

*New
Beginnings*



*Brenda
Cothern*

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Brenda Cothorn

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This book contains adult sexual situations including m/m practices and is intended for readers 18+.

Dedication

To my fans, both old and new, for
continuing down
the twisted trails of my imagination with me.

Acknowledgement

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Kevin, Cheryl, and Derek.

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Prologue

It was perpetually pleasant, neither too hot nor too cold. The flowers and trees were constantly in bloom outside the small villa. One could travel for miles and see the same flora scattered about in a persistent stasis of beauty before finding the villa once more before them. There was no defined sky or sun above the magnificence of the realm and no animals to grace the terrain.

Smoke rose lazily from the stone chimney of the villa and multicolored roses lined the pebbled path that led to a stout wooden door. Sheer drapes covered the glassless windows and could be seen blowing in the soft afternoon breeze.

Inside the villa, four women and a man are in the large central room that is the heart of their home. Several looms and embroidery stands are placed about in an orderly fashion. All of the looms are still as death as three of the women and the man sit in their circle.

The fourth woman stood in front of her embroidery stand placing the last stitch in her current piece of work before stepping back to look over her latest creation and turning to her family.

"It is finished," she announced to her siblings as she removed her piece from its stand. "Finally!" the youngest of the women exclaimed.

"Excellence takes time, little sister," the man reminded her.

"Let us see, sister," one of the other women prompted the standing woman.

The creator of the latest embroidery held the large piece in front of her so her siblings could admire her work. The piece draped from shoulder to floor and was extremely detailed as only a good embroidered piece could be. Several small scenes graced the piece and seemed to flow seamlessly into one another. There were three people, a couple in long wizardly robes and a warrior, who were interlinked by the threads of fate around the edges. The fair haired man and dark haired woman stood in an embrace though they beckoned to the warrior who approached from the edge. Other figures could be seen but were indistinct as they weaved between the arcane symbols that surrounded the entire piece.

To nods of approval and sounds of satisfaction, the embroiderer walked to the circle to take her place. She lifted the edge of the quilt that was draped across her chair and began to spread her latest piece atop it before taking her place amongst her siblings.

The panel of the quilt in front of her was as blank as her embroidery piece had been before she created the finished art. Her sister and brother helped her spread her piece to fit it within the blank panel of the quilt. The sapphire blue thread, which made up the tower in the center of her piece, sparkled and the various shades of grey that made up the surrounding compound glinted in the ambient light of their room.

The siblings threaded their quilting needles and as the first stitch was placed to secure the new panel into place, the silent sister spoke, "So be it, now it shall be."

In unison the siblings replied, "Now it shall be."

Chapter 1

Books lined the walls and every inch of space was packed with parchment and scrolls. A large mound of clutter buried a desk that sat off to one side of the room. Several wands, orbs, and various other magical paraphernalia acted as paper weights or could be seen poking through the velum mess. A deep leather chair was the only clear space in the library but even that was occupied at the moment. The woman sat with her legs curled under her, knees poking out where the slits of her wizardly robes had slid to the sides to reveal shapely thighs. Her long black hair fell in waves over her slender shoulders and she constantly had to move the runaway wisps off the

ancient tome that lay in her lap. With a wave of her hand, her frustration at her stray locks disappeared as she stopped the gentle breeze that had been cooling her.

The winter storm that raged outside of the tower was undetectable from the warmth of the library as the small globes of magical light danced playfully around the room providing warmth with their rainbow light. A steady white glow shone down upon her seat and with another flick of her finger a bookmark slid out from the mess that was her desk. Without lifting her vibrant violet eyes from the page she had been reading, she grasped the thin dragon tailed design that was her place holder. She closed the tome, its bookmark secure in its new home, and stretched like a cat. Long graceful limbs extended toward the ceiling and the floor as stiff muscles sought relief.

“You make the simplest movements appear seductive,” Brice smiled at her from the doorway.

He was tall, a head and a half more than she, and his pale blue eyes sparkled with mischief as he leaned casually against the door frame. His pale blond hair was almost white and fell in waves over his shoulders, much like her ebony locks did. To guess his age and be correct would be impossible. Oliva stopped trying over two centuries ago and even thought she knew him to be older than her own two hundred and twenty-four years, he did not look a day over his thirtieth year. She grinned at Brice and still found it hard to believe he was not a warrior or at least an archer. She could easily imagine his lithe form armored and drawing back a bow string but knew his preferred weapon was his mind.

“You always say the nicest things,” Oliva smiled as she stood and walked to him.

Brice watched her approach and still felt the tug of lust and love that had attracted him to her so many years ago. Her magical abilities had grown over the decades they had spent together, as he knew they would, though she would never be the master that he was. They both long ago accepted the limits of her magical abilities and those limits were by no means small. There was no shame in being the second most powerful mage in the lands and he knew that power was not her ultimate goal. His was. He remembered their first meeting as she wrapped her arms around his waist. She had come to his valley looking for some rumored artifact that had the power to save her dying father. Her attempt to kill him when he explained there was no such life saving relic was feeble. For three months he allowed her to try his patience with her budding sorceries. It was some point during that time that he realized she was meant to be with him.

He felt her potential as a mage, when she exerted herself, as if it was a physical blow. It was as if the barrier could just be broken, the door to the cage opened and the magic set free, she would be free as well. He tested her in many ways those first three months and it was almost like a game to him; a game that she eventually won when she claimed his heart.

“That I do, don’t I?” Brice grinned at her as he held her body to his and rested his chin upon her ebony head. “We’ve company, love,” he smiled even wider though she couldn’t see it.

It had been so long since they had a visitor or had left the tower that even the thought of a visitor excited him as he was sure it would her. The world beyond his valley remained as it always did and he tired of venturing forth or watching it from his viewing room.

“What kind of visitor?” Oliva pulled back to look up at him as she asked.

“The adventuring kind, it would seem,” Brice grinned down into her violet orbs as he watched her full lips form into a pout.

“Adventuring kind,” Oliva sighed, “at least they are more entertaining than the lore hunters.” “That they are, love,” Brice kissed her full lips gently before continuing, “How should we play?”

Oliva thought for a moment as she licked the taste of Brice from her lips and gazed up into his blue eyes. It has been a long time since their last visitor and she was sure their game with him had kept many an adventurer away for the last few generations. Adventurers are looking for adventure and they never failed to please their guests. They never hurt those who sought them out and the adventurers frequently were rewarded for their gallant efforts in the games. There were many

games they had played over the last two centuries but which one she was in the mood for she did not know.

“What are you in the mood for m’lord?” Oliva grinned back at him.

Brice wasn’t really sure which game would entertain them most. He had watched the weary traveler since the boundary wards announced his presence just outside his valley. He knew the man was not just passing through as there was nowhere to pass through to. His sapphire tower sat at the back of the circular valley and there were no passes that anyone but he and Oliva knew, to cross the mountains behind his home. The only reason to enter the valley was to seek out his sapphire refuge; whoever entered the winter enhanced valley entered with the intent to visit the tower.

Over the years, Brice had seen all sorts of adventurers and seekers of lore come to his valley. The adventurers he toyed with until they realized that easier adventure could be found elsewhere. The seekers of knowledge and lore, like his love Oliva, he toyed with as well but generally graced them with some reward for his entertainment. Sometimes it was a vague piece of lore or a riddle to puzzle which would send them back out into the world to hunt down the legend. Other times he would give them a meager trinket that they valued more than it was worth for the magic it contained.

That was where his Oliva was different. When the travel drained waif came to his valley looking for that non-existent artifact, he could not resist her. Something about the woman, maybe the pull of her magic, made him eventually care more about her than the games he usually played. Or maybe it was her sharp wit and determination that hooked his heart for when he tried to send her on one of his impossible and endless quests, she saw right through his ploy. No matter what he did, she persisted in her misled conviction that he had the item she sought. That same quality along with her entertainingly playfulness has kept him loving her for the last two centuries.

“You choose, love,” Brice continued to smile down at her.

“Let’s take a look before I decide,” she stood on tip toe and placed a light kiss on his lips before pulling out of his embrace.

Brice followed Oliva toward the archway that was the room's door and repeated the magical phrase that took him to the viewing room. He stood in the doorway and watched as Oliva strode to the large crystal orb in the center of the room. The viewing orb was the size of a small boulder and rested gently upon a deep maroon velvet drape. Eight golden brackets held the orb like the fingers of some deformed giant’s hand and their glint could be seen reflecting off the other viewing devices that Brice had collected throughout his long life.

Not all of the items in the room were orbs. In fact, several mirrors of various sizes graced the shelves and walls. Figurines, bones, and scrying bowls were placed around the room and each had their unique viewing purpose.

Oliva always used the large orb and Brice watched as she started the intricate hand gestures that would bring it to life. White swirls, which looked like smoke, filled the orb as the sound of Oliva’s voice rose to bring forth the vision of their winter shrouded valley. The smoke soon turned to the billowing snow and ice that kept all but the most determined visitors away.

Oliva gazed into the viewing orb and watched as the figure of a bundled man appeared. It was almost impossible to see more than the tall traveler trudging through knee deep snow. A wave of her hand blew snow and ice away from their figure for a brief moment as she bid the orb to look closer. A pair of mismatched eyes were revealed above the heavy cloth that covered the lower portion of the traveler’s face. Ice crystals covered the cloth from his warm breath trying to escape. Brice continued to watch Oliva as she bid the view to change again so she could inspect their visitor.

“The problem with snow and ice is it makes them bundle.” Oliva frowned down into the orb as if willing the man to reveal more of his face. “Naught can be seen when they are so layered.

What armor, if any does this adventurer wear? What weapons does he have hidden under all of those layers? Or perhaps this is an adventuring mage?"

A smile spread upon Brice's face at the argument he was well used to hearing. Oliva thought heat should be their deterrent but centuries of experience taught him better and he knew her motivation was more for the ease of viewing their visitors than the protection of their home. There were not many still alive who could challenge Brice magically but every few decades other methods were tried. Power hungry lore seekers or scared adventurers who would kill that which they did not understand would come seeking their fame. One day someone might succeed but that day has not yet come.

"He's still a few days out," Oliva commented without taking her eyes from the snowy scene before her.

"Aye, love. Plenty of time for you to choose the game." Brice grinned though she was blind to everything but the figure in the orb. He didn't mind and wasn't the least bit surprised when she didn't even notice him take his leave.

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The blowing snow and ice seemed as if it would never end. Layers of thick wool and the cloak of furs did nothing to prevent the cold from numbing him to the bone. The tower grew closer with every frozen step he took and for the millionth time he wondered if he would actually reach it before he froze to death. That thought was quickly followed by the doubt surrounding the quest he was on. For weeks he has traveled, all on the word of a seer. Her words were vague when she gripped his arm in the village market and fell into her trance.

At first, Zek wasn't even sure the words were meant for him but when she mentioned "one eye of green and one of blue to gaze upon the sapphire," he had no doubt. All of his life he looked into his mismatched eyes and cursed whatever gods there may be for the defect in his appearance. He tried to ignore the mystic's words but as the days passed after his encounter her words wormed their way into his brain and haunted him. The moment he made his decision to seek out the Sapphire Tower, the nagging dreadful feeling that had settled like a cloud upon him seemed to dissipate. In its place a sense of purpose and obsession with reaching the tower overcame him.

Zek had no way to know if the seer's prophecy would come true, that a better life and home awaited him but the sound of doom in her voice when she warned him not to ignore her words made him believe. What he was supposed to seek these master's for or what he was to do once he arrived at the tower was beyond him. Perhaps they would know why he was sent here, if they would even see him. If there was anyone to see him and if he didn't freeze to death before reaching the tower!

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Oliva found Brice tinkering in his lab. Noise filled the lab as beakers bubbled and dripped into various tubes that caused a rainbow effect when the magical white glow lights of the room shone on them just right. Powders of as many colors sat in bowls or on glass trays waiting to be used.

She did not recognize the concoction he was currently brewing and did not know what the experiment was trying to achieve but her eyes did not stay on his work for long. They drifted to watch the man and she loved the way his brow furrowed when he concentrated. His hair was pulled back into a horse-tail and he was dressed in a sleeveless linen shirt. She knew he never wore robes while working in the lab since his sleeves would just get in the way.

Oliva watched the master of the tower dip several drops of a pale amber liquid into a glass bowl that contained a deep green powder. There was no reaction at first to the combination of

alchemical elements so when a loud pop sounded it made her jump. She couldn't help but laugh at herself for her startled reaction. It was this laugh that made Brice raise his head from his current project.

"You are awake early this day, love," Brice said and knew it was the excitement of their arriving visitor that had caused her to rise well before her normal hour. Oliva was a night owl and he knew that her magic was stronger during the darker hours than those of light. For over eighty years they had tried to puzzle the reason why it was so with her but they never found an answer.

"Was your experiment a success?" Oliva asked him and he knew she was genuinely interested in the answer he was about to give her.

"Not the result I was trying for but an interesting result just the same. There may be a use for loud noises." A grin spread on Brice's face as he walked around his work table. "Our visitor's progress?" he continued knowing that she would have checked the viewing orb when she awoke.

"Late tomorrow if he keeps his current pace," she told him as he wrapped his bare arms around her.

"And the game? Have you decided?" his pale blue eyes gazed down into her violet ones. "No."

When she said no more, Brice frowned and prompted, "That is not like you, love. What is wrong?"

Oliva hated causing the concerned look that now fell like a shadow across her lover's face.

She hated even more that she had no clear answer to give him. All she had were the fragments of a dream and an unsettling feeling that change was on the wind. Oliva cast her gaze away from his face as she shrugged.

Brice would have enjoyed the rise and fall of her ample breasts when she shrugged if he had not been so concerned about her. Oliva was never indecisive about anything and he worried about her silence now.

"Is there something different about this visitor?" Brice inquired.

Again, Oliva shrugged. "Not that I can see. He seems to be just another adventurer but it's not what I can see that bothers me."

Brice remained silent as she pulled out of his embrace and worked through her thoughts. He watched as she walked around his lab, careful not to let her long red robe catch on crates of alchemical supplies he stored around the perimeter of the room.

Oliva shook her head and looked back to Brice. "It's more a feeling. Change is coming but I do not know if it will be for the better or worse. I sense that it is tied to this visitor but that is all I know."

"Nothing can harm us, love. No one for centuries has really been a threat and one man surely can not do as much damage as that army from Trilous did." Brice tried to reassure her.

"I don't feel threatened," Oliva tried to make his frown disappear by offering him a smile. "I just feel that something is going to happen and it is tied to this visitor. He is not like the others but I am not sure how I know this."

"What will be usually is," Brice held his arms open to her and she crossed the room to be held.

Oliva tilted her ebony head and placed her soft lips against his. Brice returned her kiss and was almost startled when her gentle kiss turned into one of hunger and she pressed her body roughly into his. He was not sure where her sudden desire came from but he could sense her need and had no wish to deny her as her hands snaked under the sides of his linen shirt. He clutched her tighter as their lips fed hungrily from one another.

Brice's own hands caressed down Oliva's back, to cup under her buttocks as he felt her hands delving deeper into the linen pants he wore beneath his robe. Oliva released her lips from his to trail wet, hungry kisses down his neck causing him to moan in pleasure. As the moan escaped his lips he uttered the magical phrase that instantly teleported them to their bed chamber.

He never thought to question her need as he gave into his own when they appeared at the foot of the large feather bed that they shared.

Oliva never noticed that they were teleported to their bed chamber. Her hands crept along his back, until they reached his ass then she dug her long nails in and they scraped up along his back as he lifted her to him.

Brice loved the pain her nails caused and could already feel the warm trails of blood as his under-tunic soaked up his essence. A hiss of combined pleasure and pain escaped his lips as Oliva bit sharply into the side of his neck and brought her hands to his chest. As her wet mouth latched onto him like a leech seeking blood, her fingers dug greedily into the flesh of his chest. Brice leaned back and as his knees hit the edge of the bed, he fell backward landing on the bed and pulling Oliva down on top of him.

Oliva's mouth left his neck and found his lips once more as her hands tore into his chest and his own pulled roughly at her robes. Their heated hungry kisses never stopped as wizardly robes almost magically fell away from their aroused bodies. Brice felt Oliva's firm breasts press into his chest, around her clawing hands, as his mouth left hers to explore her milky orbs. His slender fingers, that were so adept at casting spells, trailed along her smooth flank until they gripped each breast, pushing them together for his mouth to envelope each hardened bud. Her knees spread to straddle his now naked form and she ground her wetness down onto his hard rod. Oliva's hips rocked faster as he suckled her nipples and it was not long before her claws once more dug deeply into his almost hairless chest. The orgasm that pierced through her body caused her to arch her back, making her nipple rip free of Brice's wanting mouth. Brice felt the warm flood of her release upon his twitching cock and his own pleasure soon followed to fill her.

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Zek stood in the shadow of the looming sapphire tower and he breathed an inaudible sigh of relief that he had finally reached his destination. His eyes traveled up the circular tower until he could no longer follow the smooth blue walls through the blinding snow and ice. Dark elongated squares, which he assumed to be windows, were interspaced along the section of the tower he could see. No sign that the tower was inhabited, nor a door, could be seen from his current position.

Zek groaned as he forced his frozen legs to trudge through more snow as he circled the tower. There was no change in the imposing structure as he made his circuit and had he not found his original tracks in the knee deep snow, he would not have known he wasn't walking in place.

"Hail the tower!" Zek shouted over the howling winds after lowering his face cloth.

Maybe he was a fool to follow the seer's words and on a fool's mission. For all he knew, the tower was empty and the valley's only inhabitants were the ancient legends that surrounded long dead mages who once resided here.

Zek was tired, weary from traveling to this frozen tomb, as he approached the smooth blue stone. He reached out a cloth wrapped hand hesitantly and touched the tower wall. To his surprise, he felt warmth emanating from the smooth, snow-free, blue walls. No thought was given to the source of the heat he felt when he pressed his freezing back to the stone. Zek soon forgot the stinging snow and ice that blew over his body as he hungrily absorbed the tower's warmth. His last thought before succumbing to his exhaustion was that he was a fool but at least he was a fool who would feel warmth again before he died.