David’s stomach. David caught him by the chin before he could move away and tipped his head down, determined to see for himself. “Where? Let me take a look at it.”

“We don’t have time.”

His friend tried to back up and David slipped his hands around Liam’s jaw, caging him. “Look you’ve got me naked, half bound and trapped here.

You want me to trust you. So give me something in return and let me see the cut.”

“Fine, but don’t freak out on me.” Liam tilted his head and raised his hands to part his hair. “It looks worse than it actually is.”

David winced at the sight of the long, jagged gash. The only good thing that could be said about it was that it didn’t bleed. “Why didn’t you go with the EMTs? You should’ve had that stitched or stapled or something. Who cleaned it out for you?” Liam’s hair had been cleaned and there was some kind of slick coating over the wound. He hoped that it was an anti-bacterial.

“I did it myself at home while I grabbed what I needed for tonight.” Liam shrugged and moved back from David’s touch. “Once I get back to the sea the water will help it to heal.”

“Now this officially fucking insanity. It’s over. I’m taking you to the hospital. You probably have a concussion.” No wonder Liam was acting so damn weird and delusional. He could have a skull fracture, or swelling. Why had nobody contacted Anthony to let him know that his twin had been in an accident?

Somehow David had managed to shake off the spell because nothing stopped him from bending toward the duffle bag to search for a spare set of clothes. “In the morning this will all seem like a crazy dream.”

Liam grabbed him and yanked him up against his hard, lean body. David had a quick impression of heat and sinful texture before Liam kissed him. David parted his lips and grabbed a hold of Liam before he could break it again too soon. Both of them pushed and pulled at each other, trying to get away and get closer at the same time. Liam’s tongue swept into his mouth and David kissed him back, vying for possession, trying to take control.

Liam tasted strange and familiar. It stirred all those emotion he’d been fighting, turned them from a yearning desire to a raging hunger. Kissing Anthony had never been like this. Liam’s mouth softened in surrender and David growled, pressing his advantage as his arms tightened around his friend.

The ropes hugged his chest, digging into his skin a reminder of why Liam was so dangerous in this state. Too late, David tried to pull back only to feel a heavy lethargy sink into his bones. His mind went fuzzy and his thoughts and intent scattered. He swayed and would've fallen if Liam's strong arms hadn't caught him.

"Why'd you make me do that?" Liam's voice cracked. "I didn't want to be like him."

David tried to make a too heavy tongue work as Liam steadied him. "Wha-? Why?" His stomach roiled, rebelling as the rest of him couldn't.

"We don't have time for you to take me to the hospital and I know you. You wouldn't have taken no for an answer once you'd stopped kissing the damn breath outta me." Liam's stark expression eased some of the betrayal David felt over being taken over by the magic again.

His friend finished tightening the harness around him and David's breath caught as one knot settled right against that sensitive area behind his balls. The wicked, evil bastard. He glanced down at the pattern of ropes hugging his body, any other time he might've even thought it looked good, but right now he had a hard time catching his breath. Liam was hurt and delusional and who knew what he would do next.

"It'll be okay." Liam lowered him to the chair and once again David's hands were tied behind his back. His heart started racing as Liam drew out the blindfold again and he couldn't even struggle against the ropes as it was tied on. He sat there passive, an impotent fury building inside of him with each passing moment.

What gave Liam the right to pull this shit on him?

"Just one more thing and then I'll release the spell on you." Liam's hands cupped his shoulders and David jolted. The touch felt strange and at first he couldn't get his brain to stop whirling long enough to identify the problem. Then it came to him and he struggled to draw back, a harsh sound of denial strangling in his throat. Extra skin had grown between Liam's fingers, the membrane feeling especially warm and the points of claws touched David lightly.

“What?” Images flooded his mind, each freakier than the last and as David fought against the hold on his will, broken, confused memories came back of being caught up in this same feeling. Only his tormentor was Anthony not Liam. Anthony with a chill smile and avid light in his eyes that promised things David did not want to think about. He jerked his thoughts back to Liam and those unnatural hands of his. “What are you?”

“The same as you. I swear it.”

The ropes around him began to gently hum, sending a soft vibration through his body. David gasped as inexplicably he felt the moonlight on his skin, bathing him in light. It was cooler than the sun and seemed to gather in the ropes making them vibrate faster. His heart skipped a beat as his chest and hips lifted up, the harness supporting him as he was lifted off the chair, his body arching. He felt every rope, every knot as it cradled him and lifted him up like some kind of sacrifice.

“What are you going to do to me?”

Those strange hands cupped his face now and David went limp as he felt all trace of the compulsion disappear from him. “I haven’t hurt you and I’m not going to. I’m trying to help you.”

“You’ve got a fucking funny way of helping. You put a spell on me,” David snarled as he started to struggle against the ropes. They dug into his skin, chafing him, but at least that was a sensation that made sense. “How’s that any better? What kind of game have you and Anthony been pulling on me?”

“It wasn’t me. I’m trying to help you break free of it. Remember. Fucking remember.” Frustration roughened Liam’s voice. “Has Anthony, even once, ever removed that spell like I just did?”

David tried to think back, but the broken images of his past with Anthony were too chaotic to make out. All he got from them was the panicky feeling of being trapped as Liam had him trapped now. “Let me go.”

“I can’t. Not until you remember or dawn comes. Not until you give me some hope that you’re going to beat this.” The way Liam’s voice dropped off at the end told him which scenario he preferred. He touched

David's chest, his thumb stroking as David's heart hammered. "I'm not going to hurt you, see? I'm not going to rape you or do whatever it is you're freaking out about in your head. Please calm down."

"How can I calm down when I can't see a fucking thing? When I don't know what you look like anymore?"

The suspension of the harness, the light vibration made him feel almost as if he were floating. Only the chair digging into the back of his shoulder blades grounded him. Somehow through the closed windows and door David could hear the pounding of the sea. The sound crashed over him, threatening to drown him.

Liam straddled him, his thighs brushing against David's hip. "Listen to my voice. Whatever terrors Anthony implanted in your head, they aren't real."

"Stop it." David ground his teeth at the quaver in his voice. "Don't let me drown."

"You can't drown." Liam's hand slid down his body, the tip of one claw tracing the diamond over his stomach. "Listen to me, there's no way you can possibly drown. The sea is in your blood, just like it's in mine. She takes care of us."

"Let me see you." David lifted his head and tried to stare through the blindfold. "This is freaking me the fuck out. Take it off."

"I can't, not yet. I'm sorry, but I'm right here with you. Try to remember what you were doing two years ago. It was a night like this one, middle of the summer with the air so hot and heavy against our skin, even though it was night it hadn't cooled off one bit. Remember? You'd wanted to make love on the beach as the tide came in."

David could almost picture it, the water curling around their naked bodies, Liam underneath him, moaning into his kiss. He shook his head, shattering the image. "We've never been together like that."

Warm lips pressed a kiss to David's naked hip and his cock surged back to life. "Then why do you react to me like that? I believe you when you say you haven't thought of me as anything other than a friend in the last two

years. Anthony never let you, like Donovan never let me remember how much I loved you.”

David’s heart skipped a beat as an ache settled in his chest. Liam loved him. Or he had once. The thought that he might have lost it unsettled him. It was crazy to want something he never knew that he’d had, but David did.

“How do you feel about me now?” The silence dragged on until David turned his face away, disgusted by the hope that had risen up. What did he care? There were a thousand reasons not to give a damn. “Never mind. Stupid question.”

“I wouldn’t be here, trying to help you when everything inside of me is screaming to return to the sea, if I didn’t still love you. It hurts to stay. You don’t understand how much it physically, spiritually hurts. And I’m scared. Scared that the twins will catch up to us. Scared that you’ll never remember and I’ll have to live with leaving you behind.”

David tried to steady his breathing and curled into his fingers into his palms. He couldn’t ignore that stark plea. “I’ll try. I don’t remember any of the things you say. Not swimming at night or being with you, but I’ll try.”

“That’s all I ask. I have faith in you.” Those strange fingers stroked his skin along his ribs and as much as the ropes constricted him they were almost as much of a comfort as Liam’s touch. They cocooned him and the vibrations, the inability to see transported him to a place where all of his other senses were magnified. “Close your eyes and let yourself drift. Let the ropes take all your weight. Clear your mind,” Liam said in a low, compelling voice.

David obeyed, though clearing his mind was a struggle. Too much had happened in the last couple hours for him to settle down. “Can you use the spell to clear my mind for me?”

“I could, but I think it would hurt you more than help you. You need to remember on your own.” Liam’s voice moved away and David turned his head toward him. “Don’t leave me like this.”

“If dawn comes and I have to go I won’t leave you helpless. I promise.” David heard the creak of a window opening and warm, sultry air flowed in, curling around his body carrying with it the scent of salt and life. In the distance, waves crashed against the shore, continuous and rhythmic, a heartbeat that he’d almost forgotten. “Can you hear its song?” Liam whispered from across the room.

David could. The surf moved throughout his body, tugging and pulling against it as the waves did the same to the shore. He could feel it in his veins, hear the tide in his eardrums. The soft weeping sigh of a bereft mother who’d given up hope.

How could Liam ignore that cry? It made every bone in David’s body ache with the need to submerge himself and become one with the water. He gritted his teeth against it and strained against the ropes, trying to close the distance between him and Liam. “Don’t leave me.”

“I’m trying,” Liam replied, his voice tense. “Can you think of anything that may have happened before you met Anthony? Like your parents, how your dad used to sing when he thought no one was listening? Or how your sister loved to play with divers? She’d swim up behind them and tug on their flippers only to disappear when they turned around. Dammit, Dylan remember.”

Dylan. Liam had called him Dylan and it struck a chord within him. David had never seemed quite right, like an annoying pet name that grated his ears. Something shifted inside him and for the first time he started to really believe what Liam was saying, not just think that Liam believed it.

He didn’t want to think that Anthony could be capable of doing what Liam said he had. Cold, remote, beautiful, Anthony. Yeah, if Anthony had wanted him bad enough he wouldn’t scruple at using magic or whatever else it took. It was a side of his husband that David had chosen to ignore. And those little flashes in his head, those images that made no sense only added to his belief.

“Dylan.” He tried the name out loud, tasted it on his tongue and sensed the rightness. “I’m Dylan.”

“Yes you are.” His friend returned to Da-Dylan’s side and cupped his face between his hands. “Can you remember anything about us? About me from before Anthony came?”

Dylan tried, combing back through his memories, but every single last one seemed to have Anthony in it and the more he tried to probe the time before him, the more it seemed like a black wall of water ready to crash down and engulf him. He jerked, the ropes constricting around him as panic clawed inside of him. It was so cold under the water. His throat closed up, his lungs burned as he struggled to breathe.

“Calm down.” Fingers curled around Dylan’s hip. “What’s wrong? Nothing’s going to hurt you. I’m right here.”

Dylan clung to the sound of Liam’s voice, to the way his touch felt warm and familiar to him, as he dragged himself out of the hallucination. It seemed so damn real. “Every time I try to force myself to remember, I start thinking I’m going to drown. Do you think Anthony did that, too?”

“I have no doubt. It would be another way to control you.” The despair in Liam’s voice had Dylan struggling to reach out to him. “It’s the shortest night of the year. The moon is starting to set and I don’t know what to do anymore. Not if trying to get you to remember is going to trigger that.”

“Don’t give up on me.” Dylan stopped struggling with the ropes and let them cradle him, trying to relax. He thought that his friend might have the right idea by tying, blindfolding and suspending him. It made it impossible to concentrate on mundane details that would only distract him. “I’ll keep trying. Maybe instead of trying to make me remember you can show me what should be familiar. Like how you told me my real name. I don’t remember, but I can’t deny that it feels right.”

“I think I have an idea. Hold on.” Lips pressed against Dylan’s and then Liam was gone to the sound of the door shutting.

“Wait.” Dylan twisted against the vibrating ropes. What if he didn’t come back? The ocean wasn’t far away. Dylan could hear each wave clearly. They rushed against the shore, whispering their song. His heartbeat slowed down and he stopped struggling as he listened to it, the sigh of the world

breathing. He could almost picture the path the moonlight made on the waters, beckoning him to swim out further and further to see where that path ended.

His body quivered against the ropes as it strained toward that sound. It filled his entire being, rushed through his blood, and pounded in his heartbeat, in a longing so absolute that it pierced his soul with a haunting cry of loss. If Liam went near the water he'd never be able to resist such a call. He wasn't going to come back.

"Liam." Dylan shouted and fought until his cries became hoarse. Anthony would find him like this and there would be nothing he could do to fight him off this time.

This time?

Vague, shadowy images flickered in his mind. A moonlit beach, Anthony standing over them... Dylan shook his head and strained to make the images clearer. They were arguing and then Donovan reached for Liam and... No, no, his Liam. Not Donovan's. They had been... As he fought to remember the wave came crashing down over him. Dylan opened his mouth to scream only to have it fill with water. Choking, he thrashed in the nets that caught him until a sharp smack across his cheek snapped him out of the illusion.

"Are you okay?" Dylan blinked as the blindfold was stripped from him. Liam looked down at him, his eyes sharp with concern.

Still gasping, he nodded, trying to catch his breath. The room had darkened and he could no longer see the moon shining through the window. The shadows had lengthened and their time was running out. The tide would be turning soon, moving back out to sea. How he knew that he couldn't say, but he could sense the tide in his blood.

"What's your real name?" Dylan lifted his head as Liam stepped back, letting the shadows obscure him. "It's not Liam. I'm sure of it."

"Llyr."

Dylan closed his eyes as his heart leapt. Dylan and Llyr. The names fit together like two missing pieces of a puzzle. "Friends first and then lovers?"

“Well, to be honest I thought you were an arrogant git when I first met you and you thought I was a pisser.”

Dylan’s eyes flew open and he met Llyr’s amber gaze. “What changed that?”

“You dared me to nose around a boat off the shore and I went like an idiot, got caught in a fisherman’s net.” Llyr stepped closer to him, his hands caught behind his back so Dylan couldn’t see what they looked like. “You rescued me even though you could’ve gotten caught too and when we returned with me all cut and bruised I told our parents that I acted on my own and kept you out of trouble.”

Dylan craved more stories like a man dying for want of food and water. He had all those connections when he’d thought he was alone in the world except for Anthony and his friendship with Llyr. He wanted to know more about his parents, his sister, if he had any other siblings and where they lived and absolutely everything he could find out.

He forced himself to curb his impatience. With every second the sky grew darker and soon the horizon would start to pale. He had to remember. He couldn’t go back to being alone again. “What else would be familiar? What did you bring back?” Dylan sniffed the air and smelled the sand and sea clinging to Llyr’s skin. “You went down to the water.”

Llyr’s eyes lit up as he came by Dylan’s side. “I did. I brought back a bucket of water. You should’ve seen it, Dylan. It looks like it goes on forever. Somehow, at dawn, we’ll go together out there.”

“Maybe you should blindfold me again. That made it easier.” As much as Dylan wanted to keep looking at him he wanted to get this over with as soon as possible.

“I do not like seeing you so helpless, even if I was the one to do it.” Llyr leaned over to grab the fallen strip of cloth. “You should be free.”

“Just keep doing what you’re doing and I will be.” Dylan refused to believe anything else. “Then later on I can tease you about the time you had me all tied up in a pretty package and completely neglected the opportunity for helpless debauchery.”

Llyr's breath caught and Dylan had the satisfaction of seeing his friend's cock stir. It filled him with a mix of triumph and guilt. Llyr wasn't as unaffected as he seemed and still in the back of his mind a little voice wailed, what about his husband.

What really fucked with him was not knowing if that voice was his own or one implanted by Anthony. Had anything between them been real?

As Llyr tied the blindfold on, Dylan worried the band on his finger until it fell, bouncing across the tiled floor. It was like an anchor had lifted from him and Dylan drew in a shuddering breath. Every time he thought of Anthony the sick, little knot of betrayal in his stomach grew larger. Inexplicable memories played over in his head. Them arguing and suddenly the argument would be over and they would make love. Or the time he'd been dead set on them taking a cruise and over one conversation at dinner he'd lost complete interest in it.

Llyr brushed up against him and Dylan turned his thoughts from all those manipulated memories. He craved Llyr's touch. He wanted to know if it felt as good as his kisses. Because the two they'd shared had been nothing like any kisses he'd had before. If they'd been lovers, then surely Llyr's touch would be as familiar as their real names.

Cool, wet hands cupped his cheeks, a thumb brushed over his lips, leaving behind the taste of brine. It came as a shock. It was more than just salty with a wild quality to it that Dylan couldn't identify and it made his heart leap. He flexed his hands, straining to lift his body up higher. "More."

He wanted to immerse himself in the water, feel it against his skin. More liquid dribbled over his body, refreshing against the heat of the night. Again and again, he heard the splash of Llyr dipping his hands in the bucket and the water beaded on his skin, ran down until it collected against the ropes. The weeping of the sea grew stronger. It wrapped around him and called him home.

Dylan shuddered. He would drown. His body and heart longed for one thing and his mind knew better. Whatever he may have been before, he was human now. And a human couldn't survive in the deep expanse of the ocean. He'd die within minutes.

“May I touch you?” Llyr whispered. “It’s been so long.”

Dylan tried to arch his body against the ropes, but there was no leverage to do so. Not with the way the magic held him up. “Please. I thought you didn’t want me. Show me how it was between us. Remind me.”

He dropped his head back as warm lips feathered across his throat. Llyr straddled him, his thighs brushing against Dylan’s, his hands resting on Dylan’s shoulders for balance. Llyr nuzzled him with a soft sigh. “I’d forgotten what you smelled like.”

Dylan shivered and turned his head, blindly searching for his friend’s lips. “Kiss me again.”

Llyr rubbed his cheek against Dylan’s jaw and the sensation sent prickles through his body. He never imagined stubble could feel so damn sexy. It awoke every nerve ending as every part of his body begged for the same time of attention. His cock rose and bobbed against the underside of Llyr’s shaft, sending up a flurry of sizzling sparks.

He clenched his hands into fists and then started worrying at the knots. He desire to touch Llyr, to hold him down and taste him, to make love to him blotted out the song from the ocean. He’s rather hear the sounds Llyr made as they came together.

Their lips met, at first just moving against each other, little nibbles and open mouthed exploring that slowly deepened. Dylan slid his tongue into Llyr’s mouth, paying close attention to every nuance, the heat of his mouth, the way he tasted so achingly familiar. Dylan’s arms strained against the ropes. He needed to bury his hand in Llyr’s rich brown hair, hold him to the kiss as it turned wild and wanton.

Hands slid down his chest, impeded by the ropes. Fingers toyed with Dylan’s nipples, hardening them into little nubs. The ropes began to vibrate more and Dylan gasped, tearing his mouth away as that one wicked knot teased against the area behind his balls.

Dylan’s cock throbbed and he attacked the knots around his wrists until the ends of his fingers turned numb and he couldn’t feel the knots anymore. “Untie me.”

Llyr's hands left his body and Dylan cursed, lifting his head. He didn't have to see Llyr's face to sense his reluctance. "I'm not going to try to escape or knock you out and take you to a hospital even if I'm worried about you. I just want to touch you and see you and taste you all over. This doesn't feel right, being all bound up. Untie me, Llyr. Let me claim you."

"Dylan." Llyr breathed his name into the hot, still air. "We don't have time for that. No matter how much we both may want it. You said that remaining tied up helped you." His hands returned, sliding over the narrow ropes to cup Dylan's buttocks. They squeezed and lifted him up even more, brushing their cocks together.

Dylan swallowed hard at the little rush of electricity and once again he started fighting the ropes, trying to get to him. "Unless you want me to rub my wrists raw I'd suggest you let me go. Did you ever tie me up in the past? I don't think so. I'm not sure where you learned this pretty bondage thing, but it wasn't with me. Your touch is familiar and I want the chance to touch you in return."

"I'd forgotten what a persuasive bastard you are." Llyr kissed the center of his chest, right between one of the diamonds. His hot tongue flicked out, tracing a similar pattern on Dylan's skin. "Not this time, Dylan. You should see how you look. I wish I could take a picture. All that strength in you, your muscles standing out, making the ropes seem like nothing more than decorations. Even bound and vulnerable you don't seem helpless at all, not to me."

Dylan followed the path of Llyr's lips as they slid up to his throat before working its way back again. The image of Llyr straddling him, lean muscles tense as he held him up, kissed and licked his bare body, burned in Dylan's mind.

"What if it's our last night together?" Llyr went still and Dylan knew he had won the battle. "Let me have this time with you. Once again on the beach, like you said how our last time had been. If anything will help me remember that will."

Llyr bit his shoulder with a soft groan and Dylan's body jolted as another broken piece of his past came back to him. Llyr was a biter when he

got all worked up. Not hard enough to break the skin or to bruise, just enough to leave little marks all over Dylan's body some nights. "Fuck, do that again."

"You mean this?" Sharp teeth nipped along his ribs, scored his hip. Dylan hissed, his cock aching, his wrists stinging as he jerked against the ropes around them. His entire body burned with the need to bury himself in his mate.

"Let me go, Llyr."

"You win. I don't know how to fight you." A ripple moved through the ropes and then Dylan felt his body start to lower back toward the chair as the vibrations eased off. Dylan waited, his body tense with anticipation. Llyr untied his wrists first, gently chafing the sore areas where Dylan had fought against his bonds, before stripping the blindfold from him.

"Later." Dylan stretched with a groan and reached for the knife that Llyr had put back in the bag so he could get rid of the harness. His fingers brushed up against something lush and silky. Curiosity filled him as he pulled out a pelt of dark fur that smelled of Llyr, only far wilder. A strange, inhuman cry sounded behind him and Dylan jumped. Llyr snatched the pelt out of his hands, bolting a few steps before stopping to stare back at him with wide amber eyes.

Dylan's breath caught as he rose from the chair. Llyr had never seemed as otherworldly as he did now, staring back from the shadows, clutching the fur to him in a protective gesture. "It's mine. You can't take it away from me again." He growled, thrusting his head out in a challenging gesture, his entire body tense with the readiness to fight.

"I'm not going to." Dylan glanced down at the bag and the other fur sticking out, a darker one. His heart sped up as he reached for it with hesitant fingers. This was his. He knew it without being told. It called to him and that part of himself that was still locked away strained at the unseen ties holding him down. "And this is mine."

He understood the instinctive, primal reason behind Llyr lashing out at him. Now that he had his own pelt in his hands possessiveness overcame

him. If anyone tried to take it from him, even Llyr, he'd attack. Shocked, Dylan realized that his teeth were bared in a silent snarl.

Dylan clutched the fur to him, struggling to remember. This was important. It was his and he couldn't fucking remember what it meant to him. He turned toward Llyr who had moved back, deeper into the shadows. "Let me see you. I need to know what you look like. I need to know what I am."

"You don't remember. You'll think I'm a monster."

"I won't, I swear. I need to see. Please, Llyr. I won't hurt you." Still Llyr hesitated and Dylan moved toward him, being careful to go slow. His friend was at the breaking edge and the wrong move could send him scurrying straight toward the sea and Dylan would lose his last hope of unraveling this mystery. "Is that what has you so skittish? Did I hurt you before?"

"It's not your fault." Llyr sighed and his body uncoiled from its tense, hunched over position. "Anthony and Donovan liked to play games. The sometimes pitted us against each other. And..." His voice broke off. "Never mind, I don't want to talk about it. If you remember you'll know what I'm talking about and if you don't that will be one blessing."

Dylan stepped up to him and slipped his arm around Llyr's lean waist. The other man fit against him so damn right. After a moment, Llyr leaned into him as well, rubbing his cheek against Dylan's shoulder. "I shouldn't have gotten so defensive."

"I'm pretty sure I would've reacted the same way and I don't have the reasons that you do. Just instinct." Dylan lifted up Llyr's hand and examined it in the light as his friend tensed. From the lower knuckle down thin webbing stretched between his fingers and the ends were tipped with short, blunt claws. Other than that he looked completely human except for his wild, amber eyes and those beautiful swirls of hair on his body that hadn't been there before.

"Is this what we look like?"

“Not usually, we look human in our bare skins.” Llyr held up his hand, turning it slowly with a troubled look on his face and exhaustion in his eyes. “This is because I’m being called home. The change has been creeping over me since I got my pelt back. I need to go. It hurts, Dylan.”

Dylan took his hand and led him over to the duffle bag. “Is there anything else we need in there?” Llyr shook his head and Dylan grabbed the knife. Silently, Llyr cut the harness from him and traced the pattern of a diamond left on his skin.

“You looked beautiful in the ropes, but I prefer you completely naked.”

“I hope you enjoyed it because you’re not likely to get me like that again.” It had been a unique experience, frustrating and liberating at the same time. And it had at least partially accomplished what Llyr had set out to do even if it hadn’t panned out the way his friend had hoped. Still, Dylan recognized that he didn’t do helplessly well, especially when there was action that could be taken.

He led Llyr out the door and the humid air enveloped them. Llyr’s step quickened as he moved toward the sound of the ocean. It should have been too dark to see where to walk under the mangrove trees, but Dylan found that his eyes pierced the dimness and he followed the path without misstep.

As they left the trees, Llyr began to run. Dylan’s heart leapt in his throat as the wide expanse of the sea came into view. It was vast, stretching without limit to disappear in the dark horizon. Even if they could swim as well as Llyr said they wouldn’t survive out there. There were ocean liners and fishermen, sharks and orcas. Dylan shuddered. Orcas.

A vision of the black and white beast, its mouth full of teeth came to him. He remembered the sounds of panic carrying through the waters. How the creature drove itself toward its chosen prey. He’d been little, barely more than a pup. He shook off the memory and found himself on his hands and knees, the sand digging into him, his heart pounding.

Llyr returned to his side, his fingers sliding through Dylan's hair. He shuddered again with pleasure this time and leaned into his friend's touch. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah, just a memory. A bad one I think." Dylan captured Llyr's wrist and tugged him down onto the dry sand with him. He wasn't ready to get closer to all that water and he didn't want Llyr to be more tempted by the call than he already was. He wanted his friend to be tempted by him instead.

Llyr kept his pelt clutched in one hand as Dylan pulled him closer and he cast anxious eyes toward the shore. "How much do you remember? We should go, Dylan. What if Anthony and Donovan catch up with us?"

"How would they know we were here? Anthony is probably right by Donovan's side at the hospital. By the time they realize we're not at the house and track us down, we'll be long gone." Dylan's lips searched out that little spot behind Llyr's ear that drove him crazy, turned him into a helpless, mewling beggar. He remembered that spot. What else would he remember if he indulged in his need for his mate? Whatever else he might've forgotten, his body knew Llyr's.

Dylan tossed down his own pelt and took Llyr's gently from him and made a pallet on the sand. Llyr looked longingly at the surf before looking at him with equal need in his eyes. "We could go do this down where the waves kiss the sand, just like we used to."

"I think that might be a little bit too much of a temptation for you. I don't want you to disappear when things start to get interesting." He laid Llyr back on the furs and knelt back on his heels to study him. One hand slid along Llyr's thigh with a possessive touch. Llyr was his and the thought of Donovan touching him in anyway ate at him. Moonlight gilded his skin and the whirls of dark hair on his chest matched one of the pelts below him. Long, lean thighs met trim hips and a tapered waist. "The moon hasn't set and we still have a little time. Show me what it was like, Llyr. Don't leave me, yet."

Llyr's brows furrowed, hesitation on his face and then to Dylan's relief he reached for him. "Distract me," he murmured as he tugged Dylan

down on top of him. Sweat stood out on his as he turned his face toward the sea. “Make me want to stay with you.”

“Gladly.” Dylan kissed him, his tongue dipping into Llyr’s mouth, tasting and exploring. He could hear the pull and tug of the sea as well, a siren’s song that didn’t have half the lure of Llyr’s body beneath him. He burrowed his arms under Llyr’s shoulders and held him closer as they kissed.

How could he have forgotten this? Each touch, each whisper evoked more memories of all the countless times they had lain together like this. They all blended together in a blur of sensation and urgency. Dylan wanted to remember the first time and that last fateful time most of all.

Llyr attacked his throat, stinging it with little bites and then soothing them with swipes of his tongue. Dylan’s cock ached as he pushed Llyr’s thighs apart with his knees. His mind screamed at him to slow down, but his body and Llyr had other plans. Llyr slid his knees up, spreading himself open for Dylan as he arched against him. Their cocks rubbed against each other in an erotic, heated dance.

“Make it hard, Dylan. Hard and fast, please.” Llyr tightened his arms around him, breathless with need.

“No wait.” Dylan pulled away with a gasp, dragging air into his fevered lungs. They needed to slow down. He wanted to savor this, to commit every moment to memory. Reality and the lies he’d been living were one big jumbled mess that he had to sort out. The only thing that seemed real anymore was Llyr, despite how different he was from the man Dylan had known.

Llyr was up in a flash, tossing back a seductive smile as he walked back toward the surf, pelt in hand. “You’re over thinking it, Dylan. Stop struggling against it and give into the urgency.”

Dylan scrambled to his own feet. His heart raced as he looked between the man he ached for and the ocean that he couldn’t quite dispel his fear of. Did he have true reason to fear or was it all implanted memories that didn’t truly exist? “Llyr, wait.”

“You wanted me to show you how we used to play?” Llyr called back and started running toward the water line. “Then catch me if you can.”

Dylan watched him for a moment before the hot surge of desire urged him toward his feet. He grabbed the pelt at his feet and took off after Llyr. At first he stumbled, but as he struck wet sand, he moved faster, his feet slapping against the ground. Llyr slowed down, letting Dylan get closer before darting away again. The scent of salt water grew stronger, the air filled with tiny droplets of mist that cooled his skin. The first rush of water gave his ankles a welcoming kiss and Dylan drew in a shuddering breath, coming to a halt.

Instead of being terrifying it exhilarated him. He faced the oncoming waves, holding out his arms and dropping his head back. He wanted to dive right into the rollers and let them drag him back past the breakwaters. His feet moved forward and Dylan couldn't stop them if he tried. Another wave swept up, swirling around his knees, splashing his thighs.

The water tugged at him, making him take another step, filling his ears with its welcoming song. The ache of desire turned into a different ache. Home. Home. Home.

Strong arms circled around his waist and Llyr pressed his wet body against Dylan's back. “Shall we go in together and swim along the shore until we get tired? Come morning we can sleep on the waves, knowing we'll see our families again.” Naked longing colored Llyr's voice.

“Not yet.” Dylan wrapped his hand around the nape of Llyr's neck and turned to kiss him. He didn't know when he'd have a chance to touch him again. Llyr's lips parted with a sigh and his arms tightened around Dylan's waist.

“I'll stay with you. I missed you so much, even when I didn't know why I did. I'd see you with Anthony and it was torture. It drove Donovan crazy because he couldn't erase that from me no matter how much he tried.”

“I don't want to even think about either of them.” Dylan looked up and down the empty shoreline. He could make out a fishing pier in the distance and beyond that a row of vacation homes with dark windows. The

building where Llyr had held him was hidden behind the trees. They were all alone out here.

Llyr nipped his shoulder and rubbed his cheek against him, the stubble on his jaw abrading Dylan's skin. "Neither do I. That's in the past now."

"Is this what we were doing when everything changed?" Dylan slid his hands down to grip Llyr's taut ass. "Did we come to shore to make love?"

"Yes. Somewhere right along this stretch of the beach. We'd never been so far away from our own waters. But we wanted to explore."

Llyr's voice faded as sharp pains stabbed into Dylan's brain. He gritted his teeth against it, sensing Anthony's mental touch. The trap. That conniving, sick bastard. If he couldn't have Dylan, nobody could. "Tell me more," Dylan gasped, clinging to Llyr as his knees weakened. He fought against the pain, against Anthony's hold on him.

"Dylan? Dylan!" Llyr lowered his shuddering body to the cool, wet sand. "I'm sorry. I should've kept my mouth shut. Dylan, please don't die on me now."

A wave washed over them and Dylan's breath caught as one of the memories he'd been desperately searching for came back to him. Llyr lying under him, trembling in uncertainty and anticipation. The first time they'd snuck away to find a secluded beach, Llyr had believed all the tender, lusty promises that Dylan had whispered in his ear. He'd followed without question, trusting that Dylan would always look after him.

"What's wrong? You look so sad." Llyr brushed back the lock of hair that had plastered itself to Dylan's forehead. "Come back to me."

"I failed you didn't I? It's my fault we were caught." Somehow he knew without having the memory that he'd been too impatient for his mate to concern himself with making sure that they were alone.

"It was an accident. Neither of us were paying attention. You can't blame yourself."

Dylan closed his eyes, struggling to bring it back. There had been sounds of a party coming from the mangrove trees, from the very building they'd just left. He had been so arrogant, thought himself invulnerable. Now he knew better.

Sandy hands cupped Dylan's cheeks and drew him down for a sweet kiss. "Remember this?" Llyr whispered.

Lips brushed over his face and an ache swelled in Dylan's chest and throat. All the little things were trickling back. How Llyr loved to nuzzle, the contented little sounds he made in the back of his throat as they lay tangled together after mating, how he would groom and tend to him. Even now, Llyr still took care of him.

"I do remember some things." Dylan lifted his head and searched Llyr's face, warmed by the smile that lit up his eyes. "I don't know who or what I am, but I remember you, lying here like this. I remember how much I love you."

Llyr's smile faltered as he searched Dylan's face. "You do? Still?"

"I do." Another wave licked along their bodies, bringing with it more memories. All he had to do was embrace it, immerse himself in the waters. "Even when I didn't know what you meant to me, I felt that bond. I dreamt of you."

Llyr had such faith in him. He couldn't let him down. He wouldn't let there be a repeat of the past. Anthony was coming closer. Dylan could sense him like an oil slick, foul against his skin. He might never be able to wash that touch from his mind and he couldn't seduce Llyr here with that threat hanging over them. He couldn't watch Llyr in Donovan's arms again. Not when there was a solution to all his problems if he could just work up the courage to face those dark waters.

Strong arms tugged him down, held him close. "I love you, too. I knew you could do it. I knew you'd remember."

Not yet. It was so close that Dylan could taste it's sweetness on his tongue, but he wasn't there yet. He kissed Llyr's smiling lips and then slowly sat up. The tide had turned. Inch by inch the water would retreat and

as it pulled back the call became more frantic. “Will you go out there with me?”

“Are you sure?” Llyr searched his face, hesitating despite how much Dylan knew he ached to go. He’d stayed this long for him. He’d stay longer if Dylan needed the time.

“I’m sure, as long as you’re with me.” Dylan took a deep breath and looked at the waves again. “Familiar sensations right? What could be more familiar than that?”

“Considering you spent more than half your life there, not a damn thing.” Llyr slipped his hand in Dylan’s. He lifted it and kissed Llyr’s knuckles. That mix of human and non-human did not seem so unnatural anymore. Llyr smiled at him and gestured toward the water. “I’ll be with you each step.”

He wouldn’t drown. He wouldn’t let the images in his head get the best of him. Dylan repeated the mantra with each step and Llyr’s presence beside him kept him from succumbing to his fears. His body rocked with the waves as he moved deeper. They pushed at him, threatening to tumble him back then yanked, dragging him forward. Sweat popped out over his chest and face, and his heart drummed.

Beside him, Llyr moved easily with the water, his face lit up with excitement. “Stop fighting it. Let it carry you out. Your body knows what to do even if you don’t. Just relax.”

He couldn’t swim. This was a mistake. No more memories came to him, telling him what he was supposed to do. Just the black, black water and his tenuous contact with Llyr that suddenly seemed far too inadequate.

Dylan tried to calm the panic clawing at him as another wave battered his body and almost swept his feet out from under him. Water splashed against his face as he drew in a deep breath and he jerked back, arms flailing. Llyr’s hand slipped from his. “No.” Sputtering, coughing, Dylan lunged toward where he saw him last. He thought he saw a small, brown head bobbing several swells away.

“Liam!” A new voice cried out.

Dylan spun around to face the beach. A man stood at the edge of the dry sand, his arm bound in a sling. The early morning light gleamed off of his pale hair. Another man walked out of the trees to join him with an arrogant, cold smile on his lips. “How’s the water, David?”

A chill rippled through the waves or was it just through him? “Screw you, Anthony. I remember what you your bastard brother did to me and Llyr. You’re not going to be able to terrorize me into coming back to you.”

“Oh?” Anthony lifted his hand, palm up, and the water around Dylan’s thighs rushed away, knocking him down and jerking his pelt out of his other hand. Sand abraded his chest and stomach. Dylan scrambled to his knees and turned his head in time to see the dark wall of water just before it crashed down on him again. Its weight drove him to the bottom and Dylan lost all sense of what was up or down. All he knew was that he was being dragged, tumbled about, and everywhere there was only more water.

Dylan opened his mouth to shout and water poured in, filling his mouth and nostrils. His lungs ached, his thoughts screamed as he tried to get his arms and legs to work together. He kicked and clawed his way to the surface, and drew in a shuddering breath. Fuck, oh fuck. Salt stung his eyes and nose as he wiped his face. That had been too close and his heart sank as he realized how much further he’d been swept out.

Another swell splashed over him as wave after wave dragged him down deeper. Sounds filled his ears, the clicks and whistles of dolphins, the trumpeting cry of a whale deeper out among the waters. Memory touched him and Dylan hovered on the edge of understanding what all those sounds meant. One sound rose above the others. Llyr calling to him.

Llyr was the strong one, not him. Llyr had remembered while he remained lost.

Something brushed against his side and Dylan jerked away with a shout that drove the rest of the air from his lungs. A face appeared before him, round and covered in slickened dark fur. Amber eyes turned a warm velvety brown and the whiskers of a seal nuzzled Dylan’s chin. A clawed flipper hooked under his arm and teeth scored his shoulder in a nip of welcome before Dylan was propelled upward.

Coughing, Dylan dragged in breath after breath, his mind spinning. Too much. This was all just fucking too much to take in at once. The seal let go of him and immediately Dylan began to sink. With a sound of admonishment, it flipped Dylan onto his back before floating beside him with a ‘see how easy is it is’ look on his face.

Wearily, Dylan chuckled and laid back as he felt the seal supporting him. The waves gently lifted him up and down, rocking him as gently as a mother with a babe. This couldn’t be happening and yet Dylan couldn’t deny the evidence next to him.

“Llyr?”

Dylan closed his eyes and reached out, touching the body next to him. He was losing his damned mind. This was just another hallucination that Anthony dreamed up. That creature couldn’t be his mate.

The sea wept. Dylan heard every soft, sighing cry, every breath. He shuddered and finally surrendered to the longing that enveloped him, too tired to fight anymore. Llyr. In his heart he knew that the being swimming beside him, staying close in case he started to drown again was his mate. The final piece slipped into place and he put a name to what they were.

Selkie.

A selkie without his pelt and doomed to remain in his human shape until he found it again. Dylan forced his heart to calm as he laid back in the embrace of the water. It washed over him in a caress, holding him as his fragmented memories returned.

“David, I have something of yours. You’re not going to get very far without it.” Anthony. How could he have forgotten about him? Panic clutched Dylan’s stomach as he reached for his pelt only to remember how it had been snatched from him. “Beg me to rescue your dumbass and I’ll make sure you get out of there alive.” Anthony’s mocking laughter carried on the wind toward them.

“And bring Liam with you,” Donovan called in a raw voice. “What did you do with him?”

The seal cried out in defiance and anger as it flipped back onto its belly. Dylan wrapped his arms around its powerful chest before it could swim away. “No,” he rasped, his mind racing. “It’s a trap, an illusion. Anthony is good at those.” Like the water that tried to drown him. More illusion than reality, because the sea wouldn’t have answered Anthony’s call. Dylan’s belief in it is what had led the illusion its power. If Llyr went to shore, if either of them did they wouldn’t be able to fight the twins’ mind stealing magic. They’d either take them again or kill them outright.

A light shimmered around Llyr and his seal form melted away. “Are you sure?” He lifted his head above the waves, driving his body up. “It looks like your pelt.”

“It’s not. I lost mine in the waves.” Dylan treaded water easily now, his hands and feet changed to aid him, dark hair growing on his chest and thighs. Another memory niggled at him and for the first time in what seemed like hours, Dylan smiled. He’d lost his pelt, not had it taken from him. Not this time.

“Fine,” Dylan shouted as his mind raced. “We’re coming back.”

“Dylan, what are you doing?” Llyr clutched at his arm, his eyes huge. “We can’t go back. Please don’t ask me to leave the water again.”

“Hush.” Dylan drew Llyr closer and nuzzled his cheek. Llyr would follow him into exile and the thought made him ache. He wouldn’t fail Llyr this time. “I wouldn’t ask you to do that for me. Especially after everything you’ve already done. We don’t need to go back we just need to buy a little time, get closer. I didn’t have my pelt taken from me this time, it was lost.”

“And a lost pelt always finds its way back to its owner.” Llyr grinned, showing his teeth as a wicked glint came to his eyes. “What do you have in mind?”

“They’re afraid of the water. See how they refuse to step onto the wet sand? We’re going to make sure they spend the rest of their days as terrified of the ocean as they made us think we were.”

Dylan swam toward shore with powerful strokes. He had to trust, to believe. After all this time the sea would have no wish to lose them to the

land again. A small brown head popped out of the water next to Llyr, and then other in front of him as an entire pod of seals came to join them. They dived and flipped through the water, speaking the language that Dylan now understood, urging them to come play. They weren't the only ones. The dolphins had come closer, their fins, cutting through the water. Two manatees even appeared with their gentle, curious eyes. Dylan urged them all to search.

The waves became choppy as a wind came out of the east and the sun slipped above the horizon on an intense bed of red and pink clouds. A storm approached. Dylan could feel its strength building in the air and water. He just needed to harness that strength.

His feet scraped against the ground and Dylan stood up as something silky tangled around his knees. He reached for his pelt, breathing a prayer of thanks as Anthony and Donovan stepped closer to the water. A dark, limp fur hung from Anthony's hand. He'd been right. Just another illusion. "Are you ready to beg or do you want to feel the waves again? I can wait here all damn day. You're going to get too tired to keep fighting me."

It took everything Dylan had to not snatch up his pelt and change right there. The ache in his bones burned so fiercely that it felt as if they were going to crack and splinter. Dylan took that pain, that longing to go home, and his anger and threw it toward the sky as Llyr held out his arms beside him.

Lightning tore down with a clap of thunder, striking the sand in front of the twins, sending up a spray of grit. Anthony and Donovan were thrown from each other and they cried out in pain as they landed hard. Dylan let his memories fuel his anger. All those times Anthony had let him remember just to fuck with him, only to steal it again when he wanted a submissive lover. Rain drummed down.

Dylan wrapped the pelt in his arms and felt the power of sea and sky tear through him. The waves rose up again, rushing upon the twins as they struggled to their feet again. It tossed them end over end as they screamed and thrashed. As Llyr lowered his arms the sea retreated and Dylan released winds and lightning.

“Enough, Dylan. Let’s go home.” Llyr took his hand. “They can’t touch us anymore and we’re both whole again.”

Dylan tore his eyes away from the two men lying on the shore. He wasn’t sure whether they were alive or not. A part of him hoped they’d survive. The humiliation of being defeated, the fear of going near the water would eat at Anthony for the rest of his life.

“What now?” He asked as the change came over him and he slipped into his true form.

“We start over, together.” Llyr splashed water at him, inviting a chase as he headed out to the deeper waters. With a laugh, Dylan followed his mate home.

THE END