

## CHAPTER 5

Abstinence and magic were powerful aphrodisiacs.

Pyotrik let out a pent up breath. He was insatiable tonight.

Yet it was only Giselle he craved. With her, he sported a perpetual hard-on. Giselle – his seeress with the smooth skin and the bonfire touch and the way of shouting her release that was pure symphony and made him feel like a conqueror. She was beautiful. Funny and curious and sensual.

Maybe their break could wait –

Her stomach grumbled, dispelling the temptation to stay buried and start another session. After a final squeeze to Giselle’s plump breast -- fuck, but her nipple was still hard against his palm -- Pyotrik reluctantly rolled off her, pulling out his not-quite-limp dick.

Soon enough, Giselle willing, they could try some variations he had in mind, but first things first. Refresh the body. Make sure she was no longer defenseless.

What Vasili would do to her if he found her -- a shudder ran down Pyotrik’s spine.

Which reminded him . . . She was still flat on her belly, sprawled into the bed, and hadn’t answered him.

“The magic, Giselle. Or do you need a nap first?” He caressed her nape, where he’d bitten, reluctant to admit he feared she would disappear again if he stopped touching her.

She shook her head, her dark hair whispering across his fingers. “I feel wonderful. I was enjoying the glow.”

“Then take your moments.” He stroked a thumb across the strands of her hair. “There’s time for a shower should you desire. I must leave for a short time, I have an errand to attend to.”

“You can go first, then.”

“My things are elsewhere. “ He hadn’t stayed in this room since their one night; it had felt hexed and empty. Tonight had erased the curses he’d mouthed, the betrayal he’d felt, when she had vanished. “When you’re ready, come to the roof. The steps are at the rear of the hallway.”

He gave her a quick kiss, tore himself from the bed, and then retired to the Spartan room he used as a bedroom. With a few muttered words, he transferred the clothes she would need to her bedside, then he stretched out his hands, spreading his fingers wide, grinning like a fool all to himself. It felt so damn good to use the magic freely. With an economy of motion he showered and dressed, and then detoured to the kitchen.

There, his good mood sobered. What to use, to cement her awakened magic? How to teach her to recognize and use it? Their time was limited before Vasili recouped and returned. They would have to risk going out in the city, into a place so seeped in magic that she could not help but feel it.

He selected his tools, his toys, his props. Debating between caramel and strawberry, he tossed the two jars back and forth. Which did she prefer? Shit, he couldn’t remember.

He remembered a single night. Had relived it endless times, relieving his urges to the memory when pent up desire could no longer be denied and to meaningless sex when the magic demanded to be fed. He remembered his fury and his loneliness when she left and his survival without her. He remembered that she was his. He remembered his magic.

The rest was lost. What she liked, how she lived. How they had met. All the details that made up his seeress.

The reasons why she left him.

He hadn’t even recognized her face, only her name and her effect on his power.

Send her away, safe from Vasili? The room around him grew fuzzy, fading behind the dizzying thought. No. His fingers clutched the jars, and he set his jaw, forcing his surroundings back to focus.

For he remembered one more thing: he could not defeat Vasili without her. If it were only his

fate resting on the victory, he would not hesitate to face the enemy alone. But, too much more was at stake.

Giselle could not leave again. That fact, for a tangle of reasons both selfish and noble, was the only important one.

With a curse, he put both jars in a leather satchel. Her forgotten training was dangerous and risky, with Vasili so strong. She had to be prepared.

The choices that would keep her here were for the future. In the meantime-- His dick stirred, hardening again, and the grim mood misted away. His smile returned. For now, they would focus on magic, sex play, and each other.

On the pleasures and strength to be found in this time until dawn.

One other duty, however, came first right now. His friend Benedict had returned, and Pyotrik did not anticipate with any joy giving him the news of Vasili. And Lillian.

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Giselle stirred from the bed. She sat at the edge, raking her hair back and ignoring the twinge of pain in her shoulder, to look beyond the edges of the mattress.

The room was in shadow, too dark to see anything clearly. Still night? She glanced at her empty wrist, before she remembered she'd left her watch at Madame Claudine's. "How late is it?" she muttered.

A gold candle at the bedside flickered to life. Weird. Then, weirder, a glow rose from the corner of the room, illuminating the clear case and inner works of a mantel clock, whose ruby hands pointed straight up. Still midnight?

She glanced around, not just a little nervous. Between the two eerie lights, she could make out the shapes, if not the details, of the room.

The room looked half finished. Oh, the walls were all there, and the enormous plush bed took up a good portion of space and decorating needs, but the rest looked like the designer had simply

translated a jumble of ideas. A nightstand with jewel-toned ointment and oil jars. An armoire painted with a Chinese-style scene. Faint music from no discernable source. The walls were bare, except one where several paintings hung in a haphazard fashion. She rose from the bed to stroll closer, squinting as she peered at the paintings, and then gave a low whistle.

Those wouldn't be hanging in the Louvre any time soon. Very tasteful, but very erotic. Couples, threesomes, orgies, each participant highly endowed, each clearly enjoying themselves. Some unique positions, some unique props. Were those tiny bells that man was placing inside his lover's sex?

She let out a breath and realized her cheeks had gotten warm. She didn't consider herself a prude, but those pictures could teach her a thing or four.

Other needs first. She located the bathroom Pyotrik had alluded to.

Nothing half-assed or incomplete about this room. Cool marble, warm pink tiles, glittering cut glass spigots and alabaster jars of – she poured out the contents of one – silky lotions. To get clean, two positively sybaritic choices beckoned.

The enormous, irregularly-shaped tub with whirlpool jets and carved seats tempted her, but instead she opted for the shower stall, big enough to hold at least three people, with shower heads at two levels on all four sides. The stall was glass enclosed, but when she stepped in, she realized that from the inside looking out, it appeared to be in the center of a wooded glade. Only by close look could you see the bathroom beyond. When she figured out the modern looking panel of controls enough to start the shower, the water was a perfect temperature, pulsing gently from all directions, including one delicate spray that teased between her legs.

Spreading her legs, she let the water caress her with a touch both soothing and arousing. She filled her hands with the lilac soap, and then glided the bubbles along her wet skin, soaping her breasts and neck before moving lower to finger herself. Eyelids drooping with arousal, she leaned against the glass sides. Her legs spread to receive the pulse of the water, while her middle fingers pressed against

her clit, then slipped inside her semen-slicked channel. With her other hand, she toyed with her nipples, rubbing them and pinching them as Pyotrik had. The triad of rhythms aroused her with memory and with a languid touch.

Hovering on the upside of desire, she sought that power which had brushed her earlier.

At first she was only aware of her body and the exquisite sensations coursing through her. Tempted to stay right there, to imprint the pleasure until it was an indelible part of her, she forced herself to let go of the immediate and probe deeper. As her fingers penetrated further toward her womb, so she delved into her private emotions.

Ahhh, there it was. Untapped power, flowing through her like the deep undercurrent of the mighty Mississippi. She slipped deeper into her body, trying to reach it. It slipped from her, like mist through fingertips. She tried again, but the power remained elusive, unwilling to bend to her will.

Giving up for the moment, she allowed her attention to wander back to the immediate, to the shower and her unreleased arousal. The glade was still there, hazy from the steam and pleasure-unfocused vision.

Her breath came in short pants, as her fingers quickened. If Pyotrik were here with her, she would be hard pressed to ever leave this room. Then, to her shock, even though she was alone, his desire was there with her, wrapping around her, caressing her with each droplet of water. She recognized the flavor of it, the touch of it, the foreignness of it.

How could he -- ?

The deep flow inside her shifted, rising like a tide toward joining his need. Overwhelming her in a surge of power. Dangerous, driven, beyond her control.

Panic flooded at over the desire. She wasn't ready. Not for this. This unknown intimacy, this invasion. This chaos.

Her hands jerked away from her body. The tide fell, the orgasm whimpered across her – muscles contracting, hormones spewing in clinical release.

“Go away!” she shouted, refusing to listen to her body or his power inside her. She soaped furiously, scraping her hands through her hair to wash it, and then rinsed off with an economy of motion. Without a backward glance, she left the shower and dried off with the thick towel.

When she walked back into the bedroom, naked, she discovered the shadowy lighting still burned and there was a mound of cloth strips on the bed. Clothes? She picked up one piece, which vaguely reminded her of a pair of pants, and held it up to her waist.

To her shock, the fabric instantly wound around her legs, forming into trousers. She shrieked and tore the fabric away. It dropped off her body to shimmering puddle at her feet.

She glanced around, looking for something more conventional to wear. Her leather pants. A shirt of Pyotrik's. Curtains. Nothing, unless she wanted to become Stay-Puffed Marshmallow Man with the down comforter.

#### Take a chance, Giselle.

Pulling in a steadying breath, she held the cloth to her waist again, not cringing this time as it wrapped around her. Each piece she picked up unerringly found its way around her body at the appropriate spot. When the cloth was all used, she twisted her head. “Damn, I wish I could see how this all went together,” she muttered.

A glow lit onto the armoire, and she realized that the highlighted painted scene had a reflective background. When she got closer, she discovered the door came in two pieces and when she rotated the picture out of the way, she was left with a full length mirror.

Who would have thought strips of cloth could look so fine? She gaped at her reflection. The cloth had woven around her into tight silk pants and a sleeveless wrap shirt that curled around her neck and slid in single, thin tail over her shoulder.

She fingered the tail. The cloth was nothing she'd ever seen before. Misty green, silky, flowing, yet woven within the fabric were threads of metal, which gave the clothing a unique tensile strength. Overall, the outfit highlighted her curves and made her feel both sensuous and invincible in

silk-like Kevlar. It shimmered, and yet . . . as she turned, she realized the green misty fabric was actually camouflage.

She was dressed like some kind of sexy Ninja.

That thought did not sit well. Pyotrik had talked about facing Vasili; now this outfit looked like she could go directly from bed to battle and back again.

Her stomach grumbled, taking her out of her unease to more practical needs. Giselle shrugged. The outfit was sexy and fun to wear. Wasn't no way anyone could tempt her to using it for anything except a temporary barrier for Pyotrik to take off later. She was into sex in this fantasy. Not I-could-die danger. Not sharing the inside of her mind to a man who, in the end, could be no more substantial or constant in her real life than smoke in a mirror.

A pang clutched her chest, briefly, in sorrow and loss. She clenched her fists, breathing deep to will it away. No, the pain was simply hunger.

Out in the hall, she found darkness with only a faint light illuminating a door about half way down. She headed for it, put her hand on the knob, and then stopped. Her heart pounded against her ribs as she looked at the door handle -- round and glowing like a pearl -- surrounded by ruby silk. Just like the door in *Maison du Fantasie*. She snatched her hand back, throat dry.

“No, I’m not ready to leave, yet. Not yet.”

The only answer was for the handle, and the door, to glow with a deeper. Ruby and pearl, everything else vanished into deepening, insubstantial shadow. A hint of bergamot, the spice of Madame Claudine’s perfume, tickled her nose.

She’d asked for orgasms, and that she’d had in spades. She’d even had her brush with danger. Giselle’s hand hovered over the door knob, and then she glanced over her shoulder. Already, she could see nothing of Pyotrik’s home.

The fantasy was over, fulfilled. What more did she expect?

Her fingers reached for the red glow of reality. Misty green caught her eye. Her silk-covered

arm blended into the haze surrounding her and then turned the color of flesh.

This outfit promised more. She'd had a hint of it in the shower, and she'd denied it. She'd ended the fantasy. Old cautious Giselle.

If she left now, she'd go back replete, slightly different and more alive. Not enough, countered the voice of her resurrected rebellious spirit. Her chest ached from its protests. Leaving was wrong.

Her fingers curled, and then formed a fist around air. "No," she repeated, louder, drawing her hand back. "I asked for magic."

Firmly, she turned her back on the door and took a step into the cryptic darkness.

As she walked into nothingness, the ruby and pearl glow at her back reached out, blinding her, tugging her, causing her to stumble. "There's something more here, something real. I want the magic, too," she planting her feet against the door's pull.

She sought inside herself for that flow, a glow to replace the one calling her back. She found it, hooked one tiny corner of her mind into it, giving herself the power to keep walking forward.

The white glow from the door became like frost. Icy, damp, hiding her view. Her nape tightened as chilly fear crept across her shoulders and dug into the residual ache from Vasili's attack. Reminded her that with joy came fear. With pleasure came pain.

Swallowing hard, she added in a whisper, "I accept the risks."

The glow behind her faded and she thought she heard the whisper of a voice: So mote it be.

Blinking to clear her vision, she realized she'd traversed the length of the corridor. Before her rose a staircase, leading to the roof, she assumed. Giselle took one glance backward. The door was still there, but now it looked ordinary, like all the doors leading off this corridor. She turned her back to the corridor and took her first step onto the stairs.