Rose Thorns of Love

Another Backwards Fairy Tale

By. Marinela Ortiz

# From the Back:

Michelle has been a book worm for most of his life. He also has a magic power that lets him control people as if he is reading a book. When he helps someone that is chased by kids in town, he never thought he would start falling for a mysterious woman.

Gabrielle and her brother, Alicio, were both changed during the holiday season into beasts and have a rose tattoo that needs to fade due to love. When she and her brother save a woman out in the woods during a snowstorm, they would end up starting their new love story.

From the writer of Love Found in Cinders, comes another Backwards Fairy Tale that almost mirrors the first.

Other books by Marinela:

Backwards Fairy Tale:

Love Found in Cinders

As a little girl, I always loved fairy tales and the Disney movies and other interpretations based on them. Me and my friend Dameon Alexander, who this book is dedicated to, understands how Belle feels when it comes to being different than most people. I see myself different from most visually impaired people because of my love for artistic things, nerd topics, and technology. Plus, getting to talk to voice actors and on-screen people make my life even more interesting. While Dameon, on the other hand, loved makeup like I did but also loved photography, film, and fashion despite his visual impairment. It doesn’t hurt to be a little different, even if it means if you have a certain taste in something or enjoy what you do day to day, that is what I wanted to bring in these pages with Gabrielle and Michelle since they are different, Gabrielle with her appearance and Michelle with his magic and love for reading, this is where I bring to you, Rose Thorns of Love!

There is so much a man can tell you,

So much he can say.

there is so much inside.

You remain,

you.......

My power, my pleasure, my pain, baby

To me you're like a growing addiction that I can't deny. yes.

Won't you tell me is that healthy, baby?

But did you know,

That when it snows,

My eyes become large and the light that you shine can be seen.

Baby,

I compare you to a kiss from a rose on the grey.

Been kissed from a rose on the grey.

Ooh, the more I get of you

Stranger it feels, yeah

stranger it feels, yeah.

Now that your rose is in bloom.

A light hits the gloom on the grey,

-Seal, “Kiss from a Rose”

# Chapter 1

# Michelle

I walked down a dark hallway of a place that seemed unfamiliar to me. This was a dream I may have had before except it always started with this hallway and a voice teasing me.

“Michelle!” I heard a woman say.

“There it is again.” I told myself.

I looked around but could not find the person that keeps calling to me.

“Michelle.” I heard it again, this time a little more playful to the tone of her voice.

“Who are you?” I asked.

I heard a slight laugh and then a light came on at the end of the hall. I ran to the light and was led into a room this time. I saw a light and then noticed the light shine off a surface and turned to see a mirror.

“A mirror?” I asked and went to it and saw a woman in there. She was asleep somehow and covered in shadows.

“Who are you?” I asked.

That was when I felt something wet hit my head and then I sputtered as I woke up. The book on my lap fell to the floor in my bedroom.

“I was calling out to you for the past minute!” I heard my half-sister, Brittany, say.

I turned to see her with the bucket and wearing our book shop’s uniform and glaring at me with the same, crystal blue eyes except her hair was a lighter brown from mine.

“Damn it, I told you not to do that again!” I yelled.

“Well, you weren’t waking up, you even slept through your alarm!” she exclaimed and pointed to my alarm clock.

I saw the time and gasped and got up. I picked up the book to inspect it quickly and sighed in relief that it did not get soak either.

“Of course, you would be concerned about your book.” She muttered.

I glared and said, “Brittany turned around and marched out of my bedroom.”

“Huh?” she asked and then a blue outline wrapped around her, and she turned suddenly, and she squeaked in surprise and marched out.

I smirked and put the book back onto my bookshelf and felt better that she is no longer yelling at me. I sometimes enjoy using my magic which I can bewitch someone to do anything as if I were to read a book. People don’t like it, but it sure gets them to leave me alone for a bit.

“Another day of work.” I said as I went to the bathroom to get ready. I brushed my teeth and then my hair and pulled it back. I got back to my room to change into my uniform and then placed my glasses on my nose and headed downstairs to join mother and Brittany for breakfast or what is left of it.

“Just toast?” I asked.

“I would have made eggs too, but you were taking too long.” Brittany said as she finished her second piece.

I sighed and sat down and started to eat.

“You know Michelle, we’re on a schedule.” Mother said over her coffee mug.

“I know, sorry mother.” I spoke.

She also got up and placed the mug into the sink and she looked out the window. “It’s another beautiful, fall day.”

“Even though it’s been getting slightly chilly as of late.” Brittany said as she got up with her plate.

“Right, winters on its way.” She spoke.

I kept eating so we could get the shop open on time.

“So, what were you dreaming about?” Brittany asked me.

“Huh?” I asked.

“You were calling out like you were talking to someone when I came in.” she said as she walked to the sink.

“Not sure, it’s something weird but I can’t explain.” I spoke.

It felt as though the dream may be a message, but it couldn’t have been something from a book.

“If you weren’t falling asleep with a book on your lap, maybe you could dream better.” Brittany teased.

I glared at her.

“Which I have been telling you not to, you have had nightmares whenever you do that.” Mother said.

“I don’t know if it’s a nightmare or not, it ended with me seeing a woman in a mirror.” I told them.

“Interesting, I thought that was in a fairy tale book.” Mother said and then saw the clock. “Okay you two, time to open up!”

I finished my toast quickly and then chugged my orange juice and got up to grab my apron. I joined my mother and sister and knew that dream was not in a book despite my love for reading. I just felt as though she might be telling me something whenever I heard that voice call out to me.

‘Come on in!” my mother announced to the gathering crowd as the doors open.

# Chapter 2

# Gabrielle

“Are you sure you should be doing this?” I heard, Margaret, my house cleaner says from her small pillow in my easy chair ask.

“Yes, I have to get extra supplies, or we won’t eat before the next delivery.” I said as I finished braiding my hair.

“What if someone else pulls your hood down?” she asked and then licked her fur.

I remembered when someone pulled my hood and gasped at my horns. I felt humiliated due to how many people came around and I ran. I knew I was no longer welcomed.

“I will make sure that never happens.” I said as I pulled my cloak on. I made sure my rose tattoo was hidden away.

“Be careful.” She said as I grabbed the shopping bags and walked out of the room.

I passed by the staircase that led to my brother’s wing and sighed and felt sad all the time that we had to live this way. Our home used to be a happy one, with servants always hustling and bustling everywhere and making sure things were in order. Our parents even made sure we looked nice. My brother, though, he was always spoiled and threw away toys after playing with them for a week, especially into mud figuring they would be better off. He even threw a doll into the pit behind our house which I had to retrieve myself after he ran away. I was screamed at by Mother and grounded for a week.

One night, we met our match with a court wizard. For a while we have housed them while they journeyed to various parts of the land and Christmas Eve was no different.

“I can’t believe our parents went off for holiday again.” Alicio said.

“You know they already gave us our presents before they left, you should know that they want to pass tidings along every year and grandmother has been especially lonely this year.” I said as one of our house cleaners finished my hair with a red bow.

He scoffed and left the room. I followed and the both of us went down the stairs to the parlor where our tree stood with its magnificent décor. I always enjoyed this time of the year despite how spoiled my brother is and can feel the crisp of winter about to welcome the new year afterwards.

As we headed for the dining room, we heard a knock. I saw one of our butlers go and answer it where we saw a man with a cane. He wore a slightly tattered fur cloak. I gasped and ran over.

“Monsieur, are you okay?” I asked.

He looked at me and said, “Just tired, I have been traveling afar and looked for a resting place most of the day.”

“You can rest here.” I said and turned to the butler. “Have Margaret prepare some tea and a plate.”

“Yes madam!” the butler said and ran off to do so.

I got the man to a chair near the fire and said, “Here you go, nice and warm.”

“How could you help this man? He does not have any treasures on him!” Alicio exclaimed.

I looked at him and said, “Travelers don’t always have to flaunt, I bet this man is just charitable.”

The butler came back with a tray, and I brought to his lap and said, “Here you go, some fresh food with a cup of tea.”

“Thank you, you’re so very kind.” He said and took the cup and brought it to his lips.

“Just making sure you’re comfortable.” I spoke.

That was when my brother came and hit the tray out of his lap before he got a chance to take a fork to the meat on it.

“Oops!” he said sarcastically.

“Why did you do that?” I yelled.

“Just being charitable.” He said in that same tone.

“You spoiled brat.” The man said in a deeper voice.

“Huh?” I asked and looked over.

The man stood and pulled down his hood to reveal a younger man with crimson hair and eyes.

“Who are you?” I asked.

“Just a court wizard, I thought disguising myself would make it easier for my housing, but you made it harder.” He said as he went to my brother.

Alicio trembled in fear and asked, “Wait, you are a wizard? I did not know.”

“I hope you never treat any of your guests like you had just now.” He growled.

He backed up against a mirror and slid down the glass. That was when I saw horns appear and his hair go more silver than our platinum waves and I gasped. I also saw something snake up my wrist an it was a rose vine. I also looked at myself in the reflection in the shard of the broken plat and saw e that I also had horns and gasped.

“What did you do to us?” I asked.

“Just turned you two in what you should be, alongside your servants!” he exclaimed and then smirked, and more magic went through the mirror, and I saw the human version of Alicio asleep in the mirror.

“Alicio?” I asked.

“You will see yourselves whenever you glimpse a mirror, they are bound by your tattoos on your arms!” he exclaimed.

“How dare you!” Alicio growled.

“You should have smacked that tray out of my hand, I bet girls won’t find you as attractive with those horns which may not help break the spell.” He cackled and smirked.

“Wait, in order to break whatever, you did to us is by falling in love?” I asked.

He nodded and then cackled again and that was when he vanished. That night felt like it happened ages ago, but it feels so fresh in my mind. I have not had much luck in finding someone for the both of us but doubt they would even give us the time. That is why we hide, get food delivered or I go out to gather some groceries with the money our parents had sent us since we wrote to them about a bad illness to keep them away.

I walked down the path and saw the village up ahead and felt as though I was home with the people doing business in the streets I walked on.

“Let’s see what I can find today.” I said in a cheerful voice and went about my shopping.

# Chapter 3

# Michelle

The bookstore was busy as always and I was helping customers left and right. I checked them out, handed out wine samples and sold pastries. It was never a dull day and could see why grandfather kept it going for so many years. When we moved into his home after my father left, I saw mom and grandfather run the shop and keeping the townspeople happy. When Brittany and I were old enough after grandfather had died, we were naturals at the trade.

“There you go, hoping your granddaughter will enjoy these new books.” I said after handing the bag to a woman that was middle aged.

“I have a feeling she will.” She said and headed for the door.

I heard a commotion from the café area and knew the whoops were coming from one girl alone. I was surprised that no one paid attention to Gisela.

“Will you stop?” I heard one of her girlfriends, Veronica, ask.

“Yeah, I think you had enough.” Her twin sister, Victoria said.

“Come on now, the wine is so good that I couldn’t stop.” Gisela said.

Louisa sighed and said, “At least we don’t act like fools when we drink a little too much.”

Gisela and her crew always made fun of me, especially calling me by a specific name.

“Hey Bookworm! Get me another round!” Gisela exclaimed.

I came over with a grimace on my face and said, “I think I agree with your friends, you had enough so I’m cutting you off!”

“Why do you have to be so uptight like in high school?” she asked with a hiccup.

“I was a little uptight, but I hated how she grabbed my books and waved them in front of me as she played keep away. She even tried to set me up with one of the popular girls, but she walked away after finding out I wanted to go to a library to read on our date.

“I agree with my brother, you are being cut off right now.” Brittany said as she took some of the wine glasses.

“Come on, I want another glass.” She started but she coughed and then threw up on the shop floor.

My mother noticed and ran to get the mop and then started to clean up.

“Great.” Brittany groaned as she helped mother.

“Michelle, can you get her out of here before some of our other customers witness?” mother asked.

“Sure.” I said and took my apron off and then went to help the other girls.

“I knew this would happen.” Louisa said to Gisela.

Veronica had given her a water bottle.

“Come on, we’re taking you home.” I said as I lifted her up.

“No!” Gisela exclaimed and we headed outside with the girls following.

I ignored the kicks as I traveled down the street. I didn’t care if anyone noticed since Gisela does get drunk time to time but not sure what is it this time, but this is one scene I can’t tolerate. Not even my magic can take her.

When we got to her home, Francois saw her asleep in my arms and asked, “Whoa, did a wedding happen and I didn’t know about it?”

“Not funny, she got drunk but at my shop again.” I announced.

He sighed and opened the door to let us in.

We got in her bed, and I saw her friends take some seats to watch over her. Both me and Francois headed back outside.

“Great, I had a feeling that her last break up would cause her to drink again.” He spoke.

“Huh?” I asked.

“Yeah, Gisela found her crush courting one of the dress shop girls and didn’t take it well.” He answered.

“That makes guy number fifty?”” I teased.

“Maybe, she seems to swoon over the wrong guys which they end up going for others.” He spoke.

“At least she didn’t come after me.” I said as I headed for the road.

“Well, you may have a chance with someone else if you don’t always stick that nose in a book.” He spoke.

I flinched a little and said, “I guess I have to wait for that girl to come, if someone tried to force someone on me like what your sister had done once during school then I would probably be more interested.” I spoke.

“I think you may find someone unless it’s not another book.” He spoke.

We heard some shouts from the square and I saw a figure run. I also saw some of the children we see around town chasing it. I started to run after them.

“Whoa! Wait up!” Francois called out and tried to run after me.

I knew that something was up, and I need to help at once.

# Chapter 4

# Gabrielle

I looked over the vegetables and picked the right ones that looked the best at one of the stands I had visited. The people were nice and did not mind that I was covered from head to toe and didn’t want to look them in the eye even though someone was surprised my eye color was a little odd. I need some contacts to hide the lavender.

As I finished at the stand, I heard some murmurs but did not pay any attention to it since I thought it wasn’t about me.

When I passed by the group, I heard a girl ask, “Excuse me, why are you wearing a hood?”

“Hmm?” I asked and looked down to see a girl wearing suspenders with shorts.

“Why are you wearing a hood?” she repeated.

“I wonder too!” her friend exclaimed.

“I felt beads of sweat starting to come down my forehead because this was like the situation I ran into at the last village.

“I have a rare condition that I have to cover up.” I lied since I didn’t want to reveal my horns, nor the tattoo hat snaked up my arm.

“To cover myself from the hot sun.” I lied and finished paying for my items.

I took the bag and left with a smile and then heard footsteps following me. I had a feeling it was those kids from the shop, and I started to walk a little faster. They started to walk a little faster. I knew they still wanted to see what is under my hood and that was when I started running.

“Hey!” one of them exclaimed and that was when they gave chase.

I kept running until I found myself in an alley and turned to see them catch up. I was feeling a little panicky and the walls felt a little closed in.

“We’ve got you now!” one of the kids exclaimed.

“You can’t escape!” the second one said.

The third nodded in agreement.

“Now, let’s see what’s under that hood.” The leader said as they were about to take the cloth.

“Madeline stops reaching and her hand goes immediately to her side!” I heard a voice come out of nowhere.

The kid gasped and I saw the hand go to their side. It was a quick movement too I even wondered if that was a light blue glow on top of their hand as well?

“Now the three children run to their homes and hide under their beds and wished they never caused a stranger trouble again!” the voice commanded.

The light returned and I saw the children have blank looks as they ran off and I felt more at ease. I saw a figure appear and it was a man with horn rimmed glasses and wearing a shop uniform.

“Are you alright?” he asked.

I looked into his eyes and felt my heart skip a beat and said, “Thank you.”

“Not at all, those kids always cause any new travelers’ trouble.” He spoke.

“I can see why.” I said as I stood up and dusted myself off. I also took inventory of my items. “Looks like nothing got damaged.”

The man watched me and asked, “Are you okay?”

“Yes, just relieved.” I said as I was about to head back to the streets.

“Maybe you should come by my shop to relax a little?” he asked.

“No, I should be going.” I said as I tried to walk.

“Look, you may be attacked again, we usually don’t get anyone in hoods like you.” He explained.

Now I felt a little bit stranger when he said that. I would not have thought my disguise would cause trouble.

“Fine, I will see what you have in your shop.” I spoke.

He guided me to a shop that had “The Book Winery” written on the sign out front. I saw people coming in and out with bags, even someone had a bag with bottles.

“You sell books?” I asked as we walked in.

“And wine, my grandfather, who passed away, came up with it and my mother took it over.” He said as he pulled an apron on. “Just enjoy the atmosphere.”

I nodded and took a book that was closest to me and went to one of the armchairs to read. It felt warm inside the store, and I felt more at home this way since I didn’t have anyone staring at me. I did but I didn’t pay attention.

“Would you like a sample?” I heard and saw a woman with the same shade of blue eyes except her hair was a dirty blonde.

“Sample?” I asked.

“Yes, we offer adult customers samples of our wine.”

I looked at the tray and then took one and said, “Thank you.”

“You don’t have to hide your face.” She spoke.

I was silent and then said, “It’s just a skin condition I have.”

She looked at me and then scanned from head to toe and said, “Very well.”

I sipped the wine and then continued reading.

# Chapter 5

# Michelle

Meeting the woman in the cloak made me feel a little warm inside. When I saved her, it felt as though she was new and interesting but did not want to poke at why she would hide anything but wanted to protect her from other people that may be curious about her. People did see her and yet not see her when I brought her back to the shop. Some were in a hurry to take a real look which made me have an inner sigh of relief.

I did see Brit go over and offer her some wine and did notice the small conversation and then she came to me.

“Who is that in the cloak?”

“Not sure, some of the kids were bothering her in the alley so I saved her.” I answered as I finished cleaning the counter of crumbs.

She looked back at her, which she was still entranced by what she was reading, and then back at me.

“I wouldn’t have thought you as the prince-type.” She spoke.

I blushed a little and said, “I may be more of a court wizard-type.”

“I wouldn’t say that rumors have it that one went to a mansion a few years ago and the residents disappeared along with the wizard so I would be careful if I were you.”

I did remember stories of one wizard and their prince was a little corrupt and tried to take over one town since the prince was supposed to marry the princess, one man did rescue her and won her heart. Not all people were that corrupt.

Business continued and as the last customer left, I saw the cloaked woman stand up and stretched. I went over and asked, “Did you enjoy your book?”

She turned to me and said, “Oh yes! The wine was also delicious, I only had one though.”

“At least you’re not like a friend of mine.” I spoke.

“I should be going now.” She spoke.

“Let me guide you to the town exit.” I spoke.

“You don’t have to!” she exclaimed.

“It’s the least I could do.” I said as I took off my apron and went over to put it on the hook. I came back and took her bag. “Shall we?”

She nodded and headed out the door and towards the exit. She told me how she entered the town and I made sure she got to it safely. People were closing shops as we passed by and ignoring us.

“Thank you for the help.” She said at the exit.

“No problem, I guess no one else tried to bother you the shop?”

She shook her head and said, “No one bothered me while I was reading.”

I sighed in relief and then asked, “Sorry to pry but why are you wearing a hood?”

I noticed she was a little hesitant at first and then said, ‘I will only show you.”

I watched her pull her hood to show me some horns. I was a little taken a back and then she pulled her hood back up.

“I understand why you want to hide those.”

“Really?”

I nodded.

“I’m Gabrielle by the way.”

“Michelle, please come back though.”

She nodded and I watched her leave. Once she vanished into the forest, I turned and headed back home. As I walked, I remembered the story Britt had told me earlier and felt as though that Gabrielle was the victim but shook it off. I got inside and as I got upstairs; I felt my heartbeat.

# Chapter 6

# Gabrielle

I arrived home as the sun went down. I was not expecting to take longer than I hoped. I felt a little lighter on my feet after meeting Michelle. He was honest and the nicest. He did look a little surprised when I show him my horns. I figured I would pay him back for helping me out.

“Where have you been?” I heard and turned to see my older brother, Alicio.

“Alicio!” I gasped.

He glared at me with his silver eyes and his tangled hair was in his eyes. His vest was a bit torn since he did not react well to what had happened to us and wrecked some of his things.

“I went to get some supplies.” I answered.

He saw the bag and sniffed at them.

“Did anyone saw anything?” he asked.

I knew he meant my beast parts and shook my head. I know it was a lie since I did not want to mention Michelle.

“Good.” He said and went upstairs.

I sighed in relief and went into the kitchen where our staff, who were also different breeds of cats, were happy to see my haul. I smiled as they put some of the vegetables into the pot and put the rest alongside some of the other staples away.

“Did everything go okay?” Margaret asked as she appeared.

“Yes.” I answered as I took my cloak off and headed upstairs. She followed. “Nobody tried to pull my hood down.”

“Good.” She spoke.

As I was putting away my cloak, I was remembering Michelle. I felt happy that he came when he had and then felt my heartbeat again and saw a rose petal vanish.

“Huh?” I asked.

“Something happened?”

“A rose petal vanished.” I answered.

“How?” she asked.

“I did meet someone that saved me from kids who wanted to pull my hood down.” I spoke.

“What?” she asked.

“I think he is someone I can’t lose.” I spoke.

“Does that mean you may find someone?” she asked.

“I think so.” I spoke.

“What about your brother?” she asked.

I shook my head in response.

“Are you going back?” she asked.

I thought about it and said, “Maybe, I definitely look into someone for Alicio.”

“If he’s willing to fall for him.”

I did remember seeing some of the women in the village except they were not any of his types.

“I should try going back tomorrow.”

She nodded in agreement, and I hoped to find Michelle again. I could not get those beautiful eyes out of my head nor how he was able to use that spell. It felt like he was reading a book as he casted it. I never seen anything like it.

“He can’t be a court wizard, could he?” I asked aloud.

“Meow?” Margaret asked.

“The man I met, he used magic to cause the children to run off like he read something, except he had no spell book.” I spoke.

“Did he have wizard’s robes?”

I shook my head and said, “He wore a shop uniform.”

“Interesting, if he’s not a wizard for any court maybe he just wants to live a normal life.” She spoke.

“Right, but we can’t let him be in public if he goes bad.” I said remembering the one that caused our curse.

She sighed and said, “Whoever he is, he may be our friend or enemy.”

I nodded in agreement, but I had a feeling that he won’t hurt anyone if he tried. He was the sincerest man I’ve met and won’t let it go. I will return tomorrow.

# Chapter 7

# Michelle

I got back to my room after dinner and opened a book and sat in my armchair. As I was reading, my mind wanders towards Gabrielle. I thought to how beautiful she looked and could see why she hid her horns, but they made her cuter from my point of view.

“Hey!” I heard and I was surprised.

The book fell to the floor, and I looked to see Britt.

“Hey! Do not do that!” I yelled.

“Be glad I didn’t bring the bucket.” She said as I picked up my book.

“I could get why Francois said I should stop sticking my nose into a book.” I spoke.

“Because you do not see anything in your surroundings! What if someone were to rob the shop if you were reading?” she asked.

I sighed and placed the book on my arm rest and asked, “What do you want?”

“Nothing, except wondering who that strange woman in that cloak was today?”

“I don’t know.”

“What do you mean by you do not know? I clearly saw you enter with her, and mom did see her for a moment and had me serve her a wine sample.” Britt said.

“Just someone I helped earlier, some of the kids were harassing her.” I spoke.

“I see, you better not have used your magic.”

“I had to, not sure what they would do to her, so I sent them home.”

She sighed and said, “You may be slightly older, but that magic may cause trouble again like in school.”

I remembered that one time I used my magic on a girl who tried to ask me out, however her ex-boyfriend did not appreciate it and beat me up for whisking her away.

“At least she’s safe and probably at home by now.” I said and picked up the book again and started to read again.

I kept on thinking of her as the night went on and hoped to see her again.

The next day, I was sweeping the floor and heard the usual crowd. I was looking around and hoping to find the familiar cloak.

“Looking for someone?” I heard.

I turned around to see Gisela and crew.

“No, not really?” I lied as I went on and kept sweeping.

“You’re definitely looking for someone or something.” Veronica said.

“Can you all just mind your own business?” I asked.

“And thanks a lot for taking me home.” She said as I cleaned up some stuff from the tables.

“Well, it’s what I can do when you’re drunk and sorry about the breakup.” I spoke.

“I guess my brother told you.” Gisela said and sipped her cider.

“I guess not in the mood for samples?” I asked.

“Mother was not too happy about yesterday so cider it is.”

“I guess the guy didn’t like your drinking habits either.” I said sarcastically.

She grunted and then choked on cider. Louisa patted her on the back.

“No, the guy really liked the girl at the shop.” Victoria said.

“You’ll find someone.” I said which was my normal response whenever I saw Gisela being turned down.

“Except I feel like the guys around here are a joke.” Gisela said after catching her breath.

“At least you haven’t come after me.” I said as I put the broom back and went with the dustpan to get all the dust I swept up.

“Oh please, you’re just a nerd who prefers reading, I’d rather have a guy that would appreciate my beauty!” she exclaimed.

‘You always say that, and all the guys just leave.” Louisa said.

Both twins nodded in unison.

“Shut it.” She growled.

“The only way that would happen if you let yourself appreciate the guy more with your personality if you had one.” I said after finishing with the dustpan,

“He’s not wrong.” Victoria said.

She glared at her.

“You just have to be nicer about it.” I said and went back behind the counter to rearrange the bookmarks with some of them scattered around the display.

Gisela grunted and left the shop.

“Way to be blunt Book Worm.” Victoria said.

“Except you’re not wrong, Gisela may be a little forceful, but she is nice on the inside, but we rarely get to see it.” Louisa said.

“Agreed.” Veronica said.

“Maybe there is someone out there that would appreciate her.” I said after putting the last bookmark on its hook.

“Maybe but we have to see if they come, or she will search for them.” Veronica said and the three left the shop.

I sighed and thought to what Gisela had to say about the boys in town, do I feel the same towards the girls? I remembered how she tried to set me up with someone but that did not go well, I thought she didn’t understand me since I would rather curl up with a book than go dancing somewhere. I’m just too uptight?

I kept working on my tasks and kept an eye on the door with each customer, hoping that Gabrielle would show up, which felt a doubt as our regulars came in.

“Maybe you should go on a break.” I heard Mother say as she appeared behind me.

“Huh?” I asked.

She handed a wallet and said, “Head out for lunch, you are just tired working the counter this morning? I have noticed you were looking at the door like someone was coming?”

“I wasn’t!” I denied.

“Oh, please Michelle, I think it’s time for you to get out there and take a breather and maybe bring that mysterious girl in?” she teased.

“Not sure if she is in town again.” I spoke.

“Maybe you would run into her out of nowhere.” She said with a slight smile.

I nodded and hung my apron and left the shop. I hope she is right on meeting with Gabrielle.

# Chapter 8

# Gabrielle

It felt almost impossible to leave the mansion this morning. I felt as if Alicio was scrutinizing me for my shopping trip yesterday. It felt that he was watching me, but I managed to convince him that nothing had happened, and he went to his room without any more complaints.

I dawned my cloak again and headed for the town since I could not stop thinking about him again. I noticed a few petals had faded from my arm and knew I had to find someone for Alicio.

I arrived at the town square and looked for the book shop again knowing he would be there. As I walked, I noticed a group of girls coming from that direction and they were talking. One of them looked angry.

“Who does he think he is? He is nothing but a book worm!” I heard her exclaim as I walked by.

When I heard those words, I thought she may have meant Michelle?

“Look Gisela, he is trying to say that a guy would be interested if you are more like the other girls.” One of her friends said.

I looked at them and noticed the one who was yelling, had long auburn hair and was wearing a green skirt and white top, “Why would I want to be like you all? I just prefer the way I am! I just want to have an exciting time!”

“It’s because you also act irrational sometimes.” One of the others said.

She made a noise and walked off.

“Gee, she almost ats like Alicio.” I whispered to myself and managed to find the shop.

I saw Michelle walk out and I waved at him hoping he would see me.

“Gabrielle?” he asked and walked over to me.

“I knew I would find you.” I spoke.

I saw his eyes light up and asked, “You were looking for me?”

I nodded underneath my hood.

“Want to go out to lunch with me? That is where I was heading.” He asked.

I blushed a little and said, “Sure.”

“Milady.” He said and offered me his elbow.

I took it and we were off and came to a café. It was quaint and peaceful. We ordered some food and drinks and waited for them outside in the autumn air.

“You could take the hood off.” He spoke.

I looked at him and said, “I really can’t do that.”

“Why?” he asked.

“It’s because of the horns on my head.”

“That’s right, how did you get them?”

I looked down at my hands thinking about what to say. I never explained what had happened to us to anyone, let alone a stranger I just met a day ago.

“Well, me and my brother were changed into this form, beats with horns and slitted eyes on a Christmas night, we were hoping to celebrate except a court wizard was disguised as a beggar changed us that night and it felt isolating since.’

“Wait, you were visited by a wizard?”

“Yes, he evaluated our hospitality until Alicio struck him and that is how it went.”

“Your brother led to this.”

I nodded.

A server came with our food, and she left the table.

“I wore the cloak so no one could see except while I was shopping in a different town, someone pulled my hood down and screamed when she saw me.”

“I see, I understand the hiding yourself.” He said as he took a bite.

“When you didn’t react, I knew you were different after I left.”

“Well, you may think this sounds odd, but I do read fantasy books a lot and I don’t mind a girl like in my books that is different from the ones I known.”

“Really?” I asked and then took a sip of my drink.

He nodded.

“Even that one came out from the direction of your shop?”

He made a bit of a choking sound and asked, “You mean Gisela? She is a bit boastful but not my type! Even though we have been schoolmates for many years, but she always called me by Book Worm.”

I giggled a little.

“I guess no one has asked you out?”

I shook my head.

We ate in silence for a bit and did not notice anyone was watching. I felt some goose bumps and then asked, “Why is everyone staring?”

Michelle noticed and then saw someone he knew and asked, “Gisela? I thought you headed home?”

“We were except we saw you here.” She said and I saw her friends with her.

“Who’s the person with you?” one of them asked.

They got closer and looked at me.

“A woman?” one of them asked with interest.

“Except hiding underneath the hood.” Her look alike said.

I felt a little nervous at first and stood up.

“I should be going.” I said but felt a tug on my cloak.

“Let her go!” Michelle exclaimed.

“I just want to see what she looks like.” Gisela said and was about to grab my hood.

“No!” I exclaimed and felt my hood come down. I heard people gasp.

“Horns?” one of her friends asked.

Tears came to my eyes, and I yelled, “Don’t you ever listen!?”

“I didn’t know!” Gisela exclaimed.

“Gisela lets go of Gabrielle’s cloak!” Michelle yelled.

I saw her drop my cloak.

“Gisela, Louisa, Victoria, and Veronica run to Gisela’s home and lock themselves in her room!” he yelled.

I watched the four run off in one direction.

“Are you okay?” I heard and saw it was a server.

She was a bit wide-eyed when she saw me.

I could not say anything and pulled my hood back on and ran off in the opposite direction. I thought I heard Michelle call my name but did not respond to him.

# Chapter 9

# Michelle

“Damn it!” I called out and ran after Gabrielle.

We were just enjoying each other’s company and Gisela and crew had to spoil it.

I felt bad because she wanted to be hidden from any onlookers and felt worse when she ran off after seeing the server that served our food.

I managed to find her near a fountain in a garden. She looked so beautiful despite the cloak.

“Gabrielle?” I asked.

She saw me and asked, “What? You did not go after your gal friends?”

“I wanted to see if you were okay.” I said as I got closer.

She moved over to let me sit down next to her, which I did.

“No way, I’d rather see if you were not scared or angry.” I spoke.

She didn’t say anything.

“Look, I understand if you don’t want to come back but I’m sorry about what you just went through.” I told her.

She stood up and asked, “Do you think I look hideous?”

I shook my head and said, “no, I think you’re beautiful.”

“Really?” she asked.

“Yes.”

“Then tell me, will you control me as a creature with your magic?” she asked me.

“Unfortunately, that magic is something I used on anyone who is a threat to me and now to you, I act like I’m reading a book and cause people to do what I would read as if it was a story.” I spoke.

“I should go home now.” She said and left.

“Gabrielle!’ I called out but she didn’t answer.

I felt empty as I watched her go and then headed home myself.

# Chapter 10

# Gabrielle

I never went back to that town after I left Michelle alone that afternoon. I felt heartbroken I had trusted him, but I felt I couldn’t anymore even if he called me beautiful.

I looked outside the window at the newly fallen snow since autumn had ended.

“Gabrielle?” I heard Margaret.

I looked at her and asked, “Yes?”

I had to keep myself from looking sad to my staff.

“Are you okay?” she asked.

She has been watching over me since that day. I did hide my tears from my brother and kept myself strong.

“Yes.” I lied.

“Are you sure? You haven’t seen that boy as of late.” She spoke.

“He’s not the one I’d hoped.” I spoke.

“I’m sorry to hear.” She said and then came over and nuzzled against me. She also purred and I scratched her ears and caused her to purr even more.

Even though he was there to make sure I was okay, I couldn’t stop thinking about him. He was very sincere especially when he said I was beautiful except I couldn’t believe him when he said that.

Then I thought back to that Gisela girl, she would be a perfect fit for my brother except she would pull my hood down if I tried to see her again and set her up with him. I didn’t know what to do.

“Did something happen?”

“Yes, I didn’t want to tell Alicio about it due to how he would react pretty badly and that is some girl did pull my hood down while I was the boy I met.”

“Oh, wow, I can see why you were upset.”

I nodded.

“Did he allow it?”

“No, he didn’t know she was going to do it.”

“You shouldn’t blame him for it.”

“Except other people seen it since it was a public place.”

“Oh, I guess other people had seen.”

I nodded and said, “I find it weird that the girl matches Alicio so much due to how she acted.”

“As in a bit impulsive?”

“Yes, also a jerk about things.”

“That does sounds like him, maybe she would soften him, but I understand if you don’t want to go back.”

I sighed and said, “I don’t know what to do! I want this curse to be gone and we could all be human again!”

She sighed.

I feel so bad to just leave him like that at the fountain in the garden, but he would just let me go for another girl.

# Chapter 11

# Michelle

After what had taken place with Gabrielle at the café, I couldn’t stop hearing about the gossip that took place from the people who had seen Gabrielle’s horns. I felt as though the earth should swallow me up.

“I bet she got those by an experiment!” I heard someone say.

“No, it’s a surgery!” another said.

“Or maybe someone in her family placed a bad spell!” someone had said.

It went on until the end of autumn. I couldn’t help but feel bad each time and waited for her to return except more customers appeared as it got colder.

“Here you go!” I exclaimed as I handed someone their bag.

“Thank you!” they exclaimed and headed out the door.

I sighed.

“You seem depressed.” Britt said when she finished rearranging some items on her counter.

“It’s just I miss her.” I said.

“You mean that woman that came here?” she asked.

“Yeah, we had one date and that’s it.” I said.

“Did you have a fight with her? Did you use your magic?”

“Only on Gisela because she did something to her.”

“Huh?”

I looked around and said, “She said some spell was placed on her and her brother and she have horns, Gisela pulled down her hood to reveal them.”

“What? No wonder someone asked if I saw the girl with the horns as of late!” she said.

I rose an eyebrow at her and asked, “Really?”

“The gossip was all over the place about her so that is why she was wearing a cloak.” She said.

I nodded.

“Wait a second, it can’t be them, could it?” she asked.

I shrugged and said, “Not entirely sure but she only told me a little and left it at that.”

“Sounds like someone’s in love.” Britt teased.

I blushed and said, “Am not!”

Suddenly, we heard an explosion come from the basement.

“What was that?” I asked.

We saw our mother rush to the basement where our wines were stored and being made.

We followed her and saw some smoke and a few bottles were broken.

“Mother?” I asked as we came down the stairs.

“Oh no!” we heard, and we came to where she stood.

We saw the machine was broken and wine was pouring all over the floor. Britt and I rushed to help her. Once everything was cleaned up, we made sure that everyone was not hurt by the smoke that came from beneath the floor and that we made sure they went home with sample bottles of our wine.

We closed the shop early and mother was searching on the internet for any of the parts that had burned out in our machine, and she managed to find them at a shop far away.

“Are you sure they will be there in three days?” she asked over the phone.

We were eating some take out from the nearby café and heard every word.

She hung up and turned to us, “I better start packing.”

“Huh?” Britt asked.

“I need to get to that shop to get those parts.” She said and headed upstairs.

“Are you sure? The snow will be heavy tonight!” Britt called up.

We didn’t hear her respond.

Britt sighed and came back to the table.

We finished dinner and got the dishes cleaned up. We heard mother come down from upstairs with an overnight bag and her coat on.

“Take care of yourselves while I’m gone, there is extra money in the cupboard!” she exclaimed as she headed for the garage.

“Are you sure you be heading out tonight?” I asked.

“I’ll be fine! Don’t worry!” she answered.

We both sighed and watched her go.

She got into the car and heard it choke a little and then it started up. It was old by this point but still dependable as we saw her pull out and headed South. Even though she is our mother, but she is the only other parent left to rely on. Hoping she comes back okay.

# Chapter 12

# Gabrielle

I looked at myself in the mirror and saw my human half still asleep on the other side. It was the only mirror Alicio hadn’t broken over time. He couldn’t look at his dormant self except me.

“I need to see him again.” I said to myself.

I heard howls in the distance and then went to the window and opened it. I saw in the setting sky some smoke in the horizon.

“Smoke?” I asked.

“Gabrielle?” I heard as my door opened.

I saw my brother in the doorway.

“I guess you saw it too?” I asked.

He nodded and said, “The wolves are heading over there from the sounds of it.”

“Let’s go!” I exclaimed.

He nodded and we pulled on our cloaks and headed to the forest. We got to a clearing where we saw a woman fanning an engine compartment in an older vehicle. She was coughing as she tried to fix the situation. I recognized her from the shop that Michelle worked in.

“It’s her.” I said.

“What?” he asked and then saw a wolf come out of nowhere. The woman screamed.

“Oh no!” I exclaimed when I saw it coming after her. Alicio charged and went after it.

“Wait!” I called out and followed.

He attacked the wolf and then another came to get at her from the right, and I managed to fight it off. I did see the woman having a branch and trying to fight one that was about to go after her. Alicio tackled it and then I saw another jump on him from the back.

“Alicio!” I yelled.

“Help!” the woman yelled, and one jumped on her, and I ran and hit it with another branch that was closer to the vehicle.

“Are you okay?” I asked the woman.

She gasped and I had a feeling she was a bit in shock from either the wolf attacking her or my appearance. I only been to the shop twice, once inside and the second time outside waiting to see Michelle. This woman had the same eye color and hair color as him except it was pulled back into a braid.

“Who are you?” she asked.

We heard the wolves whimper and ran off. I saw Alicio panting and I ran over and saw the blood on his shoulder.

“Are you okay?” I asked him.

“The damn mutt attacked my shoulder, how about the woman?” he asked.

She gasped when she saw him and then fainted.

“I guess you scared her.” I said.

We got her back home and into bed. Some of our servants addressed her to make her comfortable while Margaret and one of the other servants attended to Alicio’s injury.

“Is she alright?” I asked as one of the servants came downstairs.

“She will be fine, she’s still in shock but will be fine.” They said.

I sighed in relief.

“Do you know her?” Alicio asked as he was being bandaged up.

“When I was in the town some children tried to pull down my hood and this man from one of the shops helped me out with his magic.” I started.

“Magic? Is he a court wizard?” Alicio asked.

I shook my head and said, “He doesn’t look like it, besides, he works at a book shop and this woman came from there, I was brought back to the shop and saw her.”

“Did anyone pull your hood down?” he asked.

“Yes, it happened the next day, so I haven’t been back there since.” I answered.

He grunted and said, “I can’t believe you risked yourself after meeting one man.”

“He was very nice and didn’t flinch when I show him my horns.”

“Wait, you revealed yourself to him?”

“I figured I would do it after what he had done, he didn’t repulse from my horns.”

He grunted again.

“Whatever, I won’t see him again after what one of his friends had done.” I said and headed back to my room.

He stood silent and then sighed.

“Don’t mind her.” Margaret said.

“I wonder if she tried to find me someone.” He wondered aloud.

I got to my room and then looked into the mirror to see my sleeping self again and then touched the glass.

“Will I ever change back into my normal self?” I asked as I touched it.

# Chapter 13

# Michelle

It’s been three days since my mother left for that far away town. She said it would take her two days to find somewhere to rest due to the oncoming snowstorm, which had dumped major piles the past day and a half. Britt and I shoveled it to make a pathway to the shop so our customers could purchase gifts for loved ones, especially the long-distance ones.

I finished packing a gift box when I heard the door open, and I saw Gisela and her crew walk in shivering.

“Shouldn’t you be in a coffee shop if you’re so cold?” I asked after I handed over the customer’s gift box and watched them leave.

“You know alcohol is a better way to warm up.” She said.

“I think I would go for a hot chocolate instead.” Veronica said aloud.

“Coming right up!” Britt exclaimed as she headed for our café area.

We not only served pastries and wine samples, we also o coffee and hot cocoa during the wintertime. The coffee also helped with anyone who may have gotten a little tipsy from the samples.

I watched them sit in the café area.

“Excuse me, I would like to purchase this!” a man said, and I helped him at the desk.

Once I was done, I started to clean up some of the books that were left on tables and near armchairs. I noticed Louisa looking around the shop and asked, “Where’s your mom?”

“Come to think of it, I haven’t seen her yesterday while my brother wanted a new book.” Veronica said.

Victoria nodded.

“She has gone out to get some parts since one of our wines making machines broke down the other day.” Britt answered.

“Wait, she couldn’t have them ordered?” Gisela asked as she placed her cup of tea.

“These were specialty parts which one shop had, and we haven’t heard if she got there or not.” I said.

Britt nodded.

After saying that I felt a bit of worry hit me and I thought she was hurt, or the car may have stopped working. I knew this didn’t seem right of her to keep us in the dark, especially with how close to the holidays we were.

Around sunset, we closed the shop and heated up leftover stew. I’m still remembering the talk from earlier and knew I had to do something. I went to bed thinking about what to do and hoped I couldfind her alive. I got out of bed and started to pack some items for the next couple of days.

Once dawn arrived, I pulled on my warmest clothes and headed into the hallway. I didn’t hear anything from Britt’s room as I headed for the stairs. I made it down and wrote a note saying that I was looking for mother and will be back in a few days. I got outside into the newly fresh snow and started to walk. As I got into the square, I heard, “Michelle!”

I turned to see Gisela with bags in arms. I had a feeling she was doing the morning shopping for her family.

“What are you doing out here? Aren’t you supposed to be preparing your shop?” she asked.

“Not exactly, I’m looking for my mother, I have a bad feeling that something had happened to her.” I answered as I started to walk again.

She followed and asked, “Do you know where exactly she drove off to?”

“”Not sure, I have a feeling she took the roads south of town.”

“Come with me.” She said.

I followed her to her home where her father and brother were setting up for the day in the shop. They didn’t notice us going into the back door.

I waited for a little bit and then saw her come down the stairs in warm clothing, holding a backpack and an overnight bag.

“Hold this.” She said as she handed over the overnight bag. I felt some weight to it as she went to the kitchen.

She came back from there putting her backpack on her back and motioned me to a separate garage.

I followed her inside where she had a motorcycle.

“When did you get this?” I asked.

“Two years ago, it helps with out-of-town deliveries.” She said and handed me a helmet with goggles. “Get in the side car.”

I nodded and climbed in and pulled the helmet on and asked, “Do you know how to ride one of these?”

“Of course, I didn’t get my license for nothing.” She answered and then got onto the bike part. “Now hold on!”

I nodded as she started up the bike and she sped off for the road. It felt natural as she drove. It was odd since I rarely see her out delivering anything except, I’m always working in the shop most days.

We kept going until the wheels slipped and we screamed as the bike went off the road and we got into a patch of frozen mud.

“Oh no!” Gisela exclaimed.

“Do you have rope?” I asked.

Gisela tried to dig through the car, but it was sinking, and I felt my pants and boots getting wet. I tried to move but it slumped even deeper.

“This is not good! Someone help!” she yelled.

I also called out.

“Great, now what do we do?”

“Wait for someone to find us.” Gisela said.

I sighed.

# Chapter 14

# Alicio

After seeing new snow fall, I decided to go outside to take some fresh air. My wound from the wolf attack was healing well and one of the servants made sure of it. There are times where during the cold months the fresh air just revives me after staying inside for so long, especially now with what had happened three days before.

My sister looked after the woman on hand and foot since she was in shock after seeing the both of us. It seems like she was also healing well. I wouldn’t know since I could scare anyone with my curled horns when Gabby’s was just straight.

As I ventured out into the garden area, I heard some distant screams. They sounded like cries for help, and I ran in that direction. Once I got there, I found some people in a partially sunken motor bike and had two people trying to get out of the pit, but they slid back down into the mud.

I ran and grabbed a branch from a tree and went back and called down, “Grab this!”

“Huh?” the woman asked and saw the branch.

“Who’s there?” The man with the glasses called out.

“Just grab it!” I called back as I tried to hide myself while holding it steady.

I felt some tugs and saw the woman first and then the man. The woman was petite compared to the man. She had long, reddish hair with deep blue eyes. She looked heavenly.

The man started to sneeze and shiver once out of the pit and on solid ground. I handed him my cloak and said, “Here.”

He looked at me and gasped and said, “You can’t be Gabrielle’s brother, can’t you?”

The woman looked at him and then me and gasped when she saw my appearance.

“Are you going to take it?” I asked.

He took the cloak and asked, “How about you?”

I turned and said, “I’m used to it, come a follow me.”

I started to walk and heard a small comment, “Should we go?”

“We can’t stay out here!”

I heard footsteps follow me in the snow and guided them to my home.

# Chapter 15

# Michelle

I felt a little nervous as I was handed the cloak. I did remember Gabrielle mentioning that she had a brother but was not expecting to see him like this.

“Are you going to take it or not?” I heard him ask and then took it and wrapped myself in it.

“Follow me.” He said and watched him walk away.

“So, do we follow him?” Gisela asked me.

“We should, I don’t want to stay out here.” I answered and followed. She started to follow me.

I kept my arms crossed as we walked since the pit was very cold and was grateful that someone get to us in in time. I looked at our rescuer and saw that he had long, silver hair and tattered clothing and thought that he would be gentler? Who am I kidding?

He led us to a big mansion that looked like it was frozen in time. It was surprising that someone could live all the way out here without any of us in town even knowing.

“Did you know this place existed?” Gisela whispered in my ear.

I shook my head and then kept walking.

As we walked into the gates, I saw roses wrapped around some of the walls and statues covered in ice. It felt eerie since most people who would own land like this would have servants running on the grounds and even twinkling lights may be on.

“This way!” we both heard and saw the big door opened front. We walked up a set of stairs and went inside. The door slammed shut behind us and we turned towards it and then back at our rescuer.

He was at the fireplace lighting itand we went over to warm ourselves up. We saw him heading towards another door.

“Thank you for saving us!” Gisela called out.

No answer and she sighed.

“I guess this is their home.” I said as I kept my arms crossed.

“You look a little feverish.” She said.

“Of course, I was in some mud in the cold weather.” I said through chattering teeth despite the warmth of the fire touching us.

We saw a group of cats appear and they had a tray in their mouths and came over to us.

“Cats?” she asked.

“Master Alicio wanted us to serve you two some tea.” One of them said.

We jumped at that with surprise.

I looked closely and some of their garments gave us signs of kitchen staff as they worked on our cups.

“Wait, you made the tea?” I asked.

They nodded.

“Master Alicio is that guy with the horns?” Gisela asked.

“Yes, he’s Lady Gabrielle’s older brother.” One of the other cats answered.

I looked around to see if any portraits were up but there weren’t any. I did see a broken mirror that was in the foyer.

“Did something happen to the mirror?” I asked.

“I will answer that!” I heard and turned to see Gabrielle holding a cat with maid garment elements and a pair spectaclse.

“Gabrielle.” I said and then coughed.

She let the cat down and went over to the cracked mirror and investigated it which we saw a woman lying in the cracks as if she were sleeping.

# Chapter 16

# Gabrielle

I was in my room when I heard a knock on my door and called out, “Come in!”

The door opened and Margaret came in and said, “Your brother brought some guests!”

I looked at her in surprise and asked, “Guests? What do you mean?”

“A man and a woman, he explained that they were found in a mud pit which he heard them screaming for help and he rescued them.” She explained.

“Why would he bring them here?”

“It was freezing, he figured they would need somewhere nice and warm, plus the man claimed you know him.”

I was taken aback since I haven’t met anyone else among my excursions and then said, “Come on, let’s see what he brought.”

I picked her up and headed downstairs. I heard voices and recognized one of them. I walked faster down the stairs and saw Michelle wrapped in one of Alicio’s cloaks and was covered in mud up to the waist. I heard them questioning the mirror and I appeared.

“I will explain.” I said and placed Margaret down.

I walked over to the mirror that Alicio shattered the day after we were transformed and revealed my sleeping human half.

“Whoa.” I heard the girl that was with Michelle. I recognized her as Gisela and Michelle was also in awe.

“A year and a half ago, we were about to celebrate the holidays and one night a beggar visited us. I gave him my generosity and had a tray of food brought to him.” I said.

Michelle understood my kindness since it was part of my nature except Alicio doesn’t have any.

“So, my brother smacked the food away and this angered the beggar and he changed into a sorcerer and changed us into what you see, what I shown you in the mirror is my human half that’s asleep, Alicio broke the mirror after being angry that he couldn’t get his half out.” I said.

“How can you change back?” Gisela asked.

I stood there and then noticed the look on Margaret’s face and I translated it as show them.

“Well, we have these tattoos.” I said as I walked over and pulled my sleeve up.

“A rose?” Michelle asked.

“It looks like some of it faded.” Gisela said.

“It’s because I’ve fallen for someone.” I said and looked at Michelle.

“Me?” he asked.

I nodded and said, “These tattoos fade when me or Alicio fall in love, it fades over time as our love grows stronger and once the last petal fades then we will be free.”

“Did your brother find someone?” he asked and coughed.

I felt his forehead and it was very hot.

“I need to get you upstairs, you’re feverish!”

“Shall we get them into the rooms?” one of the servants asked.

“Yes, please!” I answered.

“Follow us!” one of the others said and both Gisela and Michelle stood up and I watched them go.

“Are you okay Gabrielle?” Margaret asked and rubbed against my ankles.

I looked down and said, “I can’t believe he’s here.”

“I guess this makes you happy.”

“It does, at the same time afraid how he would feel knowing his mother is here.” I said.

# Chapter 17

# Michelle

Both Gisela and I were guided to an area of rooms that was known as the Guest Wing. It looked like it was never lived in before, but it felt warm and inviting to me.

I saw Gisela go into one of the rooms with one of the servant cats and I was led to the opposite one. I saw a bed with a fireplace, wardrobe, and another door that I figured it could be a closet.

“You’re lucky since the room has the best view according to some of the family members that used to visit.” The cat told me.

I was still feeling surprised by the story Gabrielle had told us. Seeing this cat also shown that he was human like her and her brother. I could imagine how lonely she’s been.

“The door over here is the bathroom.” The servant said as he stood next to it.

I walked over and opened it to see a massive tub with a shower head, I also saw the sink was massive, too.

“You could find some toiletries in the cabinet; I have a feeling Master Alicio may find your items if you brought them.” He said.

“I did, they were in the side car, I bet they may be lost.” I said as I thought to my overnight bag.

“If you need anything, there is a servant call button on the wall next to the headboard.” He said and left me alone.

I felt the place was way too big when my room back at home was just simple and cozy. This one felt too massive. I went into the wardrobe and found some dry pajamas and sent to the bathroom to bathe in the hot water. I still felt feverish, and the chills wouldn’t stop either. I got out and went over to the bed when I heard a knock and called out, “Come in!”

The door opened and Gabrielle came in with a tray.

“The cook made some soup, figured you would be hungry.” She said.

“I do, since I hadn’t eaten much since Gisela, and I left this morning.” I answered and went back to the bed.

She walked over and placed the tray in front of me and aw the bowl of soup and some of a baguet with it.

“What brought you out here in the first place?” she asked as I started to eat.

“Well, my mother had left to get parts for a machine she uses to make wine at our shop it broke down and the shop was not able to send the parts, so she headed out and we didn’t hear from her since.”

“I see, you wanted to look for her.”

I nodded.

“You’ll find her.”

“I hope so.” I said and kept eating.

“I should let you be.” She said and was about to leave.

“Is that story true, the one you had told us downstairs?”

She looked back at me and said, “Yes, it is, the man who changed us referred to himself as a Court Wizard that was travelling and all thanks to my brother being a brat, we’re like this.”

“And you want to find someone for him, right? That’s why I tried to ask about his rose.”

She nodded.

“I had a hard time with so many people always wanting to pull my hood every time I walked into any town to get some supplies before any food shipments arrived and I couldn’t go back to anywhere, I feel like a freak to anyone who has seen me.”

“I don’t think you’re one.”

She looked at me and asked, “Really?”

“When I first saw you, I thought you were beautiful.”

“What?”

“You are different from any of the women in my town, even more exquisite than Gisela, who helped me get out here.”

Then I coughed.

“You should be resting; I should let you be.” She said and ran out of the room.

It now felt colder without her in the room but finished the soup and the bread and felt sleepy. I lied down and wrapped myself in the blankets.

As I fell asleep, I thought back to her human self-asleep in the mirror and thought she was lovely in that form too. I really wanted her to be whole again and take out whoever had done this to her family.

# Chapter 18

# Gabrielle

I came back to my room and felt the warmth after seeing Michelle again, except it was in my own home. I looked at myself in the mirror again and saw my sleeping self and wondered if I would be released from the curse with him. I decided to see Alicio since Gisela may be his only hope.

I went to his wing where I passed the broken furniture and another shattered mirror. I knocked on the door and asked, “Alicio, are you in there?”

“Yes.” I heard through the door.

I came in and saw him in his bed reading.

“What brings you here?” he asked.

“I was wondering if you were okay after bringing those two here.” I said.

“I wanted to help them out of their trouble.” He said.

“Except you done something kind when you hadn’t done it before.”

He was silent.

“One question, how did you meet that man?” he asked after a minute.

“Well, while I was getting the supplies I was chased by some children, and he helped me out with some magic and then had me relax in his shop and then walked me to the exit to head home from his town.”

“Is he a court wizard?”

“He doesn’t look like it, he wears a shop uniform and sells wine and books to people.”

He looked at me and asked, “Are you sure? Unless he’s fooling you.”

“Look, not all wizards are alike, he just used magic to control people as if he was reading and I see him do it twice.”

“Really?”

“First, the children who chased me and then on Gisela, that girl that was with him, after pulling my hood down.”

“Wait, she pulled your hood?”

“Yes.”

He glared a little.

“I could understand her curiosity, but Michelle did help me out.”

“Except she exposed you.”

“What was her reaction to your horns since Michelle was wearing your cloak?”

He was silent at that.

“You know, if we’re going to find someone then they have to be comfortable with our beast appearances until we change back, I have a feeling that Gisela is the one for you.”

He started to laugh and asked, “How could that be?”

I shrugged and said, “I want this curse to end as much as you do, right?”

He went silent and then started, “I don’t know what you’re thinking but if this Gisela girl is the one then forget it.”

“But Alicio!”

He ignored me and sighed and left the room. I felt that a weight had dropped in my stomach and felt as though I would not end this curse. I will try harder and get these two together.

# Chapter 19

Michelle

It felt as if I slept for hours until I felt a hand across my forehead. I opened my eyes and saw my mother.

“Mother?” I asked.

“Margaret told me you were under the weather.” She said.

I heard that and sat up and asked, “Wait, you were here?”

She nodded and said, “Yes, I was found by the siblings while I was travelling the car broke down in the woods and wolves attacked and they saved me.”

“And how long have you been here?” I asked.

“Three days the most.”

“And you didn’t bother to call me and Britt?”

She sighed and said, “I was in shock, and they brought me here, I doubt they have a phone around in this place.”

I sighed and said, “At least you’re safe.”

“Me too, Margaret told me what had happened and was relieved you were helped out of that pit, I hope Gisela’s bike would be retrieved.”

“I wonder that too since my stuff is still in the side car with hers.”

“Just lie back down, you’re still a little warm.” She said.

I nodded and lied back down on the pillow. I heard her go into the bathroom and ran the tap and came back to place a small towel that was soaked in hot water on my forehead.

“Just rest, I will bring more soup up.” I heard her as I closed my eyes to sleep some more.

I was glad that she wasn’t hurt and being taken care of. Thank you, Gabrielle and Alicio.

# Chapter 20

# Odette

I watched my son fall asleep in the cozy bed. I left the room once I heard him snore a little and decided to go downstairs to see about some soup for him. I did see some of the servants working on something. One of them came over to me and asked, “Need something?”

“Yes, my son definitely has a fever, he needs some soup.” I explained.

“Lady Gabrielle did take some up to him.” He said.

“Except he needs more.” I said.

“Yes ma’am!” he exclaimed and rejoined his comrades to give the order. I turned to see Gabrielle coming down the stairs and said, “Hello!”

“How’s Michelle?” she asked me.

“He’s still warm, he’s resting now and seeing if more soup would be made for my son.” I explained.

She smiled and said, “I can see where he gets his kindness.”

I smiled and asked, “You really care about him?”

“He did save me with his magic, where did he get it?” she asked.

“I think my father had it, he may have inherited it.” I answered.

“He did help me out from curious little children.” She said with a smile.

“Are you falling for my son?” I asked her.

She looked away a little bit and then said, “Yes.”

“Gotcha, I was hoping he would give a woman a chance someday.” I said.

“My rose tattoo did show signs all thanks to him.”

“What do you mean by tattoo?”

She shown me a big rose vine and said, “This fade when fall in love, once it fades completely with the final petal then we would be human again.”

“Does your brother have the same thing?”

“Yes, except he has not found anyone.”

“What brought you to town then?”

“To not only buy supplies before the next food delivery but also find someone for him and I think the one named Gisela may be the right one.”

I laughed a little.

“What?”

“I hope you’re right; they do have similar personalities even though I have met him once.”

She sighed and said, “If I’m right then he would start losing petals and the vine.”

It felt a little eerie seeing that rose tattoo and I felt bad for them. I could only imagine them being so isolated from people and just living here with cat servants.

“Look, you two will change back, I know it.” I said.

She nodded in agreement.

“If those two aren’t falling for each other then we will have to find a way to do so.”

She nodded in agreement.

I will be crossing my fingers that those two fall in love. If not, who knows what would happen to them.

# Chapter 21

# Gabrielle

After talking with Odette, Michelle’s mother, I felt a little nervous with my idea in having Aalicio fall for Gisela. I know with the snow that has been falling hard and that who knows when we could get back on the roads, she will be in the mansion for a bit.

I took Michelle’s new bowl of soup up to his room. He was asleep despite how late it was getting. I guess he would eat once he’s awake. I did soak another towel and placed it on his forehead and went back into the hallway.

I went to the room Gisela was in and knocked on the door.

“Come in!” I heard her call out.

I opened the door and said, “I have some dinner for you!”

She saw me with the tray and then motioned her head to the dressing table. I saw she was in one of the night gowns and brushing her red hair. I had a feeling she bathed in the time being.

“How are you liking the room?” I asked as I turned around.

She shrugged.

I was about to leave until she asked, “Where’s Alicio?”

It made me happy for a bit as I answered, “He has his own wing, before we got changed into what you see, he was very spoiled and wanted to have a fully furnished floor and got it.”

She giggled a little.

“I did see his injury healed a little, though.”

“Wait, he got hurt?”

“Saving Michelle’s mother when we found her which wolves attacked.”

“Oh, I guess he heard us.”

“Any wolves?”

She shook her head and said, “We were in a pit so no howls.”

I sighed in relief.

“I’m glad he did find us in time.”

“Even though Michelle did get a cold.”

“That bookworm, I had a feeling he wouldn’t survive until I found him walking in town this morning.”

“I guess he is not a camper?”

“Nope, most of us in town went on camping trips and tried to invite him but he stayed home and read.”

“I guess he couldn’t let his mother be alone, then.”

“I don’t know, he has been a bit bolder when he met you.”

I blushed a little and then said, “Enjoy your food.”

She watched me go.

“Thank you and sorry for pulling down your hood that day.”

I felt happier and said, “I forgive you; I shouldn’t have put the blame on Michelle, I had a similar situation in another town and didn’t return.”

“I felt bad after your story, I couldn’t believe that something like that would happen to you.”

“Well, it did.” I said.

“So, that means your brother needs someone?” I asked.

I smirked and said, “Yes, I guess you want to be that someone?”

“Maybe.” She said in a teasing tone and went to the tray and took some of the bread.

“Good luck.” I teased back and left the room.

I hoped she could get to his heart like I had with Michelle.

# Chapter 22

# Michelle

I woke up to a warmth on my face and saw it was morning. When I saw the sun shining through, I sat up and asked, “Did I sleep throughout the rest of the night?”

I saw something on a table and went over and saw a bowl with a cover on it. I lifted it and it was some of the soup I had earlier and felt that more was brought up to me. I ate some and it was icy cold.

“I guess Gabrielle, or my mother brought that.” I said to myself.

I went to the wardrobe, saw some clothing, and pulled it on since my clothes were still with the motorcycle. They were a little bit bigger, but I managed. I went downstairs where I smelled the familiar scents of breakfast. Despite the place being dark and gothic it still held some warmth.

I found Gabrielle, Gisela, and my mother having breakfast and talking as they ate. It felt a little odd to see them being friendly despite Gabrielle just meeting mother but Gisela not getting to know her with pulling her hood down. I tried to see if Gabrielle’s brother was in sight but was not.

“So, the hero didn’t join us?” I asked.

They turned to me.

“Ah! Look who joined us!” Mother exclaimed as I walked over. I held the tray with the cold soup.

“Did you eat any?” Gabrielle asked.

“Unfortunately, it was icy cold by the time I woke up.” I said as I set it down.

“That’s okay, at least you’re feeling better.” She said.

Mother felt my forehead and said, “Still warm but not feverish.”

“Are you hungry?” the cat maid that Gabrielle had carried came up and asked me.

I nodded.

I sat down in a chair beside Gabrielle as a bowl was prepared with oatmeal. It smelled heavenly and was handed a basket of rolls and took one and smelled the cinnamon on top of it as I took a bite.

“Lady Gabrielle, we have a tray for Master Alicio.” One of the other cats said.

“I’ll take it to him!” Gisela piped up.

“You feel pretty nice today.” I said as I took my first spoonful.

“Maybe I wanted to show my appreciation for him saving us yesterday?” she asked with a squint to her eyes.

“He’s in the East Wing.” Gabrielle said as she pushed the tray to her.

“Which stairwell?” she asked.

“Follow me.” Margaret said as she jumped off the table.

Gisela followed her.

“Are you sure about that?” I asked.

“Of course!” Gabrielle exclaimed.

“I hope she doesn’t get her heart broken.” I said to myself and kept eating.

# Chapter 23

# Gisela

I followed Margaret up a set of stairs that were tucked away into the mansion. I remembered what Gabrielle had told me as I started to climb. I could imagine how much room Alicio would have in a place like this.

As I climbed, I noticed the wallpaper looked torn in certain areas. It looked ancient but the colors didn’t fade as badly. As we reached one of the landings, I saw a shattered mirror and gasped. The frame looked more intricate with the broken pieces and had a feeling that Alicio had done it.

Once we got upstairs, I saw broken furniture and more broken mirrors. I gasped and asked, “What happened up here?”

“After we transformed, Alicio went into major rage and broke apart furniture and shattered mirrors because he no longer wanted to see himself.” Margaret explained.

I walked up to a painting and saw it was still intact. It shown what looked like two human children and recognized Gabrielle in a red dress with a cute vest. I saw Aalicio in a similar outfit, but it looked like a sailor outfit. His silvery blond hair was shorter, and his dark blue eyes stared back at me.

“I guess you found our portrait.” I heard.

I gasped and dropped it and turned around quickly.

I saw Alicio wearing tattered clothing and his hair looked tangled around his horns.

“I brought you breakfast.” I said.

He looked at the tray and nodded and led me to his room. I saw more broken furniture and broken mirrors. He managed to bring a table over and dusted off the top. I placed the tray on top of it.

“Don’t you get lonely up here?” I asked as he took the top off his bowl.

“What do you mean?” he asked.

“I mean don’t you want to join us downstairs instead of being up here?”

“I’m fine.” He said and he started eating.

I watched him eat for a little while and then said, “Maybe I should come up here with my other meals.”

“I prefer being alone.” He said and placed the top back on his bowl.

“Come on, don’t you want a companion?”

“Why would you want to come up here? You want to go home?”

I looked away for a minute and said, “Your sister thinks you would like someone.”

He snorted and said, “No one likes me, I just push them away.”

“Then why did you rescue me and Michelle yesterday?”

He was silent and looked away.

“I’m heading down.” I announced and took the tray back.

I looked back and saw he was looking out the window and knew that what I said didn’t faze him at all. I felt that he was too complicated.

“How did it go?” Margaret asked as I got back to the stairs.

“He just wants to be alone.” I said and walked downwards. “Are you sure?”

“I am, I guess he doesn’t want to fall in love.” I said with tears in my voice.

# Chapter 24

# Gabrielle

Gisela appeared with tears coming down her face. I went over to her and asked, “Are you okay?”

She shook her head and ran to the stairwell that led to the guest wing.

“Great, I had a feeling Alicio said something to her.” I said and looked upwards.

“She has had her heart broken a couple of times.” Michelle stated.

“How so?” I asked.

“Well, she can be a little headstrong if she’s not too careful.” He answered.

“While my brother can be stubborn.” I said and started to go up.

“Wait!” he called out and I heard him following me.

I got to the top landing and felt heated as I walked to his room. As I was about to knock, the door opened, and he appeared

“What did you say to Gisela?” I asked.

“Just that I wanted to be alone.” He said.

“Oh, really now? You didn’t want to keep her company?”

“No, you know me, ever since our change I didn’t want to come down for meals! Is that so hard to ask?”

I glared at him and said, “You could have gotten to know her.”

“Why would I?”

“So, you could start having your roses vanish.” I said.

He was silent.

“Look Alicio, you’re making this curse harder than it seems.”

“How about your tattoo? Did it start to vanish?”

I show him mine and he saw that a few of the roses and thorns did disappear towards the bottom.

“If I had found mine in Michelle, you could find your love with Gisela.”

He sighed and said, “Fine, I will go and apologize.”

“Good, she will be in the guest wing.”

We heard a sneeze and saw Michelle.

“Gee, this place is so dusty!” he remarked and was surprised by his surroundings. “Did you do all this damage?”

“Pretty much, I couldn’t stand seeing my sleeping half in the mirrors.” He answered as he passed by him.

“I guess breaking them didn’t release yourselves?” he asked.

“Nope, we’re still here.” I answered.

“Can you tell me about this Gisela?” he asked Michelle.

He was a little surprised and said, “Um, sure.”

“How is she?” he asked.

“To be honest, she can be a little snippety, headstrong if not too careful, but she does care for her friends and she would the same for you if you give her a chance.” Michelle answered.

“Which I’m willing to.” He said and looked at me.

“Come on, you want to be human again, don’t you?” I asked my brother.

I saw him go over to one of the broken mirrors and looked at one of the shards and we saw his sleeping, human self and he said, “Yes, I do!”

“Then, go and see her.” I said.

He turned and went to the stairs and went down.

“Do you think he will fall in love?” Michelle asked.

“Hoping so.” I said.

“After knowing what you two go through, I hope we can get you two back to normal.” He said.

I nodded and then went downstairs. I heard him follow.

“I’m sorry for you getting to witness this.” I told him.

“Look, I was trying to find my mother and glad I had and that you’ve taken care of her, now it’s time for us to get to know each other! You and your brother have been alone in this place and now you have some company in us.”

I smiled.

“There you go.” He said with a smile on his face.

“Now, hoping she makes my brother smile too.” I said.

He nodded in agreement.

# Chapter 25

# Alicio

I managed to find my way to the Guest Wing. It’s been ages since I’ve been in this part of the mansion due to how we hadn’t had anyone drop by. Not even Court Wizards with what had taken place.

I had thought back to what Gabrielle had said and she was not wrong. I felt that ever since we changed that no one was going to love us but seeing that Gisela decided to try and talk to me took some courage and I felt like a jerk for not letting her in.

“I hope she doesn’t despise me.” I told myself and then found the only closed door since Odette and Michelle were downstairs. I knocked on the door.

“Who’s there?” I heard.

“I heard Gisela’s voice and felt hurt that she did sound like she had been crying.

“It’s me Alicio, I came to apologize.” I said.

I heard her unlock the door and opened it; she didn’t look at me as she let me in.

I stepped inside and noticed she had a fire in the hearth burning. She also had crumbled up tissues surrounding the tissue box on her bed.

She shut the door and asked, “Is that all you came for? To apologize I mean.”

“Yes, also to talk.”

“Then talk.”

“I am really sorry for what I had said, ever since everything had happened, I always hid myself from my sister and our servants, even tore up things to keep myself from seeing my sleeping image in the mirror.”

“So, you just kept yourself up in your room, alone?”

I nodded.

“What about your sister? I don’t count that as being alone.”

“I usually grab the meal trays and stayed inside my room to eat, I felt more to myself than ever.”

“Usually, I’m always surrounded by my girlfriends back home and I hate being without them.”

“Girlfriends?”

“I guess you haven’t had any friends?”

I shook my head and said, “We always played around the mansion here, Margaret did take us down to one of the towns so we could meet other children many years ago, but I chased them off and Gabrielle just looked into shop windows like our mother had.”

She giggled.

“I was pretty much a spoiled brat, I always broke my toys, I even threw one of Gabrielle’s dolls into some mud one time.”

“Wow, I Francois, my brother, and I were the opposite, I always wanted to be the adventurous one and my brother was always tried to keep me out of trouble.”

“What about Michelle, if I got his name right?”

“He has been a friend who always ran the shop with his mother and sister, me and the girls always played keep away with his books since he was not always social. O even tried setting him up on a date that didn’t went well.”

“Oh really?”

“Yes, he even had to take me home after I got drunk off of the wine samples, it happened recently when I saw the guy, I crushed on with one of the other ladies in a shop.”

“I see, Michelle did say you’re a bit headstrong.”

She sighed and said, “All I wanted was to know him and probably go on a date except he always avoided me and probably saw that girl walking around carrying fabric for the shop.”

I laughed.

“I guess it’s a little funny.” She said and giggled a little.

“It feels good to laugh again.”

“Yes.”

We sat in silence for a little bit and then Gisela asked, “How big is this place?”

“Do you want to know?” I asked with a smirk.

“Yes.”

“I will show you!” I exclaimed and grabbed her hand and took her to one of the upper floors. I found one of the doors that led to the roof, and we got outside where she saw the entire area. She was in awe with the view.

“Wow!” she exclaimed as she turned.

“This place takes over this entire plot and the forest behind it.” I explained.

“Does that include the forest where we crashed?” she asked as she crossed her arms from the cold.

“It only extends to the front gates and the forests are public.” I said.

“It’s beautiful.” She said.

“I knew you would love it.” I said with a smile.

I also crossed my arms and saw some of the rose petals starting to disappear and knew that I was starting to fall for Gisela.

# Chapter 26

# Michelle

A few days have passed, and I felt better throughout those days all thanks to Gabrielle waiting on me. My fever did break and got stronger all thanks to the cooking her kitchen staff despite them being cats.

The both of us saw that Alicio and Gisela were warming up to each other as if they were long time buddies but hard to tell if they were courting though.

“I can’t see if he lost any petals on his tattoo.” Gabrielle whispered to me one afternoon during lunch.

I moved my eyes to the torn sleeve on Alicio’s top. I could only see the petals in their vibrant red color and some of the leaves poking through.

“It almost looks like he’s not losing any.” I whispered back.

She nodded in agreement.

“Can’t you use your magic to control them to fall in love?”

I choked on my soup for a bit.

“Are you okay son?” I heard mother ask me as I coughed.

“Sorry, just thought about something I read.” I lied and wiped my mouth.

“Should slow down in your slurps.” She said with a smile.

I nodded and then sipped my soup slowly from the spoon this time.

We finished our lunch and handed our bowls and bread plates to the kitchen staff.

I caught up with Gabrielle as she headed for the stairs leading to her bedroom and said, “My magic only controls people as if I were reading a story aloud, I doubt it would let me control their movements to fall in love.”

“How are you sure if you haven’t tried it?”

I thought back to all the times I used my magic to get out of situations but wouldn’t think to use it to have two people get closer to each other. I had been more of a coward but not a matchmaker and then thought to Gabrielle’s situation and felt that she is really wanting to save both herself and her brother.

“I understand you can’t save him alone as yourself, I will do my best in using my magic.”

She smiled and then hugged me and said, “Thank you.”

I found the couple in the rose garden looking at the ice covered flowers. Despite the snow and ice, they looked perfect and seeing how the both of them delicately remove some of the ice. I felt nervous of what I was going to do.

“I hope this works.” I muttered to myself as I hid behind a statue in the garden. I hoped Gisela doesn’t get too suspicious since she knows my power.

# Chapter 27

# Gisela

During the time I’ve spent with Alicio, I felt I was getting slightly closer to him, but he wanted to keep his boundaries. He and I spent time together every day around the mansion and got to see the different parts to it and felt his emotions as he talked to me. I did see some of his tattoo was still whole except a few leaves have vanished.

*Is he still pushing against me despite how much we have been together?* I wondered to myself as he tended to the bushes.

“Is there something wrong?” I heard him ask.

I was surprised that he spoke after we had lunch. My heart skips a beat.

“Yes, everything’s fine.” I said with a slight hitch in my voice.

I noticed his hand moved a little and a slight glow to it and I had a feeling that Michelle may be somewhere using his magic. He was controlling his hand and then saw it move towards me.

Alicio saw it and tried to put it down but could not.

“What the hell is going on?” Alicio asked.

He stepped forward to me and stroke my face and he tried to take control again, but he was in puppet mode all thanks to the book worm.

“Someone has control of me!” Alicio exclaimed and then he hugged me.

All of the heat goes to my face and then stepped away. I stomped away from him.

“Gisela!” Alicio yelled with his arms still in the air.

“Where the hell are you Book Worm!?” I yelled and then saw him step from behind the statue. I ran over and tackled him to the snow.

He grunted in pain.

“You jerk!” I yelled and punched him.

He screamed in pain and his glasses flew off his face.

I kept on hitting him and then someone grab me and pulled me off.

“Stop it!’ I yelled.

“Sorry, I had to, Gabrielle me asked me to because she was worried about her brother was not connecting with you!” he exclaimed.

I saw that his nose was bleeding, and his lip was split.

I felt Alicio behind me and shaking from emotion.

“Alicio?” I asked.

He let me go and headed back inside.

“Alicio!” I called again as I saw him go inside. I ran after him.

# Chapter 28

# Alicio

“Gabrielle!” I yelled.

I looked for my sister due to the fury I felt towards her.

“Gabrielle!” I yelled again and went up the stairs that led to her bedroom and open the door where I found her at the window.

She turned to me and asked,

“Alicio?”

I came in and yelled, “What the hell were you thinking!?”

“Huh?”

“You made your boy toy control me with his magic! “I growled.

She looked away from me as she said, “I noticed you and Gisela were not getting along and had to do something and remembered the magic Michelle used.”

Controlling people?” I asked.

“Not quiet, he can control you as if he was reading a story and I thought if he could make you get closer to her.”

“Is it because you wanted to force my tattoo to vanish?”

She did not look at me.

“Answer me!”

She looked up and nodded and then said, “Yes.”

I glared and yelled, “You have no right to play with me and Gisela like that!”

“I want us to change back as much as you do, you know how lonely I was before Michelle stepped into my life?”

“Are you sure he is not a court wizard?” I yelled.

“I am sure, how would he be if he was?” she asked me.

“Well, he and his mother should leave if you are going to force him to use it on me! Gisela and I have been doing well until you meddled!” I yelled and stormed off.

“Alicio!” she called out.

I headed for my own room and turned over one of the slightly ruined chairs. I plopped down, pulled my tattered sleeve, and saw one of the petals vanish.

“Why the hell did Icaused this curse on us? I could have been out there trying to break it instead and not let her feel the burden.” I told myself.

I remembered the broken-down vehicles that I got our mechanic and his staff to thrive that same night Gisela and Michelle came into view.

I went down to the garage and talked to the crew to see if they could fix them.

“We’ll try, who knows how much damage they have gotten when they broke down.” The head mechanic said.

“Good, I want them fixed by the morning.” I ordered and left the garage. As I left the garage, I knew I would miss Gisela if this does get done.

# Chapter 29

# Gabrielle

I was in shock after what took place. I felt as though ice water has been thrown on me and I turned into a statue. I felt bad for Michelle and knew I should not have made him use his magic.

I went downstairs and heard some voices. I saw Michelle sitting at the dining table with a rag to his nose.

“Let me see.” I heard Odette.

I saw her look at his bruised face and dried blood.

“You said Gisela did this?”

“Mmhmm.” I heard him manage to say.

“Margaret, can you get a First Aid Kit and some water with a rag?” she asked my house cleaner.

“Yes madam.” She said and ran off.

“Michelle?” I asked as I walked over.

He did not respond.

“Oh Gabrielle, I am glad you’re here! Can you keep this rag on his nose while I wash my hands?” Odette asked.

“Yes.” I said and took over as she went into the kitchen.

“I’m so sorry for what I made you do.” I started to say.

He did not answer.

“I know you’re mad.” I continued.

He just closed his eyes.

Odette came back and I stepped aside so I could let her work. I knew he was really mad at me and once he was bandaged up, I watched him head to the stairs.

“Michelle?” I asked and followed.

“Don’t follow me! You know I don’t like using my magic, especially for something like what you made me do.” He said in a slightly angry tone.

“Again, I’m sorry!”

“That magic has been nothing but trouble! I am glad I never known what court wizards were and I bet I wouldn’t want to become one if I were to meet the one who placed the spell on you!” he yelled and headed upstairs.

It felt even colder suddenly and then tears come to my eyes.

“Gabrielle?” Odette asked me.

I sniffed and went up the opposite stairs to my room and cried there for the rest of the night.

# Chapter 30

# Michelle

I went upstairs back to my room after getting my lip stitched back together and my cheek and nose bandaged up. I never knew Gisela had a great right hook. I guess Francois helped with self-defense.

I know hurt Gabrielle, but she did get me into the situation by using me and my magic. I wanted to help her in any way I can except using the magic that caused me trouble, even if I caused a girl to get away from me.

I lie down on my bed and felt the pain from my cheek and took off my glasses so I could be comfortable against the pillow.

I heard a knock and then my name. I went to the door and saw Gisela.

“Came to give me a black eye now?” I asked her.

She shook her head and said, “No, just came to apologize.”

I rose both of my eyebrows.

“Wow, I did cause a lot, how’s the pain?”

“It hurts like hell.” I said as I let her in.

“I didn’t mean to cause that much.”

I sighed and said, “Well, didn’t mean to turn your date with Alicio into a beating match.”

“Where’s Gabrielle?” she asked.

I flinched and said, “Probably in her room.”

Gisela sighed in sadness and asked, “What will happen to us now? I hope we don’t get sent to the dungeon.”

“I doubt it, this mansion doesn’t look much like a castle.”

“I hope we go home soon.” Gisela said.

“I agree, I’d rather be at home and selling books and wine again than be here.” I said and lied back down.

Gisela nodded and then left the room.

I had a feeling that tonight ended or time here.

# Chapter 31

# Odette

I was back in my room when I heard a cat meowing. I went to the door and saw one of the servants.

“What is it?” I asked it.

“Master Alicio would love to see you.” He answered.

I nodded and headed for his wing. I was surprised at the sight of the broken furniture and mirrors. I was guided to a different room and knocked.

“Come in.” I heard.

I went in and saw an office that had broken mirrors, but the desk and chair were still intact.

I saw him looking out of the window as I sat in a chair in front of the desk.

I cleared my throat and asked, “You wanted to see me?”

“Yes, I was handed this.” He said as he turned and handed me the paper that contained the list of parts I needed to fix our wine making machines at our shop.

“You found my list.” I said.

“I was given this by my mechanic and researched into it, I was able to find the parts and all thanks to your shop’s address on this stationery, I am having them shipped there

.” He told me.

“Really?” I asked.

“We will get your car and Gisela’s bike fixed by the morning in order for you three to go home.”

“Are you sure?”

“I am, you shouldn’t be here.”

“What happened exactly? Michelle didn’t even say anything. While I took care of his wounds.”

“Basically, Gisela beat him up for using some magic on me, has he used this magic as in controlling people like if he was reading a book?”

I sighed and said, “He got it from his grandfather, it caused him trouble at times, and he tried not using it.”

“At least he didn’t become a Court Wizard.”

“I doubt if he wanted to be one if the opportunity presented itself.”

“I wonder if it had he would find the one that done this to me.” Alicio said and then resumed looking out the window.

“What happened to the wizard?” I asked.

“Who knows.” He answered.

We stood silent and I said, “Thank you for finding my parts, I was supposed to get them.”

“It was nothing, I will see you all off once your vehicles are fixed.” He said without looking at me.

I nodded and then left the office. As I am walking back to my room, I felt as though someone was watching me but couldn’t put my finger on it. I headed back to my room where dinner was sent to us by the maid staff, and I ate in silence.

I went to sleep one more time in my bed.

The next morning, the three of us had breakfast with only Alicio. Gabrielle was probably upstairs, and I knew that things didn’t bode well between her and Michelle and Alicio.

“How’s your face?” Alicio asked Michelle.

“Still hurts, I decided to keep my glasses off even if I can’t see anything.” He answered.

“Be glad I found this stuff and had it cleaned.” Alicio said and had his and Gisela’s bags on one of the benches.

“Thanks.” Michelle said.

“Wait, I thought our bags were still in that ditch.” Gisela said without looking at him.

“Well, managed to get your motorcycle back here.” He said withoutlooking back.

“How are we getting home?” Michelle asked.

“The motorcycle and car have been fixed overnight.” He answered.

I smiled at that fact and said, “So, we are going home, that’s good.”

We finished breakfast and both Gisela and Michelle grabbed their belongings, and we were led to a garage. We saw my car and Gisela’s bike there all fixed like new.

I watched Gisela go over to her bike and placed her belongings in the side car. Michelle stayed at my side as we got into the car. I guess he didn’t want to take another chance with Gisela’s riding. He did knock the seat back to lie down to rest due to his injuries.

“Thank you for your hospitality.” I said to Alicio.

He nodded in response.

I got into my car and the both of us started our vehicles and got out of the garage door that hung open for us. We got out into the sunny, winter day and headed back towards our town.

As we entered the town square area a few minutes later, I felt relieved to be home. It felt like over a year since I’ve been home, but it’s been a week. I pulled into our familiar shop and gave Michelle a gentle shake.

He snorted and woke up and asked, “What is it?”

“We’re home honey.” I said.

He blinked, saw the familiar garage, and sat the seat back up and got out. I followed and gathered our things. We got into our home, and it felt like the same house attached to a shop.

“Britt?” I called out.

There was no answer and knew that the shop was in business after seeing people coming in and out from the shop side. I put my coat on the hook and went to the shop to find Britt with the help of Gisela’s girlfriends making sure that customers were being taken care of. Britt saw me and called out, “Mom!”

She came around the counter and ran over and hugged me.

“I missed you so much!” she exclaimed.

“I missed you too honey.” I said.

“Where’s Michelle?” she asked as I let go.

“Upstairs resting, it is a bit of a story.” I said.

“Hey, I need some help here!” we heard someone call out.

I ran to grab an apron and started to get back into the groove of working the shop. It feels as though I hadn’t left even though our usual shoppers had wondered where I went. I did get notified that Louisa, Veronica, and Victoria volunteered to work since our bigger sale happened while I was gone. I was glad to be home and can’t wait for the parts to arrive.

# Chapter 32

# Michelle

I got myself upstairs and hit the bed. I felt like a ton of bricks hit not only my face but my body.

I felt as though the previous day went by like a blur and feeling guilty once I got home.

I remembered hearing the hurt in Gabrielle’s voice and eating alone in my room at the mansion felt cold. I felt relieved that Alicio was letting us go. He didn’t even acknowledge me as I got inside my mother’s car to head home. I knew I should have to apologize further but what could it do? I already caused the damage on Gabrielle’s behalf.

“I wonder if she’s okay.” I wondered aloud.

I closed my eyes to sleep again and had the same dream. This time I was surrounded by ice and felt cold this time. As I walked down the hallway, I felt some eyes watching me through the ice as if someone waswatching.

“Wizard!” I heard in the air.

“Hello!? Who said that?” I called out.

I awoke and saw that it was night and saw that I slept through the afternoon. I smelled some food and saw a note that said, “Figured you were hungry.”

I noticed it was written n mother’s handwriting and ate the food and felt the swelling stinging as I ate. I know it will be another painful and uncomfortable sleep that night.

# Chapter 33

# Gabrielle

I stayed in my room for most of the day. I felt as though my heart was heavy and empty after being hurt. I felt as though now our world has been turned upside down, well mine at least due to how much progress we were making in how much my tattoo was disappearing and hoped that Alicio would start on his.

I sat up from my bed and went over to my mirror. I saw myself asleep in my human form and then saw something wrapping around my legs. I saw it was rose vines and gasped and stepped away from it. I looked again and more formed and knew that letting go of Michelle was a mistake.

“I need to find him.” I said to myself.

I lifted my sleeve and saw my tattoo was half gone and known I need to continue falling in love.

“Court Wizard! If you can hear me, whatever you’re doing with my reflection, you better leave it alone!”

I thought I heard laughter, sinister laughter and then stepped away from my mirror and covered it with a sheet. I couldn’t look at myself again.

“I need to see him again.” I said to myself.

# Chapter 34

# Michelle

I worked for the next couple of days. I noticed that a lot of tourists were coming through for our winter festival, which I sometimes dread due to how people not only enjoy our wine samples but sometimes cause a mess by leaving plastic cups behind or wine stains in our books.

As I swept, I heard our door open and said, “Sorry, we’re about to close for the night.”

“It’s okay, I came here in secret.” I heard a male say and turned to see a man with a burn scar on his face. He wore royal regalia under his coat and scarf. He also had a walking cane.

“May I help you?” I asked.

“I came on a long trip with my wife and heard about this shop, I would like to surprise her with some wine tonight.” He said.

I nodded and said, “Let me get my mother.”

He watched me as I got my mother and she was happy to have another customer for our wine, which we got our new parts in and installed all thanks to Alicio’s help. We started producing again with some that have run out. My mother was still animated as she talked with this man as she had him sample a few wines.

“So, what brings you here to town?” she asked.

“Well, besides the festival and this shop, we did hear about a Court Wizard that came through that may have been corrupted.”

“Corrupted wizards?” I asked.

He nodded and said, “My wife encountered one of them when she was supposed to marry a prince but they tried to take over and I saved her and her home, we heard a few who have travelled may have come under some form of corruption and one turned a brother and sister into some kind of beast and we’re trying to have him arrested.”

I stood back and took a deep breath at that moment.

“I’m sorry, we haven’t seen this wizard and hoping you would find him.” Mother said.

I know he was talking about Gabrielle and Alicio, and I remembered their story about how they were changed. This man is looking for this wizard.

“I’m glad you came by; I hope your wife enjoys the wine.” My mother said as she handed him the bag to him.

“I much appreciate it.” The man said and hobbled to the door. “If you have any information, I will be at the inn, just call for Sidney.”

“Yes sir.” Mother said.

She locked the door and flipped the sign over to “Closed.”

“That was an interesting visit.” She said.

I nodded.

“Are you okay son? Is your lip still in pain?” she asked as she noticed that I went pale.

“I need some air.” I said and hung my apron. I gathered my coat, gloves, and scarf and headed outside.

I ran to Gisela’s home where the shop was also closing for the day.

“Gisela!” I called out.

The door opened and she looked very stoic and asked, “Yes?”

“I need to talk with you about something.”

“Huh?” she asked.

“Just let him in.” Francois told her.

She stepped aside and let me in. We went into a private room, and I told her what took place at my shop.

“So, you’re saying this guy is looking for that same wizard that changed Gabrielle and her brother?” she asked.

I nodded.

“He said to call for him at the inn if we had any info.” I said.

“Why would I want to help Alicio after kicking us out?” she asked as she removed her apron.

“I guess you moved on?” I asked.

“After that morning, yeah, I don’t think he was interested in me even if some of the rose petals vanished on his tattoo from what I could see.” She answered.

“Well, I want to help Gabrielle if this wizard might be out there.” I said.

“You do it, I’d rather just stay here and become an old maid.” She said and left the room.

“Unless you really cared for him.” I said.

She didn’t look at me and then walked upstairs.

I sighed and turned to see Francois show up at the door.

“Did something happen?” he asked.

“It’s nothing.” I said as I walked towards the door.

“Something happened those days, did you do anything to my sister?” he asked.

“No, it’s just something we got into, which you may not believe.” I said as I was trying to leave.

“What do you mean by that?” he asked me.

“If I tell you then you would probably think it’s farfetched.” I said with a slight annoyance to my voice.

“Test me.” He said.

I sighed and then told him what had happened to us and about Gabrielle and her brother. I even talked about how Sidney appeared at my shop and looking for the wizard that changed Gabrielle and Alicio.

“So, that is why you’re here?” Francois asked.

“Yep, I figured your sister wanted to see Sidney and probably get some help, but I guess her heart being broken again is making her not care anymore.” I said.

“How much has she interacted with this guy?” he asked.

I sighed and said, “Ever since we arrived at the mansion, I could see that they cared for each other until I meddled n it.” I said.

“Great, that magic of yours again?”

I nodded and explained, “Gabrielle thought that they would get closer after seeing that his tattoo was not vanishing, which he and Gabrielle have rose vines to get rid of to be human again.”

He sighed and then asked, “Question is that does he really love her?”

I shrugged.

“Thanks for letting me know, at least I know what’s going on.” Francois said and headed inside.

I remembered what Sidney had said and had a bad feeling that Gabrielle and Alicio may be in even more danger if the rose vines were to vanish will the wizard let them change back? I remembered old stories I have read where the princess was not let go in the end but used as ransom for the prince.

“Who am I kidding?” I asked myself as I walked inside and locked up for the night.

# Chapter 35

# Gabrielle

I packed some items since I couldn’t take being away from Michelle anymore. I know I’m leaving Alicio behind but being without Michelle’s companionship at that moment was hurting me. I will also apologize to Gisela since she was really hurt while being sent away.

I pulled on my heaviest cloak and boots and grabbed my bag. I looked back at my room and headed downstairs.

I felt my heart pound as I walked down each step to our foyer and didn’t hear anything from the opposite stairs. I had a feeling Alicio hadn’t come down except for meals. He and I were still not on speaking terms. I passed a mirror and saw myself still asleep and said to myself, “Soon.”

I left the mansion and went into the bright, winter morning. The snow had calmed down and I remembered how Alicio and I always had snowball fights with some of the younger servants. Margaret watched us play until we were all called in. We had hot chocolate to warm ourselves up as she and the kitchen staff made a hearty soup for dinner. It felt so long ago that the mansion was alive, and I missed the liveliness all thanks to this curse. I want it to end, and Michelle is one of the ways to do so.

I arrived at the village and saw it was preparing for an event. . I walked and saw the decorations and tents being placed in the square and saw the Book Winery with its tent sealed. I noticed Odette and went over to her.

“Odette!”

She saw me and asked, “Gabrielle? What are you doing here?”

“I need to see Michelle.” I answered underneath my hood.

She smiled and said, “You’re definitely in love, aren’t you?”

“Yes, I couldn’t be away from him any longer, I also feel bad for having my brother let you go due to what I had your son do.”

“I forgive you, that magic has ran in the males of my family and thought it would end with my father except Michelle adopted it.”

“I see.”

“It put him in so much trouble, I remembered so many kids picked n him in the place we used to live in before until my father said we were needed for the shop.”

“I guess I did the same thing.”

‘Gabrielle?” I heard and turned to see Michelle holding a box.

“Hi there.”

Odette saw my bag and asked, “Michelle, can you show Gabrielle the guest room at home? I think she wants to stay for a few days.”

“Sure.” He said and placed a box with clinking bottles on the table next to me and then came back. I saw his bruising died down and said, “Your bruise healed.”

“Yeah, the cold weather did help a bit for the past few days.” He said as he walked ahead.

I followed.

We walked in silence and got to the shop where I was led to an empty room upstairs that was furnished with a bed, a bedside table, dresser, and a bookshelf.

“Here you go.” He said and was about to leave.

I grabbed him by the arm and said, “Don’t go.”

“I have to prepare for the festival.”

“Look Michelle, I’m really sorry for what had happened, I wished I hadn’t pushed you to use your magic.”

He didn’t say anything.

“I couldn’t stop thinking about you so that’s why I came.” I said.

He sighed and said, “I don’t know if I could forgive you but what had happened was something you wanted to do for your brother and magic is something that shouldn’t be toyed with.” He told me.

I nodded and said, “I know, I wished I hadn’t done that.”

“Look, just make yourself comfortable, I have a lot of work to do.”

“Okay.” I said and let go of his arm and watched him leave. When I heard the door close on the first floor, I sat on the bed and looked around me. It felt so different from my own home, but it felt warm.

I saw my reflection in a standing mirror and saw more rose vines wrapping around me this time. I gasped and then flipped the mirror to keep my reflection away. I thought I heard someone cackling within that mirror and shuddered in fear.

# Chapter 36

# Michelle

I walked back to the tent and felt as though Gisela punched me again like that day but in the gut this time. I couldn’t look at her and those lavender eyes that are hidden away but I knew that she just wanted to have me by her side again. I don’t know if I could let her in again. I started to keep myself busy with the preparations for the Holiday Festival. It is big in town every year where so many people visited from other villages to royalty sometimes if we’re lucky. I wondered if Sidney will be joining the festivities if he hadn’t left by now.

“I guess not open for business?” I heard and saw both Sidney with a woman that had eyes that were spring green and wheat blonde hair.

“Ah, you came with a guest?” I asked.

“This is my wife Alexa, we decided to walk around to see the preparations for this event.” Sidney said.

“I enjoyed the wine and I wanted to see if you had any on display before the event started!” Alexa exclaimed.

“You sure can! We even have one we made for the event tonight.” My mother said as she went to help Alexa.

Sidney decided to stay with me but I just kept on working.

“So, any thing on that wizard?” he asked.

I sighed and asked, “You know?”

“Yes, your face told me everything, that bruise on your face is fading pretty well.” Sidney said.

“I do know about the wizard in question, I met the siblings who encountered them or shall I say the wizard encountered them one night.” I answered.

He looked at me with his amber eyes.

I told him everything about what had taken place with Gabrielle and Alicio. He listened to every word as if I read the book that has been written and finished with, “So, we came back home due to y own meddling since I have magic.”

“I see, you seem like when you talked about Gabrielle that you have longed for her, do you love her?”

“I, uh, I can’t really say.” I said.

“Look, when I met Alexa, I thought I wouldn’t have someone fall for me with this scar on my face.”

I saw it and asked, “How did you get it?”

“Slept wrong near a hearth, I was placed into a small nook all thanks to my stepmother when I was a kid.”

“Ow, while I get punched if I used my own magic.” I said and saw him form a green flame. “The hell?”

“But my flames of love shown bright over time, heck a spell she had her own Court Wizard used did bring us together even if she was a guy, your own flames will burn too.”

I sighed.

“You said she got changed, she needs you to change back to what she was, right?”

I nodded again.

“Then help her.”

“Right.” I said.

“Honey, I smell some good chocolate!” I heard his wife call out.

“Coming!” he said and hobbled away.

“Thanks Sidney.” I said.

He nodded and smiled as he said, “Just have a dance with her, that’s how I got mine.”

I smirked and saw him go.

Mother and I finished up at the tent and covered it up for the first day the next morning. I ran back to the shop while Mother decided to hit up the tavern for a warm drink. I ran upstairs to find Gabrielle and she was curled up in a ball.

“Gabrielle?” I asked and went to her.

I saw the mirror flipped over and knew something may have spooked her. I went to her and asked, “Are you okay? What happened?”

She sniffed and said, “I saw my sleeping self in the mirror and rose vines wrapping around my human self and then heard someone cackle.” She answered between sobs.

“What?” I asked.

She looked at me and said, “Not sure but I think that wizard is in the mirror.”

I went to it and flipped the mirror and saw myself. I pointed it towards her and saw the rose vines myself. I gasped and then turned to her, “How much of your tattoo vanished?”

She lifted her sleeve and saw half it was gone and then saw the edges faded towards the bottom.

“How about Alicio’s?” I asked.

“I have not seen it.” She answered without looking up at me again.

“Maybe this is a message to hurry the rest of the spell up.” I said.

She looked at me with reddened eyes and wiped her nose off.

“I will help you get rid of yours and I know how.”

“How?”

“During the day, I will be taking care of our booth during the festival but will be free for the evening festivities and I want you to be my date.”

“Really?”

I nodded.

“But I don’t have anything for me to wear except for a few dresses for a few days.”

“I will take care of it.” I told her and left the room. I went to the phone and dialed a number.

# Chapter 37

# Gisela

I finished up with our booth at the festival and sat to a cup of hot cocoa and cookies.

I heard the phone rang and my mother answered it.

“Gisela! It’s Michelle!”

“What does he want?” I wondered aloud and went to the phone and took the receiver.

“What do you want?” I asked.

“You sound sunny as always, I am calling to ask for a dress.”

“Dress?”

“Well, it’s for Gabrielle.”

I felt my heart beat a bit due to surprise.

“Why Gabrielle? Where is she?”

“She is in our guest room, she wanted to see me, so she is staying here for a few days.”

“What about Alicio?”

“I have a feeling he doesn’t know.”

I felt sad at that moment because I hoped he would be with her.

“She only brought enough clothing for a few days.”

“I guess you asked her to the nighttime events?”

“Yes.”

I smiled and said, “I think I have something; I have to make some calls.”

“Thank you!”

“I hope Alicio is okay, though.”

“I hope so too.” He said.

I felt tears come to my eyes and then put myself together when I said, “I will have something for you in the morning.”

I hung up and then dialed a few numbers. I did have my dresses made for school dances and fancy gatherings my family attended in the past and stayed in good terms with everyone. I made the arrangements and guessed Gabrielle’s sizing. She is taller than I am about Odette’s height but with a beautiful hourglass shape. I made my final call for something to hide her horns, I felt a pit in my stomach.

I felt as though I was helping Gabrielle more than Alicio and couldn’t go another moment without him. When I was with him, I felt more like a person than the impulsive brat I had acted before. I

always went after every guy that caught my interest except, they went after another girl.

But if I were to go to him then would he push me away like he had?

I took the stairs and when I got to the top, I saw Francois.

“What are you doing here?” I asked.

“Wondering if you’re okay? You haven’t been yourself the past few days.” He said.

I was silent and then headed for my room

“I know what’s going on, Michelle told me what had happened to you both.” He said.

I stopped and turned to him and asked, ‘So, you heard my conversation with him?”

He nodded.

“I don’t know what to do Francois, I love him so much!” I said as I started to cry again.

“Have you thought about ccontacting him?”

I shook my head.

“Just go to him.”

“What about the festival?” I asked.

“I will cover for you.” He told me.

I smiled through my tears and said, “Thank you!”

He smiled and said, “Go.”

I nodded and went to pack my things.

# Chapter 38

# Michelle

Gisela’s promise came through by mid-morning the next day. I was surprised with the packages that had arrived and I know she would hold this over my head for the next year or so if she is back to her teasing self, except she didn’t come with the clothing.

“Where’s Gisela if she sent these for Gabrielle?”

Brit looked at the one with the dress and said, “This seems really fancy for her.”

“I wanted to make it very special.” I said.

“Did you read this in a book? You surely know how to make a girl happy with all this stuff.” Brit teased me.

We heard footsteps and saw Gabrielle come downstairs.

“Did you sleep well?” Mother asked her.

“I did.” She said from under her hood.

“What’s with the hood? You don’t have to hide her from me!” Brit exclaimed and then pulled it down.

“Don’t!” I called out.

Brit gasped when she saw the horns.

“I should have warned you.” I said.

“It’s fine.” Gabrielle said.

“Um, you aren’t normal.” Brit squeaked.

“I am, my brother and I were changed into beasts.” Gabrielle explained.

“She did help me and mother when mother got lost and both me and Gisela crashed into a pit looking for her.” I said.

“At least you came home alive.” Brit said.

Gabrielle looked down.

“Here you go.” Mother said and handed her a small croissant.

“Thank you.” Gabrielle said and took a bite.

“I have something for you.” I said.

She looked at me.

“It may be something you need.” I said and guided her over to the packages. “You said you didn’t have anything to wear for the festivities tonight, but Gisela pulled some strings yesterday for you.”

She saw them and I handed her the one with the dress and said, “Open it.”

She sat down in a chair and ripped it open to find a silvery dress with red accents.

“No way.” She whispered and then held it up.

“This is gorgeous!” Mother exclaimed.

“And this is supposed to be something to go with it.” I said and handed another package.

Gabrielle opened it to reveal a matching cloak with roses embroidered.

“Wow.” She whispered.

“And this!” I said and handed the third one to her.

She saw a hat, gloves, and a muff.

“She didn’t have to do this for me.” Gabrielle said with tears in her voice.

“Um, there is one more but it’s for you bro!” Brit said and pointed to the fourth one.

I took it and opened it to see a matching suit and looked at the attached note, “You and her should match tonight!”

I smirked at her usual sense of humor.

“Looks like you have a date tonight.” Mother said with a smile.

We both blushed at that moment.

“A date?” Gabrielle asked.

“Me?” I asked.

“Michelle, this is one way of changing her back.” She told me.

“Changing who back?” Brit asked.

I saw Gabrielle lift her sleeve and I saw two more leaves vanish and she gasped.

“Me and my brother have these tattoos that vanish when we fall for someone a little at a time, we have our human selves locked in mirrors and this is the only way of getting them back.”

“I see, well, it’s in your hands!” Brit exclaimed and patted me on the shoulder as she headed upstairs to get ready for the festival.

I looked at Gabrielle and then asked, “Do you want to as a date?”

“Of course, I really want to give it a try, I never been on a date before especially after being changed.” She said.

We made our final plans, and I went upstairs o get ready as well.

We worked throughout the afternoon, and I kept an eye out for Gisela in order to thank her except she was not out there. When Veronica came by to give us an extra hand, I decided to ask her.

“What happened to Gisela?”

Veronica’s brow went up and asked, “You haven’t seen her either?”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

Victoria shown up and asked, “I guess you haven’t seen Gisela either?”

I shook my head and said, “Veronica just asked me about it, did you go by her home?”

“We did so we could come to the tents together since we did volunteer to be extra help.” Veronica said.

“But Francois said he hasn’t seen her all morning.”

“She didn’t take her motorcycle either.” Victoria said.

I ran to the tent where Gisela’s family business was and saw Francois.

“Where did she go?”

Francois shrugged and said, “Not entirely sure, she did leave a note saying she is heading out of town but didn’t say.”

I sighed.

“She did say in the same note not to worry about her.” He told me.

“Gotcha.” I said and thanked him. As I walked back to our tent, I started to worry about her., Despite her teasing in the past, I know she has looked out for me, especially when I was searching for mother recently.

*I hope she’s okay out there!* I thought to myself and went on with business.

# Chapter 39

# Gisela

I left early in the morning in my heaviest coat and clothing with the newly fallen snow. I remembered the route I took back home and reversed it to find the mansion.

Once I got to the gate, it looked so cold out in its woodsy surroundings. I opened the gate and walked up to the door. I grabbed the knocker and knocked.

No one answered and felt the door handles and they were unlocked. I opened it and stepped inside. The place felt so cold after us leaving this place. I felt more like an intruder than a guest and placed my bag on the armchair.

“Gisela?” I heard and turned to see Alicio.

“Alicio!” I exclaimed and ran over and hugged him.

He pushed me away and asked, “What the hell are you doing here?”

“I had to see you again, when I left, I felt empty.” I said.

He looked at me and said, “Why?”

“It’s because I realized I started fallign for you like how Michelle has been towards your sister and I really want to help you change back to your old self.”

He was silent for a bit and said, “You shouldn’t have come back, I don’t think you should be the one putting yourself at risk to make me happy.”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

I saw him go towards one of the shattered mirrors and I saw his sleeping self with a rose vine wrapped around him.

“I am not sure if my sister has seen this in her reflection, but the wizard might be somewhere, and I can’t see him in my reflection.”

I went over and touched the mirror, felt a prick, and held my hand.

He saw the blood and asked, “What happened?”

“It felt as though I touched a thorn except those roses are in the glass.” I said and then placed the finger in my mouth to sop up the bit of blood.

He yelled at the mirror, “You better show yourself!”

The reflection didn’t answer but a small laugh did sound from the mirror, which caused me to get closer to Alicio and he wrapped his arms around me.

*“All you have to do is fall for her.” We heard and then more laughter took place and it faded away.*

*“Alicio?” I asked.*

*“I need to find my sister.” He said and let me go.*

*I watched him head to one of the staircases and I followed. I found him outside of a room and knocking it.*

*“Gabby!” he yelled.*

*We didn’t hear anything, and he opened the door. It slammed against the wall, and we saw she was gone.*

*“Gabby?” he asked.*

*I looked at him with a guilty look and said, “She’s with Michelle actually.”*

*“What? You know this?” he asked.*

*“Yes, he called to ask to get some garments for her.” I continued.*

*He grabbed and snarled, “Take me to her!”*

*I nodded and led him back towards the village where the sun was starting to set. I saw some of the strings of fairy lights coming on around us. As we walked, some people did stare at us, but I didn’t care if they had. I felt my heart drop as we walked through the town square and knew that I caused doom.*

# Chapter 40

# Gabrielle

*I got ready for the evening with the help of Odette and Brittany since it felt so long to be pampered again.*

*Brittany braided my hair back and placed the hat on my head.*

*“There you go, no one will see your horns.” She said.*

*“Thank you.” I said.*

*“Too bad you can’t see yourself like this.” Odette told me and kneeled in front of me.*

*I shook my head.*

*“Here you go.” She said and placed a pair of silver slippers on my feet. “Do they fit?”*

*I nodded in response.*

*“Good! You are so beautiful no matter what you look like.” Odette said.*

*We heard Michelle clear his throat and I saw him wearing the matching suit with his coat. He looked handsome with his glasses and his hair pulled back.*

*“The man awaits.” He said.*

*Brittany placed the cloak around my shoulders, and I was handed the gloves and muff.*

*“Have fun you two.” Odette said.*

*We nodded and left the house portion of the shop. The fairy lights made the area look magical under the darkened sky.*

*“Shall I take your hand?” he asked.*

*I blushed and placed my hand on his elbow, and we started for the square.*

*As we walked, I felt so warm not just because of the clothes but I felt warm due to being with Michelle. I felt like a princess as we walked towards the crowd that gathered around a big tree. Michelle got us some drinks and waited for the main lights to come on.*

*As we waited, it felt natural that I didn’t have to worry about stepping on eggshells to not make Alicio mad at all.*

*“Aare you, okay?” Michelle asked.*

*I nodded and said, “I am, I never felt so alive until now! I always worried about my brother but having you here with me makes me smile.” I said.*

*“Before you came along, I always stuck my nose into a book but hadn’t done it since I returned home.” He told me.*

*“Really?” I asked and looked at him.*

*“Yes.” He said.*

*I blushed a little.*

*“Good evening, everyone! We are about to light our tree to start tonight’s festivities!” one of the men said.*

*“There you are!” we heard*

*We turned to see a couple in royal regalia and I gasped.*

*“We were wondering if you were making an appearance tonight!” the woman said.*

*“Of course, glad to be here.” Michelle said as I hid behind him.*

*“I guess this is Gabrielle?” I heard the man ask.*

*“How does he know my name?” I asked Michelle.*

*“It’s okay, these two are looking for the wizard that changed you and your brother!” he told me.*

*“Okay everyone! Time to light the tree!” one of the men announced.*

*People around us started to countdown as we turned to look at the tree.*

*Once the crowd got to one, the lights came on and they were a pretty ice blue giving the trinkets and ornaments a beautiful glow.*

*We felt some warmth as a bonfire was lit*

*“Now onto the entertainment!” one of the men said and a band came on and they started to play some music.*

*“Let’s dance!” the woman we met exclaimed and took the man on the platform that was reserved some dancing where couples were starting to gather.*

*“Would you love to dance?” Michelle asked.*

*I nodded and we both went to thejoin some of the couples. The both of us started to dance like the others. It felt as though I was drifting as he twirled me. I felt even warmer as had he caught me after another twirl.*

*As we danced, I did catch a glimpse of silver hair, but I shook my head and thought anything of it.*

*Once the band finished, everyone clapped and the both of us headed for one of the food stands to have some meat pies. We talked since it felt an eternity since I saw Michelle. I blushed as he was becoming more animated.*

*“Looks like the lovebirds are having their fun!” I heard the woman from earlier say.*

*“I guess you can tell.” I said.*

*“Sorry for not being able to introduce them to you, this is Sidney and Alexa, they took out a court wizard not too long ago so that is why they nknow about your situation.” Michelle told me.*

*“Can we see them? Your horns I mean?” Sidney asked.*

*I nodded and was about to take off the hat for a few seconds.*

*“Gabby!” I heard the familiar nickname.*

*I saw Alicio storm towards me.*

*“Alicio?” I asked.*

*“Hey!” Gisela exclaimed and appeared and grabbed him by the arm. “We can’t do this now!”*

*He pushed her aside.*

*“Why did you leave?” he asked me.*

*“Because I wanted to see Michelle again, which I can see Gisela went to see you.” I spoke.*

*Gisela nodded and said, “I did because like you I wanted to see your brother again like you had with Michelle.”*

*“Does that mean you love him?” I asked her.*

*She nodded and then went on tip toes and kissed my brother.*

*I saw through some of the rips in my brother’s sleeve that some of the rose petals vanished.*

*“Whoa!” Michelle exclaimed.*

*Sidney saw it and said, “You’re not kidding about that.”*

*Gisela broke off and said, “I have fallen for you Alicio and I want you to break this curse like your sister wanted for so long!”*

*He was silent and said, “I don’t know what to say!”*

*We heard a gasp and saw some people appear.*

*“Wat’s with the horns?” someone asked.*

*“Oh no!” I said.*

*“Um, you don’t have a cover for your horns! We should leave before anyone else sees!” Michelle exclaimed.*

*“Follow me!” Gisela exclaimed and went ahead of us into the alley.*

*We followed her and got to a house with a shop as well.*

*“Welcome to my home.” She said as she guided us through the back door.*

*“I’m sorry for the night being ruined.” Michelle told me.*

*I shook my head and said, “It wasn’t, at least I got a chance to dance with you.”*

*He smiled and I placed my hand on his and then he leaned in and kissed me.*

*I felt the world around me feel as fireworks exploded in celebration as I kissed back.*

*That was when my body went limp.*

# Chapter 41

# Michelle

*“Gabrielle?” I asked as I felt her slump against me.*

*“Gabby?” Alicio asked as he came to us.*

*She was against my chest feeling heavy like a rock.*

*“Oh no! No!” I exclaimed.*

*“What’s wrong?” Gisela asked as she came with a tray with food on it. She set it down as she came to me and Gabrielle and felt her wrist.*

*“Is she okay?” AAlicio asked.*

*“Her pulse is shallow; we need to get her to a bed.” Gisela said.*

*Alicio picked up his sister and said, “Guide the way!”*

*Gisela led him to one of the many guest rooms and placed her gently on the mattress.*

*“Remove the cloak!” Gisela ordered.*

*I did and saw that her arm was plain and gasped.*

*“Her tattoo!” Alicio exclaimed.*

*“It vanished completely when we kissed, why did she pass out?” I asked.*

*“Isn’t she supposed to change back?” Gisela asked.*

*I pulled the hat off and saw silvery blonde hair, but the horns stayed on her head.*

*“Her hair changed back but not the horns.” Alicio said.*

*We heard cackling and saw a figure appear.*

*“Even though I said that you would change back once your roses vanished, but I didn’t say it would happen right away.”*

*I felt chills go up my spine.*

*“You again!” Alicio exclaimed.*

*“Looks like you haven’t made your rose vanish as fast as your sister, hm?” the figure asked under his hood.*

*He didn’t say anything.*

*“Well, your sister may have her horns, but she will sleep forever with her loved one.” He said and looked at me and I fell to the floor.*

*“Oh no Michelle!”*

*The man cackled again.*

*“Wake them up you bastard!” ALicio yelled.*

*“Oh, they will! Once you and this pretty one fall in love once and for all.” He said and vanished.*

# Chapter 42

# Alicio

*Seeing my sister in her new hibernation state with Michelle made me freeze even after seeing this man vanish like nothing happened.*

*“What do we do? Now it became real!” Gisela said.*

*I sighed and said, “I am not sure, this wizard has very strong magic and what he had done is something that’s really hard to break! You were the only one outside of my own family I ever let in.” I told her.*

*I saw tears form in her eyes and said, “I always chased after so many men and didn’t get anything until I met you, Alicio.”*

*I felt my heart pound and then heard someone come up the stairs.*

*“I heard something!”*

*We turned to see a man and a woman in royal regalia.*

*“Who are you?” Gisela asked.*

*“We met your sister earlier, we are Sidney and Alexa.” The man said.*

*“Looks like something had taken place.” The woman said as she looked around us.*

*“Can we trust you?” I asked.*

*“Yes, just tell us what happened.” One of them said.*

*“My sister lost her tattoo and got her hair back but passed out, not sure if it was the spell that done it.” I answered.*

*“It also looks like Michelle got affected, how?” the woman, Alexa, asked.*

*“The wizard that changed us appeared, he put Michelle to sleep.” I answered.*

*“Looks like this wizard is definitely corrupt.” He spoke.*

*“Corrupted wizard?” Gisela asked.*

*“A while back, me and Sidney faced a corrupted prince, who I was supposed to marry instead of Sidney, and his wizard were trying to take over my kingdom and glad the both of us fought back.”*

*“So, we are looking for any others that may be corrupted.” Sidney said.*

*“Like the one that changed us.” I said with anger in my voice.*

*“Gisela?” we heard a male voice.*

*“Come in Francois.” She spoke.*

*“Wait, you told someone else?” I asked Gisela.*

*“He’s my older brother, I thought he should know.” She said.*

*Her brother walked into the room and asked, “I guess the prince and princess found you two?”*

*He noticed the sleeping Gabrielle and Michelle and asked, “What happened?”*

*“What happened?” he asked.*

*“Apparently the wizard shown himself and his magic.” Sidney answered.*

*He looked at the two of them and asked, “Any way of waking them up?”*

*“We should get them back to our home.” I answered.*

*“You can use our car.” Alexa said*

*“Are you sure?” Gisela asked.*

*“It’s fine, we have travelled this far so it can get us there instead of carrying these two and going by foot.” She said.*

*“Then lead us to it.” I spoke.*

*Gisela’s brother and I got both my sister and Michelle into the car that was parked near one of the inns in town. I gave the driver directions to the mansion. Alexa drove the roads carefully due to the ice on the road and managed to pull into the driveway.*

*I took my sleeping sister in my arms while Francois and Alexa had each of Michelle’s arms around their shoulders and we got the both of them inside. We got them to the chaise lounges in the parlor area.*

*“Okay, what’s next?” Gisela asked.*

*“Didn’t know this was out here.” Her brother said as he looked around us.*

*That was when flames appeared in our hearth and saw the wizard.*

*“Good, you returned!” he said.*

*“Tell us who are you!” Sidney demanded.*

*The wizard pulled down his hood and it was the same deep red eyes, beard, and hair that we saw before.*

*“They call me Callaghan, I know you are the prince that vanquished Irvine, not bad!” he said with a cackle and the flames grew more intense.*

*“Alicio, protect your sister.” Sidney whisper.*

*I saw Alexa pull out a sword from a sheath on her belt.*

*That was when mirrors surrounded us all.*

*“Mirrors?” Alexa asked.*

*I looked in one and saw myself as a little boy running with Gabby; s doll and ran to the mud pit.*

*“This is one of my memories.”*

*Alexa saw a memory of her sword fighting with some men at a castle.*

*Then Sidney saw himself as a little boy clutching his face.*

*“Is that the time you burned yourself?” Alexa asked him.*

*He nodded and saw him form a purple fireball and threw it at the mirror.*

*The glass melted with the frame.*

*“Show yourself coward!” Sidney yelled as blue flames appeared in his hands.*

*“Oh, you think I’m a coward?” we heard Callaghan ask and I felt rose vines wrap around me and saw it was my tattoo doing it. I screamed in pain.*

*“No Alicio!” Gisela yelled.*

*I saw the tattoo reform again on my sister and wrapped around her and Michelle.*

*“*

*No! Let us go!” I yelled.*

*Callaghan continued to cackle, and more vines wrapped around me including my throat. I knew I wouldn’t be able to get out alive.*

# Chapter 43

# Gisela

*I screamed and ran over to Alicio and tried to tug on the roses. I felt the thorns dig into my hands as I tried to free him.*

*“No! I won’t let you take him!” I yelled.*

*“No Gisela!” I heard Francois yell.*

*I ripped the vines and then they started to wrap around me too.*

*“No Gisela! You need to let go!” Alicio yelled.*

*“No! I can’t! I can’t let you die here! I want you…I love you!”*

*That was when the vines tore apar and vanish with his tattoo. A bright light surrounded us and both Michelle and Gabrielle.*

*“Gisela?” Francois asked.*

*The mirrors broke and we were alone, I hoped.*

*“Did she break it?” Alexa asked.*

*We heard a grunt and both Gabrielle and Michelle woke up.*

*Gabrielle’s horns were gone.*

*“Gabrielle?” Michelle asked.*

*“Where are we?” she asked groggily.*

*“Alicio?” I asked and saw him sit up and he didn’t have his horns either, his hair was now a silvery blonde.*

*“Gisela?” he asked.*

*“You’re human!” I exclaimed.*

*He looked at Gabrielle and said, “We changed back?”*

*Then out of nowhere a rain of glass came at us.*

*Sidney sent fireballs at each bit of shard, and they looked like flaming balls of paint with the rainbow that cascaded and hit to melt the shards.*

*“Michelle! Use your magic!” Gabrielle yelled.*

*“How? I don’t see the wizard!” he yelled back.*

*“Damn it Book Worm! Just throw it back!” I yelled as Alicio tried to shield me.*

*He looked around us and then yelled, “The wizard has is magic reversed back and a piece of glass hits him in the shoulder!”*

*The rain of glass flew back, and we heard a scream and saw Callaghan with a shard sticking out of his shoulder.*

*“What was that?” Alexa asked.*

*“Sorry princess, I need to use you! Alexa goes over to Callaghan and points her sword at him!” Michelle called out.*

*“Huh?” she asked and then felt herself move and went to where Callaghan was and pointed her sword.*

*“Glad I got to see your magic in action!” Sidney exclaimed.*

*“Your magic seems better than mine.” Michelle told him.*

*“Can you two admire your magic another time, we have the wizard in front of us!” Francois yelled.*

*Sidney hobbled over and said, “Callaghan, you are a traitor to the kingdom you came from! What do you say for yourself?”*

*“How pitiful of you Prince! I will not give up as easily even if your wife is standing here against her will, you should arrest that boy that is using his magic against her if you’re calling me corrupt.” Callaghan said.*

*“I had this all thanks to my grandpa and that is to control people as if I’m reading a book, it did get me in trouble, but I need to have you hurt to stop you!” Michelle exclaimed.*

*I saw a glass shard form and gasped and it flew.*

*“Look out!” I yelled.*

*I watched the shard go into his hip and he screamed in pain and went to his knees.*

*“No Michelle!” Gabrielle yelled.*

# Chapter 44

# Michelle

*I felt the shard hit me and I went to my knees.*

*“No!” Alexa yelled and she gained control again.*

*Gabrielle took me in her arms, and I saw tears come to her eyes, which were blue not lavender.*

*“You’re so beautiful.” I spoke.*

*She shook her head and said, “No, I can’t let you go like this when you have saved me and my brother with Gisela.” She spoke.*

*“Gabrielle only let two tears fall on me.” I managed to say.*

*“Huh?” she asked.*

*“She put me down and then turned to Callaghan.”*

*I was placed down gently, and she got up and I watched her go to Callaghan.*

*“What is going on?” Gisela asked.*

*“And…Gabrielle punches him squarely…in the nose!” I said and coughed up blood.*

*Gabrielle punched him and I heard her as I was about to pass out, “You bastard!”*

# Chapter 45

# Gabrielle

*With Michelle’s magic flowing through me, I felt warm as I went and gave that punch because he knew how much the both of us suffered for years and it felt satisfying.*

*“You bastard!” I yelled and saw the blood trickle from his nose.*

*Callaghan covered his nose with his other hand.*

*“I got the cuffs!” Alexa exclaimed and placed them on him.*

*I felt footsteps coming towards all of us and it was all of our servants human again.*

*“Master Alicio, Lady Gabrielle!” one of them said.*

*I felt as though I was in a blur due to how Michelle was still lying on the floor bleeding. Francois was adding pressure to his wound.*

*“Is this him?” Margaret asked as she saw him.*

*I nodded with tears in my eyes. Then looked at some of the men and said, “Please help him.”*

*“Yes my lady!” two of them said and ran over to him and Francois to help.*

*him upstairs to mend his wound.*

*I felt numb as Margaret wrapped her arms around me and I just started to sob.*

*“It’s okay child, you have gone through so much.” She said.*

*I nodded as I cried.*

*I was sent back to my room where I fell asleep in my bed again but as myself.*

*The next morning, I smelled something familiar and sat up to find a bowl of porridge with some cream in a small pitcher.*

*I noticed I still had the dress that was given to me the day before and went to pull on my own dress and ate the porridge.*

*I heard a knock and called out, “Come in!”*

*Alicio walked in wearing a fresher shirt and pants. His hair was pulled back and he looked like his old self.*

*“Michelle is resting and will pull through.” He told me.*

*I sighed in relief.*

*“You still look upset.”*

*“*

*Yes, he almost got killed saving us.”*

*“Callaghan tried to escape of course.”*

*I sniffed and felt tears come down my cheeks and I took the napkin to wipe them away.*

*“Gabby, thank you for bringing Gisela into my life.”*

*“What? You were the one who rescued her with Michelle that one day.”*

*“I should thank myself for that, but you were right, I had to have someone, and Gisela did accept me.”*

*“That’s good.” I said and wiped my nose again.*

*Another knock sounded and I called out, “Come in!”*

*The door opened and a servant came and said, “Michelle would love to see you, Lady Gabrielle.”*

*“Really?” I asked and got up and left the room. I followed him to the guest suite and knocked.*

*“Come in!” Michelle called out.*

*I opened it and saw him sitting up against pillows eating porridge as well.*

*“Hey.” He said with a smile.*

*“How are you feeling?”*

*“Still in pain since that glass shard did go around my waist area.” He spoke.*

*“I am so sorry.” I said and tears came to my eyes again as I went to him.*

*“It’s not your fault, I was almost murdered in order to save you with my magic.” He spoke.*

*I sniffed and hugged him. He hugged me back.*

*“I almost lost you!”*

*“I thought I had when you passed out in my arms after we kissed.” He spoke.*

*He let me go and held my face and then kissed me. I felt my heart pound and then kissed him back.*

*He broke off and said, “I love you Gabrielle, I’m glad you came to my town that day.”*

*I smiled through my tears and knew we were going to be together forever*

# Chapter 46

# Michelle

*Days had gone by, and I healed from my injury. The mansion started to become lively again with servants running all over the place. I felt Gabrielle and Alicio could not keep track of them making sure things were fixed and looking nice.*

*Mirrors were replaced, Alicio got new furniture, and new draperies were even freshened to make the place look bright.*

*“It feels good to have a home again!” Gabrielle exclaimed.*

*Alicio nodded in agreement.*

*“Especially the library looks brighter.” I said with a grin.*

*“Always reading as ever Book Worm.” Gisela said in a teasing tone.*

*We heard a knock on the door.*

*“Who could that be?” Gabrielle said and went over to the door to open it.*

*We saw a couple that looked like mirror images of the siblings except the man was starting to bald a little.*

*“Mama, papa!” Gabrielle exclaimed.*

*“What?” Alicio asked and ran over and saw the both of them.*

*“Hello son.” The man said.*

*“Gabby!” the woman said and went to her and hugged her.*

*“I miss you so much!’ she exclaimed and hugged her.*

*“How did you two get home?” Alicio asked.*

*“Well, Margaret sent a letter to us and explained what had happened to the both of you, I could see why you didn’t want us home.” The father said.*

*“It’s because we didn’t want you to be repulsed by our appearances the past few years.” Alicio said.*

*“If you had told us, we would have rushed home!” the mother exclaimed.*

*“I am so sorry mama, we were waiting for the right people to help us.” Gabrielle said.*

*The father looked up to see the both of us, Gisela and I.*

*“Are these the ones?” he asked.*

*Alicio nodded.*

*The both of them came over and the mother hugged the both of us and said with tears in her voice, “Thank you for saving our children.”*

*“You’re so very welcome!” Gisela said with tears in her voice too.*

*“Father, I want to say I’m sorry for being such a brat for so many years.” Alicio said.*

*Their father said, “It’s okay son, you were just spoiled and it looks like with what took place humbled you.”*

*“It did, without it I wouldn’t have loved Gisela.” Alicio said and looked at Gisela.*

*Gisela smiled back.*

*“Excuse me Monsier Michelle, both the prince and princess would like to talk to you in the guest suite.” One of the servants said.*

*“Me?” I asked.*

*“Sounds like it may be serious.” Gabrielle joked a little.*

*I went up the stairs to the guest suite and made it to the room. I entered to see the both of them packing.*

*“Did you want to see me Your Majesty?” I asked.*

*“Well, it’s just that after seeing how powerful your magic is, how would you feel about being a Court Wizard?” Sidney asked.*

*“Really? You’re asking me?” I asked.*

*“I was just like you; I was just a normal guy with magic and became one after saving my wife.” Sidney said as both looked at each other lovingly.*

*“I don’t know what to say. What happens if things go wrong for me?” I asked.*

*“*

*We will make sure we help you, but of course we must find others with magic.” Alexa said.*

*I nodded and said, “I’ll do it, I am not sure who else would be corrupted.” I spoke.*

*“Well, there is one, but she went missing after the prince in her castle was put to sleep! Rumors are that she had done it, but I need to find her to see if they are true, are you willing to come with?” Sidney asked.*

*“Of course!” I exclaimed.*

*“Good.” Sidney said.*

*I smiled and then said, “I need to do something first though.”*

*They nodded.*

# Chapter 47

# Odette

*“Hey mom, some mail came for us!” Brittany said as she shown up with the stack of letters.*

*“Really?” I asked as I worked on some new wine samples.*

*“One even came from Michelle and Gabrielle!”*

*I took the letter and opened it up to read:*

*“Dear mom and Brittany,*

*I am currently travelling with Prince Sidney and Princess Alexa to find corrupted wizards that may cause trouble in the kingdom. After my battle with Callaghan, we had to find any Court Wizards that may have lost their way and either help them or send them to prison for what they done, which Callahan was sent to prison for what he had done to Gabrielle and Alicio. If you’re wondering, they’re doing fine. Alicio and Gisela have gotten together and making sure the mansion is being taken care of while Gabrielle and I are with the prince and princess. Alexa is teaching Gabrielle sword fighting, who knew a princess could defend themselves and I’m proud of Gabrielle. Sidney has been helping me prepare for the Court Wizard exam so I can help on the journey and train before my test. I may be as good as him or at least getting there.”*

*“Wow, looks like they’re doing great.”*

*“So, does that mean they’; get married?” Brittany asked.*

*“Sounds like it, they are good for each other and goes the same with Alicio and Gisela.” I said with a smile.*

*We heard the bell over the shop door and heard our new employees, Victoria, Veronica, and Louisa taking care of the customers. Some servants from Gabrielle’s home even started working since they figured we may need the extra help.*

*“Safe travels you two!” I spoke.*

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*Racheal is a Court Wizard on the run due to being accused of putting her prince to sleep. She doesn’t want to return at all to help the prince wake up from his slumber, but Sidney and Michelle know that she is innocent in all of this and willing to solve the real mystery.*

*Aaron is a former Court Wizard that had lost his own sight but can use magic with his other senses. He knows he has more potential and be able to help with saving Racheal’s mystery and heart by being a big help in his own way.*

*A Lovely Sleep is the next installment of the Backwards Fairy Tale Series.*

# About the Author:

*Marinela has looked up to many authors such as Jim Butcher, Mimi Jean Pamfiloff, Lara Adrian, and Kaz Le Fave. She was diagnosed with a rare form of Retinitis Pigmentosa but has been using Assistive Technology to help write her books and her blog, Nerdy Shique Universe. She is passionate in technology that helps others with disabilities and is currently teaching it to other blind and visually impaired folks in the state of Florida.*

*She is currently living in Daytona Beach with her husband, Richard and studying for her master’s at George Mason University in Assistive Technology.*