After A Millennium A Renewal: Discussions
by Kudara

Summary

Demona continues her transformation as the Ancient One's chosen, re-building her relationships with Macbeth and Angela, making several new friends, and building a life with Kendra.

Notes

Disclaimer: All the characters appearing in Gargoyles are copyright Buena Vista Television/The Walt Disney Company. No infringement of these copyrights is intended as this is a not for profit fan fiction work. All original characters are the property of the author.

Warning: none

Notes: Dominique Destine's home, and the character's Candice and Gregory are from 'The Gargoyles Saga' world and adapted for use in this story.

Rating: Mature (barely)

Feedback: Always welcome, feedback is what encourages me to keep writing. Please let me know what you like and what you dislike about the story.

Revision History: 05/06/08
- Inspired by *Better Days* by Nancy Brown
- Inspired by *The Gargoyles Saga* by Multiple Authors
December 5th, 1997

"Do you find it odd that we're flying into the same airport that the kidnappers flew us out from?"
Kendra asked with a wry smile as the plane landed. It bounced only slightly before settling firmly on
the runway and then began taxing toward the terminal.

Dominique chuckled, "It is odd," she agreed, "but I doubt this size plane could get permission to land
at JFK or LaGuardia. This is probably the closest regional airport to Manhattan that it can land at,"
she looked up toward the closed door of the cockpit, "and probably the reason your cousin and his
Quarrymen had to fly out from it."

"True," agreed Kendra, she peered out the small window toward the terminal building, "it's going to
be a long taxi ride from here," she observed.

"Gregory will be waiting for us with the limo," Dominique said, she frowned searching her memory.
"I'm sorry; I guess I forgot to mention that."

"You have a limo?" Kendra asked in surprise, turning away from the window.

The redhead flushed, "I don't know how to drive," she admitted. She glanced once again at the
cockpit door, "I never had time in Paris, and then it would have been too suspicious for Dominique
Destine to take driving lessons," she shrugged, "so I have a limo and a driver."

Kendra stared at her, surprised; she hadn't considered that the redhead didn't know how to drive.
"We'll have to do something about that, you should know at least the basics," she sounded slightly
scolding.

Dominique arched an eyebrow, "Are you offering to teach me?" she inquired.

The black-haired woman's lips curved in a crooked smile, "I guess I am."

The plane came to a stop next to the terminal and a minute later the cockpit door opened and the pilot
stepped out. "Ladies," he said, "they'll have the steps here shortly and then I'll get your bags for
you."

Fifteen minutes later, they had cleared a cursory customs check of their bags, and were walking
toward the black limousine that was waiting by the terminal entrance. The driver door opened and a
young man in a dark suit and cap practically leapt out of the driver's seat. "Ms. Destine," he
exclaimed as he hurried up to them, "Ms. Canmore," he added belatedly.

"Gregory," Dominique acknowledged him; she looked out over the familiar cityscape and drew in a
breath. Her nose wrinkled as it was immediately assaulted with the odors of asphalt, car exhaust and
other assorted odors better left unnamed. They paused by the trunk of the limousine.

Beside her, Kendra chuckled, "Missing the snow, pine, and fresh air already?"

Gregory opened the trunk and took their bags from them, stowing them in the netting on either side.

The redhead returned her smile wryly, "but not the cold and I'm not really missing the snow. I'll deal
with the smells to get to my bath and my bed. Besides, it doesn't smell like this where my house is
located."
Kendra noticed that the driver, who was now holding open the wide passenger door for them, was looking somewhat startled by the conversation. Recalling how Dominique had acted before the kidnapping, she could make some guesses as to why. They slipped into the limo, sitting opposite one another on the black leather bench seats and Gregory closed the door as soon as he saw they were settled. Kendra looked around the interior curiously, she had ridden in limos before, unfortunately, the two prior times were her father's and then her mother's funerals. The control console in the ceiling looked intimidating, though she could easily recognize sound and climate controls.

"Where to Ms. Destine?" Gregory asked over the intercom.

Dominique looked inquiringly at Kendra, "we're stopping by your apartment first right?"

The black haired woman nodded and rattled off the East 57th Street address, and the limo started moving. She looked out the tinted window watching the street and building slip past, with a frown she switched seats, sliding into the one by Dominique. Now everything was moving in the right direction, she thought, as she stared forward out the window in the direction the vehicle was moving.

"Kendra," Dominique's worried tone had her switching her attention instantly from the window to the redhead beside her, "what's wrong? You've seemed…" she hesitated obviously searching for the right word, "restless and upset ever since we got in the limo."

Kendra sighed, "Sorry," she hesitated, and then looked into the concerned green eyes, "I just haven't rode in one of these too many times." She indicated the seat where she had been sitting, "going backwards felt weird."

Dominique smirked, "I don't like those seats either for the very same reason." She examined the pensive looking face of her lover; it seemed as if it were more than just that bothering Kendra. "When was the last time you were in a limo?"

"My mother's funeral," Kendra responded quietly, "and before that my father's."

The redhead's green eyes widened slightly, she reached over and placed a comforting hand on a strong thigh. After a second, Kendra's hand covered hers and their finger's entwined. Kendra offered her a soft smile, "I'm sure that after a few more times it won't remind me of that at all." Her sapphire blue eyes dropped to their hands, and her smile shaded more toward mischievousness, "though if we don't want your driver to figure out certain things we need to be careful." She looked curiously toward the smoked glass partition.

"He can't see back here unless he lowers the partition," Dominique reassured her. She pointed at a dark LED on the console above them, "And that lights up whenever he activates the intercom."

Kendra's blue eyes took on a predatory gleam, "so he can't see or hear us," she said.

Dominique looked into her lover's darkened eyes, her breath caught in her throat and a rush of desire went through her body. When the intent blue gaze lowered for a long moment before returning to her own, she knew that Kendra had noticed her reaction. Oh this was not good, Dominique thought, she had to get control of herself before Monday if all Kendra had to do was glance at her and all she could think of was what her lover's mouth and hands could make her feel. Even with those cautionary thoughts running through her mind, the redhead didn't move as Kendra slid across the seat towards her. Their lips met, Dominique closed her eyes and surrendered to the kiss, tilting her head to the side and lifting one hand to slide it through the thick black hair and cup Kendra's head as their lips pressed and moved against each other hungrily. She moaned breathily when she felt the tip of Kendra's tongue slide along her lips and then it was warm within her mouth, and the cushions of the
seatback were cool against her shoulders as Kendra's warm body pressed her against them.

She sighed in disappointment when Kendra pulled away a few minutes later, "Traffic's getting heavier and I don't think these side windows are one way," the black haired woman explained, her voice both uneven and regretful.

Dominique looked out the window. Kendra was right, traffic was picking up. She took a deep breath, willing herself to calm, "How long do you think you need at your apartment?" she asked trying to keep her mind from dwelling on thoughts of what might happen once they were safely inside her home.

Kendra frowned, "I'm not sure," she replied, "I realized last night that I hadn't made any phone calls of my own and there's a few of my father's old friends that I really should call and let know that I'm alright. I'm sure they will have heard already, but they would be hurt if I didn't give them a call myself." She gave the redhead a regretful and slightly embarrassed look, "I can make those calls short so long as I promise to call them back over the weekend, but that will still probably take me close to an hour."

Dominique didn't understand why Kendra felt she had to call these people today, "they can't wait until tomorrow?"

Kendra shook her head. "There are a few of them that I need to call today, I should have called them yesterday actually, but I didn't think of it." Kendra could see from the frown on the redhead's face that Dominique was going to try and persuade her to wait another day. Before the redhead could marshal her arguments, Kendra continued, "I was only sixteen when father died in the car accident, for the first week or so they didn't know whether or not my mother was going to live. I was trying to keep up with school, visit my mother in the ICU and the county morgue was asking me where to send my father's body for embalming services. I don't know what I would have done if Richard Murton and William Kensley, my father's best friends, hadn't stepped in and helped me make the funeral arrangements as well as taking me to see my mother every day."

It was all Dominique could do not to snarl out the word 'humans' in disgust at the idea of pestering a child about what to do with the body of one parent when the other was still gravely wounded. "I'm glad they were there for you," she said trying to get her anger under control.

Kendra's eyebrow rose slightly at the redhead's growling tone, she reached over and squeezed the slender hand on the seat between them. "So you see why I should call them today instead of waiting until tomorrow."

Dominique nodded, she did see, she didn't like it, but she did understand now.

"So I was thinking that you could drop me off and I'll drive over to your place once I'm done, that way I can drive us if we want to go out somewhere over the weekend without you having to call up Gregory," Kendra said.

Go out somewhere, Dominique considered the words, she hadn't thought about going somewhere this weekend, but it might be nice to go out for lunch or dinner. And Kendra was right; it would be a good idea not to have Gregory driving them everywhere, both to keep him from noticing and because the limo made them too noticeable. Neither of them had stated it, but considering how Kendra had initially acted around Rachael and how they were both acting now, Dominique thought she was right in thinking that Kendra wasn't any more anxious than she was to advertise their new relationship. "I hadn't thought about going out, did you have something in mind?"

Kendra's blue eyes sparkled, "I thought going out to One if by Land, Two if by Sea might be nice."
We completely skipped going out to dinner and a play or movie as a part of getting acquainted with each other, but there's no reason we can't do them now," she commented with a grin.

"Tonight?" Dominique asked, she didn't really want to go out tonight, and wasn't certain if they could even get reservations for tonight, but if Kendra wanted to she would try.

The black-haired woman shook her head, "No, I was thinking tomorrow or Sunday. I'll call and see which night I can get reservations for," she glanced at the redhead, noting the slight frown, "or you can do it," she shrugged, it didn't really matter to her who did, "while I'm making my calls and picking up something for us."

Dominique glanced at her curiously, "Picking up something? Dinner?"

Kendra looked thoughtful, "No, but that's not a bad idea. My cleaning service at the apartment will have taken out anything that spoiled while we were in Canada, but I don't know if you have someone come in and clean your house?"

The redhead made a face, she hadn't thought about the state of her refrigerator, "I have a cleaning service that comes in once a week, but they can't get into the house unless I'm there to let them in so they won't have cleaned. I'll have to clean out the refrigerator when I get home." Dominique frowned, not happy at all about having to do it, but it wasn't something she could avoid. She sighed in resignation, "I guess I'll have to stop by the grocery store too and pick a few things up on my way home too."

Kendra looked out the window, they were getting close to her condominium building, "I have a few items to pick up as well, so it will probably be a few hours before I head over. I have a phone in the car, so I'll give you a call when I'm done and headed that way." She grinned, "Which brings me to the directions part of this, I don't have a clue where you live."

"Forest Hills Gardens on Long Island," Dominique proceeded to give her directions from the Queens Midtown Tunnel to her home. The limo pulled to a stop in front of the very distinctively angled entrance of the Galleria, the redhead stared in surprise at it for a moment before realizing that the street address Kendra gave must be this building. "Your condo is in the Galleria?" she inquired, wanting to make sure.

"47rd floor," Kendra responded as the driver opened her door. She glanced over at the redhead, "did you want to go up with me and see it? It's not big, the tour won't take long," she grinned.

Dominique nodded, not waiting for Gregory to come around to her side of the limo she opened the door and stepped out looking up at the odd architecture of the skyscraper.

"The top is just odd, but the condos are nice, plus they have full housekeeping services," Kendra commented coming up beside her and following her gaze upward. "My dad bought the condo in 1976, shortly after the building was finished."

Dominique instructed Gregory to wait for them in the limo and the two women entered the building. The redhead had never been inside the building before; she looked around curiously at the tall ceiling with the angled sunlights. They went up a small set of stairs to the right of the entrance into another lobby; along one side was a bank of elevators with an elderly doorman sitting on a padded stool in front of them. He rose from the stool as they entered, and his dark eyes widened in recognition, "Miss Canmore!" he exclaimed.

"Robert," Kendra replied warmly, "how are you doing this afternoon?"
"I'm doing well Miss Canmore," he walked stiffly over to the elevators and with his key summoned one for them. "I was worried about you when the police said you had been kidnapped," he said turning back around to look at them.

Kendra chuckled, "I was worried about me a few times too, but everything worked out well and here I am again none the worse for wear." One of the elevator doors opened, and they stepped inside. Kendra pushed the button for the 47rd floor.

Robert replied, "I'm glad to hear that Miss Canmore, you take care now."

"I will Robert," Kendra replied as the doors closed.

"He seems to know you well," Dominique commented slight surprised at the old human's familiarity.

"Robert's been one of the doormen here for as long as I can remember, I think he started working here when they first opened up the building," Kendra said. "We pretty much lived here during the summers when I was growing up, so he's known me for just over twenty years now. I loved spending summer in the city, there was always something to do or see that was interesting: concerts in the park, visit one of the museums, or go to a play or the theater."

Dominique gazed at her lover, seeing the faraway look in her blue eyes. She wondered what Kendra had looked like as a child, unfortunately she had never paid much attention to how humans aged as they grew from a child to an adult so the task was not easy for her. The most she could guess was that Kendra must have been as striking a child as she was an adult with her dark hair, skin tone and unusually brilliant blue eyes. Thinking of Kendra as a child made the redhead realize that she knew very little about Kendra's past, they had spent most of their time discussing hers.

The elevator arrived at the 47th floor and the doors opened, they stepped out into a foyer with four doors, Kendra walked up to one of them an opened it with her key. They stepped inside, the first thing Dominique noticed were the windows, the entire wall was windowed and through it she could see buildings and Central Park, they were obviously on the north side of the building she realized. Double doors opened onto a small recessed balcony with tall black railings. They were several blocks away from the park, but from this high up there were only a few buildings tall enough to obstruct the view.

"I think the view and price was what sold my father on this place," said Kendra, "when he bought it the building owners were almost into bankruptcy. They had originally designed it for office space and when that didn't sell well they converted it to condos, he got a good deal on the price considering the building's location and how high up we are."

"It is a very nice view," Dominique agreed, she looked around the large room; it was immediately obvious it was a combined living room and dining area. To the left were two comfortable looking dark grey leather couches arranged in a half square with one against the windows and the other vertically dividing off the room. Black iron tables with smoked glass inserts rested to the side of both couches and another longer coffee table in the same style rested in the center of the square formed by the couches. An answering machine with its red light blinking rested upon the center coffee table. The right side of the room contained a smoked glass dining table with modern looking chairs with black seat cushions. The furniture would have looked too dark if not for the white walls and windows, and the blue carpet on the floor. As it was, the three colors together contrasted pleasantly with one another giving the room a strong, distinctive look.

"That was my room when my parents were alive," Kendra indicated a doorway on the northwest side of the room through which Dominique could see a small room with a weight bench and treadmill, "I converted it to an exercise room a few years ago."
Kendra turned toward the right, "Office, bathroom, and kitchen are on this side." She turned back to her left, "Beside the exercise room is the main bathroom, and the master bedroom." Dominique followed behind Kendra as they went down the short hallway leading past a large bathroom; the redhead peeked in noting the marble floor, white wood wainscot and blue wallpaper and what looked like a whirlpool tub. They entered the master bedroom; Kendra sat the duffle bag down on the bed and walked over to the west wall windows to open the blinds over them. The afternoon light shone in, lighting up the room. Cherry wood, blue and cream were the colors in this room, cherry wood furniture and wainscot, dark blue textured wallpaper and thick cream-colored cut pile carpet.

"Very nice condo," Dominique said, "did you redecorate?"

Kendra cocked a quizzical eyebrow at her, "I had an interior decorator come in two years ago and remodel the entire condo. I like darker colors than my mother did, and I'm not as fond of reds and pinks as she was."

Dominique's lips curved upward, she glanced at the stucco textured deep blue wallpaper above the cherry panel wainscot, "Let me guess…you like blues," she said thinking of the blue carpet in the main room and the blue wallpaper in the bathroom.

The black haired woman chuckled, "there is a lot of blue isn't there."

The redhead glanced over at the inviting looking bed; it was tempting, especially when she thought of the state of her refrigerator. She frowned, that reminded her that she needed to call the cleaning service and see if they could come and clean either this or next weekend.

"What's wrong?" Kendra asked.

Dominique glanced over at her, "Just thinking about when to schedule my cleaning service," she explained, "I guess I'll see what state the house is in before I decide because I really don't want to have them over this weekend."

Kendra made a noncommittal noise, "It probably won't be that bad," she said optimistically, "after all it's only been twelve days and no one's been bringing dirt into the house." She unzipped the duffle bag and began pulling out clothes, "are we going out to more than one formal dinner?" she asked glancing from her task to the redhead standing just in the doorway, "I need to know how many suits to bring."

Dominique smiled remembering the silk blouse and black leather pants Kendra had worn to their first meeting. She took a step back and leaned against the doorway, "No more than two, I don't believe I'll feel like going out more than twice. I don't usually like being around…people," she quickly substituted in another word for the one she would have normally used, "and after the last twelve days I suspect it will take awhile to get used to it again."

"Crowds don't usually bother me," Kendra replied, choosing not to comment on her lover's hesitation, "but I know some people just don't like them. She carried the clean clothes with her into the walk in closet to put away. "Did we ever decide what we're doing for dinner tonight?" she asked as she hung a sweater up.

"No," replied Dominique, walking over to the closet door. It was a sizable walk in closet, she noted, and the lower portion of one side had drawers. "Do you have a preference?"

"I've been wanting Italian," confessed Kendra, "Lasagna with some salad and a nice Chianti Classico to go with dinner."
Dominique chuckled at the rather specific answer, "I assume you have a place you want to pick it up from?"

"Gradisca," Kendra immediately responded, "their lasagna is some of the best I've tasted, I'll order it just before I head out for your place. I can get a bottle of wine there as well they have a nice Riserva Cru that's a nice hearty sangiovese and cabernet blend."

Fifteen minutes and one long kiss later Dominique slipped back into her limo as Gregory shut the door. She waited until she heard the sound of the driver door shutting before using the intercom to let him know she needed to stop by the grocery store. The redhead glanced up at the building once more before the limo pulled into traffic; it seemed strangely fateful that Kendra's apartment happened to be one of the few in this area that actually had a balcony. Granted it was a small one, but a gargoyle could land there if they were careful.

Forest Hills Gardens Long Island

Three hours later, Kendra was turning onto Queens Blvd from the Long Island Expressway, dinner was sitting in the seat next to her filling the car with wonderful aromas and everything else was in the trunk. She had heard of the prestigious Forest Hills Gardens area but had never driven this way before, from what she recalled the entire area had been built in the Tudor style. She turned right onto Ascan Ave. and drove under the railway, no sooner had she emerged from underneath the trestle than she was abruptly in a completely different neighborhood. Tall trees bordered and hung over the two-lane street, large houses some in red brick, some in the characteristic cream colored stucco with exposed dark beams appeared at intervals, each with its carefully landscaped yard. Kendra whistled underneath her breath, this place was impressive and very European in feel, no wonder Demona chose to live here. As she wound her way through the neighborhood streets, toward the address Dominique gave her she slowed her car, taking time to admire the architecture of the houses.

Finally, she turned onto Dominique's street, she was looking for a large garage and a tall stone fence around the property. Kendra slowed to a stop in front of the address, staring at what she could see of the two-story house set well back from the street. Between the tall stone fence and the bare branched trees in the front yard it was difficult to see very much of the house from the street, and Kendra could imagine that during the warmer months they hid it almost completely. The house, or at least the second story of the house which was all she could see from the street, was architecturally interesting. Stucco and horizontal and vertical dark beams covered the left side of house; rough cream and brownish stone covered the right hand side of the house. The right side of the house also had a half-octagonal design element giving it almost a turret like appearance.

Kendra stared at the garage, Dominique had described it as large; it was large enough to fit two limos side by side. One of the garage doors opened as she was staring at it, Dominique stood inside with her hands on her hips, her attitude showing her impatience. Kendra could guess that the redhead was wondering why she had stopped in front of the house and just stared at it instead of driving up into the driveway. Turning the wheel sharply she turned into the driveway and drove into the garage. She turned off the ignition and opened the door. Sliding out of the car, she turned around and smirked at the redhead, "We need to discuss the difference between the words large and huge," she said. To make her point she glanced around at the cavernous interior of the garage, four jaguars would fit inside it if they pulled up close to the wall and each other.

Dominique laughed, "Is that why you just stopped in front of the house," she remarked. "I thought maybe you hadn't written down the exact address and weren't certain you had the right place so I came out to get you." She walked over to the car, looked inside, "this is a Jaguar isn't it?"
Kendra smirked, "Jaguar XKR Convertible," she confirmed.

Dominique looked across the top of the vehicle at her, there was a smirk on her lips and one eyebrow was arched, "a black jaguar," the redhead stated, amusement clear in her tone.

The black-haired woman shrugged eloquently, "could I possibly drive anything else?"

The redhead chuckled and shook her head she opened the passenger door. "This is dinner?" she asked, inhaling the aromas drifting from the bag in the passenger seat of the car, tomatoes, oregano, basil, olive oil and alongside those scents a whiff of chocolate. Her stomach growled at her, they had lunch with Rachael before flying out of Alma, but nothing since then and she was hungry.

"Yep," said Kendra going around to the trunk of her car, "Flatbread, salad, lasagna, the wine I mentioned and chocolate soufflé for desert." She pulled out the overnight and garment bags she had packed and two shopping bags. Dominique picked up the bag containing their dinner, shut the car door, and opened the door leading into the house. Kendra followed her in, they were in the kitchen, to the right was a table onto which Dominique was unpacking the restaurant bag. She sat down her bags upon the floor and moved over to help her. "When did you want to eat?" she glanced at the clock on the microwave, it was four forty-three.

"As soon as we take your bags up to my room?" Dominique responded.

Kendra nodded, "Sounds good to me, lunch was early."

Dominique picked up the two shopping bags, one of which was much larger and heavier than the other.

Kendra glanced at the bags in the redhead's hands, "Oh, wait there's something in that one that needs to be washed before we can use it," she indicated the larger bag.

Dominique opened the bag, curious; two packages that looked like blankets drew her eye, as they were the largest. In the bottom of the bag, she could see different sized bottles and one long box. Kendra reached into the bag and drew out the two packages. The redhead stared at them uncertainly, whatever was inside was black, "Sensual throes?" she asked hesitantly after a second.

"Yep," Kendra confirmed, opening one of the bags, "they have a vinyl middle, and should work well at protecting your bed from the massage oil."

The redhead flushed, suddenly feeling slightly warmer as she remembered Kendra's promise that she would give her a proper massage with massage oil. She looked in the bag, now that the two packages were gone she could see the labels of the bottles in the bottom, one was sweet almond massage oil and the other was labeled personal lubricant. She drew in a breath, remembering, the tent, the relatively warm night, the globe shining a reddish light over everything, Kendra's hands massaging, stroking, and then later her hand inside her, slowly twisting.

"I got black just to be safe, since I didn't know what colors you had in your bedroom," Kendra said pulling the throe out of its bag. "It has a velvet side and a satin side, I don't know which will feel more comfortable," she ran her hand over the muted black material of the velvet, "this is softer than I thought it would be," she commented holding it out to Dominique.

Dominique ran her hand over the velvet side of the black throe, "It is soft," she agreed, "the utility room is right behind us, we can go ahead and put them both in to wash now." She sat the shopping bags back down upon the floor and helped Kendra unpack the two black throes.

"Nice washer and dryer, do they work as well as advertised?" Kendra asked, watching as the
redhead stuff the two throes into her front loading washer.

"I've been pleased with them," Dominique responded, adding liquid detergent and starting the washer.

The two of them returned to the kitchen, Kendra picked up the smaller shopping bag and handed it to Dominique, "while was out shopping I stopped by the Oscar Wilde Bookshop and realized you probably didn't have some basic essentials." The black haired woman shrugged; "I don't know if you'll even like them..." she trailed off uncertainly, watching as Dominique pulled out the three books and two music CD's. It had seemed like a funny idea at the time, but now she wasn't certain that the gargoyle would understand the significance of the books or more to the point, she realized belatedly that she had no idea how Demona thought of herself right now. If the gargoyle was uneasy with identifying herself as bisexual, the gifts might go over rather badly instead of amusing and interesting as intended.

Dominique stared at the three books and two CD's in puzzlement; she flipped over the back of the smallest book, 'Curious Wine,' and read the summary on the back. Her confusion cleared as she realized the book was a lesbian romance novel. "You've read these?" she asked, looking up from the book to Kendra. She raised an eyebrow at the obvious relieved look on her lover's face.

"Yes I have, their all three are good books. The CD's," Kendra shrugged, "I don't know if you will like them or not, Melissa Etheridge is a rock singer and k.d. lang is a country music singer."

The redhead glanced briefly at the two CD's still in the bag, returning her gaze to Kendra she asked, "Were you worried that I wouldn't like them?"

"Actually, it crossed my mind once I gave them to you that perhaps they wouldn't go over well. We haven't really discussed...," Kendra hesitated searching for the right words, "our relationship and the outside world. I don't know how closeted you want to be or even if you want to be closeted."

It took Dominique a few seconds to remember that closeted was used to mean secretive in this context, she hadn't heard it used that way very often and certainly never before in reference to her own life. She put the books down on the kitchen counter and placed the bag beside them, "Let's take your bags up to my room and we'll discuss it over dinner."

As they walked down the hallway Kendra looked down curiously at the stone tiles, "Is this marble?" she inquired. It looked like marble, but she had never seen any in this creamy terracotta tone before, or if she had, she hadn't paid enough attention to it to realize it was marble and not some type of sandstone. It went rather well with the antique looking hardwood raised panel wainscot and dark red painted walls. The hallway opened into a large foyer that ran the entire width of the house; there was a stairway up to the second floor here.

"Egyptian Marble," Dominique answered as they started up the stairs, "the owner before me had tile put down over the original hardwood floors. The glue completely ruined them, so I had the marble put down. I liked how it looked with the walls which the real estate agent claimed were original," her tone indicated that she didn't know whether that claim was true or not.

Kendra nodded, "From their looks I would be inclined to believe her, they look like maple." They stepped out onto the second floor foyer, she hesitated looking down at the wood floor, "Please tell me this isn't the hardwood he tiled over."

Dominique paused, looked back at her, "No the second floor was done in pine, I had the mahogany put in when I bought the house. How do you know so much about wood floors and paneling?"
"When we remodeled the estate house mother dragged me with her, it was a long time ago, but I still remember the discussions she had with the remodelers over the different types of wood and why she wanted sugar maple flooring for the hallway and entry area instead of oak. I remember she considered mahogany because of its hardness and wear ability, but it was darker than what she wanted."

Dominique turned walked back alongside the stairwell railing and to the first door on the left, which was open, "We should hang your suits up to make sure they don't wrinkle." Kendra followed her into the room; she noticed the fireplace on her right as she entered the room first and then the large canopy bed with cream-colored curtains and red comforter at the far end of the room second. Dominique walked over to the right most door of two on the opposite wall and opened it, "this is my walk in closet," she said with a smirk.

Kendra raised an eyebrow at the tone, she walked over and looked in, it was more than twice the size of her closet at the condo and only half of the space was filled with clothing. She unhooked the folded garment bag, unfolded it and hung it up on the empty side; she then dropped the overnight bag under it. She unhooked the fold garment bag, unfolded it and hung it up on the empty side; she then dropped the overnight bag under it. Kendra eyed the garment bag critically; she opened it and pulled out the four hangers, two suits and two dress shirts. She placed the hangers on the empty side leaving about a foot of spaced between each of them. Throughout all this, the redhead watched her curiously, leaning casually against the doorway with her arms crossed over her chest. "There," Kendra announced, "now it doesn't look so empty."

Dominique shook her head and chuckled, "Let's go eat before everything gets cold," she said straightening up from where she had been leaning. She walked over to a table and put the shopping bag with the oils and other items upon it. Turning she glanced at the fireplace thoughtfully, "I think I'll order some wood, it might be nice to light a fire one night."

The black haired woman walked over and knelt by the fireplace looking into it, "Did you have the chimney swept this fall?" she asked.

"No," replied Dominique walking over to stand next to her.

"You should before we start up a fire," the black haired woman advised, "nothing like discovering a bird has nested in it or a squirrel and it either won't draw or the nest catches fire."

"That sounds like the voice of experience," Dominique commented, her lips curving in a smile as she observed her lover.

Kendra looked up at her, her blue eyes dancing with laughter, "Oh it is." She rose, they walked out of the room and down the stairs as Kendra related how she had learned about the necessity of having chimneys swept out every year in the late fall well after any birds or squirrels might feel the need to build something.

4:30 pm Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building Upper Manhattan

The first thing that Angela noticed when she woke was that Elisa was waiting for them just as she had the night before when she informed them Demona had been found along with Kendra Canmore. Angela was certain that she had been the only one not surprised by the news that Kendra Canmore was still alive.

"Elisa," Goliath rumbled, jumping down from his perch and striding over to her, "you have more news of Demona?"
"She and Kendra Canmore flew back into town earlier today, and Matt managed to get a copy of the Canadian police report," the detective reported. The clan looked at her expectantly, "They claim never to have seen the faces of any of their kidnappers, someone came in and fed them but he had a mask on and refused to talk to them. They were tranquilized before the plane transfer in Alma Quebec and didn't wake until after the crash."

"But you don't believe that," Broadway said, picking up on her phrasing.

Elisa glanced over at him, "If this were a normal kidnapping then it would make sense, the kidnappers wouldn't want to be identified after their demands were met and they freed their prisoners. However, Matt and I are certain that the kidnappers were Quarrymen lead by Jon Canmore; it doesn't make sense that he would have hidden his identity from Kendra and Demona. He would have come into talk to Kendra, either to rant about her being with Demona or giving her a chance to join him. And he would have wanted to rant at Demona and taunt her about whatever he had planned for her."

"Well it does make sense that Demona wouldn't want anyone to know the Quarrymen were involved," Lexington commented, "after all Jon Canmore might tell them that Dominique Destine turns into a gargoyle at night."

The detective nodded at the small green male, "That's exactly what Matt and I believe, that Kendra and Demona know exactly who kidnapped them and their keeping it from the police to protect Demona's secret."

"She may choose to directly attack the Quarrymen or Jon Canmore directly," Goliath said thoughtfully, "now that they have moved directly against her."

Elisa nodded, "That occurred to us as well." She grimaced, "It couldn't be worse timing, we've uncovered enough information about the Quarrymen for it to be time for me to go undercover and see what I can find out from the inside. The last thing we need is for her to go on one of her rampages and disrupt the investigation, plus the taskforce is watching the Quarrymen pretty closely if she attacks them..." her voice trailed off.

"One of them will see her and all the effort we've done to prove that we are the good guys and not monsters like they say we are will go down the drain," Brooklyn said gloomily.

Goliath's eyes flared white; he made a frustrated sound and stalked off toward the other side of the battlements away from everyone. Elisa stared after him for a moment before she turned to Brooklyn, "why don't you guys go ahead and have breakfast," she suggested quietly.

Brooklyn glanced at Goliath, taking in the way his leader was standing, the clan leader was clearly angry. He looked back at Elisa, "That sounds like a good idea," he agreed. "Hey Broadway what's for breakfast tonight?"

Elisa waited until they had all left before going over to stand beside the large lavender male, "What's bothering you?" she asked, "besides the obvious," she added dryly.

The big male sighed, "Once again Demona's desire for revenge threatens to harm the clan."

The dark haired woman echoed his sigh, it was the obvious, "Matt and I are planning on going and visiting Nightstone Monday morning to try and get some more information from Demona. There's at least a chance that she'll say something to us that she wouldn't say to the Canadians."

As she had expected Goliath wasn't exactly pleased to hear this. As she listened to his usual
arguments about how she shouldn't have anything to do with his ex-mate, Elisa wished that she knew what schemes Demona was plotting. She was certain the gargoyle would retaliate against the Quarrymen in some way, and Demona was probably brooding about what she was going to do to Jon Canmore right at this very moment.

5:55 pm Destine Manor – Forest Hills Gardens Long Island

Kendra regarded the redhead across from her fondly; she found it rather endearing that Dominique had insisted that they use the formal dining room next to the kitchen to eat. The redhead had set the table with china, silverware, crystal glasses and tall white tapers. The warmed food was on their plates, the wine bottle open and decanted into a clear crystal container and Dominique was lighting the tapers after turning down the room lighting. It made for a very romantic setting, which was not really something that Kendra had associated with the gargoyle up until now. Given how gentle and tender the gargoyle could be though, it probably should be a surprise that she was romantic as well, the black-haired woman reflected.

"So," said the redhead as she poured the wine into their glasses, "in reference to the outside world and our relationship, what do you see as our options?"

"Well," Kendra began hesitantly, "We can try and hide the relationship. Unfortunately, I'm out so that will automatically make the gossipers suspicious if we're seen together too much. We would have to limit the amount of times we went out together in public, and it would probably be a good idea to find you a beard."

Dominique blinked; surely she hadn't heard that correctly. She stared a Kendra in puzzlement, a frown upon her face. "Why exactly would I need to get a beard?" she asked hesitantly, all sorts of very odd thoughts going through her mind.

Catching sight of the look on the redhead's face, Kendra chuckled, "Oh, sorry, I meant we need to find you a male escort to play the part of a boyfriend. A gay guy with the same need would be perfect."

The redhead's confusion cleared, she could see the sense in what Kendra was saying, and why a gay male would make the perfect escort. There would be no concern about him running to the gossip columnists and risk exposing himself, and no concern that he would get ideas that he would become more than just an escort. "Why is that called a beard?"

Kendra took a sip of her wine as she thought, "You know, I don't really know where the term came from just that it's the term gay's use to describe that situation."

Dominique nodded, "And the other option?"

Kendra shrugged, "We go out to dinner, or wherever, and try not to be too obvious. Let the gossip's tongues wag and just ignore them. We neither confirm nor deny anything. If your company was public I'd be worried about the stock valuation slipping for a few months until people got used to it, but since it's not, the only potential problem you have is whether or not you have some supplier or buyer who's a raging homophobic."

Dominique took a bite of the lasagna, the sauce was not the tomato rich one she had gotten used to, but the more gentle melding of flavors characteristic of the best Bolognese sauce. Her eyes half closed in pleasure, Kendra was right this was quite good. She made a quiet sound of pleasure, as soon as she swallowed she commented, "This is delicious where did you pick it up from again?"
The redhead looked up inquiringly as Kendra cleared her throat before responding, "Gradisca."

"We will have to order from there again some time," Dominique commented. "As for the other, I prefer the second option. It should also allow me the time to see if I'm going to need to switch suppliers or have difficulty with my buyers, though I don't think I will, they don't strike me as the type to let something like my sexuality stop them from buying Nightstone's weapon and defense technology."

Kendra nodded, she watched her lover take another bite of lasagna. She had read about people being able to eat in a sensual manner, but had always suspected it would look rather affected and obvious. The way Dominique was eating was definitely not an act nor was it obvious, it was more of a combination of the very proper way she was cutting her food before eating each single bite and the purely sensual pleasure evident on her face as she savored that bite's flavor. It was the combination of elegance and enjoyment, Kendra decided that was what made how Dominique was eating sensual.

Dominique glanced up from her meal to her quiet companion, wondering why Kendra hadn't commented on what she had said yet. Strange, she thought, the look on the black haired woman's face reminded her of something. Macbeth she realized, she had caught him looking at her like that sometimes when they were out eating. "What is it?" she asked taking her napkin and wiping her lips, wondering if she had accidentally gotten some sauce on her face. No, the napkin was still clean she noticed as she placed it back in her lap.

"Nothing," Kendra responded lightly, returning her attention to her food, "I was just thinking of what you said." She was hardly going to admit that she had been enjoying watching her lover eat; besides, she didn't want to make Dominique self-conscious.

Green eyes narrowed slightly, Macbeth had pretended not to have been watching her as well. She observed the rather determined way Kendra was staring at her food; it was fairly easy to guess that she would have as much luck getting Kendra to confess why she had been watching her eat as she had with trying to get Macbeth to admit it.

"Are you going to continue with the weapon's research?" Kendra asked searching for a distracting topic, entirely aware of the redhead's green eyes boring into her.

Dominique's eyebrow rose briefly, at least it was a decent attempt at a distraction she decided, recognizing the attempt for what it was, after all she employed it herself quite frequently to divert humans away from questions about herself. "I'll have to for now," she responded, "it's the source of almost half of Nightstone's revenues, though I'd like to get away from it I think, I suspect it doesn't fit in well with the inherent worth idea to be making weapons to kill humans more efficiently," she commented rather dryly.

Kendra snorted, "No probably not," she agreed. A thought came to her; it was one that had been in the hovering in the back of her mind ever since they discussed the power sources Nightstone had developed for its laser weapons. She stared absent at the silver chafing dish on the table behind Dominique's right shoulder as she considered the idea. "That power source you developed, would it be possible to further develop that into a generic power source?"

Dominique, who had been almost ready to look over her shoulder to see what Kendra was staring at so fixedly, stared at her lover instead, she hadn't been expecting that question. "One of the scientists working on the project mentioned that it might be possible, but I haven't had the team pursue that idea. What are you thinking about?"

"How much patenting the next generation of battery technology might make Nightstone," Kendra replied, meeting the green-eyed gaze. "Especially if their noticeably better than lithium ion batteries
and can be made for at or nearly the same cost."

The redhead tilted her head slightly to the side as she considered Kendra's idea, she hadn't considered the humans suggestion because it didn't fit into her desire to revenge herself upon his species. Now however, that wasn't a consideration since she had swore to the Ancient One that she would no longer war on humanity as a whole. Batteries were truly ubiquitous; almost every electronic device used batteries of one type or another. "That could be very lucrative if it can actually be done and done for a low enough cost," the redhead commented thoughtfully. "He did seem very excited about the possibility, and disappointed that I wasn't interested." Dominique smiled, "I think I'll be paying Research and Development a visit early in the week and letting them know I've changed my mind."
Chapter 2

December 5th, 1997 (night)

After cleaning up after dinner and moving the throes over to the dryer, the two women moved to the living room. Dominique had picked up both the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal while at the grocery store, and now they sat side by side on one of the two couches in the room, Dominique reading the Journal and Kendra the Times. The room was quiet only the sound of the newspaper pages rustling and the occasional noise as one of them shifted position disturbing the silence. Finally, Kendra folded her newspaper and dropped it on her lap, looking over towards Dominique with a discontented expression. The redhead lowered her paper, glancing over at her lover with a raised eyebrow, "What's wrong?"

"I didn't mind the quiet out in the woods, but now that we're back I'm reminded of the fact that it's been twelve days since I listened to some music or watched TV," Kendra commented.

Dominique turned her head in the other direction and looked at the flat panel TV hung on the wall. She wasn't interested in watching TV, but she could always go to her study or up to the library and read if whatever Kendra chose was too distracting for her to concentrate on the paper. A small unhappy noise from the woman next to her had the redhead glancing back at her lover, the look on Kendra's face told Dominique that the black-haired woman didn't really want to watch TV either. "Music," Dominique said, the blue eyes lit up and the gargoyle tried to think of where she had put the radio, she knew she had one somewhere.

Fifteen minutes later, she unearthed device in one of the utility room cabinets. The rather startled and dismayed expression on Kendra's face when the redhead handed the device, which looked as if it had been purchased a few decades ago, over to the black-haired woman spoke volumes about Kendra's opinion of its acceptability though her lover did try to hide her consternation. Resigned, Dominique asked, "Can we at least wait until tomorrow to go out shopping for a replacement?"
"Sorry," Kendra apologized though the effect was marred by the laughter in her tone, "when did you buy this anyway?"

"I didn't, I found it in the house," Dominique explained as they walked back toward the living room. "It still worked, and I thought I might need it someday so I kept it instead of throwing it out." She sat down on the couch and watched while Kendra plugged in the old radio and found a classical music station. The choice surprised her, given the two CD's Kendra had bought her she had expected her lover to choose something else. "Better?" she inquired when the black-haired woman sat down beside her.

Kendra looked over at the old radio, the speaker quality could definitely be improved, but it would suffice for tonight. "It works," she replied. "I'll look up the closest Bose store tomorrow morning, but I'm fairly certain there's one out this way."

"Why a Bose store?" Dominique asked, wondering why they couldn't just go to the nearest electronics store, there were a few in Forest Hills.

"Their Wave Radio's have the best sound quality for their size," Kendra replied, picking up the Times paper, "I have one at the condo and two at the estate house."

Dominique nodded absently, willing to take Kendra's advice on audio equipment since, as was evidenced by the radio playing now, she had never bought one herself. She was hesitant to suggest this, but the subject of electronics made her remember her promise to Rachael. The senior Owl's chosen had said that the youngest of the Eagle Owl's chosen was exceptionally intelligent and particularly gifted when it came to anything electronic. She had also told them the reason why Robert had been given the power of transformation; he was confined to a wheelchair and had been ever since the accident that took both his parent's lives when he was eight. The young man lived with his aunt and uncle and a nurse that came in to help care for him. Between the three of them, him he didn't have the privacy to go into the deep trance like state to visit the spirit realm very often, or transform into his owl shape. That was also the reason why they hadn't met him in the spirit world before now. "Would you mind if I asked Robert if he wanted to come with us?"

Kendra stopped flipping through the pages of the paper in her search for where she had stopped reading earlier to glance over at the redhead in surprise. "No," she replied, "Rachael told us he lives in Union City right?" Dominique nodded and Kendra continued, "I know the closest Bose store to him then, it's the one nearest my condo, Columbus Circle. I was actually thinking about inviting him as well, but we don't have a handicapped accessible vehicle to take him, and I'm not certain how to go about getting one, maybe they rent them or something."

"I was planning on asking Gregory if he could find one," Dominique commented. "I can call him first thing in the morning see if he can locate something for us to use tomorrow," she proposed, looking questioningly at Kendra to see if the black-haired woman had any objections.

"Shouldn't we see if Robert wants to go first?" Kendra remarked.

Dominique glanced over with an arched eyebrow, "I'd like to see if we can get the vehicle first," she said, her tone firm.

The redhead's tone had Kendra arching an eyebrow of her own until she realized why, "you don't want to bring it up if we can't take him."

The redhead nodded, "Rachel implied he didn't get to go out much; I don't want to mention it to him if it's not possible on such short notice."
The black-haired woman inclined her head gracefully in acknowledgement, "good point."

Dominique picked up the Journal, which was folded open at where she had stopped reading when they went searching for the radio, "I'll call Gregory in the morning, and if he can get something then I'll call Robert and see if he wants to go out with us," the redhead said decisively.

Kendra reclined against the back of the couch, choosing to observe the woman sitting next to her instead of reading the paper in her hand. She was curious why the gargoyle was still in her human form this late at night. In Canada, even after the Ancient One had given Demona the ability to control her form changes, the gargoyle had always changed at sunset or immediately afterward.

"What is it?" Kendra could hear the hint of irritation in the redheads tone as she turned to glance her way.

"You're usually in your gargoyle form by now," the black haired woman responded.

Dominique glanced at the clock on the mantle above the fireplace it was well past sunset. The gargoyle knew the exact moment every day when the sun set and rose; some instinct inside of her realized she should be breaking out of her stone sleep or going into it. Tonight hadn't been any different, but they had been setting the table at that moment and she hadn't wanted to go up and change clothes right then. Since then she just hadn't thought about it. She looked back over at Kendra, meeting her curious eyes, "I'll change when we go up to bathe." Evidently, that was enough to satisfy the black-haired woman's curiosity, because she turned her attention back to the newspaper in her hands.

Dominique, however, stared at the paper in front of her without actually reading it. Why hadn't she noticed? She asked herself, profoundly disconcerted that until Kendra had mentioned it she hadn't really thought about the fact that it was night and she was still human. She had stayed in her human form the night before at Rachael's, but that had been out of necessity, not choice. She had planned on going out to eat or dance with Kendra at night, but again that was remaining human for a specific purpose. Right now though, she wasn't human for any particular reason other than she didn't feel like going upstairs and changing into her halter top and loincloth at this moment.

She used to wait anxiously for the moment when she could be a gargoyle again, be her true self instead of the weak human shape she assumed at dawn. Of course, she didn't have to wait for anything now, she could be her true self whenever she desired. Perhaps that was part of the reason, Demona considered, now that it was her choice which form she chose it bothered her less to be in her human form at any time. The fact that she could change instantly into a gargoyle was comforting to her, reassuring her that if she needed her gargoyle strength it was just a quick transformation away. She looked at the pale five fingered hands holding the paper, she hadn't hated them for a while, but she had resented them, their paleness, their weakness. With a shock of surprise, she realized she didn't even feel that resentment any longer.

She turned and looked at Kendra, altered her sight and looked at the energies flowing through her lover. She could see the jaguar inside the human sitting next to her, not struggling to get out, not confined or imprisoned by the human form that was outermost at the moment, just resting and always present.

"Dominique?" Kendra's worried tone had the redhead changing her vision back to normal.

She met the concerned blue eyes, "Just thinking about the fact that its night and it doesn't bother me to be in my human form," she admitted. "It doesn't bother you does it," she asked reflectively.

Kendra frowned in confusion, "For you to be human?"
The redhead shook her head, "No, I was referring to what you said a few days ago about your human and jaguar spirits merging. Does it matter to you anymore what form you're in now? Do they both feel like you?"

Kendra's confusion cleared, "I used to see the jaguar as not being my true form, that my true form was the human one, but that's not the case now." She sighed frustrated that she couldn't find the right words, "Of course this one feels more human because it is, but they're both me, just different… different aspects of me are predominant." She tilted her head to the side and placed a reassuring hand on the redhead's leg, "Don't worry about it so Demona, you are always you, no matter what shape you've chosen to show to the world at any particular time. One will feel more gargoyle and the other more human because that's the nature of the body you're in, but they are both you."

The redhead thought about it, thought about her gargoyle form curled up inside the human at this moment. Later tonight, it would be the opposite; perhaps it was just that simple. She put a hand over Kendra's on her thigh, and turned her attention back to the article she had been reading.

Approximately thirty minutes later Dominique asked, "Did you want to read the Journal? I'm done with it."

"Not particularly, maybe in the morning," Kendra answered, "did you want the Times?"

Dominique shook her head, she looked down at their entwined hands, "I thought maybe we could go upstairs, take a bath," she said quietly. She was actually feeling slightly uncertain about showing Kendra her bath, she was fully aware of the fact that it was rather…indulgent.

Kendra glanced over at the redhead curiously; there had been something odd about her tone. "A bath sounds like a good idea," she agreed remembering that Demona had said something about her bath being large enough for her to enjoy as a gargoyle. "I gather it's big enough for two?" she asked thinking of the possibilities of a naked gargoyle, a soft washcloth and those wonderfully sensitive wings.

The husky tone in her lover's voice caused a tingling rush of awareness to race through Dominique, just as it had earlier in the day when they were in the limo. And just as then, the gargoyle found it slightly disconcerting to realize how quickly and eagerly her body became aroused by the slightest hint that Kendra was interested. She swallowed against a suddenly dry throat as she laid the paper on the coffee table and rose from the couch. "Did you want to get the throes now? They should be dry."

"That would probably be a good idea," Kendra agreed with a slight smile that increased the tingling awareness in the redhead's body.

It didn't take them long to pull the two black throes out of the dry and fold them. As they walked toward the stairs Dominique said, "Several centuries ago I visited a clan of gargoyles northern Japan; they had a local hot spring that they enjoyed soaking within. It was the first time I had ever willingly immersed myself in water and certainly the first time that it was a pleasant experience."

"Let me guess an accidental dip in a cold river wasn't that pleasant?" asked Kendra with a grin, as they made their way up the stairs.

"Something like that yes," agreed the redhead dryly. "Anyway, after that I kept an eye out for any hot springs I could find that weren't already known and visited by the humans in the area."

"I suspect those were few and far between," Kendra commented.

Dominique nodded, "They were," they entered her bedroom and she placed the throes on the foot of
the canopied bed, "which is why when I had the bathroom remodeled I had them design it to incorporate all the things I liked best about the springs I had visited over the centuries." She opened the door to the bathroom and glanced in, staring at it for a moment before stepping out of Kendra's way so the woman could enter.

Kendra's jaw dropped, when Dominique said she had a bath large enough for her to soak with her wings stretched out, the black-haired woman had known it had to be a large tub, but she had never imagined anything like what she was seeing now. The floor and walls of the bathroom were both covered in multi-toned blue tiles. The raised platform at the far end of the room, also covered in the blue tiles, enclosed a whirlpool jet tub that could easily hold four people without anyone feeling remotely cramped, if the people in the tub didn't mind being friendlier, it could hold eight. However, the tub was not what held Kendra's attention, what held her attention was the waterfall fountain behind the tub.

It too was covered in the blue tiles. The fountain structure rose to within two foot of the ceiling and fit into the entire right rear corner of the room. Three waterfalls, one in the middle at the top, and two further down on either side flowed down into two terraces filled with water at the sculptures base. The first terrace was almost flush with the whirlpool top, the middle waterfall poured into this terrace. The second terrace above the first was a foot taller and inset a foot from the lower terrace, and the two side waterfalls poured into it. Around the terraces and up the sides of the sculpture, plants were growing; their light needs taken care of by the grow lights in the ceiling above the sculpture.

"Wow," Kendra said softly taking another step into the bathroom and taking in more of the details now that she had gotten used to the waterfalls behind the whirlpool. Next to the waterfall structure, tall plants in white containers grew lushly green underneath the lights, one on either side. Next to the tall plants were short pedestals with water filled bowls on top that held floating candles. In the corner of the room, opposite from the waterfalls there was a shower, and Kendra guessed it was for those times Dominique didn't have either the time or inclination to fill the whirlpool and take a bath. Next to the shower were the toilet and sink. Two racks with thick cream-colored towels hung over them were in the room, one next to the shower and one against the wall near the whirlpool.

Kendra turned to the woman standing next to her, "Dominique this isn't a bathroom," she solemnly informed her. Ignoring the frown forming on the redheads face, she continued in the same straight-faced serious manner, "This is a sybaritic bathing experience," she finished and finally allowed her amusement to show.

Dominique stared narrowly at the black-haired woman for a moment before giving in and smirking at the comment. She looked at the waterfalls and whirlpool; she couldn't exactly disagree with the description. The carpenter and plumbers who had worked on it had been impressed with the finished room as well. She had overheard one of the men telling another that he wasn't mentioning this job to his wife out of fear she would get the idea she wanted something like it.

The redhead walked over and up the short stairs onto the raised platform and knelt by the whirlpool. She checked the temperature readout and then started the water flowing, the thermostat would automatically adjust the hot and cold water to keep the desired temperature and then the heating system would keep it that temperature as it circulated the water. "It will take it a few minutes to fill," she said, rising and coming back down the stairs.

They returned to the bedroom, Kendra watched as Dominique removed the tie controlling her hair and began to brush it out in front of a full-length mirror. She loved the gargoyle's hair; it almost had a life of its own, springing out wildly about Dominique's face in complete defiance of the usual regal aristocratic aloofness so often displayed there. It was a contradiction that fascinated Kendra. "What are you thinking about so seriously," the redhead asked huskily, staring back at Kendra's reflection in
Kendra moved until she was right behind the redhead, looking over her shoulder to meet her green-eyed gaze in the mirror. "The contradictions that make you so fascinating to me," Kendra answered honestly. Dominique raised one eyebrow and stared at her lover in curiosity. She reached up and stroked her fingers through the thick red locks, "You present yourself with such haughty regalness when you're human. Oh, your eyes flash and warn of your temper, but your demeanor insists to everyone that you are in complete control of yourself. Then you let loose your hair and it completely contradicts that; it's wild and untamed and hints of the presence of another you that isn't quite so rigidly controlled."

"Let loose?" Dominique repeated with a smirk. She chose not to remark on the other things Kendra had said; after all, it had been that not so controlled part that had willingly participated in the passionate kisses earlier today in the limo.

Kendra reached up with both hands as the redhead watched and gathered the red hair into a thick ponytail as it had been earlier, then she let go and drew her hands back. The scarlet hair immediately sprang back into the wild tumbled locks that it seemed to prefer. Now it was Kendra's turn to smirk, "let loose," she confirmed.

Green eyes met blue, it was useless to protest and Dominique knew it, "I like my hair," she said instead.

"And so do I," said Kendra huskily, burying her nose in the thick locks and inhaling their scent.

A fine shiver ran through the redhead's body at this as she watched their reflection in the mirror, she felt the urge to arch backward into Kendra's body, and her body ached to be touched. "The whirlpool should be almost full," she whispered.

Kendra drew slowly away, "Where should I put my clothes?" she asked.

"There is a clothes hamper next to the dresser," Dominique turned slightly and pointed toward the back of the room.

Kendra stared at the piece of furniture the redhead was indicating with a frown, she had taken it to be some type of in-table, but now that she looked more closely at it, she realized it was solid on the sides with a hinged top. Bemusedly she walked over to it and opened the wooden top, it slid open smoothly and stayed open, held securely by the hinge.

Aware that the redhead was watching her, she knelt and untied her boots first, and then slipped them off her feet along with her socks. Her sweater was next, pulled up over her head and then down her arms, she turned toward the clothes hamper and dropped it in. With her back still turned towards the woman behind her, she undid the catch of her bra and removed it, dropping it in after the sweater. She heard an indrawn breath behind her as she undid the button of her jeans and lowered the zipper, pausing briefly, she closed her eyes and sought to steady her own breathing, she could almost feel Dominique's gaze on her back like a caress. Turning slightly so she was more in profile, she slowly pulled off both remaining pieces of clothing in one smooth economical move.

Kendra turned her head, as she suspected she had Dominique's complete attention. She straightened and walked past the redhead into the bathroom. Pausing at the doorway, she glanced inside the room toward the pillars with the bowls of floating candles, "Matches or lighter for the candles?" she asked, meeting the darkened green eyes.

"Lighter on the shelf below the sink," Dominique responded quietly.
Kendra nodded, turned in that direction, she paused, twisted at the waist and looked back at the redhead watching her from the doorway, "Don't you think you're a bit overdressed for a bath," she asked archly before proceeding to the sink to get the lighter. On her way there, she realized that the tiles under her bare feet were warm instead of cold and realized there was a floor warmer underneath them. Kendra smirked at this touch; it went well with the generally hedonistic theme going on in this bathroom.

Kendra finally heard the redhead move as she was lighting the candles, she glanced at the doorway, Dominique was no longer there and she assumed that the redhead was undressing. A minute or so later the bathroom lights lowering drew Kendra's attention to the doorway again, the redhead had transformed into her gargoyle form. Demona had foregone wearing the golden headband that covered her eye ridges and kept her hair from obscuring her vision, she also hadn't put on any of the other pieces of gold jewelry that she usually wore. "So beautiful," Kendra whispered. Holding out her hand, she requested softly, "Join me."

Demona crossed the room and climbed the three steps to the raised platform, her green eyes never leaving Kendra's blue ones. The blue-skinned gargoyle reached out and took the black-haired woman's hand; however, instead of letting her lover lead her into the whirlpool, Demona pulled the dusky skinned woman into her arms. The scarlet haired gargoyle sighed in pleasure as Kendra's smooth muscular thighs, flat stomach and soft full breasts pressed against her. The gargoyle's wings wrapped around her human lover as their lips met, pressed together, withdrew slightly and then brushed against each other lightly before pressing in once again. The kisses grew hungrier, lips opened and mouths pressed together, and tongues gave silent promises of what other things they might be caressing later. When they parted both the gargoyle and human were breathing heavier, and their locked gazes mirrored the other's arousal.

Almost as if some silent signal had passed between them, they slowly parted. Kendra stepped down carefully into the whirlpool and moved to the side as she watched the gargoyle enter with almost exaggerated caution as Demona made sure her talon's didn't scratch the inside of the tub. The black-haired woman breathed an, "ah," of pure pleasure as she knelt in the middle of the whirlpool immersing herself up to the shoulders in the deepest part of the warm swirling water. With the lights down and only the candles lighting the room, the dim lights in the water filled ledges shining upward to light the waterfalls from behind were noticeable for the first time as they lit the water rippling down from above. The sound of the falling water pouring smoothly into the water below filled the quiet room lit only by the flickering lights of the candles and the cool, water-rippled light of the fountain. Pivoting in the water, Kendra shifted her gaze from the fountain to the sky-blue gargoyle.

Demona was sitting on the whirlpool's bench, her wings partially extended and lowered so that they were mostly covered by the gently churning waters. The water lapped along the top of the gargoyle's breasts, Kendra's eyes followed the swell of them upward to the delicate hollow of the collarbone. She wanted to reach out and trace her fingers along the same path, trail her lips across the collarbone and up the slim neck. She met the gargoyle's intent green eyes, and her pulse thudded heavily in her throat once and then again.

After their failed attempt to be quiet in the camp when Rachael was there, neither of them had felt comfortable enough last night to do anything in the Cree woman's guest bedroom, which was across the hallway from their hostess's bedroom. It had been very hard not to touch Demona last night, and to stop in the limo on her way to her apartment, and to not touch the redhead as she stood in the bedroom of her apartment. Now though there was no one else besides them around, no one waiting on either of them, no calls that needed to be made.

"I want you," the black-haired woman whispered with quiet hunger, "I want your wings wrapped around me, I want to feel you touching and stroking me," Kendra paused, both to take in a shaky
breath and moisten her lips. The gargoyles intense gaze followed the path of her tongue over her lips with an almost burning intensity. "I want…" she paused, inhaled sharply before admitting, "I need… to feel you inside of me." She stared into the green eyes, "Demona," she said in a hoarse plea, "I ache…" Kendra didn't have to finish the gargoyle was already moving through the water toward her, her green eyes intense and dark upon her blue one's.

Demona knelt down beside Kendra, and lifted her up out of the water. The black-haired woman grasped for her shoulders, startled for a moment before relaxing into the gargoyle's strong arms, Demona moved over to the edge of the whirlpool and laid Kendra gently down upon the blue tiles of the raised platform. This was definitely one time she was glad that she had allowed the bathroom designer to put in the heaters underneath both the floor and platform tile, Demona thought to herself as she lifted herself out of the whirlpool to kneel beside her human lover. Kendra raised up, supporting herself upon her elbows; Demona grabbed one of the towels from the rack, folded it, and handed it to her.

Their eyes met as the black-haired woman took the folded towel from her, glanced at it for a moment and then slowly laid back putting it underneath her head. Demona moved carefully over Kendra, mindful of the spurs on her knees. Most of her weight was supported by the gargoyle's bent leg near the woman's hip, the other leg was extended and between Kendra's knees. Demona hovered over her, staring down into the passion darkened blue eyes, her eyes wandered over her lover's face, "you are beautiful," she whispered.

Kendra reached up, ran her fingers gently over the gargoyle's eye ridges, "as are you," she whispered in return.

The gargoyle's green eyes shut briefly, as she enjoyed the feeling of her lover's fingers stroking her eye ridge. The fingers wandered over to her ears, stroked up the bony spike at the top and then gently caressed along the outer edge. They buried themselves into her hair and there was a gentle downward pull on her head, she opened her eyes and allowed Kendra to pull her down into a hungry kiss. She curled her tail and slowly stroked upward along the smooth skin of Kendra's inner thigh. With a deep groan, her lover parted and raised her knees, the thigh between the gargoyle's own coming into contact with proof of Demona's own arousal. The gargoyle heard Kendra's quickly indrawn breath at the same time as she arched her hips into the contact, pressing herself against her lover's muscular thigh and coating it even more with her arousal.

"Oh, Demona," Kendra moaned against the gargoyle's lips. Her hands drifted down the gargoyle's neck and then began gently stroking along what portions of the blue-skinned gargoyle's wings joints and wings.

It was Demona's turn to pull away from their kiss as her wings quivered in reaction to the caresses. She brought her tail further up; when it brushed against soft curly hair, she brushed the tip through them until she found what she sought, soft, tender and very moistly aroused flesh. "So wet for me," Demona murmured hoarsely.

"All day," Kendra groaned thrusting her hips against the teasing tail tip, trying to obtain more contact. The admission reassured Demona; at least it hadn't only been she that had experienced those moments of intense arousal throughout the day. "Demona, please," Kendra begged.

Demona looked down into her lover's blue eyes, slowly she thrust her tail into Kendra's warm, moist depths, stretching and filling her until she could go no further. Kendra's head went back; she half closed her sapphire blue eyes and a raw look of carnal satisfaction crossed her face. The flame haired gargoyle stared down at her, fascinated and hotly aroused by this clear evidence of how much Kendra wanted her. The blue eyes opened and fixed on her with a silent question as the gargoyle did
nothing but enter her and remain. Demona was concentrating on what she wanted her tail to do, remembering how wonderful Kendra's twisting hand had felt inside her.

A low throaty cry from Kendra's lips and the surge of hips into the gargoyle's tail heralded the gargoyles success as her tail slowly twisted inside the velvety channel. Demona could feel the muscles inside Kendra ripple and tighten around her tail, holding it inside her lover. A sweet, welling, hot sensation filled her chest as she stared down at Kendra, taking in the naked pleasure on her face, the sensual way she was moving as she rocked her hips into Demona's tail inside her. The sky-blue gargoyle stared down at that point of contact between them. Watching her tail as it withdrew from inside Kendra and then pushed back slowly into her again, this time she managed to twist her tail as she entered her lover.

A gasping, "Oh yes," drew her eyes back to Kendra's face, the passion darkened blue eyes were staring up at her, "so good," the black-haired woman moaned. Demona was familiar enough with how it felt to be inside Kendra now that she knew when she had gone as far as was comfortable for her lover. Keeping her tail where it was fully sheathed inside the woman beneath her, she twisted it once again. Kendra arched forcefully up against her in reaction to the feeling, and the thigh pressed so intimately against the gargoyle rocked and slid against the gargoyle's sensitive flesh.

Demona's eyes closed reflexively as she arched against Kendra's thigh, she felt so wild, so almost out of control, she wanted to bury her tail over and over again in Kendra's warm, tight depths. She clung determinedly to what control she had left though, the one thing she absolutely never wanted to do was hurt Kendra, and right now with her tail buried inside her lover's tender, vulnerable flesh it was too frighteningly real a possibly given her gargoyle strength. Not that Kendra seemed at all concerned about the possibility, she noted, as the woman arched and drove herself into her tail and the gargoyle barely relaxed the muscles in it so that it would give with her lover's thrust.

Demona growled, this was too dangerous and Kendra was too aroused to realize it. The gargoyle lowered her body, resting her elbows on the tiles and pressing her hips against Kendra's to hold her lover still as she entered her once again. This time when the woman tried to arch into her thrusting tail she had little room in which to do it and only managed to rock her hips slightly. This was not the first time Demona had to restrain her lover so she was not surprised when Kendra grew even wetter in response to the confinement. Kendra liked feeling her strength, liked knowing that Demona was powerful enough to physically restrain her.

Now Demona was able to begin a steady rhythm, arching into the thigh pressed up against her as she thrust her tail inside Kendra and then twisting inside the tight velvety passage before withdrawing and beginning again. She kept the place slow even though she knew Kendra would prefer she go faster. She was enjoying the sensations too much to hurry. There was nothing quite as wonderful as feeling the muscles in her lover's passage tighten around her tail, in thrusting into the warmth of her wet yielding center and hearing Kendra's gasping aroused cry as she did so.

Kendra calmed as they continued and they began rocking against one another in a slow sensual pace that pleased Demona more than the almost desperate need her lover had shown earlier. Kendra's hands moved from her shoulders, down her sides and then to her back where they began gently caressing in long slow strokes up and down the wing joint on either side. "Oh, Kendra," Demona gaspingly murmured as she ground herself against her lover's thigh. Everything felt so good, the sensual contact of their bodies as they moved against one another, the tender stroking hands on her back that sent tingles of pleasure through her wings and down to her center, the warmth intimate depths of her lover into which she was slowly thrusting and twisting her tail. In the quiet of the warm, candle lit room, their gasping breaths echoed off the blue tiles and mingled with the sound of the waterfalls and the hum and swirling water of the whirlpool.
Slowly their movements became more intense, blue eyes stared up into green ones as they against one another, their breaths coming in pants as their arousal climbed. Demona could feel that Kendra was close from the way her inner muscles were tightening around her tail, and she could tell that she was not that far herself. One of Kendra's hands trailed down her back and began gently massaging at the base of her tail, and the gargoyle gave a gasping cry at the additional stimulation. She was so close, the gargoyle realized, she buried her tail inside Kendra's warm depths and began twisting it back and forth inside the woman faster.

"Demona, oh, Demona, so…cl…" the last word broke off into a wailing cry as Kendra's channel tightened with almost punishing force around the gargoyle's tail, and the blue-eyed woman arched and shuddered helplessly against the flame-haired gargoyle's body above her.

Her dark eyes intent upon her lover's pleasure filled face, Demona thrust twice against Kendra's thigh, her body stiffened and then the heated rush of her own release raced thru the gargoyle's body. Demona roared her pleasure into the darkened, candle lit room as her entire body stiffened and her wings sporadically jerked and twitched. Smaller aftershocks of release had her thrusting herself against Kendra's body with soft gasping cries of pleasure; even as she felt Kendra arching up into her and the heated intimate flesh enclosing her tail convulsively tighten with her lover's own aftershocks. Finally, the gargoyle slumped almost boneless onto the woman underneath her, barely managing to remember to support most of her weight on her elbows and knees. With a concerted effort, the gargoyle managed to twitch her wings together so that she could lie down on her side.

With what sounded suspiciously like a purr, Kendra curled up next to her, tucking her head underneath Demona's chin and pressing soft kisses along her collarbone and up the gargoyle's neck. Demona wrapped her arm round her lover's back and pulled the human closer, and extended her wing to cover her lover's body as well. The gargoyle dipped her head and waited, the soft lips trailed along her jawbone in a caress before meeting her own in a long gentle kiss.

"Shall we return to our bath," Demona asked softly when their finally lips parted, the tiles underneath their bodies were warm, but that did nothing to soften their hardness.

"Mmm," Kendra murmured.

The gargoyle wasn't certain whether or not the sound indicated Kendra's agreement with her suggestion until the woman moved to get up. They returned to the warm waters of the whirlpool tub, Demona moved to the side where there was a bar of soap and a stack of washcloths. Thickly soaping one of the washcloths, the gargoyle returned the soap to its dish and moved out of the way so Kendra could get to the soap. They bathed, each pausing occasionally to watch the other, their eyes following the path of the washcloth across smoothly muscled limbs and bare skin.

"Would you get my back," Kendra asked quietly when she had washed all that she could easily reach.

Demona nodded, "turn around," she directed, when the black haired woman did the gargoyle took a moment to admire the view presented to her. Kendra's shoulders were relatively broad for a woman and her waist trim above the feminine curves of her hips. Demona took the washcloth and began running it over the dusky skin in slow circles. Kendra sighed in what sounded like pleasure as she bent her head forward and pulled her hair over her shoulder to get it out of the gargoyle's way.

Once Demona was done, Kendra knelt in the water, lowering herself until it was over her shoulders; she turned and looked up at the flame haired gargoyle. "Would you like me to get yours?"

The gargoyle had already run the washcloth over her back, but she nodded anyway. Not only could Kendra wash the area more thoroughly, but the gargoyle suspected it would feel much better as well.
The washcloth moving in small circular strokes across her back did indeed feel much better. Remembering what Kendra had done when she was washing the woman's back, Demona reached up and pulled her hair to the side so her lover could wash her upper shoulders and neck.

"Rinse that and I'll get your wings," Kendra whispered in the gargoyle's ear.

The husky, low tone sent a shiver through Demona. She dipped low in the water to rinse the soap from her shoulders and neck. When she stood she felt Kendra's steadying touch on her wing arm just before she felt the washcloth begin to move over the outside of her wing in long gentle strokes from the upper part of the wing to the edge and back. The gargoyle didn't usually wash them unless they had gotten something upon them and she couldn't wash them like this herself. Demona extended her wings and relaxed them. Kendra's hand upon her wing arm supported the weight of her wing and held it steady as she washed first the outside of the wing, and then the inside. The gargoyle closed her eyes and just concentrated on the pleasant sensation of the washrag upon her wing membrane.

"Rinse," her lover's voice was low and gentle, "and then I'll do the other wing."

Demona knelt down in the water and moved her soapy wing gently through it before standing once again. Kendra moved around to the other side and lifted the unwashed wing with one hand while gently washing the wing membrane with the soapy washcloth in the other. The black-haired woman smiled at the peaceful look on the gargoyle's face, Demona's eyes were closed and she looked to be almost dozing as her wing was washed. Demona might try to deny it, but Kendra knew the flame haired gargoyle loved being pampered like this. Every time she did something like this for the gargoyle, Demona got the same pleased happy look that she had right now.

They washed their hair, and spent a few minutes longer in the warm soothing waters before Kendra decided she was pruning and it was definitely time to get out. Kendra helped Demona dry her wings, and then went into the bedroom; there were a few things she needed to set out. Exiting the bathroom a minute later Demona watched Kendra spread the throes over her bed and the pillows stacked in a chair with surprise; she hadn't expected that the black-haired woman would want to tonight after the long bath.

Catching the look Kendra asked, indicating the cover, "did you not want to?"

Demona looked at the velvety black blankets on the bed; she saw the bottles setting on the nightstand. She caped her wings on her shoulders letting them settle behind her. "I'd like to," the gargoyle said huskily feeling a rising heat within her at the thought of Kendra's hands gliding over her skin.

Kendra patted the soft surface of the throe, "then lie down," she said, her voice soft.

Demona climbed carefully upon the bed and lay down on her stomach upon the black soft fabric. Remembering the last massage, she kept her wings close to her body as she got comfortable.

She felt the bed dip and watched as Kendra got up on the bed beside her. The black-haired woman reached up and brushed the gargoyle's hair off her back and then reached over for the massage oil. Kendra laid it on the bed and moved until she was kneeling by the gargoyle's side, then she picked up the bottle of almond oil and poured a small amount of it into her cupped palm. Demona closed her eyes and listened as Kendra spread the oil between her palms. Then Kendra's hands were warm upon her shoulders, the oil on them allowing them to gliding firmly and smoothly over the gargoyle's skin. Demona let out a breathy sigh at the feel. Kendra had said last time that it would be better with oil and the gargoyle could already tell that her lover was right.

The hands on her shoulders paused and she felt Kendra lean over her, "Last time I only got to
massage one sensitive place," Kendra whispered close to the gargoyle's ear, "shall we see how far I can get this time?"

The action and words sent a shiver through the gargoyle, desire rose in a hot inexorable wave from deep within. Demona's green eyes opened and she looked into the dark intent blue eyes of her lover, and then she did something she hadn't done since her youth and her first matings with Goliath, she whimpered. Kendra eyes grew soft and there was more than a hint of gentle amusement in them, she leaned over and placed a kiss on the gargoyle's bony ear ridge. "Darn," she said with a sexy grin, resting back on her bent legs once again, "I guess I'll have to settle for you having one while on your back and one while on your front then."

No sooner had the gargoyle registered these words with widening eyes and a sharply indrawn breath, than Kendra shifted from kneeling beside her to straddling the gargoyle's hips. The base of Demona's spine where her tail began and the very top of the tail was normally sensitive, and when she became aroused, it became very sensitive. She was aroused now so when Kendra rested upon that area Demona could easily tell that the warmth pressed against her there was very soft and slicked with arousal. With a moan she arched her back and pressed her rear into the wet warm flesh resting upon the base of her tail, she heard Kendra's answering moan and then the woman was pressing and thrusting into her sensitive flesh. Demona growled softly, this was definitely a submissive position, but she found to her surprise that she really didn't care. The thought of feeling Kendra's body pressed against her back, the woman's soft breasts rubbing against her wing joints and her lover's most intimate flesh against the base of her tail as Kendra moved against her was too delicious.

"Stop that or you're not going to get your full massage," Kendra chided softly, her voice breathy and low.

Demona buried her face into the velvety softness of the material under her, as Kendra began massaging her shoulders once again. The gargoyle swallowed a bit desperately; she could feel every slight movement of Kendra's sex against the base of her tail as the woman shifted.

"Relax into it," Kendra's words came as a surprise to the gargoyle, "take deep even breaths and relax into what your body's feeling, don't try and make anything happen or even anticipate it just let your body exist and feel."

Demona turned her head to the side again and evened out her breathing as she attempted to do what Kendra wanted. It helped that her lover wasn't pressed against the base of her tail anymore. As Kendra's strong hands continued to knead and stroke along her neck and shoulder muscles the gargoyle was finally able to relax into the massage. By the time that she felt Kendra's warm wetness against the base of her tail again, Demona was able to do what her lover wanted and remain relaxed while the hot sweet feelings inside her rose steadily as she felt her lover move gently against the sensitive location. When Demona's release eventually came, it came as a surprise, the sky blue gargoyle arched underneath Kendra's stroking hands upon her wing joints as the sensations rippling from the center point of her groin all the way out to her toes and fingers and even her wings as they snapped out to their fullest extension. Her cry was an extended wail of satisfaction as the orgasm caught her in its grip and then left her completely limp upon her bed.

Demona sighed in pleasure as she felt Kendra's soft kisses along the center of her back, "I'll get us some water and let you recover before I have you turn over."

The gargoyle could only make a slight sound of protest at the thought, she was feeling so wrung out and exhausted at the moment she simply couldn't. She heard Kendra chuckle softly before reassuring her, "If you don't want to then it will just be a nice massage."

Demona felt the bed move as Kendra got off it and then she watched as her lover left the room for a
glass of water from downstairs. A random thought went through Demona's head that caused the gargoyle to snicker softly to herself in amusement, maybe Kendra hadn't actually given up the Canmore quest to kill her, she had just chosen a very different method from all the others.
December 6th, 1997

Dominique woke slowly, a smile curving her lips; the sun was shining brightly through the curtains letting her know it was well past sunrise. The warm body pressed close against her back sighed and the arm around her waist tightened briefly in response to her movement. The redhead softly caressed the arm around her waist for a few moments before looking at the window once again at the brightness of the light outside. She needed to get up, carefully she lifted Kendra's arm from about her waist and slid out of the bed.

The redhead paused and looked tenderly at the woman asleep in her bed, Kendra's face was relaxed, peaceful, her midnight black hair spread across the pillow. Last night's lovemaking had been truly wonderful, but what she was remembering now was afterward when Kendra had gathered her up in her arms and carried her into the bathroom. If she hadn't been floating in a haze of sated bliss Demona probably would have protested being carried around like a hatchling. As it was, the gargoyle had simply marveled at how easily Kendra carried her into the bathroom and then into the whirlpool. There Kendra gently washed the oil from the gargoyle's skin and hair, and would have probably continued to ignore her own need if Demona hadn't lifted her upon the whirlpool's edge and made love to her until she came, shuddering against the gargoyle's mouth and crying out Demona's name.

Reluctantly, Dominique pulled her thoughts away from her memories of the night before. With one final lingering look, she turned away from the bed and the sleeping woman in it, dressed as quietly as possible and then went downstairs. The clock in the kitchen read 8:23 am. The redhead decided to wait ten more minutes and then call Gregory to see if he could find suitable transportation. She wasn't certain if he could, she paid his company for his services and the use of their limousines, but she wasn't certain if they had a vehicle that was wheelchair accessible. She busied herself with making coffee while she waited for the time to pass, at 8:35 she called Gregory's cell phone number.
It rang three times before she heard Gregory politely answer, "Good morning Ms. Destine, do you require the limo today?"

"Good morning, Gregory," Dominique replied, she was pleased that she had gotten her driver instead of being forwarded to the limo company as sometimes happened when he had the day off. "That will depend; I need a wheelchair accessible vehicle today."

There was silence for a moment on the other end of the phone and Dominique smirked as she imagined his startled look. "I'll have to check Ms. Destine, we have one vehicle that's wheelchair accessible, but I'll have to see if it's already reserved for today. For what times do you require it?"

"I'm not certain," the redhead replied coolly, not appreciating the request for specific times even though she could understand why Gregory was asking. "I wanted to find out if there was suitable transportation available before inviting my guest."

"Of course, Ms Destine," Gregory hastily answered catching the irritation in his employer's voice, "I'll check and call you immediately with that information."

A sound behind her distracted her, she turned, Kendra was leaning against the kitchen wall watching her. The woman was wearing navy blue sweat pants that rested low upon her hips, a white sports bra and nothing else. Dominique's eyes wandered appreciatively over her lover, her gaze slowing as her eyes traveled over the trim waist and expanse of toned stomach. The redhead wondered how Kendra managed to look just as sexy in what she was wearing now as when she had been completely nude the night before.

"Ms. Destine?" Gregory inquired, confused at the lack of a response.

Belatedly Dominique recalled the phone in her hand and the last thing Gregory had said before she became distracted. She cleared her throat, "Thank you Gregory, I'll expect your call shortly then."

"Yes Ms. Destine," Gregory responded promptly.

Dominique hung up the phone, turned toward the waiting woman and raised an inquiring eyebrow, "that looks quite nice, but probably not to wear out shopping."

Kendra chuckled, "I need to get back in the habit of working out every morning," she explained. "I thought I'd ask if you happened to have any exercise equipment somewhere and maybe have a cup of coffee before I began."

"Coffee's brewing," Dominique responded, "and I have a small workout room upstairs."

_A few miles away in Greenwich Village._

"What did Miss Rich Bitch want?" the voice came from the bedroom after Gregory hung up the phone, "Please tell me you don't have to work today, we had lunch planned."

"Michael!" he protested staring at the phone with a worried expression, "she might hear you and then I'd certainly lose my job," he added in a low mutter, "if not my head too."

"I waited until after I heard you hang up the phone," the tenor voice protested from the bedroom.

Gregory stared at the doorway, just barely able to see the foot of the bed from where he was standing, "I told you I was on call today."
"Yes, but you said she didn't say anything yesterday," his lover replied in a pouting tone.

"Well," Gregory responded unhappily, "she didn't, but I'm on call so..." There was no reply from the other room and he could easily imagine Michael staring up at the ceiling with a sullen expression. "Anyway I need to call work and see if the van is available, she asked for a handicapped vehicle," his voice held his puzzlement at the request.

"Has she ever asked for one before?" Michael asked.

"No," Gregory replied, "this is the first time; I didn't even know she knew someone who was handicapped."

"Ohh," Michael's voice was closer and Gregory looked up to see his boyfriend standing in the doorway of the bedroom with just his briefs on. "Did you see that hot fem-butch Kendra Canmore?" he asked. "The girls at the store were all drooling over her the other day. They had some old magazine with a picture of her in black leather and a big black motorbike. Turns out she is definitely family, she had a string of girlfriends a few years back and then she just sorta dropped off the radar."

Gregory grinned at him, amused at his description; he could easily see the woman he met yesterday in bike leathers. "I tried to tell you that yesterday, but you weren't interested."

Michael smirked as his eyes wandered slowly over the dark haired man sitting at the table, "Well, I did have other things on my mind," he drawled.

The two of them shared a warm look before Gregory glanced back at the phone, "I need to check and see if the van's available. Ms. Destine is waiting for me to call her back," he grimaced at the thought of his employers temper if she thought she had waited too long.

Michael turned around and sauntered toward the bathroom, he said over his shoulder as he turned into the door, "You do that, but you should know that rumor says Miss Hot Stuff Canmore has a thing for redheads." The bathroom door closed behind him, leaving Gregory staring after him with surprised eyes at this piece of news. He couldn't help but remember that the redhead had been in a remarkably good mood considering the fact that she had been hiking back to civilization through the wilderness and snow for ten days after being kidnapped.

**Back at Dominique Destine's home.**

"May I speak to Robert please," Dominique asked, trying to keep the hostility from her voice as she remembered what Rachael had said about these humans who were taking care of the young Owl's chosen.

"Who may I tell him is calling?" the feminine voice sounded older than the redhead was expecting.

"Dominique Destine," she responded in a clipped tone.

There was a pause on the other end of the line, "The woman who was kidnapped?" the woman asked incredulously.

The redheads green eyes narrowed, "Yes, the woman who was kidnapped, now may I speak to Robert."

"How do you know Robert?" the woman asked demandingly.
Dominique fought down a snarl, what business was it of this human's how she knew Robert. "A mutual friend asked me to contact him," she replied, her irritation showing in her tone.

"What mutual friend, we know all of Robert's friends," the woman demanded.

The redhead stared incredulously at the phone, wondering if the woman, who was most likely Robert's aunt, interrogated all of his callers in this manner, "Rachael Wabagano."

The woman's reply was disapproving sniff, "Oh that Indian woman."

By sheer force of will, Dominique bit back the scathing response she wanted to make in reply. "May I speak to Robert now?" she asked in a chill firm tone. In the background the redhead heard a young sounding male voice ask, "Who is it Aunt Nancy?"

"Robert," the woman's voice didn't sound that pleased, "I was just asking that, it's some woman claiming to be Dominique Destine, that woman who was kidnapped." Dominique noted that the woman she had been talking to didn't sound as if she quite believed that Dominique was who she said she was.

"Rachael said she would call," the young male voice replied. Dominique smiled, she approved of the way he was standing up for himself, his tone wasn't disrespectful, but it was firmly determined.

"Oh," the woman's voice sounded surprised. A moment later Dominique heard a defensive sounding "Well, you know you can't be too careful these days." The redhead glared incredulous at the phone, she was the owner and CEO of Nightstone Unlimited not some drug dealing hoodlum.

Almost as if reading her mind she heard Robert say, "She's the owner of her own business Aunt Nancy, remember they were talking about Nightstone Unlimited on the news."

There was a long moment of silence as Dominique listened, finally the older female voice replied, "Oh yes that's right," she now sounded approving. "Ms. Destine, I'm sorry I thought someone was trying to play a prank on me," Robert's aunt said.

"A…" Dominique managed to stop the incredulous reply she wanted to make, "Yes…well, may I speak to Robert now Ms.?

"Collins," the woman replied, suddenly sounding rather cordial.

"Mrs. Collins," Dominique memorized the name, "If I may speak to Robert now?"

"Yes, of course," Robert's aunt replied. "Now remember to be polite Robert," the redhead heard her say in the background before the noise of a phone being passed from hand to hand indicated that the woman had passed the handset to her nephew.

"Yes Aunt Nancy," Dominique heard Robert reply in an even tone just before he said into the phone, "Good morning Ms. Destine."

"Good morning Robert," she replied. The last thing Rachael had said was that she needed to contact Robert and inform him of Demona's new status, as he was unaware of everything that had recently happened. "I gather that Rachael was able to speak to you?" she inquired hoping that had been the case. If not this call would probably just be to introduce herself, inviting Robert out would have to wait until after Rachael had contacted him.

"Yes, we were able to have a thorough conversation about what happened to you," Dominique smiled at the carefully worded statement, she was fairly certain that meant that he had been able to
visit the spirit realm and talk to Rachael and probably the Wise One. "I was glad to hear that you and Miss Canmore were found safely."

"So am I, Rachael's assistance was invaluable," Dominique commented quite sincerely.

"Yea, she's that way," the redhead could hear the affection he had for the senior Owl's chosen in his tone.

"Well," Dominique said after a moment's silence, "as to the purpose of this call," she continued briskly, "Kendra and I wanted to invite you to go shopping with us. It's become apparent that I'm rather lacking in audio equipment," she commented dryly, "so we are visiting the Bose store in Columbus Circle and going out for lunch or an early dinner. I've already arranged for suitable transportation for you to accompany us if you wish."

"Umm," he sounded rather surprised. "The Bose store," he repeated sounding more interested, "what were you planning on getting?"

"Kendra said something about a Wave Radio, but depending on what they have I may pick up a full audio system," she responded. It was something she had considered earlier this morning, she wanted Kendra to feel at home here and after last night it was obvious that music was rather important to her lover.

"They have some nice ones with wireless speakers," Robert said enthusiastically.

Dominique commented lightly, "That will certainly make setting it up easier."

"Robert?" the redhead heard the aunt inquire from the background.

His voice was distant when he answered his aunt, as if he were covering the phone, "Ms. Destine invited me to go with her to the Bose store. She's interested in purchasing some audio equipment."

Dominique's eyebrow rose at the way Robert was phrasing her invitation, he was making it sound as if she was interested in his opinion rather than his company.

"Well, she probably heard that you know about those types of things from that other woman," the woman sounded dismissive and, oddly to the listening redhead, more relaxed, as if the idea of her requesting Robert's company for his expertise rather than his company was reassuring to her.

"If you want to go you'll have to call and see if you can find transportation, but I doubt you will be able to since it's the weekend," the almost satisfied way the woman said this made Dominique glad that she had already arranged for a vehicle. She couldn't wait to see the expression on this human's face when the woman saw what type of transportation she had arranged for Robert.

"Yes Aunt Nancy," she heard and then he was speaking to her once again, "Ms. Destine I'd be pleased to accept your invitation what time would you like to pick me up?"

Dominique was starting to get the feeling that Robert was just as intelligent as Rachael had implied and had just maneuvered his aunt into giving him permission to do what he wanted. "Eleven o'clock?" she said, "that way we can have lunch and then go shopping."

"Eleven o'clock," he repeated almost formally, "I'll be ready Ms. Destine."

"I hope you'll call me Dominique once we pick you up," the redhead commented, amused.

He replied with only the barest hint of amusement in his tone, "Of course Ms. Destine."

Dominique chuckled, "I'll see you at eleven o'clock Robert."
"Good bye Ms. Destine," he replied politely, in the background, Dominique heard his aunt ask sharply, "She does understand that you need..." the disconnecting phone cut off the woman's question. The redhead shook her head as she hung up the phone; she was looking forward to meeting Robert even more now.

Dominique glanced at the clock as she placed the phone in its recharging stand, Gregory would be by to pick them up in an hour. There was just enough time for her to change into her own workout clothes and get in a short workout of her own before it was time to shower and change.

When she stepped into her exercise room, Kendra was at the leg press station of the home gym smoothly pressing up an impressive stack of weights. Dominique took a moment to watch, Kendra had a look of total concentration on her face as she pressed the weights up. Her lover had put her hair up into a pony tail and wispy black strands stuck to her slightly sweaty forehead and neck. Though her legs were covered by the sweat pants, the redhead could see the outline of her thighs as they flexed through the material and her bare stomach was a washboard of tense muscle. Kendra completed her set of exercises and got up from the station moving round to the lat pull down bar and spotted the redhead standing in the doorway. Pausing, she inquired, "Is Robert going with us?"

Dominique nodded, "Gregory will be here in forty five minutes, so I thought I'd join you and get in a short workout," explaining her change of clothing.

"Three sets on this and then the gyms all yours," Kendra said reaching up for the lat bar once she had set the weights.

The redhead nodded moving to the treadmill in the corner, she wanted to warm up for a few minutes before starting on the weights. She started out at a quick walk, which moved into a slow jog after half a minute, out of the corner of her eye she watched Kendra pull down the lat bar behind her head, the muscles in her shoulders and arms bunching and flexing as she lifted the weights. She couldn't ignore the fact that the sight was causing a distracting tingle of awareness to course through her, she wanted to run her fingers over those shoulders, test the solidness of the muscles she could so clearly see right now for herself. Determinedly she tore her eyes away, focusing on the treadmill gauges instead. She jogged for a few more minutes before stopping the treadmill and moving to the rack of free weights in the corner for a set of hand weights to do curls.

Kendra finished with the lat pull down bar and moved over to the free weights to pick up the heaviest set of hand weights and then over to the weight bench. Holding the weights to her chest she straddled the bench and then laid down on her back, she then raised the hand weights overhead and began doing supine flies.

Dominique had to keep dragging her eyes away from the prone woman, from watching the way her muscles moved in her arms, the flexing of her stomach. The redhead wanted to shatter the total concentration Kendra was giving to the exercise she was doing by walking over and running her hand down the flat stomach and taking the waistband of those sweat pants and pulling them...

Dominique tore her thoughts away from the direction they were taking, Gregory was going to be here in less than thirty minutes and Robert would be waiting for them to arrive at eleven.

"I'll go up and take my shower now," Kendra announced as she got up from the bench after completing her last set of bench presses. The black haired woman paused in the doorway, turning around and meeting the redhead's green eyes. Dominique's breath caught in her throat at the intense look Kendra was giving her; it was enough to let her know that she wasn't the only one fighting with their desires. They stared at each other for a few seconds before Kendra said huskily, "I'll make it quick, I believe we only have about twenty more minutes before he arrives."

Dominique's arms hang limply from the lat bar after Kendra left, she hadn't felt like this since the last
breeder's moon, and the next one wasn't for ten more years. She had to get control of herself before
Monday. They couldn't act like this at the offices or it wouldn't be long at all before someone figured
out that they were much more than employee and employer.

After her shower, Dominique stared at the suits in her closet, from the way Roberts aunt had sounded
she strongly suspected the human would be easily impressed by an obvious show of wealth and
power. Yet she didn't want to dress as she usually would for the office, she finally settled on a russet
wool herringbone belted jacket and pantsuit with a cream-colored silk sweater. She put up her hair,
put on her usual gold stud earrings and watch that she wore to work, and then grabbed her long wool
cloak before going downstairs.

She hadn't seen Kendra since the woman had left the exercise room so she paused at the entrance to
the kitchen to stare at the starkly simple outfit her lover was wearing. A black turtleneck that
Dominique guessed was a silk blend from the way it looked and hung, black wool slacks, and black
boots. On the back of the chair Kendra was sitting in hung a hip-length black leather jacket with a
stand-up collar. The all black outfit drew attention to the glossy blackness of Kendra's hair, the dusky
tone of her skin and the brilliant blue of her eyes.

"You look very nice," Kendra commented looking at the redhead appreciatively.

Dominique's lips curved upward as she eyed her lover, "Black is definitely your color," she said
huskily. The buzzer ringing interrupted them, "that will be Gregory," the redhead said, before she
could put on her coat Kendra was standing behind her gently taking it from her hands and holding it
open for her. "Thank you," Dominique said softly as she slipped her arms in the sleeves. She felt
Kendra's hands on her shoulders, and then the press of her lover's body against her back right before
Kendra pressed a kiss against the side of her neck.

"You're welcome," Kendra whispered into her ear, sending a faint shiver through the redhead's
body, before stepping away, getting her own coat and shrugging into it. The black haired woman
opened the door to the garage and motioned for Dominique to precede her.

As Dominique walked through the door, the redhead reflected on Kendra's behavior. The black
haired woman had been protective of her even before the kidnapping, the redhead remembered
thinking back to Kendra's protectively bristling attitude as she asked who had hurt her right before
the Quarrymen had attacked when she had been in her office crying over her daughter's rejection.
The almost gallant way Kendra had just behaved was new though, and Dominique liked it. It
reminded her of the way Macbeth had treated her when she was pretending to date him. Then her
enjoyment of being treated as if she was the most important person in someone's life had been marred
by the fact that she didn't like Macbeth and certainly wasn't interested in being his mate, only in
getting access to his money. With Kendra however, that certainly wasn't the case, and Dominique
was free to cherish everything her lover did to show the redhead that she cared.

Dominique looked up from the steps leading down to the garage and came to an abrupt halt at the
sight of the vehicle Gregory was standing beside. It was a black stretch van, the redhead decided
bemusedly after a few seconds examination.

"Ms. Destine," Gregory sounded uneasy as he cast a glance at the vehicle he was driving today. It
didn't take a genius to figure out from the redhead's expression that this hadn't been exactly what she
was expecting.

"This is the wheelchair accessible vehicle I gather," she finally commented.

"Yes, Ms. Destine," Gregory responded, trying not to stare at the woman standing behind his
employer. The black Jaguar convertible parked in the normally empty garage had been an obvious
clue that Ms. Destine had company this morning and now he knew who owned it. "It will accommodate two wheelchairs and six regular passengers."

Dominique nodded, and indicated the side door of the van with a wave of her hand. She would reserve her opinion of the vehicle's acceptability until she saw the interior. Gregory promptly opened the door and held out a hand to assist her into the vehicle. The seats were the same grey cushioned leather seats as she was used to in the regular limousines she noticed, only arranged along one side of the vehicle in a long bench. Down the other side of the vehicle was a black rubber mat with inset metal rings presumably to secure the wheelchair once it was inside the vehicle. As in all limousines, the driver's area was separated from the front by smoked glass and another row of passenger seats. She sat down in one of the seats looking at the interior, except for the area where the wheelchair was to be secured the appointments were just as nice as she was accustomed to in the regular limousines.

Kendra was standing in the open door looking inside the stretch van, "How will we get Robert's wheelchair in here?" she asked Gregory.

"There is a motorized wheelchair lift underneath the vehicle at the rear, Ms Canmore," Gregory promptly answered. He had actually gotten instruction on exactly how he was to handle his handicapped passenger this morning and was a little nervous about doing it for the first time, but he certainly wasn't going to let Ms. Destine or Ms. Canmore suspect that.

The black haired woman nodded and got into the van taking a seat near, but not next to Ms. Destine. Gregory closed the door behind her after seeing that both women were settled, he already had the address of the next guest and knew how to get there. As he walked around to the driver's door, he thought back to the expression on Ms. Destine's face when she stepped into the garage. The redhead's usual expression was a sharp-eyed neutral one, he had seen her pleased after a business negotiation she had won, and he had even seen her happy a few times. What he had never seen before was the soft pleased expression accompanied by a touch of color to her cheeks that he had seen right then. That expression combined with the way the usually aloof woman looked at Kendra Canmore made him think that his boyfriend might actually be right. He shook his head in wonder; he would have never pegged Ms. Dominique Destine as anything but straight before today.

Thirty minutes later in Union City, New Jersey

Robert waited anxiously by the front window looking at each passing van to see if would pull into his aunt and uncle's driveway. He didn't know what type of van Dominique Destine would be driving, only that she had already arranged for one. Rachael had described the Ancient One's chosen to him and it was hard for him to believe that the woman he was about to meet was not only over a thousand years old but also not even human. She was a gargoyle and had been born in the early 900's, Robert couldn't imagine the history she had lived through and even though Rachael had cautioned him that Demona's life hadn't been that pleasant for her, he hoped she would be willing to tell him about some of it. He loved the Renaissance Period, the inventors, engineers and architects of Italy where the Renaissance was born such as Leonardo da Vinci and Filippo Brunelleschi and then once it had moved to northern Europe and begun the Scientific Revolution, the scientists such as Nicholas Copernicus, and Rene Descartes.

A gleaming long black van with dark windows driving up the road caught the young man's attention, whoever owned it had obviously waxed and polished it recently. Robert didn't recognize the make but it looked vaguely European and expensive. When it slowed in front of the house and then pulled into the driveway, his grey eyes opened wide. The vehicle stopped and a dark haired man in a black suit, a cap, and white gloves got out of the driver's seat. The man walked around to the side of the
van and pulled open the door then held his white gloved hand out to assist whoever was inside.

"Robert," his aunt walked up beside him, her voice demanding, "who is that in the driveway…" her voice trailed off as she got a good look at the stretch van in the driveway and the woman being assisted out of it by the driver. Dominique Destine stepped down from the vehicle looking around the neighborhood like royalty come to visit. From the obviously expensive suit she was wearing to the haughty, regal expression on her face and her confident stance, she instantly drew and commanded one's attention.

Seeing the Ancient One's chosen in person, Robert was sharply reminded of the fact that the woman he was watching was over a thousand years old. On top of that, she was a very rich business owner who had gotten her company to where it was today by being smarter, shrewder, and if rumor was to be believed, more ruthless than her competitors were. Rachael's warning to him that he not forget whom Demona was as well as who she had been in his enthusiasm suddenly made more sense to the young man. Not in that he had to be fearful of the gargoyle, but that he be respectful of her, of her long past, and of her treatment at the hands of the Fey.

Ms. Destine stepped out of the way and turned her head to glance back at the vehicle, a second woman emerged from within it. He recognized the second woman immediately having seen her picture on the news about their kidnapping. This was Kendra Canmore, one of two Jaguars's chosen. Robert took in the black hair, the blue of the woman's eyes that he could see even from inside the house. She was wearing all black, and he noted how she paused for a moment as she stepped down, taking a quick observant scan of the neighborhood before proceeding to stand beside Dominique.

The two women proceeded toward the house, Dominique Destine walking with sure, confident strides, Kendra Canmore with a lithe gracefulness that made the cat in her very easy to discern to Robert's eyes. The young man thought of what he knew about Jaguar, the spirit only had two chosen and both were given a full measure of the Jaguar's gifts. Of all the chosen, the Jaguars were probably the strongest and deadliest warriors. Robert's eyes went back to the redhead and the way she held herself as she moved. He had only seen the Ancient One a few times, but every time he had been struck by the regal way the spirit carried himself. It wasn't just the Irish Elks size, though being ten foot tall certainly helped, or the impressive rack of antlers the stag had, though that helped as well, it was simply what the spirit was, the Ancient One was the epitome of majestic, the way he moved, the deep thoughtful way he spoke, the look in his great eye. Looking at Dominique Destine, he was not certain if he were seeing the Ancient One so clearly in her or if she had always been somewhat this way and what he was seeing was the Ancient One's mark on her combined with her normal bearing.

"Well her business must be doing well if she can afford to have a driver and rent such a vehicle just to go to the mall," his Aunt Nancy commented, managing sound at the same time impressed and disapproving. He glanced over at her; Dominique couldn't have chosen a better way of making sure that his aunt would be eager to have him continue to associate with the Ancient One's chosen. Aunt Nancy wished she were rich; she wanted to have the type of self-assuredness that the redhead walking up to the door so effortlessly projected. Unfortunately, what she managed was a self-righteousness closed-minded bigotry that found fault in everyone around her, especially those who weren't white, at least middle class or higher and preferably protestant. He looked toward the door as it rang and added to his mental list of those his aunt approved of: straight. The young man watched as his aunt invited the two women into her house, knowing that she would completely flip if she ever realized they were a couple.

Robert rolled his wheelchair over toward the front door. "Yes, I'm pleased to meet you as well Mrs. Collins," Dominique was saying to his aunt as she glanced at her watch, "I have reservations for lunch at noon Robert," she said looking up at him, "so I hope you haven't eaten yet."
"Lunch," his aunt repeated uncertainly, Dominique shifted her green eyes from him to his aunt, "Robert doesn't have a very big allowance…"

Robert gritted his teeth; money was currently a sore issue between him and his aunt and uncle. He wanted to go to MIT and they insisted that he would be better off going to a local and less costly university. He knew that his parent's estate had been sizable and he was starting to wonder how his aunt and uncle had managed his trust fund that they were concerned about the cost of his education. Unfortunately, even though he would turn eighteen in only a few months, he wouldn't gain control of his trust fund until he was twenty-one, and he couldn't get an answer out of his aunt and uncle as to how much of his trust fund remained. The two times he had pressed the issue after finding out they weren't planning on letting him go to MIT, they looked at him as if he were betraying them. His aunt started crying and wailing, and his uncle began talking about how costly it was to provide for him. The last time he had asked his Uncle Edward had lectured him about how he needed to be careful with his inheritance because he wasn't likely to find a well paying position with his disability no matter what legal protections were in place, as employers didn't want to hire people who cost them money.

Dominique didn't let her continue, "I never make purchases on an empty stomach, and, of course, as Robert is my guest, I certainly wouldn't expect him to pay for his meal." The redhead sounded offended at the very idea.

Robert noticed the redhead's eyes turn his way, and a second later one eyebrow arched expectantly. He realized this was his cue to say something, "I'm ready to go now Ms. Destine," he said rolling his chair closer to the door.

She inclined her head toward him in acknowledgement before turning back to his aunt, "We should return by no later than four o'clock."

"Why so long?" his aunt questioned with a frown, he began to get worried, his aunt and uncle didn't like for him to be out of the house for very long.

"I want to ask him some questions, see if Rachael was correct about his level of technical proficiency," she explained coolly. "Nightstone has a few summer internships. Robert is younger than we would usually consider, but I'm willing to overlook that if he is as knowledgeable as I've been led to believe," she sounded doubtful, as if she wasn't really expecting that to be the case.

Robert flushed he didn't like being discussed as if he wasn't present, and he really didn't appreciate his intelligence being questioned. Too many people had a tendency to do that to him as if the wheelchair rendered him unable to think as well walk, and he definitely had not expected such treatment from another chosen. He felt his eyes sting, the Ancient One's chosen treating him this way hurt. Motion behind Dominique caught his eye; Kendra shook her head at him and held up a silencing finger to her lips. He stared at her in confusion before realizing that she was standing outside the door and to the side where his aunt couldn't see her. The Jaguar's chosen gave him a reassuring look and a warm smile.

"I'm sure you will find that he's very knowledgeable," he heard his aunt say. He jerked his gaze back to her, staring in amazement, "he attends the Science and Technical High School here taking advanced placement courses in computers and the sciences." Robert was dumbfounded, his aunt sounded proud of him, she normally told him he needed to be more social, and spend less time back in his room with his computers while at the same time coming up with objections and reasons why it was too difficult to take him anywhere once he got home from school. He hadn't thought she was even paying any attention to what he was taking in school except to hand him ten dollars every time he showed her all A's on his report card.
"Well," Dominique cast a coolly assessing glance his way, "that's in part what today's purpose is for. Undoubtedly, I will need to meet with Robert more than once before making my decision. I wouldn't want to place him in a working situation he's not quite mature enough for yet."

Robert flushed even harder, he was starting to see that Dominique was maneuvering his aunt into doing what she wanted but that didn't make what she was saying any easier to listen too. Aunt Nancy looked over at him and frowned flashing a warning look at him, "I'm sure you will find that he's very mature for his age." As his aunt was staring at him he watched the Ancient One's chosen stare at her with a coolly measuring look that held no friendliness, the expression disappeared, replaced with polite smile as soon as his aunt turned back to her. That made it clear to him what Dominique was doing, and with widened eyes he watched as the redhead continued to manipulate his aunt into agreeing to let him not only go out several more times with her, but also visit Nightstone for a few afternoons.

On their way out to the van where the driver was waiting by the lowered wheelchair lift, he heard Kendra, who was walking right behind him whisper in an amused tone, "You need to look a little less smug until we are actually out of her sight."

He heard Dominique chuckle, "was I looking smug?" she asked in what Robert thought was a playful tone.

He wanted to turn around and see the expression on her face, but decided to wait until they were away from his aunt's prying eyes, and he had no doubt she was watching them right now from the living room window. He was still reeling from watching how easily the Ancient One's chosen had maneuvered his aunt into doing exactly what she wanted.

Dominique waited until the van pulled out onto the street and away from Robert's house before reaching over and getting his attention with a hand on his arm. She had seen the sheen of tears in the young man's eyes before he realized what was going on, and it bothered her that she had hurt him no matter how briefly it had lasted. "Robert, I have no doubt that you are the bright intelligent young man Rachael said you were, I only said the things I did to get that human to let me see you more than just this time."

Robert looked startled for a moment before he nodded, "I figured out what you were doing." His grey eyes fell away from hers for a moment before he looked up again, he said quietly, "I know she doesn't love me like I wish she would, but she is my mother's sister."

Despite his quiet tone, there was firmness in his eyes that Dominique liked; she understood his defense of his clan. "She seemed proud of your achievements in school," the redhead commented, she had noticed the stunned expression on his face as the woman spoke. Personally, she didn't think it said that much about the woman that Robert had been that surprised.

He nodded, "I didn't realize she had really noticed, she doesn't comment on the courses I'm taking."

"Maybe she's just not one of those people who does praise well," Kendra offered.

Robert looked over at her uncertainly, not really believing that. Her blue eyes were kind, and he realized that she didn't believe it either. He took in a breath fighting down the old hurt, turned back to Dominique, "do you really have an internship program?"

"Yes," she replied, looking him in the eye, "Nightstone usually takes college students in their junior and senior years, but I can think of a few positions that might be suitable for you." She glanced over at Kendra, "There's a new division being formed next week that might have an internship position, but that would be up to the division manager."

He followed the direction of her gaze, Kendra looked startled at first and then the Jaguar's chosen
turned her gaze on him. She leaned back in her seat, gave him a measuring look and asked, "So, what are your interests Robert."

"Umm," he said then flushed realizing that didn't sound too confident, he sat up straight and began, "Currently I'm taking courses in physics, chemistry, electronics, structural engineering and history."

Kendra's blue eyes sharpened, "Are you interested in one of those in particular or in being more of a generalist?"

He flushed, "I want to go to MIT and get in their EECS program, but my aunt and uncle say there's not enough money in my trust fund for it."

"EECS?" asked Kendra.

Dominique answered before Robert could, "Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, one of the researchers in R & D Special Projects has a doctoral degree from MIT in Chemical Engineering and a master's degree in EECS. He's the one I spoke with you about yesterday."

Robert's eyes lit, "That sounds like an interesting combination. I considered Chemical Engineering as well because their working on fuel cells there, but I decided I'd rather eventually go into robotics."

Neither woman missed his quick downward glance at his legs.

"You applied to MIT?" asked Dominique, at his nod she continued, "You don't think you'll qualify for a scholarship?"

He flushed, "I can't do most of the types of extra-curricular activities they like to see on your application, and I haven't been able to attend the ones like debate that I can do."

Even though she suspected she knew the answer, the redhead asked, "Why not?"

"My uncle and aunt don't like to get out much, and they don't like to drive at night because they can't see that well anymore," he explained.

Dominique inclined her head, "Your aunt was much older than I was expecting," she allowed, remembering her surprise at seeing the liberal amount of white in the woman's brown hair and the lines on her face.

Robert explained, "My mother was born fifteen years after Aunt Nancy, and my parent's didn't have me until my mother was thirty. My aunt and uncle weren't expecting to have to care for a child when my parents died, but they took me in anyway rather than let me go into the foster care system."

The redhead's green eyes narrowed in anger, to her that comment represented what was worst about the care Robert had been given by what should have been his clan. Kendra's hand on her leg forestalled her angry comment.

"Considering the state of the foster care system, it's a good thing they did," Kendra said frankly, "even with a trust fund to care for you it's hard to say where you might have ended up."

The young man looked up at her with a grim expression on his face, "Yea I know."

Dominique settled back in her seat feeling unsettled, she knew they were right, she had seen enough in the news to know that the care for those children without a family to claim them was uneven at best and fraught with possible danger. As much as she hated to admit it, even with their failings Robert's aunt and uncle were a better place for the young Owl's chosen to be than the foster system.
The redhead studied him while Kendra and he discussed the classes he was taking and his interest in robotics. He had a rectangular shaped face with a strong jaw and chin, and high cheekbones. A nose that was neither too wide nor too narrow, and lips that could be described the same way. His curly brown hair was a little long, but not overly so for his age, she thought, remembering other young men she had seen. He was a handsome for a young male human Dominique decided. Despite his disability, he looked to be strong with well-developed shoulder and arms, probably from moving his body around she decided, and he had not let himself become overweight. If anything, she thought critically, he could use a little more flesh on his bones, as he was almost too lean.

She turned her attention to the discussion Kendra and he were having, her lover was currently questioning him about his knowledge of fuel cells. The redhead listened intently to the conversation about the different types of fuel cells and then the pros and cons of hydrogen proton exchange membrane fuel cell vs. the direct methane fuel cell. It was obvious to her that her lover knew more about the details of the current difficulties faced by both types of fuel cells, but Robert was asking intelligent questions that showed that he understood what Kendra was saying.

The van slowing to a halt at the doors of the Columbus Circle Shops brought a halt to the conversation. Dominique looked at her watch; it was 11:45 am, they had plenty of time to make it to the restaurant in time for their reservations.

"Ms. Destine," the startled recognition in the host's voice irritated Dominique; they had been receiving the same type of looks throughout their walk through the Shops. She hadn't anticipated that the news coverage of their kidnapping and then their rescuing themselves had made Kendra and she pseudo celebrities. At least no one had presumed to come up to them and begin a conversation. Though at least one overheard conversation between two young women had been entertaining as they waited for the elevator to take them up to the fourth floor.

"Is that the women who were kidnapped?" asked the first young woman.

"I think it, is they both look like the pictures they showed on TV," said the second.

"Damn, that one looks like she walked those 350 miles without even breaking a nail," commented the first respectfully.

The elevator doors had opened then, and they had stepped inside leaving the two young women. Both Kendra and Robert had stared at her hands until she held them up for their inspection with a wry look; obviously, they thought she was the one the two young women were discussing. Kendra and Robert inspected them solemnly, Kendra looked down at Robert, "Damn, she didn’t break a nail," she announced. The elevator doors had opened then, allowing Dominique to exit before either could comment further except for the chuckling that followed behind her.

"We have reservations for noon," she stated coolly to the host.

"Of course, madam, allow me to escort you to your seats. As you specified, we have a suitable place prepared for your guest," he turned toward Robert and executed a respectful half bow in his direction. The young man looked a little startled, but inclined his head in reply before they began moving again following the host through the restaurant.

None of them spotted the woman who had been following along behind them ever since she first recognized them. When the host came back to the restaurant entrance, there was another well-dressed redheaded woman there waiting for a table. Fox stopped the man before he lead her off in a direction other than the one she wanted, "May I have that table?" she indicated one well away from but still in partial view of the one Demona and her two companions were seated.
"Of course, madam," the host politely answered, Fox hadn't really thought he would argue with her especially since he had already recognized her, her tattoo was both a curse and a blessing that way. She seated herself at the booth and slid back toward the wall before looking over at her quarry, neither of the three seemed to have noticed her, good. She recognized Kendra Canmore from the news, but she had no idea who the good-looking young man in the wheelchair was with them.

Dominique was pleased with how quickly Robert was adapting, it was obvious to her that he had never been in an establishment like this one. He had been wide-eyed and watchful ever since the host and a nearby waiter had assisted Kendra and her with their chairs, and then the waiter had opened and placed their napkins across their laps before he poured water for the table. "Males usually place their own napkins," she reassured him quietly after the waiter had left, having noticed his uncertain glance at the napkin he had placed in his own lap.

He looked up at her from his examination of the table and nodded, "silverware is outside to in?" he whispered.

"Yes," she confirmed, "just watch what Kendra and I do and you'll be fine," she reassured him.

Kendra chuckled drawing their attention, "If you sit up straight, don't rest your arms on the table like your guarding your food, and don't belch you have most of polite behavior for men covered," she commented dryly.

Dominique smirked, amused, Kendra was right. In dining, like most things in human society, there was a definite double standard when it came to acceptable male and acceptable female behavior.

Robert looked back and forth between them, taking in their expressions, "I think I can manage that." He turned his gaze to the menu in his hands. A slight frown formed on his face as he looked at it.

"Get what looks good to you Robert," Kendra commented, glancing over at him, "don't worry about the prices. I'm going to have the strip steak myself along with the Belgian endive salad and I was thinking the chilled seafood platter looks interesting as an appetizer for the table."

"Hmm," Dominique commented glancing over the menu, "I believe I'll go with the strip steak as well and a Caesar salad." Her decision made she turned her attention to the wine menu, "Wine?" she asked Kendra.

"Please," Kendra replied, "split a bottle?"

Dominique nodded, "Bordeaux or Cabernet?" she smiled as she looked up from the wine menu into her lover's blue eyes. She enjoyed the fact that Kendra seemed to know almost as much about wines as she did.

Kendra picked up the wine menu by her hand and glanced at it for a minute, "Are you really set on a Bordeaux or will a Napa Meritage do?"

Robert listened as the two women continued to discuss what wine to have with lunch, being with them was both more intimidating and more fun than he had imagined. He really hoped he hadn't disappointed Kendra with his lack of knowledge about fuel cells; the technology wasn't anything they had really discussed in depth at school, and most of what he knew he had picked up from the journals at the library. The more he was around Dominique and Kendra the more interesting the idea of working at Nightstone became to him. The idea of working with cutting edge technologies even before he started college was a definite draw for him, but it was also fascinating to watch the way people reacted to the two women. Despite the casual way the women had accepted the host and waiter's help with their chairs and napkins, he could see that not everyone got quite that level of
The waiter arriving for their orders interrupted his thoughts. He had intended on getting his steak well done as his aunt and uncle always cooked it, but hearing Kendra order hers rare and Dominique medium-rare, he tentatively ordered his medium instead.

"So," Dominique said, once they had placed their orders and the waiter had left, "you mentioned you were interested in electrical engineering. What do you know about nanoengineering?"

Her green eyes held a hint of challenge as she waited calmly for his answer. He knew almost nothing about nanoengineering, he had heard of the name and had a vague idea about what it was, but none of the companies developing it were discussing it publically yet.

"Dominique," Kendra chided her gently, "I don't know much about it either. You know no one's talking about it because you're all rushing to develop something worth patenting before you allow your R&D guys to publish."

The redhead nodded, "I know but he's going to face questions and challenges like that if he comes to work for us. They're going to see his youth and wonder why we hired him; I need to see how he does with these types of questions." Her challenging gaze turned his direction once again.

He straightened and took in a breath lifting his chin slightly; he knew that he pretty much knew nothing about the subject. "I don't really know anything about it except for the name and that it involves engineering materials such as tubes and wafers which measure only microns across."

She continued to stare at him for a moment longer before her face relaxed into an approving smile, "I would have been surprised if you had, as Kendra noted very few of the details have been published yet. I wanted you to tell me that you didn't know instead of trying to pretend that you did." His face must have registered his surprise because she continued, "I don't expect you to have the same level of knowledge as my lead researcher," she assured him. "And trust me it's much better to say up front that you don't understand something than have it come out once you've proven to everyone that you don't," she commented dryly.

Kendra snorted, "That sounds like it comes with a story."

Dominique nodded, "A former employee caused us to miss putting in a patent for a process that we should have easily beaten Xanatos Enterprises to, it cost Nightstone several million dollars in wasted research efforts." She looked over at Robert, "Not that you'll see that type of responsibility for several years, but I believe that gives you an idea of why you need to be honest about what you know and what you don't."

He looked at her searchingly; her last statement implied that she saw him working for her at Nightstone in the future, "Does that mean I have an internship this summer?" The redhead glanced over inquiringly at Kendra. Robert turned that way as well waiting for the other woman to answer.

Kendra tilted her head, "You sure you want to? She can be pretty scary when she puts her mind to it," she indicated Dominique.

Robert frowned puzzled; he didn't understand why Kendra seemed to be trying to discourage him now. He glanced over at Dominique, he wasn't afraid of her, she was still very intimidating of course, but he certainly wasn't afraid of her. Actually, he felt safer and more confident than he usually felt out in public with the two of them.

"From your expression I gather that you don't find me scary?" Dominique commented, her tone
reassuring.

He shook his head, "You're intimidating, but I'm not frightened of you."

"Good, I never want you to be," Dominique stated, looking directly at him, "but I do have a temper and there may be times when I lose it around you."

He stared back at her wide-eyed at the thought; suddenly he could see how she could be scary.

"You understand I'll be your boss when you come to work and that she's my boss there?" Kendra asked him, drawing his attention away from Dominique.

He nodded, "I understand."

Kendra grinned, "Then you have an internship this summer."

The waiter arrived with their appetizers, placing salads in front of each of them and a platter of chilled seafood in the center of the table. Robert waited until he was gone to reply, "Thank you," he returned her grin; "I think I'm looking forward to it."

The Jaguar's chosen chuckled at his reply, he cast a glance over at Dominique, but she was apparently engrossed with her salad. Her green eyes rose briefly to meet his gaze and he saw the warm amusement in them. When the redhead turned her attention to her plate he started on his own salad feeling happy inside, he wasn't certain how his aunt and uncle were going to react, but he would be 18 in only four months and they couldn't stop him from going to work at Nightstone during the summer.

They had barely finished off the seafood platter when the waiter brought out their steaks. Kendra's had an impressive amount of blood red juice or maybe just blood, draining from it. Dominique smirked; she said to Robert, "if you get that side I'll get this one in case her steak decides to make a run for it."

Robert grinned, the bloody steak reminded him of the fact that the full moon was next weekend and he wondered if Kendra normally preferred her meat this raw or it was an effect of the approaching moon.

Kendra picked up her knife and fork, with one smooth motion she sliced the steak in half, "it's not going anywhere now," she assured them. Unfortunately, the waiter chose that moment to pour wine into the two women's glasses, the man halted staring wide eyed at Kendra's plate and then quickly poured the wine and left.

Dominique held her hand over her mouth covering the smile there until the human left. As soon as he did, she dropped her hand to her lap and commented to Kendra, "We're supposed to be showing Robert how to eat in polite company, not showing him how to terrorize the wait staff."

Kendra reversed the grip she had on her knife to a more proper one, she sliced off a small strip of steak and cut it into bite-sized portions, "Can't we do both?" she asked looking up with a perfectly innocent expression.

It was too much for Dominique to keep her composure, the redhead leaned back in her seat laughing merrily, gazing over with a warmly affectionate look at her lover. She didn't pay attention to the sound of coughing in the background, nor the voice of a waiter asking if another patron was all right.

Robert joined in with Dominique's laughter, even as he marveled at how it completely changed her face. In one moment, she went from regal and slightly unapproachable to a beautiful older woman
with warmth dancing in her eyes and laugh. The loving look she gave Kendra then made a wistful lump rise in his throat, he hoped he found someone some day that he wanted to look at in that way.
Chapter 4

December 6th, 1997 (evening)

_Eyrie Building_

"You're certain," David questioned his fingers steepled in front of his chin as he considered what Fox had just told him.

"I'm certain," she assured him dryly, leaning back in her chair. "I could hardly believe what I was seeing myself." She chuckled as she saw the persistent disbelieving expression on his face. She couldn't blame him; the idea of Demona with a human was inconceivable enough, much less a Canmore and a female. She shrugged, taking a sip of her drink. "Perhaps I was wrong and I misread her expression, but I don't think I am, and over the course of their meal it happened more than once," which was what had finally convinced her that she wasn't seeing things, Fox thought, but didn't add.

He leaned back in his chair, "And the only hint we have of the identity of the young man with them is that his name is Robert, he's handicapped, and Nightstone will be employing him this summer as an intern."

Fox nodded, "That's all I was able to hear." She swung her crossed leg slowly, "So are we going to tell the clan and Maza?"

David was silent for a long moment, "No I don't think so, not until I can find out more information. They're too likely to want to confront her, and from what you said she doesn't have any intentions towards the young man other than hiring him for an internship position," he glanced at her questioningly.

"I don't think she does," Fox said reflectively, "if she did I would have expected her to look at him analytically when his attention wasn't on her, trying to judge if her efforts were successful, but if anything she looked more fond of him then."
"And you're certain she didn't see you?" David asked, wondering if Demona had been putting on a show for his wife's benefit. It wouldn't be beyond her.

"Positive," Fox replied decisively meeting his brown eyes.

He nodded, "Then yes, I think waiting until we get more information is the best idea. As much as I like Goliath's direct approach at times, in this situation it will just make her more wary and guarded. That would make the information we are seeking, both the clarification of what her relationship with Kendra Canmore is, and the identity of the young man you saw, much harder to obtain."

"Is there anyone we can buy on the inside of Nightstone?" Fox inquired.

"There's always someone you can buy for the right price," he said with a confident smirk. The smile on her face mirrored his as she commented, "True." Fox took another sip of her drink, letting it slide over her tongue, remembering the merry laughter and the warm look on Dominique Destine's face. It wasn't something she had ever expected to see, much less directed at another woman. She smirked, though if Demona had decided to switch sides she did have excellent taste, Kendra Canmore was beautiful and exotic looking with her brilliantly blue eyes and dark skin, as well as being unusually graceful in her movements. As a part of the Pack, Fox had worked on looking graceful and deadly as part of her act, but she had never managed it to the extent that Kendra Canmore did, much less how the woman made it look natural and effortless. "The next few months should be interesting," she mused aloud.

"Indeed," David agreed, his white teeth shining as he smiled broadly, "and we have front row seats."

**December 7th (evening)**

Dominique settled into in the leather seat of the Jaguar, observing Kendra intently as she drove them back to the redhead's home. The black haired woman looked incredibly good tonight; the ruffled collar and cuffs of her white blouse the only overtly feminine touch to the tailored three-piece suit she was wearing. In the dim light from the street lamps, the redhead could just see the tendons flex in the back of her lover's hands as she shifted gears and then returned her hand to the steering wheel. Dominique didn't feel like hiding the fact that the only thought on her mind was how they would feel upon her when they got to her home. The redhead shifted in her seat restlessly, her entire body felt sensitized to every touch, even the caress of her clothes against her skin. She shifted once again unable to keep still as she felt another heated anticipatory tingle of desire run though her body.

She heard an indrawn breath and looked over to see Kendra lift her head slightly her nostrils flaring. The hands on the steering wheel tightened briefly and then relaxed, darkened blue eyes met her gaze their intensity sending a bolt of heat through her body before they shifted back to the road. Dominique closed her eyes, by the Dragon she couldn't remember ever having been this aroused before without even being touched and knowing that Kendra could scent it only intensified the fiery tingling that was dancing over her skin. The car slowed and she opened her eyes, they were pulling into the driveway.

The garage door opened and Kendra pulled in, bringing the Jaguar to a stop next to the door leading into the kitchen. Dominique had just opened her door when Kendra was there holding out her hand to help her out of the low slung vehicle. She swung her legs out and allowed her lover to assist her to her feet. The long scarlet sheath dress she had on, despite the slit up the side to above her knee, didn't allow for very much movement. The look on Kendra's face when she came down the stairs after dressing though had made the effort she took tonight so very worth it. Kendra had seemed to
remember to breathe only when she reached the bottom of the stairs, "You're beautiful," she had whispered her eyes brilliantly blue.

"Dominique?" Kendra's husky voice brought her out of her memories of earlier in the evening; the black haired woman was holding the garage door open for her. She walked through it, turned and waited for Kendra to lock it with the second set of keys she had given her earlier. Their eyes met, "Let's go upstairs," her lover whispered.

Anyone following along behind them would have come across Kendra's jacket on the marble floor of the foyer, her vest on the stairs, the long red dress lying abandoned on the mahogany floor of the second story, and a few feet further the matching red high heels. The navy pants and black shoes were just inside the bedroom door, while on the floor beside the bed were the stockings and garters Dominique had wore underneath the dress along with a ruffled white blouse. The few other remaining pieces of clothing were not immediately noticeable, though they might be lost somewhere among the covers of the four-poster canopy bed.

As for the entwined figures moving together upon the bed, from the soft gasping cries, the occasional low possessive, "mine," and responding hissed, "yes," they most assuredly didn't care at the moment where their clothes were, just so long as they were no longer in the way.

December 8th 1997 (morning)

Dominique opened her eyes, the annoying sound of her alarm clock in her ears; still half-asleep, she reached out and managed to turn it off even with the arm around her waist limiting her movement. A protesting moan from behind her heralded Kendra's own awakening, she laid back upon her pillow. Scarlet red drew her attention and she looked up, her strapless bra from last night was hanging over the headboard. She stared up at it bemused, wondering exactly how it had managed to end up there. Dusky olive skinned fingers entered her field of vision; she looked over at her grinning lover as Kendra retrieved the piece of clothing and then sat up. She looked over toward the door of the bedroom, the grin getting wider. Dominique turned her head, following her lover's gaze; Kendra's pants were lying on the floor just inside the bedroom doorway. A few feet further inside the room sat one glossy black shoe, the other of the pair, lying on its side, was few feet away from it. She flushed as she remembered Kendra on her knees wearing only her white blouse and driving the redhead wild with her nips and kisses as she removed the stockings from her legs. Those would be right beside the bed. A warm kiss upon her shoulder had her returning her attention to the woman beside her, Kendra's blue eyes were dancing with amusement as she murmured, "I'll go collect our clothes."

The redhead paused in front of the full-length mirror to glance over her body briefly; she suspected that if it weren't for her healing ability, she would have marks upon her from last night. Seeing none on her creamy pale skin, she felt a brief pang of regret. She met her own green-eyed gaze in the mirror, surprised to realize that she wouldn't actually mind a few reminders of those moments when Kendra had growled possessively over her and then suckled hard on her fair, creamy skin, marking her as Dominique encouraged her lover with her urgings.

Movement drew her attention, her eyes shifted from her own to the reflection of Kendra's blue one's as the black haired woman stood naked in the doorway with an armful of their hastily removed clothing from last night. She watched still as those sapphire eyes moved over her a hint of possession in their gaze, Dominique lifted her chin proudly, feeling very aware of how beautiful and desirable her lover found her. Kendra had touched her everywhere the night previously with her massage. Last night the black haired woman had tasted her everywhere, lips, tongue, and teeth had traced
meandering paths all over her body leaving no part of her unexplored while whispering against her skin how beautiful, how desirable, how sexy she was and how much Kendra wanted her.

"You should take your shower or you won't be getting to work on time," Kendra murmured huskily.

For a moment Dominique was tempted, and then she remembered everything she needed to set in motion today. She strode into the bathroom, escaping from her temptation, and closed the door behind her, feeling the warmth of Kendra's blue eyes on her every step of the way.

As she dressed after her shower, Dominique was briefly tempted to wear something different from normal to work this day. Her hand hovered over a camel colored suit before switching to one of her favorite suits in red; with the kidnapping and her extended absence she needed to remind her employees that Dominique Destine, owner and CEO of Nightstone Unlimited had returned.

She strode into the bathroom, escaping from her temptation, and closed the door behind her, feeling the warmth of Kendra's blue eyes on her every step of the way.

As she dressed after her shower, Dominique was briefly tempted to wear something different from normal to work this day. Her hand hovered over a camel colored suit before switching to one of her favorite suits in red; with the kidnapping and her extended absence she needed to remind her employees that Dominique Destine, owner and CEO of Nightstone Unlimited had returned.

She strode into the bathroom, escaping from her temptation, and closed the door behind her, feeling the warmth of Kendra's blue eyes on her every step of the way.

As she dressed after her shower, Dominique was briefly tempted to wear something different from normal to work this day. Her hand hovered over a camel colored suit before switching to one of her favorite suits in red; with the kidnapping and her extended absence she needed to remind her employees that Dominique Destine, owner and CEO of Nightstone Unlimited had returned.

She strode into the bathroom, escaping from her temptation, and closed the door behind her, feeling the warmth of Kendra's blue eyes on her every step of the way.

As she dressed after her shower, Dominique was briefly tempted to wear something different from normal to work this day. Her hand hovered over a camel colored suit before switching to one of her favorite suits in red; with the kidnapping and her extended absence she needed to remind her employees that Dominique Destine, owner and CEO of Nightstone Unlimited had returned.

She strode into the bathroom, escaping from her temptation, and closed the door behind her, feeling the warmth of Kendra's blue eyes on her every step of the way.

As she dressed after her shower, Dominique was briefly tempted to wear something different from normal to work this day. Her hand hovered over a camel colored suit before switching to one of her favorite suits in red; with the kidnapping and her extended absence she needed to remind her employees that Dominique Destine, owner and CEO of Nightstone Unlimited had returned.

She strode into the bathroom, escaping from her temptation, and closed the door behind her, feeling the warmth of Kendra's blue eyes on her every step of the way.

As she dressed after her shower, Dominique was briefly tempted to wear something different from normal to work this day. Her hand hovered over a camel colored suit before switching to one of her favorite suits in red; with the kidnapping and her extended absence she needed to remind her employees that Dominique Destine, owner and CEO of Nightstone Unlimited had returned.

She strode into the bathroom, escaping from her temptation, and closed the door behind her, feeling the warmth of Kendra's blue eyes on her every step of the way.

As she dressed after her shower, Dominique was briefly tempted to wear something different from normal to work this day. Her hand hovered over a camel colored suit before switching to one of her favorite suits in red; with the kidnapping and her extended absence she needed to remind her employees that Dominique Destine, owner and CEO of Nightstone Unlimited had returned.

She strode into the bathroom, escaping from her temptation, and closed the door behind her, feeling the warmth of Kendra's blue eyes on her every step of the way.

As she dressed after her shower, Dominique was briefly tempted to wear something different from normal to work this day. Her hand hovered over a camel colored suit before switching to one of her favorite suits in red; with the kidnapping and her extended absence she needed to remind her employees that Dominique Destine, owner and CEO of Nightstone Unlimited had returned.

She strode into the bathroom, escaping from her temptation, and closed the door behind her, feeling the warmth of Kendra's blue eyes on her every step of the way.

As she dressed after her shower, Dominique was briefly tempted to wear something different from normal to work this day. Her hand hovered over a camel colored suit before switching to one of her favorite suits in red; with the kidnapping and her extended absence she needed to remind her employees that Dominique Destine, owner and CEO of Nightstone Unlimited had returned.

She strode into the bathroom, escaping from her temptation, and closed the door behind her, feeling the warmth of Kendra's blue eyes on her every step of the way.

As she dressed after her shower, Dominique was briefly tempted to wear something different from normal to work this day. Her hand hovered over a camel colored suit before switching to one of her favorite suits in red; with the kidnapping and her extended absence she needed to remind her employees that Dominique Destine, owner and CEO of Nightstone Unlimited had returned.

She strode into the bathroom, escaping from her temptation, and closed the door behind her, feeling the warmth of Kendra's blue eyes on her every step of the way.

As she dressed after her shower, Dominique was briefly tempted to wear something different from normal to work this day. Her hand hovered over a camel colored suit before switching to one of her favorite suits in red; with the kidnapping and her extended absence she needed to remind her employees that Dominique Destine, owner and CEO of Nightstone Unlimited had returned.

She strode into the bathroom, escaping from her temptation, and closed the door behind her, feeling the warmth of Kendra's blue eyes on her every step of the way.

As she dressed after her shower, Dominique was briefly tempted to wear something different from normal to work this day. Her hand hovered over a camel colored suit before switching to one of her favorite suits in red; with the kidnapping and her extended absence she needed to remind her employees that Dominique Destine, owner and CEO of Nightstone Unlimited had returned.

She strode into the bathroom, escaping from her temptation, and closed the door behind her, feeling the warmth of Kendra's blue eyes on her every step of the way.

As she dressed after her shower, Dominique was briefly tempted to wear something different from normal to work this day. Her hand hovered over a camel colored suit before switching to one of her favorite suits in red; with the kidnapping and her extended absence she needed to remind her employees that Dominique Destine, owner and CEO of Nightstone Unlimited had returned.

She strode into the bathroom, escaping from her temptation, and closed the door behind her, feeling the warmth of Kendra's blue eyes on her every step of the way.

As she dressed after her shower, Dominique was briefly tempted to wear something different from normal to work this day. Her hand hovered over a camel colored suit before switching to one of her favorite suits in red; with the kidnapping and her extended absence she needed to remind her employees that Dominique Destine, owner and CEO of Nightstone Unlimited had returned.

She strode into the bathroom, escaping from her temptation, and closed the door behind her, feeling the warmth of Kendra's blue eyes on her every step of the way.

As she dressed after her shower, Dominique was briefly tempted to wear something different from normal to work this day. Her hand hovered over a camel colored suit before switching to one of her favorite suits in red; with the kidnapping and her extended absence she needed to remind her employees that Dominique Destine, owner and CEO of Nightstone Unlimited had returned.

She strode into the bathroom, escaping from her temptation, and closed the door behind her, feeling the warmth of Kendra's blue eyes on her every step of the way.

As she dressed after her shower, Dominique was briefly tempted to wear something different from normal to work this day. Her hand hovered over a camel colored suit before switching to one of her favorite suits in red; with the kidnapping and her extended absence she needed to remind her employees that Dominique Destine, owner and CEO of Nightstone Unlimited had returned.
had promised to become a wise steward and guardian of to the Ancient One. The limo slowed and halted before the building. Demona took in a deep breath, thought of everything the spirit had done for her, he had freed her from manipulations of the Weird Sisters, given her the truth of her past, supported and comforted her when she was hurting, and yes, pushed and prodded her to accomplish what he believed that she could accomplish. She lifted her head resolutely as the butterflies in her stomach settled; she was not going to disappoint him.

As Gregory opened the door and assisted her from the limo, she looked up at the building, its windowed sides gleaming brightly in the morning sunlight, above it absolutely clear blue skies. She reached out mentally to the majestic stag, wondering if he was nearby watching over her. A sense of calmness flowed over her accompanied by the feel of the spirit, the wisdom, calmness, strength and kindness of him. She drew in a deep breath of the wintery cold New York air, sensing the life energy of its people dancing just out of the range of her normal vision.

She turned toward Gregory waiting beside her; he was staring at her, a puzzled and slightly bewildered expression on his face. She glanced at him with a raised questioning brow, and he almost seemed to shake himself out of whatever it was that had affected him. "Will you require my services before four o'clock this afternoon Ms. Destine?" he asked politely as he did every morning.

Usually she gave him a cool glare and assured him that she would contact him if she did, this morning she responded calmly, "Not that I'm aware of, I'll contact you if that changes."

There was a very brief flash of startlement across his face before he recovered his professional demeanor, "Of course, Ms. Destine," he politely replied.

A brief moment of mischief caused her to comment, "Excellently smooth ride in as usual, Gregory." She turned toward the building before he could reply, but she had seen the open surprise in his expression at the compliment. She shook her head at herself; Kendra's sense of humor was rubbing off on her.

Still, her lips curved upward briefly, that had been amusing.

As Dominique strode toward the doors of her company, her earlier sense of purpose and determination returned. She lifted her head high, and squared her shoulders as she walked toward the main doors. She was unaware that unlike all other mornings she was meeting her employee's eyes instead of passing them by as if they barely existed and that her own held something other than cool disinterest. She left in her wake confused and startled glances; after all, the general consensus had been that she would be in a worse mood than usual after her experiences.

Mr. Aaron Lancaster, the division manager of Sales and Marketing, and Mr. Harry Delaney, the Marketing Dept. manager, were heading into work discussing last night's football game when the sound of purposeful steps behind them caused Aaron to glance back. "Ms. Destine," he said, realizing the front doors were right in front of them he stepped forward quickly and pulled it open for her.

"Mr. Lancaster, Mr. Delaney, good morning," the redhead acknowledged them as she stepped through the door Aaron held open for her. "I trust everything has gone well during my absence in your division Mr. Lancaster," she glanced at him expectantly.

She didn't pause but continued towards the elevators; Aaron cast a confused glance at Harry and then hurried to catch up to her. "Yes, Ms. Destine," he continued to give her a very brief explanation of what had happened in his department as he entered the elevator with her. Harry stepped back from the elevator door intending on escape by taking another, but a commanding crook of a red nailed finger had him stepping obediently into the elevator with them.

When the doors closed on the three of them and began to move upward, Ms. Destine glanced at Mr.
Lancaster and held up a finger, "a moment Mr. Lancaster," she said interrupting him. He stopped speaking, confused, she turned toward his division's marketing manager, "Mr. Delaney I understand you have a meeting this morning with a representative of the Department of Defense?"

"Yes, Ms. Destine," Harry Delaney hastily acknowledged, "we're discussing the next calendar year's contracting."

"Shift the focus of those contracts away from any further weapons development to armor and defensive countermeasures," she instructed him firmly. The elevator passed the floor the two men should have gotten off on, but neither of them had been foolish enough to push that button. The only floor button lit was the thirteenth floor.

He grimaced, knowing what the DoD representative would be most interested in, "I'll try my best Ms. Destine, but I believe weapons development is what they were planning on discussing," he admitted. He stiffened; bracing himself for the redhead's legendary temper that he was certain was about to be directed his way.

Dominique reached out and hit the stop button halting the elevator and turned toward him. Noting his posture, she suspected he though she was about to yell at him. Luckily for him though she wasn't, at least not this morning, "I understand that Mr. Delaney, but as of today Nightstone Unlimited is getting out of the business of discovering better ways to kill off the human race." her tone was dryly amused. "Therefore you need to shift the focus of those discussions to the two area's I mentioned and if you cannot then set up another meeting with the DoD's representative and myself and I will explain to him why our company is no longer interested in pursuing such contracts."

He gaped at her for a moment before hastily recovering himself, "Yes, of course… I mean I'll do my best Ms. Destine so that isn't necessary."

She looked at him noting the nervousness, she knew his meeting with the DoD representative was in two hours, leaving him little time to prepare a strategy to do what she was requesting. "Mr. Delaney I understand I'm giving you little time to prepare, do your best," she reached out and pushed the start button to get the elevator moving once again, "invite Mr. McKnight and have him discuss the new ceramic composites and the laser anti-missile defense system he's working on," she suggested, her mind working through the problem. "That should take up the majority of your scheduled time. When the meeting runs long reschedule it for next week," the doors opened on the thirteenth floor, "I believe that should give you sufficient time to develop a new marketing approach." She looked over expectantly for his reply, she could see his mind working over the possibility she had presented.

His iron-grey eyes brightened, "I'll do that, thank you for the suggestion Ms. Destine."

The doors began to close and Aaron reached out and pushed the button to reopen them, "We'll have an alternate marketing strategy on your desk by the end of the week Ms. Destine," he assured her.

"Very good, Mr. Lancaster," she acknowledged before stepping out of the elevator, in her thoughts she marked one item off her days long to do list. She turned toward her office, her stride slowed as she saw the two humans rise from where they had been sitting. Her green eyes narrowed, Maza and Bluestone, undoubtedly here on the clan's behalf to see if they could get her to tell them something she hadn't mentioned to the police already.

"Ms. Destine," Candice rose from her desk as soon as she saw her, shooting a wary look at the two detectives, "I wasn't certain what to do about your morning appointments. These detectives say they have some questions about your kidnapping."

Dominique shrugged out of her coat and handed it to the waiting woman, turning to the two waiting
humans as soon as Candice took it. "Detective Bluestone, Detective Maza I wasn't aware that you had been transferred from the Task Force, how unfortunate for you," she commented with false sympathy. She stared at them waiting, ignoring the obvious hatred in Elisa Maza's brown eyes.

Bluestone looked uncomfortable, "We haven't Ms. Destine," he replied.

"Ahh," she drew out her reply, "I wasn't aware that the department engaged in a free for all when it came to its cases. I was under the impression that it was the duty of the detectives assigned to my kidnapping to ask any further questions they had, not any detective or detectives who just happen to be curious about it." She let that sink in a moment. Before Goliath's human could utter the angry comment she could see burning in those brown eyes, the redhead continued. "I'm sure you won't mind if I call your captain to ask her exactly how many detectives I should be expecting to show up at my office? That way I'll know exactly how much time I need to set aside to satisfy the personal curiosity of any random detective who decides to drop by." Her tone was sarcastically dry as she drove in the point that they had no real grounds to be here.

Elisa couldn't believe it; whenever they had come to ask Demona questions during the day before the gargoyle had spent all her time subtly glaring and sniping at her, and barely addressed Matt except for the rare response to his question. This was the first time the gargoyle had ever passed by a chance to snip at her; in fact, the redhead appeared to be pretty much completely ignoring her except for a few cool glances in her direction that held none of their usual venom. She had watched the redhead closely ever since she stepped out of the elevator and except for the narrowed eyes when she first saw them, Demona appeared remarkably calm this morning despite the irritation and sarcastic wit she was displaying.

Bluestone flushed angrily, "Ms. Destine we only have a few questions if you could give us ten minutes," he knew she had them over a barrel; he hadn't mentioned the possible involvement of the Quarrymen to anyone. They had no official reason to be here asking her questions about the kidnapping, and it would raise uncomfortable questions if the department knew they were here. He wouldn't have thought Demona would go there, she usually glared at them and then acquiesced, but she looked rather displeased and quite ready to make that phone call this morning. Maybe her first day back at work hadn't been the best time to confront her.

The elevator behind them opened with a muted chime, Dominique's gaze went past the two detectives to see who else had just arrived. Her green eyes widened in surprise when she saw Macbeth staring back at her. She drew in a breath; she hadn't expected this though she probably should have given what had happened. "Candice," she turned toward her secretary ignoring the two detectives and the approaching Macbeth, "move all of my appointment's back one hour except for the one with HR and reschedule the last appointment to tomorrow."

She turned back toward her three visitors; Macbeth was glaring angrily at Detective Maza who was staring back at him with open surprise. His actions confused her as well until she recalled that the Ancient One had returned his memories of Avalon as well. She felt a wave of embarrassment and chagrin as she remembered that he had been there when the Archmage had raged in front of her and when the Weird Sisters had replaced their enchantment upon her.

Macbeth stopped in front of the Detective, his eyes narrowed, "How dare you make decisions about our lives and what we're allowed to know, you do not know the damage you did that day," he hissed at her.

Bluestone stepped forward even as Elisa stepped back from the angry former king, "Professor McDuff," Matt put a restraining hand on the older man's arm.

Before the situation could escalate further, Dominique said softly, "Lennox," as she expected his
grey eyes swung toward her immediately. She hesitated only briefly before continuing, "They were certainly not the first to be taken in by their false claims." There was nothing to lose at this point by acknowledging it in front of Maza, if the woman hadn't guessed by now that Macbeth had his memories of Avalon back the detective was only seconds away from it, the human wasn't stupid. She could see by his flinch that her words had hit their mark, she and Macbeth were the first ones who had been completely taken in by the Weird Sisters false claims not Elisa and Goliath.

What was the human saying, in for a penny in for a pound? This was certainly guaranteed to upset Maza and the clan. She held out her hand toward him, "I've cleared my schedule for you, let's take our discussion into my office." As soon as Macbeth shook off Bluestone's restraining hand, she glanced over at Candice, "while I'm meeting with Professor McDuff type those memos I sent you over the weekend and have them hand delivered to their recipients. If anyone has any questions I'll try and fit them in tomorrow," she ordered.

"Yes, Ms. Destine," her secretary replied.

The memos directed the Research and Development Division to shift their focus and personnel from weapons research to armor and defensive systems. It also directed the project lead of R&D's Special Projects to put his entire department's efforts into developing the batteries he had engineered for the laser weapons into a commercially suitable product. The second memo was to Human Resources telling them she wanted a report on the feasibility of instituting flexible working hours, telecommuting, pre-tax elder and childcare accounts, and extending the health care plan for spouses to domestic partners. The final memo was to the legal department, it was past time for Nightstone Unlimited's silent partner to become nothing but a dim memory. They were to find a way to get Alexander Thialog's name off the incorporation documents and make Dominique Destine the sole owner of the company in every way. As she happened to know that that misbegotten clone was currently serving as a pigeon roost both day and night, Demona didn't anticipate any difficulties from him over it.

That was another task on the days to do list started, Dominique thought as she turned her attention back to the tall broad shouldered man walking toward her. With any luck, she might actually get through half of them.

"Dominique," he greeted her, halting a few paces away as if he were uncertain of his welcome. She could see the conflicting emotions in his stormy grey eyes and the way he looked at her, sorrow, pity, and a hint of old anger, though directed at her or his thoughts of them she couldn't guess.

She wouldn't take his pity, what was done was done and there was nothing either one of them could do to change the past. She lifted her head proudly; meeting his eyes letting him see her determination. Knowing that the others in the room wouldn't understand she said in the old form of Scots Gaelic that they had spoken when he was her ally. "We cannot change the past my old friend and king," she said softly, remembering Kendra's words to her the night after her memories of Avalon were returned, "but we can make a different present and future than what they intended for us."

His eyes widened at her words and their gazes meshed as his eyes searched hers. His arms rose and she grasped his forearms in a warrior's clasp as he grasped hers. They stood like that for a few seconds, Dominique was aware of the three other humans in the room staring at them in open amazement, but she didn't really care. Let Maza and Bluestone try and figure out how Macbeth and she had went from sworn enemies to friends. Macbeth was the only one who would tell them anything and her old friend only knew what it was safe for him to know and after the discussion they were about to have, he hopefully would be telling them very little.

She loosened her hold on his arms and stepped away, glancing coolly at the two detectives. She
knew Bluestone and Maza would be doggedly persistent in getting the information they had come here after, therefore it would just be easiest to give it to them. "You've caught me in a generous mood this morning detectives so I'll give you two answers." She found the surprise in their eyes rather amusing. "To the question you came to ask, yes. To the question you are worried about...no." She let it sink in for a moment before steeling her tone, "And that detectives is all you're going to get this morning, so good day to you."

She returned her attention to Macbeth, completely ignoring the two detectives. Indicating the door of her office, she smirked, unable to resist the temptation, "Lead on MacDuff."

He growled in annoyance, "you know that's lay on MacDuff, and I don't use the a."

She breezed past him, "Yes, I just wanted to see if you knew," she said sweetly.

"Woman," he complained as he entered her office and she closed the door behind them. He turned to look at her, took in the amused smile and lively sparkle in her green eyes. For a second he was painfully reminded how she had managed to trick him into falling in love with her. Demona's human form was a very beautiful woman. The smile on her face slipped away, before she could give voice to the regret that was filling her eyes and taking away their light he held up a hand, "It's ok lass, you've already apologized enough for that, let's just forget about it. Besides, that's not why I came to see you today."

Dominique straightened with a nod, "The dreams," she replied, sounding business like. She glanced at the collar of his blue shirt, "Did you get your charm made?"

In reply he pulled out the intricate iron charm on its silver chain, "and you?" he inquired remembering that the spirit had said something about providing one for her. She undid the high collar of her shirt, revealing a gold chain and lifted up a pendant of reddish stone set in gold. He leaned closer to see what was inscribed upon it, and saw the image of a woman. He met her eyes questioningly.

She lifted an eyebrow, "The spirit broke the fey enchantments upon us Macbeth, including the one that Puck placed on me allowing me to be human during the day." She replaced the pendant and buttoned her shirt, "The charm replaces that spell as well as protecting me from being enchanted again."

"I didn't even think about that," he said chagrined.

A smile curved her red lips, "Thankfully the spirit did."

He shook his head ruefully, remembering his original purpose this morning, at her questioning look he said, "I came in here today to try and figure out if the dreams were real."

Dominique tilted her head to the side curiously, "And how did you intend to determine that?"

From his pocket he pulled out the small device he had built, "it delivers a decent jolt but does no damage; it's enough for us to make sure we aren't linked anymore." He had already tested it out earlier in the weekend to make sure it worked as he thought it should, so now he didn't hesitate to press it against his hand and activate it. With a mumbled oath, he pulled his hand away from the machine shaking it with a growl of irritation, she hadn't moved except to stare at him, one brow raised high.

"And now I suppose you expect me to do that?" she asked dryly.

Without responding he tossed it to her, she caught it easily. Her brow hadn't lowered one millimeter,
"I am not going around with a burn mark on my hand."

He showed the palm of the hand he had tested himself with to her, "It won't leave a mark, I said it did no damage and I meant it."

She sighed in irritation, a moment later the device was returned to him a bit more forcefully than he had tossed it to her. "I didn't feel anything," he said, his relief apparent.

"Did you really expect to?" she asked, shaking her still tingling hand, honestly surprised that he had doubted the Ancient One's word.

"I didn't know," he said sitting down, "after what the Weird sisters did to us…"

Her eyes softened, "I understand, I was hesitant to place my trust in him at first as well, but everything the spirit said he would do he has done."

Something in her tone caught his attention, a level of affection and respect that seemed odd given the amount of time they had spent with the spirit. "He does seem to have," he agreed.

She turned her chair toward her and sat in it, "There is one thing that he reminded me about that I don't remember him telling you," she said fixing him with a serious look. "While the charms will make sure we can't be enchanted, they don't protect us from direct magical attacks."

He sank into the chair on the opposite side of Dominique's desk, a frown on his face, "Do you expect them to attack us?"

"After what they did to us just to have their revenge on the Magus can you say they wouldn't?" she countered.

His frown deepened, and he leaned back in the chair and absent-mindedly stroked his beard as he considered the question. The more he thought about the lengths they had went to get their revenge upon the Magus and how willing they had been to kill the young gargoyles and humans that had taken refuge on Avalon, the more likely the possibility seemed to him. "No, I can't," he finally acknowledged, "the more I consider it the more likely that seems."

She nodded, "That was my analysis of the situation as well. We need time to prepare for a direct attack upon us." She leaned forward in her chair, "Right now Oberon has every fey except one with him on Avalon and they're not supposed to leave the island without his direct permission."

Macbeth frowned, "How do you know this?" He didn't remember being informed of any of this information.

"The spirit told me at the same time he warned me we weren't immune to direct attacks," she responded.

Obviously, the spirit had spent a lot more time with Demona than with him, Macbeth thought staring at the redhead across from him. "Which fey is not on Avalon?"

"Puck, who pretends to be the human Owen Burnett, personal assistant to David Xanatos," Dominique watched his grey eyes widen, "which means there is a possible conduit of information from Xanatos, the two detectives and the clan directly to Avalon and the Weird Sisters."

He groaned, remembering what he had said to Elisa Maza.

Dominique smiled wryly, "The only thing they know right now is that you remember the events on
Avalon and, given that we didn't try and kill one another, that I do as well." She paused and leaned forward in her chair, her gaze intent, "They do not know exactly what we overheard, nor do they know that the spirit removed the enchantments on us. When Goliath comes to talk to you all he needs to know is why we aren’t enemies."

Macbeth stared back at her considering her words, "We don't know that Puck would tell them," he pointed out.

"Why take that chance until we are ready in case he does," she immediately countered.

He leaned back in the chair and stared at her, "What about the enchantment the Weird Sisters placed on you, doesn't the clan deserve to know why you kept attacking them." He could see her fingers whiten upon the armrests of her chair, betraying her reaction to his words, "Don't you deserve for them to know why you did your best to drive them away from you?"

She smiled bitterly, "I'm not sure it would make a difference at this point, and I'm still not willing to risk everything just to tell the clan about that enchantment."

"Are you sure you just don't want them to know what they did to you," he saw her flinch, her eyes fell away from his and knew he was at least partially right. Placing his hands on his knees, he leaned forward, "Demona I saw your clan together enough to know that one of the hardest things for a gargoyle to endure is being alone. What they did to you was beyond cruel." He waited until she was looking at him again before continuing, "Lass you don't deserve to be alone anymore, you thought you were protecting them from the hunters, give them the chance to protect you."

Her eyes widened in surprise as she realized he was trying to help her become part of the Wyvern clan once again. Her expression softened, "Macbeth I can't go back to being the gargoyle I was a thousand years ago, I don't fit in there anymore." She took in a hesitant breath, suddenly having a lot more empathy for why Kendra had been hesitant to tell her mother that she was gay. She had no idea how Macbeth would react to this, "And I'm not alone, though I suspect my choice will come as rather a shock to everyone."

Macbeth stared at her in surprise, wondering whom she was talking about and why she would say it would be a shock. Brilliantly blue eyes warning him away from Demona flashed in his mind, "Kendra Canmore?!"

Dominique's green eyes narrowed, her chin raised, "And what if it is?" she said challengingly.

He opened his mouth, closed it on the words as the thought the better of them seeing the rising temper in her narrowed eyes. "You know she's human right?" he blurted.

The redhead stared at him silently for a few seconds, finally her lips twitched, "I had noticed that a few times," she replied dryly. He flushed, she leaned back in her chair, "That's all you have to say? She's human?" she was clearly amused.

He stared at her, even though he had guessed accurately, somehow he hadn't really thought he would be right. "Well there is the part about her being a Canmore, and a woman." For some reason his mind flashed to the past, and he remembered how Gruoch had always been somehow immune to the gargoyles temper, even when Demona was in a foul mood she wouldn't lash out at his wife. He had always attributed it to the fact that Gruoch reminded Demona of her more innocent self, the one who had been completely devoted to and in love with Goliath as Gruoch was with him. Now he wondered, "I didn't know that you were..." he searched for the right word, "bisexual."

She snorted softly, "Neither did I until Kendra came into my life," her face softened markedly and
her eyes brightened as she smiled, "and proceeded to turn it completely upside down."

He took in the slight flush to her cheeks, the pleased, even joyous expression on her face. It had been centuries since he had seen her look so completely happy. "How long have you known her?" he asked curiously. He still wasn't certain what he thought of the relationship, but this stint as a university professor and his own experiences over the centuries had broadened his outlook on the world. He certainly wasn't about to condemn something that brought such evident joy to his old friends life, especially now that he knew how tormented she had been by the Weird Sisters.

The pink tinge to her cheeks increased as she admitted, "Almost a month."

Several responses ran though his mind, all of them likely to raise her ire.

"I know it's not been long," she acknowledged, his expression having given away his doubts, "and we're still figuring everything ourselves." Her smile became crooked as she confided, "Along with everything else that's one of the reasons I'm not interested in getting involved with the clan right now, I don't need them or their opinions in the middle of things, not when I'm still getting used to it myself."

"You don't think they would take it well?" He asked, puzzled, "I wasn't aware that gargoyles had any prejudices against such relationships."

"The subject has never come up before as far as I know," her eyes met his squarely, "I'm the only one I know about or have ever known about."

Macbeth stared at her in surprise, "Oh," he said somewhat weakly.

Ruefully she agreed, "Yes, oh. I have no idea how they will react since it has literally never come up before." She glanced over at the time, she wanted to make sure they were able to go over exactly what Macbeth would tell the clan when they came seeking him out as they undoubtedly would either tonight or tomorrow night. "I only have an hour, so shall we work on what you will say to the clan," she finished wryly, "probably tonight?"

He chuckled, knowing that she was most likely correct about how Goliath would react to the news of their friendly meeting.

West 57th Street – Kendra's Condo

Kendra glanced over at the ringing phone irritated; her answering machine had been filled with requests from various reporters to interview her. This was probably another one of them, or one of the same one's trying yet again. She returned her attention to her laptop, Dominique wanted a list of companies involved in fuel cell production and research and Kendra's evaluation of their value to Nightstone by the end of the week. She already knew about a lot of the companies involved in the field, but there were always new advances and new players.

"Ms. Canmore," Gregory's voice on the answering machine came as a surprise and she reached over and picked up the phone while shutting off the answering machine.

"Gregory, it's Kendra Canmore," she said to let him know she had picked up the phone. There was a small crease between her brows as she tried to think of why Dominique's driver would be calling her.

"Ms Canmore," he sounded relieved, "I was hoping I could reach you here. This morning after Ms. Destine entered the building I was approached by a man who offered me money in exchange for
information about Ms. Destine's movements."

"Oh just tell her the truth," another male voice broke in loudly, Kendra's brow raised as she listened to his voice, that was a queen, or if he wasn't one he was certainly doing a good imitation of one. "Someone's sniffing around trying to figure out if you two are lovers, cause they asked Greg how many times he had seen you two together and how you acted around one another. They wanted him to call and let them know whenever you two go out."

"Michael," Gregory's chastising voice identified the other male.

"It's alright Gregory," Kendra assured him, "that's the specific type of information I needed to know. How much did they offer you?"

A few seconds of silence passed before he responded, "The man kept upping the price, I guess he thought I just wanted more money, but I wouldn't do that to you or Ms. Destine." Something in his tone told her that there was a story behind it, and it didn't take a genius to guess that someone had done that to him or someone he cared about and the fallout hadn't been pretty.

"I appreciate that Gregory," she said softly, "but I need to know so I can give her an idea about how hard their trying to buy that information. Since they didn't get it from you they'll just go elsewhere and that elsewhere might not have the same scruples as you."

"I threatened to turn him into security, so I don't know how high he would have gone but the last offer was twenty thousand per each piece of information," Gregory responded.

Kendra was impressed and worried, that was a lot of money to tempt someone with, "They really want it then."

"That was why I decided to call you Ms. Canmore," Gregory responded.

"That and I told him he could go out and buy one of those suction cup dildo's if he wanted any for the next month if he didn't," Michael's voice broke in once again making it clear he had been listening in on the conversation.

"Michael!" Gregory's voice was utterly appalled.

Kendra's eyebrows rose in shock for a brief moment, and then she bent over in laughter. Above the sound of her own merriment, she could hear Gregory complaining, "I can't believe you said that to her..."

"Oh please," Michael interrupted sarcastically, "does it sound like she has a problem with it?"

"It's ok Gregory," Kendra assured him trying to get control of herself, "though I wouldn't recommend saying that around Ms. Destine," she couldn't help but add with a chuckle.

He sounded relieved, "That's one of the reasons I contacted you, Ms Canmore, I wasn't sure how Ms. Destine would react..." he hesitated before finishing, "to any of this."

Kendra smirked, she wasn't certain if he meant the attempts at bribery, the fact that he was gay, or his boyfriend. "I'll contact her but I need his description first," she said, "tell me everything you remember about this guy."

"He had brown eyes, dark hair that was short and parted on the side, he was a little taller than I am..." Gregory began.
Twenty minutes later at Nightstone Unlimited

Dominique hung up the phone after talking to security, they would begin sweeping the building looking for anyone who wasn't an employee and verifying that they had a legitimate reason to be there. Candice was currently informing the division managers to be on alert for any information gathering attempts. The redhead smirked; fortunately, corporate espionage was such a business reality that this particular attempt likely wouldn't gain any more attention or remarks than usual, no matter what information whoever was funding this was after.

She didn't understand why Gregory had called Kendra instead of simply walking in and informing security, but given the size of the bribe he had been offered, she was relieved that the human hadn't just taken it. Five minutes worth of conversation would have made him a richer man. In the past she hadn't worried about what Gregory knew, after all what was he going to tell someone, that he drove her to and from work and occasionally stopped by the grocery store? Now though it was different, she did have something to protect, not because she was ashamed that Kendra was her lover, but because she wanted control of when that information was revealed and to whom it was revealed.

The few seconds before Macbeth's response, when she had informed him that she was no longer alone, had ended up being surprisingly tense when she realized that she didn't know enough about his views on such relationships to know whether Macbeth would accept her or become self-righteous and condemn her. She had chosen to take that chance with her old ally and it had worked out in her favor, but it had also shown her that she didn't want such moments to come as a surprise. She didn't like the idea of someone blindsiding her with the question of what her relationship was with Kendra when she wasn't prepared for it or the possible outcomes from answering it.

This morning was one of the very few times she had ever complimented Gregory. The few words she had said about his driving hardly seemed like a sufficient reason for him to have not taken that bribe. In the past, she would have attributed his refusal to his fear of her or of losing his job; however, Kendra said his reason was a personal one. Dominique had tried to get Kendra to tell her, but the black haired woman had been adamant that she needed to wait until after work to hear it. That had only made Dominique more curious. For right now though, she would have to settle for simply being grateful that her driver had not taken the bribe and that he had informed them about the attempt.
December 8th, 1997

_Nightstone Unlimited HQ, Lower East Side Manhattan_

“Mr. Cleveland,” Dominique looked up from the Operations Division report she was reading as the door opened and the division manager of Human Resources entered with a plain manila folder in his hand. “If you’ll have a seat, I’ll be through here in a moment.” She barely paid attention to his acknowledgement as she returned her attention to the report in her hand. It was, as usual, concise and to the point, and she wished more of her division managers showed the same level of competency in writing theirs.

She laid the report down and looked at the division manager sitting in the chair on the other side of her desk. She took in the ill fitting black suit and slouched shoulders that only made his thin frame appear even weaker, the thin strands of fine brown hair that tried to hide the fact that he was going bald, the sharp beady eyes and perpetual frown. Mr. Cleveland was one of the division managers that would benefit from looking over and imitating Ms. Wright’s work, and interestingly enough, though most of her employees were annoying her less than usual today, the sight of this one annoyed her just as much as it had before the kidnapping.

“That is the employment offer for Ms. Canmore?” she inquired, glancing at the folder in his hands.

He opened the folder pulled out some papers held together with a paper clip, and extended them over the desk to her, “This is the employment offer for Ms. Canmore, Ms. Destine. I wasn’t certain what salary you wanted to offer, so I wrote down the company’s standard starting range for a position of this type.”

Dominique took the papers and scanned over them, the salary range was what she had expected; however, there was no mention of any stock options as she had requested. “Why is there no mention
of offering stock in lieu of a portion of her salary? Did Candice not pass that instruction on to you?” She knew that wasn’t the case, as her secretary had blind copied her on the email she sent to HR as per her standing policy when her secretary sent out any instructions in her name, but she wanted to see what he would reply.

Mr. Cleveland shifted uncomfortably, “Ms. Destine you can’t offer stock options without Mr. Thailog’s approval unless you are planning on offering them out of your own share of the company.”

Her green eyes narrowed at the mention of the name, “Ah yes the absent Mr. Thailog,” she commented in a deceptively soft tone, “You are aware, of course, that no one’s heard from him in almost a year.”

It was something, the nervous flicker of his eyes, the little twitch in his face. Even as he was agreeing, “I believe so Ms. Destine,” she was wondering if she had really gotten rid of all of Thailog’s moles during her reorganization of the company following the miserable male’s betrayal of her and what she had thought was the clone’s fiery demise.

“Mmm,” she pretended to return her attention to the employment offer for Kendra in her hand. Fire him now or see if he would lead to something interesting, Dominique weighed the two options that immediately came to her mind. She decided to see if he would lead to anything interesting, “We’ll table the stock options for a few months then. It shouldn’t take legal long to either find him or get the courts to declare him missing and presumed dead, whereupon his share of Nightstone will default to me,” her gaze returned to his face in time to savor the look of surprise and dismay upon his pale, thin face before he smoothed his expression over. “I believe that settles the employment offer for Ms. Canmore, was there something else Mr. Cleveland?”

“Well Ms. Destine, about these changes you want to make to the company’s employee benefits,” the redhead could easily hear the disapproval in his tone as he spoke. “Nightstone followed standard employment practices for New York City in including sexual orientation in its EEO statement, but offering medical benefits to those people is clearly beyond anything that our competitors are doing.”

Dominique leaned back in her chair, interlacing her fingers over her stomach. Everything had been going so well this morning until now, she had begun thinking that this idea of all humans having inherent worth might not be so difficult for her to accept. Then Mr. Cleveland had to come along and remind her of why she had been doubtful that she could actually embrace that concept. “Those people,” she repeated evenly, “by that I’m assuming you mean gays and lesbians.”

He was at least smart enough to not mistake her even tone for acceptance, she noticed as he began looking distinctly uncomfortable. That hint though, didn’t stop him from pursing his lips as if he were tasting something foul as he replied, “Yes, Ms. Destine I meant gays and lesbians.”

“I assume by your tone then that you do not actually agree with Nightstone’s EEO statement?” she asked, feigning a lack of real interest in his answer. Her plan of just a few seconds ago, to let him remain employed while monitoring his activities to see if he attempted to contact Thailog, was no longer an option in her mind. This human was not going to remain her Human Resources division manager, before she fired him though, she would see just how deep a hole he would dig himself. If he admitted that he had violated Nightstone’s EEO policy she would not only be able to fire him, but deny him his severance package as well, a thought that gave her a rather vicious sense of satisfaction. Waiting until nightfall to grab this human and drop him into the Hudson River from very far above the city might not be an option for her anymore, but that didn’t mean she had to let him escape entirely unscathed.

She saw the wary expression in his eyes just before he carefully responded, “Of course not Ms. Destine, I fully support all of Nightstone’s personnel policies.”
It was all Dominique could do to not reveal her annoyance; Mr. Cleveland’s survival instincts were obviously quite good. An old memory rose in her mind, it was one of the times when food had been very hard to find, she had been flying over a field when she spotted a hare, unfortunately it had spotted her as well and dived into its hole just before she dove to catch it. Knowing that it would come out as soon as it felt itself safe, she had altered her course and circled above the field patiently waiting for the animal to appear once again. She had had that night and its flesh had tasted all the sweeter for the effort she put in to catch it. She fixed the human sitting across from her with a stern look, “That’s good to hear Mr. Cleveland, because I don’t care about my employees personal lives only their work,” she stated in a firm tone.

He nodded nervously, “I understand completely Ms. Destine.”

She continued in the same firm tone, “As for the other, I was asking for a report on the financial cost to the company of such a benefit,” abruptly her tone turned sharply chill, “not anyone’s personal views on the subject.”

She could see his prominent adam’s apple bob up and down in his thin throat as he swallowed, “Of course Ms. Destine, I’ll get started on that immediately.”

As soon as the door to her office shut behind his swiftly retreating figure, she picked up the phone and dialed a number. Dominique could guess that trying to prove Mr. Cleveland was breaking the company EEO policy would be difficult to impossible. However, if he had been following Thailog’s orders during the past year or attempted during the next few days to contact Thailog to get instructions from him, the HR division manager would be in direct violation of the instructions she had issued as soon as she had returned to work after the Coney Island fire. Those instructions had reminded all employees that Mr. Thailog had only been given authority to direct the company during her scheduled absence and now that she had returned, he was no longer to be considered part of the company’s management team. As Nightstone Unlimited’s majority shareholder and CEO, she had ordered all employees to cease following any directives issued by Mr. Thailog as of that date and to report any attempts by Mr. Thailog to issue such orders to her. If she could find any proof that Mr. Cleveland was in violation of those instructions it would give her the reason she needed to fire him.

“Ms. Conrad,” she interrupted the woman’s standard company greeting, “Has the network monitoring equipment and software I ordered for your department been received?”

“It has Ms. Destine, I had the network team install the monitoring devices last week during our normally scheduled downtime and the monitoring agents were installed in the last update,” as usual the IT’s division manager spoke in a brisk, decisive tone that matched her personality perfectly.

The last time the network had unexpectedly went down, Dominique had stormed down to the IT department intending on ripping someone’s head off for the disruption to her work. Instead, she had stopped in the doorway to watch first in astonishment, and then in grudging admiration, as the slender short woman standing over one of her technicians and watching his computer screen, orchestrated the controlled chaos of technicians calling out information as they typed furiously at their computers and ran in and out of the room to perform the various tasks she set for them. In between issuing orders and listening to the information she was receiving, Ms. Conrad had given Dominique an update on the source of the problem, a virus ridden personal laptop someone had connected to the network, and the steps she was taking to stop the spread of the infection and remediate the problem. Much calmer than she had arrived, and impressed despite herself with the petite blonde woman, Dominique had growled that she expected the problem to be fixed as soon as possible no matter how late people had to work, and that she expected a full report on how to make sure this did not happen again before leaving.

“Very good,” Dominique almost purred the words out in her satisfaction, “I want all communications


to and from Mr. Cleveland monitored and I want all of his computer records searched for any indication that he either has received and acted upon instruction from Mr. Thailog or that he is seeking to contact Mr. Thailog for instructions.”

There was a brief hesitation before the woman on the other end of the phone replied briskly, “I’ll start monitoring his communications and searching though his files for that information immediately Ms. Destine.”

Dominique warned her sternly, “I don’t want him alerted that we’re monitoring him.”

“I’ll do it myself Ms Destine,” Ms. Conrad promised, “he won’t suspect a thing.”

As she hung up the phone, Dominique wondered if she had imagined the hint of satisfaction in her IT division manager’s voice.

Nightstone Unlimited – three hours later

Her stride purposeful, Dominique entered the executive level conference room with Kendra beside her. The black haired woman paused at the doorway while the redhead took her usual seat at the head of the oval table. Following along behind them were Ms. Conrad, Mr. Justin Burns, Human Resources Hiring manager and second in line behind Mr. Cleveland, Mrs. Merrill, the Administrative Division Manager, and Mr. Weiss, Nightstone’s Senior Legal Council. Mr. Cleveland was already seated at the table, unaware that Dominique had just notified the other division managers that the afternoon meeting was running approximately thirty minutes late. As the last person walked into the room, Kendra quietly shut the door behind them. Candice would post a notice on it warning people not to enter.

Mr. Cleveland looked up from the papers he was reading and glanced around the room with a frown, noticing they were short several division managers. He cast an inquisitive look at Mr. Burns, who responded with a tense looking shrug as the short, rotund man’s grey eyes slid uneasily away from the hazel one’s of his boss.

Mr. Cleveland turned towards Dominique, a wary look on his face, and in a carefully diffident tone inquired, “Ms. Destine I wasn’t aware that Mr. Burns was supposed to be at this meeting.”

Dominique glanced at him, “That’s alright Mr. Cleveland, neither did he until a short while ago when I requested his presence.” The coolness of her gaze was enough to discourage him from asking any more questions and enough to make him even more wary and nervous looking.

The redhead shifted her attention from him to her IT Division manager, “Ms. Conrad I requested that you audit Mr. Cleveland’s computer account earlier today,” she ignored the thin man’s violent start at this news as she continued evenly, “If you will share your findings with us.”

“Ms. Destine,” Ms. Conrad acknowledged her as she opened up the folder in front of her, “As you requested I monitored Mr. Cleveland’s communications and scanned the files on his computer and network folder for any mention of Mr. Thailog. At 12:10 pm Mr. Cleveland sent the following encrypted communication from his computer…”

“You had no right!” he protested, giving the blonde woman a nasty look.

Before Dominique could respond Ms. Conrad looked him in the eye and coolly replied, “Perhaps you’ve missed the notice when you sign on every day that notifies you that you have no right to privacy while using the company’s computers and network?”

He flushed, the red extending all the way down his neck. Before he could say anything more,
Dominique interrupted firmly, “Now that the subject of your lack of privacy rights has been covered,” the redhead ignored the angry look the man turned her way, “if you will continue Ms. Conrad.”

The blonde nodded, “Normally the encryption would prevent us from reading the message, but as I was monitoring his computer directly, I was able to see the message before it was encrypted. This is the message Mr. Cleveland sent at 12:10 pm today.” She picked up a piece of paper and began reading off it, “Mr. Thailog I learned this morning that Ms. Destine is beginning the legal process to have you declared dead so that she can claim your portion of the company. I would be pleased to assist you in this matter to prevent this travesty from occurring, please send me instructions detailing what actions you wish me to take to protect your interests. Your last instructions to me were several months ago, it is unfortunate that that woman heading the IT Division detected the monitoring software I placed on Ms. Greene’s computer, but I assure you I can do better if you give me another opportunity.”

Dominique could see Mr. Cleveland’s beady hazel eyes darting around the table nervously. “Mr. Cleveland,” she said, her tone softly dangerous, “Since I discussed the wording of the instructions I issued several months ago regarding Mr. Thailog with you, I’m certain that you are aware of their contents. Would you care to explain to me why you not only completely disregarded them, but also installed software to monitor my secretary’s computer?”

The nervousness in his demeanor vanished abruptly as he glared at her and snarled, “Mr. Thailog explained to me that he was supposed to be the majority partner, that you changed the agreement during the incorporation process without notifying him or seeking his approval. You had no right to issue those instructions freezing him out of the company’s decision making process since he owns almost as much of Nightstone Unlimited as you.”

The redhead leaned back in her chair, she hadn’t expected that this human would have the backbone to do anything other than fold and plead that she not fire him, it almost impressed her. Even better, however, was the fact that his outburst presented an excellent opportunity for her to make public certain carefully crafted pieces of information that were equal parts misdirection and truth. “Tell me Mr. Cleveland have you ever met Mr. Thailog in person?” She already knew he hadn’t, the communications Ms. Conrad had found indicated this clearly. In addition, she knew the clone had been even more paranoid than she was about letting humans know he was a gargoyle. Dominique saw Kendra tense in her chair and glance at her quickly before relaxing once again. She could guess that Kendra had picked up on the fact that she was not worried about Mr. Cleveland’s answer.

Mr. Cleveland frowned, “No, but then Mr. Thailog is often out of the country.”

Dominique chuckled dryly, “I assure you that during the entire two months Mr. Thailog was running this company he was in this city.”

Mrs. Merrill was the one who asked the question Dominique was waiting to be asked, “But then why didn’t he come into the office?”

Dominique shrugged, “I’m not certain, but then I’ve never met Mr. Alexander Thailog in person either, as far as I know no one has ever met the man in person. My guess is he has some mental issue or medical problem that prevents him from leaving his home and interacting with other people in person.” Everyone but Kendra looked stunned by this information. “I made that change to the incorporation document because I knew that due to Mr. Thailog’s eccentricity I would be the sole person running the company in its day to day operations. Mr. Thailog had two weeks to protest the changes; they would have even come to his home if he had informed them he was physically unable to come into their offices. He let the two weeks pass without taking any action to prevent the
incorporation from becoming final.” She turned back to Mr. Cleveland, “Now, Mr. Cleveland knowing that Mr. Thailog had every chance to protest the changes I made and did not because he refused to leave his home or have anyone come and visit him, would you care to make that claim again that he would be a better choice to run this company? A man who can’t or won’t interact with any of you or our customer’s face to face?”

The man’s pale skin looked pasty as he admitted, “No, Ms. Destine I would not.”

The redhead examined him coolly, taking in the defeated posture, the haunted look as he accepted what was about to happen. “If you had bothered to look up the incorporation process in France, you would have realized that Mr. Thailog was lying to you Mr. Cleveland. It’s unfortunate for you that you did not,” she turned to the companies legal counsel sitting to her left, “Mr. Weiss would you lay out Mr. Cleveland’s options for him please.”

It only took ten more minutes for him to sign the papers agreeing that he would leave Nightstone Unlimited immediately and without any severance package in exchange for the company not pursuing criminal and civil charges against him for his actions. Dominique sat back in her chair, savoring her victory as she watched the lanky man and the security officer escorting him leave. During the meeting, one of the technicians in Ms. Conrad’s division had taken his computer to investigate it further, and Mrs. Merrill’s assistant packed his belongings and took them down to the security desk for him to take on his way out of the building.

Dominique checked her watch, firing Mr. Cleveland had only taken twenty five minutes, almost exactly what she had expected. “If you need a break we have five minutes until the afternoon Division Manager’s meeting,” she announced.

Mr. Weiss nodded to her, “Do you require my presence any longer Ms. Destine?”

“No, I do not,” Dominique responded, “have a good afternoon Mr. Weiss,” she added in a pleasant tone, pleased at how quickly he had gotten together the paperwork to get rid of Mr. Cleveland.

He wished her a pleasant afternoon in return and left, and she glanced over at the blue-eyed woman who was regarding her with a mildly amused expression. There was no one else in the room with them at the moment as Ms. Conrad, Mr. Burns and Mrs. Merrill had taken the offer to take a short break. “What?” Dominique asked in a low tone.

“You’re in a good mood,” Kendra observed with a small grin.

Dominique glanced at the door, it and the hallway outside was still empty, “That man’s annoyed me ever since he was hired,” she admitted quietly, “until today though I had no reason to get rid of him, and then he gave me not one but two good reasons.” Kendra was right she was in a good mood, the obvious defeat in the humans posture had gone a long way to soothe the anger she had felt ever since his statement about offering medical benefits to domestic partners in her office.

The redhead glanced over at her lover, Kendra had been a great help to her this afternoon. It had confirmed in Dominique’s mind that she had been correct to offer Kendra the position she had, and made her hope that the black haired woman would decide in a few months to continue working for her. Kendra had signed her employment papers with Mr. Cleveland while giving him no hint that he was being investigated and that enough had already been found to fire him. Then she had then gone down to the IT Division to assist Ms. Conrad with searching through his files for other incriminating documents. That had allowed Dominique the time she needed to meet with Mrs. Merrill and Mr. Weiss to have them draw up the legal documents to offer Mr. Cleveland the choice of leaving quietly without his severance package or have the company pursue legal action against him.
A tall slender woman with long ash blonde hair walked into the room, “Ms. Destine, Ms. Canmore,” she greeted them quietly as she took a seat at the table a notepad, pen and thin sheaf of papers in her hand.

“Ms. Wright,” Dominique responded. The redhead watched as Candice entered the room with a steno pad and pen and took her usual seat at the conference table to take notes. As soon as all the division managers were seated around the table she began the meeting, “Ms. Canmore you’ve already met Ms. Conrad, Mrs. Merrill and Mr. Burns.” The redhead began going around the table introducing everyone, “This is Ms. Wright the division manager for Operations,” she indicated the woman who had come in first, “Mr. Takana of the Financial Division, Mr. Pierre of Research and Development, and Mr. Lancaster of Sales and Marketing.”

Kendra nodded to each division manager as they were introduced, her sapphire blue eyes evaluating them briefly before moving onto the next. Her gaze returned to the large, muscular man Dominique had introduced as Mr. Pierre as soon as Dominique finished the introductions, searching his ebony features. There was something familiar about him.

He smiled at her, “Ms. Canmore,” he responded in a deep, smooth French accented voice to her searching look.

Kendra’s eyes widened slightly as the distinctive voice along with his appearance jarred loose the memory; yes, she had met this man before. “Mr. Pierre,” she gave him a brief return smile before turning her attention to Dominique. The redhead glanced at both of them curiously, but didn’t ask about the brief exchange. Kendra guessed that she would later when they were both alone.

Suspecting that many of the managers had heard about the man’s ignoble departure from the building only minutes before, Dominique started the meeting by announcing, “Mr. Cleveland’s employment with the company ended this afternoon. Mr. Burns has agreed to temporarily take his position while we go through the hiring process for a new division manager,” Dominique stated, explaining the presence of the rotund man at the table. “I’ll take this opportunity to remind everyone that I remain quite serious about the instructions I issued several months ago. Mr. Thailog is not part of the management of this company, and I will not tolerate anyone either seeking him out for business related decisions or following any such instructions issued by him.”

Ms. Wright straightened her shoulders and met Dominique’s gaze, “Was Mr. Cleveland successful in his attempt to contact Mr. Thailog?”

The redhead leaned back in her chair, “Mr. Cleveland hasn’t received any communications from Mr. Thailog in several months. Neither have I, which is why I have instructed our legal department to try and ascertain the whereabouts of Mr. Thailog. If they cannot locate him we will report him as missing to the legal authorities and attempt to have him legally declared dead or at least have the courts assign someone to take care of his business interests.”

The tanned blonde woman nodded, and seeing that there were no more questions about Mr. Thailog, Dominique continued. “Also, I expect everyone without exception to strictly adhere to Nightstone’s EEO policy, I will tolerate no discriminatory practices in this company and I would strongly suggest that if anyone has any intolerance toward any group mentioned in our EEO policy that they either start seeking new employment or work on becoming more tolerant.” Dominique looked around the table, meeting everyone’s eyes. Some of the expressions on her division manager’s faces were not quite what she expected, given the stern tone with which she had delivered her statement.

Mr. Pierre cleared his throat, and Dominique glanced over at him, “For myself Ms. Destine, that will not be a problem, and I would like to thank you for standing so firmly behind Nightstone’s non-discriminatory practices. Mr. Cleveland’s attitudes towards certain groups of people were well
known in the company, many of us found it disconcerting that he remained the division manager for Human Resources.”

Dominique stared at the ebony skinned man, reading between the lines of his statement. What he meant was that many of them thought she agreed with Mr. Cleveland’s attitudes and thus hadn’t come to her with their concerns about those same attitudes. She frowned, “Now that you know where I stand I expect such matters to be brought to the appropriate person’s attention immediately. If I had been made aware that Mr. Cleveland’s personal views were interfering with his duties as the division manager of Human Resources, I would have terminated his employment sooner Mr. Pierre.”

He nodded, “Yes, Ms. Destine,” he easily agreed.

She held his gaze for a moment longer before looking down at the first item on her meeting agenda. “I’m sure that all of you have heard by now of the new division Ms. Canmore heads, New Technologies and Special Projects,” Dominique began, “and you are all wondering what exactly this new division’s role will be in the company.” She paused only a second to take a glance around the table before continuing, “The division’s primary role will be to research emerging technologies and the businesses developing them for possible acquisition or investment by Nightstone Unlimited. The division’s secondary role will be as a troubleshooting team, and its third role will be to complete whatever other special projects I assign to it.”

Kendra looked around the table and could see a lot of puzzled looks; it was a widely diverse set of roles for a division to be assigned.

“As for personnel to be assigned to the new division,” Dominique shifted her attention to Mrs. Merrill, “Ms. Canmore will need a secretary to prepare reports and a personal assistant to carry out research duties. Until she gets a better idea of how many personnel she will need to carry out the division’s duties that will be all the permanent personnel assigned to the new division.” The redhead stopped there, and let the silence draw out as she watched her division managers with a small sly smile. She let them stare at her with puzzled expressions for a few more seconds before speaking again, “The remainder of the personnel for the division will be temporarily drawn from the existing divisions depending on the specific nature of the tasks assigned to the new division.” Before anyone could voice a protest at having their people borrowed, even temporarily, Dominique continued, “Mr. Pierre, Ms. Canmore will be meeting with you tomorrow morning to discuss which of your researchers would be best suited to evaluate the various fuel cell technologies currently in commercial production and the companies developing them for possible acquisition or investment.”

Out of the corner of her eye, Dominique could see Mr. Takana sit up in his chair; formerly she had brought the companies she was interested in directly to the Finance Department to develop a strategy for acquiring them. “After Ms. Canmore and her team have a short list of companies that fit our requirements she will liaison with the Finance Division to carry out the actual acquisition process.” The Finance Division manager sat back in his chair, a thoughtful look on his face as he considered this. “Once the company has been acquired it will follow the normal acquisition process and Ms. Canmore’s division will move on to another task.”

Dominique looked around the table, meeting each of her manager’s eyes in turn as she spoke, “Working with Ms. Canmore will be an opportunity for your personnel to use their training and skills in a slightly different manner than they might normally,” Dominique let that sink in for a moment. “And it will allow your personnel to have a role in deciding which companies Nightstone will attempt to acquire and which technologies we will be researching and developing in the future. There is also a good chance that these temporary assignments will also include travel.”

The redhead could tell from their expressions that they were catching onto the fact that these
temporary assignments were meant to be opportunities and rewards for their personnel. “And, so long as such participation doesn’t interfere with your primary responsibilities, I would suggest that each of you take advantage of the opportunity to stretch your own talents as well when Ms. Canmore comes to you requesting personnel. Sit in on the team meetings or if travel is involved, accompanying the team to observe a target companies production processes and or research operations. Just keep in mind that while you are sitting in on these meetings or accompanying Ms. Canmore, she is the senior manager in those situations and I expect you each to respect her authority,” she finished in a stern tone.

The offer to let the division managers participate had almost been their first argument. Dominique hadn’t wanted to allow them the opportunity, reasoning that they had enough duties of their own and there wasn’t a compelling reason to allow them to essentially tag along for a company paid trip. Kendra had countered with the argument that the division managers were more likely to assign their most competent people if they had a reason to believe that it would benefit them instead of simply taking away their most productive employees. In the end, Dominique had acquiesced, yielding to the black haired woman’s argument that it was a basic psychological fact that you could get more cooperation if you offered a carrot along with the threat of the stick instead of just the stick alone.

Well she had just laid out the carrot for them, now for the stick, “One last comment before we leave the topic of the new division, I expect each of you to cooperate fully with Ms. Canmore. I will be extremely irritated with any one of you whom I suspect is not filling Ms. Canmore’s request with the employee that best fits her requirements.” A quick glance around the table reassured her that they did indeed understand her meaning very clearly, and Mr. Cleveland’s recent firing for disregarding her instructions was most likely uppermost in their thoughts.

“The next subject I want to address is the possible upcoming change to our personnel policy,” Dominique moved onto the next topic of the meeting. “I need each of you to prepare reports detailing the management overhead costs, along with what you see as the possible benefits and possible disadvantages to implementing flexible working hours spanning from seven am to six pm and telecommuting.” The redhead looked directly at her IT Division manager, “Ms. Conrad I need from you a report detailing the possible security issues related to the company allowing telecommuting, any measures you recommend to mitigate those security issues, and whether you believe the security issues can be mitigated enough to even recommend allowing telecommuting.”

“Yes, Ms. Destine,” the honey blonde woman responded belatedly, looking a little stunned. Dominique enjoyed the surprised looks on the faces of the division managers who hadn’t already known about the proposed changes. “Comments anyone?” There were a few, mostly about when telecommuting would be authorized and how they could make sure that people were actually working instead of simply logging hours. Dominique let them discuss the matter amongst themselves for ten minutes while limiting her comments to what she expected the policy change to accomplish. Finally, after listening to almost the same concern from Mr. Takana and Ms. Wright, the redhead called the meeting to an end, realizing that continuing it any longer would no longer be productive.

Dominique waited until Kendra and she were in her office and the door was closed behind them to say, “I’ve ordered groceries,” she looked at her watch, “they should deliver them around 6 pm, I thought we would have beef stroganoff tonight?”

Kendra chuckled, “I guess that means you’re inviting me over tonight?” she said with a smile.

The redhead glanced over at her, suddenly uncertain as she realized she had assumed that the black haired woman would be coming over. “I’m sorry, did you have other plans for tonight,” she asked, unable to keep the disappointment from showing in her tone.
Kendra gave her a gentle look, “No,” she responded, “I was just going to point out how very cliché we are being.”

Dominique raised an eyebrow, “How so?”

The grin came back, “There’s an old joke, what does a lesbian bring to her second date?”

Seeing Kendra’s mirth, Dominique’s lips curved into a smile even though she wasn’t certain what exactly was so amusing. Her brow rose even higher, “I have no idea,” she said regarding her lover curiously.

“A U-Haul,” Kendra said and then chuckled as the redhead flushed.

5:15 pm Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan

“Detective,” David Xanatos greeted Elisa as she stepped out into the main hall of the castle from the elevator.

She eyed him coolly, “Xanatos,” she replied wondering what he was doing here.

“I believe you’re on your way to speak to the clan,” he commented, a gleam of interest in his dark eyes, “about Macbeth showing up at Nightstone this morning?”

Elisa scowled suspiciously, “How did you know that?”

He smirked, “You weren’t the only one trying to find information this morning,” he said and motioned toward the stairs leading up to the battlements, “Shall we? It’s almost sunset.” Reluctantly she began to walk with him, “I suspect you weren’t much more successful this morning than I was Detective.”

She gave him a narrow eyed look, “We got a little,” she reluctantly admitted knowing that with him she would have to give something to get something, “and were there when Macbeth arrived,” her voice trailed off as she remembered the less than friendly greeting she had gotten from the ancient king. It stood in stark contrast to the greeting he and Demona had given one another. Each time Elisa remembered the friendly way the two had gripped each other’s arms, she felt shocked that it had actually occurred.

Xanatos nodded, “Unfortunately someone informed Demona that questions were being asked, and Nightstone security discouraged any further information gathering attempts. We had better luck this afternoon when Demona fired her Human Resources Division manager for attempting to contact Thailog. Mr. Cleveland was very eager to talk,” he smirked, “with the proper monetary motivation, of course.”

“Of course,” Elisa echoed, as they stepped out onto the battlements. She lifted her collar against the chill night wind, “And what did Mr. Cleveland have to say.”

He glanced at the sinking sun, “It’s only a few minutes until sunset, I think I’ll wait until everyone is awake if you don’t mind Detective.”

Elisa grimaced, but looking at the sinking orb, she knew he was right, it would only be a minute or two more before the clan awoke. The two waited, staring at the sinking sun until the slight sound of crackling stone caught their attention, with roars the gargoyles awoke, stretching and shattering the stone encasing them.
Goliath turned, noticing the two humans waiting for them, “Elisa,” he greeted the detective first sounding relieved, then with a curious look, “Xanatos.”

Elisa glanced at the tall man standing next to her, “We both have news of Demona.”

The clan gathered around them curiously. “Mmm,” Goliath rumbled, “You and Detective Bluestone went to see her today.” It had been the last thing on his mind when the sun rose, and the first thing he thought of when he awoke, which was why he had been relieved to see her tonight. “I gather your visit did prove useful.”

She grimaced, “Let’s say it was interesting.” she decided not to mention how Demona had called them on the fact that they had no official reason to be there asking questions. “Macbeth showed up while we were there,” the entire clan looked shocked, “he wasn’t very happy with me,” she stared into Goliath’s eyes, “or you. He told me that we didn’t have the right to make decisions about their lives or about what they were allowed to know, then he said that we didn’t understand the damage we caused that day.”

Goliath frowned, “The damage we caused?” he repeated in a puzzled tone.

“Let me tell you the rest of what I saw before we discuss what Matt and I think might explain their behavior,” Elisa said. She told how Demona had immediately cleared her schedule for Macbeth, how the two of them had greeted one another in what she thought was Gaelic and had clasped one another’s arms.

“Do you remember anything of what they said, lass?” asked Hudson.

Elisa shook her head; she had been too shocked at seeing Demona and Macbeth acting like old friends to really pay attention to what they were saying, “Not really.”

“What thoughts did you and Matt have about the reason for their behavior?” asked Goliath.

The dark haired woman turned back towards the big lavender male, “That somehow Macbeth and Demona have remembered their time on Avalon. That the Weird Sisters mentioned something while they were entranced that when they remembered it caused them to set aside their hatred of one another.” She looked around at the clan, “it’s the only thing that makes sense, only we have no idea why they would have remembered Avalon, or what they remembered that would have such a…” she hesitated searching for the right word, “profound effect on both of them.”

“Interesting,” noted David Xanatos, thoughtfully.

His comment reminded Elisa that he had information about Demona as well, “You said you had some information to share,” she stared at him challengingly.

“I do,” he confirmed, returning her challenging gaze with an amused smirk, “Demona’s been quite busy her first day back at work. She’s started her Human Resources division into looking at the costs of adding several new employee benefits, fired her Human Resources Division manager for working for Thailog and quite possibly for failing to fully support Nightstone’s EEO policies.” He paused for a moment to look up at the stone figures of the clones, “and started her legal department looking into having one Alexander Thailog declared legally dead.” He turned back to the clan, “I suspect she’s fully aware that he’s unable to protest.”

“Why would Demona wish to do that?” Goliath asked looking puzzled.

Xanatos explained, “Because he owns forty-nine percent of Nightstone Unlimited, and I suspect she wants to be the sole owner of the company instead of just the majority stockholder.”
The entire clan still looked puzzled, Elisa explained, “If the courts decide there is reasonable cause to suspect that he’s dead and his body just hasn’t been found, then they can declare him dead and issue a death certificate. Then his estate would go to whoever is in his will, or in this case I suspect that he and Demona declared in the incorporation documents that the other shareholder would get all their shares if they died.”

“They did,” confirmed Xanatos.

“So she’s trying to steal his part of the company from him,” Brooklyn growled, looking over toward Thailog’s still stone form.

Xanatos’ eyebrow rose at the brick red gargoyle’s comment, “Actually,” he commented, “since Thailog stole the money he invested in Nightstone from me originally, it would be more accurate to say she’s stealing my part of the company.”

From the expression on Brooklyn’s face, it was quite evident that he had forgotten that particular fact, “Uh, yea I guess so.”

Angela took a few steps toward Xanatos, attracting his attention, “What are EEO policies,” she asked with a confused frown, “and why would Demona fire this man for not following them?”

“EEO stands for equal employment opportunity,” Xanatos explained, “it’s a company policy that states they don’t base their employment decisions on race, religious beliefs, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. Demona didn’t fire him for that, but he seemed convinced that it was one of the reasons she went looking for evidence that he tried to contact Thailog in the first place.”

Elisa frowned, “Why would she be able to fire someone for trying to contact Thailog if he’s an owner of the company?”

“There’s a difference between being an owner and being a manager,” Xanatos stated, “I’m both the owner and manager of Xanatos Enterprises. Demona is the majority owner and manager of Nightstone Unlimited, whereas Thailog is only a shareholder, he has no authority to make management decisions. Mr. Cleveland made the mistake of following Thailog’s directions for the company, and quite frankly I would do the same thing as she did if I found one of my employees following some shareholder’s instructions instead of my own,” he said with a hard edge to his tone.

“So it wasn’t that he contacted Thailog, it was what he contacted him about,” said Hudson, who was pleased that in all the strange talk of ownership and management that he understood that you didn’t go behind the leaders back and follow someone else’s orders.

David smiled, “Exactly.”

Lexington asked curiously, “If she fired him for trying to contact Thailog, then why did this manager think that one of the reason’s she fired him was for not following Nightstone’s equal employment policy?”

David smirked, this had been one piece of information Fox and he had found very interesting, given what Fox had observed over the weekend. “Because one of the employee benefits Demona is considering is extending medical coverage to the partners of her gay and lesbian employees. Mr. Cleveland made the mistake of stating that he didn’t believe that they deserved such coverage.”

The green gargoyle’s eyes slid over towards Elisa, she had lectured the clan extensively about the rights of all of the city’s citizens to be treated equally. That discussion had come about as a result of Angela, Broadway and Lexington saving two men from a group of thugs who were calling them
names and threatening them with tire irons and bats. For all but Lexington, who had already come across both terms and even met some gays online, it had been the clan’s introduction to the concepts of homosexuality and hate crimes. The web-winged gargoyle knew that Goliath especially had trouble with the concept, but even he had simply shrugged and agreed that no one deserved to be beaten or killed just because of whom they chose to love.

“I don’t understand,” said Angela, “why don’t they have this medical coverage already?”

Xanatos looked over at Elisa, “I believe I’ll let you explain this one detective.”

The dark haired woman grimaced, “Thanks,” she said dryly. She took in a deep breath as she turned to face the young female, “Medical coverage usually applies only to a legally recognized spouse and your children. Since gays and lesbians can’t marry, they don’t have legally recognized spouses and thus can’t get medical coverage for them from their employers. What Demona’s considering is extending that coverage to them anyway.” Elisa frowned, there was no reason she could think of for the gargoyle to do something like this.

“I don’t understand,” said Broadway looking puzzled, “why would Demona do something like that? She hates humans.”

“This is getting us no closer to understanding why Macbeth and Demona are no longer enemies,” interrupted Goliath. Everyone turned toward him, “What Demona is doing with her company is separate from determining what has happened between she and Macbeth.”

The big lavender male and Elisa shared a long look, “Be careful,” she said, “he is rather upset about whatever it is that he remembered.”

“We’re going to visit Macbeth,” Brooklyn guessed.

Goliath nodded, “I see no other way to find out the information we need other than to ask him.”

“Before you go,” Xanatos interrupted quickly before the gargoyles left, “There’s one other thing I learned today that you might find interesting.”

Goliath frowned, he didn’t like the smug smile on Xanatos’ face, it meant that the man had purposefully kept this piece of information from them until now, “What?”

“Along with everything else she was doing today, Demona hired Kendra Canmore to head up a new division of Nightstone Unlimited, New Technologies and Special Projects,” Xanatos announced. “I don’t know yet what the new division’s role will be in the company, but I’m sure that won’t be too hard to find out in the next few days,” he said confidently.

Goliath stared at him, a deep frown creasing his brow; nothing that Demona was doing lately, starting with the fact that she had helped Kendra Canmore make it through the wilderness after their kidnapping, made sense to him. Though it had hurt him deeply, he had finally come to terms with who his former mate had turned into over the centuries, but ever since the kidnapping Demona had been acting in ways that kept catching him completely by surprise.

Destine Manor – Forest Hills Gardens Long Island

The quiet rumble of the garage door opening drew Dominique’s attention. She put up the can of tomato paste and closed the cabinet door before walking over and opening the door to the garage, Kendra’s Jaguar was just pulling in. Dominique smiled warmly, glad that she could drop the distant
behavior she had adopted towards her lover while they had been at work. They hadn’t spent much
time together today, and that perhaps had been a good thing given how many time she had to remind
herself not to reach out and touch Kendra or look at her too tenderly.

Kendra got out of the car and leaned on the black top, “Hey,” she said huskily a slow smile curving
her lips as she stared at the redhead over the top of the vehicle.

Relieved there were no curious, watchful eyes on them, Dominique allowed herself to stare at her
lover the way she had wanted to all day. After several seconds, the redhead chuckled, realizing how
silly they were both behaving, “Are you going to stay there or come in? I’m about ready to start
dinner.”

With a grin, Kendra shut the car door and walked around to the other side, opening it and pulling out
a large bag. “This is not my entire closet,” the black haired woman assured her as she hefted it.

Dominique shook her head at the other woman, “I know I’ve seen your closet after all.” The redhead
stood still as Kendra approached and then, as the black haired woman dropped the bag she was
carrying on the steps and wrapped her arms around her, the redhead sighed in pleasure. Dominique
closed her eyes and buried her face in her lover’s neck as she wrapped her arms tightly around the
black haired woman in return.

“I missed being able to do this today,” Kendra whispered into her hair, “I hadn’t really considered
how hard it would be to be around you and not treat you like my lover.”

The redhead couldn’t believe she was about to do this but… she pulled away slightly and looked into
Kendra’s face, “If you don’t want to I’ll understand,” she said softly.

Kendra was already shaking her head, “No, I want to stay, today was hard, but it also showed me
how much you need someone there that you can trust. You would have had a much harder time
coordinating everything so you could fire that asshole if I hadn’t been there to help Jordan go
through those files instead of you having to try and do that as well as meet with Mr. Weiss.”

Dominique snorted in amusement, “You figured that out in just the short amount of time you spent
signing papers in his office?”

Kendra grinned, “Not exactly, Jordan wasn’t shy in telling me about Mr. Cleveland’s less than
tolerant views about women and gays. In case you hadn’t figured it out already, she really disliked
that man and was quite happy to be the one you asked to find the information to fire him.”

The redhead tilted her head to the side, “I had wondered, she sounded very satisfied when I asked
her to monitor his computer,” Dominique commented. She looked inquisitively into Kendra’s blue
eyes. “You seem to have made friends with my IT Division manager rather quickly.”

Kendra gave her an odd, searching look, “Dominique, if she’s not a dyke and didn’t immediately
identify me as one too then I need to tear up my lesbian union card.”

Dominique’s green eyes widened.

Kendra began laughing, “No there’s not a union,” she finally managed to say in between chuckles.

The redhead slapped her very lightly on the back, “I didn’t think there was,” Dominique defended
herself, “I was just surprised that you would say Ms. Conrad is a lesbian.”

“I’m almost certain that she is,” affirmed Kendra.
Dominique’s green eyes narrowed in anger as a possibility of how her lover would know this raced through her head, “did she make an advance toward you?” she growled.

“Whoa,” said Kendra, looking at her with a frown, “slow down on the green eyed monster; Jordan did not hit on me.” Feeling embarrassed, Dominique flushed and tried to pull away, but Kendra wouldn’t let her. “Dominique,” the black haired woman said gently, “I don’t have a sign floating above my head that says taken, so it’s not really fair of you to get jealous just because someone tries to figure out if I am or not, much less when they’re just trying to figure out whether I’m gay like them or not.”

The redhead knew Kendra was right, but she still felt embarrassed and slightly angry although she wasn’t entirely certain why. She pushed lightly on Kendra’s arms to get the black haired woman to release her. “Let’s go inside, now that you’re here I want to go and change for the evening.” By the time they had hung up the clothes Kendra brought and she had transformed into her true form, Demona had calmed down enough to understand why she had been angry. “I don’t like the fact that I can’t just let everyone know that you’re my lover,” she said to Kendra as they went back downstairs.

Kendra, who was going down the stairs in front of her, paused when she reached the foyer, turned to look at her. Pointing at the gold headband around the gargoyle’s head she said, “Why don’t you take that off for a second.” Curious, Demona did as her lover asked, the black haired woman moved very close and then reached up with both hands to pull the flame haired gargoyle’s head down, “let’s try this again now that you have a brow ridge,” Kendra said softly as she brought their foreheads together.

Demona’s eyes half closed at the wonderful feel of Kendra’s smooth soft skin rubbing so gently along her brow ridge. She drew in a breath, threaded her hands through her lover’s midnight black hair and brought her wings forward, wrapping them around Kendra and completing the connection between them. Her heart thudded in her chest and she fought the desire to say aloud what her heart was telling her, we are one. She had said those words to Goliath and Thailog and they had turned out to be lies both times. Now when they felt the truest she hesitated, the words felt tainted by the times she had uttered them before, and she couldn’t get out of her mind Kendra’s words about ownership assertion. The last thing she wanted to do right now was to trigger her lover’s instinctive need for independence.

“Easy there,” Kendra’s gentle, worried voice broke Demona out of her thoughts. Belatedly, the gargoyle realized that she had been holding onto her lover rather tightly and pressing her brow ridges into Kendra’s forehead hard enough that it couldn’t have been comfortable.

Demona immediately released Kendra’s head, pulled her wings away from her lover, and took a step back. “I’m sorry,” she apologized.

Kendra stared at her with concerned eyes, “Demona what’s wrong?”

“Nothing,” the flame haired gargoyle winced as she heard the lie in her own voice, knowing that the black haired woman would hear it as well.

Kendra’s head tilted just slightly and a crease formed between her brows as she looked at the gargoyle, “Did you not want me to continue working at Nightstone?”

Before she could say anything more, Demona responded firmly, “I want you there.”

“Then what’s wrong my love,” Kendra spoke so softly that the gargoyle wasn’t certain at first that she had heard the words correctly. The black haired woman’s brow raised and her lips curved in a
crooked smile, “You look so surprised,” Kendra noted, “After last night, I decided it was past time for me to just admit that I’ve wanted to call you my love for several days now.”

“After last night?” Demona repeated, feeling as if she were missing something because it was hard to concentrate on the conversation with all the emotions rushing through her body.

The smile on Kendra’s face grew, “You don’t remember calling me that in between directions?” she asked, her eyes beginning to dance with amusement.

Demona felt her face heat; she did remember after a certain point telling Kendra rather specifically what she wanted her lover to do to her. What she didn’t remember was calling Kendra my love during that time. “I don’t remember saying it, but it doesn’t surprise me that I did,” the gargoyle admitted softly.

The merriment in Kendra’s eyes softened and gentled, “I understand, even before we came back to New York City I wanted to tell you I was falling in love with you, but it just didn’t seem real to me that it could happen this fast.”

The gargoyles breath left her chest in a relieved exhale, it wasn’t just she that felt that everything was happening very quickly between them. “It took me years before I felt ready to become Goliath’s mate. I already want everyone to know you’re my lover and that I’m yours and my heart tells me that it will not be very long before I want to be your mate.”

Something flickered in her lover’s blue eyes, Kendra’s nostrils flared, and a low rumbling purr vibrated from her chest. Then Kendra’s hands were holding the flame haired gargoyle’s head still while the Jaguar’s chosen brought her face up and firmly rubbed her cheek along Demona’s face from the corner of her mouth to her ear and then repeated the process on the other side, ignoring the startled, wide-eyed look she was getting from the gargoyle at this behavior.

“What just happened?” asked Demona once Kendra released her.

Kendra flushed, “I’ve never had the jaguar in me become active quite like that,” she cleared her throat unnecessarily, trying to buy some time before she had to explain what had just occurred. In many ways, it stunned her just as much as it had Demona.

Seeing the mixture of embarrassment, confusion, and surprise on Kendra’s face, Demona pulled her lover into her arms and hugged her tightly. She hadn’t watched cats that often, but she had watched them enough to suspect what had just happened, “Did the jaguar in you just scent mark me?”

The black haired woman slipped her arms around the gargoyle’s slender waist, “Not exactly,” she confessed, tucking her head underneath Demona’s chin, “When cats form social groups they mark each other to create a group scent, its called allomarking.”

Without any conscious thought on her part, Demona’s wings extended forward and wrapped around the woman in her arms as Demona silently absorbed this information. “So does that mean the jaguar spirit in you thinks my being your mate is a good idea?” she asked after several seconds, a pleased smile curving her lips at the thought.

Hearing the happiness in the gargoyle’s voice, Kendra leaned back enough to see Demona’s expression. A matching smile curved her lips upon seeing the joy there, “Yes, that’s what it means.”

Each time she thought she couldn’t feel happier something happened to show her that yes she could, thought Demona to herself, it was almost the exact opposite of what she had come to expect in the past, that things could, and usually did, get worse. Not that she suddenly thought that bad things
wouldn’t happen to her, the gargoyle reminded herself, she was just starting to think that her personal life was just starting to go right and actually had room to improve. Demona bent her head, meeting Kendra’s lips with her own in a slow, gentle kiss that turned achingly sweet. When their lips parted, it seemed only natural to the gargoyle that they pressed their brows together and tenderly brushed them against one another.

“This is a little more than just a kiss isn’t it,” whispered Kendra, her breath warm against the gargoyle’s lips.

Demona grinned, feeling only a little embarrassed at being caught, “a little yes, usually only mates or pairs that are certain they will be mates will stroke their brow ridges together like this.”

Kendra chuckled lightly as she drew away, “I thought it might be something like that,” she said with an amused look. The two of them stared into each other’s eyes for a long moment before Kendra snuggled into the gargoyle’s arms once again, resting her head on Demona’s shoulder as the flame haired gargoyle’s arms tightened around her. They stood like that for several minutes, enjoying the warmth and feel of each other, and silently thinking about what all had been said between them. It was Kendra who finally broke the comfortable silence, “You said something about beef stroganoff?”

“I did,” commented Demona, releasing her lover reluctantly, but knowing that Kendra was likely getting just as hungry as she. On the way to the kitchen the gargoyle inquired curiously, “so why do you think Ms. Conrad…Jordan is gay?”

“She told me she liked Kate Delafield mysteries by Katherine V. Forrest,” responded Kendra with a grin.

It took Demona a second to connect the authors name with two of the books Kendra had given her, but she had yet to find the time to start. One of those had been a mystery novel she remembered, “So the books you gave me are part of a secret identification code between gay people?”

Kendra shot her a startled look, for a second the black haired woman looked like she was going to break into laughter, and then an odd look crossed her face. “You know,” she said thoughtfully, “I was about to say no, there’s no such thing, but perhaps informally there actually is, people mention books by certain authors, movies that are popular in the community, places such as Rehoboth Beach, Provincetown and Fire Island to see if the other person recognizes the significance of them.”

Demona pulled the cutting board out of the cabinet and put it on the counter; she turned toward Kendra with a smirk, “So you are saying there is a secret way of identifying yourselves to each other,” she said with a note of triumph. Before the black haired woman could respond the gargoyle pointed to the refrigerator Kendra was standing in front of, “Could you hand me the sirloin, I need to slice it.”

“You don’t count yourself as part of the community?” asked Kendra as she opened the refrigerator and pulled out the large slab of meat and handed it over.

Demona was silent for a moment as she unwrapped the piece of sirloin and placed it on the cutting board, “I don’t know,” she said selecting a knife from the cutlery storage block on the counter, “I was never attracted to one of my rookery sisters like I’m attracted to you,” she started slicing the meat into strips. “I guess I’m bisexual, and it’s a little difficult for me to think of myself as belonging to any human community.”

Kendra smiled, “it’s called les-bi-gay for a reason, but I do see your point about not being human though I suspect you would find more welcome in the community than you think you would.”
The flame haired gargoyle stopped slicing the sirloin into strips to stare at her lover incredulously.

Kendra shrugged, “I’m not saying you should show up as a gargoyle at the next Pride Festival wearing an ‘I’m here, I’m queer, Get used to it’ shirt, but I suspect you would find more acceptance from the community than a random selection of humans on the street. That is after all, why Gregory didn’t accept that bribe and why he called me to tell me that someone had tried to bribe him.”

It took a long shocked moment for Demona to get past the idea of wearing such a shirt no matter whether she was a gargoyle or not, to realize what Kendra was saying, “Gregory is gay.” She stared at the black haired woman, her mind trying to wrap around the concept that her driver hadn’t accepted a large sum of money simply because both he and she had same sex lovers.

Kendra nodded, “He is, that’s why he didn’t accept the bribe and when he went home and told his lover about it, Michael insisted that he call either you or I to tell us about it.” The black haired woman smirked, “for some reason I think he felt safer calling me.”

Well that answered the question of why Gregory had called Kendra instead of simply informing the security guard, thought Demona. She turned back to cutting board and started slicing the meat again, “I don’t understand though why you couldn’t just tell me that at work.”

“Ahh well,” Kendra’s voice was amused, “exactly how I learned that Gregory was gay and that his lover Michael was the reason we got called is why you needed to be here instead of there.” Demona finished slicing the meat and laid the knife on the counter before she turned toward her lover with a raised eyebrow. “I was talking to Gregory when Michael spoke up to first tell me exactly what the guy trying to bribe Gregory was asking. Then Michael spoke up again to let me know that Greg was calling because Michael told him that he’d need to go out and buy a dildo with a suction cup to get any in the next month if he didn’t.”

It took Dominique’s mind a second or two to put together everything.

“So that’s what you look like when you blush as a gargoyle,” noted Kendra with a wicked smile.

They were eating dinner when Dominique thought to ask Kendra how she knew her Research and Development Division manager.

“I met him and his lover out at club a few years ago, I didn’t talk much to Jean at the time, but I did dance quite a few sets with Andre. He’s a wonderfully elegant dancer, and even thought I wasn’t interested, I was very flattered that he thought I was good enough to try and talk me into dancing regularly with him so we could enter ballroom dance competitions.”

The main thought that was running through Demona’s mind after hearing this was that she really should have guessed this during the meeting.

Kendra gave her a sly amused look, “You do realize that three of your eight division managers are gay? I highly doubt there is another major company in this city whose senior management staff is over forty percent gay or bisexual.”

Demona gave her a startled look before realizing that her lover was of course counting her among the senior staff, making the current tally four of nine senior management personnel. “I suspect you’re probably correct,” she bemusedly agreed.
December 8th, 1997

6:45 pm Macbeth’s Castle – North of Manhattan

Macbeth looked up from the paper he had been grading as he heard the castle’s automatic defenses activate; he suspected he knew who had triggered them. A grim smile curved his lips as he set the half graded paper aside and waited, he had set the targeting system to ignore gargoyles, if the turrets didn’t activate then he was right about who was arriving. When the turrets didn’t fire, he picked up the paper and began grading it again, no reason to waste his time while waiting for his uninvited guests to decide to come in.

It was several minutes before he heard the sound of the door opening. “Usually guests call before they drop by,” he said without looking up from the paper as he corrected yet another grammatical error, the paper was starting to look like someone had bled all over it, it was so covered with red marks. Only a quiet, annoyed sounding rumble answered him. Macbeth set the paper aside and looked up at the big lavender male standing a few feet away, the other members of the clan clustered behind him. He stared for a moment at the young female with the long brown hair. He remembered her from Paris; this was Demona’s daughter, Angela. His eyes shifted to Goliath, “It’s a good thing for you that Demona predicted you would drop by this evening, you would have gotten a rather warm welcome if I hadn’t set the targeting system to ignore gargoyles.”

Goliath’s head went up at that statement and his eyes narrowed, but it was the brick-red male with the beak whose eyes flared white at the mention of her name. “She probably asked you to set them on high,” the younger male growled sourly.

Macbeth eyed the beaked male coolly, “You couldn’t be more wrong,” he replied, unaware of just how much conviction his voice carried.
The listening gargoyles stirred uncertainly, but before anyone else could speak, Goliath took a small step forward, silently claiming his right as clan leader to speak for them. “Elisa told us that you met with Demona today and from the manner in which you greeted one another you appear to no longer be enemies.”

“And you want to know why,” Macbeth said rising from his chair, “there’s a simple answer,” his eyes flared with his hatred, “We learned who our real enemies have been all this time, and that it wasn’t each other. From the very beginning it’s been the Weird Sisters. They were the ones that schemed and manipulated events so that both of us were desperate, her to protect what little remained of her clan, me to protect my family from Duncan, that we would let them cast that spell on us. Little did we realize then that it was all a lie, they never intended to allow us to protect either, for they had already determined that both would end up completely destroyed.” He stared at the gargoyles that were looking back at him wide-eyed at this. “They pretended to tell the future, that I would be king after Duncan, that Luach would follow me and then Canmore, and then they set about making sure that their prediction would come true no matter what the cost to any mortal, after all our lives meant nothing to them,” he snarled. “In order for Canmore to end up king as they had said, Demona had to betray me. It ended up being harder than they thought it would be, for over the years she had become close to us.” He turned and walked away from them, not wanting them to witness his pain as he remembered Demona crying out his son’s name in anguish as her memories were restored to her, “Even with what she overheard, even with her fear that I would listen to Bodhe’s suggestion, she wasn’t willing to put my family in danger. She would have stayed with me so the Weird Sisters cast a spell on her to take her memories of them from her and forced her to betray us.”

“I do not understand,” Goliath’s confused voice had the immortal king turning back toward him, the large lavender colored gargoyle was sitting back on his haunches, his face puzzled, worried, “Did they speak of these things while you were with them on Avalon?”

Macbeth sighed, “Not exactly, though they spoke of many things that caused us to suspect the true extent of their perfidy and how little they valued any mortal life.” He walked over to the sideboard and poured himself some scotch from a crystal decanter there; he took a meditative sip of it before turning back to the gargoyle clan. “This would probably make more sense if I started at the beginning with Demona’s kidnapping and her trip across Canada with Kendra Canmore.” Macbeth started telling them the carefully edited version of the truth that he and Demona had agreed that it was safe for them to take back with them to the castle and Puck. “Somewhere in her journey Demona caught the attention of a powerful wilderness spirit, one with a great dislike of the fey, and one who for reasons of his own had been watching the fey in general, and the Weird Sisters specifically, for a very long time. Both Demona and I began meeting with the spirit in our dreams, he returned our memories of Avalon and then he showed us both what he had observed as he watched the Weird Sisters. We started at the very beginning, the confrontation between the three Sisters and the Magus when he reflected the spell they were casting back upon them and turned them into owls.”

Macbeth took another drink, his attention focused on the young lavender female, “You weren’t even born then, you were one of the eggs in the three boats they had with them before the two women left in one with the Grimorium,” he said to her.

Angela’s eye slid over toward her father, but he appeared lost in thought, “I know this story, but can you tell me more about what you saw?”

The former king smiled, “Want to see if what I saw was the actual past and not just some dream do you? Very well,” the young female looked embarrassed at being found out so easily, but she also didn’t glance away from him. Macbeth started once again, this time with the first appearance of the three boats out of the mists. He told of the confrontation, the flying away of the three fey, the decision by the Magus to give up the book into the care of the two women and then finally of the
three humans with their cargo of gargoyle eggs proceeding onward to Avalon’s shore.

“I’ll assume from your expression that what I just told you agrees with what you heard?” Macbeth commented, amused at Angela’s surprised look.

She nodded slowly, her expression troubled, “the Magus, Princess Katherine and Guardian Tom told us the exact same thing.”

Macbeth nodded, “Then let me tell you the part you don’t know, what happened immediately after the two boats landed on Avalon. The Archmage appeared,” at the sound of the name Goliath straightened, focusing his attention on Macbeth once again, “and reversed the spell upon the Weird Sisters turning them into fey once again. The three of them were not at all happy with being bested by the Magus, but they could not pursue him because of Oberon’s decree that no fey were to step foot on Avalon’s shores. When the Archmage offered an alliance so they could get their revenge upon the Magus and the rest of you, they were more than happy to accept.”

“I don’t understand,” Broadway spoke up, “why were they angry with Princess Katherine, Guardian Tom and the eggs, they hadn’t done anything to them,” he said indignantly.

Macbeth smiled at him grimly, “Mortals didn’t deserve to live on Avalon’s fair shores, especially when Oberon was denying them entry.”

“Why were you and Demona chosen by the Weird Sisters to fight for them?” rumbled Goliath.

The former king’s grey eyes shifted to the clan leader, “They didn’t chose us, the Archmage picked us out so that he could have his revenge upon Demona for betraying him, and told them to guide us so that we would be there when he required us in 975 years.”

“Revenge,” repeated Goliath startled.

“Because Demona gave the Phoenix Gate to you instead of him, and because she helped you get the Grimorium from him,” Macbeth clarified. “He wanted revenge for what he saw as her betrayal of him, so the Archmage gave the Weird Sisters a set of specific instructions for us. Would you like to know what they were?” he growled. “Unfortunately neither of us remembered them again until very recently, but now it’s hard for me to forget because of how much he gloated in satisfaction as he told her the last thousand years of her life were his punishment for her betrayal!” He glared at Goliath.

Without waiting for the large lavender male to respond, Macbeth continued, “The Weird Sisters were to make sure that we remained powerful warriors, that our lives were to be filled with bitterness and hatred so that we would be hard and merciless when the time came for us to fight for them. They were to make sure we did not become contented with their immortality, or concerned with descendants or lovers that might make us soft or compassionate. They were to make sure we remained alone, that we had no ties to anyone but each other, and that the ties that bound us together were ones of enmity.” He stared hard at them, “For over nine hundred years if either of us showed the least sign of being too content or god forbid happy with our lives, they found us and ruined it,” he snarled. In a fit of anger, he launched the thick crystal glass in his hand at the fireplace, watching it explode as it hit the stones, the flames flared high for a moment as the remaining scotch that had been in the glass fed them.

He whirled back toward the clan, ignoring their shocked looks he shook his fist at Goliath. “And then you,” he growled furiously at the big lavender male, “you let them take us, and then to add insult to injury when we could have realized what they had been doing to us all this time, you allowed them to take our memories away. You helped them keep us ignorant to the fact that we’ve been nothing but their puppets to play with and torment as they pleased for almost a thousand years,
a thousand years that were the Archmage’s vengeance upon Demona for loving you more than she was obedient to him,” he roared.

Goliath actually took a step back from the enraged man, “I did not know,” he protested.

Macbeth clenched his fists and closed his eyes for a moment, when he opened them they were clearer, though no less angry, “And that and the fact that you killed the Archmage is why I let you come in here tonight without attacking you.” He stared into the clan leader’s eyes with cold determination, “Make no mistake about this though, if you ever agree to anything the Weird Sisters propose in regards to Demona or I again, we will be enemies.”

*Fifteen minutes later on the way back to the Eyrie Building from Macbeth’s Castle*

Angela was not very happy. Goliath had decided they should leave immediately after Macbeth made his threatening statement. Since they now knew why Macbeth and Demona were no longer enemies, her father apparently had no further questions for the former king. However, the questions she wanted to ask Macbeth only kept multiplying inside her head. What had he meant when he said the Weird Sisters had made them desperate enough to accept that spell? She could guess that the spell he was speaking of was the one that bound them together and gave them immortality, but how had they had been manipulated into letting it be cast upon them? Why exactly had the Weird Sisters forced her mother into betraying Macbeth, and what did it have to do with Canmore becoming king? What had been her mother’s relationship with Macbeth’s family if it were strong enough to keep her from betraying them, even when she suspected Macbeth was about to betray her?

She didn’t know when or if she would ever get these questions asked and some of the other things Macbeth had said made her feel sick inside when she thought about them. She couldn’t get Macbeth’s words out of her head, that he and Demona been nothing but the Weird Sister’s puppets to play with and torment for almost a thousand years. She had always thought that her mother must have been exaggerating when she told Angela that she had no idea what Demona had lived through while Angela was safe on Avalon. The young female’s stomach did an uneasy flip, now however she wasn’t so sure about that, not after what Macbeth had said about the Weird Sisters making sure they never found contentment, much less happiness for very long before they destroyed it.

“Demona must have cast a spell on him,” Brooklyn spoke up suddenly.

“No!” growled Angela, glaring at him.

“Angela,” chastised Goliath.

She looked up at her father gliding above and in front of them, “Demona didn’t cast a spell on him, what Macbeth told us about the battle between the Magus and the Weird Sisters was how it happened.”

“You must have told her about it in the Labyrinth that’s how she knew,” said Brooklyn staring at her with a frown that said clearly to her that he had thought she was over defending Demona.

“I didn’t tell her about that,” Angela said, “I remember all of our conversations, and I never told her that story.”

Goliath slowed, came down to glide beside her, “You are certain Angela? This is very important,” he rumbled.

She looked over at him, “I am certain father. I never told her about it,” she frowned, “I don’t think
I’ve told anyone here about it.”

Goliath looked around the clan, everyone was shaking their heads, they had never heard about the battle either. He sighed deeply, rising and sweeping his wings to move him out in front to the clan leader’s position once again, in many ways he would have rather her answer been yes, it would have made everything much simpler to understand. This tale of an intervening spirit showing Demona and Macbeth scenes of the past, showing them that Demona had been forced by the Weird Sisters into betraying Macbeth sounded like a tale out of a story to him. As for the other part of what Macbeth had told them, that he and Demona’s immortality had actually been the Archmage’s revenge upon Demona for giving Goliath half of the Phoenix Gate and for helping Goliath and Hudson get the Grimorium from the Archmage to save Prince Malcolm’s life. Goliath didn’t know what to think of that, he still remembered only too well the way Demona had deftly manipulated his emotions and tricked him into giving her his half of the Phoenix Gate during the wedding of Fox and David Xanatos.

He couldn’t blame Brooklyn for assuming this was all another deception of Demona’s, the way everything was falling into place to blame anyone else but her for what had happened in the past had all the markings of yet another one of her schemes. It was much easier to believe that Demona had cast a spell on Macbeth to make him believe that these things were true than to believe the tale that he had given them. However, Angela was right, the fact that Macbeth knew what had happened during the battle between the Magus and the three fey gave credence to his tale. His head rose thoughtfully, that didn’t mean though that she hadn’t found another source for the tale, his ex mate seemed endlessly able to find out information that she shouldn’t know, such as finding out Angela was her daughter before setting herself up to be caught and imprisoned in the Labyrinth.

“Angela I’m sorry, but even if everything Macbeth told us was true, it doesn’t change the fact that Demona’s been attacking us ever since we first woke up,” Brooklyn said in a conciliatory tone. “And it doesn’t change the fact that just a few weeks ago she deceived all of us and hired someone to kill Goliath so she could try and take over the clan.”

Goliath frowned, Brooklyn was right, but he didn’t want this to be the start of their arguing over Demona again. That had been the one good thing to come out of Demona’s attempt to kill him; Angela had finally seen Demona for who she was instead of who she wanted her mother to be.

Angela didn’t respond for a long moment, and when she did the sorrow in his daughters voice tore at Goliath’s heart, “I know, but doesn’t it explain why she’s the way she is? After a thousand years of being under the Weird Sister’s control, of them following the Archmage’s orders to make sure she experienced mostly bitterness and hate for that entire time, is it surprising that she’s hateful and bitter?”

“She has a point,” Broadway commented to Brooklyn, earning himself a smile from Angela in the process, “if Macbeth is right wouldn’t you sort of expect Demona to be exactly the way she is?”

“Enough,” Goliath ordered, “We will discuss this more when we return to the castle and Elisa and Hudson can join us.” The clan leader turned his attention back to watching out for any threat to his clan, but he could not get out of his mind his daughter’s words or Macbeth’s words that Demona had been punished for loving him.

8:05 pm – Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building in Upper Manhattan

“Oh boy,” said Elisa, in the silence that followed Goliath’s recital of what he had learned from Macbeth. There were only three of them in the room, Goliath, Hudson and Elisa, the big lavender
male had sent the others out on patrol.

“What does that mean lass?” asked the elderly Hudson.

She met his eyes solemnly, “That either this is the cruelest thing she’s ever done to Macbeth or it’s the truth.”

Goliath sighed loudly, “That was my thought as well,” he admitted. “Angela believes Macbeth’s tale, Brooklyn believes it is another of Demona’s schemes. I had hoped one of you would see clearer what the truth might be, for it cannot be both.”

“I’m sorry Goliath, but I just don’t know,” Elisa admitted, “I don’t have enough information to make that call.”

“Then perhaps that’s what we need more of,” Hudson observed.

Elisa and Goliath stared at him for a second, then Elisa nodded, “You’re right, we need more information. There’s no way we can decide which of the two possibilities is the right one with what we know.” She frowned, “There’s just one thing that puzzles me…” her voice trailed off as a crease formed between her brows.

“What Elisa?” asked Goliath after a few seconds.

Her eyes focused on him, “Why she seemed to be so calm this morning. We expected her to be furious over the kidnapping and ready to taunt us with how we couldn’t stop her from going after Jon Canmore. She wasn’t, if anything I think she’s not even planning on going after him right now.” She told them about the two cryptic answers Demona had given them this morning. “If she guessed that we were going to ask if Jon Canmore kidnapped her, then that was a yes he did, and then the no was her answer to whether or not she was going after him.”

“You didn’t mention that earlier,” noted Hudson before Goliath could say anything.

The dark haired woman grimaced, “I didn’t want to bring up how she threatened to call the captain and mention we were there asking questions in front of Xanatos. He would have found it entirely too amusing.”

“But you are a detective; you are supposed to question people when you suspect a crime has been committed,” said Goliath.

Elisa gave him a wry smile, “Yes, but unless we’re assigned to the case we don’t really have a right to go around asking questions just because we feel like it. Demona’s never pointed that out before today, though I’m sure she’s been just as aware of it as we have. She’s always taken the opportunity to glare at me and not so subtly gloat over us not being able to stop her. This morning however, it was clear that she wasn’t interested in doing either and that’s what puzzles me. Now I don’t know whether to think it’s because she’s in the middle of planning something big, or because she’s still reeling from shock at learning about the past and neither I nor Jon Canmore seems that important to her right now.”

“She has not been behaving as we expect ever since the kidnapping,” Goliath observed darkly.

Hudson observed dryly, “If she’s in shock that will stop soon enough.”

Elisa nodded, “And then she’ll be angry. The question is will she be angrier with the Weird Sisters or with Goliath and I?” She let that point hang in the air for a moment before continuing, “Of course, that’s only something we have to worry about if what Macbeth said is true and this isn’t the start of
some big scheme of hers, in which case we need to figure out what she’s plotting.” She sighed, “And in the middle of all this it’s time for me to go undercover and work on infiltrating the Quarrymen, so it will be up to you guys to figure out what’s going on with Demona. I won’t be able to contact you for a week or so while I’m setting up my cover. At least it seems like Demona won’t be in the middle of that trying to attack the Quarrymen for her kidnapping,” she noted ruefully remembering their concerns of just a few days ago.

“Be careful Elisa,” rumbled Goliath, more concerned now about her safety than about whatever Demona was planning.

Hudson added, “Aye lass, be very careful.”

“I will be,” she assured them, “now let’s call the others in from patrol, we need to explain things so Angela understands that we still need to be wary of what Demona’s planning no matter which of the two possibilities are true.”

8:15 pm Destine Manor – Forest Hills Gardens Long Island

“Are you sure you’ll be comfortable with me like this?” asked Demona, she was lying on the couch with her head resting in Kendra’s lap.

“Oh yes,” replied the dark haired woman with a smile as she stroked through the gargoyle’s thick red tresses, “My computer’s right here and I have a drink, I’ll be fine for the hour to ninety minutes that you’re going to spend in the spirit realm.”

Kendra’s hand brushed lightly against Demona’s ear, sending tingles down throughout her body, it was all the gargoyle could do to resist the impulse to roll onto her back and invite her lover’s touch on more than just her hair. It had however, been days since she visited the Ancient One for a magic lesson. With the clan aware that something had happened, and very likely on their way to Macbeth tonight to find out what, it made it even more urgent for her to learn as much as she could, as quickly as she could, before the Weird Sisters realized that their puppets had cut their strings and came looking for them.

“The sooner you go the sooner you will be back,” Kendra said softly, and with a knowing glint in her eyes. Her hand settled on the gargoyle’s shoulder, and she shifted her attention on the laptop sitting on the side table as if to say that she wouldn’t offer any further distractions.

Demona stared up at her lover’s profile for a moment longer, admiring the strong planes of her face, the dark sweep of her brows over the sapphire blue eyes, the soft fullness of her lips. She tore her eyes away from Kendra’s face and focused on the fireplace instead, looking at her lover was definitely not getting her any closer to the spirit realm. Taking a deep breath, she closed her eyes and focused.

She felt the shift in realities and opened her eyes looking around her in fascination at the shadowy outline of her house. She could see her body lying upon the couch with her head in Kendra’s lap; her lover was staring down at her still form with a tender expression upon her face. Here Demona could safely say what her heart had been telling her for days, “I think I’ve already fallen in love with you,” she whispered to herself. She watched for a moment longer until Kendra turned back to her laptop, and then she turned around and started with surprise as she saw the massive form of the Irish Elk spirit.

“Chosen,” he greeted her.
Demona stared at him, wondering if he had been there long enough to overhear her, “Ancient One,” she responded.

His massive head turned as he surveyed their surroundings, “This is your home?” The gargoyle nodded, looking around and wondering what the spirit thought of it, though she rather doubted he thought much about the show of wealth and power it represented given his nature. “Let us go outside,” the Ancient One said, “there is enough nature and life magic there for us to have our lesson.” She frowned slightly looking around the room once, he was right there was very little life or nature energy inside her home, perhaps she should do something to correct that, the possibility certainly existed that she might need it someday.

The gargoyle watched in surprise as the great stag strode though the shadowy wall of the house before following. She turned back and looked at the wall thoughtfully after she had passed through it; she hadn’t realized that such a thing was possible.

“This is but an image of the living world; the things you see here are only as solid as you believe them to be,” the spirit commented drawing her attention.

Her green eyes narrowed on him, “So why did we always walk around the trees?”

“It is easiest to treat the things we see as solid,” he replied calmly, “unless there is a reason not to.”

The two of them stopped once they were out in the large yard surrounding her home. The stag spirit turned his great head and looked at her, “Has anything of note occurred since our last meeting?”

Of note, Demona considered his question, there had been many things that had happened since they last spoke. “Many things,” she replied, “For one, the clan is undoubtedly seeking out Macbeth tonight to ask him why we aren’t enemies anymore.”

“Chosen,” the Ancient One interrupted, staring into her eyes.

Of course, the gargoyle realized, there was a much easier way to do this rather than relating everything aloud. She met the Irish Elk’s brown eyes, and thought about what she wanted to share with him. Demona wasn’t sure how many minutes had passed when the connection between her and the spirit ended, she was only certain that she had shared more with the great stag spirit than she had originally intended.

“You are correct in thinking that your body feels young again my chosen,” the Irish Elk said, confirming the gargoyles thought, for she had certainly not intended to share the difficulty she was having controlling herself around Kendra. “If you will recall when I transfused some of my life energy into you to attune you to the energies of life and nature and to grant you immortality?”

Demona was embarrassed, but now she was also curious, for it sounded as if the Ancient One knew of a reason for what she had been feeling. She nodded in response to his question; she didn’t think she would ever forget that moment when she had shared awareness with so many creatures and even with the planet itself.

“Your physical body was renewed as well in that instant,” the great stag spirit stated.

“My body wasn’t being kept young by the fey enchantments?” She asked with a frown.

The Irish Elk shook his antlered head, “Not in the same manner. Your physical appearance did not change, but I suspect you had been noticing for some time that wounds hurt more than they had in the past, and perhaps took slightly longer to heal. You very likely felt the many years of your existence as well.” He looked over at her inquiringly.
Demona had noticed that the years seemed to be weighing on her more heavily; knowing about her daughter had helped the feeling, but had not caused it to disappear entirely. “Yes, I did feel that way,” she paused, realizing that the past tense of her statement was appropriate, she didn’t feel that way any longer, “but not anymore,” she said feeling slightly shocked. No wonder she was feeling as if she were a young gargoyle, apparently she was one again.

“As for the other matter of which you are concerned,” the Ancient One said, gazing directly at her, “your conduct in, and feelings about, driving the human out of your domain. I am satisfied that you never seriously considered attacking him, the impulse was fleeting and arose more out of your anger that he was scorning you and your chosen mate. The fact that his words showed that he was not a suitable choice for the position which he filled in your domain also angered you, though I believe some of that anger was at yourself for not noticing such an obvious failing in him earlier. If I understand his…job in your company correctly, his responsibility was to protect those in your domain from unfair judgments based on their characteristics not on how they carried out their duties?”

Demona nodded; relieved that the great stag wasn’t displeased with the way she had acted. She had been almost certain that he would be disappointed with the vengeful way she had driven the human from her company. After all, during the entire time she was finding the information needed to fire the human and arranging for that process to take place, the thought that Mr. Samuel Cleveland had any inherent worth had hardly crossed her mind at all.

“Then clearly he was unfit for that position, as he was one of the ones from which your employees needed protection,” the Ancient One pointed out, “therefore you were correct in driving him away from your domain. As for the feelings you felt while doing so, and your concern that I would disapprove of them, chosen I did not mislead you when I said that seeing the inherent worth in others was something you should strive toward. I could tell from your thoughts that part of your difficulty in seeing the inherent worth in him was because it became obvious to you that he did not respect or see the worth of you, the young jaguar, or others, only himself and those like him.”

“You’re right,” Demona agreed after a moment of silent thought. “That was most of what was fueling my anger toward him.” She paused and stared at him, a frown forming upon her face, “How do you know so much about my company and about business in general, it doesn’t seem like something you would have spent time observing.”

He gave her what she thought was an amused look, “Chosen you did invite me to be with you this morning, and you shared your thoughts with me, between the two, I have learned much about your domain from you today.”

The gargoyle opened her mouth as if to say something and then closed it again, staring at him in rueful embarrassment. “Of course, I should have realized that,” she finally stated.

“We should begin your lesson,” the Ancient One said after a few seconds, “what I have to teach you tonight is very different from what you have learned so far. Tonight you will learn how to shield yourself from the elements and from magical attacks.”

An hour later, Demona took in a deep breath and stirred on Kendra’s lap; she opened her eyes and blinked against the brightness of the room. A hand appeared, blocking the light, “Hey, welcome back,” her lover whispered softly. Demona smiled, before she could say anything Kendra asked, “Hungry love?”

The smile on Demona’s lips grew at her use of the word, “I’m starving,” the gargoyle admitted, “We did a lot of magical work tonight.” Learning how to shape the shields out of the available nature energy had taken up most of her time with the Ancient One, then he had started lobbing magical
spheres at her that she had to block with them.

“If you’ll let me up, I’ll start heating water for your noodles,” Kendra offered.

The flame haired gargoyle sat up, and swung her legs around and stood up, “That’s alright. I want to tell you about what I learned tonight.” The two of them set off for the kitchen with Demona explaining rather animatedly to her lover how the Ancient One had taught her to pull together the free nature energy in the air and earth to form a transparent lattice like shield to block magical attacks.

Once Demona had eaten, and they had put the dishes they had used into the dishwasher and started it, the gargoyle turned toward Kendra, reluctantly she said, “I need to work for about an hour and then I’ll be done for the night, I can get most of the rest of it done on the way to Nightstone tomorrow.”

Kendra looked at her in surprise, the redhead had already worked some after they finished dinner. She hadn’t realized that Demona had yet more she needed to get done tonight. “I can use the time to work out,” she offered.

The flash of an image went through Demona’s mind of the last time Kendra had worked out, her lover lying on the free weight bench wearing just a white sports bra and very low riding sweat pants, every muscle taunt and outlined as she bench-pressed the weight bar. The gargoyle cleared her throat, “That sounds good,” her tail twitched briefly as she realized how much of her current thoughts her voice had given away.

Her lover’s blue eyes sharpened on her, Kendra turned her head slightly to the side and stared at the fiery haired gargoyle for a moment before a smug looking grin curved her lips. “Good then, you know where to find me when you’re done with your work,” the black haired woman’s voice was a husky, sensual purr.

Demona stared after the black haired woman as she turned and sauntered down the hallway. Somehow, she didn’t doubt that Kendra was going to change into a similar outfit to work out in as the one she had wore on Sunday.

Forty-five minutes later the gargoyle shut down the computer in her study. The constant low level of arousal she had felt the entire time from knowing that Kendra was waiting for her upstairs didn’t trouble her so much tonight. The information the Ancient One had shared with her, that her physical body had been renewed as well in the moment the spirit chose her, explained exactly why she had been feeling as if her body were young again and slightly out of her control. She paused in the doorway of her study as an odd thought ran through her mind, just how old was her body she wondered, and was it possible that she and Kendra were now physically close to the same age? She shook her head bemused, she wasn’t even certain it was relevant what her physical age was, after all she still had the experiences of living for over a thousand years.

It only took Demona a few minutes to make her way up the stairs and to the open door of the workout room. Instead of a white bra and navy sweat pants, Kendra was wearing a black bra and black sweat pants tonight. The gargoyle paused in the doorway to watch her lover. She smirked, she had arrived just in time, Kendra was doing bench presses. The fiery haired gargoyle’s eyes drank in the sight before her, watching how the muscles in her lover’s arms and shoulders bunched and strained as Kendra lifted the heavy set of weights on the bar. The muscles of her bare stomach were taunt and hard from the strain; sweat caused the dusky olive skin to glisten slightly in the light making their flexing with every repetition easier for the watching gargoyle to observe. Finally, the black haired woman set the weight bar back on its supports and locked it in place.

“No stay there,” ordered Demona softly as she entered the room, forestalling Kendra’s movement to
get up from the bench.

“I’m sweaty,” Kendra warned her breathily as the gargoyle approached the black haired woman.

“Yes, I can see that,” the gargoyle said as she stood over her lover and carefully ran her hand over the dusky skin of her bare stomach. She watched intently as the muscles underneath her touch bunched and tightened and she heard Kendra exhale in a long breath as her hand drew closer to the waistband of the low riding sweatpants. Her tone almost conversational except for a certain huskiness to it, she asked, “Do you know what I wanted to do Sunday, but I couldn’t because Gregory was coming by to pick us up?” She slipped her taloned fingers just underneath the material of the sweatpants and looked up to meet Kendra’s darkening blue eyes.

“Not exactly,” whispered Kendra, watching her intently.

“This,” Demona said, slowly pulling down the sweatpants, her eyes never leaving Kendra’s even as the black haired woman lifted her hips slightly so that she could remove them. Once they were down below Kendra’s hips, the gargoyle looked down at the small strands of black lace and the triangle of fabric that shielded her lover’s intimate softness from her view. The gargoyle smirked, “Somehow I doubt this is what you usually wear under these while lifting weights.”

Kendra grinned, her tone mischievous, she teased, “I guess you’ll just have to keep checking to make that determination.”

“Mmm,” Demona murmured with a soft chuckle as she knelt at the end of the bench and pulled the sweatpants the rest of the way off Kendra’s legs and dropped them on the floor, “I’ll have to keep that in mind.” The gargoyle rose to her taloned feet once again and ran her hands back up along her lover’s powerful thighs to the thin black bands of lace.

“Have you been thinking of me?” Demona asked inhaling deeply of the rich fragrance of her lover’s arousal as she lifted the thin band and began running her finger slowly back and forth underneath it along the dusky skin of Kendra’s hip. They both knew that the slightest pressure of her talon would easily slice the fabric in two.

“Can’t you tell?” whispered the black haired woman.

Demona looked up, met Kendra’s eyes and inhaled again, “Yes,” she ran her tongue teasingly over her lips. The flicker of blue eyes downward briefly and an indrawn breath rewarded her, her eyes wandered up her lover’s body, coming to rest on the black bra. She left her play with the strand of black lace, smirking at Kendra’s disappointed sounding sigh and slid her hands up her lover’s side. She hooked her fingers underneath the thick fabric of the sports bra and lifted it upward, releasing the soft swells with their stiffly budded tips from its confinement.

Demona continued sliding the bra upward and over Kendra’s head, she stopped before pulling it all the way off, pinning Kendra’s arms over her head with it instead. The scarlet haired gargoyle stared silently for a long moment with hungry eyes at the sight of her lover, her arms stretched out over her head, her lithely muscular body with its feminine curves bare to her gaze except for the small triangle of black fabric. When Demona next moved it was to bend down and claim Kendra’s full lips with hers in a passionate, hungry kiss. When their lips parted, the gargoyle said in a low, intent tone, “This isn’t going to be stable enough for what I want to do to you tonight, let’s move to the bedroom.” She released the fabric of the bra clenched in her fist and moved a step back from the bench.

Kendra stared up at her for a moment before sitting up and bringing her arms down, the sports bra still around her wrists, “And what might that be?” she asked gazing at the gargoyle with intrigued eyes.

Demona just smiled mysteriously and took a step back toward the door.
The black haired woman cocked her head to the side, she rose from the bench and held up her wrists, “Did you want this left on?” she asked with a smirk, “I wasn’t sure if you weren’t getting in touch with your inner dominatrix there for a second or not.”

The comment caught the gargoyle by surprise and she stared at Kendra for a moment before she smirked, reached out and grabbed the proffered fabric once again, “What an interesting suggestion,” she purred. The brief widening of her lover’s sapphire blue eyes almost caused her to chuckle, Kendra obviously hadn’t expected Demona to take her up on the offer. “Come along,” she said tugging lightly on the impromptu bonds.

Kendra studied her intently for a moment before moving, they were almost to the bedroom door before she tried again, “So not even a hint?”

“Patience,” Demona counseled her, leading her over to the bed. She turned Kendra around so that she was facing her and leaning back against the mattress. She pulled the bra from around her lover’s wrists, dropped it on the floor, and then knelt in front of the woman. She ignored Kendra’s questioning utterance of her name as she started lightly biting and kissing along the taut muscular thigh in front of her, tasting the sweat of Kendra’s exertions and testing the tautness of the muscles with her teeth. Sunday night this had almost been enough to make her come; she hoped her lover’s legs proved to be as sensitive. “You are so beautiful,” she whispered against the dusky skin, “so strong and powerful.” She drew her teeth and lips back up along the line of muscle to her inner thigh, close enough to easily smell how aroused Kendra was, “I ache to claim you, to mark you as mine tonight,” she whispered.

It was close enough to what the black haired woman had said to her Sunday night for Kendra to realize what the gargoyle wanted to do tonight. “Oh yes,” Kendra whispered she reached down and cupped the gargoyle’s head, pressing her lips harder against the dusky skin, “Please.” The sweet mixture pleasure and pain of the hard suckling of Demona’s lips and teeth against her skin was almost like a small mating bite. Kendra arched against it feeling it radiating into her groin and dragging a loud groan from her lips, “Oh yes my love, yes, yours.”

Demona shuddered at the words, after a moment her hard suckling softened into gentle kisses across the reddened skin, and with her hands, she urged Kendra to move onto the bed. Demona felt almost hot and fevered with the desire to lay claim to Kendra, and yet at the same time she felt an overwhelming need to show her lover how much she loved and cherished her. She followed Kendra down onto the bed grasping and holding the woman still as she explored her stomach with her mouth. She ignored the efforts of her lover to squirm away as she hit ticklish spots, though she left those quickly, not wanting to annoy Kendra instead of arouse her, and slowed over the places that caused her lover to make sounds of pleasure.

Finally, she let Kendra turn over, but only because it allowed her access to her lover’s backside. She had noticed before that though Kendra did not have wings nor wing joints, the black haired woman’s back was wonderfully sensitive, especially when one gently bit along the muscular area on either side of her spine…

December 9th, 1997

Morning Nightstone Unlimited HQ, Lower East Side Manhattan

“Jean,” Kendra greeted the muscular ebony-skinned man warmly as he rose from behind his desk, “how are you doing these days.”
“I’m doing well,” he glanced meaningfully at the open door behind her.

Casually, Kendra took a step backward and closed it behind her, before going over and accepting his brief hug.

“It’s been a few years since Andre and I have seen you out,” he commented as he sat back down in his chair. “He misses you,” his wide grin was very white.

Sinking down into the comfortable looking chair on the other side of his desk, Kendra commented, “You may see me out again sometime soon.” Though it wouldn’t be before Dominique stopped working so hard, she thought to herself, they hadn’t even time for dancing lessons right now.

“With Ms. Dominique Destine?” he asked shrewdly.

Kendra raised an eyebrow, “Well that was hardly a subtle fishing attempt.”

“Did I need to be subtle?” he inquired, looking slightly amused.

She stared at him evenly, “I’m not answering that question. Inside this building she’s both your boss and mine.”

He gazed at her for a moment, then his lips curved in a grin, “That could be taken for an answer in and of itself,” he pointed out.

She shrugged, “Take it as you wish, but I meant it,” her voice firmed noticeably as her sapphire blue eyes met his.

He raised an eyebrow and held up his hands as if surrendering, “Understood,” he replied in a purposefully mollifying tone. The two of them stared at one another for a moment before he settled back in his chair and asked, “So what’s this about Nightstone investing in fuel cell technology?” he inquired, changing the topic.

Early afternoon Nightstone Unlimited HQ, Lower East Side Manhattan

“What do you think of some of these proposed employee benefits?” Dominique slowed as she recognized the voice of her secretary, Candice. Her green eyes narrowed as she waited to see if she could identify who the woman was talking to, Candice should know better than to gossip about this matter, it was not supposed to be general company knowledge at this time.

“Personally I’m hoping we can implement the child and elder care benefits,” the redhead relaxed as she recognized the voice of the Administrative Division manager, Mrs. Merritt, “My mother had a stroke four months ago. She’s living with my husband and I right now, and I’ve got a nurse that comes in during the day to check on her while we’re at work, but I’d like to get her into one of those nice adult day care programs. Right now we’re too short of money to do it because we’re paying two college tuitions, that’s the downside they don’t mention when they tell you to have your kids within a few years of each other,” she noted ruefully.

“Will the pre-tax fund make that much of a difference?” Candice asked.

By now Dominique was standing motionless in the hallway just out of sight of her secretary’s desk, she was curious about Mrs. Merritt’s answer as well.

“Oh yes,” the older woman answered, “Even with my cap for my salary I’ll still be able to put back
enough each month to pay for the day care program I want to put her in, and the money I save in taxes will be just enough to allow us to do it.”

Dominique was almost about to begin walking again when Mrs. Merrill said, “What about yourself?”

When Candice answered, her voice had a shy, diffident tone that the redhead had never heard from the woman before, “Well my husband and I have been thinking about having a baby, but we just haven’t been sure we were in a good enough financial position to afford it with the cost of child care and everything.”

“Good child care is expensive,” agreed Mrs. Merrill in a knowledgeable voice.

“I know,” Candice responded, “and I don’t want to hire someone who might go off and leave my child alone during the day. Don and I were taking last night and if Ms. Destine approves it, I think we’re going to go ahead and try. I’d like to have my baby before I get much older, I’m already twenty-seven and I’m starting to get worried I won’t be able to keep up with a child if I wait too much longer.”

Dominique didn’t really want to hear any more, the idea that her decision whether or not to implement an employee benefit could have an effect on her secretary’s choice of when to have a child unsettled her. She started walking again only to stop abruptly when she heard Mrs. Merrill say, “What do you think is going on with Ms. Destine?”

When Candice responded her voice was even lower than it had been, and Dominique had to strain to hear her words, “You mean the absence of the completely foul mood she used to regularly arrive at work with?”

The redhead eavesdropping on the conversation scowled at this.

Mrs. Merrill commented, “Doesn’t she seem almost…happy to you these days?”

The scowl faded into almost a bemused look, Dominique hadn’t realized her employees paid so much attention to her moods that they had noticed.

“My guess is it’s that really distinguished looking gentleman, Professor Lennox MacDuff, that came up to see her the morning she came back to work,” Candice confided. “I thought she was going to kiss him she looked so pleased to see him.” Dominique’s green eyes widened at the completely erroneous conclusion her secretary had drawn, while Candice continued, “Though those two detectives looked as if they’d seen a ghost when they saw Ms. Destine greet him, I can’t figure that, or the strange things they said, out at all,” she added in a puzzled tone.

“So you think she’s dating him?” Mrs. Merrill asked her interest obvious.

“Weren’t you the one who just pointed out that she looks happy these days?” pointed out Candice, “and I haven’t seen anyone else visiting that she could be seeing.”

Mrs. Merrill chuckled, “There is that, isn’t there.”

Sensing that the conversation was over Dominique began walking up the hallway once again, gazing at the reports in her hand as if she were reading them.

“Ms. Destine,” Mrs. Merrill said, the redhead looked up from the papers in her hand and raised an inquiring eyebrow at the chestnut haired woman standing by her secretary’s desk. “I’ve got my Division’s report on instituting flexible working hours completed,” the Administrative Division manager held out a folder.
“Thank you, Mrs. Merrill,” Dominique replied as she accepted it, she glanced at the papers inside briefly before looking up again, “was there something else you needed?” she inquired a touch of coolness entering her voice. She might not be in a completely foul mood anymore as Candice had put it, but that didn’t mean that she would suddenly put up with people standing around gossiping while she paid them.

“No Ms. Destine,” the chestnut haired woman promptly straightened, turned and headed toward the elevators. The redhead looked after her for only a second before turning and heading toward her office. Dominique put the report Mrs. Merrill had just handed her on her desk as she passed it by, and then she went to the window and stared out at the city for a moment, thinking of what she had just overheard. She was still surprised that Candice would think that she and Macbeth were romantically involved; there hadn’t been anything lover-like, at least to her mind, in their greeting at all. As for the first part of the conversation, it reminded her of the name of the Bison’s chosen Rachael had given her to call.

She walked over to her desk and pulled out her purse, searching for the thin address book where she had written down the information. Margaret Jackson, she found the page with the name and a few numbers, she hesitated only for a second longer before dialing the number, not really wanting to examine too closely why being able to implement all the benefits she had set her Human Resources Division investigating had become more important to her. As she listened to the dial tone, Dominique’s thoughts wandered to her daughter, and the redhead wondered how the young gargoyle was doing. Despite the current situation between them, Dominique was grateful that she even had a daughter to worry about her relationship with, for it was a strange turn of events that lead to Angela growing up on Avalon with its much slower time so that the young female was alive in this time instead of being dead centuries ago.

“Hello Margaret Jackson speaking,” the pleasant alto voice on the other end of the phone jarred Dominique out of her thoughts.

“This is Dominique Destine; Rachael gave me your number,” the redhead responded.

“Dominique Destine?” the woman repeated sounding confused, then there was an, “Ohh…” of realization before Margaret continued, “sorry, yes, Rachael contacted me and told me you might get in touch with me about increasing the number of employee benefits you offer. I believe it’s Nightstone Unlimited?”

“Yes,” Dominique replied, “Rachael mentioned that you might be able to assist us with choosing which benefits will offer the most gain within the limits of Nightstone’s budget.”

Margaret responded somewhat hesitantly, “She mentioned something to me about coming up and visiting the same week she was going to stay with you?”

“She did say something about you wanting to visit New York, but wasn’t certain whether…” Dominique paused searching for the right words.

Margaret chuckled, “You weren’t sure if Rachael was right, and I wanted to work for play tickets and a place to stay?”

“I’m quite willing to pay your usual consultancy fee,” the redhead assured her.

“That’s alright, I haven’t seen Rachael in quite a few years, and I’d like to meet you and Kendra as well, and even maybe young Robert if that’s at all possible. So a working vacation in New York City doesn’t sound bad at all,” the Bison’s chosen assured her. “What day is Rachael coming up?”
“The nineteenth,” Dominique replied, “we’re going to spend solstice together,” she hesitated only for a second to wonder if Kendra would mind and then decided that she wouldn’t, “did you want to celebrate solstice with us as well?”

“That would be wonderful,” replied Margaret warmly, “I could come up earlier in the week and get started on looking over your information. It usually takes me about two weeks or so to get my recommendations together.”

“I already have my Human Resources Division doing a feasibility study, at least some of them should be completed by that time,” Dominique said.

Margaret responded, “That will help me out a lot, which benefits are you looking at?”

“Flexible working hours, telecommuting, pre-tax elder and childcare accounts, and extending the health care plan for spouses to domestic partners,” Dominique rattled off the list she had sent to Human Resources.

There was a brief moment of silence before the Bison’s chosen replied, “Well that’s certainly an excellent mix of choices that benefit both you and your employees as well as some that are very helpful to your employees. The only other thing I would suggest would be seeing if you can arrange for company discounts at a few of the nicer accredited care programs in your area, but that can always be looked into later after you’ve decided whether to implement the pre-tax care plan or not.”

They had just finished arranging for Margaret’s flight when a light knock on the door drew Dominique’s attention. The redhead frowned, “Margaret, I need just a moment, there’s someone at my office door.”

She was still frowning when she opened the door only to see Kendra there, the frown turned into a smile as she motioned the other woman in, “I’m talking to Margaret. She’s going to be flying in early next week and we were just discussing where she will stay while she’s here,” she said closing the door behind the black haired woman.

“That’s easy; she can stay in my apartment. It’s reasonably close to here and convenient to everything in the city,” Kendra said as they walked over to Dominique’s desk.

Dominique looked at her thoughtfully for a second, “Are you sure?” she asked.

Kendra gave her a warm smile, “I’m sure.”

The redhead smiled at her in return as she picked back up the phone, “Margaret, Kendra’s offering her apartment for you to stay in. It’s on the 47th floor of the Galleria.”

Once it became clear that Margaret would accept the offer, Kendra asked, “Is she staying over solstice?”

Dominique nodded, staring at her questioningly.

Kendra looked thoughtful, “Why don’t we try and get tickets for all of us one night to something, hopefully we can get permission for Robert to go with us as well.”

“Phantom of the Opera,” Margaret said on the phone, obviously overhearing the suggestion, “Rachael’s been saying she would like to see that sometime and it’s on my list of plays that I want to see as well. Robert should like it too, provided of course that we can manage to pry him away from his Aunt and Uncle.”
“I didn’t know you knew Robert that well,” commented Dominique, surprised.

Margaret chuckled, “You’re new, wait until you’ve been around for another forty or fifty years. You’ll know everyone and their business by then as well,” she assured Dominique. “Usually we only get new people maybe once every twenty or so years. That’s the reason… well in your specific case one of the reasons,” Margaret sounded amused, “why everyone knows so much about you already, new people are rare. You and Robert coming in within five years of each other is the most that’s been accepted in such a short time span that I’ve ever heard of and I’ve been around for... oh it feels like a hundred or so years.”

Dominique’s lips twitched in amusement at the coded way Margaret was speaking, still it was probably a good habit to get into just in case when one didn’t know who might be listening. What the Bison’s chosen was saying did make a lot of sense, plus it went a long way toward explaining why it seemed like every chosen she met already knew so much about her. It sounded to her that this was almost as bad as a gargoyle clan accepting in a new member, and she knew in that case any piece of gossip about the new gargoyle would make it though the entire clan in less than half of a night, and more likely only a quarter.

“I’ll keep that in mind,” she said lightly.

Having settled a few more details of Margaret’s stay, Dominique hung up the phone ten minutes later. She turned toward Kendra with a smirk, “Guess what I heard Candice and Mrs. Merrill gossiping about this afternoon.”

“What?” asked Kendra curiously.

Dominique shook her head, “Between my relatively better mood and the way I greeted Macbeth yesterday, they think I’m dating him.”

Kendra looked at her incredulously, and then she shook her head, “People really do see what they expect don’t they,” she commented thoughtfully. “However, that could prove useful if Macbeth doesn’t mind.”

The redhead recalled their conversation over the weekend, she smirked, “At least he has a beard,” she commented with a chuckle, “but I don’t know if he’s seeing anyone, or if he would be willing.” Dominique hesitated a moment before she continued in a softer tone, “Then there’s the fact that I’m not really sure I want to do that. I don’t want anyone getting the idea that I’m trying to hide our relationship as if I’m ashamed of it, because I certainly am not.”

Kendra’s expression gentled, “Then you certainly don’t have to.”
December 10th, 1997

Morning - Outside Jason’s Apartment Building, Manhattan

Kendra stared at the building where Jason’s apartment was located. She had been sitting here for ten minutes staring at it trying to figure out what in the world she would say to her cousin. She was fairly certain that “hey Jason guess what I found out while I was trekking though the Canadian wilderness. The Canmore’s have been ensorcelled for the past thousand years by these three fey called the Weird Sisters so that we would make sure Demona didn’t get lazy and out of shape,” wouldn’t work too well.

For one thing, it would raise questions about what the fey were and how it was that she had come to know about them. Secondly, she really didn’t think that Jason would believe her, at least not without her showing him things, such as the fact she had the ability to shapeshift and revealing the existence of the chosen. That was completely unacceptable, she was hardly going to trust Jason or her other two cousins with that type of information about herself or anyone else.

A white van pulled up outside the building, and Kendra sat up straighter as she saw the lettering on the side of it. There was a possibility that someone else in the building might need wheelchair accessible transportation, but there was a good chance the van was for Jason. Luck was with her, a few minutes later her cousin wheeled himself out of the building. It only took a moment for her to see the expected tattered remains of sickly green fey magic upon him. Kendra sank back in her seat with an unhappy sigh, “Great,” she muttered to herself, “now how am I going to free Robyn and Jon?”
Angela gazed pensively at the lights of the city far below the castle as she wondered what her mother was doing right now. Was Demona plotting against Elisa and Goliath or against Macbeth as the clan feared, or...the young lavender female’s thoughts trailed off uncertainly. Angela really had no idea how learning what the Weird Sisters had done to her would affect her proud mother. That Demona would not be pleased was an easy conclusion to make, what her mother would do after that was not so easy for her daughter to predict.

The young female sighed unhappily, despite how much Demona had hurt her every time she tried to reach out to the older female, despite all the lies her mother had told and the way Demona had manipulated her, Angela still felt some concern for her mother. Yet her father had been very clear that she was not to go seeking Demona out, not until the clan had a better idea what the immortal gargoyle was planning.

Angela suspected her father believed that Demona was plotting against Macbeth and had cast a spell on the immortal king making him believe that the Weird Sisters were responsible for Demona’s betrayal of him in the past. She didn’t know what to believe, she knew that it was certainly something her mother was capable of doing. She had to only think of everything Demona had done to manipulate her into believing the older gargoyle was helping the clan against the Quarrymen, when in reality Demona was trying to kill Goliath and take the clan leaders position, to know to what levels of deception her mother was capable of pulling off.

The other possibility that the clan feared, provided that what Macbeth told them was the truth and this wasn’t another of Demona’s schemes, was that either Demona was, or would shortly be, plotting her revenge against Goliath and Elisa. In all the time she had known her mother, Demona’s fiery, and frequently irrational, temper had certainly been something Angela had noticed about the immortal gargoyle’s temperament. Considering that her mother hated Goliath and Elisa already and had tried to kill both of them before, even Angela thought it was reasonable to fear that Demona would lash out at Goliath and Elisa for allowing the Weird Sisters to cast a spell on her causing her to forget the events on Avalon.

“Angela?” Broadway’s hesitant voice from behind her interrupted her thoughts. She smiled at him warmly, she knew he wasn’t the smartest or quickest, but he was the kindest and best tempered of the Trio as well as the strongest of all three of the young males. “Are you alright?” he asked with a concerned look.

And the most thoughtful, Angela added to her mental list of his qualities. “I was thinking of my mother,” she admitted, “wondering if she will try and attack father and Elisa.”

He shifted uneasily beside her, “She does have a temper.”

Angela’s short laugh carried little humor, “I know.”

“We’ll stop her if she does, we won’t let her hurt Goliath or Elisa,” he said confidently.

The young lavender female nodded. She was silent for a long moment before changing the subject, “When is Elisa going undercover?”

“How will we know if she needs help?” The thought of what might happen to Elisa if the Quarrymen found out Elisa’s identity frightened her. Jon Canmore’s
willingness to kill his own clan for associating with Demona showed how ruthless and dangerous he was; she doubted he would hesitate to hurt Elisa once he realized she was spying on him.

“Matt’s watching out for her and Goliath’s in contact with him, if anything happens we’ll know about it,” Broadway reassured her.

The lavender female glanced over at him, there were some rather obvious issues with that plan and she could see by his worried look that he was well aware of them. “Yes, but will we know in time to protect her,” she spoke her biggest worry aloud.

Broadway looked over at her, his expression both understanding and firm, “That’s why we have to stay nearby and ready, just in case Elisa needs us.”

Angela stared at him for a moment before looking back over the city, “I understand,” the young female’s determination firm. Elisa had never let her down and had saved her life and the lives of the clan several times, she wouldn’t let herself get distracted by her concern for her mother while the human woman was in such danger.

Night – Destine Manor, Forest Hills Gardens, Long Island

“Let’s go gliding,” Demona tossed the reports she had been reading down on the coffee table and looked over at Kendra, who was reading a novel, expectantly, “I’m tired of reading these and you need the practice.”

The black haired woman looked startled for a brief moment before she smiled broadly, “That sounds like a wonderful idea,” she agreed sounding relieved.

The gargoyle stared at her lover bemused as she practically bounded to her feet, laid the book she had been reading on the coffee table, and waited expectantly by the couch, her blue eyes gleaming with eagerness. A short five minutes later, they were standing outside on the second floor balcony. Demona stared at up at Kendra’s dark winged form. The jaguar’s chosen was already standing upon the railing, balancing upon it effortlessly and staring out into the night and taking deep breaths of the cool air, her tail switching from side to side in not quite an agitated motion. The brightness of the night caused Kendra’s glossy black wing feathers to gleam, catching the gargoyle’s attention. She looked up at the source of the light, and her eyes widened in comprehension as she looked back at her lover. “It’s almost the full moon,” she commented quietly.

“It is,” Kendra agreed looking up at the sky, “I’ll need to head up to my estate this weekend.” She glanced down at Demona, her blue eyes intense against the darkness of her black furred face, “Come with me,” she requested.

The fiery haired gargoyle didn’t even need to think about it, “Alright.”

The blue eyes lightened, “Good,” the winged jaguar extended her hand.

Demona stared at Kendra’s outstretched hand and then at the railing upon which the jaguar’s chosen was standing. She extended her own; her lover’s warm hand wrapped around it and then Demona drew in a startled gasp as Kendra simply lifted her into the air high enough for her to stand on the railing with the winged jaguar. She caught a glimpse of Kendra’s dark, wine red lips curving into an amused grin just before her lover leapt into the air and with a powerful downward sweep of her feathered wings took to the air. Shaking her head in amusement, the gargoyle followed, obviously Kendra had already incorporated some of the changes she had been talking about earlier into her
winged form to make it stronger, quicker and more agile.

Gliding swiftly to catch up, Demona pointed to the south, “Forest Hills Park is directly to the south of us just over the Interborough Parkway, and west of that is a golf course. Let's practice turns and loops there and then we can head north to let you experience gliding over streets and buildings. The asphalt holds in heat no matter what the season and that causes a constant slight thermal effect.”

“Much wind shear along the buildings?” Kendra inquired as they curved gradually toward the band of trees that was the park.

“Not where we’re flying tonight, but in Manhattan yes, it can be very tricky gliding among the buildings with the unpredictable updrafts and even occasional downdraft,” Demona said, “so we’ll wait until you’re ready to fly there to go over the bridge. Besides I don’t want to run into the clan yet and that’s their patrol territory.”

“Ok,” Kendra agreed easily as they reached the park. As Demona watched and called out advice, the winged were-jaguar practiced ever-tightening turns and then vertical rolls, which Kendra had just learned how to do before they left Canada.

Demona watched Kendra’s gliding closely, but there were only a few corrections she needed to make. The gargoyle marveled at how swiftly the were-jaguar was learning to fly; it had been less than two weeks, yet Kendra was already starting to look at home in the air. Suddenly the gargoyle was very grateful that Kendra hadn’t decided to become a hunter. The Canmore’s were unusually skilled warriors for humans, but her lover’s physical abilities far surpassed those of the rest of her family. Demona strongly suspected Kendra’s physical prowess predated her becoming one of the Jaguar’s chosen, and she wouldn’t be at all surprised to learn that had been what had drawn the Jaguar priestess’ attention to the young Kendra.

“Ready to fly over the city?” the gargoyle asked.

Kendra did one more roll before turning and gliding next to the flame haired gargoyle, “Sure,” she looked northward, “that way?”

Demona nodded, “That way is Forest Hills, it will do nicely for your introduction to gliding over city areas.”

The newness of being able to fly had still not worn off, and Kendra looked with interest at the landscape passing below them, the houses, and streets with cars and trucks moving along them. As they approached more densely populated areas, she noticed that they were gradually rising in the air, “We’re gaining altitude, is it because you don’t want them to see us?”

“Not many tall buildings in this area to block their view of us,” Demona explained, “so it’s a good idea to present less of a silhouette against the night sky for the humans to notice.” She smirked, “We don’t want your cousin to show up, escaping from Quarrymen flitters and helicopters definitely falls under advanced gliding lessons.”

Kendra smiled briefly, she knew Demona had meant the comment to be amusing but it reminded her of the news reports she had read about the kidnapping. “No we don’t want that,” the were-jaguar said, “especially given the fact that for all his prostrations that he’s protecting people, he doesn’t seem to give a damn who gets hurt when he’s hunting,” she growled thinking of the people on the street below Nightstone who had been injured by the falling glass from his kidnapping of them.

Demona glanced over at her, a concerned look on her face, “You know he’s being controlled by the Weird Sister’s spell.”
The were-jaguar frowned, “It’s not forcing him to not care if he hurts anyone else while he’s hunting you or the other gargoyles.” Demona looked away abruptly, but Kendra had already noticed the flash of pain and remorse on the gargoyle’s face. She could guess what Demona was thinking, the enchantments on her hadn’t forced her to war on humanity either and yet she had chosen to do so, killing the innocent along with the guilty.

Kendra continued, “I saw Jason, and even broken as the spell was, I could easily tell that it was just one enchantment that had been on him. My cousin’s actions aren’t anywhere close to being as controlled as yours were. I suspect that what Jon’s doing now is mostly his own choice because he can’t accept that he was the one who crippled Jason.” She wasn’t quite so willing to let her cousin off the hook without holding him accountable for at least some of his decisions, especially given the rather radical difference in the amount of fey spells on her cousins and the mass that had bound Demona before the Ancient One freed her.

“You mean like I kept blaming the humans at Wyvern Castle for my clan’s massacre,” Demona said finally turning back toward Kendra. Her green eyes were bleak as they met her lover’s blue ones, “Or telling myself that I was claiming vengeance for those gargoyles that died over the centuries the night I killed those humans I turned into stone?”

The were-jaguar stared searchingly at the flame haired gargoyle’s expression, “But you’ve accepted your share of the guilt for those actions and you regret them,” she said, her tone softer.

“Yes, and it took me ten centuries to admit that I was just as guilty as Robbie for the slaughter of my clan” Demona pointed out sadly.

Kendra growled in irritation, but she couldn’t deny the point Demona was making. It wasn’t fair of her to completely forgive her lover for her past and be unwilling to forgive her cousin. Finally she sighed, “I know, that’s why I’m not going after Jon for what he did to us. I need to find him and break the spell on him and hope that stops him from doing anything else crazy.”

She didn’t mention that she had her doubts as to whether that would actually get Jon to stop with the Quarrymen nonsense.

Demona was silent for a moment before offering, “I know where the Quarrymen headquarters are located, or at least the public ones.”

“I need to get close to him for only a few seconds to dissolve the enchantment,” Kendra said, “and that’s all I’m going to do.” She stared down at the city streets below them, feeling the updraft of warmer air Demona had mentioned. “I know the spirits would rather I taught him how to do it himself,” she looked over at the gargoyle grimly, “but I don’t trust Jon with that much information about me or you or anyone else. I think he’s too unstable.”

She looked down once again, watching the small matchbox-sized cars move along the street, “And I’ll have to go visit Robyn in prison to see if she’s broken the enchantment on her like Jason broke his, if she hasn’t then I’m not certain what I can do until she gets out of prison.”

Demona commented, “I guess it’s a good thing that the Weird Sisters are trapped on Avalon or they would have probably enchanted them again.”

Kendra looked pained, “That’s the only thing that bothers me about not telling them, it leaves them completely unprotected from the fey,” she admitted. “The only thing I can do is keep an eye on them.”

The flame haired gargoyle offered, “At least if they do, we’ll know that the Weird Sisters are about again, and it’s easy enough to dispel any enchantment they place on your cousins.”
Kendra nodded, then changing the subject she said, “I can feel the updraft you mentioned,” she glanced to the north where she could see the tall buildings of the city, “how is it different over Manhattan?”

Demona looked over at her with a raised brow for a second before responding, “I’m sure you’ve felt the slightly stronger updrafts?”

They crossed over one right then, and Kendra adjusted her wings to steady her flight, “Like that one?” she commented with a grin, “It feels sort of like we’re going over waves in the air.”

“Yes, like that one, and yes, I guess it does,” Demona agreed with a smile, “the ones over Manhattan are much stronger and more abrupt. If you aren’t prepared for them they can actually be rather startling when they lift, or perhaps I should actually say bounce, you up in the air.”

“I can see how that would be startling,” Kendra commented, amused. She looked up at the sky above them, the almost full moon, “I’m glad we came out tonight, I’ve been feeling rather cooped up lately,” she admitted softly.

The gargoyle stared at her for a long moment before asking, “What do you usually do at night?”

“Walk around my estate or change and go for a run though the woods,” Kendra responded, taking a deep breath of the night air. This wasn’t quite the same, but it was definitely close enough to dispel the trapped sensation she had been feeling.

Demona stared at her lover, the words and the way Kendra was acting served as a strong reminder of the wildness inside her lover, “We can go out for a little bit every night,” she promised. She wasn’t sure how she could cut her workload more, but she would find a way, seeing how even this short glide had relaxed Kendra made it clear to the gargoyle that the jaguar’s chosen needed this time outside.

Kendra glanced over at her, “Is there anything I could be helping you with to lighten your load?”

Demona immediately shook her head, “No, I don’t want you doing the job of a personal assistant. You’ve got quite enough to do already with your own Division,” she grinned slyly, “or if you don’t yet, you will be soon enough.”

The winged were-jaguar chuckled at the answer. She knew Demona was correct; the meeting with Jean this morning had definitely started the ball rolling on the fuel cell company acquisition. “Would one of those help?”

Demona laughed dryly, “Yes, but after the last one, I decided it was safer to do without.”

It took Kendra a moment to make sense of the statement, “Robyn,” she commented remembering finally.

The flame haired gargoyle nodded, “Yes Robyn, pity she turned out to be a hunter. She was very good at the job.”

“What about another chosen?”

“Another…” Demona’s voice trailed off and she got a thoughtful look on her face, “that might work; there would certainly be no doubts in my mind as to whether or not I could trust them. The question is whether there is a chosen with an interest in business, I might be wrong but I’m getting the idea that you and I are oddities, most of the others don’t seem to be…”
“Motivated by money and power?” commented Kendra with a grin.

Demona chuckled, “Something like that, yes,” she admitted. “Still it won’t hurt to ask if there is anyone who would be interested, I’ll give Rachael a call tomorrow, she seems to know about everyone.”

December 11th, 1997

Morning - Nightstone Unlimited HQ, Lower East Side Manhattan

“Good morning Rachael,” Dominique said as soon as the senior Owl’s chosen answered the phone.

“Dominique,” the Cree woman replied warmly as soon as she recognized the redhead’s voice, “I understand Margaret will be in New York City for Solstice too and that we’re going out with Robert to see Phantom of the Opera?”

The redhead grinned, Rachael sounded rather excited, “I haven’t checked with his Aunt and Uncle yet, but I’m hopeful that he will be able to come with us,” she said, “I’ve already gotten us tickets for the show and arranged for transportation for all of us.”

“I hope he can,” Rachael responded, “this is turning into quite the little gathering. I haven’t seen Margaret in many years and Robert only once in person.”

“I’ll try my best to arrange it so that he can come along,” Dominique assured her, “I can’t guarantee anything though.”

“I’ll understand if you can’t, his Aunt and Uncle don’t like him going out, and I get the feeling that there are very few people they would approve of him socializing with,” said Rachael.

Dominique recalled how Robert’s aunt had referred to Rachael as that Indian woman, “I suspect you’re right,” she agreed dryly. “Actually though, I wasn’t calling about our Solstice plans.”

“You weren’t,” Rachael sounded surprised, “why were you calling then?”

“I was wondering if you knew of anyone who had both the training and interest in becoming my personal assistant,” Dominique said. “The last one I hired turned out to be Kendra’s cousin, Robyn Canmore, and the working relationship between us ended on less than a cordial note on either side.”

The redhead smiled at the amused sounding snort on the other end of the phone, “I thought I might have better luck asking you if you knew someone, not to mention it might be safer for me.”

Now Rachael did laugh aloud, “I’ll ask around, see if there’s anyone either in business or pursuing a business career. I know of one young woman that might be interested, she just graduated this winter from Arizona State University. I’m not sure she would want to move to a big city though; she has a horse and loves riding. I don’t know if that would work out very well for her.”

Arizona, horses, it didn’t take Dominique long to come up with the picture of a cowgirl in her mind, “She has a business degree?”

“Yes,” the Cree woman confirmed, “she just got her bachelor’s degree.”

“General business or?” the redhead asked, she had been hoping for someone with a master’s degree, but it was worth more to her to have someone she could trust than a person with an advanced degree that she could not.
“Umm…” Rachael hesitated, “I’m not sure, I think Sharon said something about a double major in business?”

Dominique’s interest was stirred, a double major sounded promising, at the very least it meant that this Sharon had more than just a general business degree. “I’m sure something could be worked out for her horse, if she’s interested.”

“I’ll ask and let you know, or did you want to contact her yourself?” Rachael inquired.

Dominique thought of the work she needed to do today, “Would you mind contacting her?”

“Not at all,” Rachael assured her, “will you be around tonight?”

“I can be,” Dominique responded.

“Seven o’clock?”

“Alright,” the redhead agreed, “I’ll see you then.” Dominique hung up the phone, grabbed a notebook and started listing the things she needed to get done in order to be ready for Rachael’s arrival and their Solstice eve celebration. She needed to call the cleaning service and get the house cleaned, and the guest room downstairs needed to be prepared for Rachael’s stay. She continued writing down her to do list: she needed to get some decorations and have them put up, and put in an order for groceries. That brought Dominique’s thoughts to the Solstice meal. She wanted to have something nice and elegant for the dinner which meant that she needed to get the meal catered, because she certainly wasn’t a skilled enough chef to prepare the type of meal she wanted to have, nor did she want to spend the time making it.

Dominique was looking at the list trying to think whether there was anything missing, when it dawned on the redhead that the small, quiet celebration she had initially envisioned had certainly grown. Now she was getting the house decorated for the holiday and planning a dinner, bemused she shook her head, her life certainly had changed rather dramatically since the Ancient One chose her. She had Kendra who was both friend and lover, Rachael and Robert who were her friends, and now Margaret and possibly Sharon as potential friends.

How different this year was from last year, Dominique mused, she had still been fuming over the failure of the carrier virus a year ago. A chill swept through her at the thought of what would have happened had Goliath not caught the canister, Kendra and Rachael might have survived, but young Robert wasn’t immortal. The thought made her feel ill, and reminded her that there were still stocks of the carrier virus stored in the lab along with Dr. Sevarius’s research papers. Her jaw firmed, that was easy enough to correct, and she needed to talk with Mr. Pierre about shifting the focus of the Biological and Chemical Research Department anyway.

She glanced at her list once again before rising and walking out to her secretary’s desk. The dark skinned woman looked up inquiringly as she approached. “Candice could you find me the names of some caterers and decorators, I’m planning a holiday get together at my house.”

There was a moment of silence, and despite her grim mood, Dominique found the brief stunned look on the woman’s face amusing, she had never made such a request before. “Of course Ms. Destine,” Candice finally responded, “for how many people?”

“Five…” Dominique frowned, thinking of the unknown Sharon who might or might not be working for her by that time, “or six perhaps, I’m not certain.”

She was walking toward the elevators when her steps slowed, memories of the past reminding her of
the human celebrations usually associated with this time of year. She turned and walked back to Candice’s desk, her secretary looked up alertly. “I believe it’s customary for there to be some type of corporate Christmas party?” she said ignoring the fact that she certainly hadn’t authorized any type of party the past two years. Candice gave her such a blank look in response to her question that Dominique wondered for a moment if she had accidentally spoken in Scots Gaelic or French instead of English.

“A Christmas party?” the woman finally responded, “Here, or at a hotel or a dinner cruise?”

“I suspect it’s too late to arrange for one elsewhere,” Dominique replied, “why don’t you and Mrs. Merrill discuss the possibilities and get back to me with the information by the end of the week. Something catered during the day might be the best choice considering it’s already the eleventh.”

“Yes, Ms. Destine,” Candice sounded slightly overwhelmed and the redhead stared at her in surprise. There had definitely been busier weeks at Nightstone that hadn’t ruffled the woman in the slightest. Still, maybe there was more to arranging one of these parties, especially a last minute one, than she realized, Dominique considered.

She looked down at the calendar on her secretary’s desk, and sighed in resignation, “Also prepare a memo for me to sign announcing that we will be closing at noon on the 24th for the Christmas holiday.” She didn’t wait for Candice to respond before turning away from the woman and striding toward the elevators, she didn’t like the idea of paying for another half day of vacation, but she knew that both Xanatos Enterprises and Cyberbiotics gave their employees a half day, therefore she would as well. As she stepped into the elevator, it occurred to her that Macbeth would doubtless get the credit for both the party and half day off. Dominique smiled wryly, at this rate he would be a popular man around Nightstone.

Thirty minutes later, “The carrier virus is certainly a mixed bag,” Dr. Sanders, the Biological and Chemical Research Project Lead in Research and Development’s Special Projects Department, said, “on the one hand, Dr. Sevarius did engineer it to not be able to replicate so it’s fairly harmless on its own. On the other hand, the wide range of vectors it has gives it a deadly potential when it’s bound to a pathogen that’s capable of replicating once it finds a suitable host. Especially if that pathogen is highly contagious once it’s released into a population…” her voice trailed off uncertainly, “Ms. Destine?”

Dominique gripped the console in front of her in a white knuckled hold, “I had forgotten that the carrier virus couldn’t replicate on its own,” she admitted absently. Dr. Sanders gave her a rather odd look, “From his notes I gather that both you and Dr. Sevarius agreed that if it were allowed to replicate the chances of it mutating were simply too high, thus negating its value as a carrier virus.”

“Yes,” the redhead agreed still sounding strange as she stared at the screen where the virus rotated, “I remember that now.”

There was a moment of silence as Dr. Sanders glanced over at Mr. Pierre with a puzzled look. The large man shrugged, he didn’t know what was going on with Ms. Destine on any more than the researcher did.

Finally, the redhead released the console and turned around to face them. She appeared composed, as if the brief moment before had never happened, “Still it’s too potentially dangerous,” she said, her tone firm and commanding once again. “Dispose of it properly along with all the other things Sevarius was playing with and get rid of every piece of information that would allow someone to reproduce it.”
“Yes Ms. Destine, I’ll start on that immediately,” Dr. Sanders said, a pleased look on her face.

Dominique spared a glance at her, taking in the woman’s expression and feeling reasonably certain her orders would be followed. She knew Dr. Sanders hadn’t approved of some of the research Nightstone had been conducting; now she had just given the researcher permission to dispose of most of them. As for the rest, “Also, unless the project has a therapeutic focus all research projects in your section are suspended pending my review.” Dominique ignored the stunned look on the woman’s face, “Those researchers affected by this suspension will be working with Mr. Kirkland on his current project,” she turned to the Research and Development Division manager, “Mr. Pierre if you will fill Dr. Sanders in please.”

The redhead listened as the ebony skinned man explained the new battery technology Mr. Kirkland had developed and why the Biological and Chemical Research Team might be able to solve his current problem. “Mr. Kirkland developed a new type of battery technology four months ago using a thin cellulose sheet soaked in ionic electrolytes with embedded carbon nanotubes. Our current problem is how to produce larger and cheaper sheets of these paper batteries for commercial production.”

“Has Nightstone already patented this?” asked Dr Sanders with a slight frown, she didn’t recall hearing anything about this new battery technology at any of the department meetings.

Jean Pierre shook his head, “Not yet, Ms. Destine just gave us the go ahead to submit the patent application for it. They should go in at the beginning of next week.” He waited a second to see if she had any more questions before continuing, “What I’m hoping is that if we diversify the scientific backgrounds of the researchers working on this project we will come up with some new ideas on how to produce the size sheets we need at a reasonable cost.”

“Mr. Pierre, Dr. Sanders,” Dominique interrupted them, they immediately stopped and looked her way inquiringly, “I believe you two can handle this from here. Dr. Sanders I’d like a report on what you disposed of and how it was disposed for company records.”

Dominique was able to hold together her calm façade until the elevator, once the doors closed with only her inside she leaned against the wall choking back both incredulous laughter and the prick of tears. How could she have forgotten that one rather relevant fact about the carrier virus, Dominique wondered. The carrier virus couldn’t replicate, and the disinfectant she had spent so much time and difficulty obtaining certainly couldn’t reproduce itself. The spell she had cast upon it would have spread the virus and disinfectant across the entire globe, but it would have also dispersed the matter in that one canister so widely that it would have had no effect at all upon anything.

The disappointment and horror in her daughter’s eyes, the disgust and loathing in Goliath’s and Brooklyn’s, the crippling of Kendra’s cousin Jason, all of it for nothing, for a canister of liquid that without the dispersal spell would have simply been a puddle of relatively harmless disinfectant on the floor of the cathedral. “Damn them,” Dominique whispered bitterly in the silence of the elevator, knowing just whose enchantment it had been that had been the root cause of it all.

*Late Afternoon - Surveillance van outside Quarryman Headquarters in Lower Manhattan*

Elisa Maza, disguised as her Sally persona, opened the back door of the van just enough for her to slip inside, and shut it quickly behind her. “Anything interesting?” she asked Matt who had one cup of a pair of headphones up to his ear.

He shook his head, “Not so far.”
The detective’s eyes scanned the bank of monitors along one side of the interior of the van; they showed views of the outside of the van and the building the task force was monitoring. A familiar face caught her attention, her eyes swung back to one monitor as she stared at the black haired woman watching the same building they were monitoring.

She made an irritated sound that drew Matt’s attention, “What is it?” he asked.

As an answer Elisa pointed at the monitor, “Kendra Canmore, I guess that’s why Demona said she wasn’t going after him, she doesn’t need to.”

“What do you think she’s after?” Matt asked after a few minutes of watching Kendra Canmore watch the Quarrymen Headquarters.

Elisa replied dryly, “Besides watching the building? I don’t know, maybe she’s waiting for Jon to show.”

“Whatever it is,” Matt said a moment later as a familiar car approached, “we should know soon.”

The two detectives waited, tense and ready to move, a dozen scenarios running though their heads as they tried to figure out what might happen in the next few minutes.

Kendra Canmore straightened as soon as she saw Jon Canmore step out of his vehicle; she crossed the street and followed him, catching up to him with swift long strides in a few seconds. Her collaring of him was one of the smoothest either detective had seen, in one motion she grabbed his shirt and twisted his arm down and around behind his back, and in the next the both of them were continuing down the street. Jon was struggling, but it was clear that he was getting nowhere; his attempts to get free weren’t even throwing Kendra off stride.

Matt whistled in admiration, “Nice,” he muttered.

“Yea, but now that she’s got him what is she going to do with him,” Elisa commented, worried.

Matt glanced at her, “You don’t think she’d kill him do you?”

“He did try to kill her,” she pointed out. As Kendra and Jon Canmore disappeared into an alleyway the two detectives eyes met, “I’ll go,” Elisa said, “that way Sally can save him if it’s needed.” She paused a moment to check her blonde wig, slipped out of the van and crossed the street, then headed toward the alleyway that the two Canmore cousins had disappeared into. She hugged the building’s brick wall as she approached the alley, and cautiously peered around the corner.

“I didn’t want to kill you, but you chose the Demon over your own family,” Elisa heard Jon say angrily as she looked into the passageway. Kendra and Jon were fighting, or rather Jon was fighting and Kendra was brushing off his attacks with almost contemptuous ease. To the watching detective, it was painfully obvious that Kendra was much more adept in the martial arts than her cousin. Yet another skill she could add to the growing list of Kendra Canmore’s talents, thought Elisa sourly, remembering the ice skating exhibition.

“You mean a bunch of murders and child killers don’t you,” Kendra responded contemptuously.

Jon growled, renewing his attack and trying desperately to land at least one blow, “They’re demons, you can’t murder a demon, you send it back to the hell that spawned it.”

At least Kendra didn’t appear to be interested in killing him, Elisa thought to herself, as she listened to the two cousin’s argue.

“They’re not demons, Jon and you know it,” Kendra replied coolly, “you just can’t accept that
Jason’s injury is solely your fault, so you’re blaming them for it.”

Jon’s angry yell in response to this statement, and a rapid flurry of blows between the two cousins had Elisa rethinking her previous thought, but before she could intervene, Jon was down on the ground.

Kendra stared down at the unconscious man, in an almost gentle tone she said, “But then I know that you’re not acting completely of your own free will right now.” Her voice turned colder, “Just as our family hasn’t acted entirely of their own will in spending the last thousand years committing genocide while they were chasing Demona around to make sure she kept her warrior skills honed.” Kendra knelt beside him, “Those three bitches are to blame for that, and if I get the chance I’ll kill them for what they turned our family into,” she finished harshly.

Elisa’s eyes widened in shock at the angry words, and she watched as Kendra placed a hand on Jon’s chest and then closed her eyes. The detective stared puzzled at the unmoving woman; it almost looked as if Kendra were praying over him. Finally, Kendra moved again, staring down at her cousin thoughtfully for a long moment before rising to her feet.

Elisa ducked back around the corner, her mind was whirling and she didn’t know whether she wanted to confront Kendra Canmore about what she had said right now or not. Her feet started carrying her away from the alley and back toward the surveillance van where her partner Matt was waiting. She needed some time to think, about both what she had just heard, and what Macbeth had said about the Weird Sisters meddling in his and Demona’s lives, before talking with Kendra Canmore.

She slipped back into the van, “Did she give any sign that she saw me?” she asked Matt immediately. She wasn’t quite yet willing to accept what she had heard at face value, it might be another part of a plot by Demona to have them thinking what Macbeth had said was real, though she couldn’t think of any reason why Kendra Canmore would be willing to go along with such a plot.

“I don’t think so,” he responded, “she glanced up and down the street before leaving, but she didn’t seem to look at you any longer than anyone else.” He stared at her, curiously, “What happened?”

Elisa related what she had seen and heard in the alleyway, “I still don’t get what she was doing though,” she said puzzled.

“Woa,” Matt said, “so what Macbeth said was real then…”

“Maybe,” the dark haired, dark eyed woman commented uncertainly.

Matt frowned, “Why would Kendra Canmore be caught up in a scheme by Demona against Macbeth though?”

“I don’t know,” Elisa admitted, that was the one thing she couldn’t think of a reason to explain, “but then we don’t really know that much about her except for the little that Jason knows,” she said thoughtfully.

Bluestone glanced at her, “Well, are the Weird Sisters capable of doing what they’re saying?”

Elisa thought of what she knew of the three fey, how they had been willing to kill the young gargoyles, Princess Katherine, Guardian Tom and the Magus just to get their revenge for the Magus defeating them. How they had lied to Oberon and Titiana in an effort to get Oberon to kill or drive away the young gargoyles when their first effort with Demona, Macbeth and the Archmage had failed. “Yes they are,” she stated in a hard tone.
A crease formed between the red headed detective’s eyebrows, “Then why are you so determined to believe this is all a scheme of Demona’s?”

She scowled at him, “You know how many times she’s pulled something like this.”

“That doesn’t mean she’s doing it this time though,” he said reasonably, “what does the evidence tell you?”

“That it could go either way,” she responded immediately, annoyed, “and how many times has it not been a scheme by Demona?”

Matt couldn’t argue with that point, so he didn’t try, “Wouldn’t it explain though why she helped Kendra across Canada? If she knew the Canmores had been enchanted by the Weird Sisters, it would have gone a long way toward her not holding her family against Kendra.”

Stubbornly, Elisa maintained, “If they were in this together, it would explain why Demona helped Kendra as well.”

Matt sighed; they were back to this again, “Once again, why would Kendra help Demona? It’s not like she needs a cut of Macbeth’s money.”

She stared at the monitor bank for a moment with a scowl before glancing over at him, “You saw how she acted in the park at the Quarrymen rally, maybe she just thinks it fun. Or maybe there’s a motive there we don’t know about because, as I just said, we don’t really know much about her.”

Bluestone stared at her narrow eyed, “You don’t like Kendra Canmore do you?” he said, his tone perceptive.

“What?” Elisa said incredulously, trying to ignore the twinge of discomfort she felt at misleading her partner. It wasn’t as if she was lying though, she didn’t dislike Kendra Canmore, being jealous wasn’t the same as disliking someone.

Matt shrugged, “I’m just mentioning that you always bristle when her name’s brought up,” he turned his attention back to the monitors and sat up in his chair, “there’s Jon, I guess he woke up.”

Elisa turned her attention back to the monitors and watched with Bluestone as the blonde man looked up and down the street before heading into the building that housed the Quarrymen headquarters. She looked at her watch, “It’s about time for Sally to show up.”

Matt wasn’t willing to let his partner change the subject yet, “When are you going to tell the clan?”

She frowned thoughtfully, “In a few nights,” she decided, she gave him a firm look, “I’d rather tell them myself.”

He stared at her, “Alright,” he finally acquiesced, “but they need to know about this.”

“I know,” Elisa agreed quietly, “if this is a scheme by Demona I’d expect her to try and contact Angela, but she should be safe for another few nights. She didn’t argue with Goliath when he told the clan to stay away from Demona until we had a better idea what was going on.”

“And if Demona doesn’t?” asked Matt.

Elisa shook her head, “I’ll be surprised if she doesn’t,” the dark haired woman admitted. “And even if this isn’t another plot of hers, as Brooklyn pointed out a few nights ago, she’s still attacked the clan repeatedly, killed several people the night she used that spell to change people into stone, and tried to
wipe out the entire human race just over a year ago. None of what I’ve heard so far changes any of that.”

*Night - Destine Manor – Forest Hills Gardens, Long Island*

“Ahh, I had wondered if that disinfectant was really that dangerous,” Kendra commented, winding her spaghetti around her fork, “I mean, disinfecting the earth of all the germ like humans on it sounded pretty catchy, but it seemed a little short on the scientific principal side. Binding the carrier virus to a pathogen would have made so much more sense.”

Demona stared at her lover, confused, she wasn’t certain what reaction she had been anticipating, but this certainly wasn’t it. “But it caused your cousin Jason to be crippled,” she pointed out guiltily.

The black haired woman shook her head, she finished her bite of food and took a sip of her wine before responding firmly, “No Jon did that because none of my cousins stopped to ask themselves if what you were claiming was actually possible. What you did was use a relatively harmless disinfectant instead of a pathogen in one of your plans to drive the entire clan father away from you. Considering that a pathogen would have worked just as well, I’m really glad you decided to use the disinfectant.”

The flame haired gargoyle gave Kendra a puzzled look, not immediately following her line of reasoning. “Using a pathogen certainly would have guaranteed that you remained alone. I doubt the clan would have wanted to have anything to do with you after you succeeded after all, and with the praying gargoyle you would have been able to protect the other gargoyles from being harmed by whatever pathogen you chose,” Kendra pointed out. “Which means that the interesting question is why you so conveniently forgot about the carrier virus not being able to replicate, and why you chose to use a disinfectant instead of the more logical choice of a pathogen in the first place,” she commented.

Demona sat back in her chair, stunned, she hadn’t thought about the fact that she could have chosen a pathogen instead of the stolen disinfectant and fulfilled the demands of the Weird Sister’s enchantment just as well. The gargoyles shuddered, she was pleased that she had used the disinfectant, but it did raise questions as to why she had gone through all that effort to steal the canisters of it from Xanatos when Sevarius had several pathogens she could have chosen from that he had been playing with in his laboratory at Nightstone. It was almost as if she had willfully blinded herself to that possibility, and instead chosen something that, while it sounded threatening, had little possibility of actually being harmful. She had no answers for Kendra’s questions, she didn’t know why she had forgotten about the carrier virus not being able to replicate, nor did she know why she had fixated upon Xanatos’s disinfectant instead of one of the pathogens in her own lab, and the two unanswered questions left her feeling deeply unsettled.

When Demona didn’t respond after a few seconds, Kendra continued, “It’s too bad Robyn didn’t research the carrier virus more thoroughly before she stirred everyone up to go and stop you, but maybe the enchantment on her was to blame. The one on Jon…” she shook her head, “I have no idea what it was supposed to do,” she admitted, “but I really didn’t like what it looked like…”

Demona frowned, Kendra appeared really bothered by this, “Why, what about it disturbed you?” the gargoyles prodded, trying to get her lover to continue.

Kendra looked at her, “I’m not sure, but I got a very nasty feeling about it when I was looking at it. The threads of the enchantment connected certain areas of his brain together, but nothing else. I’m glad we’re going to the spirit realm tonight, maybe one of the spirits will have an idea what exactly it
was doing to him.”

“I’m certain one of them will,” Demona responded reassuringly.

Forty minutes later, they curled together on the couch and made the transition from the living world into the spirit realm. They stepped out of the house and into the yard; the Ancient One and the Jaguar spirit were waiting for them. “My chosen,” the Jaguar spirit addressed Kendra, in his rich, commanding baritone, “You have news of your cousin?”

Kendra went immediately to the Jaguar spirit, kneeling in front of him and meeting his green eyes in silent communication.

While the two of them were communing, Demona quietly greeted the Irish Elk spirit, “Ancient One.”

First his ears and then his great brown eyes shifted from watching Kendra and the Jaguar spirit to her, “My chosen,” he responded in his great deep voice.

Finally, Kendra and the Jaguar spirit stirred once again, the Jaguar spirit turned toward the Ancient One, “I have never seen a fey enchantment like this one,” he sounded troubled. This time, as Kendra and Demona watched, it was the two spirits whose eyes met for a moment.

The Irish Elk stamped his foot, “The Wise One may know more than even I, a few of her chosen have been examining this spell since recent events brought it more to our attention. I have my suspicions as to how this enchantment affects the other Canmores, but we should confer with her to see what she has learned.”

The great stag sounded angry, Demona frowned, remembering what Kendra had said about the enchantment and how it had made her feel to see it. She started to worry about what it was that the Ancient One suspected, and how it might affect Kendra. Only a few seconds later the Eagle Owl spirit came winging out of the grey mists to land in between the other two spirits.

“I do know what the spell on the Canmore’s does,” the Wise One stated immediately without even greeting anyone, her tone coldly angry, “One of the Eagles chosen, Ishmael, who is a physician, recognized what it was doing from some new research into the physical causes of drug addiction. The enchantment mimics the effect of certain addictive drugs on the human brain; it activates the dopamine reward circuit in the brain whenever the person it is placed upon performs the desired behavior. In this case the behavior they wanted was for the Canmores to pursue and attempt to kill Demona. Unfortunately the enchantment is not specific enough and any gargoyle’s death will activate the enchantment, though not as strongly.”

Kendra turned toward the Wise One, her expression incredulous, “They addicted them to killing gargoyles?”

The Eagle Owl spirit ruffled her feathers, “Not just killing, even thinking about harming a gargoyle will cause a weak activation of the enchantment,” she snapped her beak together angrily. “As I said, by the look of the spell I suspect they didn’t intend for the enchantment to be triggered by anything but Demona, but they didn’t take any steps to limit the stimulus that caused the enchantment to activate over the centuries they used it either.”

The black haired woman’s expression slowly changed from disbelieving to enraged, she turned and walked a few paces away from them. Demona heard her take a few deep breaths and started to cross over to her when a wild cry of raw fury and pain erupted from Kendra’s throat as she fell to her knees. The flame haired gargoyle could feel the anger radiating off Kendra, and the sense of danger emanating from the black haired woman was something she hadn’t felt since that first meeting
between them in her office.

The great stag stepped in front of Demona as she started towards Kendra, “Chosen,” he cautioned.

Demona stepped around him, she knew Kendra would never hurt her, “Kendra,” she said softly as she approached the black haired woman. It got no immediate response, “My love,” she tried again as knelt a few feet away.

That got a response, Kendra’s head turned, their eyes met, “How could they have done something that perverse? To make my ancestors feel pleasure when they murdered or thought about hurting…” the sapphire blue eyes were filled with anger, but underneath it they were haunted, pain filled. Then Demona felt it, the sharp pain of the wound this knowledge had made in Kendra’s spirit, the bewilderment and anger she was feeling.

The gargoyle opened her arms, her heart filled with a deep, aching pain for her mate, and then they were full of her hurting lover. She wrapped her wings around the woman and silently held her, rocking her gently back and forth. She didn’t know what to do to lessen Kendra’s pain, except what she was doing now, holding the black haired woman and letting her know that she cared and would be there for her. Just as Kendra had been doing for her ever since the gargoyle learned that the past thousand years of suffering had been the Archmages vengeance against her. Gently Demona stroked the long, silky midnight black hair and thought about how much she loved the human woman in her arms, how much she wanted to just take this pain away from her and protect her from anything that might hurt her like this in the future.

After a minute or two, Kendra shifted in her arms, moving so that she could hold the gargoyle in return, “You’re making it very hard for me to remain angry,” she murmured. Demona gave her a confused look; the black haired woman pulled away enough so that she could reach up and pull the gargoyle’s head down so that the bony eyebrow ridge rested against her forehead. “Feeling your emotions,” Kendra explained, rubbing her brow against the gargoyle’s gently, “is making it impossible for me to remain angry with the Weird Sisters.” Their lips met in a brief kiss, “What I’m feeling from you is so very beautiful my love.”

Demona closed her eyes, their foreheads were still touching and they breathed into the shared space between their faces. Her wings held Kendra’s body tightly against her own. The anger and pain she had felt from Kendra receded, replaced by much different emotions. Tender and gentle, fierce and protective, bright and passionate, the strength of them brought tears to her eyes as she shifted to bring her body into even closer contact with her lover’s. The gargoyle wanted to stay here forever wrapped up in these feelings, wrapped around Kendra.

The slight sound of feathers rustling reminded the two of them that they were not alone, “Demona, Kendra,” said the Wise One, sounding rather stern and commanding. Her tone was quite unlike anything either of them had ever heard from the Eagle Owl before, and surprised they broke apart from each other and looked over toward her. The spirit regarded them steadily, “I understand it is a temptation to remain here and feel one another’s emotions, but it is not safe for either of you to do so. In the past, other chosen who were mates have seriously damaged their physical bodies when they remained here too long. I do not wish to see that happen to either of you.”

The flame haired gargoyle’s green eyes widened at the Wise One’s warning words. Considering the thoughts she had just had about wanting to stay here forever in Kendra’s arms, she could understand only too easily how it had happened. Reluctantly, they released one another, moving apart until they were able to rise to their feet once again. Kendra reached out and gently stroked down the side of Demona’s face, before turning to the Eagle Owl spirit, “Thank you for your warning.”

The Wise One twitched her wings back into place before replying, “You are welcome young jaguar,
now my senior chosen is waiting with one of the young Horse’s chosen for you.”

“Concentrate on her image and will yourself to her as you travel, chosen,” the Irish Elk spirit advised.

Demona frowned, the directions he was giving sounded rather odd, yet… she thought of the Cree woman and began walking. The swirling mists got closer instead of clearing in front of her as they normally did. In her surprise, she let her concentration waver, and the mists receded from in front of her revealing more of her yard.

“Do not let your concentration waver chosen,” the great stag instructed. The gargoyle nodded, she had already guessed what had happened. Once again she concentrated, and this time when the mists remained steady she kept her concentration on the Cree woman’s image and walked into them. When they cleared almost immediately in front of her, she recognized the woods around Rachael’s home in Canada.

“Cool,” Kendra commented as she appeared out of the mists beside her, the black haired woman turned and looked back at the mists from which they had come with a delighted smile. Demona smiled at her, Kendra was right it was a very interesting way to travel.

Rachael was already standing beside her home; beside her was a much younger woman with short brown hair, wearing black chinos and a long sleeved white shirt. This was probably Sharon, the gargoyle took a moment to look her over, the woman was a few inches shorter than either she or Kendra, and appeared to be rather muscular and solid looking. At first glance she rather reminded Demona of her IT Division manager Jordan Conrad, though she wasn’t as slender. Standing behind the young woman was a very large and powerful looking dark bay stallion that the gargoyle immediately guessed was the Horse spirit.

“Demona, Kendra” the Cree woman smiled warmly as she welcomed them. “This is Sharon McDonald, one of the Horse spirit’s chosen and the Horse spirit.”

“Pleased to meet you, Ma’am,” the tanned young woman said, stepping forward with bold self-confidence and holding out her hand to Demona.

Her hazel eyes met those of the gargoyle without any guile and Demona’s first impression of the young woman was that she was rather open and honest. Mindful of her talons and amused by Sharon’s manner, Demona grasped the proffered hand and shook it. “I’m pleased to meet you as well.” The gargoyle found it interesting that the young woman was treating this as if it were an interview; it meant that she was at least curious about the position.

Demona’s eyes went to the spirit standing behind his chosen, “Horse spirit,” she acknowledged him respectfully. The greeting was quickly echoed by Kendra who was standing a little behind and off to the side of the gargoyle.

“Ancient One’s chosen, Jaguar’s chosen,” the equine spirit replied lifting his head and giving both of them but especially Demona a long assessing look.

“Rachael told me you were interested in filling a personal assistant position?” Sharon inquired, breaking the silence.

Given the Horse spirit’s obvious interest in this matter, the flame haired gargoyle decided it was best to be completely honest about why she was looking for someone. Demona wanted both Sharon and the spirit protectively watching over her to have a clear idea about what the gargoyle expected of the young woman if she accepted the position, “I am. With my magical lessons and teaching Kendra
how to glide, my evenings are rather full these days. I’d like to have the time to spar, work out, and learn how to dance as well, but I need to start taking less work home with me to have more time to fit them in, thus the need for a personal assistant.”

The hazel eyes softened, and Sharon nodded, “I can understand that. I don’t have any official work experience besides two summer internships with local businesses, but I did just graduate with a double major in International Business Management and Business Administration from Arizona State University.”

Demona’s brow raised, that was an interesting choice of majors and potentially a good fit with the type of work the younger woman would be doing for her, not to mention that that University was known for having a very good business program. “Official work experience?” questioned the gargoyle, wondering exactly what Sharon meant by that.

“I’ve been helping my Dad with the ranch ever since I was twelve or so,” the young Horse’s chosen explained, “it’s why I decided to go into business administration. I realized I enjoyed understanding how the ranch worked and stayed profitable so much that I decided that was what I wanted to do for a living.”

“He doesn’t need your help?” Demona inquired carefully.

Sharon grinned, “He’s got my two older brothers to help him. I’m sure he would find something for me to do if I wanted, but he doesn’t need me to work on the ranch.” Then apparently suddenly mindful that such an expression wasn’t quite appropriate for an interview, she sobered abruptly.

“Relax, Sharon,” Demona smirked at her, “this is somewhat informal for an interview after all.” The gargoyle was pleased to see that though the shorter woman did relax, she didn’t take the invitation as an excuse to relax too much. “I understand that you have a horse?”

The hazel eyes warmed appreciably, “Bree, she’s a three year old Appaloosa mare,” she smiled, “I picked her out when she was just a foal and trained her myself. Even when I was in school I always came out on the weekends to ride her. That’s the main thing I’m concerned about with your company being located in such a big city, where will I keep her and how often will I get to see her.”

Knowing whose chosen she was, Sharon’s obvious love for the animal didn’t seem so odd to Demona anymore, “If you’re interested in the position, I’m sure that something could be worked out for your horse.”

“Up near where I live in Dutchess County, there are several very nice stables. It’s only a two hour drive from the city and I’ve got more than enough room if you want to stay at my estate on the weekends to see her,” Kendra offered.

“If I can find a stable that would exercise her, that might work,” Sharon responded, her eyes brightening hopefully.

“Will you need to go up every full moon?” the gargoyle asked, her eyes flickering briefly back to the dark bay spirit standing behind the younger woman.

Sharon looked puzzled for a moment, then understanding filled her eyes, “No, that won’t be necessary for me.”

Demona was relieved, that would have made things more difficult as well as being awkward to explain at work. “I’ll need you to send me your resume so I can look it over, if you can send it to my email address I can take a look at it this weekend.”
Sharon suddenly looked a bit overwhelmed, “I can do that, does that mean I might have the position? I haven’t even talked to my family about the possibility of me moving to New York. Dad’s going to…” Her voice trailed off, but Demona could make a few guesses as to how Sharon thought her father might react to this news.

“Why don’t you both take the weekend and think about it,” Kendra proposed, looking over toward Demona with a raised eyebrow to see if this suggestion met with the gargoyle’s approval. “We can meet again on Sunday night after you’ve had a chance to look over her resume,” her gaze shifted to Sharon “and you’ve had a chance to introduce the idea to your family.”

Demona nodded, “That sounds like an excellent suggestion.”

December 12th – Friday

*Afternoon – Park Avenue, Manhattan*

They had put their clothes for the weekend into Kendra’s car this morning so that they could leave directly from Nightstone. Now they were driving north on Park Avenue headed out of town to Kendra’s estate in Dutchess County.

The work day had went well in Dominique’s opinion, by mid-morning Dr. Sanders had sent up a report detailing how she had disposed of the biological and chemicals in Dr. Sevarius’s old laboratory and the steps she had taken to destroy any research information that could be used to replicate the carrier virus. The redhead had been impressed; the researcher had been quick and thorough at completing the task. Apparently, she had been right about how much Dr. Sanders disliked Dr. Sevarius’s work. In return, Dominique had reviewed the department’s projects and sent a list of those she wanted discontinued to Dr. Sanders. Those researchers on the discontinued projects would either be assigned to Dr. Kirkland’s team or reassigned to other projects in the Biological and Chemical Department.

Sharon’s resume had been waiting in her inbox when she got into work, and Dominique had been rather impressed with it, the young woman hadn’t mentioned that she graduated Summa Cum Laude. She had also looked up the courses required for both majors and been pleased with the breadth of coursework required. The major concern remaining in the redhead’s mind was whether or not Sharon would be able to deal with the formality she would require of the young woman while they were at work. That however was something they would both have to discover if the young woman accepted the position and Dominique already knew she was going to offer it to her.

“I wasn’t searching to end this hurting, but out of nowhere you made me feel.”

The opening lyrics of the song playing on the radio caught the redhead’s attention, pulling her thoughts away from work and to the woman sitting next to her in the driver’s seat of the car. She stared at Kendra’s profile, taking in the straight nose and strong line of her jaw, thinking of how her lips had traced over the same soft skin she was looking at now, the night before. Their lovemaking last night had been unusually intense, each staring into the other’s eyes as they touched and caressed one another, searching for the emotions they had felt from each other in the spirit realm.

“Send me a lover, someone to believe in,
Please send me someone I can hold,
Baby now send me lover, a new beginning,
Someone to take away the cold,
And give me back, what I’ve been missing,
All the love that waits inside your heart.”

The words of the song seemed almost meant specifically for her; she had been so cold and alone for so very long before Kendra came into her life. She reached out toward Kendra intending to simply place her hand on the woman’s strong thigh. Instead, her hand taken in a warm, strong clasp, the redhead looked up from their entwined hands to see Kendra glancing at her with a soft smile.

“It still astounds me, the way you found me,
It’s almost too good to be true,
From our first meeting,
I had a feeling the rest of my life I’d spend with you.”

Dominique smiled; well it hadn’t been quite that soon, though she had definitely been interested in Kendra from their first meeting. She almost had to laugh at herself now, thinking of all the reasons she had made up in her mind for why she accepted the investment, the sparring match, and then not telling Kendra’s secret. The last thing she had been ready to admit that first week was that she found Kendra herself interesting, not the information the woman had or what she might be able to tell the clan.

“I just can’t turn my back on what I know is true,
I’m into you in every way.”

They pulled up to a stoplight as the refrain of the song began again, Kendra turned toward her and Dominique needed no urging to lean over and meet her lover’s lips.

“I thought that love was only a word that I would never feel
All the passion that I hold inside was just a dream
Out of your heart you spoke to me all that I’d imagined
And I’ve fallen so in love with you.”

Afternoon – Also on Park Avenue, Manhattan

“I don’t know what they’re up to, but something big is definitely happening, Castaway is constantly in meetings with the other Quarrymen leaders,” Elisa said, her eyes narrowed against the glare of the setting sun reflected from the glass sides of the buildings lining the street. She glanced idly at the black sports car in front of her and smiled as she saw the two figures inside take advantage of the stop light to lean over and kiss. It made her think of Goliath; perhaps someday they would be able to display their feelings for one another as openly as the couple in the car ahead of her. She blinked in surprise as she saw the hair silhouetted against the light. Either the guy in the driver’s seat had very long hair or it was actually two women in the car ahead of them, with the glare off the buildings and the dark tinted glass of the windows, she couldn’t really make out enough detail to tell.

“What do you think it is?” Matt asked.

She shrugged, “As I said I don’t know, they don’t trust Sally quite enough yet to tell me. Whatever it is I’d expect it to go down in the next week or so.” Elisa raised an eyebrow as the woman in the driver’s seat leaned farther over, her silhouette providing undisputable evidence that she was indeed female, and cupped the other woman’s head and the woman in the passenger seat did the same. The detective couldn’t see much detail, but she didn’t need to tell that the kiss between the two was getting more heated.

“Hey, that’s two women,” Matt said sitting up in his seat and looking with more interest at the two
figures kissing in the car just ahead of them.

Elisa rolled her eyes; she had wondered when he would notice that. She glanced at the car absently noting it was a Jaguar, the same type of car Kendra Canmore drove, she remembered, that first day she had met the annoying woman. She frowned as she recalled the frank up and down appraising look Jason’s cousin had given her; she couldn’t remember ever having been so openly cruised by another woman before. It had been irritating and even more so when she realized that Kendra was just doing it to see if it would rattle her.

The light turned green and the two women in the black Jaguar seemed completely oblivious of the world around them. After waiting a few more seconds for the two to realize the light had turned, the detective pushed on her horn, it still took a few seconds before the figures in the car broke apart. The two silhouettes stared at one another for a few moments before the diver finally sat back and the vehicle began moving.

“Are you going to tell the clan tonight about what you saw the other day?” Matt asked, distracting her from the vehicle in front of them.

She let up on the brake and stepped lightly on the gas to get her car moving, “Yes, I’ll tell them tonight,” she confirmed. “I just hope that it doesn’t distract Angela too much, the last thing we need right now is her going off and getting caught up in whatever Demona is playing at.”

Matt sighed, “She might not be playing at anything,” he pointed out once again.

“I know,” Elisa growled, tired of this argument, “listen, I recognize I’m not really looking at this objectively, but after what she did to Angela less than a month ago I don’t think I’m being that unreasonable in suspecting this is just more of the same.”

“You don’t think that type of news is enough to make her rethink everything?” Matt tried again; he didn’t like how his partner was letting her emotions keep her from seeing all the possibilities. It was a very bad habit for a detective to get into. “I mean from what I’ve heard most of the reasons she believes humanity can’t get along with gargoyles was because of what she thought was Macbeth’s betrayal of her clan and the way the Canmore’s hunted her. Suppose Macbeth’s story is true, and Kendra Canmore wasn’t playing along in some scheme, and that right now Demona knows that neither of those two things is true, that it was just part of a larger scheme against her by the Weird Sisters and the Archmage. Isn’t it reasonable to think that might be enough to get her to stop warring with the clan and maybe even the rest of us?”

“Maybe,” Elisa very reluctantly allowed after a few seconds. The black Jaguar continued down Park Avenue as she slowed to turn toward the Eyrie building, “but if that’s the case then whatever’s going on with the Quarrymen is more important than what Demona may or may not be thinking right now. Unless she is planning something, they’re definitely the more immediate threat we need to concentrate on at the moment.”

Matt couldn’t argue with that logic, if Demona wasn’t a current threat then Elisa was right, they needed to focus on taking the Quarrymen down and stopping whatever it was they were in the middle of planning.
Friday, December 12th 1997

Night - Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan

Elisa repeated what she had heard Kendra say to the unconscious Jon Canmore two days ago. That the Weird Sisters had used the Canmores for the past thousand years to keep Demona’s skills honed until they needed her. The detective didn’t include the fact that Kendra had actually referred to the three fey as those three bitches instead of the Weird Sisters, she didn’t really feel it was necessary to be that accurate and she could just imagine Goliath’s disapproving reaction to that particular fact.

“Maybe she was talking to the same spirit Macbeth said helped Demona and him,” Lexington said before anyone else could speak up.

The detective looked over at him in surprise, that possibility hadn’t even crossed her mind. Part of the reason she was having trouble accepting Macbeth’s story was the idea of yet another powerful mystical entity out there that she had never suspected existed before. His suggestion, however, did offer a reason for Kendra’s strange behavior over her unconscious cousin.

The web-winged gargoyle frowned thoughtfully, but before he could say what was on his mind Brooklyn interrupted, “Don’t tell me you think this story of a spirit is real?” he said incredulously. “This is just something else Demona has cooked up, just like with those fake Quarrymen and that Assassin guy.”

“Brooklyn,” Goliath reproved him, “We do not know what is real and what is not, that is why I said we must watch and wait to determine the truth.”
“Surely this proves that what Macbeth told us was real,” protested Angela.

Brooklyn offered suspiciously, “She could be in on it as well for her own reasons. Maybe that’s the real reason Demona helped her and why she’s working for Demona now.” Elisa winced at how paranoid he sounded. If that was how she sounded, no wonder Matt was constantly harping on her about it.

“And what would those be?” the young female replied scornfully, her arms on her hips as she scowled at him, “Or is it just that anything that points toward my mother not being as evil as everyone thought, must be part of this mysterious plot of hers.”

“Enough,” growled Goliath, looking particularly unhappy, and the detective knew it was because the old argument between Angela and Brooklyn over Demona was starting once again. “If,” he stressed the word, “what Macbeth told us is real, then you are right,” he said to his daughter, “it does explain why she changed in the way she did over the centuries we were sleeping.” The big lavender male paused, his expression turning even more grim, “That does not, however, mean that Demona is not a threat to this clan,” he frowned at Angela when it looked as if she were about to interrupt him, silencing her. “Until we see evidence that Demona has given up her anger and bitterness and is no longer a threat to us or the humans we protect, we must be wary of her.”

“But what if now is the time that some support from us could persuade her to give up her bitterness and anger,” Angela implored. Finally saying what had been bothering for some nights, the feeling that she was letting a real opportunity to reach out to her mother slip away from her.

Elisa stared at the young lavender female troubled, if what they had been told was the truth, she couldn’t say that Angela was wrong. If Demona was emotionally struggling with the truth of what had happened to her in the past, then now might be the perfect time for the young gargoyles to make an attempt at reaching out to her mother. In light of that possibility, did she have the right to insist that the clan put her investigation first and ignore whatever was going on with the immortal gargoyles?

Brooklyn broke in, unable to keep silent any longer. He couldn’t believe that Angela could still be so naive about her mother, “And what if this is just for that purpose, so that we will feel sorry for what she has gone though. This is just another plot of hers to get back in the clan and once she is she’ll try and take over from Goliath just as she’s been trying to do all along!” the brick red gargoyles glared at her.

“Enough!” Goliath said again, this time with a roar loud enough to make everyone flinch, “you have heard my decision. We cannot afford to have our attention diverted from Elisa’s investigation of the Quarrymen by this matter.” He paused, staring sternly at them, “To tell us about Kendra Canmore was only part of the reason Elisa came tonight,” the huge lavender male turned toward the detective, obviously meaning for her to take over the conversation.

Despite her new doubts Elisa nodded to him, this wasn’t the right time or place to bring them up, “We don’t know what is going on yet, but the Quarrymen definitely have some big operation planned for the next week or so,” she said somberly. “One thing I do know is that whatever they are planning, it will put you guys in even more danger from them. We have to be ready to stop them and hopefully find enough evidence to put Canmore and the other Quarrymen leaders in jail.” She went on to describe the increased meetings between Jon Canmore and the other Quarrymen leaders, the frenetic and almost paranoid way Jon was acting recently.

Five minutes later, the detective stared after the dwindling forms of the five gargoyles. Goliath had decided to take the clan out on patrol, not wanting either Angela or Brooklyn to have time alone to fume, or worse, time to argue with one another. “What’s bothering you lass?” Hudson asked, coming up beside her.
Elisa glanced over at him, “That if Angela’s right then this is the time for her to try and contact Demona, and if Brooklyn’s right then that’s exactly the wrong thing for her to do.”

The old gargoyle sighed, “That does seem to be the entire problem doesn’t it. We don’t know if what we’re hearing is the truth or another lie.”

Saturday, December 13th 1997

Morning – Kendra’s Estate, north of Poughkeepsie, Dutchess County, NY

“Demona wake up,” Kendra’s voice disturbed the gargoyle’s slumber, “I’ve got a cup of coffee for you.”

The green eyes reluctantly opened, focusing on the woman standing by the bed holding the promised cup. Sleepily the flame haired gargoyle blinked up at her, “What time is it?” she asked her voice husky with sleep.

“Six o’clock,” the black haired woman said with a smile, “if we can head out in twenty or so minutes I can find where the herd is feeding this morning and show them to you.”

Demona stared at Kendra; she could tell it wasn’t even sunrise yet though it was close. She sat up and held out a taloned hand for the cup of aromatic brew. She was slightly grumpy about being woken on the weekend while it was still dark outside, but she could see that her lover was excited about this. Therefore, she didn’t say anything but sipped her coffee, transformed into her human form and dressed warmly, as she wasn’t certain how long they would be outside.

Signs of the day were apparent in the lightening of the darkness when they stepped outside. It wasn’t anywhere near as cold as it had been in Canada, but Dominique’s breath still hung in the cold air. In one hand she held a covered stainless steel mug of coffee, and in the other a warm biscuit stuffed with ham, swiss cheese and egg.

“I’ve got four winter food plots, I’m guessing they will be at one of them,” Kendra said as they started walking across the expanse of yard that separated the house from the surrounding woods and what looked like cleared fields. The stark bare branches of the trees of the woods raised toward the sky, while underneath, the fall leaves formed a brown carpet among the underbrush.

The redhead raised an eyebrow, “What are food plots?” she asked curiously.

“In winter just some winter wheat and corn,” the black haired woman explained, “in the spring I’ll have alfalfa, soybeans, spring oats and buckwheat planted in between corn rows.”

It took them fifteen minutes to get to the first plot. They slowed as they approached, swinging around so that they were approaching from downwind and stepping lightly among the dried leaves on the forest floor to avoid making too much noise. Dominique stared at the row of short round trees that bordered the field of alternating rows of dried corn and wheat. “What are those?” she whispered in Kendra’s ear.

“Crabapple and persimmon trees, they act both as a natural wind break for the field and as an extra food source,” the black haired woman whispered back. “Ah we’re lucky, there they are,” she said softly.

Dominique had already spotted the movement; it was a grayish-brown colored doe, stepping warily along the row of corn. The animal raised up on her hind legs and grabbed a dried ear of corn in her
mouth, pulling it as well as the top of the corn plant down as she dropped to all four feet. Another
deer appeared behind the doe, the redhead frowned, this deer was limping badly and as more of it
came into view, she could see deep bloody wounds on its sides and rear legs.

Beside her, Kendra stiffened, “Damn it, I thought that feral dog pack had all been caught,” she
growled quietly.

The redhead looked again at the wounded deer, its injuries looked fresh. If she could only get close
enough, she could at least speed the animal’s healing. But of course, that was the problem; it would
be rather difficult to persuade the deer that she meant it no harm. Or was it…she wondered.

“That was one of the best young bucks born that year too,” Kendra said angrily, “I doubt he’ll keep
enough strength in his hindquarters once that heals to compete with the other males during rutting
season now though.”

“How old is he?” Dominique asked. She was surprised that Kendra recognized the deer; she knew
that the black haired woman picked out which deer she would hunt each moon, but that was slightly
different from knowing each animal in the herd by sight.

“Two years old,” Kendra answered, “he’ll be old enough to compete with the more mature bucks in
another year or two.”

The redhead turned and looked at her lover for a second, seeing the compassion there for the
wounded animal. She shook her head slightly, Kendra’s relationship with this herd was obviously
more complex than she had guessed, “Let me ask if there’s anything I can do to get close to him, if I
can than I can heal that.” She grinned at the surprised look on her lover’s face, settled into a more
comfortable position and closed her eyes, shifting her consciousness effortlessly into the spirit realm.

The great Irish Elk was not waiting for her, but she had the feeling that he would be there very soon.
She looked over at the shadowy image of the wounded deer, altering her vision so that she could see
its life energy. Here it was a simple matter to move close enough to the animal so that she could
kneel by it and examine its wounds more closely. Some of the wounds were very deep and had torn
the muscle, but none seemed to be immediately life threatening unless the animal went further into
shock than it was or they got infected.

“Chosen,” the deep voice of the spirit drew her attention away from the wounded deer.

Dominique swiveled and rose in one move, “Ancient One,” she responded. She looked down at the
grayish image of the deer, “I would like to heal this buck’s wounds, but unlike a tree he can, and
probably will, run away. I was hoping you knew of a way to get him to stay still long enough for me
to help him.” The great stag stepped gracefully toward her to look down upon the much smaller deer.
“Kendra thinks a feral dog pack attacked him, from the wounds I’d guess that she’s right,” added the
redhead, seeing that the spirit was examining the deer’s injuries.

“There is a way chosen,” the great stag finally said, shifting his gaze from the deer to her. Dominique
met his eyes expecting him to teach her; instead the spirit gazed at her for a very long moment. She
had the feeling she was being evaluated, but she had no idea why, then his eyes drew her in, and by
the time they released her once again she understood. “There is a responsibility that goes along with
using life energy in this way chosen,” the Ancient One stated, his tone stern.

Dominique bowed her head slightly, “I will not misuse it,” she promised him, her green eyes meeting
his brown ones solemnly.

He dipped his antlered head in acknowledgement, “I will be here to assist you with healing the
animal once you are ready. It is different from mending a tree, but I believe you will have no great difficulty.”

The redhead gave him a grateful look and slipped back into the living world. She drew in a breath of the cold air and opened her eyes to meet Kendra’s curious blue gaze. “There is a way,” she said to the black haired woman quietly, “I have to convince him that I, and anyone with me, mean him no harm, and that I’m going to help him.” She paused a second, trying to think of how to say what needed to be said so that Kendra understood she couldn’t go with her, without hurting her lover’s feelings, “That has to be the truth; otherwise it will be a grave misuse of the abilities the Ancient One gave me.”

Kendra’s eyes widened as she absorbed this, “I guess I’ll be staying back here then,” she said settling back on her heels, “you can’t make that promise for me.”

The redhead leaned forward and gave her lover a quick kiss; thankful that Kendra understood that with the full moon so near, she couldn’t be vouched for by Dominique when she would be hunting the herd either this night or the next. “Can you back up a little bit, I’m not sure I can move quietly enough to get closer without alarming him.”

Kendra nodded and backed carefully away until she was several feet behind the redhead. From there she watched curiously as Dominique held out one hand toward the wounded deer for a few seconds before the redhead moved forward a few feet and then stopped again to hold out her hand before repeating the process over again. The other deer moved away nervously, but the injured one remained still, staring at the cautiously approaching human with its ears pricked forward. The black haired woman could only guess that Dominique was using life energy in some way to calm the animal. Still, it took almost a full minute of the slow stop and go process for the redhead to cross the intervening space to the wounded deer’s side. Kendra watched in awe as the animal sniffed at Dominique’s hand and accepted her touch without any more than a flicker of its tail from side to side.

With her enhanced eyesight, Kendra could see the deepest wounds in the animal’s flanks slowly closing as Dominique began healing the worst injuries first. “My lover is a healer,” she whispered almost silently to herself in wonder and a touch of awe as she watched. This was the first time she had seen Dominique heal anything other than a tree, and somehow seeing the deer’s wounds heal as the redhead concentrated on knitting together the injured flesh made it real in a way it hadn’t been before. She suspected Dominique was currently straddling the realms and getting instruction from the Ancient One, but didn’t feel like shifting and missing any of this to see if her guess was correct.

After the young buck’s worst injuries were healed, the animal seemed more alert and definitely more curious about the strange creature healing him. Kendra watched with a grin as the deer sniffed at Dominique’s long hair and lipped at it inquisitively causing the redhead to turn and look at the animal with a raised eyebrow and amused look. Dominique petted the animal on its muzzle for a few seconds before returning her attention to its flank and the remaining less serious injuries there. Kendra shook her head remembering the prickly antagonistic gargoyle she had first met, who would have guessed that just over a month later that same gargoyle would be doing something like this.

“He wanted to follow you home I see,” Kendra said with a smirk several minutes later as Dominique walked toward her. The redhead had ended up having to sternly escort the buck back to where she had healed him several times before the young male seemed to get the idea that she really didn’t want him to come with her.

Dominique looked back at the young buck that was now contentedly grazing on the dried wheat, bemused; she hadn’t anticipated that the animal would decide it wanted to stay with her. “I hadn’t expected that,” the redhead admitted.
Kendra chuckled, “So shall we name him Bambi?” she asked with sideways look and a sly grin. She got an elbow in the side for an answer, but as she looked over at the redhead, she noticed the solemn look Dominique was directing toward the animal. Kendra put one arm around the redhead and hugged her, “Don’t worry, something tells me Bambi there will lead a charmed life,” Kendra said ruefully staring at the animal.

“You don’t have to,” the redhead said softly, shifting her gaze from the peacefully gazing buck to the black haired woman beside her.

“I know, but something in here,” Kendra tapped Dominique gently on the chest, “reached out to him and told him he was safe with you. That’s good enough for me to let him live a good long life, besides,” she said in a purposefully lighter tone, “I could hardly kill the first animal you ever healed.”

Two hours later, Kendra watched in amusement as three yelping and terrified dogs ran as fast as their legs would carry them out of her territory. She roared a threatening snarl after them just to remind them of why they didn’t want to cross onto her land again before turning and heading for home.

**Late Morning – Kendra’s Estate, north of Poughkeepsie, Dutchess County, NY**

Dominique stirred, and snuggled deeper into the arms and warm body behind her. When Kendra returned from scaring off the feral dogs and re-marking the boundaries of her land, they had decided to take a bath together. The redhead smiled; any intentions either of them had of simply bathing together hadn’t lasted for more than a few minutes before soapy hands had started wandering.

The memory of cold tiles against her back as she rocked against the heat of Kendra’s mouth and begged her lover to fill her flashed though her mind, sending a warm throbbing pulse of heated arousal through her. She shifted, feeling the gathering moisture between her legs with disbelief. She could understand if the bathtub had been the only time, but once they finally dried off and made it to the bedroom they had made love once again, rocking slowly against one another for a long time before finally coming in each other’s arms and then falling asleep. She couldn’t possibly want Kendra again so soon—a warm hand sliding up her side, cupping her breast, and gently pinching the nipple derailed Dominique’s thoughts. She couldn’t stop the moan of want that escaped her throat, the arching of her back thrusting her breast against Kendra’s hand, or the way she ground her hips into her lover’s body.

“So beautiful, so sexy,” Kendra breathed in the redhead’s ear, “sometimes I wonder what I did so right to deserve you.”

Even as her body reacted to the words, Dominique bit back a disbelieving, sobbing laugh, surely that had to be her line not Kendra’s. If she were truthful with herself, she would admit that she hadn’t felt deserving of love for centuries, perhaps that had been the real reason she put up with the scraps of affection she got from Thailog along with the rest of the way he treated her, she hadn’t believed she really deserved anything better. Teeth dragging along the top of her shoulder before lightly biting the muscle sent her thoughts of the cloned male scattering like leaves, “Kendra,” she whispered entreatingly.

The arm holding her tightened in a hug, “What do you want my love?”

The whispered question evoked a frustrated whimper from the redhead, “You,” Dominique didn’t know quite what she wanted; she felt so conflicted right now, torn between the memories that kept rising in her mind and the sweetness of her lover’s touch.
“You have me,” Kendra assured her.

The promise brought the beginning of tears to Dominique’s eyes, she turned in the black haired woman’s arms, “I’m the one that doesn’t deserve you,” she confessed, gazing up into the warm sapphire blue eyes.

Gentle fingers brushed along her cheekbones, “Then aren’t we both lucky that love doesn’t seem to care a whit about such things,” Kendra murmured before her lips covered the redhead’s.

Dominique buried her fingers into her lover’s thick black hair as their mouths met; Kendra’s kiss was loving and passionate. She threw back her head, exposing more of her throat as those lips left her own and trailed down her neck. Lips closed around her nipple, pulling a pleased murmur from Dominique at the same time as an insistent knee slid between her thighs. She willingly parted her legs allowing Kendra to slide in between them.

Dominique’s world swiftly narrowed to the weight and warmth of her lover upon her, the insistent mouth that alternately tormented and soothed her sensitive breasts, and the first gentle, teasing strokes on the intimate flesh between her thighs. But even the acute pleasure from Kendra’s touch couldn’t stem the flood of memories that insisted upon rising into Dominique’s mind. Instead, the pleasure swirled and entwined with the bitter sorrow rising from the deep dark well of pain that was her past, creating a bittersweet torment of both.

In the beginning, sex with Thailog had been very good, though she wasn’t certain now if it were him or the fact that she had been centuries without a lover when she first met him. That happy time hadn’t lasted but a few weeks or so before she began realizing how rough he was with her. After that it hadn’t taken very long at all before the bruises from his grip, or the raw areas on her wings or arms and legs from where he pushed her against the floor, or the unpleasant ache inside from him being too forceful with his thrusts, had caused her to be almost as wary of intimacy with him as she was desirous of it.

She remembered the very first time she had touched Kendra, and how she had mentally compared how much she had wanted Thailog in the beginning with how much she wanted to touch Kendra. Now though that mental comparison seemed like an insult to her lover, Kendra was nothing like that selfish and insensitive betraying male. For one thing Kendra had never hurt her, not even during their most passionate and forceful lovemaking. That realization was enough for Dominique to finally understand what it was that she wanted from Kendra. She wrapped her arms round her knees, pulling her bent legs towards her chest and opening herself completely to her lover. “Take me, claim me,” she begged, hoping that Kendra would understand that this was an offering of trust.

Kendra paused, stared into her eyes for a long moment before she replied, her expression intent, “I will.” The black haired woman sat back on her thighs, looked down at the soft intimate flesh offered to her. The soft teasing touches began once again, and Dominique drew in a sharp breath as she watched her lover watch what her fingers were doing upon her flesh. The blue eyes flickered up caught her gaze, fingers teased her center, began entering her, “Don’t close your eyes, I want to see you as I take you,” she commanded as the redhead’s green eyes began to close.

Dominique’s eyes opened, locked with Kendra’s blue gaze, and she gave a harsh gasping moan as she was filled. “Kendra,” she pleaded, this was so different from the other night when they had looked for the love in one another’s gaze, that had been gentle, loving and soft, this was no less loving, but instead of gentle and soft it was commanding and very possessive. Exactly what she had wanted though she hadn’t anticipated this, she felt like this claim was being placed not just upon her body, but also upon her soul.

“Demona,” Kendra whispered as her fingers claimed the redhead once again, this time twisting as
they entered.

The redhead arched into it, driving her lover’s fingers deeper inside, keeping her eyes locked on Kendra’s, a hissed, “Yes,” was all she was able to utter in response. A second hand joined the first, fingers slid inside her gathering up the copious moisture there before sliding down to the second opening that no one had ever touched before. “Kendra?” Dominique questioned uncertainly, feeling the fingers circle and play with the opening, which was proving to be surprisingly sensitive.

“I’ll stop if you want me to,” Kendra reassured her, the finger caressing her there slipped slightly inside before withdrawing.

Dominique was surprised, she hadn’t realized that being touched there would feel so good, the finger slipped inside once again and she pressed down upon it, pushing it deeper inside her. She moaned in pleasure at the feel, and drew in a breath, “No, its ok, I just hadn’t thought…it’s not sensitive like this when I’m a gargoyle,” she explained disjointedly.

“I’ll keep that in mind,” Kendra said, her blue eyes dark and intense, and in the next moment both of her hands moved in unison, twisting, entering slowly, inexorably, wringing a pleasured cry from the redhead.

It was all Dominique could do to keep her eyes open and fixed upon Kendra’s gaze under the dual penetration of her lover’s fingers thrusting steadily into her, filling her, claiming every part of her. It felt so unimaginably good to be taken this way; she shook with the ecstasy of it, the intimacy of it. Kendra shifted and she had a moment to wonder why before the black haired woman bent toward her and there was the warmth of her lover’s mouth upon her, the flicker of Kendra’s tongue over her forcing another aroused cry from her lips. She tightened her arms around her knees and closed her eyes concentrating on the beautiful sensations Kendra’s tongue and fingers were creating as they added to the ever-rising spiral of sensation and tension inside her. She began rocking into her lover’s touch as the ecstasy and pressure built, she was barely aware of her sobbing breaths, the way she chanted Kendra’s name, or told her how good what she was doing felt while imploring her not to stop.

The knowledge that she could open herself this way, make herself so vulnerable and trust Kendra not to hurt her filled the redhead with a raw wild joy. The steady rhythmic movement of Kendra’s hands and tongue, the thrusting fingers filling her, claiming her, drove her need, her pleasure, her ecstasy, ever higher and higher. The redhead was shaking helplessly now with the pleasure of it and still it built ever higher ever more acute and intense. Dominique felt on the edge of fracturing into a thousand pieces, between the unbearable tension of the rising pleasure and the emotions surging through her she felt raw and naked to her soul. When her orgasm finally came, when the ecstasy roared through her body, scattering her senses and utterly overwhelming her, all she was aware of was Kendra’s claiming touch within her and the warmth of her mouth and tongue against her as she screamed the woman’s name. Then she couldn’t stop the harsh sobbing that shook her, she felt shattered, unmade, and only Kendra’s hand pulling her arms from around her legs so that she could lower them to the bed and then Kendra’s body wrapping tightly around her started pulling the scattered pieces of her back together.

Finally, her lover’s increasingly worried questions broke though the emotions clouding her senses, “Hold me, just hold me,” she pleaded, “you didn’t hurt me, you’ve never hurt me.”

Something about the way Dominique sounded when she said the last caused Kendra’s brow to crease in concern, “I’ve got you, love, I’ve got you,” she reassured the woman in her arms. Dominique couldn’t see the flicker of rage that passed over her lover’s features at the thought that someone in the past had hurt the redhead that way. Kendra knew there were only two possibilities
for the culprit, and one of the two was far likelier than the other given what she knew from Dominique of the cloned male Thailog.

Kendra stroked Dominique’s hair, soothed her hand along her back, and pressed soft kisses against her skin. When the harsh sobs shaking Dominique’s body quieted the black haired woman whispered into the red hair, “I need to go wash my hands, and I’ll be right back.” She waited for Dominique’s acknowledgement before rolling carefully away and hurrying to the bathroom. As soon as she came back, Kendra pulled the redhead back into her arms, wrapping herself protectively around Dominique’s suddenly fragile seeming body as much as she was able. “I will never purposefully hurt you, and I will always try my best to never accidentally hurt you either,” she whispered.

“I know,” Dominique replied, she squirmed and when Kendra loosened her hold she turned and buried her head underneath Kendra’s chin. She lay there, feeling Kendra’s strong arms wrap around her once again as they settled against one another. Despite, or perhaps because of the crying she had done, she felt more at peace than she had before. She felt Kendra moving slightly, her arm reaching for something, and then the blankets were pulled over them. Dominique smiled, kissed the soft skin of her lover’s chest, Kendra was always watching out for her like this. She remembered how during their very first sparring session the black haired woman had been so worried about hurting her wings. She allowed her eyes to close, feeling completely relaxed, happy and contented, and safe within Kendra’s arms.

On the edge of sleep and dreaming, between consciousness and unconsciousness when one wasn’t certain what was real and what was the dream, Dominique thought she heard Kendra say softly, “I love you.”

The redhead rubbed her cheek against warm soft skin, “I love you too,” she whispered, never completely waking, never realizing that her lover had momentarily stiffened upon realizing she had been heard and then relaxed and hugged her more tightly at hearing the response.

*Noon - Eyrie Building in Upper Manhattan*

“So,” Fox drawled out the word, not bothering to hide the grin on her face, “what do you think now?”

David Xanatos chuckled, “I think you might be right,” he admitted. The reports from his investigators that Kendra Canmore had been spending every night this past week at Dominique Destine’s home did seem to point to the two of them being lovers.

“Interesting that her driver is gay,” Fox remarked, they were fairly certain now that was who blew the whistle on their information gathering attempts. The fact that Dominique’s driver was gay and he was the one to tell her about the bribery attempts, was to Fox another piece of evidence indicating that she was right.

“Not only her driver,” David said dryly. The tattooed redhead raised an eyebrow inquiringly, “Nightstone has eight division managers,” he said, “and after seeing the reports on them, I think that three of them are homosexual, or at least they have someone of the same sex living with them that aren’t related by blood.”

Fox stared at him in surprise, she leaned back in her chair thoughtfully, “Roommates?” she offered another possible explanation.
“Only if you usually put a roommate on your life insurance, your power of attorney, in your will, and live with the same roommate for more than five years,” he replied dryly.

She inclined her head, that didn’t sound like the average roommate, “Do you think Demona knows?” she wondered.

He shrugged, “I have no idea, but I find it rather interesting.”

It was interesting, interesting in one way if she hadn’t known and had unconsciously picked them out from the other prospective applicants, and interesting in another if she had known and hired them on purpose. “So are we going to tell the clan that Demona has a human lover?” Fox asked. “A female human lover,” she added with a smile.

David looked thoughtful, “I don’t know that they would believe us with the information we have right now, so I’d like to find something more concrete than what we have so far before telling them. And I’d like to know what Elisa Maza has been discussing with them lately that has Brooklyn and Angela glaring at one another again. I’ll be very surprised if it doesn’t have something to do with Demona.”

“They do all seem to be a bit tense lately,” Fox agreed. “It’s too bad that Lexington figured out how to scan for hidden microphones or we’d know.” The web-winged gargoyle had found the ones scattered about the battlements only a few weeks after the clan moved back into the castle, and since they were trying to gain the clan’s trust, they hadn’t replaced them after Lexington found them.

“And they no longer have their discussions within range of the security system cameras,” David added with a disgruntled frown.

Fox thought for a moment, considering the possibilities in her mind. She smirked, “Maybe there’s a simple way to find out.” Xanatos looked at her questioningly. His wife leaned back in her chair, looking rather Cheshire like, “I’ll ask Lexington what’s going on with Angela and Brooklyn while he’s playing with Alex tonight.”

**Early Afternoon – Kendra’s Estate, north of Poughkeepsie, Dutchess County, NY**

“Alright, first let’s start with the basic dance frame,” Kendra said standing very close to Dominique. They were currently in the middle of the eastward facing sun room, having already moved some of the furniture out of the way to make an open space in the middle. “I’ll form an L shape with my left hand, and if you will place your right hand thus,” she said taking Dominique’s hand and placing it so that her four fingers fit between Kendra’s thumb and fingers and the redhead’s thumb was on the outside of her own. “Perfect,” the black haired woman commented once that was done.

“Now square your shoulders,” once again she demonstrated, “this makes your shoulder blades more prominent so that I can do this.” Her right arm curved around Dominique as she placed her right hand on her back above the bone. “Keeping your shoulders back gives me a good hold so that I can do this,” she said pulling with her fingers catching the edge of the shoulder blade and moving the redhead to her right, “or this,” she pushed with the heel of her hand, pushing against the bone and moving Dominique the other way.

The redhead smirked, “A steering hold?”

Kendra grinned, “Along with this,” she shook her left hand which was clasping the redhead’s right hand, “yes. Now place your left arm on top of mine, and your hand on top or in front of my
shoulder.” She looked down at the result, “Hmm,” she frowned, “I’m missing…” the frown cleared, “put your thumb toward the inside of my shoulder, or your entire hand, just something so you can feel if I’m turning or moving toward you.” Dominique moved her hand slightly, and Kendra leaned forward letting her feel how it allowed her to sense that movement. “Ok firm this arm up,” the black haired woman said shaking their clasped hands, “but not too firm. There should be a slight pressure but our arms shouldn’t be stiff.”

Dominique was surprised at how pleasant it felt to be held like this, not that she had expected it to feel unpleasant, but she hadn’t expected it to feel as nice as this. The muscles of Kendra’s shoulder felt solid underneath her left hand, the clasp of the black haired woman’s hand around her own warm and strong, and they were close enough to…she leaned forward and pressed her lips against Kendra’s. Her lover’s arms tightened around her, pulling her closer until their bodies met.

When they parted, Kendra said “Now, now,” her voice stern, but her blue eyes were dancing with amusement, “no distracting the dance instructor.”

“Who’s easily distracted?” smirked Dominique.

“Who’s easily distracted,” Kendra agreed with a grin. “Now if you will look down,” the black haired woman continued with the dance lesson, “you will notice our bodies are off center, I have room to move my left foot without stepping on you and you have room to move your right foot. You will always, no matter what the dance, start on your right foot,” Kendra said to the redhead.

Dominique nodded, “And you your left?”

“Exactly,” Kendra said, “I’ll start off on my left. So if you will shift your weight slightly to your left foot and keep your knees loose, you don’t want to lock them.” Kendra waited a second and then stepped forward with her left foot.

Dominique felt the movement, both with their clasped hands and with the hand on Kendra’s shoulder, it was natural with her weight mostly on her left leg to simply step back with her right. She smiled; maybe this wouldn’t be that difficult to learn after all.

“Very good,” Kendra praised, “I guess it’s time to learn your first dance, the simplest one is the Slow Dance, which is a four count dance. We’ll start with taking a step to the side, you with your right foot me with my left, so step,” Kendra stepped, and Dominique felt the simultaneous pull on their clasped hands and subtle push to her shoulder blade indicating which direction the black haired woman wanted her to move. She took the step to the side with her right foot, “pause with your weight on your right foot, and then bring your left foot over and just touch it to the floor without shifting your weight to it.” Kendra waited until the redhead had followed suit, “And then back the other way with your left foot and then touch with your right to complete the four counts.”

“Simple enough right?” Kendra commented once they had completed a few more of the basic step touches with the black haired woman quietly calling out the steps.

“I trust there is more to this dance than simply moving back and forth,” Dominique said, having found the basic step ridiculously easy to master.

“There is,” Kendra grinned, “you’re sure you’ve got this down?” she asked with a smirk.

The redhead mock glared at her, while trying and failing to keep an answering grin from her face, “I believe so,” she responded dryly.

“Then we will move onto the diagonal step,” Kendra said pausing and bringing them to a halt. “I’ll
step forward and slightly to my left while you step back and to the right,” she followed the instruction with the step and was pleased to see the Dominique automatically followed the step up with the touch, “and yes like that touch and then step back the other direction, me with my right, you with your left…and touch.” She gave her partner a warm smile of encouragement, the dance was simple, and so she expected the redhead to learn it quickly. What she was pleased with was how Dominique was showing such a quick grasp of stepping on the correct time. Rhythm was one of the hardest things to master if it didn’t come naturally, requiring time and practice to learn, but Dominique seemed to have a natural feel for it. “So the next step is the back diagonal, and since we always start off on the same feet, it will be me on my left stepping back and left and you on your right foot stepping forward and right.”

They danced around for a few minutes practicing the different steps. There were a few missteps when she expected the black haired woman to go in one direction and Kendra went in another until the redhead started paying more attention to Kendra’s signals indicating which direction they were moving in next instead of which direction the redhead thought her lover should go.

“Now for the basic turns, once we have those down I’ll put on some music and we’ll put everything into practice.”

Sunset – Kendra’s Estate, north of Poughkeepsie, Dutchess County, NY

To Demona’s surprise Kendra wanted to go gliding instead of walking through the woods when night came, the Jagaur’s chosen wouldn’t go hunting until tomorrow night, the night of the full moon. “Alright,” she agreed, glancing up at the black haired woman from where she was lounging on the dark brown leather couch reading Amateur City, the mystery novel Kendra had bought her a little over a week ago. She couldn’t quite bring herself to read the romance novel, and besides she had been curious about the book ever since her IT Division manager, Ms. Conrad, had mentioned it to Kendra while trying to figure out if she was gay.

“We need to make you some clothes,” the flame haired gargoyle commented, glancing over at her now furred lover as they stepped out onto the small second floor balcony above the front door of the house a few minutes later.

Kendra shrugged, “We haven’t had the time. Besides, who else but you is going to see me?” She smirked, “And I thought you liked the view.”

“I do like the view,” Demona commented huskily, letting her eyes sweep slowly up the were-jaguar’s winged muscular form. “But we might run into the clan sometime and they’re rather used to at least a certain level of modesty.”

Kendra leapt upon the railing of the balcony, she crouched there for a moment her tail lazily swishing back and forth before standing and balancing there easily. “If it can be cut so that it’s comfortable on the wings and tail, a dark sapphire blue tunic would probably look good and not show up against the night sky,” she said, offering her hand to the flame haired gargoyle.

Demona took it with an amused shake of her head, this time she wasn’t surprised when she was lifted up to the railing. She looked critically at Kendra, trying to imagine the style and color on her. “I think that would look good on you,” the blue gargoyle agreed after a moment’s consideration, “and a tunic isn’t difficult to make, one of the gargoyles in my clan at Moray wore something like that.”

Kendra looked more interested in the idea upon hearing this, “Maybe we can go into Poughkeepsie tomorrow and look for a suitable fabric?”
The flame haired gargoyle nodded, she opened her wings and leapt off the railing, gaining altitude with a down sweep of her wings and then finding a wind current to carry her higher into the air. In a moment, she saw Kendra come gliding up beside her, “I’d like to fly a search pattern over my land, make sure there’s nothing I missed earlier,” the were-jaguar stated.

Demona slowed a little letting her take the lead, “That would be nice, it’s very beautiful up here,” she commented. “I don’t have nearly the amount of land around my house that I wanted, but I couldn’t find anything else that had a larger yard and was as nice without going much farther away from the city.”

Kendra could hear the wistfulness in her voice, “Earlier today I was thinking that I really needed to come up at least twice a month to make sure everything is alright with the land and herd,” she offered hesitantly glancing over to see how Demona was reacting. Seeing that the gargoyle looked thoughtful instead of disappointed, she continued with more confidence, “I couldn’t tell if those dogs I chased off today were feral or if they belong to someone who lets them run loose so I’ll need to keep the scent markings I made today fresh and keep an eye out for them.”

The flame haired gargoyle stared at her for a long moment, she looked down at the wild land beneath them, thought of the house they had just left and how comfortable being there already felt to her, “I think that sounds like an excellent idea.”

Night - Eyrie Building in Upper Manhattan

“Hello Lexington,” Fox greeted the smallest gargoyle from the rocking chair where she was feeding Alex. When he whirled around and stuttered out an apology, she grinned triumphantly at his back. The sight of her feeding the baby was always enough to rattle the green gargoyle. “How are you doing tonight?” she asked as if nothing particularly interesting was going on.

“Ohm,” she could almost see the puzzled frown on his face at the question, “I’m doing alright.”

“I noticed that Angela and Brooklyn are arguing again, does that mean I need to worry about Demona trying to shoot up the castle?” her voice was a carefully crafted mixture of amusement and worry.

He actually turned his head halfway round toward her before remembering what she was currently doing, and he quickly looked at the wall again. He wasn’t certain what to say, Goliath hadn’t informed Xanatos or his mate about what they had learned, so he shouldn’t say anything. However, he thought there was a chance Demona might be angry with Puck as well as the Weird Sisters, after all Puck did cast that spell on her, and even though she benefited from it, the transformation hurt a lot as well. That had become apparent to everyone during her stay in the Labyrinth.

“Lexington,” now her tone was only worried, “Is there something going on we need to know?”

“You should talk to Goliath,” he responded weakly, he thought Goliath should tell them, after all Puck might know something about the spirit Macbeth said returned their memories.

The green gargoyle didn’t see her eyes narrow on him, “I’ll do that,” she said firmly.

There were a lot of questions Lexington had about Macbeth, Demona and Kendra Canmore that Goliath, Elisa and Brooklyn hadn’t thought of because they were convinced everything was just another plot of hers. If he was right and Kendra Canmore had been asking the same spirit Macbeth had talked about to take the spell off her cousin, then why hadn’t the spirit taken the spells off
Macbeth and Demona? From being around Puck and Alexander when the older fey was teaching the baby magic, he knew that a fey couldn’t remove the spells of another fey, they could only modify them. That meant that for the spirit to take the spell off Jon Canmore it was probably more powerful than the fey who had cast it; surely then it could take the spell off the two immortals as well. The only reason he could think of that the spirit wouldn’t, was that Macbeth and Demona didn’t want to be mortal, or perhaps they would die instantly now if it were removed.

He was playing with Alex when Fox and Goliath entered the nursery ten minutes later, “Lexington,” his clan leader’s irritated voice summoned him. With one last fond pat, the web-winged gargoyle carefully put the baby into his crib before going over to where they were standing in the doorway.

Lexington took one look at the deep frown on the big male’s face and launched into his explanation, “If Demona’s blaming the fey instead of the humans she might come after Puck for putting the spell on her to change her into a human during the day.”

“If Demona’s blaming the fey,” Fox repeated alarmed; she glanced past the small green male at her child in his crib, amusing himself by playing with his feet.

“Mmm,” Goliath rumbled following her gaze, “I had not thought of that possibility,” he admitted staring down at the smallest of the trio. Lexington was right, considering that Demona had been willing to eradicate the entire human race for what a few had done, it wasn’t unreasonable to suppose she might now be just as vengeful against the fey and Puck in particular along with the Weird Sisters. He could see the small male relax, apparently thinking he was no longer in trouble, “You should come to me with these concerns first Lexington.”

Sending Xanatos’s mate to him with her question had been the right thing to do, but it would have been better if the young male had brought his concerns to his clan leader earlier.

“Yes, Goliath,” the young male’s wings drooped a little at the chastisement.

“What are you two talking about?” Fox asked insistently, “Why would Demona decide to blame the fey for her problems instead of humanity?”

Goliath stared at her thoughtfully, “Perhaps we should find Xanatos and Puck before speaking of this.”

Twenty minutes later Goliath finished relating what little, and to his mind confusing, information they had gathered from Macbeth on the Weird Sister’s role in his and Demona’s past, and from what Elisa had overheard Kendra Canmore saying about the three feys’ role in her family’s history and their vendetta against the immortal gargoyle.

“Owen,” David looked over at the blond man, “do you know anything about this?”

“The existence of such spirits or what the Weird Sisters have been doing since the fey were banished from Avalon?” Owen asked with a straight face.

“Both, either,” Fox interjected with a frown, as far as she was concerned the time for Puck’s levity had passed the moment there was the possibility of this situation threatening her son.

Owen glanced at her, “There are spirits that have intervened in the past when mortals were…” he hesitated searching for the right word.

“Harassed, tormented,” offered David dryly.

The blonde man inclined his head, “A rather interesting choice of words considering the subject,” he commented grimly, “the latter of those two words would fit best in the particular cases I am referring
to,” he conceded. Ignoring the surprised and dismayed looks on their faces, he continued, “I do not have extensive knowledge of these spirits, but what I do know indicates that they are very powerful and potentially very deadly. Around two thousand and five hundred years ago, we began finding the bodies of fey that had a reputation for amusing themselves by,” he nodded in Xanatos’ direction, “harassing and tormenting mortals. From the wounds on their bodies, they had been killed by a wild animal or in some cases wild animals like a wolf pack. Since fey usually are immune to such attacks, we knew that whatever type of animal killed them was able to injure fey as if they were mortal.” He paused looking pensive, “That was all we knew for almost a thousand years until the day that one of the bodies had a note on it informing us that if we would gather nearby we would be informed of why they had been killed. Lord Oberon and Lady Titania were expecting an attack; they arranged us as if for a battle. We thought no one could approach without us knowing and then he appeared in our midst to deliver the spirits’ message to us.”

The blonde man fell silent apparently lost in his thoughts, it was Fox that broke the silence to ask the question, “He who?”

“The were-jaguar,” Owen responded. He looked over at the large lavender male gargoyle, “He was as big as Goliath, and moved so swiftly through us that we didn’t have time to react to his presence before he seized Queen Titania by the throat and ordered us to be still before his claws extended any further than they already were. Lord Oberon commanded no one to attack, as he was close enough to see that the creature had already pricked her skin, drawing the smallest amount of blood. That was enough for Oberon to realize that the creature could kill her, we do not bleed from normal attacks. The were-jaguar informed us that the spirits were displeased with the fey race, that we were not created so that we could torment the mortal races, nor had we been created to rule over them as some of us seemed to believe. The creature told us that if we continued on this path the spirit’s chosen would continue to cull the worst of us until the survivors decided to cease their tormenting of the mortal races.”

“Cull?” Xanatos sounded slightly shocked.

Owen’s face tightened as he grimaced, “That was the word he used,” he confirmed. “It was not long after that incident that Lord Oberon decreed that we were no longer to interfere with the mortal races.”

“So what Macbeth said about the spirit was true,” Lexington stated once Owen stopped speaking and before anyone else could comment on the rather shocking information.

“Very likely,” the blonde man agreed tersely.

“What I don’t understand,” Lexington said thoughtfully, “is if Kendra Canmore was able to ask the spirit to remove the Weird Sister’s spell from her cousin, why Demona and Macbeth have any fey spells on them now.” He started pacing back and forth, “I mean if the spirit could remove them from Jon Cannmore then why not them as well.” The web-winged gargoyle didn’t seem to realize that everyone in the room was staring at him wide eyed, “But Demona is still a human during the day so obviously she still has your spell on her.” Lexington finally stopped speaking and pacing to stare at Owen expectantly.

The blond man looked uncharacteristically hesitant, “Perhaps not…”

“Owen?” David prompted at the man’s continued silence.

Owen Burnett grimaced, “Understand that what I’m about to tell you is mostly my conjecture based upon the events that followed the were-jaguar’s appearance.” Xanatos nodded and the blonde man continued, “A few of the less wise fey decided that the humans, who had been tormented by the
killed fey, were responsible in some way for their deaths. They determined that some of these humans were now immune to fey enchantments and essentially invisible to our magical senses, and the rest were using iron jewelry to protect themselves from being enchanted once again. Whichever the case, the outcome was the same in all cases, shortly after they attacked the humans almost all of them were found dead, killed by wild animals like the others that had died before.”

Owen turned toward Lexington, “So to answer your question, if the spirit Macbeth is referring to is the same type of spirit then it is doubtful that either Macbeth or Demona are enchanted any longer. Since she’s still able to be a human during the day, I’d say the spirit has provided some other means for her to do so.” He paused just for a moment before adding, “I would also expect to find that either or both are protected by iron jewelry or are immune to having enchantments placed upon them.”

Xanatos leaned back in his chair, “So we need to determine whether the fey enchantments on Macbeth and Demona have been removed. If they have, then that would mean that what Macbeth told Goliath is the truth,” he looked inquiringly at Owen.

The blonde man looked thoughtful, “It should, another thing we can look for is if one or both of them are now immune to being enchanted.”

“We are not involving Alex in this,” Fox stated firmly, a protective glint in her eyes. “Not when these spirits are capable of killing fey.”

David immediately shook his head, “I wasn’t even considering it,” he quickly reassured her. He turned back to Owen, “I was thinking a visit to Nightstone to see its CEO might prove instructive.”

When everyone had left David’s office but Fox, the two of them stared at one another for a second before he commented, “Well that was rather more than I thought we would learn. Spirits that can and will kill fey and Demona mixed up with them.”

“It does rather change things,” Fox commented seriously, “there’s a lot more going on here than just the question of whether or not Demona is in a relationship with Kendra Canmore. I’m not too thrilled about the possibility of her starting a war with the fey.”

Xanatos nodded, his eyes narrowed and his countenance serious, “Well the first step is to find out whether or not Macbeth’s story is true, and whether the spirit he mentioned is one of the same one’s Puck told us about. I’ll set up an appointment to meet with Ms. Dominique Destine early next week.”
Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: All the characters appearing in Gargoyles are copyright Buena Vista Television/The Walt Disney Company. No infringement of these copyrights is intended as this is a not for profit fan fiction work. All original characters are the property of the author.

Warning: Sexual suggestiveness

Notes: Songs: ‘When You Say Nothing At All’ by Alison Krauss, and ‘Black Velvet’ by Alannah Myles. Dominique Destine’s home, and the character’s Candice and Gregory are from ‘The Gargoyles Saga’ world and adapted for use in this story.

Rating: Mature

Feedback: Always welcome, feedback is what encourages me to keep writing. Please let me know what you like and what you dislike about the story.

Revision History: 06/29/08

Saturday, December 13th 1997

Late Night – Kendra’s Estate, north of Poughkeepsie, Dutchess County, NY

Dominique examined the black jeans, emerald green long sleeve shirt and black loafers she was wearing with a critical eye, Kendra had assured her this was appropriate for where they were going to dance. The redhead shrugged and grabbed the black leather jacket her lover had loaned her, it was nine thirty at night and time to leave. It seemed late to Dominique, but Kendra had said they would actually be a bit early and could practice their dancing; the club wouldn’t start to fill up until after eleven or so.

The first thing the redhead noticed when they entered the club was the loud booming music. The second was the pervasive smell of stale smoke, causing her to wrinkle her nose in distaste.

“What’s wrong?” Kendra asked leaning close so she didn’t have to raise her voice over the sound.

“It smells of cigarette smoke,” Dominique answered.

Kendra responded, “We’ll take a bath before going to bed to get the smell out of our hair.” She looked a little apologetic, “It’s pretty much like this at any bar or club you go to.”

Dominique nodded, resigning herself to the situation, she looked around the bar curiously, noticing that the majority of the humans currently present were male, with only a few women either standing by the bar or seated at the tables around the edge of the dance floor. A few male couples were…the redhead stared at one pair of males that appeared to be only moments away from mating in public with the way they were grinding their crotches into each other, the rest were gyrating, there really was no other word for it, on the dance floor.
Kendra followed her eyes, “Don’t worry they won’t be going any further than that in here,” she assured her, “though there’s a few places in the city where I couldn’t make that guarantee.” Dominique stared at her wondering if she were joking, but Kendra didn’t notice as she was looking at the few still empty tables around the walls of the bar. As she began guiding the redhead across the floor to claim one of them, she commented, “It’s been a few years since I’ve been here. I hope they haven’t started playing only techno club music, if that’s the case then we’ll have to wait till we go back to the city to practice our dancing. I’ll go over and ask the DJ, and if it is, then we can leave if you want.”

From where she sat at the table they had claimed, Dominique watched as her lover walked around the dance floor and spoke to the male standing behind a bank of electronics gear. Kendra’s red lips curved up in a smile at his answer and the redhead guessed that his answer had been that this was not the only music he was playing the entire night. She didn’t know whether to be pleased or not, this place smelled and was very loud. She glanced briefly again at the two males grinding into one another, though the activities of the humans here might be interesting.

“Dominique,” the mixture of reproach and amusement in her lover’s voice caused the redhead to glance at Kendra, who had just come back to the table, with a raised eyebrow. “You’re not supposed to stare at the boys as if they’re wildlife at the zoo.” The redhead’s eyebrow arched higher, and the black haired woman grinned, “No matter how they’re acting,” she added. “Now what would you like to drink, and you don’t want to order any wine here,” she hurriedly added.

Dominique had already guessed that, “What are you having?”

“Corona,” Kendra responded, “it’s about the best beer you can get here, or I can see what they have for bottled water.” She paused a beat before adding, “Unless you want a mixed drink?”

The redhead shook her head; except for the occasional scotch, she wasn’t that fond of distilled spirits, “How about some water and I’ll try your beer.” Kendra nodded and headed in the direction of the bar.

About a minute later, the black haired woman returned with her beer, a wedge of lime floating inside the neck of the bottle, and bottled water. “Not entirely unpleasant,” Dominique announced after taking a sip of it, the beer itself wasn’t too strongly flavored, and the lime, which the redhead had initially thought rather odd, went well with it.

“Did you want me to get you one?” Kendra inquired, watching the redhead open the bottled water.

Dominique shook her head, “This will do for now,” she lifted the bottle and took a sip. Her eyes went to the doorway as a large group of women entered, noisily greeting the bartender and others. One of them, an auburn haired woman, looked vaguely familiar to Dominique, though she couldn’t place where she might have seen the human before. A vaguely annoyed sound from Kendra drew her attention away from the boisterous group to her lover; the black haired woman was staring at the group as well, a slight grimace turning the corners of her lips down. “What’s wrong?” the redhead asked, her attention going back to the group. The auburn haired woman was now staring back at them, and the expression on her face was not a particularly friendly one.

“What’s wrong?” Kendra replied succinctly, looking away from the woman to meet Dominique’s gaze, “one that didn’t want to be an ex, but I didn’t feel for her what she said she felt for me.”

Well that explained why the woman had looked familiar, the redhead thought as she remembered the pictures her investigator had included in his report. Her green eyes sharpened on her lover, “You doubted her?” she glanced again at the woman, “Was she one of the ones more interested in your money than you?”
Kendra shrugged, drawing Dominique’s attention once again, “I don’t know, I never knew if what she was saying was the truth or not.” She took a sip of her beer, looking introspective, “I think maybe it started out that way for her and then she started getting serious…or maybe I just want to think that it wasn’t just my money.”

Dominique asked carefully, “You cared for her?” She knew it wasn’t fair of her considering that she had her own lovers in the past, but she just didn’t like the idea of Kendra caring about some other woman.

Kendra responded quietly enough that the redhead had to lean closer to hear over the music, “Enough so that when she started talking long term, I decided it was time to end it because I knew I’d never feel that way about her.” Sapphire blue eyes met green, “You have no need to feel jealous of her,” Kendra commented gently, “when you start making plans for a year or two from now I’ll happily make them with you, when she did I headed for the hills.” The redhead flushed, both at being caught, and in pleasure at the comment, before she could respond however, Kendra continued, her eyes locked onto Dominique’s, “And I’ve never told anyone else that I’m falling in love with them.” The black haired woman stood and held out her hand, “Dance with me?”

Dominique had been so focused on their conversation that she had barely noticed the end of the thumping music, and the start of a ballad. She let Kendra help her to her feet as she began listening to the soft, gentle sounding voice of the female singer.

“It's amazing how you can speak right to my heart,
Without saying a word you can light up the dark,
Try as I may I could never explain,
What I hear when you don't say a thing.”

Dominique looked into Kendra’s face as they stepped onto the dance floor, her lover’s expression was tender and yet serious and a bit intense as well. Kendra pulled her closer than she had when they practiced the steps, but Dominique didn’t mind, she knew the steps now and she wanted her lover to hold her close.

“The smile on your face lets me know that you need me,
There’s a truth in your eyes saying that you’ll never leave me,
The touch of your hand says you’ll catch me if ever I fall,
You say it best when say nothing at all.”

The look in Kendra’s eyes caused the redhead’s heart to beat more strongly, and Dominique wondered, as she had when she woke up earlier, if she had dreamed that Kendra told her that she loved her or if it had been real. “Did you request this?” She asked softly. The black haired woman nodded. Dominique felt embarrassed now at her jealousy of the other woman, the song was beautiful, and the fact that Kendra had asked that it be played for their first dance together… “I’m sorry,” she whispered, feeling slightly ashamed.

“For what?” Kendra glanced at her curiously.

“For being jealous,” the redhead responded quietly.

“Shh…” Kendra leaned forward and brushed her lips in a feather light caress across her brow, “don’t worry about it.”

Reassured, the redhead did relax, allowing herself to enjoy moving in rhythm with her lover as they danced. As she listened to the words of the song and stared into Kendra’s blue eyes, her throat tightened with emotion, she was starting to think it hadn’t been a dream at all. She could guess why
her lover hadn’t spoken more openly, undoubtedly for the same reasons she herself hadn’t, this was so fast, so sudden. Her more pragmatic side doubted that love could happen so swiftly and completely, and was waiting for it to disappear like a mirage in the desert heat.

“All day long I can hear people talking out loud, 
But when you hold me near, you drown out the crowd, 
Old Mr. Webster could never define, 
What's being said between your heart and mine.”

Her pragmatic side might be wrong though, Dominique thought and if this sweet rush of emotion she was feeling for Kendra wasn’t love then she had no idea what it might be.

“The smile on your face lets me know that you need me, 
There’s a truth in your eyes saying that you’ll never leave me, 
The touch of your hand says you’ll catch me if ever I fall, 
You say it best when say nothing at all.”

As they continued dancing, the redhead became aware of the looks they were drawing, some envious, many appreciative, as they moved around the dance floor. Dominique was starting to see the appeal of going out to a gay club. She knew there weren’t many places where she could openly be with Kendra and not get hostile or shocked looks, and being out with her lover in a public place where everyone was aware that they were together was rather nice.

The current song playing ended and when the next one began the redhead eyed the couples taking a dance stance that she had never seen before. “What dance are they doing?” she asked curiously, the couple she was watching were both facing the same direction, the woman in what she guessed was the lead position holding their partner close to them with one arm wrapped around her waist.

Kendra chuckled, “I guess you’d call it the Gay Nightclub Two Step, because I haven’t seen it done anywhere else. It’s a quick, quick slow step, though with this beat it’s a step, step, slow step, and it’s not that hard to learn if you’d like?”

Dominique nodded, “I would,” she confirmed, staring at the other dancers.

“Mississippi in the middle of a dry spell, 
Jimmy Rogers on the Victrola up high, 
Mama's dancing with baby on her shoulder, 
The sun is setting like molasses in the sky, 
The boy could sing, knew how to move, everything, 
Always wanting more, he'd leave you longing for”

The redhead drew in a breath when Kendra’s warm body pressed against her back, “Alright,” her lover whispered in her ear, sending a shiver of arousal though her. “You can do this with the more traditional dance frame or this completely untraditional one,” Dominique could hear the amusement in her whispered voice. “Since you’re looking at the dancers dancing this way, I’ll explain this one,” Kendra said. “One hand at the center of the waist,” she took the redhead’s right hand in hers and wrapped her arm round Dominique’s waist, pulling her tightly against her so that her shapely rear nestled tight against her groin. Her voice was huskier as she took the redhead’s left hand in hers,

“And this arm out like this, just bent slightly,” she held her left arm outstretched with a slight bend at the elbow, “this acts as a guide for what direction we will be going,” she moved her left arm forward and back a little. “Now as for the dance step, we’re both technically in the lead position so we will both be starting off on our left foot. As you can see from the other dancers it’s a step with the left foot to the left and forward, then bring the right foot up beside the left, take another step with the left and bring the right up. Then a slow step with the right foot in the other direction and bring the left foot up
and start over again.”

“Black velvet and that little boy’s smile,
Black velvet with that slow southern style,
A new religion that’ll bring ya to your knees,
Black velvet if you please”

After finishing her instructions, Kendra said, “Let’s start over here in this corner so we will be out of the way of the other dancers.” She only called out the steps softly a few times before stopping, the beat of the song was very slow and Dominique was having no problems catching onto the simple steps.

“Up in Memphis the music's like a heatwave,
White lightning, bound to drive you wild,
Mama’s baby's in the heart of every school girl,
"Love me tender" leaves 'em cryin’ in the aisle,
The way he moved, it was a sin, so sweet and true,
Always wanting more, he'd leave you longing for”

They were pressed so close together that Dominique could feel the warmth of her lover from her shoulders to her thighs, the soft press of Kendra’s breasts against her back, and every flex of the powerful muscles in her lover’s thighs against her rear and back of her legs as Kendra danced. The slow, heavy bass beat of the song throbbed into her body forming a sensual counterpoint to the rock and sway of their hips as they moved together in the steps of the dance.

“Black velvet and that little boy's smile,
Black velvet with that slow southern style,
A new religion that'll bring ya to your knees,
Black velvet if you please”

As they moved together to the unhurried rhythm of the song, the redhead half closed her eyes, preferring to concentrate less on the other dancers and more on the feel of the strong warm body behind her guiding her so surely around the dance floor.

“Every word of every song that he sang was for you,
In a flash he was gone, it happened so soon, what could you do?”

When the song ended far sooner than she would have liked, the redhead turned around and looked at her lover. Kendra’s blue eyes were darkened, showing her arousal, and Dominique knew her own eyes were just as revealing of her own state. Dancing so close together, their bodies moving as one in a slow sensual rhythm, had been more than a little suggestive of something a bit more intimate than dancing.

“We can practice this at home, and I’ll teach you how to switch from one hold to the other and back again, and how to do the turns from either hold,” Kendra offered as they returned to their table.

Dominique nodded, “I’d like that,” she had noticed the other dancers doing some rather intricate looking moves as they switched back and forth between the two holds. The redhead glanced around, noticing that the club was starting to fill up. There were no tables where there were not drinks left while their owners were on the dance floor or people sitting and talking.

Kendra finished her beer in one long swallow, she held up the empty bottle, “Did you want another water or one of these?”
The redhead stared at the bottle for a second before making up her mind, “I’ll try one of those,” she finally responded. She turned in her seat to watch as the black haired woman made her way through the crowd to the bar, admiring how the black jeans she was wearing showed off the muscular length of her legs and the white shirt she was wearing contrasted with her black hair and dusky skin.

“Don’t let the songs or those soft blue eyes get to you,” Dominique turned back around in her seat to look up at the owner of the bitter voice, “haven’t you noticed yet how she never mentions anything beyond the fact that she cares for you?” The auburn haired woman’s eyes glittered with malice as she continued, “How though her hands are tender when she has sex with you that you’re always alone on your side of the bed come morning.”

Dominique stared at her, knowing that the woman couldn’t realize what she had just revealed about her relationship with Kendra. Yes her lover had touched this woman intimately, had given her pleasure, but she had clearly never given this woman much of her heart at all. The redhead knew she could wound the woman with a few well-placed words, a simple statement of ‘No I don’t know about either of those things’ would be both succinct, truthful…and cruel. She chose not to say anything, and was unaware of the obvious pity in her green eyes.

Just as the bitter malice in the woman’s hazel eyes changed to anger Dominique felt a warm hand upon her shoulder and Kendra’s unmistakable presence behind her, “Marla,” her lover’s tone was a warning and held no softness or warmth. A hand holding two bottles appeared within her field of vision as Kendra placed them on the table in front of her, “I think you should go back and sit with your friends.”

The auburn haired woman pasted a false looking smile on her face as she looked over Dominique’s head at the woman standing behind her, “I was just giving your new girlfriend a friendly warning to never assume you mean more than exactly what you say.”

Kendra responded in a firm, unsympathetic tone, “I think you’ve already realized that she doesn’t need a warning and that’s why you’re over here.”

Marla paled noticeably and Dominique’s eyes sharpened on her, so that had been the woman’s intention. Unfortunately for her, she and Kendra’s relationship had already passed the stage where her words would have any effect. If indeed it had ever started there, Dominique mused remembering how from the very beginning they had slept cuddled up against one another, and it hadn’t been just because of the cold, though that had definitely contributed.

Dominique smirked, seeing no need to be nice now that she knew what the woman’s game was, “I thank you for your concern,” she said sweetly, “but Kendra and I have no problems with being emotionally intimate with one another, and as for the other, I’ve never woken without her arm around me in my arms.” She reached up and stroked her fingers along her lover’s hand, Kendra’s hand slid forward capturing her own and held it. The auburn haired woman stared at her in what almost looked like disbelief for a second before she flushed angrily, whirlrd and left, almost knocking the chair on that side of the table over in her haste.

Kendra’s hand let go of hers and then the black haired woman slid into the chair next to her, giving her a concerned glance.

Before her lover could ask, Dominique said, “She was busy telling me about how you would be sleeping on the other side of the bed come morning. Funny how I’ve never noticed that, I’ve never woken up without your arm around me, you seem rather possessive of me in your sleep.”

The redhead shook her head, “No I rather like it,” she admitted.

“That was it?” the black haired woman remarked looking rather surprised.

“Well she did say something about you never telling me anything more than you cared about me, but I rather think we’ve already gone past that point,” Dominique said softly.

Kendra gave her a tender look, “Yes, I believe we have.”

It was after midnight, the club lights were down low, and the song playing was soft and slow. Like most of the other couples on the floor Dominique and Kendra were barely bothering to step to the music. Pressed close against one another they stepped in a small circle and swayed to the music, Kendra’s hands were around the redhead’s waist pressing and stroking her lower back in a way that if she were a gargoyle would definitely amount to having public sex. Dominique’s head was resting upon Kendra’s shoulder, her arms were wrapped around Kendra’s neck her fingers playing with her lover’s silky black hair or stroking teasingly along her neck and shoulders.

“I think it’s time we went home,” the redhead lifted her head enough to whisper into Kendra’s ear. The hands at her waist pulled her tighter against her lover’s hips for a moment, causing a fresh surge of arousal to go through her body.

“That sounds good,” the black haired woman agreed in a low, husky voice.

They released one another and left the dance floor, stopping by their table to get their jackets before leaving. If either of them noticed the knowing looks that followed them, they didn’t bother acknowledging them.

Sunday, December 14th 1997

Early Night – Kendra’s Estate, north of Poughkeepsie, Dutchess County, NY

After getting up late, they had spent the day being more productive than they had been on Saturday. They had worked out together and then Dominique had sat down to do some work while Kendra went out to the small barn that had been converted to a gymnasium to practice. In the afternoon, the redhead had called Robert’s Aunt and persuaded the woman to let her take the young Owl’s chosen out for two nights in a row, first to get fitted for a suit and go out to dinner, and the next night to attend dinner and the play with the group.

After eating dinner and cleaning up the dishes, Dominique transformed into her gargoyle form and they sat down on the leather living room couch together, getting ready to go into the spirit realm.

“So are you going to offer her the position?” Kendra asked curiously.

Demona glanced at her surprised before realizing that she hadn’t shown Kendra Sharon’s resume, she reached over and shuffled the papers on the coffee table around searching for it. As soon as she found it, she handed it to the black haired woman and waited.

Kendra looked up after scanning though the resume quickly, “You’re offering her the position,” she stated.

The gargoyle smiled, “I am, she is certainly more knowledgeable about business than I was when Thailog and I started Nightstone. The only thing I’m worried about is whether she can adapt to the more formal atmosphere of the company, but there’s no way of knowing that until she actually starts
The black haired woman nodded, “She’ll need to upgrade her wardrobe as well if what she wore last time was an example of what she has for work clothes.” She paused thoughtfully, “Depending on how well off her family is, she may need some money up front to be able to afford the move for herself and her horse, a month’s rent and deposit as well as new clothing.”

“I’ve already considered that, I plan to offer her a rather healthy signing bonus, it should cover all of her expenses,” Demona commented.

Kendra grinned, “Sounds like you have everything covered then, shall we go?”

Rather large group was waiting for them when they got there, not only was the Ancient One there along with Sharon and the Horse spirit, but also the Jaguar spirit, Rachael, and the Wolf spirit with Wayne Robinson.

“Chosen,” the Ancient One and the Jaguar spirit greeted them almost at the same time.

“Ancient One,” Demona greeted the Irish Elk spirit, rather taken aback at the size of the gathering and wondering especially why the Wolf spirit and Wayne were there.

“Jaguar,” Kendra greeted her spirit, “What’s going on?” she asked staring at the others.

“You cannot reach your cousin Robyn to free her from the fey enchantment upon her. The Wolf spirit believes that his chosen will be able to do so,” the great cat explained.

That seemed to be the cue for the lean pack leader and Wayne to approach. “Greetings Ancient One’s chosen, young Jaguar,” the Wolf spirit said as he sat back down on his haunches.

Kendra and Demona returned the spirits greeting and then exchanged greetings with Wayne.

“My chosen,” the grey Wolf spirit looked up expectantly at the lanky man standing next to him.

“I’ve started investigating the Quarrymen. Bluestone, the lead detective of the Gargoyle’s Task Force was right, there are some organized crime groups among other’s funding them. With that piece of information, I’ve got enough of a reason to go visit Robyn Canmore to see if she knows anything about these Quarrymen. I’ll also question her to see if any of the money for their expensive toys came from some place other than their inheritance from their father.” Wayne smiled crookedly, “I expect she won’t be very cooperative, but that will get me close enough to her to rip out that enchantment the Weird Sisters put on her.”

Kendra’s lips quirked briefly upward at his choice of words before her expression became more serious, “Thank you Wayne, I didn’t like the idea of leaving that enchantment on her until her sentence was complete.”

“Yea that’s alright,” he waved her thanks away, sounding rather gruff and embarrassed, “it’s what we do for each other and that…” he seemed to be struggling to find the proper word, open anger apparent now, “perversion shouldn’t remain on her any longer than necessary.” He didn’t even pause long enough for Kendra to respond before continuing, “I’ll get a message to you letting you know when it’s done.”

The black haired woman stared at him for a second, and then her lips twitched in amusement, “I’d appreciate that,” she acknowledged.

He nodded sharply, then wavered and disappeared.
“He’s not one for a lot of small talk is he,” Kendra commented bemused.

The Wolf spirit’s mouth opened in a canine grin, “My chosen prefers actions to words. If at all possible he will accomplish what he has promised to do.” The pack leader stood, “Now I will leave you to your business with the Horse’s chosen.” He turned to go, paused and looked back at Demona, “It is good to see you reaching out to your fellow chosen as you are, Ancient One’s chosen, you will find that your trust in them is well placed.”

It took Demona a half second to reply; she hadn’t been expecting the spirit to speak to her at all, much less about this topic. “I don’t doubt it,” she acknowledged, “I only hope I can be as helpful when someone comes to me with a request.”

He cocked his head a little to the side and stared at her, “But you already have been, Ancient One’s chosen.”

The gargoyle stared at him puzzled, “Robert?” she finally made the connection, “but…” she cut off her protest, seeing Robert had started out as a favor to Rachael. “It’s not that way anymore, I like the young man and enjoy his company,” she said softly.

“And that is what I meant by how you are reaching out to your fellow chosen,” the Wolf spirit said, the canine grin apparent once again. Then, apparently satisfied with Demona’s surprised expression, he turned and trotted away, blending quickly into the grey mists.

The Irish Elk stared after him for a moment before turning his massive head to gaze at his chosen, “The Wolf spirit is right, it is good to see you forming relationships with your fellow chosen,” he said, his tone approving.

Demona stared at him, his words ringing in her mind. She caped her wings automatically about herself as she thought about the recent past and her interactions with Rachael, Margaret, Sharon and yes, even Wayne. She certainly hadn’t consciously set out to do so, but she had been forming relationships this entire time, friendships. Kendra was, of course, her friend as well as her lover, and Rachael was her friend and possibly Robert as well in time. Margaret and Wayne weren’t yet her friends, but that would probably happen as they interacted more in the future. She glanced over at young Sharon; the Horse’s chosen would likely become a friend as well as an employee if everything worked out. Friends, the concept was strange after being completely alone for so many centuries, she hadn’t had a friend since Michael and now she possibly had several.

“You’re not alone anymore,” Kendra said softly from beside her.

The flame haired gargoyle glanced at her, “No, I’m not,” she agreed. Well she had wondered at one point what the chosen were to one another; apparently, the answer was they were friends or at least potential friends.

“Demona, Kendra,” Rachael greeted them warmly as she, Sharon, and the Horse spirit came over. Demona stepped forward hesitantly her arms slightly upraised, the Cree woman gave her a big smile and finished the movement, wrapping her arms around the gargoyle in a warm hug.

As soon as everyone finished greeting one another, Demona turned toward the senior Owl’s chosen, “Rachael,” she said, “I spoke to Robert’s aunt today, he will be going out with us on two days, the nineteenth and the twentieth.”

The smile on Rachael’s face grew brighter at this news, “How did you manage that?”

Demona smirked, “Why I told the truth, of course. He’s interviewing for the intern position in
Kendra’s division, which means he has to be able to interact with other corporate executives in social situations where he will be representing the company.” The smirk shifted into a wry smile, “Well mostly the truth,” she amended her previous statement, “he already has the position, but I do need to see if he can handle himself in social situations.” Rachael gave her a questioning look, so the gargoyle explained further, “Kendra will be visiting other companies, as her intern Robert would accompany her and those usually involve going out to lunch or dinner with the company’s executives.”

The confusion on Rachael’s face cleared, “When I asked you to get to know Robert,” the senior Owl’s chosen said, looking guilty, “I didn’t mean that you had to hire him.”

The blue skin gargoyle waved it off, “Nightstone has several summer intern positions, I have no doubt that Robert is just as capable of performing up to the level I expect of an intern as any of the college students we hire.”

The Cree woman gave her a penetrating look, “Yes, but would you hire anyone of them to be Kendra’s intern?” she asked perceptively.

Demona grinned, “Certainly not, I’d never give one of them access to information such as what technologies the company will be developing or which companies Nightstone intends to acquire. Robert however, is another matter and hopefully it will give him some direction so he can select what major or majors he wishes to take in college.” Before Rachael could say anything else, the gargoyle added in a softer tone, “Besides I like Robert. I can see that he’s a bright, intelligent young man and depending on what he chooses to do with his future, I’d like to persuade him that there’s no better place for him to work than Nightstone once he finishes with college.”

Rachael expression softened and she gave the gargoyle a crooked smile, “So this is all just a plot to make sure you get first dibbs on him four years from now?”

The flame haired gargoyle’s smile widened, showing white teeth and fangs, “Precisely,” she agreed her green eyes dancing with amusement. From Kendra’s quizzical glance, Demona knew she was acting unusually cheerful, but her surprise at realizing she had friends had changed into a mild feeling of…elation, she really couldn’t think of another word that fit how she was feeling.

Having friends wasn’t the same as having clan, but then Demona didn’t think she would really be happy in a clan anymore. Clan meant that you were seldom alone, that you did everything with your rookery brothers and sisters, and that everyone seemed to be always curious about what you were doing. She hadn’t always appreciated the closeness a thousand years ago, but she had accepted it because that was the reality of belonging to a gargoyle clan. After several centuries of being alone, the gargoyle strongly suspected she would feel completely smothered by the closeness and attention these days.

Even though she didn’t want to be part of a clan, Demona was still a gargoyle, and that meant that she didn’t want to be completely alone and needed regular social contact with others. As far as she was concerned, the good thing about friends was they didn’t insist on living with you and knowing what you were doing all the time, and that made them sound just about perfect to Demona.

The gargoyle looked over at the Horse spirit and his chosen, noting that Sharon looked troubled. The young woman’s expression immediately damped her good mood, “Did your conversation with your father not go well?” she asked concerned.

A frown etched itself between the younger woman’s brows, “Dad brought up a lot of things he wanted me to consider before accepting. I didn’t realize how expensive it is to live in New York City.”
“Ah,” now Demona understood, she imagined it was quite a shock after living in Arizona to look at the prices for housing in New York City.

“I found a few stables that I wouldn’t mind boarding Bree, all around an hour’s drive or so north of the city,” Sharon continued, “if I can find a place around the Yonkers end of the metro line then it would only be a thirty minute drive to see her. It’s just the amount of rent they want is…”

“High compared to where you live,” the gargoyle finished for her, “However, the salaries here are also higher than they would be in Arizona. I was planning on offering you sixty-eight thousand plus the boarding costs for your horse.” Sharon looked stunned at the figure and the big bay stallion standing behind the young woman stretched his muzzle forward and nuzzled her hair. The brown haired woman reached up and touched his jaw briefly in what seemed almost like an automatic response.

Kendra spoke up, “Boarding places run about seven hundred and fifty a month if you want them to let your horse out to graze and run for a few hours each day.”

Demona quickly added the cost for a year up in her head, “Let’s make it eighty thousand then, that should give you enough to feed your horse as well as board her.”

“Are you sure?” the young woman asked sounding uncertain.

“Interesting, I’ve never had anyone try to persuade me to lower their salary,” the gargoyle said with sly amusement. Sharon blushed, but before she could respond Demona continued, “I did say salaries were higher here to make up for the fact that rent is rather high. I believe that takes care of your concerns about managing to find a decent place to live and eat as well?”

“Yes,” the young brown haired woman agreed weakly.

The green eyes sharpened on her, “Don’t think it’s a handout, I’ll expect you to work as hard as I do, so you’ll earn every penny of it.”

Sharon straightened, “I’m used to working from seven in the morning until four or five in the afternoon on the ranch,” she said determinedly.

“Good,” Demona said, her words a challenge, “Because I work from eight until five with usually only a half hour break for lunch. And for the first few months’ I imagine you’ll be taking home a few hours work as well each night as you learn about the company, its competitors, and our business environment.”

The young chosen’s jaw firmed as her head rose proudly, and in that moment Demona saw a striking similarity between Sharon and the proud bay stallion standing behind her. It was the look in her eye, the way she held herself, she could see the horse spirit inside the younger woman and it reminded the gargoyle of the way she could see the jaguar in Kendra. “I’m a hard worker, Ms. Destine I’ll do what I need to do to get up to speed.”

Demona stared measuringly at the younger woman, finally she smiled, “I’m sure you will, I’ll have HR send your official job offer on Monday to start work on the 12th of January, a month should give you time to arrange everything and move.”

Sharon looked slightly overwhelmed, but she nodded determinedly, “I’ll be ready by then.”

The flame haired gargoyle took in a breath, this was the part she wasn’t so certain about, but she was managing to remain focused on work with Kendra while they were at Nightstone, so she didn’t see why she couldn’t manage to be both Sharon’s employer and friend. “I’m sure you’re aware that
Rachael is staying with me later in the week and that Margaret is going to be in New York City at the same time as well. I can get plane tickets for you to come and stay with me a few days to celebrate Solstice with us while you look for an apartment and arrange for the boarding of your horse.”

The younger woman’s face brightened, before she could reply though Rachael broke in, “Oh, please say yes, we already have Margaret and Robert it would be nice for you to be there as well.”

Sharon grinned at the older Cree woman before turning back to Demona, “That would be wonderful.”

“Good, because I’d hate for that extra play ticket I had Candice purchase earlier this week go to waste,” the gargoyle stated.

“But you didn’t know if I would accept,” Sharon protested, looking as if she wasn’t certain whether to be offended that she had been so predictable or not.

Demona shook an admonishing talon at her, “A good businesswoman is always prepared for all possible outcomes of an offer,” she said with a smirk.

Monday, December 15th 1997

_Early Afternoon, Rose M. Singer Center, Rikers Island_

Robyn Canmore stared after the two men from the FBI as they left the small room where she had been brought so they could question her about what she knew of the Quarrymen and any connection her family had with organized crime. Oh Jon, she thought to herself sadly, what have you gotten yourself into now.

It had certainly been one of the stranger interrogations she had experienced since the ill-fated attack on the 23rd precinct building. She was becoming used to being sneered at and treated with open hostility from various law enforcement officers, firing a missile into a building full of their fellow officers certainly hadn’t made her very popular with them. The two FBI agents, despite their stern demeanor, hadn’t been very hostile toward her at all; even when the one tall agent had briefly put his hands on her shoulders, she hadn’t felt threatened by either of them.

“Canmore,” the stern voice of the prison guard drew her out of her thoughts, schooling her face to impassiveness she stood and let the woman check her restraints. The way the guard was fingering her baton and Robyn knew the woman was just looking for the slightest excuse to use it. Once she was safely back in her cell, she sat down on her cot and allowed herself to relax for a few moments.

She didn’t know what had possessed Jon to get involved with the organized crime syndicates, now he had federal level attention. What was worse, she was certain that the two agents suspected that Jon Cannmore and John Castaway were the same person, why they hadn’t pulled her brother in for questioning if they knew that she wasn’t sure. Maybe they were just waiting for him to make a mistake big enough for them to throw him in jail too; she knew they didn’t have enough on him to arrest him for his role in the clock tower attack. Neither she nor Jason had even mentioned he was there, and lacking any evidence to the contrary the only thing the police department possibly had on him was using a false identity to get hired as a journalist.

Steps coming down the corridor had her opening her eyes and focusing them on the far side of the cell. She didn’t look through the bars to see who it was; she guessed it was a guard doing their
regular round through the cellblock. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw the guard slow as they walked past her cell and look in at her. Their baton swung out, hit one of the bars, she finally looked away from the wall to meet the guard’s sharp gaze, keeping her own carefully neutral. The guard sneered at her, satisfied they had interrupted whatever it was she was doing and continued on their round.

Robyn took in a deep breath, she hated this, hated being treated like an animal in a cage for the guards to amuse themselves by tormenting, and she wished more than anything else that she had never ever fired that damn missile. But the thought of killing the gargoyles she knew were inside the clock tower had driven her on, that and the feeling of righteous elation she felt whenever she contemplated killing the demon who had killed her father or any others like her.

She tensed, realizing with dismay where her thoughts had gone, and waiting for the rush of feeling that now sickened her, but it never came. She stared unseeing at the institutional green colored wall, thought about killing the demon once again, this time intentionally…nothing. There was none of the feeling her father had taught her was God’s reward for thinking righteous thoughts. She tried again, thought of firing a particle beam right through the scarlet haired demons chest, still nothing except for the ever present hatred she felt for the gargoyle that had killed her father.

The blonde woman frowned utterly confused; the rush of pleasure that followed thoughts of killing a gargoyle had been something she had known for as long as she could remember. Suddenly not feeling that was disconcerting and even slightly frightening, even though the feelings were ones she had grown to hate for leading her to this place.

*Late Afternoon – inside Quarryman Headquarters in Lower Manhattan*

“Hey Sally, get away from there,” the gruff voice caused Elisa to jump guiltily away from the partially open door she had been peering though.

“I’m sorry,” she said in a low voice stepping closer to the Quarryman, “I’m just worried about Mr. Castaway.” The sound of a hammer hitting rock from the partially open door behind her caused her to jump, it was followed a moment later by a frustrated sounding shout.

“He just wants to find one of those demons to kill, he’ll be fine after that,” the man said, it would have been more convincing if he hadn’t sounded like he was trying to persuade himself as well as her. “We should get the stuff to bag us some pretty soon though,” he patted her on the arm in a comforting manner, “we got some extra special anti-gargoyle weapons coming in soon.”

She looked up at the tall heavy-set man curiously, “We will, will I get to try one of them?” It was in character of her to ask, she was playing a rather gung ho gargoyle hating recruit. For some reason her question amused him, “Maybe,” he responded after he quick chuckling. “Don’t worry, you’ll get your chance to kill one of those demons too.”

Her eyes narrowed in supposed anger, “Good,” she said vehemently, “I’m looking forward to getting rid of those winged freaks.”

“You’ll have your chance soon,” the smooth oily voice of Jon Canmore, or rather John Castaway, came from behind her.

She turned around, “Mr. Castaway,” she greeted him in the respectful, deferential tone she had noticed he liked from his followers. She couldn’t help notice how his reddened eyes darted nervously
around the hallway, he looked pale, tired, and perhaps even sick. “Are you coming down with a cold Mr. Castaway? You look like you don’t feel well,” she said solicitously.

“What?” he barked, staring at her suspiciously.

“I thought you might want some chicken soup?” she offered startled at his behavior, she was fairly sure her cover was still intact, but he was acting so strange lately. She had thought it just a coincidence that the odd behavior had begun right after his altercation with his cousin. However, what she had heard him say right before the Quarryman had found her watching at the door indicated that the way he was acting did have something to do with Kendra Canmore.

“Soup?” he repeated staring at her blankly, “No, no,” he finally responded in a more reasonable tone, “I’m not ill I’ve just been having trouble sleeping lately.” The blonde man turned and walked away, leaving both she and the Quarryman next to her staring after him baffled. Elisa couldn’t figure out his behavior, if she didn’t know better, she would think he was a junkie badly needing his next fix, but she was fairly certain that he wasn’t doing drugs.

She found a quiet room to sit and think about what she had just seen and heard, her cop instincts were telling her that it was significant. Jon had been smashing gargoyle statues, staring at the rubble as if he expected something from it and then looking disappointed and enraged when it did not. What had he been expecting, she asked herself, and what did it have to do with Kendra Canmore, for what she had heard him say was “What did you do to me cousin, how could you have taken God’s reward for the righteous from me?”

That phrase kept repeating in her mind, to what was he referring? What was God’s reward for the righteous? Her mind kept coming back to the last question and to how he was looking and acting like a junkie deprived of his fix. Elisa really didn’t like the connections her mind was making; surely the Weird Sisters wouldn’t have… The detective remembered their cold, arrogant manner the both times she had interacted with them, the way they had regarded her as if her life and the lives of those she cared about were worth absolutely nothing to them. Yes they would have she knew, they would have enchanted Jason, Jon and Robyn to give them a high like a druggie taking a hit whenever they did anything that resembled killing a gargoyle and thought nothing of doing it.

Elisa felt sick, if what she was thinking was true no wonder Kendra had sounded so furious and ready to kill the three fey. Her mind raced trying to figure out a way to either prove or disprove the conclusion she had drawn from Jon’s words and behavior. She couldn’t go to Jason while the investigation was ongoing to ask him if he ever felt high when he thought about killing a gargoyle, he would certainly want to know why she was asking, and she couldn’t risk him warning his brother. Finding out the truth would have to wait until she got the evidence she needed to arrest Jon Canmore, she finally decided with reluctance.

Late Evening – Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan

Marvin has entered GayChat

Xenafan0001: hey Marvin how are you doing this evening?

Marvin: alright

Furrybear: looking forward to your Christmas break?

Marvin: yea, that will be nice to be out of school for a few days
Greywolf has entered GayChat

Greywolf: hey guys, how are you all doing tonight

Furrybear: hey Grey

Marvin: doing alright Greywolf

Xenafan0001: hey Greywolf

Greywolf: wow, what a weekend, I went up to see a friend of mine in Poughkeepsie and we went out Saturday night at the club up there and you wouldn’t believe who we saw in there

Xenafan0001: who?

Furrybear: spill it don’t keep us waiting

Greywolf: you know those two women who were kidnapped? Haha well I know now what they were doing every night when they stopped to warm up :o

Xenafan0001: you saw Kendra Canmore and Dominique Destine at the gay club in Poughkeepsie? You’re joking

Greywolf: I swear I’m not, and by the way they were dancing together and looking at each other they are certainly not just friends

Xenafan0001: damn, I mean I knew Kendra was gay but I never heard anything about Dominique Destine being gay

Greywolf: well then she’s certainly at least bi, and stunning wow what a gorgeous shade of red and those green eyes and that body sigh, Kendra’s a lucky woman but then from what I understand shes very partial to redheads

Marvin: when did you see her?

Greywolf: Saturday I thought I said that?

Marvin: I mean what time?

Greywolf: shrug, dunno midnight or so, why?

Marvin: oh… just wondered. You’re sure it was Dominique Destine?

Greywolf: haha, oh yea, both me and my friend were like is that Dominique Destine with Kendra? But then we were like how many other women with that shade of red hair and green eyes that also look just like the picture of her are there… it was Dominique Destine

Xenafan0001: so they’re lover’s now I wonder how long Dominique will last, Kendra isn’t known for keeping them around for long though I haven’t heard of her seeing anyone in years

Furrybear: yea from what I’ve heard she isn’t into long term relationships

Greywolf: uhh I dunno, I sorta remember seeing her years ago out with another woman and I don’t remember seeing her look at that woman then like she looked at Dominique last night. They were really into each other, I mean really really into each other like the rest of the world doesn’t exist into each other
Xenafan0001: you’re joking

Greywolf: no I’m not, I could hear other people around us talking about how Kendra looked like she’s been landed this time. I mean we were all drooling over how hot they looked together but no one even tried to go up and ask either of them for a dance

Greywolf: and I heard that before we got there Dominique sent Marla off with a bee in her bonnet when she came over

Xenafan0001: oh god why doesn’t she get over it, I mean it’s been like three years since she was going out with Kendra

Greywolf: well from the tale going around and I don’t know if its true or not since we weren’t there. Marla tried to say something to her about Kendra never falling in love and she told her that they had no problems being emotionally intimate with one another and that Kendra held her all night

Xeanfan0001: :o

Greywolf: but as I said I don’t know if that’s true or not, since it was a someone overheard her and they told…etc type of thing

Furrybear: yea no telling what she actually said though that sorta sounds weird I mean the emotionally intimate part of it who says something like that

Greywolf: shrug. I don’t know about that but I’m telling you they looked really sweet together the way they would just stare into each other’s eyes

Furrybear: haha, the if your a diabetic don’t sit at this table type of were staring into each others eyes?

Xenafan0001: you’re

Greywolf: LOL yes definitely that type of sweet, as I said they were really into one another and it was pretty clear what they were planning on doing when they left cause they were slow dancing or maybe slow swaying would be a better description and then they left like right in the middle of the song

Greywolf: it didn’t take much of an imagination to guess they were going somewhere to do the horizontal dance

Greywolf: damn they looked hot together, I need to find a girlfriend

Furrybear: haha

Xenafan0001: LOL poor baby did watching them get you wishing you had someone to do that with?

Xenafan0001: I keep offering to hook you up with someone, come out with us this weekend

Greywolf: I may take you up on that, where is it you go?

Lexington sat back in his chair shaking his head, and chuckling at himself, for a moment there he had actually thought...but Demona was a gargoyle at night so they had to have seen some other redhead woman with Kendra Canmore. Still it was interesting to find out that Kendra was gay. He looked back at his screen reading the text he had missed, Xenafan and Greywolf were still discussing going out to the club to find a girlfriend for Greywolf. He suspected the conversation would get more
explicit once he left, they all thought he was a sophomore in high school, so they often wouldn’t talk that way when he showed up in the chat room.

He knew he should tell Goliath about this, but that would mean explaining where he had heard the information. The green gargoyle cringed, he did not want to tell the big lavender male that he chatted in this particular chat room, he still remembered Goliath’s reaction to Elisa explaining why those two men had been threatened. The clan leader hadn’t said much but it had been very clear to all of them that he disapproved of such relationships and thought they were abnormal in some way. The last thing he wanted the clan leader to start suspecting was that he might be that way…

He huddled unhappily in his chair his wings curling automatically around him in response to his thoughts. He already didn’t fit into the clan with his obsession with modern electronics, the last thing he needed was yet something else to set him apart much less something that Goliath disapproved of so strongly. Anyway, it wasn’t as if it could have actually been Demona, the green web-winged gargoyle comforted himself, so there was really no reason to tell his clan leader about this.
Tuesday, December 16th 1997

Morning - Nightstone Unlimited HQ, Lower East Side Manhattan

Dominique stared out her thirteenth story window, mentally reviewing the previous work week. She had started her HR department looking at the personnel benefits she wanted to implement, started the legal department looking into having Thailog declared legally dead, dealt with an attempt to bribe information from her employees, hired Kendra and fired Mr. Cleveland, and started R&D working on the new battery technology. That had all been on Monday. On Tuesday, she had invited Margaret up, her eyes went to the clock noting the time, who Gregory and Kendra should be picking up from the airport about now and then taking to Kendra’s apartment to unpack and settle in. On Thursday, she had reviewed the papers to patent the paper battery technology, ordered Sevarius’ research destroyed, ordered a stop on all non-therapeutic research, and contacted Rachael about a personnel assistant and then that night she had met Sharon. This morning she had sent a memo to HR detailing the specifics of Sharon’s job offer that they would be overnighting to the young woman later today.

Her eyes went to the Marketing and Sales report on her desk, she snarled silently, as much as she had not wanted to do this, she needed to approve the Department of Defense’s order for more weapons. Right now Nightstone needed the cash flow from the contract, especially with the planned acquisition of a company so they could enter the industrial fuel cell market. At least Mr. Delaney’s efforts to push Nightstone’s armor and defensive countermeasures over their weapons systems had resulted in a new DoD contract for their new ceramic composite vehicle armor and laser anti-missile defense system in addition to the weapon’s contract.

It was unfortunate that the DoD hadn’t been interested in purchasing new body armor in addition to
the vehicle armor. The body armor Nightstone could produce wasn’t enough of a significant improvement from what the DoD was currently using for them to be interested in purchasing it. It was possible to make significantly better body armor with the existing technology; Xanatos Enterprises held a patent for the manufacturing process to make reusable armor plate technology that would replace the currently used heavy ceramic plates that needed to be replaced every time they stopped a bullet. Xanatos Enterprises didn’t however have the patent for the material to make the plates; Nightstone did, and because of that currently neither company could produce the best possible body armor.

What was truly annoying Dominique about the current impasse was her own role in it. She had found out through one of her own spies that Xanatos Enterprises was working on the same technology as Nightstone, and had shifted her entire R&D department into accelerating the research project. Nightstone managed to just beat Xanatos Enterprises to the patent office with the process to make the nanofiber weave that would be used in both the plates and the material of the vest, but they hadn’t beaten them to developing the plate manufacturing process. At that time she hadn’t been interested in humans having better body armor to protect themselves from each other; she had wanted them to keep killing one another. Therefore, once she had the patent, she rejected Xanatos’ offer to let Nightstone use their manufacturing patent in exchange for letting Xanatos Enterprises use the patent for the nanofiber material, thereby hobbling both companies.

Without Xanatos’s manufacturing method however, the nanofiber weave that Nightstone had developed for the material of the vest that significantly increased its ability to protect the wearer from low and medium impact bullets simply wasn’t of interest enough to the DoD. They wanted body armor capable of protecting soldiers from high impact rifle ammunition. The market that could benefit from the body armor Nightstone could make, mainly state and local law enforcement agencies, didn’t have the type of budget to afford buying new vests when the old ones worked well enough.

Until recently, of course, she hadn’t cared that she had hurt her own company as well as Xanatos Enterprises; since she never thought she would be interested in Nightstone producing body armor. Now though, everything had changed, and she wanted to change Nightstone’s DoD contract focus from weapons development to armor and defensive countermeasures and one essential piece of that pie was producing body armor. To do that however, she needed Xanatos’ permission to use the manufacturing process his company had patented. Her green eyes narrowed as she thought, David Xanatos would make her pay far more than the patent was worth if she made an offer now, she smiled a rather shark like smile, but perhaps he might be more amiable to an arrangement where both of them gave up a little to gain a lot more. If she knew one thing about David Xanatos, it was that the man never let his personal feelings get in the way of making a healthy profit.

The phone on her desk rang, she turned away from the window and walked over to her desk to look down at it, it was an internal call from the IT division. She picked up the phone, “Ms. Destine,” she answered knowing that it was probably Ms. Conrad.

“Ms. Destine,” it was her IT Division manager, “I’ve been auditing our computer system as you requested and I’ve found something.”

Dominique frowned, Ms. Conrad rarely sounded upset or uncertain, and right now she sounded both. “What is it?” she asked her voice flat as she wondered what Thailog had done to her company.

“I found a program embedded in the accounting software, it’s been transferring small amounts of money from various departmental accounts out of the company by placing false billing requests…”

Ms. Conrad didn’t get any further before Dominique interrupted, “Mr. Cleveland,” the redhead
venomously snarled, “I’ll see him rotting in jail for this.”

“I’ve already put some of my best people working on tracing it to him while I track down where the money’s going,” Ms. Conrad assured her quickly, “but this looks like it’s been hidden inside the accounting system for quite some time.” The IT Division manager sounded apologetic and she should, because if it had been there for a while that meant that she had missed it during the audit a year ago.

Dominique frowned, “How did your earlier audit miss it?” she asked tersely.

“With what the program is doing it would have been easy to erase it while the audit was going on and then...”

“Reintroduce it once the audit was finished, and he knew exactly when the audit was to begin and when it was completed,” the redhead finished seeing exactly how Mr. Cleveland had evaded detection.

“Exactly,” Ms. Conrad sounded relieved. “There’s only one thing that puzzles me, I really didn’t think Mr. Cleveland knew enough about computers, much less programming to be able to create this program.”

“He didn’t,” Dominique replied, her voice chill as her thoughts went to the cloned male, “Mr. Thailog did.”

An hour later, Ms. Conrad and her team were still trying to track down exactly where the money was going, and find evidence of exactly who had placed the program in the system in the first place. Dominique, except for asking for regular updates, remained in her office running various scenarios through her mind. She knew Ms. Jordan Conrad was quite capable of doing her job; she didn’t need to go down there and stand over the woman to make sure it was done correctly. She smirked, wondering how surprised her division managers would be to find out that she actually did think they were competent despite what she had frequently yelled at them in the past. Then again perhaps they did, she doubted any of them were under any illusions that she wouldn’t have already fired them if they weren’t competent enough to meet her expectations.

She interlaced her fingers and rested her chin on them, refocusing her mind on her current problem, once Ms. Conrad found out exactly where the embezzled money had gone should she call in the authorities or quietly deal with the problem internally and have the money transferred back into the company. The later was illegal of course, but she knew full well that companies did it all the time. Sometimes you didn’t want everyone, and especially your competitors and stockholders, to know that one of your employees had managed to steal money from the company.

Reporting the embezzlement to the authorities, provided that Ms. Conrad found information pointing to Mr. Alexander Thailog being the end recipient of the money and that evidence showed the embezzled money hadn’t been touched in months, could help her efforts to have Thailog declared legally deceased. On the other hand bringing in the authorities, depending on what they found when they started digging into Mr. Alexander Thailog’s business practices and background, could spectacularly backfire on her if they found out things she definitely didn’t want revealed about either herself or Thailog. The redhead frowned; having the authorities investigating Mr. Alexander Thailog to determine whether he was alive wasn’t quite the same as them investigating him for embezzling, that might just be the level of attention that she didn’t want placed on the activities of the cloned male.

The phone on her desk buzzed indicating that it was the intercom line from her secretary, Dominique pushed the speaker button, “What is it Candice?”
“Ms. Canmore and Ms. Jackson are here to see you Ms. Destine,” the woman responded.

“Send them in,” Dominique said as she stood up, this distraction from her current problem was a welcome one, plus she wanted to discuss this with Kendra before deciding on a course of action. She ended the call and walked around her desk, looking toward the door curiously. The redhead had no idea what the Bison’s chosen, Margaret, looked like, nor really any idea of the woman’s personality, except that the woman had seemed cheerful and pleasant when she spoke to her on the phone last week. The door to her office opened and Kendra entered followed closely by a woman that was both taller and wider than she was.

“Ms. Destine,” the tall, stout woman greeted her warmly, the hazel eyes behind her glasses taking in both her and her office in a single swift glance around. The woman was tanned and had dark brown hair that was pulled back from her face in a long single braid that hung to midway down her back. Dominique knew her expression had to be revealing her astonishment at the woman’s appearance, by sheer force of will, she smoothed her expression and forced down the laughter bubbling up in her throat. Now that she was starting to watch for it, she could clearly see the influence of the chosen’s patron spirit in them. That wasn’t what was currently amusing her however, what was humorous, now that she was looking for it, was how many of them bore more than a passing resemblance to their patron spirit animal. Wayne was lean and tall, and so was the Wolf spirit, Kendra was very muscular and strong for a female, the Jaguar spirit was also strong and muscular, Margaret well… Dominique doubted the stoutness she was seeing had anything to do with the woman being overweight, certainly some of it was fat, but she suspected quite a bit of it was muscle. “Ms. Jackson,” she finally managed to return the woman’s greeting and shake her hand.

Margaret gave her a sharp glance, and then she sighed sounding resigned, “Yes I know, sometimes I wonder if the spirits have more of a droll sense of humor than we suspect, I’ve often accused mine of picking me on looks alone.” Her martyred attitude was ruined by the merry twinkle in her hazel eyes and the twitching of her lips. Kendra started chuckling, “This wouldn’t be so bad if I hadn’t pretty much done the same thing about forty minutes ago.”

Dominique could no longer help it; the laughter she had been trying to contain escaped her control. “I’ve just begun to notice that about some of us,” she admitted once she got herself back under control. “Wayne, Sharon and Margaret,” she looked over at Kendra, “you,” she grinned at her lover’s surprised look, “all look a little bit like their patron spirit animal. I haven’t seen it in Rachael and Robert except perhaps in their personalities.” A startling thought occurred to her, “I haven’t, do I?” she asked them, a slight frown on her face, she couldn’t see how anyone could resemble the Irish Elk spirit.

Margaret and Kendra both looked at her intently, finally Margaret said, “Sometimes it’s not how you look exactly, sometimes it’s more something you sense in someone. How they stand how they move how they hold themselves.” She looked over at the Jaguar’s chosen, “Kendra’s a perfect example of both, she looks and moves like her spirit.” The tall, stout woman smirked at the black haired woman, “As a matter of fact she practically exudes Jaguar.” Kendra smirked right back at her, looking smugly pleased with the assessment. Dominique grinned at her lover; Margaret was right Kendra did both look and move like the Jaguar spirit, it had been one of the first things that she had noticed and found attractive about Kendra.

Margaret turned back to Dominique, “With you I can see him in how you hold yourself, and I suspect as time goes by his influence on you will become even more apparent than it already is.” The redhead found herself oddly touched by Margaret’s statement, the thought that she held enough of
the Ancient One within her that it was apparent to those looking at her made her feel at once both humble and proud.

“She’s right, you were regal and self-confident before,” Kendra said, her smile briefly shading from warm to wicked and Dominique was reminded of her saying by the stream that she had wanted to muss up her regalness that first meeting between them. “Now you’re even more so,” Kendra continued, “It’s like every characteristic that you have that he has as well is amplified.”

Margaret nodded, her eyes brightening, “That’s exactly how it seems to work, the spirits don’t add anything, they just make stronger those characteristics that we already have that they have as well.”

Dominique nodded, recalling how she had suspected that what had interested the Jaguar spirit in Kendra initially was the warrior already within the young girl.

When no one immediately followed up with another comment, Margaret turned to the redheaded woman “Well you probably need to get back to work. You said you had your Human Resources Division working on feasibility studies?”

“Yes, and you’re right I do need to get back to work, especially since something came up this morning that I’ll want to talk with you about after we get though with this,” Dominique said glancing over at Kendra.

Kendra gave her a sharp eyed glance, “Alright.”

Dominique waved her hand toward the two chairs in her office, silently inviting them to sit if they wanted as she turned to her desk and pulled a thick folder from a stack of papers. “I just got the last one this morning,” she said as she handed the folder over to Margaret. “I hope you can come up with some ways for us to implement these more cheaply, right now Human Resources is recommending against extending medical benefits to domestic partners due to the projected cost to the company.”

“Oh I know a few ways of doing things to cut down the administrative costs,” Margaret said scanning though the papers, “And a few tricks that will allow you to increase your tax deductions for employee benefit costs.” She looked up at Dominique, “With any luck I can show you how to save enough money to afford to implement all these benefits,” she indicated the stack of papers in her hand.

Late Morning - Nightstone Unlimited HQ, Lower East Side Manhattan

Ms. Conrad had finally tracked the money to an account with a Bermudan bank that currently held approximately thirty-three million dollars. Significantly, the embezzled money hadn’t been touched in a few months, and that only made it more tempting to Dominique to use it as proof that Mr. Alexander Thailog was indeed deceased.

Kendra had suggested leaving the account untouched for now and consulting with Wayne, who would at least be able to give the redhead a better idea of the risks she would be running if she brought the embezzling to the attention of the authorities. Dominique was uneasy about bringing the matter to his attention, even though he was another chosen he was still a law enforcement officer and she didn’t want to put him in an awkward position. Still Kendra was right, if anyone could give her an informed opinion on the risk she would be running by reporting Thailog’s embezzlement to the authorities it would be Wayne.

Dominique pushed the intercom button on her phone, “Candice I don’t want to be bothered by
anyone for the next thirty minutes.” She was about to close the connection when a thought occurred, “Except for Ms. Canmore if she should need me for something and then have her enter quietly without knocking so she doesn’t interrupt me.”

She could hear the bewilderment in her secretary’s voice as she responded, “Yes, Ms. Destine.” Her lips quirked up in a small grin, really Candice should be used to strange requests from her by now, this certainly wasn’t the oddest by far that she had made over the past two years.

The redhead clicked the button on her desk that opened the hidden door to the control room next to her office and entered, going to the upper level where there was a relatively comfortable couch along one wall. She sat down upon it, her back against the couch’s arm and her feet up on the couch. Her body relatively comfortable and secure, she closed her eyes and transitioned into the spirit realm. Dominique looked back at her body on the couch verifying that it wasn’t in a position that would leave her with a crick in her neck when she returned to it. She nodded in satisfaction at seeing her head resting comfortably against the support of the back and arm of the couch then fixed her thoughts upon the Irish Elk spirit and walked into the swirling mists.

When they cleared, she recognized with considerable shock the stone rotunda by the lake in Avalon where she and Macbeth had spent so much time standing around as still as statues while the Archmage and Weird Sisters schemed together. The Ancient One was standing by the pool in its center watching the grey images of the three fey.

The Irish Elk spirit’s antlered head swung toward her, “My chosen,” he greeted her. Warily, she crossed over to stand near him staring at the three sisters feeling her hatred, and yes, fear, of them. “They do not know that either of us is here, you are in no danger from them my chosen,” the great stag assured her gently. “And your defensive skills are already sufficient to protect yourself from their attacks, even their combined ones.”

Dominique stared at him in surprise; she hadn’t realized she had progressed that far with her shielding ability. Her arms dropped from where they had been crossed defensively across her chest, and she was able to look at the three fey more calmly. “What are they doing?”

“Attempting to scry upon you and Macbeth, their attempts are not succeeding however,” the Ancient One noted with satisfaction.

She took a few steps closer to the pool and looked down into the water, the reflective surface showed nothing but the reflection of the domed top of the rotunda. She looked up at the Weird Sisters, noting the confused frown on the silver haired sister’s face and smirked. The smile on her face faded as she took in the anger on Selene’s countenance, this would be the one who would press the others to seek out Macbeth and she to determine what was preventing them from scrying on their former puppets. She looked back at the great stag, pointing at the dark haired sister, “She will insist on finding out why they cannot spy on us.”

He dipped his antlered head in agreement, “Very likely, but they will find leaving Avalon difficult, their actions have drawn the attention of Titania, Lord Oberon’s mate.” His head turned and she followed his gaze to see a tall light teal skinned fey with long red hair approaching, “See, here she is even now, she is watching them rather closely.” The two of them watched as the regal fey woman approached the three sisters and stared at them and the pool suspiciously. Titania exchanged some words with the Weird Sisters and then stared after them as they left, when they were out of sight she waved her hand imperiously over the surface of the pool and then stared down at it frowning, a look of confusion on her face. The Fey Queen turned and stared narrow eyed after the Weird Sisters for a few moments before turning and leaving herself.

Dominique stared after her, wishing that she knew how to read lips better, she thought Titania had
said something about Lord Oberon requiring their presence, but sound didn’t travel into the spirit realm so she wasn’t certain. When the rotunda was empty, the great stag turned toward Dominique, “This is early for you my chosen,” he stated.

“It is,” she acknowledged, “I need to speak to Wayne about Thailog, I just found out this morning he’s been embezzling money from Nightstone.”

“Thailog,” the Ancient One repeated thoughtfully, “He was the one who attempted to have you and Macbeth kill one another so he could claim your possessions.”

The redhead grimaced, “Yes,” she said, “He was, or I guess more accurately still is, even though he’s currently stone both day and night, Goliath’s clone.”

The great stag head jerked a little, betraying his surprise at her statement, “Cloned,” the Ancient One repeated. “I was not aware that this was possible,” the great stag sounded troubled.

Dominique looked around at the stone rotunda. The view from here was beautiful even though it was only a grey reflection of the living world, with the still waters of the lake nearby reflecting the few wispy clouds in the sky above, but this place held so many bad memories for her. “Can we go elsewhere for this,” she asked quietly.

His great brown eyes met hers, “Of course, chosen, follow me.” Dominique was relieved to see the familiar pine forest, snow and stream of the Canadian wilderness where she and Kendra had stayed for so many days when the mists cleared once again. “Now chosen, tell me of this Thailog and of how he was cloned.” He turned to look at her obviously expecting her to meet his gaze so that she could share the information she had as he had requested.

Instead, she turned away from the spirit troubled and embarrassed, her arms wrapped around herself, a poor replacement for the comfort of her wings. She took a few steps toward the stream to stare at it, “Thailog was not a proper gargoyle,” she offered after a few seconds. Warm breath through her hair and on the back of her neck was the first sign she had that the great stag was near, then his great head pressed against her back. Dominique bowed her head, “We were mates for a time, but after the first few weeks he…” her hand went to her cheek remembering when he had started striking her when he became angered even drawing blood on occasion, “was not a kind one. Gargoyle mates do not treat each other the way he treated me,” of course neither do gargoyle mates treat one another as you treated Goliath, her mind reminded her. She shook her head, not wanting to get lost in those thoughts right now.

The Ancient One did not say anything, just offered his supportive presence and his unspoken determination that she would eventually share this information with him. Reluctantly she turned round closed her eyes and rested her head against his. “I will not judge you for your relationship with Thailog chosen,” he assured her. Finally, she opened her green eyes and met his gaze, unaware of how desperately her fingers clutched at his broad muzzle in her fear of what he would think of her once he knew how she had let Thailog treat her.

When the Ancient One’s gaze released her Dominique sunk to her knees and bowed her head feeling ill from the recalled memories. With time and distance, she could see so clearly now that he had treated her worse and worse the longer they were together. She couldn’t understand why she hadn’t just left him; it wasn’t as if she hadn’t considered it several times while they were together. How had she let herself become so weak and needy of a male that treated her so badly?

“You are correct my chosen, he was neither a proper gargoyle nor mate to you,” the great stag comforted her quietly.
She looked up at him, “Why did I stay?” she asked him plaintively, “I didn’t even want to be with him toward the end.”

“No,” the spirit agreed, “that is why you acquiesced to his plans to clone the other gargoyles; the idea of being away from him and his demands as your mate for a month or more was agreeable to you. Even if it was confined as a prisoner of your clan.”

Dominique winced, it was the truth, besides the opportunity to get to know her daughter, getting away from Thailog had been one of the reasons she agreed to his plan. Of course, she didn’t realize then what he planned to do to the clones. Her first interaction with them when she realized how limited he had made them had filled her with bitter disappointment and disillusionment. Thailog had made them into a mockery of a clan, and she had to pretend to be pleased with them in front of her daughter and the others. Goliath had spoken true when he had remarked about how low she had sunk after she introduced the clones to him, but not in the manner he had meant, the lowness she had sunk to had been in remaining with Thailog and agreeing to his plan to make the clones.

“As for why you stayed,” the Ancient One continued, “I am troubled that you have not yet realized what he began doing from almost your very first interactions.” Dominique frowned, not understanding what the great stag meant. “Chosen, from the very beginning he set out to undermine your confidence in yourself and your abilities and replace that with the belief that only he was capable of making the right decisions for you as mates and then later for Nightstone,” the Irish Elk said to her.

She stared at him, first in disbelief, and then rising anger as she began reviewing her memories of her and Thailog’s interactions. She recalled how he had constantly belittled her ideas for the company and repeatedly told her that he had been created knowing everything David Xanatos did about business and therefore should be the one to make all the decisions for Nightstone. Her place at Nightstone was merely to be the human face during the day that carried his decisions out. She was never to make spur of the moment business decisions without him reviewing them first or she would likely ruin the company. She hadn’t though, after his betrayal of her and her taking over the company, Nightstone had thrived under her care.

“When you began rebelling against his treatment of you, he created a mate that would not disagree with him and would not object to anything he did to her,” the Ancient One’s words pulled Dominique out of her memories of Thailog’s treatment of her. She stared at him in shocked disbelief, her anger rising as she remembered the moment when the cloned male had revealed the abomination he had made as a replacement for her. “Chosen, Delilah is as enslaved and manipulated by her programming as you were by the enchantments the Weird Sisters placed upon you. I doubt he is any better a mate to her than he was to you, and it is likely he is a worse mate because he programmed her to be unable to think of rebelling against him no matter how much he hurts her, or how badly he treats her.”

The Ancient One’s tone held a hint of rebuke, that and what he had said abruptly cooled her rising anger. She had never considered how Thailog treated the female he cloned from she and Elisa Maza, or if she had she had always assumed that he treated Delilah better than he had her because the white haired female would never disappoint and anger him. The spirits words however gave her pause, the Ancient One was implying that Thailog would still have hurt Delilah simply because he could and the cloned female wouldn’t be able to object or decide to leave him because he had created her to be unable to even consider the possibility.

Thailog had stated more than once that he only hit her because she made him angry and he lost his temper with her. The redhead had always thought that if she could do things better, if she could please him more, that things would be perfect between them and he wouldn’t hurt her anymore. Or
had Thailog just used that as an excuse to hurt her because he liked doing so, and manipulated her into believing it was her own fault?

“You were never responsible for his actions chosen; it was always his choice to hurt you,” it was almost as if the spirit were reading her mind, his words were so well timed. “He knew how lonely you were and he used that to manipulate you into believing that he was the only male that would accept you. Once he was certain you believed that and would not immediately leave him, he began telling you that you were responsible for his emotions, for his happiness, for his anger, and when you believed that he began telling you that you were responsible for his actions. That was when he began to hurt you, and tell you that you were the one responsible for it.”

She stared into his understanding great brown eyes for a few seconds before shifting her gaze to the grey colored stream beside them, “How could I have been so…foolish and weak,” she whispered. She remembered the desperate loneliness she had felt before Thailog, how he had at least eased it even if he wasn’t as kind and considerate as she would have liked. She remembered how she had persuaded herself that if only she tried harder he wouldn’t get angry, if only she gave him more time to learn how to be a better lover he would stop hurting her and then everything would be perfect between them and she wouldn’t be so very alone anymore. Apparently though, that had all been a carefully constructed lie by the cloned male, a ruse to persuade her that she was in control, but he had been the one in control the entire time, and not only of himself but of her as well.

The Irish Elk shook his massive head, “You were not chosen, he was very methodical and careful in the way he went about causing you first to doubt yourself, then to believing that you were responsible for his emotions and actions. He worked very diligently at persuading you to believe that if only you tried harder you could prevent him from being angry with or harming you.”

She nodded, rising to her feet she leaned against his head, taking in the comfort he so freely offered before reluctantly commenting, “I told Candice to only hold my calls for thirty minutes, so I need to leave. Can you get a message to Wayne that I need to talk with him about whether or not it’s too risky to report Thailog’s embezzlement?”

“I will,” he assured her, “and the young jaguar is right, he is the best one to council you on this matter.”

Dominique paused before leaving; sharing that part of her past with the Irish Elk spirit had not been as terrible as she had feared. It had drained her and left her feeling saddened and angry that she had been so gullible and easily manipulated by the cloned male. The Ancient One’s analysis of the relationship had been insightful and left her feeling much wiser as to what had really been going on during that time, and though she was ashamed that she had allowed herself to be so easily controlled by Thailog she was oddly less ashamed of herself. She felt less…stained by the experience than she had before she had shared it with the great stag spirit.

She reached out, laid her hand on his broad muzzle, looked into his wise ancient eyes, “Thank you,” she said quietly feeling extremely humble and grateful toward him. That he had reached out to her, that he had taken her as his chosen, and that he had quietly insisted that she share this with him even though she had not wanted to.

His gaze held hers, “You are welcome my chosen.” The emphasis on the last words was clear as were his emotions directed toward her. Her head lifted and her eyes filled with tears as she felt them wash over her, pride, affection, and warmth. “Until our lesson tonight chosen.”

She inclined her head in acknowledgement, stepped back and transitioned back into the living realm. Sensing someone nearby, she opened her eyes and met Kendra’s concerned blue ones. “Hey, welcome back,” the black haired woman said softly. Kendra reached up and gently touched one of
the tears on the redhead’s face, her expression worried, “Are you alright? Is something wrong?”

Dominique looked at her, took in the concern, the protectiveness of her lover, her mate, “I love you,” she said in a flatly serious tone. Her green eyes widened, she hadn’t really intended to say that aloud.

Kendra cocked her head to the side, giving her a bemused look, “I love you too,” she responded gently.

Dominique moved first, but Kendra met her more than halfway as their arms wrapped around one another. The redhead allowed herself to soak in the warmth, the strength and steadiness of the woman holding her. “I know you disagree with me, but I don’t deserve you,” the redhead whispered into the raven black hair, “I am so grateful that you’re in my life and that you love me.”

The black haired woman pulled back far enough to look into Dominique’s green eyes, “You’re right we do disagree on this, I do think you deserve to be loved and I love you.” They leaned forward at the same time, their lips meeting, pressing gently and then more passionately as Kendra pulled Dominique more tightly to her.

Dominique grasped her lover’s strong shoulders as the kiss deepened, feeling Kendra’s desire for her. Her own answering surge of passion caught the redhead by surprise. “Touch me,” she begged, not caring at this moment that they were at work, that at any time one of her employees could come into her office looking for her and wonder where she and Kendra had gone. Dominique wanted her lover’s gentle passionate touch upon her bare skin, to feel Kendra’s hunger and desire for her and know that she could surrender herself to it freely and without fear.

First her suit top and then her skirt was carefully pulled off and draped over the back of the couch, the black haired woman’s blue eyes darkened as they took in the black garters holding up the redhead woman’s hose and the lacy black panties she wore. Kendra’s fingers lightly traced the garters holding up Dominique’s hose, she growled softly, “Do you know it drives me crazy each day knowing you have these on underneath your oh so conservative business suits?”

“Yes,” the redhead murmured with satisfaction, her breath catching at the teasing touch along her upper thigh.

She felt Kendra’s shoulders shake with laughter, and her lips curved in an answering smile that quickly changed to an aroused gasp as her lover surged forward and pressed her lips against the thin layer of black lace that shielded her femininity. A low possessive grow vibrated against her sensitive flesh, and her hips bucked into the contact as she groaned, “Oh yes, yours my love yours,” her hands threaded though the silky black hair as she pulled Kendra closer.

An hour later, Dominique finished off her now cold lunch that Kendra had set out on the round table in the middle of the control room while she was in the spirit realm with the Ancient One. As much as she wanted nothing more than to lie on the couch with Kendra holding her, she needed to prepare for her meeting with Xanatos in another hour. “Thank you for lunch,” she said after finishing the last bite of chicken cacciatore from the Styrofoam container.

Kendra smiled, “Well when I came in here and realized what you were doing, I figured you would need a substantial lunch afterward.” Her expression became more serious, “I want to be with you for your meeting with Xanatos since he’s bringing that fey with him.”

Dominique glanced over at her, “I’m sure I’ll be in no danger from Puck,” she said lightly. Kendra’s expression didn’t change even the slightest bit as the black haired woman stared at her with a resolute expression. Finally Dominique sighed, “You’re not going to drop this are you?” she asked. Kendra’s determinedly protective stance didn’t waver, she sighed, “Very well,” she finally gave in, it wasn’t
worth the argument and besides she would feel better if Kendra was with her.

Afternoon - Nightstone Unlimited HQ, Lower East Side Manhattan

“Ms. Destine, Mr. Xanatos and Mr. Burnett are here for your three o’clock meeting,” Candice informed her over the open intercom line.

“Thank you Candice, would you contact Ms. Canmore and let her know, she’s attending the meeting as well,” Dominique responded.

“Of course Ms. Destine, I’ll do that right now,” her secretary replied.

“See if they want coffee or anything to drink and I’ll be out to meet them in a few minutes,” the redhead instructed, she wanted to give Kendra time to arrive before inviting the two into her office. She cut off the intercom line and began straightening the papers on her desk, making sure nothing was in sight that she didn’t want Xanatos or his pet fey to see.

After a few minutes, she took one last look around her office her eyes falling on the green of the fake silk plants in the corners. She frowned; it was a good thing she didn’t really expect to need to protect herself from Puck. While there was some nature magic available, there was certainly not an abundance of it for her to draw upon here. She made a mental note to rectify that problem as soon as her meeting with Xanatos was over. When the decorators came over to the mansion tomorrow night to decorate it for the Solstice, they would be delivering some plants for her as well, but she hadn’t made the same type of arrangements for her office. Dominique shook her head, there was nothing she could do about it right now so she might as well not dwell on it.

It was David Xanatos that she needed to be concerned about today, not Puck, for it was Xanatos who had been the one to program Thailog with every manipulative and calculating trick the human knew. Her eyes narrowed and she grimaced at the direction her thoughts were taking; now she knew exactly to what extent Thailog had used those skills against her. Still, ever since the birth of his child, Xanatos appeared to be making an effort to reform his ways, but that didn’t mean that she didn’t need to be careful to not reveal any piece of information that she didn’t want him and the clan to know.

She squared her shoulders, readying herself for whatever Xanatos was up to with this meeting and then walked over to open the door of her office, only to smirk in amusement as she took in the tableau by her secretary’s desk. Kendra had arrived and was currently giving a stiff looking Owen Burnett a rather toothy smile or perhaps it was a warning baring of her teeth while Candice looked on, her eyes wide. “Mr. Xanatos, Mr. Burnett, Ms. Canmore,” she interrupted, “if you will come into my office,” she said in a pleasant voice. “Ms. Canmore if you would bring a chair for yourself, please.” She waited until Kendra turned to look at her and give her an acknowledging nod before turning and walking back into her office as the two males followed her in. She settled into her chair and Kendra followed a few seconds later, carrying a chair which she placed to the side and just slightly in front of Dominique’s desk and angled it so that she could see everyone in the room.

The redhead watched her lover settle herself feeling both amused and warmed by her obvious protectiveness and noting how David Xanatos and Puck, in his human guise of Owen Burnett, were currently paying more attention to Kendra than they were to her. Little surprise there, even though the jaguar spirit in Kendra was actually being relatively low key considering how close to the full moon it was, she could barely sense the threat emanating from the black haired woman. The tenseness in her stomach settled, it wasn’t as if she hadn’t handled Xanatos in the past after all, and now she had Kendra by her side as well. “So,” she raised her voice slightly and watched as the two
males turned toward her, “you didn’t give my secretary a topic for this meeting.” She met Xanatos’ dark eyes calmly and waited for him to speak.

The dark haired man studied her openly for a few seconds before replying, “It seemed like a good time to bring up the nanoweave patent once again.”

Dominique fought to hide her surprise; this was a strange coincidence considering that very thing had been on her mind this morning. “What did you have in mind?” she asked evenly. She knew her response in itself was a departure from her past responses; up until today she had refused before even hearing his offer.

Only the slightest widening of his eyes and then the sharp gaze he directed her way betrayed his surprise, “You’re willing to discuss a price for Xanatos Enterprises to use the patent?”

She leaned back in her chair, “I’d rather discuss the possibility of Xanatos Enterprises and Nightstone Unlimited entering into an arrangement to jointly produce the most technically advanced personal body armor possible, both now and in the future,” she replied frankly. It was rare that she managed to surprise David Xanatos to the extent that he openly showed his surprise; this was one of those times. After a few seconds of silence, Dominique smirked, “Nothing to say? How surprising, you’re usually quite glib with your responses,” she commented with sly amusement.

His eyes immediately narrowed, “I thought you weren’t interested in saving human lives,” he remarked, his tone sarcastic.

Out of the corner of her eye, the redhead saw Kendra give him a narrow-eyed warning stare, Xanatos’ dark eyes flickered quickly toward the black haired woman and he tensed slightly. Before the situation between the two could escalate, Dominique responded evenly, “That was then, this is now,” drawing his attention back to her, “things have changed.” She hesitated considering her next words; it wasn’t usually a good idea to let your major competitor know about a change of company direction before you had even really mentioned it to your managers, much less fully implemented it, but this was something she wanted the clan to know. “Nightstone is no longer developing or researching any new offensive technologies.” The smirk returned to her face as she saw she had managed to surprise him yet again.

The surprise on his face faded, transformed into a suspicious look upon seeing her amusement, “Somehow I find that hard to believe, weapon’s contracts have been very lucrative for Nightstone in the past.”

Dominique inclined her head in agreement, after all she had just signed off on a weapons contract for just that reason. “You are, of course, correct, nevertheless Nightstone Unlimited will no longer be involved in assisting humanity in developing new and better ways to kill itself. We will still produce and sell our current weapons line, as you mentioned it is a very lucrative division of the company, but when it’s outdated…there will be nothing new to replace it.” She met his doubtful dark eyes serenely, “Thus my interest in a joint venture between our companies to produce body armor.”

David Xanatos stared at her; she could tell that he was trying to figure out if she was being truthful or if this was another elaborate deception she was attempting. She could understand his suspiciousness; if this had been even a month ago he would have probably been correct in his distrust of her intentions. His eyes flickered over once to Kendra, a speculative gleam in them, and she was suddenly certain who it had been who had been behind the bribery attempts to find out if she and Kendra were lover’s. She had no idea how he would have learned of it, but then again they hadn’t really been attempting to hide their relationship. It could have been something as simple as someone mentioning they had seen them together at a restaurant. Still if he wanted to attribute her sudden change of heart to Kendra, well…he certainly wasn’t incorrect; it was just that he didn’t have the
entire truth.

Xanatos returned his attention to her, “Just like that,” he commented skeptically, “you’re no longer enemies with Macbeth and now you’re no longer trying to wipe out humanity?”

Well that answered the question of whether or not the clan had told him about their meeting with Macbeth. She stared at him contemplatively, remembering when the Ancient One had asked her if she was still the human’s enemy and her thoughts before she answered that she was not. “Yes, just like that,” she responded evenly, “the information I gained from the spirit made it clear to me that the justification’s I believed I had to hate humanity simply weren’t true.” Her green eyes hardened in the first sign of anger either of the two males had seen so far, “The Canmores, Macbeth and I were all pawns of the Archmage and the Weird Sisters. It’s those three fey who are really responsible for all the gargoyle deaths over the centuries, not the human line they so perversely enchanted so that they would be driven to try and kill me or any other gargoyle they came across.”

Owen Burnett shifted in his seat at this statement, drawing both of the women’s eyes to him. Neither gaze was particularly friendly. David Xanatos straightened, drawing their attention away from the blonde man. “Owen’s not responsible for anything that happened to you,” he said with a hard glare of his own, “if anything you owe him a thank you for putting that transformation spell on you. You wouldn’t have any of this,” he glanced meaningfully around the office, “if it weren’t for him.”

“But he is responsible for how much it hurt her,” Kendra said, her tone hard.

“Actually I’m not,” Owen replied to Kendra. His gaze shifted from the black haired woman to Dominique, “Your transformations should have been mildly uncomfortable, but nothing near the painful experiences I understand they are to you.”

Dominique stared at him measuringly for a long moment, “Were,” she finally corrected him, “the spirit provided an alternate means for me to change into a human form.”

“I had hoped that was the case,” he responded, his eyes never wavering from hers. “The Weird Sisters were not pleased with the gift I gave you, so they decided to alter it.”

Kendra leaned forward, regaining his attention, “So why didn’t you do something about it instead of just letting their cruelty continue,” she demanded, her blue-eyed gaze as chill as a winter day.

His gaze slipped away from hers, and for the first time he looked uncomfortable, “I had hoped my enchantment would go unnoticed, but that was not the case. Once they added their alteration to increase the pain of Demona’s transformations, I did not dare attempt anything else, not after gaining their attention. No one but Lord Oberon and Lady Titania are strong enough to defeat their combined power.”

The redhead stared at the fey in human form puzzled, there was something she wasn’t understanding here. She would almost swear that his eyes held an apology. “Why couldn’t you go to Lord Oberon and ask that he do something about them?”

“That has been tried in the past,” he answered tensely, “but they have Lord Oberon’s favor, and are very skilled at explaining why their actions have not broken any of his commands. The most he has ever done was to rebuke them before letting them go. Afterward they have their own way of dealing with those foolish enough to bring their actions to his attention.”

Dominique’s eyes widened in understanding, “You didn’t dare bring it to Oberon’s attention because you were certain he wouldn’t do anything to them and you’re not strong enough to protect yourself from their retribution once he ignored the matter.”
“Correct,” Owen replied flatly, his eyes holding a hint of shame.

“Lovely,” Kendra replied, “I’m looking forward to meeting these three more every time I hear something new about them,” her tone was sarcastic, but it also held an edge of sincere threat.

The way both Owen Burnett’s and David Xanatos’ heads whipped around to stare at the black haired woman incredulously was almost comical if it hadn’t been for the fact that Dominique was worried that Kendra would give away too much information.

Kendra leaned back in her chair and smirked at them, “Just kidding,” she commented, managing to sound almost as if she meant it.

Dominique covered up her chuckle with a cough. She wasn’t certain why Kendra was teasing the two men, but from the uncertain way they were eyeing her, the black haired woman was successfully keeping both of them off balance. That was something the redhead would have thought couldn’t be done before this, and she certainly could turn it to her advantage. “So are you going to inform them of what’s happened?” she asked Owen bluntly, pulling his attention abruptly back to her.

“No,” he replied immediately and without hesitation. Dominique stared at him searchingly, looking for any sign of duplicity. She knew from past experience that it was difficult to tell when Puck was being deceptive and when he wasn’t, but she believed he was being completely serious about this.

“What exactly has happened,” David Xanatos asked, “Goliath told us what Macbeth told them, but quite honestly that wasn’t much. Are you and Macbeth still immortal? Are you still bound to each other?”

She continued staring at Owen for a moment longer before shifting her gaze to Xanatos. She needed to be careful how she answered him, what she was about to do was a trick he used himself quite frequently. “The spirit removed all the fey enchantments upon us, so no we aren’t bound to one another anymore. As for how long I will live,” she shrugged, “time will tell, personally I’m pleased that I’m still alive instead of dying when the enchantment was removed.”

“You gave up your immortality?” the dark haired man questioned again, clearly disbelieving her.

“I gave up being a puppet to the Weird Sisters,” she responded, letting her bitterness seep into her tone, “what is immortality worth when it comes at the cost of being controlled by them.”

He stared at her frowning, “Are you going after them?”

Dominique chuckled, “I’m quite certain I won’t need to,” she responded wryly, “they’ll come after us.” Her gaze sharpened on Xanatos, “Which reminds me, I need you to take a message to Goliath for me…”

---

**Almost Sunset - Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan**

“Good job on bringing the conversation back around to the enchantment on the Canmores,” David thanked Owen as they stepped into the Eyrie Building elevator on their way up to the castle, “It hadn’t occurred to me that it was Detective Maza and not Macbeth that had mentioned that particular fact.”

The blonde man nodded, “It seemed prudent that Demona not realize we were less surprised by that news than we should have been if it were the first time we had heard of it.” The dark haired man made a noise of agreement, but his expression was far away and thoughtful. “Sir?” Owen
questioned.

Xanatos gaze focused on him, “Just thinking of how Demona seemed today.” He frowned, “Not that she didn’t have times that she seemed like her normal self, but overall did she seem rather…” the crease between his brows deepened briefly before fading into a look of confusion, “mellow,” he shook his head as if disbelieving he had even said the word, “to you today?” he glanced questioningly at Owen.

Owen raised an eyebrow, “Given the nature of the conversation, yes. I would have expected her to be more…” his voice trailed off as he considered what particular word he wanted to use.


The blonde man allowed himself a small smirk, “Yes.”

The frown returned, “That was my thought as well, usually when she’s that calm and thoughtful she’s planning something big.”

Owen observed, “Such as when she deceived you into believing that her immortality was due to her stealing seconds off everyone’s life and instead she turned the entire city into stone.”

“Exactly,” anger flashed in David’s dark eyes as he thought of how close he had come to losing Fox that night.

“I do not doubt that she is planning something,” Owen responded, “the question is who is her target this time.”

The elevator arrived at its uppermost destination and the doors opened onto the great hallway of the castle. Both men stepped out and headed up toward the battlements, as they stepped out into the chill winter evening air, Xanatos finally responded, “The only ones she seems to be currently angry with are the Weird Sisters.”

“It does seem that way,” agreed Owen as they halted near the center of the castle battlements.

“Relieved?” questioned Xanatos with a grin.

“Actually, yes,” admitted the blonde man, “I would not like to have her angry with me at this particular time.”

It wasn’t quite yet dark; the gargoyles were still in their stone sleep upon their perches. “Or Kendra Canmore,” the dark haired man added broodingly.

Owen nodded, “She did seem rather protective of Demona,” he agreed, his voice carefully free of any emotional undertones.

David gave a dry bark of laughter at this understatement, “That’s one way of putting it,” he commented remembering both the threatening way she had smiled at Owen before they ever went into Demona’s office and the chill warning glare the woman had given him for his sarcastic comment. Of course, there had been that one moment when Demona’s face had softened and there had been an unmistakable warmth in her gaze when she looked at Kendra Canmore that had been very enlightening as well. It hadn’t happened more than that once, and if he hadn’t already suspected they were lovers he probably wouldn’t have noticed it, but it had been enough to convince him that what Fox suspected was true. The cracking of stone and the roars of awakening gargoyles interrupted his thoughts. “Goliath,” Xanatos greeted the large male as he stepped down from his perch.
“Xanatos,” Goliath rumbled, coming up to him, “You met with Demona today?” The other gargoyles jumped down from where they had perched during the day and came over to join them. Goliath had told the rest of the clan about the conversation he and Lexington had with Xanatos, Fox and Owen immediately after it occurred, so they were curious as to what the two men had learned today.

“I want to hear this too,” a feminine voice called out and Fox came up the stairs carrying a well wrapped up Alexander in her arms. She gave her husband an irritated look, “If Demona’s starting a war with the fey I want to know.”

“It appears to only be with three of them,” David gave his wife an apologetic glance for starting without her.

“The Weird Sisters,” Angela broke in a look of worry on her face. She remembered only too clearly the two times she had come up against the three fey. Neither experience had been pleasant, the first time they had been with the Archmage and using Demona and Macbeth to attack them upon Avalon and the second time they had tried to get Oberon to force the clan off the island.

Goliath glanced over at her, frowning at the clear look of worry on her face. He turned back to Xanatos, “What did you learn?”

Xanatos glanced over at the fey in human form standing beside him, clearly indicating that it was his question to answer.

“Demona no longer has any fey spells upon her.” Owen said calmly, “Also, she’s now completely invisible to my magical senses,” his eyebrow rose, “as was Kendra Canmore,” he added. Only Xanatos did not look completely surprised by this piece of information, Owen having informed him as soon as they left Nightstone.

“So Macbeth was telling the truth,” Angela focused upon what she saw as the most important thing Owen had said, shooting a triumphant look at Brooklyn. The brick red male’s eyes glowed white and he opened his beaked mouth to respond.

Before the two could start arguing, Goliath interrupted, “Enough,” he rebuked both of them, his irritation at their behavior clear.

Xanatos glanced at his wife and son, “We learned quite a few things today, and it’s going to take awhile to go over everything so why don’t we go inside where it’s warm.”

Goliath followed his gaze to the young child, and he nodded approvingly. Once they were all in the great hall, David pulled out a chair for Fox. He waited until she seated herself before he continued, his hands resting lightly upon her shoulders, “Demona confirmed that the Canmores were enchanted to hunt her and any other gargoyle they came across.” That caused a small stir among the gargoyles.

“And as Owen said she has no fey spells on her anymore,” Xanatos continued, “so she’s no longer bound to Macbeth and she’s no longer immortal.” He frowned, “Though I’m not certain that she wasn’t being deceptive about that. What she specifically said was that time would tell how long she lived, she didn’t say outright that she wasn’t immortal anymore.” He looked over at the blonde man questioningly.

“I noticed that as well,” confirmed Owen. “It is possible that she does not know herself,” he said, “she did say that she was pleased to still be alive instead of dying as soon as the enchantment was removed.” A distressed sound from Angela caused the blonde man to turn to her and add reassuringly, “She was not worried about it, so I’m certain she doesn’t expect that event to happen
any time soon.”

“And her turning into a human during the day?” asked Lexington curiously after a moment when neither Xanatos nor Owen said anything else.

Owen responded promptly, “As I suspected, the spirit that removed the enchantments on her provided her an alternate way to become human during the day.”

The green gargoyle nodded in satisfaction at having all his questions answered. It had never made sense to him why the spirit wouldn’t have removed the spells on Demona and Macbeth.

Xanatos looked around the room at the thoughtfully frowning gargoyle faces. The clan all looked surprised at what had been learned so far, and what they had been told already wasn’t the most important piece of information he and Owen had learned today. “Demona says she’s given up her quest to wipe out humanity,” he smirked in satisfaction as every head except for Owen’s blonde one turned abruptly his way.

Fox frowned up at him, “Are you joking?” she asked seeing his amusement.

He shook his head, “No I’m not, she told us that Nightstone was no longer in the business of helping humanity find better ways to kill itself. Nightstone will continue to sell the weapons they’ve already developed but she’s halted their weapons research program.”

“That doesn’t mean she’s given up killing off every human on the planet,” growled Brooklyn.

“I thought about that as well,” Xanatos admitted, glancing over at the reddish gargoyle, “so I asked. Demona now blames the Weird Sisters because of the enchantment they placed on the Canmores’ to make them hunt her and any other gargoyle they found.”

The way Brooklyn was looking at him made it was obvious that the gargoyle didn’t believe it, “And what about the Quarrymen,” he pointed out, “after she gets though being angry at the Weird Sisters she’ll decide she hates humans again.”

Xanatos shrugged, “Jon Canmore is leading the Quarrymen and he was enchanted, so that makes the Weird Sisters responsible for their actions as well.”

Angela glared at Brooklyn, for a moment before turning back to Xanatos, “She said she wasn’t going to continue trying to destroy humanity?”

“Not quite,” he admitted, “she said that she learned from the spirit that the justifications she thought she had for hating humanity weren’t true.”

“So she didn’t specifically say she wasn’t still trying to wipe out humanity,” Brooklyn stated, looking vindicated.

The young lavender female gave him a disgusted look before turning to her father, “Isn’t this what you wanted, a sign that she’s changed?”

Before the clan leader could respond David cleared his throat, Angela looked back at him, feeling her hopes drop when she saw the slight frown on his face. “She gave us a message for Goliath,” the dark haired man looked over at the big lavender male gargoyle, “she said to keep the clan far away from her and Macbeth. She doesn’t want any of you,” he glanced over at Angela, “to get hurt in the battle when the Weird Sisters come searching for them to find out why they aren’t under their control anymore.”
“No,” protested Angela, looking back at her father.

Fox frowned, “Does she really expect them to defy Oberon and leave Avalon?” she asked skeptically.

“They will,” Owen responded before Xanatos could, “they will not be pleased that the mortals they have had under their control for so long have found a way to escape them. They will find a way to come after them to either bring them back under their control or kill them.”

Angela was still staring at her father trying to gauge what the frown on his face meant, but at the fey’s words she whipped her head around and looked at him, “But you said she can’t be enchanted anymore.”

The blonde man nodded, meeting the young females gaze calmly, “She knows they will try to kill her, that is the reason she does not want the clan to interfere. She seemed very confident that she can defend herself against them, what I believe she fears is that she cannot defend both herself and the clan.”

The young female wrapped her wings tightly around herself, “How can she win against them alone,” she demanded, remembering how they had not been able to defeat the weakened Lord Oberon until Titania had given them the hint about using the sound of an iron bell against him.

“I believe Goliath informed the clan about the conversation of a few nights ago and the fate of the fey who attempted retribution against the humans who were protected as Demona is now?” Owen responded.

Angela nodded, “You think the spirit is watching out for them to attack her,” she realized, remembering what had been said, “and will send one of those creatures to protect her.”

“Neither she nor Kendra Canmore seemed very worried about it,” Xanatos spoke up, “in fact,” he added wryly, “I got the distinct impression that Ms. Canmore was actually looking forward to them appearing.”

“Very few of us will mourn their passing,” Owen commented, his voice distinctly cold.

That got the blond man startled looks from everyone but Xanatos, who knew why he had said it. “Why would you say that?” asked Hudson curiously. It was the first time he had spoken up, although he had been watching and listening closely to everything and had noticed the sympathetic look David Xanatos had given the fey after he made his statement.

“They are not kind to anyone,” Owen said after a moment, “fey or mortal. The only one they bother to hide their true nature from is Lord Oberon, and his favor they actively seek, which is why they haven’t been punished for their actions before now.”

Goliath frowned, “I don’t understand,” he rumbled, “what other things have they done besides those we know of?”

“The spell Puck put on Demona to transform her into a human would have been only mildly uncomfortable, they’re the ones who altered it to be painful,” Xanatos said, “Demona wasn’t surprised.” He looked down at Fox, “We don’t have to worry about her coming after Puck anymore, she accepted that he wasn’t the one responsible.”

“Well that’s a relief,” she said, “though these Weird Sisters are sounding more like real pieces of work the more I hear about them,” she commented glancing worriedly at Owen.
Lexington who had been listening to the conversation with a thoughtful frown on his face finally had to ask, “I don’t understand, if they don’t care about anyone then what were they doing the night that Demona turned humans into stone?”

Brooklyn’s eyes flashed white at the mention of that night and he looked as if he were about to say something except Xanatos spoke first. The dark haired man said with a frown, “I thought they were making sure she and Macbeth didn’t kill one another before they took them to Avalon.”

“Partially,” Owen responded, “but the entire night was likely carefully orchestrated by the Weird Sisters to accomplish exactly the outcome it did.”

Everyone stared at him in shock, including Xanatos and Fox. Xanatos recovered first, “What do you mean?”

“I believe the gargoyles saw them multiple times that night?” the blond man questioned.

“We did,” Goliath confirmed.

“At the bank,” said Lexington.

“And on the street where Demona had been smashing humans,” added Brooklyn, his disgust with the ancient female evident in his tone.

“So what were they after,” asked Fox.

“Goliath permitting them to take Demona and Macbeth away when they offered to accept responsibility for them, that way they could legitimately claim to Lord Oberon that they were simply helping him when they enthralled them,” Owen answered in his calm unemotional voice.

“You mean they set the whole thing up just so that they could claim to be helping Goliath?” asked Broadway, shock in his tone.

“I have little doubt they did,” Owen confirmed, “as I said they are very skilled at making sure they have a reason for why their actions are not breaking Lord Oberon’s decrees. They likely arranged for Demona to find the needed spell and informed Macbeth of what would happen so that he would be present to hunt her. Then they made sure Goliath would prevent Macbeth and Demona from killing one another.”

“But why would they want her to do something so terrible?” Angela asked, shocked.

“To ensure that Goliath would not object when they offered to take them away,” Owen replied as if it should be self evident, “they had to ensure that he would be so horrified and disgusted by her actions that he would not question what exactly they planned to do with them once they had them.”

The lavender male sank to his haunches, silent and looking utterly appalled. It was true, he had been so revolted by Demona’s actions that he hadn’t cared what the three fey did to her, only that he didn’t have be responsible for deciding what to do with her.

Hudson stared at Goliath a moment before turning to the fey, “But how did they make sure Demona would act on it?”

Owen turned toward him, his face solemn, “I have no doubt that thanks to the Canmores’ Demona has many memories of the gargoyles they have killed over the centuries of her existence. It would be a simple matter for them to torment her with those images until they were certain she would use the spell to exact a like revenge once it came into her hands.”
“Good God,” uttered Fox softly. It wasn’t as if she and David hadn’t done some questionable things, but to torment Demona until she was thoroughly enraged and then send her out to kill people just to make sure you had a good excuse to keep yourself out of trouble… “They really don’t care about us, not in the slightest.”

Xanatos stared down at her and his son a concerned frown on his face, “Are we ready for them in case they decide to attack the clan for any reason while trying to get to Demona and Macbeth,” he turned, looked toward Owen. “And why didn’t you mention this before?” he asked annoyed.

The blonde man looked thoughtful, “I made a few modifications to the buildings defenses after Lord Oberon’s last attack, but I’ll go back over them with those three in mind. As for why I haven’t mentioned it before this,” he looked embarrassed, “Until recently I hadn’t considered what the Weird Sisters had to gain from that night, so I didn’t realize that the events of the entire evening bore evidence of their interference.”

“We don’t know that any of this is true,” protested Brooklyn, unable to remain silent. First this talk of Demona being forced to betray Macbeth and now this, he didn’t know how she was pulling this off, but why couldn’t they see this was all another scheme of hers.

“You are correct, I do not know for certain if what I have said is true, but I have witnessed them do very similar things in the past.” Owen assured him stiffly. His eyes went toward the large bluish-green skinned gargoyle, “As Broadway would say, it fits their modus operandi.”

Broadway looked distinctly taken aback by his comment.

“It does not matter,” Goliath finally spoke as he straightened to his full height. “Demona and I are in agreement on this matter,” his lips twisted in a grimace as he said this, “Since she is certain that we would make her defense more difficult and you are certain that the Weird Sisters will seek her out, we will do as she asks and stay away from her until this matter is resolved.”

“But that could take years,” protested Angela, referring to the time difference between here and Avalon.

“Doubtful,” Owen responded to her in a dry tone, “the Weird Sisters have undoubtedly already realized that something has happened to their playthings and are even now planning a way to legitimately leave Avalon to find out what has happened to them.”

Angela objected loudly, “Mother is not their plaything!”

Xanatos gave her a sympathetic look, “Even Demona referred to herself as their puppet,” he said quietly.

The young female gave him a wild despairing look out of dark eyes that were welling with tears and then turned away and headed rapidly toward the battlements.

“Angela,” Goliath called after her commandingly, his tone worried.

She paused at the stairs, “I’m not going anywhere,” she called back, her voice bitter and betraying her tears. Broadway gave them all a concerned look before he turned and followed her up the stairs.

A deep sigh from Goliath as he watched his daughter leave, drew Hudson’s attention. The younger lavender gargoyle looked at the older one, “Mentor, how could I have misjudged things so badly?”

“What do you mean?” asked Hudson frowning.
“First I let them take Macbeth and Demona without questioning what they meant to do with them and then I let them take their memories of that time away from them. They claimed it would only harm them to remember, but after their attack on our clan’s children why did I believe their words?”

The old gargoyle sighed, “They fooled Demona and Macbeth as well, from what Puck is saying it’s something they are very good at. The only thing you can do is remember and be wary of anything they say or do in the future.”

Out on the battlements.

“Angela?” Broadway asked hesitantly as he approached her.

The young lavender female turned toward him and threw herself into his arms, “I can’t believe that Father is ordering us to stay away when she needs us the most. You heard what Xanatos said what she called herself, you know how proud she is, how hard it had to have been for her to admit that.”

He wrapped his arms and wings around her, looking down at her worriedly, “Yes,” he agreed. He did know how proud Demona was, but that didn’t mean he was entirely certain this wasn’t just a very elaborate scheme by her and it wouldn’t end with Angela being hurt even more.

“We have each other,” she looked up at him sorrowfully, “but she has no one.” She pulled a little away from him, “When all this started I was certain that she had something planned, that she would find me and try and persuade me to join her in whatever it was just like she always has in the past.” She looked up at him, “But she hasn’t tried, she hasn’t made any attempt to find me at all, and now when I want to go to her both she and father are ordering me not to.”

Broadway sighed, “She cares about you, even with everything she’s done she’s always tried to protect you if you were in danger. If she really thinks those fey are going to come after her then she’s not going to want you to be near her.”

“I know,” Angela admitted staring out over the city sadly, “but I still think this is the time she needs someone to show they care about her the most.”

Later that Night – Xanatos’ Office, Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan

“Should we have mentioned that we suspect Kendra Canmore and Demona are lovers?” Fox asked David, “Angela’s pretty upset about her.”

He glanced over at her; she was slouched deeply within her leather chair, her green eyes serious. “They looked shocked enough as it was,” he responded, “Maybe in a few days after they’ve recovered from tonight we can spring that on them.” He leaned back in his chair, “After seeing them together today I am convinced that they are lovers.” Fox straightened, and stared at him curiously, “Kendra Canmore is very protective of Demona, and Demona…I’ll admit if I hadn’t suspected already I doubt I would have noticed it, but she looked at Kendra once during the meeting and her feelings for her were rather obvious. It was all I could do to not show my surprise when I realized that what we suspected was actually true,” he confessed with a boyish grin.

Her eyes brightened with interest, “Really,” she commented.

His grin widened, “If anything judging on the way she looked I’d say Demona’s definitely in love with her.”

Fox took a moment to absorb this piece of information, “A human woman who’s also a Canmore,”
she shook her head, “things really have changed in Demona’s life recently haven’t they,” she said musingly. She focused on him, “What else did you notice?” she asked, sensing from David’s smugness that he still had more to share.

David smirked, “That Demona seemed pretty mellow today.”

He saw his wife’s lips move as she repeated the word to herself silently, “Demona?” She stared at him suspiciously, seeing the redhead laugh so unrestrainedly in the restaurant had been shocking enough, but describing her as mellow was pushing it.

He chuckled at her expression, “I even asked Owen if he had noticed the same thing and he agreed with me. We were both surprised, especially since the conversation we were having should have triggered that temper of hers a few times.”

“Well, well,” she commented, an amused smirk forming on her own lips, “I wonder what exactly we can take that to mean.”

David laughed softly, “That even with everything that’s going on she’s one very satisfied gargoyle?”

Fox joined him in his laughter, “That would be my guess,” she agreed.
Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: All the characters appearing in Gargoyles are copyright Buena Vista Television/The Walt Disney Company. No infringement of these copyrights is intended as this is a not for profit fan fiction work. All original characters are the property of the author.

Warning: none

Notes: Events mentioned in the story are from the third season episode, “…For It May Come True.” The wheelchairs mentioned in this section actually exist. I thought they looked so much better than the regular everyday one’s we see that I decided Robert just had to have one, www.colourswheelchair.com. Dominique Destine’s home, and the character’s Candice and Gregory are from ‘The Gargoyles Saga’ world and adapted for use in this story.

Rating: Teen

Feedback: Always welcome, feedback is what encourages me to keep writing. Please let me know what you like and what you dislike about the story.

Revision History: 07/15/08

Wednesday, December 17th 1997

*Early Morning - Nightstone Unlimited HQ, Lower East Side Manhattan*

Her mug of coffee in her hands, Dominique idly swung her chair around and looked out the glass that made up one wall of her office. It was a clear winter morning and the sun was shining brightly off the sides of the buildings as it rose.

Last night had gone rather well, as soon as he had arrived, Wayne informed her that he had removed the enchantment on Robyn Canmore the day before. From there, their discussion had moved onto Thailog. Dominique still wasn’t certain if the Wolf’s chosen knew anything about the true nature of her relationship with the cloned male or not, Wayne’s questions had been limited to what she knew of Thailog’s properties and business interests and hadn’t strayed to anything personal at all.

After he finished asking all the questions he needed answered about Thailog, Wayne had inquired if he could investigate her history as Dominique to see if any the documentation proving her identity would raise any flags in an official investigation into her past. She had been surprised by the request until he pointed out that all the immortal chosen would eventually have to pretend to die and then arrange for new identities to hide the fact that they were immortal. Their old method of evading detection by moving to new locations where no one knew them would not work anymore, not with the way governments were keeping track of everyone these days. Her identity as a human was to be their trial run so to speak, if they could make sure the identity she had created for Dominique Destine would stand up to any scrutiny, then they could use what they learned to make identities for other chosen.
Dominique wasn’t certain who the ‘they’ Wayne had referred to were; probably the other Wolf’s chosen she guessed. She certainly didn’t mind them looking into the documentation she had created to see if it would stand up under scrutiny and taking care of what didn’t. After all, in sixty or eighty years she would need their help to arrange for new identities for Kendra and herself.

The intercom line on her phone rang, she swung her chair back around to face her desk and answered it, “Yes, Candice?”

“Ms. Destine, Ms. Jackson is here to see you,” her secretary responded.

Dominique was surprised, Margaret had said yesterday that it wouldn’t take her very long to come up with a few suggestions, but she hadn’t expected her to have anything so soon. “Send her in please.”

She stood up and went around to the other side of her desk as the door opened and Margaret entered, today she was dressed in a plum colored skirt suit and was wearing three-inch heels. The redhead raised one eyebrow as she stared down at the shoes for a moment and then back up into the tall woman’s face. Margaret had a broad grin on her face, and her hazel eyes were dancing with laughter as she watched the redhead. “Not tall enough?” Dominique asked dryly.

“A woman can never be tall enough,” Margaret responded cheerfully, “there’s nothing quite like standing next to a six foot tall man when he realizes he has to look up at you.”

The answer startled a laugh out of Dominique, she could easily imagine the scene Margaret was describing.

The tall woman chuckled with her then held up what the redhead assumed was the folder she had given her the day before. “I’ve looked through these and I have some recommendations I need to discuss with your Administrative Division manager.”

“That would be Mrs. Merrill,” Dominique responded, “I’ll have Candice arrange for you to meet with her.”

Margaret nodded, “I suspected that might be who I needed to see, but I thought I’d stop by and let you know that I see no reason why Nightstone can’t eventually implement all of these benefits. It will take a few months since there are quite a few legal documents you’ll need to file with both the local and federal governments and some administrative changes that need to be made, but you can definitely do this at a minimal cost to your company.”

Dominique stared at her surprised, “All of them?” she had hoped, but certainly hadn’t expected a favorable answer this quickly.

The tall woman smiled, “All of them,” she confirmed.

Dominique smiled back at her, “Good,” she said softly, “and thank you.”

Margaret chuckled, “Tell me that again after your Administrative Division finishes complaining about the changes I want them to make.”

The redhead smirked, “I doubt they will, I’ll make sure Mrs. Merrill understands that I expect her Division to cooperate fully with whatever changes you feel are necessary.” The Bison’s chosen gave her a concerned look and Dominique chuckled, “Don’t worry, I doubt I’ll have to even raise my voice, I’ll just let them know that no benefits will be implemented until I’m certain that all of them can be,” her voice was light but her eyes were unyielding. She had suspected they might have given up on finding a way to afford the domestic partner benefits too easily, and the fact that Margaret had
found a way so quickly just strengthened her suspicions.

Late Morning - Nightstone Unlimited HQ, Lower East Side Manhattan

A tentative knock on her door caused Dominique to look up from the market research she was doing, “Come in,” she called out in a raised voice, knowing from experience that she needed to be quite loud to be heard. The office wasn’t quite soundproof, but it was close.

The door opened and Candice came in, “Sorry to bother you Ms. Destine, but you said last week you wanted me to arrange a Christmas Party. I’ve come up with two options for you,” she handed the folder she was holding to the redheaded woman.

Dominique accepted it, placing it on her desk and flipping it open, the first sheet had a picture of a well-lit ship floating upon moonlit water stapled to it. The vessel looked familiar and she lifted the picture to look at the sheet underneath, it was a cost analysis for four-hundred person dinner cruise on the Hudson River. She raised her eyebrow and looked up at the mocha-skinned woman standing on the other side of her desk, “Not all of the dinner cruises are booked?” she was surprised, this close to the holiday she had thought all the usual corporate venues would be.

“No Ms. Destine, that one’s available for the night of the twenty-second,” Candice responded promptly.

The redhead nodded, she set the paper with the ship attached to the side and read the second sheet, it was for a catered party at Nightstone. Surprisingly the costs for the two events were about the same, Nightstone would pay the entire cost of the catered party, while the cruise cost would only be partially subsidized by the company. The actual cost of the cruise would depend on how many of the seats were sold. Dominique tapped the employee cost for the dinner cruise with her fingernail, “Would the other employees be willing to pay this to go on a dinner cruise?”

Candice nodded confidently, “Oh yes, this cruise line is known for having really good dinners, and that’s just under half the price it would be if you bought tickets to one of their regular dinner cruises.”

Dominique leaned back in her chair, “I guess since the dinner cruise is on top that’s the choice you would prefer?”

Her secretary’s dark eyes searched her face nervously for a moment before what she saw there apparently reassured her, “I worked with Mrs. Merrill as you suggested, and we asked Mr. Burns and Ms. Wright for their opinion, the dinner cruise was what they preferred as well. It’s more…” Candice’s voice trailed off, Dominique just stared at her, waiting for her to finish, the redhead was curious as to why the dinner cruise would be preferable to having a social gathering at Nightstone. “Well, it’s more fun to get dressed up and go out on a cruise for dinner and dancing than to get dressed up and come back to work,” her secretary finally admitted.

The redhead nodded thoughtfully, put that way it did make sense, “Very well, make the arrangements and let everyone know the date and time. Hopefully enough people will be interested that I won’t end up paying the maximum amount,” she added dryly.

“Oh, I’m sure that won’t be a problem,” Candice assured her.

Dominique stared at her for a moment, the woman seemed very confident about that, which seemed odd considering the event hadn’t even been announced yet. Candice started shifting uneasily under her stare and not quite meeting her eyes, which made the redhead suspicious, but she couldn’t fathom...
what her secretary would be hiding about a dinner cruise of all things.

“Is that all you needed Ms. Destine?” the woman finally asked.

The redhead stared at the woman for a moment longer, watching her secretary become ever more nervous before finally responding, “Yes, that’s all I needed.” Her green eyes narrowed as she watched the woman leave and could have swore she heard a relieved sigh just before her office door closed. Clearly, there was something going on, she looked down at the picture of the ship on the river bemused, and it had something to do with this cruise. She shrugged as she returned to her work; whatever it was Candice was hiding about why she was so sure the dinner cruise would be well received couldn’t be that important.

_Noon - Nightstone Unlimited HQ, Lower East Side Manhattan_

Dominique smiled, uncertain as to what exactly was so amusing, but Kendra’s unrestrained laughter was infectious. “What is it?” she asked, “Candice was acting rather oddly about this dinner cruise.”

The black haired woman snorted, “I bet, this was the unofficial Nightstone Christmas Party,” she said, “before you decided to have an official one. That sent everyone into a real tizzy trying to figure out what to do since the Division managers had already put down a payment on the cruise. I guess they decided to cross their fingers and hope you chose it over the banquet.”

The redhead stared at her, no wonder Candice had looked so odd when she first brought up the idea. She frowned starting to feel rather irritated that this unofficial party had been arranged behind her back and then they had tried to deceive her by presenting it as something they had just arranged. Then there was the fact that Kendra had not mentioned it to her either, that hurt.

“Dominique,” Kendra said softly, the redhead glanced up at her, “before you get angry about this, ask yourself if it’s really worth getting angry over.” She reached over and tapped the picture of the ship, “This says that your employees thought enough of being part of this company that they wanted to get together to celebrate the holiday season like all the other companies were doing even if you didn’t officially sanction it.” The redhead frowned down at the picture but before she could respond, Kendra continued, “What would you have done if you were one of your managers and you went through the trouble of arranging this for the people under you and then suddenly your boss, who you never thought even acknowledged the holiday existed except to annoy her by making her give everyone yet another paid day off, suddenly decided at the last minute that she wanted a corporate Christmas party?”

Dominique scowled at her; Kendra took another bite of her sandwich and stared back, one eyebrow raised. Finally, the redhead blew out an irritated breath, “Probably the same thing they did,” she admitted reluctantly. “That doesn’t mean that I’m pleased they tried to slip this past me though,” she said with a scowl.

Kendra nodded, she finished her bite of food, “Understandable, personally though I’m planning on enjoying the cruise since I happen to know that it was too late for them to arrange something like that when you first mentioned it. Have you thought about getting tickets for Rachael, Margaret and Sharon yet?”

The redhead stared at her, “No though I guess I should, shouldn’t I?” Now that it had been brought up that actually sounded like a good idea, they would probably enjoy cruising down the river and seeing the city by night. She frowned at Kendra, “Why didn’t you tell me about this?” she finally asked, her voice betraying her emotions.
Kendra’s eyes sharpened on her and then softened, “I hear bits and pieces of a lot of conversations with my hearing, it was only this morning that I heard enough bits and pieces to put everything together,” she said softly. “Do you really want me tattling on your employees to you for every little thing? They’ll eventually realize it could only be me telling you and then I’m not likely to be too popular after that,” the black haired woman paused letting that sink in. “I didn’t think that this was important enough for me to rush in here to tell you about it an hour or so ago, should I have?”

“Yes,” Dominique snapped, the black haired woman’s brow rose, but before she could say anything the redhead growled out grudgingly, “No.” Dominique did want to hear about everything, but she knew that what Kendra was saying was correct. Kendra continued to stare at her with a concerned look on her face, and finally the redhead admitted what was really bothering her. “I used to be feared by all of my employees, before this last month I doubt they would have dared to even try this,” she observed, annoyed and slightly worried that she was losing an essential element of her control over her employees. She didn’t want them to be terrified of her anymore, but they should respect her and fear her wrath if they did something wrong.

“Ah,” Kendra responded, relaxing immediately. Dominique frowned; she was quite serious about this. “Don’t worry,” the black haired woman assured her blithely, looking down at her lunch, “I’m certain that they’ll royally mess something up and give you a really good reason to rip their heads off and hand them back to them sooner or later.”

Dominique stared at her, shocked, then Kendra glanced back up at her and she saw the devilish amusement in her sapphire blue eyes.

At her desk Candice glanced up startled by the sound of laughter coming from Ms. Destine’s office, she smiled uncertainly wondering what was so amusing that it would get Ms. Destine to laugh like that.

**Afternoon - Nightstone Unlimited HQ, Lower East Side Manhattan**

Dominique smiled satisfied as she read the email from her R&D Division manager, Mr. Pierre, their application for a patent on the battery technology had been accepted by the patent office. Her eyes narrowed in thought, now they just had to develop a cheaper way of manufacturing them. She smiled crookedly, if it weren’t for the fact that she would have to explain how she did it, she was fairly certain that after a few tries she could figure out how to guide the carbon nanotubes to form in a straight line within the cellulose matrix. She suspected it wouldn’t be that different from some of the things the Irish Elk had her doing already.

**Night – Destine Manor, Forest Hills Gardens, Long Island**

Demona sat down at the bench where she usually metal crafted, in front of her, on a sheet of fire safe ceramic, laid a bar of gold. She altered her vision so that she could see nature magic and examined it, looking at the rigid structure of the gold molecules that formed the bar as the Ancient One had taught her last night. He had also taught her how to do what she was about to attempt now for the first time in the living realm. He had also taught her how to do what she was about to attempt now for the first time in the living realm.

She summoned the free nature magic in the area to her and then carefully directed it into the gold bar. As the energy levels rose inside the bar she could see that it’s rigid matrix like structure was beginning to weaken. She slowed the energy transfer to a trickle; the spirit had warned her it was possible if she wasn’t careful at this point that the structure could break apart all at once, resulting in
the metal exploding into molten droplets. That would be rather painful and was definitely something she didn’t want to experience.

A little more, a little more, she thought to herself, watching the bonds between the molecules, the bar deformed and then a second later melted entirely into a hot puddle of liquid metal. She smiled, pleased with her accomplishment. Of course, this was the easy, if dangerous, part; the next thing she needed to do would be much harder and would require her full concentration.

She closed her eyes and painstakingly formed in her mind the image of the miniature dragon she wanted to make, the faceted eyes, the tiny scales covering its skin, the wings folded and resting against its back, and the talons on its clawed feet. Opening her eyes she cupped her hands above the molten metal feeling the heat radiating off it, and called more nature magic to her. She then willed the magic into the shape of the image she held in her mind. This step was what the spirit had her practicing for almost a full hour the night before, forming a detailed image in her mind and then willing the nature energy to take that shape.

Now for the final step, she summoned the cooling, but still liquid metal up into the mold formed by the nature energy she had shaped. Holding the metal in the magical mold, she began drawing energy from the molten liquid, re-solidifying it. Pulling her hands apart, she stared down at the tiny gold dragon complete with a loop on its back for her to thread a fine chain through. It was complete, but there was one more thing she wanted to do to it, gold was soft, the dragon charm would be too easily damaged the way it was right now. Once again she examined the bonds between the gold molecules, this time when she summoned nature energy she overlaid it on top of those bonds, altering the nature of them slightly and in the process hardening the gold so that it was less easily damaged.

She picked up the charm, placed it on her palm and took a moment to examine it, from its uplifted front paw to its curled tail it looked just as she had imagined it. She had done it, and on her first try. She smiled broadly, feeling proud of herself until she remembered for whom she had made this as a gift. The smile on her lips faded, she sighed, rose, and left her workroom. Kendra was sitting on the couch in the living room listening to music and reading a book.

The black haired woman looked up, “You’re done? How did it go?” she asked eagerly laying the book face down on the coffee table and standing up.

Demona’s mood lightened at seeing her lover’s reaction, the smile returned to her face and she held out the tiny gold dragon for Kendra to examine.

The black haired woman accepted it carefully, turning it around and around as she examined it from every angle. “Oh Demona this is exquisite,” Kendra said in a soft, awed voice, “the little tongue in his mouth, the scales, the wings.” She shook her head, “If Angela doesn’t love it she’s nuts.” She held it back out to Demona.

The flame haired gargoyle accepted it, a melancholy expression on her face, “Do you think it is too soon? Will she even open it or read my letter?”

“I don’t know,” Kendra responded gently, “but do you lose anything by taking the chance?”

Demona stared at her, “No, if she doesn’t accept it then I’ll know she’s still angry with me,” she finally responded. “If she does, then she’ll know I’m thinking about her, even though I told her to stay away.”

“Come here,” Kendra opened her arms, and Demona stepped into them, feeling them wrap firmly around her. She buried her face in her lover’s black hair, breathing in the scent of it as she wrapped
her arms around Kendra in return. “I love you,” Kendra whispered, stressing each word individually.

Demona’s arms tightened, “I love you too,” she took in a shaky breath, “Sometimes I don’t know what I would do if I didn’t have you and the Ancient One,” she admitted.

Kendra pulled back far enough to stare into the gargoyle’s eyes, “You are stronger than you think,” she stated firmly. “I watch how hard you’re working at Nightstone, the new benefits for your employees, the fact that you halted Nightstone’s weapons development research because you’re keeping not only just the word, but the spirit of your promises to the Ancient One. Every day I’m amazed and impressed at how strong and smart you are, I know learning about what the Weird Sisters did to you and Macbeth was hard, and I know that something’s been really bothering you this week and I suspect that it has to do with Thailog and how he treated you.” The gargoyle stiffened in her arms, but Kendra continued before Demona could respond, “but you’re not letting any of it stop you from doing what you need to do to take your life back and live it. You’re not letting them stop you from smiling and laughing, from loving or from hoping.”

“Kendra,” Demona broke off and just stared into her lover’s blue eyes for a moment, she swallowed over the huge lump in her throat, closed her eyes for a moment and thanked whatever was out there that had brought them together. Two single tears slipped out as she opened them again, “You are the source of so much of that strength, whenever I falter I think of you, how you treat me, how you love me, and how much I love you, and then I know that my life is and can be better than it has been in the past.”

Thursday, December 18th 1997

Morning - Nightstone Unlimited HQ, Lower East Side Manhattan

Dominique’s gaze shifted from the newspaper that she had been reading to the corner of her desk where the small box that held the gold dragon charm still rested, she would send it soon she decided, but not today. She glanced once again at the newspaper in her hand; it was a local paper, one of the ones offered for free at the metro stops. In it was an article and advertisement from the People for Interspecies Tolerance denouncing the activities and lies of the Quarrymen group. She couldn’t be near her daughter right now, but she could do something, even if she wasn’t certain it would be that useful, to protect her and the rest of the clan. Funding PIT in their efforts to persuade their fellow humans that gargoyles weren’t the monsters that the Quarrymen claimed they were, seemed like a rather weak effort, but one never knew, and the group had been surprisingly effective with the small amount of funds they currently had available to them. It was something she had been putting off for too long anyway, she decided. The redhead picked up the phone and dialed the number of the law office that handled her personal legal business. Fifteen minutes later, she placed the phone back in its receiver; her lawyer would be sending papers for her to sign later today. Now she would see how the group did when they had the money to advertise in something besides the local city papers.

Very Late Night - Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan

Elisa waited impatiently for the elevator to reach its destination; she had to know how Goliath was, if he had been injured. Some of the shells from the anti-aircraft guns the Quarrymen had obtained had come so terrifyingly close to him. There had been several times that her eyes had searched the dark clouds from the explosions frantically, almost certain that she would see his body falling from them.
After the weapons had been destroyed by the falling tower, and Castaway and the Quarrymen with him arrested, there had been the paperwork she had to fill out, all the while pretending that her thoughts weren’t with Goliath and the clan wondering if any of them had been hurt.

Finally the doors opened, revealing the hanging tapestries of the main gathering room of the castle and the sound of familiar voices. She stepped out quickly, and followed the sound of the conversation into the dining hall. The clan was gathered around one of the tables whose wooden surface was almost completely covered with platters of food. She breathed out a sigh of relief; Goliath was there, a heaped plate of food in his hand. Her eyes swept over him, he seemed to be uninjured.

He turned his head, looking toward her; his dark eyes met hers, and warmed in welcome. “Elisa,” he rumbled a greeting.

“Hey big guy,” she responded, she smiled at the rest of the clan as she approached but her eyes kept coming back to the lavender male that led the clan. “Are you alright?” she asked as she drew nearer, “some of those shells…” her voice trailed off, her tense face telling its own tale of her fears.

“I am uninjured,” he responded, his deep voice soft.

She stopped a few feet in front of him, gave him a crooked smile, “Good.”

“Hey Elisa, did you want something to eat?” Broadway’s hopeful voice broke the silence between them.

For a moment longer she looked into the lavender male’s dark eyes before turning and smiling warmly at Broadway. “Sure,” she responded and was not surprised when a heaping plate of food was pressed into her hands. She looked around the room, and frowned, “Is Lexington alright? I thought I saw you and Brooklyn carrying him at some point?”

“Yea,” Broadway answered, “I think he went to get some more coke to drink. He got knocked around a bit, but he’s better already.”

“That’s good,” she responded, “I wasn’t expecting the buy to be military anti-aircraft guns.” Her gaze went to the lavender female standing off by herself looking out one of the windows. “What’s wrong with Angela?” she asked him, concerned.

Broadway followed her gaze looking unhappy, “Demona told her to stay away because she’s expecting the Weird Sisters to attack her and she doesn’t want her to get hurt by them. Well she said the clan, but we all suspect she really meant just Angela.”

Elisa stared at him, “What?” she said somewhat loudly.

“Oh…,” he uttered, his eyes glancing over toward his clan leader, “that’s one of the things that’s happened while you’ve been undercover. Maybe you ought to ask Goliath,” he finished.

Her dark eyes narrowed, “I think I will,” she agreed. What in the world had the clan been up to while she was gone, she wondered to herself.

Elisa stared at Goliath, trying to order her thoughts and fit in everything she had just learned into what she thought she knew about Demona and Macbeth. There were spirits out there that didn’t particularly like the Fey, and had acted to protect mortals from them in the past. And while she couldn’t agree with the lethality of their methods, she found herself thankful that something out there was keeping an eye on what the Fey were doing and preventing their worst excesses. That had been one of her problems with believing Macbeth’s tale, believing that such spirits actually existed, but it
seemed as if they did, and it was very likely that one of them had chosen to intervene in Macbeths and Demona’s lives just as the immortal king had claimed.

As for what Xanatos and Owen had learned when they visited Nightstone, the detective didn’t know quite what to think of the fact that both Demona and Kendra Canmore were immune to being enchanted by the Fey and that all of the fey enchantments on Demona had been removed. Both facts were however, pieces of evidence pointing toward the fact that the spirit that Demona and Macbeth had met was one of the same types of spirits that Owen had described. She wasn’t certain that she believed that the gargoyle had actually given up her obsessive hatred of humanity. That she was currently focused on the Weird Sisters, yes, she could believe that, but Demona had hated humans for centuries. Even if the ancient gargoyle had decided to give up her vengeance against humans, how long would it take for the Quarrymen or another gargoyle hating group to persuade her to change her mind once again and decide that she had been right all along and humanity was a threat to her race’s continuing existence?

Then there was the last thing Goliath had told her, she took in the big male’s drooping wings his troubled expression. She reached out and touched his arm, “That’s only Puck’s theory about what happened; we don’t know that he’s right.”

He looked down at her, and she was surprised to see shame in his eyes, “For a moment I thought about remaining silent,” he admitted, “and letting Macbeth end both their lives, end the threat she was to the clan.”

The detective sucked in a surprised breath, “But you didn’t,” she pointed out in the next moment.

“I did not,” he grimly agreed, “but Puck was correct, after seeing what Demona had done, I did want them to take her away and I did not care what they did with her. If that was indeed their intent, then they succeeded, and upon Avalon they succeeded again when I agreed that they should erase Demona and Macbeth’s memories of the events there.”

Elisa rubbed her forehead; she was getting a raging headache from trying to think about all of this. The idea that that entire night, all the people that had died either smashed by Demona or shattered when their cars wrecked or they became stone as they were walking up stairs or on an escalator, had been planned by the Weird Sisters solely so they had a reason they could present to Lord Oberon for why they had entralled the two immortals was almost unbelievable. And yet Puck had implied that if it was true, it was not the first time they had done something like that. The sheer callousness of it horrified her.

If it were all true, Demona and Macbeth had spent almost a thousand years under their control at the behest of a vengeful Archmage. Elisa almost wished that she was still convinced this was all a plot by Demona, that was much easier to think about than to consider what life must have been like for the gargoyle. What was it Goliath had said Macbeth told him? That the Archmage had ordered the Weird Sisters to make sure they stayed alone, bitter and angry? Demona had even stayed that way after her plans to release the clan had succeeded, the first thing she did was to betray and attack them, and she hadn’t stopped with just that. Elisa’s eyes widened…surely not, her headache redoubled as she considered whether all those wild, angry attacks had somehow been the Weird Sisters doing.

The detective rubbed her forehead, she still wasn’t certain that this wasn’t somehow Demona’s most elaborate and successful scheme yet. The evidence was starting to weigh overwhelming in the favor of it not being one of Demona’s schemes, that Macbeth had told them the truth, and, as odd as it seemed, that Demona for once was actually telling the truth. The last was almost too much to believe and one of the reasons for her persistent feeling that this spirit story just couldn’t be true.

Elisa shook her head, she gave up on figuring this out for now, “We still don’t know if she’s mad at
us for what happened on Avalon,” she pointed out wearily, “and I’ve got news to tell the clan about Jon Canmore.”

Friday, December 19th 1997

10:45am – Destine Manor, Forest Hills Gardens, Long Island

Gregory pulled into the garage and parked the limousine. He had barely gotten out of the driver’s seat before the passenger doors opened and the women inside began getting out. He hurried forward to assist, only to halt abruptly as Kendra Canmore got out and turned around to help Ms. Destine. The two women’s eyes met and he had the feeling at that moment that the rest of the world didn’t exist for them as the redhead accepted the offered hand and let the black haired woman assist her out of the vehicle. Five minutes later with all the luggage of Ms. Destine’s guests unloaded from the trunk and placed inside the house he backed the limousine out of the drive way. He was due back here in two hours, this time with the handicapped accessible vehicle so they could pick up young Robert.

Standing in the kitchen, Dominique indicated the first door to the left in the hallway, “Rachael that will be your bedroom and Sharon yours is on the second floor above it, the easiest way there from the kitchen is to use the stairs in the utility room,” she indicated the doorway behind her.

“I’ll show Sharon her room,” Kendra offered, picking up one of the suitcases the younger woman had brought with her.

“I can get them,” Sharon protested, snatching up her other bag before the black haired woman could claim that one as well.

Kendra just chuckled at her as she opened the door to the utility room, and Dominique watched as the two of them bounded up the stairs to the second floor. “Well it looks like those two are getting along,” Rachael observed from beside her.

Dominique detected a hint of dryness in her tone; she smirked and shook her head. Even during the short time she had observed the brunette, it was apparent that the Horse spirit’s chosen was an independent young woman, and Kendra had immediately begun doing things to tease her about that, such as what she had done just then by picking up one of Sharon’s bags. At least the brunette didn’t seem offended, and Kendra was making it fairly obvious that she was teasing her.

Rachael picked up her garment bag, “I’ll gratefully accept help with my bags,” she commented with a grin. The redhead raised an eyebrow, the only bag left was a rather large suitcase, thankfully it had rollers. “Oh Dominique, this is lovely,” Rachael said as they walked into the large first floor bedroom. She looked around at the dark wainscot and the cream-colored fleur-de-lis patterned wallpaper above it, the dark red Persian carpet on the floor, and the heavy looking dark red drapes tied back from the windows. The only non-Victorian piece of furniture in the room was the comfortable looking queen sized bed. The room was spotless, the furniture and even the wood panel wainscot gleamed from being freshly polished.

The redhead smiled, the cleaning company she used had descended upon the house a few nights before with an entire cleaning crew to prepare the guest bedrooms for use. She had never let so many strangers into her home before, but she had gritted her teeth and allowed it, she didn’t have the time or inclination to do the necessary cleaning herself. She had even been so impressed with how hard and efficiently the cleaning crew had worked that she had given their manager a sizable tip to distribute among them, earning herself a, “Have a Merry Christmas, Ms. Destine,” from them as they
She didn’t even scowl at them for it since she was feeling entirely too pleased at the thought of not spending this Solstice alone.

“This is your bathroom,” Dominique opened the door, glancing in at the high backed soaking tub at the end and the old-fashioned looking toilet with its elevated cistern and decorative copper piping.

“My goodness I haven’t seen one of those in years,” Rachael commented as she came up to stand beside her and stared at the toilet.

The redhead smiled, “Don’t worry, it’s not that old, it just looks like it is.” After helping Rachael hang up her the dress and suit she had brought with her, Dominique showed the Cree woman around the rest of her home.

Tasteful garlands of fresh greenery were hung along the banister of the central staircase in the foyer; and seasonal centerpieces now decorated the long dining table in the dining room, the mantle above the fireplace in the living room, and the coffee table in front of the couch. A six foot tall Fraser fir tree graced the corner of the living room, it was potted, and the decorator had warned her that it was not likely to survive to be planted, but she had been firm about not wanting a cut tree. The woman had been right, the tree had already been in poor health when it arrived, but she had spent time with it last night healing what she could of its injuries and now it was in good condition. The final piece of the holiday decorations she had ordered rested in the living room fireplace, a Yule log.

The two women were headed back to the kitchen when the rapid sound of footsteps down the main stairway heralded the arrival of Kendra and Sharon. “Oh Rachael you’ve got to see Dominique’s bathroom,” was the first thing Sharon said as she came up to them, “it’s absolutely amazing.”

Dominique narrowed her eyes at Kendra in a glare, the slight curve to her lips however showed that she wasn’t that particularly annoyed. The black haired woman came up to Dominique, a grin on her face as she pulled the green-eyed woman into a hug and pressed her lips briefly against her forehead. “You did say we wouldn’t be hogging it to ourselves,” she reminded the redhead.

One eyebrow arched an elegant statement at her choice of words as her hands came up to rest on Kendra’s arms. “Well no,” the redhead agreed, “but did it have to be the first thing you showed her?” she protested.

“It wasn’t, I showed her the workout room first,” Kendra said mildly. Dominique stared up at her lover, of course, why hadn’t she guessed that she thought; she finally relaxed into the embrace and wrapped her arms around the black haired woman in return.

“You are terrible,” the redhead whispered almost inaudibly.

A roguish grin and an amused soft chuckle were her response; she glanced upward to see the mischievous glint in her lover’s sapphire blue eyes. Kendra bent her head to whisper in her ear, “I thought you liked that about me.”

Her lover’s husky voice and the breath of an exhale across the shell of her ear sent aroused tingles racing throughout her body, her breath caught and she lowered her eyes to hide her reaction. She felt the muscles under her fingertips tense in reaction as Kendra sensed her response. Dragon, she lowered her head to stare at the strongly beating pulse in her lover’s neck, that only made it worse, she thought as she felt her body respond even more strongly.

“I think we’ll go get lunch ready,” Rachael said, after a moment.

“Thank you,” Dominique responded quietly, barely glancing over toward the Cree woman.
As the two women disappeared down the hallway toward the kitchen, the redhead noticed Kendra smirking. “What?” she inquired.

Kendra shook her head; she didn’t want to admit that she had just heard Sharon whisper to Rachael. “No wonder they stuck us on the other side of the house from them.”

“Sharon’s just proving that she’s smart,” the black haired woman commented before she lowered her lips to the red ones of the woman in her arms.

1:00pm – Lower Manhattan, New York City

“I hope everyone doesn’t mind an unscheduled stop,” Kendra grinned, her eyes going to Robert, “Dominique found this rather interesting place and we thought we’d stop by to see what they had.”

Robert looked at the black haired woman puzzled, but she didn’t say anything more, instead settling back into the seat cushions looking smugly pleased. He turned his head to glance over at Dominique, hoping that she would enlighten him. The limousine was slowing, the redhead smiled at him and nodded toward the window. He looked out; they were stopping in front of a medical supply store. He frowned, confused as to why they would be going here, he didn’t need anything.

“Ah, Ms. Destine,” a store manager hurried toward them, as they entered the store, “as you requested we have a selection of wheelchairs for the young gentleman to try today.”

Dominique nodded, “Thank you Mr. Peterson,” she acknowledged and then inclined her head toward Robert. She was not the one the human needed to be paying attention to right now.

The manager got the hint and turned towards the young man in the wheelchair, “Mr. McKenzie if you will come this way please.”

Robert stared up at him startled at being addressed in such a manner; tentatively he nodded his head and followed the man toward the back of the store. His eyes widened as he followed the manager around a corner and he saw the three wheelchairs they were approaching. These wheelchairs were as different from the one he was using as an inexpensive family sedan was from an expensive European styled sedan.

The first was aggressively styled with three spoked black wheels chrome tubing and a bright blue seat. The second was only slightly less aggressively styled, it also had three spoked black wheels with chrome tubing and its seat was black. The last wheelchair was rather elegant looking considering that it was a wheelchair. The main wheel had elegantly curved spokes and its hand rim was polished black, the seat and backrest were plush black cushions with black leather edges.

Dominique walked over to the elegant looking wheelchair and looked it over with sharp eyes. She placed a hand on the backrest and met Robert’s eyes, “If these are comfortable and meet with your approval, I would like to purchase this one for you to use when we go out and for you to use when you start your internship. Kendra pointed out that you would probably prefer something other than this one for everyday use,” she waved her free hand toward the other two wheelchairs, “so you may pick whichever of these other two styles suits you best, and I will purchase that as well.”

He wasn’t really comfortable with the idea of Dominique buying these for him. He could tell by the way they looked that they were expensive and she was already buying him a suit today to wear to the play and out to dinner tomorrow night. Rachael walked past him and up to the wheelchair the redhead was standing beside, “This is really nice looking, how in the world did you find it? I don’t
think I’ve ever seen one of these.”

“I thought about it when I was looking yesterday afternoon for a suitable place to find a suit for him, I had to look through a few places before finding these.” Dominique’s green eyes turned his way, as she looked at the standard wheelchair with its worn armrests and navy blue nylon seat and back, “what he has now…” her voice trailed off and she grimaced just slightly.

Robert looked down at his wheelchair; he hadn’t really ever thought much about what it looked like. It was just something he had to use to get around. A warm hand on his shoulder caused him to look up, he leaned back slightly so he could meet Margaret’s warm hazel eyes. He didn’t think he had ever met a woman as tall as the Bison’s chosen before. She winked at him before turning her attention to Dominique, “Accessorizing with a wheelchair, what an interesting concept,” she commented.

The redhead arched one eyebrow and very obviously looked the tall woman up and down, the Bison’s chosen was wearing a wine red pantsuit, a heavy silver and onyx necklace hung in three loops around her neck and her long black coat looked almost the same as the one Dominique was wearing.

“I’m agreeing with you,” Margaret protested with a grin, “if we’re going for a suave and sophisticated look for him, then you’re right what he currently has just won’t do.”

As this was going on a quiet voice from just behind him whispered, “Let her,” he turned his head and looked into Kendra’s blue eyes, “she’s been thrilled about the idea of doing this for you ever since she saw these and found out that this place sold them. Think of this as our Solstice gift to you,” the Jaguar’s chosen finished.

Robert stared at her for a few seconds longer, taking in the almost entreating look in her eyes. He turned to look at Dominique, noticing for the first time the hopeful look she was giving him. It stunned him, he didn’t really understand why this was so important to her, “Thank you,” he said to her.

Dominique smiled a warm pleased smile that lit up her face and lightened her eyes, “Good, if their advertising is to be believed, you should find this much more comfortable than the one you currently have.” She continued looking at him for a moment longer and then glanced over at the manager, “I understand they need to measure you to finish this chair,” she said briskly.

“Yes, Ms. Destine,” the man pulled a measuring tape out of his pocket, “I need to measure him to see how large the main wheel should be and to determine the proper seat depth and height.”

As the manager measured him and tisked over the fact that he had outgrown his current chair, Dominique commented, “It is fortunate that with his skin tone silver goes very well.” He glanced over at the redhead a bit bemused by her comment. Rachael who was standing near her grinned at him and shook her head, he didn’t think she was disagreeing with the assessment, but making a comment on the conversation.

Margaret looked over at him, “He does have the right skin tone for silver, doesn’t he.”

Sharon, who had been looking over the other two wheelchairs, glanced up at them looking surprised, “It comes in gold colored metal?”

The redhead raised an eyebrow, “It comes in gold electroplate,” she corrected mildly. Robert and Sharon stared at her.
“For a small fee, I’m sure,” Margaret commented dryly.

Dominique turned her attention to the tall woman, she smirked, “Of course.”

Kendra came up beside her, “Now who’s being terrible,” she quietly asked with a grin.

The smirk on the redhead’s face grew, and now Robert could see the laughter in her eyes. She had been teasing them all along he realized.

“Were you kidding about the gold electroplate?” Sharon asked uncertainly.

Dominique chuckled, “Actually, no I wasn’t.”

A few minutes later, as the manager was wheeling the elegant looking chair back to be fitted with the correct seat and the current wheels changed out for a size larger, Rachael walked casually over to him and knelt down beside his chair. She leaned over and whispered, “She’s trying to give back to us in the only way she feels she can right now.” The Cree woman turned to look at him, “She’s been alone for so long Robert. She’s had no reason and no one to celebrate this holiday with for almost five hundred years.”

Robert turned his grey-eyed gaze toward the ancient gargoyle in human form; he really couldn’t fathom what it would be like to live alone for that long. He often felt very alone though he had friends at school, they could do so many more things and go to so many more places than he could with his disability tying him to his wheelchair. But not having any friends at all for centuries…

He rolled his wheelchair closer to the two women. Dominique was talking with Margaret and as he listened to them, he realized with astonishment that they were talking about the different ways the redhead could have one of her bathrooms modified for his use.

He watched them until Dominique noticed and came over to him, giving him a concerned look. “Is something wrong Robert?” she asked.

He stared up at her, his grey eyes dark and intense, “You do know that I’d like you even if you didn’t have money,” he assured her earnestly.

Her face softened, “I know that,” she assured him gently; she reached out and ran her hand through his curly hair.

He didn’t have to spend long deciding between the two wheelchairs, he liked the looks of the more aggressively styled one with the thick black spoked wheels. Then came all the questions, what color would he like the frame to be, the manager opened a folder and handed it to him with all the different paint choices. Eventually he chose glossy black. What color did he want the seat cushions to be? He really liked the royal blue the demo model had on it. The questions continued, what type of handrail, what type of wheel, what type of tires, did he want quick release cut to the wheel protectors on the side to make sure his clothes didn’t get caught in the wheel. By the time he finished making his choices, his head was reeling.

The manager assured them that the wheelchair would be delivered to his home before Christmas; there were a few parts they needed to order to complete the customization.

When they left the store, Robert was in the elegant looking wheelchair Dominique had picked out for him to use. He was surprised at how much more comfortable it felt to both sit and ride in, each wheel had a shock absorber and they really did smooth out the ride compared to his old wheelchair. The thick cushions in the seat and back felt much more comfortable than the seat on his old wheelchair, and instead of high armrests that rubbed against his arms when he rolled the chair, this one had cut to
fit sides that followed the outline of the wheel. Besides nothing being in his way when he rolled the chair, the new one just seemed easier to roll taking much less effort to move.

2:23pm – 5th Avenue shops, Manhattan, New York City

Sharon looked on with a faintly horrified expression while Dominique and Margaret pulled out various business suits and discussed their relative merits. While she didn’t disagree with what they were saying, she couldn’t imagine herself wearing any of the dress suits they were setting to the side for her to try on.

Finally Kendra spoke up, taking pity on the younger woman, “Those simply won’t do for her, their all too femme looking. You need to go with something more on the butch side,” She flicked her eyes over toward Sharon, completely missing the look of surprise that crossed Dominique’s face, “Or maybe in this case baby butch instead of butch,” she teased with a sly smile.

Sharon crossed her arms across her chest and glared at the black haired woman, lifting her head and sticking her chin out slightly in a silent rebuttal.

Kendra tilted her head and stared at her thoughtfully for a second before straightening, “Mewl,” Kendra made a kittenish sound.

A look of outrage crossed Sharon’s face, “Hey!” she protested loud enough to draw glances from the other patrons in the store.

“Ladies,” Dominique scolded them in a stern tone, the two immediately turned towards her, their faces taking on almost identical innocent looks. She stared at them for a moment, ignoring Margaret and Robert’s chuckles, and then shook her head.

Turning toward the Cree woman she inquired, “Rachael?”

The Cree woman’s brow rose, “I did say I thought she would fit in well,” she said, and it was clear that she hadn’t expected this news to be a surprise to Dominique.

The redhead shot her an exasperated look.

“No, of course not,” Dominique waved her hand dismissively, “It’s just that no one is going to believe that I’m not doing this on purpose,” she finished with a frown.

Kendra snickered.

Sharon frowned, glancing first at Kendra and then back at Dominique, “Not doing what on purpose?”

Dominique sighed, “Completely unintentionally,” she kept her voice low, not wanting to advertise the fact, “almost half of Nightstone’s senior management staff is homosexual or bisexual.”

Sharon looked shocked for a moment and then she smiled broadly, “Really?”

A crooked smile formed on the redhead’s lips, “Yes, really.”

“That’s so cool,” Sharon said, her voice rising in her excitement. Dominique’s eyebrow rose, and the
younger woman’s eyes widened as she realized what she had done, she straightened up and made an effort look more serious.

“I’m sorry, I really thought you realized already,” Kendra said apologetically to the redhead, drawing her attention away from Sharon.

Dominique gave her a wry look, “I probably should have,” she turned back to the clothes rack, “so pantsuits.”

Behind her Sharon exhaled a quiet relieved breath, making a mental note to herself to not become too informal around her new boss.

5:45pm – Peter Luger Steakhouse, Brooklyn, New York City

“Brendan,” Margot leaned over hissed to her husband, “Isn’t that Dominique Destine over there?”

Her husband followed her pointing finger, the redhead seated at the table with four other women and a young man in a wheelchair did look like Dominique Destine. “I believe so,” he replied. The hostess came back to her podium then, interrupting anything else his wife might have had to say as she showed them to their table. He glanced over at the table again after they were seated; their waiter was in the process of pouring a new round of drinks for everyone but the young man.

“Well she looks like she’s out celebrating tonight,” his wife noted her eyebrows raising as her gaze followed the waiter as he removed an empty wine bottle, took the wine bottle he had emptied in refilling the glasses, and left a full one at the table.

Brendan’s eyes went to the redhead once again as she laughed along with her friends at something one of them had said, he hadn’t really realized the CEO of Nightstone was such a beautiful woman. “Well it is the time of year for that,” he commented.

“I believe the woman sitting next to her is Kendra Canmore,” Margot commented, “I guess they became friends after their ordeal together.”

This was one case where he apparently knew something his wife didn’t, “I’d think so since she hired her to head up a new division at Nightstone as soon as they got back.”

“Really?” his wife’s eyes sharpened on him, “how interesting. I wonder who the other people are with her.”

He shrugged, he had no idea, none of them looked familiar to him.

8:45pm – Movie Theater, Upper Manhattan, New York City

“Well, Ms. Destine, we seem to choosing the same entertainment this evening,” Dominique turned around to see who was addressing her and recognized the city’s Assistant District Attorney, Margot Yale and her husband.

“Mrs. Yale, how are you this evening,” she asked pleasantly, inside she wasn’t quite so pleased to have someone even remotely connected with Maza see her out at night. Sooner or later the clan would find out, but she would rather it be as later as possible.
“I must admit,” Margot continued, “I was surprised to see you and your friends in the movie theater after seeing you at Luger’s.”

Ah so that was where she had seen them, thought Dominique. She shrugged, “Quite a few of my friends wanted to see it.” She saw the woman’s eyes sharpen upon Robert and the others, before Margot Yale could ask to be introduced, she said, “Well we must be going, we need to get Robert home before its late.”

“Of course,” the woman said her eyes going to the young man in the wheelchair. As he went by, she said to him, “Very nice looking wheelchair, I don’t think I’ve seen another like it.”

The curly haired young man stopped, “Thank you,” he replied politely, “Ms. Destine bought it for me earlier today as a gift.”

Margot’s eyes widened, she hadn’t expected that, obviously this young man must be a close friend of Dominique Destine.

“Robert,” the redheads commanding voice summoned. The young man gave her an apologetic smile and rolled his chair to catch up to Dominique.

After the group had passed, Brendan asked curiously, “What was that about?”

“Just curious,” his wife replied, “I don’t think I’ve ever seen her at any of the big social functions since she started Nightstone, and then tonight we see her twice.”
Saturday, December 20th 1997

Early Morning – Destine Manor, Forest Hills Gardens, Long Island

Dominique smiled fondly at her sleeping lover. This was definitely one thing she had noticed about Kendra, she woke up easily enough, but left to her own devices she would lay in bed much longer than the redhead would. “Kendra, time to get up,” she said and watched as the blue eyes opened slowly, blinked once and then the black haired woman sat up and stretched, arching her back and extending her arms upward. Dominique allowed herself to enjoy the sight, it was unfortunate that they didn’t have time for her to go over and run her hands up her lover’s back, over her shoulders and then downward. She held out a cup of coffee instead, “Sharon has a list of five apartments and two different stables that she wants to see, so it shouldn’t take that long.”

Kendra accepted it and took a long sip before slipping out of bed, “I hadn’t expected you to gain a rookery sister in Sharon,” Dominique finally had to comment on yesterday’s behavior between the two.

The black haired woman looked startled, and then her expression became thoughtful, “I guess, I wouldn’t really know.” That was right, the redhead realized, Kendra had been an only child. Her lover shrugged, “I like her, and it’s funny how she’s trying to show me she can be just as much a warrior type as I am. Don’t worry though we won’t do it at work,” she assured the redhead.

“I’m trusting that you won’t,” Dominique replied. She wasn’t quite certain that Kendra had read the situation correctly, though she did agree that Sharon was trying to prove something to the black haired woman. “I’m not sure though that she’s trying to prove that she’s a warrior or just trying to prove herself to you in a more general sense,” she commented.
“Prove herself to me,” Kendra said, pausing to frown at her before heading into the bathroom.

Dominique stayed where she was, giving her lover some privacy, “Well you are older.”

“Only by four years,” the black haired woman protested.

The redhead smiled, “And you are Jaguar’s chosen.”

“Which means?”

“I don’t think she’s trying to show that she’s your equal, so much as get you to recognize that she’s capable,” Dominique explained.

There was a long silence from the bathroom, “I guess I shouldn’t tease her so much about it then,” Kendra finally responded, “I have no doubts that she’s capable. Though I guess I should spar with her a few times just to make sure she knows how to protect herself.”

Dominique smirked; she had no idea if Sharon was quite ready for Kendra’s idea of a friendly sparring session. They hadn’t really had time for more than one or two spars since they returned from Canada; she was hoping that once Sharon got up to speed she and Kendra could start sparring regularly once again.

On a more serious note though, “Did you want to talk about Jon yet?” the redhead asked. When she read the headlines yesterday, she had been very worried for her daughter until she read the whole story. From what the paper said witnesses saw four gargoyles involved in the battle and they saw those same four flying away carrying one of their number between them. From the description of the hurt gargoyle, she guessed it was Lexington, since he was the only web wing. He must have been knocked unconscious she guessed, since otherwise Goliath would have carried the small gargoyle in his arms and not let Brooklyn and Broadway hold him in between them by the arms.

Kendra hadn’t said much after reading the article, but the fact that she had gone upstairs and worked out for a full hour made its own statement about her reaction to the news.

“What can I say,” her lover finally responded to her question, “I was concerned that he would continue doing crazy things despite me removing the enchantment on him, and he did. His stunt the other night firing off anti-aircraft guns in the middle of Manhattan endangered the other gargoyles and sent a lot of people to the hospital. He’s obviously learned nothing from what he did to Jason because he still gives no thought to how much harm his actions can cause, or if he does then he doesn’t give a damn. The only other thing I can think of to explain his actions is that he’s so desperate to get a hit from the enchantment that he doesn’t care who he has to hurt to kill a gargoyle and he doesn’t realize or want to realized that it’s no longer there” Her voice was tense, angry. Apparently, she had only cooled down slightly from her initial reaction yesterday.

Dominique lowered her head, damn it, why had she ever conceived of the carrier virus or that mad plan in the first place, “I’m sorry.” It didn’t really matter that the cleanser and carrier virus mixture she had made was completely harmless, what mattered was that all this had come about because of the events of that night. Jason had been crippled and Jon became John Castaway leader of the Quarrymen because everyone there, including her at that time, had thought it was real and that she was about to wipe out the entire human race.

“Why?” came the puzzled question from the bathroom.

Dominique lifted her head, staring into the bathroom through the open door, “Because if it hadn’t been for me they wouldn’t have been in the cathedral, and Jon wouldn’t have shot Jason, starting all
“of this,” she stated, her tone bleak.

Kendra came back out of the bathroom, as nude as she had went in, and came over, placing both hands on Dominique’s shoulders and staring into her eyes. “You are not responsible for Jon’s actions, whether those actions are caused by his inability to accept that he was the one who pulled the trigger and wounded Jason, or the fact that he can’t accept he’s no longer going to get a feel good hit for killing a gargoyle, or a combination of both,” she said rather forcefully. The redhead stared at her wide eyed, not having expected the strength of her lover’s response to her statement.

“And as for why you were there in the first place with the master plan to wipe out humanity that couldn’t possibly work as advertised,” Kendra continued, “Well, we know whose enchantment is to blame for that. It’s the same three fey whose enchantment on my cousins is probably at fault for Robyn failing to realize that the carrier virus bound to a disinfectant could not possibly do what you claimed it could on that disk.”

The black haired woman exhaled in a loud sigh, her expression unhappy, “There’s plenty of blame for that night to go around. Jon for shooting Jason, all of my cousins for not thinking logically about what the disk was claiming. Jason for forcing the other two into continuing the hunt after Charles died when they really didn’t want too. The Weird Sisters for enchanting my family to hunt you and for the enchantment on you that caused you to drive your clan away from you.”

Dominique opened her mouth as if to speak, but Kendra beat her to it. “If,” she stressed the word strongly, “you are to blame for any of it,” she removed one hand and measured out a space between her thumb and index finger, “then you can only claim a slice of it, the majority of it goes to those three fey and my cousins.”

The redhead stared uncertainly at Kendra, her feelings in a jumble from everything that the black haired woman had said to her. Finally, she simply leaned forward and rested her head on Kendra’s bare shoulder. She knew her lover was right, she, Jason, Robyn and Jon Canmore, and the three Weird Sisters had all made choices and done things that lead to that night at the cathedral on the Hunter’s Moon. The events there had lead to the formation of the Quarrymen by Jon as John Castaway, and then to Jon’s arrest for illegally purchasing military anti aircraft weapons and then firing them inside the city.

Kendra’s arms wrapped around her, pulling her closer, and Dominique snuggled into the embrace, turning her head to bury her face into the hollow of her neck and shoulder and enjoying the feel of her lover’s warm body against hers. She felt an uncomfortable mixture of guilt over her own actions, anger and embarrassment because that entire disaster the night of the Hunter’s Moon had been an unwilling hoax on her part caused by the Weird Sister’s enchantment, and dismay that removing the enchantment on Jon hadn’t caused him to give up the hunt. She took in a deep breath, scenting her lover’s distinctive faintly musky scent; it soothed her, quieting the chaos of her emotions.

A hand gently stroking through her hair and then cupping her jaw had Dominique lifting her head to look up into Kendra’s face. “I love you,” the black haired woman whispered before gently capturing the redhead’s lips with her own.

When she returned to the kitchen, Rachael held up the New York Times “Did you see this Dominique?”

The redhead glanced at the paper warily, at least it didn’t appear that Rachael was referring to the front page, “See what?”

The Cree woman handed over the NY/Region section of the paper, down the page some she saw the article title, ‘CEO of Nightstone Comes Out on the Side of the Gargoyles.’
“That’s quite a sizable donation,” Rachael commented, referring to the one million dollars quoted in the article.

“It was a nice round figure,” the redhead commented, beginning to read the article, “and advertising in papers like the Times is expensive.” The article was very short, noting that Dominique Destine had never indicated any opinion on whether gargoyles were a threat or not before making this donation to PIT. It also mentioned that this was the largest donation ever made by an individual to the organization, and that its leaders were excited by the opportunities the donation opened to expand their efforts to inform and educate people about gargoyles and disprove the myths and outright lies circulating about them by groups such as the Quarrymen.

She looked up from the article, “If they’re smart they will take out some ads in the Times as soon as possible and capitalize on the Quarrymen’s actions Thursday night.”

“From what I’ve read that does seem to have changed some people’s opinions of the Quarrymen, they damaged a lot of buildings with those weapons,” Rachael said, “the concussion from the rounds exploding broke out windows for blocks around the entire area and sent some people to the hospital with injuries from the falling glass.”

Dominique nodded, keeping silent. She felt rather conflicted about the injuries; on the one hand, she was pleased that it had happened because those injuries hurt the Quarrymen’s image much more than the property damage. On the other hand, innocent people, perhaps even people who didn’t hate gargoyles or think they were demons, had been hurt, some of them seriously by the falling glass. All she had to do was think about what if Robert or Margaret had been in the area and injured to understand the anger and worry their friends and family must feel.

Morning – Xanatos’ Residence, Wyvern Castle, Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan

Xanatos looked up as Owen entered, a stack of papers in his hand, “You may want to look at the Regional section of the Times first,” the blond man advised calmly as he handed them over.

David looked at him curiously as he accepted them, but Owen’s face was giving nothing away. He opened the Times after a cursory glance at the front page and turned to the indicated section. The slight widening of his eyes revealed his surprise, “That’s quite a sizable donation,” he commented after reading the article.

“Coming so soon after the Quarrymen’s actions and Castaway’s arrest this is bound to provoke a reaction from them,” Owen noted.

Xanatos shrugged, “It would have provoked a reaction from them no matter what,” he noted.

“Perhaps I should have said it will provoke a stronger reaction from them than if this had been announced before the Quarrymen illegally bought anti-aircraft weapons and shot them over the city resulting in Castaway’s arrest,” Owen stated.

David smiled, “Now on that, you may be right.”

Afternoon, District Court House, Manhattan

“Sorry that took so long Mr. Castaway, we couldn’t get a bail hearing set any sooner,” the lawyer explained.
Jon waved his hand; he had much more important things on his mind right now than the extra night he had spent in jail waiting for the bail amount to be decided. “I want to arrange a press conference, I have something important I want to announce.”

It was too much to be borne, first his cousin had deserted them entirely by going over to the side of the Demon and now the Demon was supporting those who actively sought to corrupt others with the idea that the demons were not demons but living creatures that deserved respect and tolerance.

One hour later John Canmore stood on the steps of the courthouse where his trial would be held in a few weeks.

“My fellow citizens of this city we are in the midst of a war.” He paused for a moment letting that idea sink in, “A war against these alien monsters who have invaded our city. Who terrify the citizens with their attacks, and cause us to keep our children indoors once the sun goes down out of fear of them. The Quarrymen have stood against these monsters and will continue standing against them without fear, without hesitation, taking the battle to them wherever we find these demons.”

These reporters were not a good audience for him, he realized, seeing the skepticism on their faces. Perhaps it would be better to simply make his announcement and then let the Demon deal with having the entire city knowing what a monster she really was under the human appearing illusion she wore during the day.

“But that is not why I am speaking to you today. We all know that these monsters, these unholy demons turn to stone by day. However, there is one of them that does not, and that one is the most terrible, the most cruel and evil of them all. The Demon does not turn into stone during the day, but into a human…” he paused, looked at his audience, he finally had them, he could see the interest on their faces, “Dominique Destine.”

Late Afternoon - Collin’s Residence, Union City, New Jersey

Dominique let Gregory assist her from the limousine, she paused a moment, focusing upon the image she wanted to project before beginning the walk to Robert’s home. She didn’t have to look around to know that Kendra had already fallen into step behind her.

To her surprise, it was a balding, pot-bellied male human, and not Robert’s Aunt who answered the door. He had a belligerent look on his face, and immediately after opening the door he leaned forward aggressively giving every impression of being about to start an argument with her. This must be the frequently absent Uncle, “Mr. Edward Collins I presume,” she said coolly before he could say anything. “I’m Dominique Destine,” she turned around slightly, and the black haired woman stepped forward, “and this is Ms. Kendra Canmore, the Division manager of New Technologies and Special Projects. It is for the internship in her Division that we are considering Robert.”

She wasn’t quite certain what he had been ready to argue about, but she could see that the way she had introduced herself and Kendra had disarmed him for he was no longer leaning slightly forward and his initial belligerence was rapidly being replaced by surprise. “I thought he was lying about that,” he blurted.

Dominique held her anger in check, instead raising one eyebrow at the human male. “It is unusual that he would be considered at his age,” a variation of this had worked on the aunt, so it should work on the uncle, “but Ms. Canmore would prefer to have the same intern for several summers in a row rather than a different one every, or every other summer.”
Or perhaps not, she thought taking in the skeptical expression on the uncle’s florid face, “Oh you don’t have to trot out that nonsense for me, I understand,” he assured her with a wink and sly smile.

“Indeed,” she responded shortly, she had no clue what he thought she meant and her brain was racing trying to figure out the various possibilities.

“You need a handicapped person to fill out your numbers,” he didn’t even make the effort to lower his voice, “You don’t have to lie to me, people like us, we understand the world.” The redhead gritted her teeth, his statement rankled, she was nothing like this man…at least not anymore. The Uncle continued, “What I don’t understand is why you’re buying him things like that suit and that wheelchair.” Some of the belligerence crept back into his tone, and now she could guess the reason for his antagonism.

Dominique forced herself to smile back at the odious human, and to not betray how much she already detested him, “Well as you say, we understand the world,” she forced the words out, feeling tainted by just saying them, “and you know people make their initial judgments based on appearances. I could have put him into the most expensive suit in the world and it wouldn’t have done any good at all if he were in his old wheelchair.”

Now he looked surprised, “You meant all that stuff you said to Nancy about him representing your company was true?”

The redhead nodded, “Provided he continues to perform as he did last evening, yes. He will be Ms. Canmore’s intern and accompany her on her visits to companies that interest Nightstone Unlimited. It is imperative that he represent the company properly and that extends to his appearance, thus the wheelchair.”

Robert’s uncle scowled, “And the other wheelchair?”

She waved the question away with one elegant hand, what she was about to say was certainly an outright lie, but she suspected he would believe it, “I expense accounted them, I didn’t want him using the other when he goes to school and then to college.”

“Ah,” the angry expression disappeared, the human gave her a knowing look and laughed, “I get it now; you’re taking all this off on your taxes. I do the same thing,” he admitted confidingly, “handicapped kids are expensive.” He took a step backward and turned slightly to the side, “Robert get over here, don’t keep Ms. Destine waiting on you.”

Dominique willed her expression to smooth before the human turned back around, inside she was seething at the thought of Robert hearing this conversation. Hopefully the young man knew better by now than to believe that she thought that way about him.

Robert appeared from around the corner; his aunt followed him and came to stand beside her husband. “Mrs. Collins,” Dominique spared a moment to acknowledge the woman before examining Robert’s appearance. The two-button virgin wool black suit they had picked out at the Armani store, and then had tailored for him looked just as good on the young man as she had thought it would, subtly accentuating the muscles he had built up in his arms and shoulders without bunching in an unsightly manner. She glanced into his grey eyes, they were calm and when he saw her looking at him, he gave her a reassuring smile. She let out a relieved breath, but was careful not to let her emotions show on her face. She nodded to him, “Yes, that will do nicely indeed; you look every inch the young gentleman Robert.”

“He does, doesn’t he,” his Aunt agreed, an odd note of surprise in her tone.
Robert glanced at her uncertainly, giving her a tentative smile before turning back to Dominique, “Thank you, Ms. Destine,” he replied politely.

Edward gave his nephew a hard stare, “Now you mind your manners tonight.” His wife glanced over at him, a hint of disapproval in her eyes that surprised the watching redhead, but she didn’t say anything.

“Yes, Uncle,” Robert replied; only the slightest tightening around his mouth betraying how he felt.

The balding man glanced at the suit Robert was wearing and he scowled again, “I don’t know why she got you a designer suit, but don’t let it go to your head.”

“He will be representing Nightstone Unlimited to other company CEO’s and owners,” Dominique interrupted him, “and men like David Xanatos and Halycon Renard would instantly recognize the lack of quality of his clothing. It would reflect badly upon me if he attended such meetings in less than appropriate clothing.”

She could see that the names made an impression on him. The scowl faded and Edward looked dubiously at his nephew. “Are you sure you want him going to those types of meetings? I mean,” he glanced meaningfully at the wheelchair.

Dominique ignored the insinuation that Robert’s handicap made him unsuitable as a representative for her company “That is what events such as tonight’s dinner at the Savoy and the theater are supposed to determine,” she responded, she looked at her watch, “Speaking of which our reservation time is in thirty minutes, we need to get going.”

“You’ll do fine Robert,” his Aunt reassured him, “just remember what we talked about earlier and watch out for your suit sleeves.”

Dominique barely stopped herself from betraying her surprise at the woman being so openly supportive of him. Perhaps the woman wasn’t as bad of an elder to Robert as she had initially thought.

As soon as Gregory got Robert into the limousine and closed the doors, the redhead leaned forward, reaching out and placing her hand on the young man’s arm, “I want to know everything you remember about your inheritance and what your parents might have left you.”

Robert stared at her with wide eyes, not having expected the question at all, “Umm I don’t really remember much,” he said embarrassed. He was painfully aware that Rachael, Margaret and Sharon were watching them curiously.

“All I need to start with are their names,” Dominique assured him, “most of the information such as the initial size of your inheritance, and the details of how your trust fund is set up will be available in the public court records.”

“I’m named after my father, Robert, and my mother’s name was Mary, she was a Maguire before they married,” Robert answered quietly, his expression uncertain.

Dominique squeezed his arm, “I’ll let you know what I find out, at the very least I’ll find the starting amount of your trust fund and let you know the details of how and when you will come into control of it.” Robert nodded, still not quite certain why the Ancient One’s chosen was suddenly interested in his inheritance.

“Do you think you will find something?” Rachael asked, looking intently at the redhead.
Dominique released Robert’s arm and sat back in the seat. Her jaw firmed, “I’m fairly certain there will be something there to find.”

“Why?” Robert asked his grey eyes wide as he stared at her, trying to think of what his Uncle had said that would cause her to be so sure.

The redhead stared at him, her eyes distant, melancholy, “Because of the assumptions he made about my motivations,” she responded after a few seconds. She drew in a deep breath, “What people assume about others frequently indicates what they would do in a similar situation.” Her green eyes finally focused on him, she should know, she thought to herself grimly, in the past her assumptions had said quite a lot of unflattering things about what she would do if she were in the other person’s place. “He made several assumptions, that I would only hire you because I needed a handicapped employee to prove I wasn’t discriminating against them in Nightstone’s hiring practices, and that I would claim the cost of your wheelchairs and suits on my expense account, which by the way I did not,” she assured him. He nodded since the way she was staring at him seemed to indicate she wanted an acknowledgement.

Dominique fell silent for a long moment before continuing, “The strongest reason that I think I will find something, however, is the statement that he made that he claimed your expenses on his taxes. You’ve told me that they’ve been using your trust fund to pay for all your needs. Your Uncle cannot do both. If he’s been using your trust fund to pay for your living expenses, then he can’t claim you or any of your medical expenses on his taxes,” she explained. “At the very least I suspect I’ll find that he’s guilty of tax fraud.”

He stared at her, thinking about what she had said, what he remembered his uncle saying both when he was talking to Dominique and at other times. What she was saying made sense, his uncle had stated quite a few times that almost all of his trust fund had been used up in taking care of him, and yet he had also heard his uncle say that he claimed his expenses on his taxes. “If you do find out that he’s been doing that will you let me decide whether or not to…” he hesitated, trying to decide on the right words to use, “do anything with it?”

Dominique saw the pleading in his eyes; it reminded her of her daughter, and all the mistakes she had made by not listening to the younger female, by insisting on her own way of doing things. “I won’t do anything with the information I find unless you tell me to,” she promised him quietly.

“Do you know where your Social Security survivor benefits are going?” asked Margaret.

Robert looked over at her confused; he had no idea what she was talking about, “I’m sorry? I don’t know what those are.”

“Your parents died, you should be getting their Social Security benefits since you’re their child. I got checks until I turned nineteen after my father died in a car accident,” Kendra responded.

Sharon leaned forward in her seat, “Do you get an allowance?”

“My aunt gives me fifty dollars a month,” Robert responded, while it wasn’t that much, he knew it was more than some kids got.

The shorthaired brunette frowned, “I don’t know how much you should get, but I would think it would be several hundred dollars a month.”

“Around a thousand or more I would think,” Kendra answered.

Robert noticed that Rachael looked troubled; he felt a sinking sensation in his stomach, the senior
Owl’s chosen also suspected that Dominique would find out that his uncle had been lying on his taxes. “Well let’s see what Demona finds out first before jumping to conclusions,” Margaret spoke once again. “By the way Robert, you look very handsome this evening,” she smiled at him.

He was flushing by the time both Sharon and Rachael added in their complements as well, off to the side he noticed Kendra grinning at him. “Shall I add my complements as well, and see how much more you can blush?” she teased.

He grinned back at her and shook his head, “Please don’t.” That caused a round of soft laughter among the women. He looked around at them thinking of how strong and assured they all were, even Sharon who was the closest to his age. He wanted to be more like them, not like his uncle or his aunt.

Dominique leaned back in her seat, relieved to see the young man looking less distressed. She hadn’t meant to upset Robert, she had only been thinking of what his Uncle had said and realizing there was a good chance the man was misusing Robert’s trust fund. And, she had to admit to herself, she had been looking for a way to distance herself from the man. She had been disturbed by who she had pretended to be to Robert’s uncle, by the assumptions he had made about her motives, and by the fact that only a few months ago it probably wouldn’t have been a pretense and he probably would have been right about her motives. There was also the fact that she didn’t find it at all comforting to think of Robert being in the care of a man who was reassured by the idea that she was using his nephew. She glanced out the window, and one never knew when such information might prove handy to have, she wouldn’t use it unless Robert said it was all right, but she wanted as much information on the Collins as possible now.

Late Afternoon – 23rd Precinct Police Office, Upper Manhattan

“What utter nonsense,” the drawling tones of Margot Yale greeted Elisa as she stepped into the precinct headquarters to begin her shift. The Assistant District Attorney was talking to Captain Maria Chavez, “Why I saw her just last night at Luger’s Steakhouse and then later at the movie theater where they had gone to see the new Bond movie.”

Maria shook her head, “I guess it was her donation to PIT that set him off. I wish he hadn’t made bail today, but I guess you couldn’t stall the hearing any longer.”

Elisa frowned wondering what they were talking about, she hadn’t heard anything on the radio during her short drive to the station, but that didn’t mean much.

“He’s legally entitled to a bail hearing and he had the five million to pay it.” Mrs. Yale shook her head sadly, “I can’t believe that they did what they did, the Quarrymen had such a promising beginning standing up and saying those gargoyles are menaces and need to be stopped. Castaway though is obviously unstable, first buying illegal military weapons and firing them in the city, and now accusing Dominique Destine of being a gargoyle. The Quarrymen really need to get rid of him, he’s going to be a laughing stock by tomorrow. I’ve already talked to Travis Marshal of WVRN about seeing her out last night with her friends.”

The detective stared at the woman; surely she hadn’t just said what she thought she had said.

“Detective Maza, what are you doing in here? You’re supposed to be off for a few more nights,” Maria said to her, noticing her for the first time.

Elisa glanced over at her, “I just came in to finish a piece of paperwork for Castaway’s arrest, what
“are you two talking about?”

“Castaway made bail this afternoon,” Chavez answered, “and then an hour later he called for a press conference where he made a rather big production of announcing that Dominique Destine is actually a gargoyle.” The dark skinned woman’s voice was dryly amused.

Elisa drew in a sharp breath, she had heard what she had thought she heard, Jon Canmore had revealed that Demona turned into a human during the day, but...

“Utter nonsense of course,” Margot spoke up, interrupting the detective’s stunned thoughts, “it just proves how unstable he is.”

“I don’t know why he thought he would get away with it, I know she’s usually a recluse and doesn’t go to any of the big social functions, but all she has to do is show up once at night to disprove it,” Maria shook her head, an incredulous expression on her face. “And as Margot just pointed out she saw Ms. Destine out with her friends just last night.”

Elisa just managed to keep her shock off her face, she hadn’t misheard what they were talking about when she came in. “Really, where?” she asked weakly, not quite knowing what to think of this new twist.

“As I said before, Luger’s Steakhouse and then later at the movie theater,” Margot looked and sounded impatient with her.

The dark haired woman fought off her shock at the idea of Demona going to something as mundane as a movie to remember what else Margot had said. “You said she was with friends?” she asked, feeling more in control and calmer as she started thinking of this as an information gathering mission.

“Oh yes, and they were having a good time at Luger’s,” Margot said with a smirk, “between the five of them drinking they went through several bottles of wine, I know I noticed the waiter brought at least four or five bottles over. It’s a good thing they were using a limo, because the only one not drinking was the young man in a wheelchair with them. Dominique must really like him,” the woman commented, “because when I spoke to him at the theater he said that she had just bought him the nice looking wheelchair he was using.”

Elisa stared at her for a moment, the image in her mind of the redhead drinking and partying too much for her to believe. Nor could she figure out why the gargoyle would befriend a young disabled man and buy him a wheelchair. “Are you sure it was Dominique Destine?” she finally had to ask.

Margot stared at her, her eyebrow rising at the question, “Of course, I would think that I knew who I was speaking to at the theater,” she responded curtly, her annoyance clear.

The detective nodded, only too aware of her Captain’s sharpening eyes on her, she had to control herself better, she didn’t want to be explaining to Maria why she was so surprised that Dominique Destine wasn’t a gargoyle at night. “It’s just that the times I’ve had to talk to Ms. Destine she hasn’t seemed like the type of person to make many friends.”

The ADA smirked, “Well, people aren’t usually at their friendliest when their being questioned by the police,” she commented. “I don’t know who everyone was, but I did recognize Kendra Canmore with her, I guess they became friends during their trek across Canada.” She paused for a second, adding as an afterthought, “Oh and the young man’s name was Robert, I remember her calling him that.”

Thirty minutes later Elisa was done with filling out the paperwork she needed to complete. After the
way Maria Chavez had stared at her after Margot Yale left, she didn’t dare leave it undone. She had also managed to find out about the donation they had been discussing when she walked in; Demona had given a million dollars to PIT, and that had probably been what provoked Jon Canmore into revealing her dual nature.

Elisa stepped outside the police station, glancing up at the setting sun. She needed to get to the Eyrie building, the clan definitely needed to know about all this. She had no idea how Demona was managing to pull off appearing as a human at night, but she didn’t doubt that she was, Margot wouldn’t make a mistake like not recognizing one of the richest women in the city.

Evening – Savoy Restaurant, Lower Manhattan

Dominique raised her eyebrow at the host, wondering why in the world he was giving her such an odd look. “Destine party, we do have reservations for this time,” she just managed not to snap at him, but her irritation with his behavior was clear.

Her tone seemed enough to snap him out of whatever had been distracting him, “Of course, Ms. Destine, pardon me. It’s just that…” his voice trailed off uncertainly and he seemed to wilt under her gaze.

“Ms. Destine,” Gregory’s slightly out of breath voice had her turning around, wondering why he had followed them into the restaurant and why he was out of breath as if he had been running. The dark haired man paused, took off his cap and took two deep breaths before continuing, “I just heard something on the radio you should know about, Ms. Destine.” She noticed his dark eyes were worried, he glanced over at the host for a moment and then a subtle wave of his hand indicated that he wished to tell her whatever he had to say out of the man’s hearing.

She nodded to him and turned back to the other women. She met Kendra’s eyes, nodded, and then glanced over at Rachael, “If you would get our table, we should be back shortly.”

“Of course,” the Cree woman agreed smoothly, stepping up to the podium and looking at the host expectantly.

Dominique turned and followed Gregory out of the restaurant, Kendra falling into step beside her. “Gregory?” she questioned when they stepped outside.

“I was listening to the radio,” he began, “when the news came on, that man that was arrested the other night for firing those anti aircraft weapons, Mr. Castaway, claimed that you were a gargoyle.” Gregory shook his head, looking bemused, “I thought you should know Ms. Destine, just in case the press tries to contact you for a comment.”

Kendra snorted, “You mean just in case they come looking for her to see if it’s true,” she remarked dryly.

Gregory flushed, gave a small shrug of his shoulders, as if to say what can you do about the press. After all these months of silence, Dominique thought, it was too bad for Jon Canmore that he hadn’t revealed that particular fact sooner. She wasn’t worried for herself or Kendra, but the others and especially Robert, might find a crush of journalists with their camera’s flashing intimidating.

“Perhaps we should skip going to the theater after dinner,” she grimaced; she didn’t want to deprive the others of seeing the play they were looking forward to but…

“Ms. Destine,” Gregory offered hesitantly, “We have a company we usually work with to provide
security for celebrities that we chauffeur; I could call them for you and arrange for them to meet us here.” His voice firmed, “They will make sure the press doesn’t get anywhere near you or your guests.”

Dominique stared into his eyes, he appeared confident that these security people could do what he claimed. “Very well,” she responded, “make the arrangements, and make sure there are enough of them to provide protection to Robert while he’s being moved into and out of the vehicle.”

“I will Ms. Destine,” he assured her.

As they walked back into the restaurant, Kendra observed, “Well at least now we know why the host was staring at you so strangely.”

“Did he expect me to turn into a gargoyle in front of him?” the redhead asked sardonically.

Kendra shrugged, “It’s not as if it really matters anymore,” she observed, her sapphire blue eyes meeting Dominique’s green ones.

The redhead smirked, “No I guess it doesn’t, does it.” The smirk on her face faded slightly as she considered what might have happened had Jon publicized that piece of information just a few months ago when she wouldn’t have been able to come out at night and disprove it. The suspicions that Castaway might be right would have grown until it would have been impossible for her to go out at night at all lest she be seen departing her home as a gargoyle.

A light touch on her arm drew Dominique out of her less than pleasant thoughts, “Rachael and the others are seated over there,” Kendra said, pointing toward a large table near the center of the restaurant.

Dominique noticed several startled looks as people recognized them on the way to their table. She ignored them, by tomorrow Castaway would be shown for a fool, discredited even more by his wild accusation. Her step faltered for a moment and her green eyes widened as she realized that the clan and Angela would also hear about this, and about the fact that she had been seen in her human form at night. Suddenly she wished she hadn’t been so secretative about this with Xanatos, but there was nothing to be done about it now.

“You never told me you got a cool gargoyle transformer ring with a million dollar donation, Dominique,” Kendra said teasingly as they sat down at the table, “you’ve been holding out on me.”

“What?” Sharon looked up from the menu, giving them a puzzled look.

“I’ll second that what,” Margaret remarked, staring at them curiously.

Dominique stared at Kendra, taken aback by the levity before she realized how many of the people around the table were listening in on the conversation. She smirked, “I guess I forgot to mention that, fortunately Mr. Castaway was kind enough to remind me that one comes with every large donation to the People for Interspecies Tolerance.”

“I am so lost,” Sharon commented, looking bewildered, “Why would the crazy guy who fired anti aircraft guns in the middle of the city have reminded you about a ring coming with your PIT donation?”

Robert, who was sitting next to her, commented, “Don’t feel alone, I have no idea what they’re talking about either.”

Kendra chuckled and began relating what Gregory had told them.
“Well that would have been a news worthy item,” Margaret commented when she finished, “except for one small detail.” She made a show of looking Dominique over, “No wings.” There was a general chuckle around the table at this quip.

“What I want to know though,” Rachael commented once the laughter died down, “is once you get your nifty ring, whether it comes with flying lessons; otherwise the learning curve could be rather painful.”

“Yes Dominique, when you get it can we watch?” Margaret asked, her hazel eyes sparkling, “I believe the first steps are pretty much a controlled plummet from a height.”

Dominique gave her a dirty look, when she had been learning how to glide she had done so away from her rookery brothers and sisters. If she were learning to glide all over again, she would hardly do it where Margaret and Rachael could critique her progress.

“I think that was a no,” Rachael commented with a laugh.

Margaret chuckled, “I think that was a bit stronger than just a no.”

*Almost Sunset - Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan*

“Detective,” Xanatos’ voice greeted her as she stepped out of the elevator, “I guess you’re here to tell the clan the news about Castaway’s little bombshell?”

“That and something she forgot to mention to you,” for once she didn’t bother glaring at him, “what exactly did Demona say about how she’s able to transform into a human now?”

The dark haired man glanced quickly at the fey in human form beside him before answering, “That Puck’s spell was no longer on her, and that the spirit had provided her with an alternate means of changing into a human form.” He stared at her curiously when he finished, “Why?”

“Apparently that alternate means included an alternate time frame as well,” she responded tartly, “because Margot Yale saw her out at Luger’s Steakhouse last night.” She glanced at her watch, “I need to get up there.”

“Interesting,” he replied as he joined her in heading up to the battlements, “I wonder how Castaway will respond to the important news that he called a press conference to announce being so quickly disproven.”

“Margot Yale was calling him unstable and saying that the Quarrymen should get someone else as a leader,” Elisa said to him as they stepped out onto the battlements just as the last of the sun’s rays disappeared. The roars of waking gargoyles made his reply unintelligible, but his surprised look was enough for her to guess the essence of it, the ADA’s statement was quite a turnaround from her past opinion of the Quarrymen leader.

“Elisa,” Goliath said as he stepped down from his perch, he had expected to see her here tonight, but the presence of Xanatos and Owen was unexpected, “Xanatos, Owen,” he greeted them as well.

“Let’s get everyone inside,” she said to him, “I think we’re going to want to keep an eye on the news channels tonight.”

“We can use the one in my office; I can set it up to scan the channels for mention of specific terms. I suspect Dominique Destine and Castaway will work for tonight,” Xanatos commented dryly.
“Elisa?” Goliath questioned, staring at them both puzzled.

“More Demona news,” Elisa explained, “though it might actually be an attempt to help the clan that’s caused this latest…” she shrugged, not entirely certain how to classify this, “revelation.” She knew her exasperation was creeping into her tone, without really doing anything Demona had the clan in more of an uproar lately than she had since the first few months of them being reawakened and the latest news was almost certainly guaranteed to make it worse.

“Help the clan?” Brooklyn’s disbelieving comment didn’t surprise Elisa. She was beginning to be worried about the fact that he seemed incapable of even considering that what they had found out about Demona might actually be the truth.

“Let’s go inside,” she repeated, speaking to Goliath and huddling down into her coat, the wind had picked up and it was a cold night tonight.

“Dominique Destine donated one million dollars to the People for Interspecies Tolerance today to promote their efforts to educate the public about gargoyles,” the dark haired woman said as soon as they stepped into the main hall.

Angela straightened at this news, “Mother is trying to help us,” she said, sounding surprised and pleased.

Elisa gave her a brief smile, “That does appear to be her motivation,” her smile slipped, “unfortunately that news coincided with Castaway making bail today and being released.”

Xanatos commented lightly in an aside, “He seems to have taken it personally that Demona donated to them.”

The detective glanced at him, “He does,” she agreed, “and he called a press conference to tell everyone that Dominique Destine is Demona.”

The entire clan’s eyes widened in alarm at this, “Oh no,” Angela said alarmed.

“Don’t worry,” Xanatos assured her with a grin, “he seems to have been a day late and a dollar short with his news.”

“What?” rumbled Goliath looking confused and a bit annoyed, he wasn’t sure what Xanatos meant by that statement or why neither he nor Elisa appeared more worried by this news, this was certain to make the people of the city even more afraid of them.

“Demona failed to explicitly mention to us that the alternate arrangements made by the spirit for her transformation apparently included control over when they occurred as well,” Owen finally spoke up, delivering the news with imperturbable calm. Inside Puck was laughing at the stunned looks on the gargoyle’s faces, his timing had been absolutely perfect.

“What!?” Lexington asked rather loudly, looking stunned. It was so unlike the normally quiet male that everyone stared at him in surprise.

“Dominique Destine has been seen out at night,” Elisa said shooting Owen an irritated glance and drawing everyone’s attention back to her, “Margot Yale and her husband saw her last night at a restaurant and then later again at a movie theater.” She waited a beat, “With friends.” She saw that got a raised eyebrow from Xanatos, apparently he hadn’t known that fact.

Goliath’s eyes widened and she could see by the troubled look on his face that he didn’t know whether this was a good or bad thing. Right now, it was good since it disproved Castaway’s claim,
and in the process hurt the Quarrymen. On the other hand, it opened up the world to Demona in a way it hadn’t been before, and made her possibly even more dangerous than before if she decided to go back to her old ways.

“Demona doesn’t have friends, she just has people she uses,” Brooklyn commented bitterly, his eyes glowing white. The comment drew an angry glare from Angela that actually seemed to get through to him that he had gone too far. The reddish gargoyle stared at her in surprise, the white glow fading from his eyes as he took in the look of dislike on her face before she very pointedly turned away from him.

Elisa stared at the two in concern, she knew the reason for Brooklyn’s deep-seated anger at Demona, Goliath had told her about the close mentor like relationship that had existed between his clan second and the younger male before the massacre at Wyvern. She understood the beaked males anger, but it was clouding his judgment, even she had finally accepted that the evidence overwhelmingly supported that Macbeth had told them the truth. A spirit had intervened in his and Demona’s lives, removing all the fey enchantments on them and showing them the truth about their past and the Weird Sister’s role in it. She wasn’t as certain about Demona’s abrupt change of heart as a result of it. She would give the ancient female the benefit of the doubt that she meant it right now, but what about in a few years?

The ringing of Owen’s phone drew her attention away from the two younger gargoyles and her thoughts. After several seconds Owen slipped his phone back into his pocket, “Mrs. Xanatos has just informed me that WVRN is currently reporting on this, and that they have information that Ms. Destine is having dinner at the Savoy.”

“I guess we should head to my office then,” Xanatos said, he turned and started walking briskly in that direction, Owen following dutifully behind him. Elisa waited for Goliath before following the dark haired man.

“Sources inside the restaurant have confirmed that Ms. Dominique Destine, owner and CEO of Nightstone Unlimited is having dinner there along with Kendra Canmore three other women and one younger man,” Travis Marshal’s voice said from the flat screen monitor on the wall as they walked into Xanatos’ office. “The mood at her table is described as light hearted, and joking comments about Castaway’s announcement and Dominique Destine’s current lack of wings have been heard from her party by other diners.”

Fox Xanatos, who was sitting in her husband’s chair holding Alexander in her arms, commented, “Castaway is going to pop a cork over this.” Elisa could only agree with her, Jon Canmore would probably not take the news that Dominique Destine was making jokes about his announcement very well at all.

Abruptly the picture on the TV screen changed from the newsroom to the outside of the Savoy restaurant in Soho. “Travis,” the female news reporter now on the screen said, “We have news that Ms. Destine’s party is ready to leave, and certainly the private security that arrived a short time ago is moving into place to keep the press and onlookers back.” The view panned around onto what looked like a black stretch van, “What you’re seeing now is one of the few handicapped accessible limousines in the city, one of the members of Ms. Destine’s party tonight is in a wheelchair.”

The view panned back up toward the door, one could see the security people moving into place along either side, opening a path in front of the door. A few seconds later, the restaurant door opened and an olive toned woman with long midnight black hair and piercingly blue eyes stepped out and surveyed the scene intently. She was wearing a black woolen coat over a black pants suit, and a blue scarf that matched her eyes was draped around her neck, “That’s Ms. Kendra Canmore whose
stepped out first,” the reporter identified her for those people who didn’t recognize the woman from the reports on the kidnapping.

Kendra glanced back inside and nodded shortly before returning her attention to the small crowd outside the restaurant. Instead of Dominique Destine exiting next though, a tall woman wearing a dark brown cashmere coat over her wine red dress walked out the doorway followed by two other women who moved to stand slightly to either side of her. The young man in a wheelchair followed them and moved into the center of what was obviously a protective wedge around him.

“That must be the Robert, Margot Yale mentioned,” Elisa said as she leaned forward trying to get a better look at the young man. Margot was right, she noticed, the wheelchair that Demona had bought him was rather nice looking compared to the wheelchairs she normally saw.

The three women and the young man made their way to the limousine while Kendra remained where she was, watching everything. “They’re just a little bit protective of him aren’t they,” Fox commented.

“I notice Demona’s not helping them,” Brooklyn noted snidely. Angela’s gaze shifted his way, her eyes glowing faintly red and her face angry, but she didn’t say anything, instead pointedly looking away from him after a second and back toward the monitor on the wall. The reddish gargoyle didn’t notice her reaction, nor did he notice Goliath giving him a brief narrow eyed look before the big lavender male returned his attention to the monitor.

“She would do more harm than good,” Xanatos remarked. “Her presence out there would guarantee that the press would try and rush them, right now the reporters are leaving him alone because they’re concentrating on the door waiting for Dominique Destine to leave.” The reddish gargoyle scowled, but even he could see that the gathered reporters were ignoring the four humans moving toward the vehicle and concentrating on the door of the restaurant.

Only when the young man had been loaded into the vehicle by a lift in the back and the three women seated in the vehicle did Kendra Canmore move from her position and go back inside the restaurant. Finally Dominique Destine appeared, stepping out of the door of the restaurant and then pausing for a moment with Kendra Canmore right behind her as she calmly surveyed the gathered reporters. The cream-colored coat she was wearing contrasted with the green dress she wore that perfectly matched her eyes. Her vivid red hair was gathered up at the front in double French braids that met in the back to form one long braid over loose hair.

She stood still and composed for a few moments under the barrage of light from the various cameras before taking a step forward. Kendra Canmore joined her and the two women walked together down the middle of the corridor formed by the security personnel, the black haired woman pacing with a graceful deadliness that was all the more apparent because of the elegant regalness with which the reddish gargoyle beside her carried herself.

“Ms. Destine, do you have any comment to make about Mr. Castaway’s accusation that you’re supposed to be a gargoyle at night?” one of the reporters called out loudly.

Dominique Destine paused, glanced over at him with one arched eyebrow, “I should think that the answer to his accusation is fairly obvious,” she responded, dry amusement clear in her tone, “as to why he would make such a patiently ludicrous statement,” she shrugged. “I can only think that it has something to do with my recent donation to the People for Interspecies Tolerance.”

It was the voice that reassured Angela that she was actually looking at her mother no matter how strange it was to see her as a human woman. As she watched the two women continue their journey to the vehicle waiting for them, she was struck by how it seemed that Kendra Canmore was
protecting her mother, the way the black haired woman held herself, the way she watched the area alertly gave the unmistakable impression that she was ready to leap into action should it be required.

“Interesting that Kendra’s acting as her bodyguard,” Fox remarked, echoing Angela’s thoughts.

“I noticed that too,” Elisa seconded her. They watched as Kendra paused by the vehicle, keeping watch while the driver assisted Dominique into the limousine. The redhead woman paused for a second to say something to the young man in the wheelchair. The WVRN news camera just happened to be placed where they could just see Dominique’s face and the concern there, whatever the young man’s response it caused her to smile and reach out and ruffle his hair in an affectionate gesture before sitting down. Kendra Canmore then finally got in herself and the driver closed the door behind her. The long vehicle pulled away from the curb and the excitement for the night obviously over, the scene switched back to the studio and the regular nightly program.

“Well I guess that removes any doubt that she can be Dominique Destine at night as well as in the day,” David Xanatos commented as he turned down the volume of the monitor.

“Who do you think those humans were with Demona?” Hudson asked.

Elisa looked toward the Xanatos’, “I don’t suppose you know any of them? I didn’t recognize anyone.”

Fox shook her head, but David nodded, “The woman who walked in front of Robert is Margaret Jackson, a rather well known work-life effectiveness consultant who is currently working with Nightstone to implement the employee benefits Demona wanted to add,” he said. “I don’t know the identities of the other two women.”

“Do we know anything about the young human, Robert? Who he is, where he lives?” Brooklyn asked. He had seen the fake look of concern on Demona’s face, the way she ran her hand through the young human’s hair. It made him feel sick inside; she was doing it again, acting as if she cared to make the young human trust her and then she would betray him, use him for some evil purpose of her own. The fact that the young human was handicapped just made what she was doing worse in his mind. He had to find out who the young male was so he could warn him not to trust Demona, not to trust her lies.

Elisa frowned at his tone, the intense way he was asking, “No, just his first name,” she admitted reluctantly, staring at him.

“Maybe they’re Kendra Canmore’s friends and Demona is just with them,” Broadway offered.

“Hmm,” Goliath rumbled, “That sounds reasonable.”

“Except for Robert,” Fox commented, “even if Demona met him by way of Kendra Canmore, she appears rather fond of him now.”

“She bought that wheelchair he was using tonight,” Elisa added to the discussion, “Margot Yale asked him about it and he told her that Dominique bought it for him.”

Angela remembered the way her mother had looked at the young human, the concern she had shown for him, the warm smile and then the gargoyle equivalent of a human kiss she had given him by running her hand through his hair. The young female frowned unhappily, who was this young human to Demona that her mother would give him gifts and be so openly affectionate toward him.

“We have to find out who he is so we can warn him about her,” Brooklyn blurted out, “she’s planning on using him for something.”
Angela turned around with a silent snarl, she was getting so tired of Brooklyn’s attitude toward her mother, before she could say anything though, someone else responded.

“I don’t think that will be necessary,” David responded smoothly, “I doubt he’s in any danger since he has a summer internship at Nightstone.”

“How do you know this?” Goliath rumbled out before Elisa could ask almost the same question

“Yes,” seconded Hudson frowningly, “how do you know this?”

Fox and David glanced at one another before Fox replied, “I saw Dominique, Kendra and Robert the weekend they came back from Canada, they were out having lunch together. I managed to get a table near them and overheard enough of the conversation to hear Demona offering him a position in Kendra’s Division.”

“And you didn’t tell us about this?” Elisa stared at the two angrily; she couldn’t believe they had kept this information from them, and it made her wonder what other information they might be keeping to themselves.

“No,” Fox replied calmly, “because the person I saw that day wasn’t acting anything like the old Demona we all knew and loved so well. David and I wanted to try and figure out why before you and the clan confronted her and ruined any chance we had of gathering information without her being aware of what we were doing.”

Goliath rumbled his displeasure while staring at Fox narrow eyed and Elisa flushed angrily, mostly because she couldn’t disagree with the statement. “So did you find out anything?” the detective asked tersely.

David and Fox stared meaningfully at one another for a second, and Brooklyn said his eyes glowing angrily, “She is up to something, I knew it, this was all a scheme of hers.”

Fox glanced away from her husband to raise an eyebrow at the reddish gargoyle, “It’s just that type of reaction we were worried about. That knee jerk Demona must be up to something, let’s run over and stop it.”

“Enough,” Goliath rumbled, staring at his second in command, his disappointment with his behavior clear. The glow in Brooklyn’s eyes faded as he realized the clan leader was not pleased with him. The big lavender male turned back toward the woman sitting behind the desk, “What information did you uncover.” He was unhappy with Fox and David Xanatos for keeping this information from them, but he was less happy about the way his second in command was behaving.

“That Kendra Canmore spends most of her time with Demona,” David answered the question, “she stops by her apartment occasionally but the rest of the time she’s at Demona’s home.”

Elisa stared at them incredulously, surely they weren’t implying that… she stared at the two and realized that they were, “You think they’re lovers?” she asked disbelievingly. She let out a short bark of laughter, “You can’t be serious,” she stated flatly, “did it escape your notice that Kendra Canmore is not only a woman but a human as well.”

Fox shook her head, “No it didn’t, and that’s why we’ve had them followed for so long because it didn’t seem possible to us either. But we’re certain enough of it now to tell you about it.”

“Impossible,” Goliath responded calmly, “this gayness,” His voice clearly indicated his disapproval, “does not exist in the gargoyle race. You are misinterpreting what you are seeing, they cannot be mates.”
Angela stared back and forth between her father and the Xanatos’, both seemed so certain about what they were saying, but both of them could not be right. The idea of her mother having a human lover seemed exceptionally unlikely given the ancient gargoyles opinion of the entire race. Add that to the fact that her mother’s past mates had been male and Kendra Canmore was definitely not, and the idea seemed even more improbable. Father was right; the Xanatos’ were misinterpreting what they were seeing.

“You said that the Canmore lass was also immune to fey magic, the obvious answer is that they’re staying together for safety against the Weird Sisters,” Hudson said confidently, “and quite frankly given what’s been said about those three that sounds like a wise choice on their part. Goliath is right there have never been any gay gargoyles, it simply doesn’t exist in our race.”

Fox stared at them, a crease forming between her brows, “Demona is human part of the time,” she pointed out. She wasn’t however, looking nearly as confident as she had before, Goliath and Hudson seemed very certain about what they were saying.

Hudson waved a taloned hand, dismissing her comment, “She is a gargoyle no matter what her appearance, what you’re saying simply isn’t possible.”

“Well what you’re saying certainly is just as likely an explanation for their behavior as what we thought,” David admitted after sharing an unreadable look with his wife.

Elisa saw the satisfied expressions on Goliath and Hudson’s faces; they believed they had successfully argued their point. She decided it was probably the wisest course of action not to mention to the frequently stubborn clan leader that she doubted they had persuaded Fox and David Xanatos of anything at all except the fact that they wouldn’t believe them. Out of the corner of her eye, the detective noticed Lexington standing off by himself a miserable look on his face and his arms folded across his chest. When she turned her head to look at him he glanced over at her his expression turning wary for a moment before he turned to Fox, “Mind if I take Alex to the nursery?”

Lexington successfully made his escape from the rest of the clan and Elisa’s sharp eyes. He didn’t want to hear anymore of Goliath’s opinions on the subject of homosexual gargoyles not existing. He had heard the clan leader’s opinion on gay humans before, so Goliath’s proclamation in Xanatos’ office hadn’t exactly come as a surprise to him. “I guess I’m not a proper gargoyle am I Alex,” he whispered with bitter hurt to the child he was carrying, “not that that’s exactly news,” he added thinking of his unusual, for a gargoyle, fascination with computers and machinery.

When they got to the nursery, he pulled out one of the child’s toys and amused the young infant with it awhile before leaving Alex to play on his own while he went to the computer and pulled up the encrypted file where he had stored the chat room conversation. Demona could stay human at night, which meant that Greywolf could have been right when she said she saw Kendra Canmore and Dominique Destine together at a gay club.

He knew how he felt, Angela was a beautiful female, he could see that, but he felt nothing for her besides affection as a rookery sister. He had only joined in the competition for her because Brooklyn and Broadway would have harassed him about why he didn’t like her. The truth of the matter was he felt more for Brooklyn than he did for Angela, he found the reddish male’s muscular physique and confidence attractive, but he would never dare let Brooklyn know because he was certain that the second in command did not feel the same way.

Goliath and Hudson were wrong in saying there were no gay gargoyles because there was at least one gay gargoyle, him, that meant that they could be wrong about Demona as well. If Greywolf was right and the Xanatos’ were right, then… “Wow,” he said aloud and then looked around, only Alex who was still playing with his toy was there to hear. Demona had a human lover who was female; he
glanced once again at the chat from that night before encrypting the file.

He didn’t know quite what to think of his realization, on the one hand at least he didn’t feel so quite alone anymore, on the other hand the very idea... He shook his head, his mind struggling with the concept. Then he remembered the way Demona and Kendra Canmore had walked together, their steps perfectly matched, the blue-eyed human so watchful and protective of the gargoyle that only looked human beside her. Suddenly he didn’t find the idea of their being mates so hard to think of after all.

Lexington joined the child on the floor, “What should I do Alex, I should tell him about what I know, he’s the clan leader.” The young child grabbed the stuffed toy and tried to stuff it into his mouth, “No, that’s to play with not to eat,” the web winged gargoyle pulled the toy away and began playing with its arms, “like this.” Alex just stared at the toy and him solemnly, “I guess you’re bored with this one huh,” Lexington said looking around the room for something that would interest the young child.

A shape sorter puzzle caught his eye and he brought it over, “How about this, see the round piece goes into the round hole and the square goes into the square hole,” he explained to the young child. He emptied the toy and laid out the pieces for the child to play with while he considered his options. He could tell Goliath and maybe the clan leader wouldn’t ask many questions about where he had gotten his information. Of course the clan leader might ask and then what could he say? I was in the chat room because I was curious might work and that had been where it had started, so it wasn’t exactly a lie. With Goliath believing there were no gay gargoyles, it would probably never occur to the big lavender male that there might be another reason.

He looked over at Alex who was trying to fit the triangle shape into the square hole of the puzzle, “No that won’t work, you can’t fit that into the square hole, it’s not a square it’s a triangle,” he explained while giving the child the proper shape. What he had just said struck him and he stared at the triangle shape in his hand, “You can’t fit a triangle into a square hole,” he repeated to himself. He would never fit into the shape Goliath seemed to think was the only shape that existed, because he wasn’t a square, he was a triangle. He wasn’t certain what Demona was, but she definitely wasn’t a square, and right now it seemed that she was more of a triangle as well like him.

David and Fox Xanatos had tried to tell Goliath that Demona and Kendra were mates and he hadn’t believed them. Even though Goliath and Hudson might not ask questions, Lexington wasn’t so sure that Brooklyn, Broadway and Angela might not and he was almost certain that Elisa would want to know. The green gargoyle’s jaw set, he wouldn’t tell, there was too much of a chance that questions would be asked that he didn’t want to answer.

Then there was another reason for not telling, and thinking of how much he didn’t want his own secret revealed made him appreciate it even more. He had learned in the chat room that you didn’t out people, you didn’t tell people who weren’t gay about those who were gay. That was what the Xanatos’ had tried to do to Demona, and had only failed because of Goliath’s stubbornness. He wouldn’t do that to her, especially now that it seemed she was changing and not being the enemy of the clan anymore or trying to kill off the human race. It was her personal life and her choice whether or not she chose to tell the clan just like it was his choice to tell or not to tell the clan.
Chapter 13

Saturday, December 20th 1997

Night – Majestic Theater, Manhattan

Dominique exhaled a quiet breath of relief once she saw Robert and the others settle safely inside the limousine, there seemed to be fewer reporters and more onlookers watching as they left the theater. That, combined with the fact that the Quarrymen undoubtedly knew where she currently was, increased the possible danger to her party.

Kendra, standing on the other side of the glass door, turned and nodded to her, indicating that it was time for her to exit. Dominique waited for the black haired woman to open the door and then stepped outside, being careful to not focus on the flashing lights of the mercifully fewer cameras. Despite her best efforts, it had been hard to see anything when she stepped outside the restaurant earlier in the night due to the number of cameras on either side.

A red blur in the air from Dominique’s right and the shout of “Kill the Demon!” was her only warning that they were being attacked. She reached up to catch what appeared to be a brick only to see Kendra’s hand in front of her own, the Jaguar’s chosen had shifted sides and moved to protect her from the attack. The brick slapped into the black haired woman’s open hand, their eyes met, and Dominique’s brow rose, “I would have caught that,” she protested.

In the next instant the reporters and onlookers, realizing what was happening, started shouting in fear and scattering around them, while the security team leader started bellowing orders to his men. The slight shifting of Kendra’s eyes was all Dominique needed to spot the next incoming object, “Yours then,” the black haired woman said just as the brick slammed into the redhead’s hand.

“What?” the redhead noted as she shook her hand after dropping the brick, that had stung slightly. Kendra grinned merrily and Dominique smirked right back at her. The redhead knew she should be
more serious about the situation, especially since Robert, Sharon and the others were still nearby, but she had been so good since they had gotten back from Canada. A battle would be rather welcome right now, especially since she was not the one instigating it. Well…her sense of fairness had her acknowledging that she had started this in a way by donating to PIT, but really, this was rather an overreaction on the Quarrymen’s part.

The security team leader trying to grab her interrupted her thoughts, she easily evaded him and gave him a narrow eyed look, “Ms. Destine,” he protested, “we need to get you out of here!”

She evaded him once again, while at the same time snatching another incoming brick out of the air and dropping it on the ground. It earned her a startled glance from the brawny man, and seemed to be the signal to her attackers that it was time to try something different, more men came running up carrying hammers. Kendra took a few steps forward to intercept them.

Dominique grabbed the man, “Get Robert and the others out of here,” she ordered him, “otherwise they’ll follow us and attack the vehicle. Kendra and I can handle this and the police should be here very soon. Now!” she yelled, as he looked ready to argue with her.

Another closer yell of, “Kill the Demon!” had her turning away from the security team leader, two Quarrymen, hoods on and charged hammers raised over their heads were rushing towards her. She altered her stance, her weight mostly on her rear foot as she waited a half second for the right moment. Just as the Quarryman in the lead raised his hammer slightly in preparation to bring it swinging down, she shifted her weight to her front foot, bringing her left leg forward in a powerful high kick. The ripping sound of the seam of her dress giving way reminded her too late that it wasn’t really cut for this type of activity, as her extended foot caught the hooded man perfectly underneath his chin, snapping his head back and lifting him slightly into the air. His feet slid out from under him as he fell backward unconscious, the hammer falling from his hands with a loud clatter onto the walkway.

She ducked underneath the wild swing of the second man, stepping just slightly to the side and then bringing her left knee up hard into his groin. His strangled sounding scream coincided with the sound of his hammer dropping on the ground. She took a step backward away from her attacker; the Quarryman was bent over clutching the sorely abused flesh between his legs. The hooded man lifted his head to brokenly snarl, “You bitch. I’m going to make you regret that.” A swift hard right cross to his chin ended his chances of following up on the threat.

She turned slightly, the security leader was staring at her wide eyed, “Now!” she repeated her order, this time he obeyed turning toward the vehicle and grabbing a few of his men.

“You four with me,” she heard him shout, “We’re getting the boy and the others out of here to safety. The rest of you stay with Ms. Destine.” The last thing she heard from him was him muttering, “Not that she looks like she needs the help.”

Dominique chuckled to herself and glanced around to check on Kendra. The black haired woman was snatching a hammer from a large Quarryman as if he had barely been gripping it, the redhead grinned as she imagined the surprise the human was probably feeling right now. In the next instant, Kendra’s fist met his chin and Dominique doubted he was thinking of anything as the redhead watched the hooded man fall to the ground a few yards away from her.

Movement drew her eye and she turned to watch the limousine carrying Robert, Rachael, Sharon and Margaret pull away from the curb with two of the security vehicles, one before and one behind it, acting as escorts. She nodded in satisfaction.

A warning, “Ms. Destine,” along with the sense that something was behind her, had the redhead
instinctively ducking the swing of a hammer and whirling around to face her attacker. A fast fist to the Quarryman’s stomach bent her attacker over; she grabbed his head in both hands and raised it slightly before bringing it down hard onto her swiftly rising knee. As that attacker slumped to the ground, a kick of her foot to the handle of the hammer the man had dropped switched it off before someone stepped onto it and got a nasty shock from it. Another Quarryman had been with him, but the three security men who had been left behind were taking care of him.

The sound of sirens rapidly approaching heralded the arrival of the police, and Dominique watched as the remaining Quarrymen scattered to escape them.

“Race traitor!” the nearby yell had her whirling toward the sound, anxiety clenching her stomach. There was a Quarryman standing perhaps twenty feet away and her eyes widened in fear as she saw the gun in his hand aimed right at Kendra. “No!” Knowing that he was too far away even as close as he was, Dominique started running towards him even as she heard the gunfire. Kendra leaned, almost in a casual movement to the side, evading the bullet as she scooped a brick from the ground and threw it with unerring accuracy at the Quarryman. He screamed a high-pitched sound of pain and dropped the gun to sink to the ground and hold his hand.

Dominique stopped in front of him, “How dare you,” she growled at the kneeling human, furious that he had threatened her mate. She wanted badly to lash out at him, to hurt him, but he was unarmed and obviously out of the fight. He looked up at her and she could see the fear in his brown eyes though the holes in his hood, she reached out and yanked it from his head and then stared at the teenaged young male revealed by her action.

He couldn’t be any older than Robert she realized with some surprise. Her anger, if not cooled, was now at least more controlled, and instead of striking him, she kicked the weapon he had dropped further away from him.

“We’ve got him Ms. Destine,” the three security men who had been left behind came up, one of them using a handkerchief to grab up the pistol and the other two standing over the young man, their looks warning him not to move.

“I’m alright,” Kendra’s warmly reassuring voice had her whirling around, grabbing the black haired woman’s coat and holding it open while her eyes worriedly examined the black haired woman for any sign of injury. She could see no sign of a wound and a quick altering of her vision allowed her to verify that by checking her life energy. “I’m alright,” Kendra repeated softly.

Dominique didn’t care who was watching, she stepped closer and pulled the black haired woman into a tight hug, “You need to stop scaring me like that,” she scolded, remembering their first flight together when Kendra had almost taken a dive into the ground.

Kendra’s arms wrapped around her and squeezed briefly, “I’m sorry; I’ll try not to have anyone shoot at me again,” she promised and the redhead could hear the thread of humor in her tone.

The redhead indulged herself by staying within her lover’s arms a few seconds longer before releasing the black haired woman and taking a step away when Kendra released her. She looked into the blue eyes seeing the expected warmth and amusement there; she shook her head and smiled crookedly back, “You do that.”

A sudden increase in the volume of the approaching sirens and flashing blue lights interrupted anything Kendra might have said as the first police car screeched to a stop in front of the theater. Detective Bluestone, how amusing, Dominique thought sardonically as she noticed who was getting out of the vehicle.

The redhead leaned over, “So, I got three,” she said in a low tone, glancing around at the unconscious Quarrymen littering the area.
Kendra smirked, “Five.”

Dominique frowned and started counting, “My heels slowed me down,” she defended herself after a few seconds.

Kendra let out a bark of laughter, staring briefly down at the heels in question. “I believe you; don’t feel bad though, I think the three security guys only got the one, which might be why they’re giving us such wary looks.”

Dominique glanced over at the three men standing in a huddle together; she turned away and smirked after seeing the same expression Kendra was referring to on their faces.

“Ms Destine,” a timid voice had her turning around to see who was talking to her. It was one of the reporters who had been there and scattered for cover when the Quarrymen had attacked. The man turned and impatiently motioned the cameraman following well behind him closer.

“Do you have any comment about what’s happened tonight,” he asked holding his microphone out toward her.

Dominique stared at him consideringly, “Perhaps, if you will give me a moment alone I’ll think about it,” she finally said.

She turned to Kendra, motioned for her to lean closer, “If I say anything it will make this situation with the Quarrymen worse than it already is,” she whispered quietly, staring into her mate’s face. “I don’t mind for myself, it may even keep them away from the clan, but I want to know how you feel about it before I say anything.”

“We need to be able to protect the others from them,” Kendra whispered back.

“I can hire security to guard the house at least until Rachael and Sharon leave, and we will have to stay away from Robert until this dies down. I can use the security team we had tonight to escort Margaret around town until she leaves,” Dominique offered.

The redhead watched Kendra’s face as the black haired woman considered what she had said, finally the blue eyes re-focused upon her and her mate nodded, “Go for it, my cousin will find out that he really didn’t want us as his enemies,” the blue eyes turned chill.

Dominique reached up and gripped her forearms, “We don’t have to do this, I don’t want you to go against your clan.”

Kendra shook her head in disagreement, “Except for my father I’ve always been against my clan, I just gave them a chance to mend their murderous ways. Jon’s refused his chance, and it looks like he’s not going to leave you alone on his own, so we would have to do this anyway. Our choice is simply when, I’d rather go ahead and deal with him now than later.”

Dominique stared into her eyes for a few seconds more before nodding sharply; she turned around to the reporter and motioned for him to come closer.

“I think we can all see tonight what the Quarrymen are really doing” Dominique turned and indicated the young man the police were taking away. “Turning young people into obedient followers ready to kill anyone Castaway thinks is a threat to his organization.” She turned back to the reporter, “The Quarrymen tried to kill me tonight simply because I chose to support PIT, a group that stands opposed to their goals. I think that says quite a bit about the true nature of their organization and its supposed protection of this city’s citizens.”
She shook her head, her expression solemn, “Who exactly should we fear the most?” she asked him. “The gargoyles who are trying to stop the criminals of this city, or these Quarrymen who fire anti-aircraft guns in the middle of Manhattan injuring dozens of people, and then tonight made a blatant attempt to murder Kendra Canmore and I because we don’t agree with their views or their goals?”

As soon as the reporter backed away, she stepped closer to Kendra, “I’ll try and make arrangements for security around the house tonight.” She sighed unhappily, “I guess I’ll have to do without a personal assistant for awhile longer,” she said in a low tone to keep others from overhearing her. She wasn’t pleased with the way things were working out, she hadn’t anticipated her donation starting an all out war with the Quarrymen, but if that was what they wanted then she wouldn’t disappoint them. What she wouldn’t do was endanger others by getting them caught in the crossfire.

Kendra nodded in a particular direction, “Don’t you think you should let her make up her mind about that, especially since she’s here now.” Dominique turned around following Kendra’s gaze, the limousine and the two escorting security vehicles were parked at the curb, apparently they hadn’t gone very far. Of course the entire fight hadn’t taken that long either, perhaps five minutes at the most.

Sharon had already gotten out of the limo and was headed rapidly in their direction. “Are you two alright?” the short haired brunette asked in a worried voice as she came up to them. “Gregory turned on the satellite TV in the limousine and we watched the entire thing.” She nodded toward the single reporter and his crew, “The camera crew over there was filming the entire time; they weren’t that close, but he has a pretty good zoom lens on his camera so we saw everything.”

The redhead looked over towards the vehicle; she could see Robert and Rachael sitting within it. Margaret was standing on the sidewalk looking toward them. “We’re not hurt,” she turned back to Sharon, reassuring her.

“I thought not, but I wasn’t sure,” she looked back and forth between them, “You two were amazing,” she said her tone awed. “I didn’t realize you could fight like that.”

Dominique smiled, but Sharon’s statement only reminded her of how vulnerable the young woman was, “Let’s go to the limo, the windows of this one are dark enough to give us privacy and I need to talk with everyone.”

The redhead waited until the doors were shut behind them before starting to speak, “The Quarrymen won’t stop with just one attack tonight, they’ll keep coming after me and I probably just made myself more of a target with what I said to the reporter.”

“I suspect you’re right,” Rachael agreed pointing up at the monitor which was still showing the scene around the theater with the police arresting the unconscious Quarrymen and occasionally panning over to the limousine in which they were sitting. “But given what they did tonight, I suspect you really didn’t make yourself much more of a target than you already were just from making that donation.”

Wonderful, Dominique thought, live coverage, everyone had already heard what she had said to the reporter. She turned back to Rachael and smiled wryly, “Undoubtedly,” she agreed. “I’ll make arrangements with a security firm to have the house watched while you and Sharon are there.” She turned toward Robert, “Robert, it’s probably best if I don’t see you for awhile, I don’t want them to target you or your Aunt and Uncle.”

“No,” he protested, looking rebellious.

“It doesn’t mean that Kendra and I won’t call you,” Dominique leaned forward, her face and tone
earnest, “just that we shouldn’t visit you in person until this calms down.” Robert looked only slightly mollified, “Besides, I suspect after tonight you’re Aunt and Uncle won’t be too pleased with the idea of letting you go out with me anymore anyway,” Dominique commented as she leaned back into her seat with a resigned sigh. “Not that I blame them, I’m hoping I can get them to agree in a month or so to let you come to Nightstone so you can tour the building.”

“And if all else fails,” Kendra added, “you’ll be eighteen in a few months and they won’t be able to prevent you from seeing us anyway.”

Robert looked back and forth between them, “Do you think this will be over in a few months?”

“One way or another this will be settled in a few months,” Kendra finally spoke, her voice flatly resolute.

Dominique stared at the black haired woman troubled; sapphire blue eyes met her green ones. “I know you want me to give him chances, but how many chances have you needed since the Ancient One freed you of the Weird Sister’s enchantments?” Kendra asked her gently.

The redhead frowned, there were more than a few differences in what had happened to her and what had happened to Jon Canmore, “He doesn’t know what was done to him, or who did it and why,” she pointed out.

“You’re right, he doesn’t,” Kendra agreed, “but I can’t permit him to harm you, or our friends, or the clan.”

“Then maybe he needs to know,” Rachael stated, staring at Kendra, “before any…permanent and irreversible decisions are made.”

Both Dominique and Kendra turned to look at her, “How?” Kendra asked. “I want to give him as little information as possible, because if he doesn’t change after he knows the truth, then it might put everyone at risk.”

“In the same way Macbeth learned the truth,” the Cree woman answered.

The redhead frowned, recalling what she and Macbeth had been shown, “Do the spirits know enough about the Canmore’s past? I never actually saw the Weird Sister’s enchanting any of them, though I did see the enchantments on them.”

“There’s no harm in asking,” Margaret responded before Rachael could, “The Ancient One wouldn’t have shown you anything that didn’t relate directly to your own history, so he could know much more about the Canmores than you think. And even if he doesn’t, the other spirits might, between them all…” she shrugged.

Kendra stared at her for a second, “Alright,” she agreed, “I’ll ask, I do want to give Jon every chance I can to decide to stop what he’s doing.” She took in a deep breath, staring at the carpet between her feet before looking up again, “Because I really don’t want to have to kill him.”

Dominique stared at the black haired woman, at the grim but resolute look on her face; the redhead had no doubt that Kendra would kill Jon to protect her or others from him. Dominique also had no doubt that doing so would forever scar her mate, “Then let’s do everything we can to make sure that it doesn’t come to that,” she said, shifting her eyes from Kendra to Rachael and Margaret.

Loud knocking on the darkened window of the vehicle, along with a faint, “Ms. Destine, I need to speak with you,” interrupted them.
Dominique looked out, she could see the silhouette of a man through the dark window, but that was all. She rolled down the window nearest her a few inches and recognized the man standing there immediately, “Detective Bluestone what do you need?” she asked impatiently.

“I need you and Ms. Canmore to come to the precinct office to make your statement, Ms. Destine, Ms. Canmore,” the detective stated firmly, his eyes shifting between the two of them.

One eyebrow arched, “In a few minutes detective, I’m not finished speaking to my friends yet.” She raised the window again without giving him a chance to argue. It didn’t however stop him from knocking on the window once again.

“Impatient, isn’t he,” noted Margaret with a frown.

“Detective Bluestone,” she said once again, her displeasure with him clear as she lowered the window.

“Do you and Ms. Canmore intend to give statements on tonight’s events, Ms. Destine?” he asked, this time he only directed his comment to the redhead.

“Yes detective, we intend to give our statements, we even intend on letting you drive us there while my driver takes Mr. McKenzie home,” she had startled him with that she saw, “but how soon that occurs is dependent on you letting me finish my conversation here,” she snapped.

This time she waited, staring at him impatiently, he flushed, “Let me know when you’re ready then Ms. Destine.”

“I’ll do that detective,” she assured him before raising the window once again. She took in a calming breath before turning towards the young woman sitting at the back of the limousine. “Sharon,” Dominique said, “I think it best that we delay your start date for awhile longer to let things settle down here. The Quarrymen might target you once it’s known you’re my personal assistant.

Sharon immediately shook her head, “I don’t want to do that. I understood when I accepted your offer that I was agreeing to help you with everything you agreed to do for the Ancient One, not just helping you with Nightstone.” The brunette lifted her chin, “I know I’m your employee, but I’m also another chosen and I want to be involved in this.”

“This could get very dangerous, Sharon,” Dominique frowned at her, “It’s not a game, and as far as I know you’re not immortal,” she gave the young Horse’s chosen an inquiring look. She could be wrong about this, she didn’t remember ever asking.

“No I’m not immortal, but that doesn’t mean that I can’t make this choice.” The younger woman’s hazel eyes met hers determinedly, “Standing up the Quarrymen is the right thing to do, and it’s what the Stallion would expect me to do. Not flee at the first sign of danger leaving you two to face it alone,” her voice held a hint of outrage as she finished speaking.

Dominique stared at Sharon, taken aback by what the younger woman had just said, she understood wanting to please your patron spirit only too well. Did she have the right to deny that to Sharon just because of her own fears? But the thought of failing, of losing the young woman to a Canmore Hunter’s hatred just as she had lost her own clan so long ago… Sharon had only spent two days in her home, but she had watched how she and Kendra interacted, had seen how much the younger woman already looked up to the Jaguar’s chosen even though Kendra seemed unaware of it. Watched the black haired woman patiently teach Sharon dance steps late last night when they returned from taking Robert home and even danced with the younger woman while Kendra gave Sharon tips on how to be a better lead. If Robert reminded her in so many ways of Macbeth’s son
Luach, then Sharon reminded her of Angela, the two shared the same type of idealism and determination to do what they thought was right.

“You have almost two weeks until you’re due to start, we’ll see what happens to the situation here during that time,” it was all she was prepared to give Sharon, more time to consider her decision whether or not the young woman should come at the original time or wait longer. “No, there will be no more argument over this matter right now,” she held up a forbidding hand, giving the younger woman a stern look when she saw the rebellious look in the hazel eyes and the opening of her lips to continue the discussion. Sharon gave her an angry, frustrated look and the redhead was very aware of everyone else inside staring at the two of them.

She looked over towards Kendra for help, saw the understanding and compassion in her mate’s blue eyes. Dominique took in a deep breath, turned back toward Sharon, her expression softer, “Don’t you understand that I’m worried about losing you to their hatred, and of how much it would hurt to have a Hunter take another person I cared about from me just as they’ve taken so many already over the centuries.”

That seemed to take the fight out of the younger woman as she stared the redhead in open surprise, the two of them continued staring at one another for a few more seconds before Sharon dropped her eyes in silent acquiescence. Dominique regarded the younger woman for a moment more before saying, “Do what you can to smooth things over with Robert’s Aunt and Uncle, let them know he has the internship and the only other thing is for him to visit the company to sign his paperwork and get a tour sometime between now and the summer.”

Robert protested, “But what about the visits to Nightstone?”

Dominique looked over at him, “I’ll try and work in the extra visits after they calm down, for now let’s let them think the excitement is over.”

“I’ll go with her,” Margaret offered, “I’m usually pretty good at calming down excited people.”

“Thank you,” Sharon said to her, looking grateful for the backup.

“It’s not a problem,” the tall woman assured her with a smile.

“I’d offer to help as well, but I don’t think my presence would help much,” Rachael commented dryly.

“Bigots,” Sharon said disapprovingly. Robert flushed, looking uncomfortable and Sharon, noticing it, had the grace to be embarrassed, “I’m sorry,” she apologized to him.

“It’s ok, they are,” he admitted, giving Rachael an apologetic look.

The Cree woman smiled at him and reached out to pat him on the arm, “Don’t worry about it, their opinions don’t bother me.”

Dominique debated whether or not to add anything to the conversation, but decided that it was probably best to not. “Alright, now for just one more thing,” she said instead as she pushed the button to open the intercom to her driver. “Gregory, I was hoping that either you or Kendra could help me once again this evening.”

He responded promptly, “What did you need Ms. Destine?” and Kendra looked at her questioningly.

“I’m going to need to arrange for around the clock security of my home for at least the next few nights and perhaps even longer. I’d prefer a security company that knows how to be discrete about
“their employer,” she said meaningfully. “I was hoping that you might have some suggestions.”

Kendra shrugged, “I don’t know of any gay friendly security companies, I might be able to find something in a few days though if Gregory doesn’t know of anyone.”

“Actually,” Gregory responded, “I might know of someone, but I don’t know if their company is too busy right now to take on another client,”

“Understandable,” Dominique replied to him, “Which security company were you thinking of?”

“Masada Security,” Dominique was impressed, she had heard of the company, no wonder Gregory wasn’t certain they could take on another client. “The owner is Michael’s ex,” her driver finished.

Her brow rose, out of the corner of her eye she saw Kendra grinning and then Sharon said under her breath, “It’s a small gay world.”

She looked over at the younger woman, bemused by the comment, “I’d appreciate if you checked on that as soon as possible, I’d like to get security in place tonight if possible.”

“I’ll make the call immediately Ms. Destine,” he assured her.

“Thank you Gregory,” she replied and cut off the intercom.

“We need to get going,” she said looking over at Kendra, the black haired woman nodded. Dominique turned to Robert, his grey eyes met hers unhappily, she didn’t feel any better about how things were working out but this was the safest thing for her to do for him. This was one young man that she could, and would, save, “Keep yourself safe,” she said reaching out and gripping his arm. “Keep an eye out for anyone following you or watching your house that shouldn’t be there. If you see anything suspicious let whomever you can reach first know about it.”

“Here,” interrupted Kendra, holding out a slender cell phone to him, “take this; I’ll get a second line tomorrow and a replacement phone.”

“Good idea,” Margaret commented, “I’d keep the fact that you have that from your Aunt and Uncle as well just in case their reaction to tonight is extreme.”

Robert looked at her wide eyed for a moment and then nodded, “I will.” He knew she meant that if his Aunt and Uncle reacted to tonight by ordering him to not speak to Ms. Destine again, he honestly didn’t know how likely that was, but it wasn’t entirely unlikely either especially since his uncle thought the Quarrymen were right and the gargoyles were a menace.

Dominique nodded to the Bison’s chosen, that had been a wise suggestion. No matter how Robert’s Aunt and Uncle responded tonight, he would have a way of contacting them so long as they remained unaware that he had a cell phone.

She rose and hugged Robert her arms going around his shoulders, “Never doubt that I care about you,” she whispered to him as his arms wrapped around her in return. She heard his surprised breath and then the strong young arms around her tightened to almost the point of being painful before relaxing once again. She had made the mistake of never actually telling Luach what she felt for him, and then she had forever lost the chance because of the Weird Sisters. She wasn’t going to make that mistake with this young man.

A few minutes later Kendra and she watched as the limousine pulled away, escorted by the two security vehicles. She turned to the waiting detective, “I trust that your vehicle at least has comfortable seats.”
“Umm,” he glanced uncertainly toward a late model dark sedan, he was pretty sure his seats didn’t compare to the one’s he had seen inside the limousine.

Night - Quarryman Headquarters in Lower Manhattan

“Who ordered this attack?!” Jon Canmore stared at the television screen, appalled, this was just the type of publicity that the Quarrymen did not need at this time.

“Not any one of us,” one of the men assured him, “we think they just got together and decided to do this after her earlier appearance.”

Jon grimaced, he didn’t know how the Demon managed it, but tonight had made it clear that she could appear human at night as well as during the day. Her appearance at the restaurant had neatly diffused his earlier announcement and made him look like a fool in the process, the Demon had even referred to it as a patently ridiculous statement. That had been humiliating enough, but this…it would have been one thing if she had been in her true form instead of this sorcerous illusion, but for them to make the attempt when she appeared to be human was disastrous for the organization. In addition, the Demon had immediately capitalized upon it, accusing the Quarrymen of purposefully targeting youth to turn them into murderers. The only thing more disastrous she could have done was openly compare them to the Nazis or KKK.

“We have to distance ourselves from them, make an announcement that we do not condone in any way their actions tonight,” his second in command said reluctantly. “This was too public, and they made it too obvious they were trying to kill her, this will be much worse than the flack we got for breaking up that PIT meeting.”

His second was right, that night had been a public relations fiasco and because of it, they had ordered their members to leave any more PIT meetings strictly alone because the press was beginning to draw parallels between them and the KKK for employing similar violent tactics against those who disagreed with them. Tonight was guaranteed to stir those accusations up once again, only they would be much worse and it would take much longer for them to fade away.

Jon nodded, “I’ll do it tonight.” The other men left him staring at the television screen his mind frantically working; he had to do something to turn this around, to show everyone that Dominique Destine was not the outraged innocent victim that she was pretending to be. His eyes widened, he had it, there was no way she could disprove his allegations this time, the mere fact that her company had developed something like the carrier virus would damn her in and of itself, whether or not people believed she had tried to wipe out the entire human race.

And his cousin, Jon felt a wave of disgust at the suspicion that was rising in his mind after witnessing how concerned the Demon had been that Kendra was injured and their embrace. Surely, his cousin hadn’t sunk so far as to actually sleep with the Demon?

Late Night - Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan

“Elisa,” Goliath rumbled as she entered Xanatos’ office joining the gargoyles gathered there.

“Hey Goliath,” she greeted him tiredly, “I’ve spoke to Matt, Demona and Kendra Canmore are at the precinct station making their statements now.”

“We have yet to watch what occurred,” the big male admitted, “we were patrolling when Xanatos
informed us of what happened. We decided to wait for you since you said you had not seen it either.”

“Is mother alright?” Angela asked her, she wasn’t certain what was going on, only that the Quarrymen had attempted to kill her mother and failed.

The expression on Elisa’s face was an odd mix of a grimace and a wry smile, “Oh she’s fine, and apparently the press is currently busy painting her and Kendra Canmore as crosses between Lara Croft and Wonder Woman.”

“Really?” Lexington remarked looking surprised and impressed.

Angela looked over at the web-winged gargoyle with a confused frown; she had no idea who the two women Elisa had mentioned were or why the press would compare her mother to them, but it was obvious that Lexington did, and considered it a complement.

“I would say so,” Fox agreed, “Quite frankly I’m jealous, I had no idea Demona could fight that well, especially in three inch heels.”

“Personally, I liked the garters,” David Xanatos commented with a grin.

“You would,” Fox’s tone had enough of a bite to it that the grin on his face faded noticeably, replaced by a startled look at his wife’s show of jealousy.

“Maybe we ought to watch the tape,” Elisa interrupted, staring at the two of them. This was the second time she had heard garters mentioned and she was really beginning to wonder why.

“That sounds like a good idea,” Hudson added, confused himself as to what was going on with the married couple.

The flickering of the flat screen on the wall drew their attention as David started the replay of the earlier live broadcast.

The clan watched as the group left the theater just as they had before with the three women and the young man in the wheelchair leaving first. “We know his full name now, it’s Robert McKenzie,” Elisa mentioned quietly. Brooklyn glanced over at her sharply, making a note of the name, now all he needed was a number and he could warn the kid about Demona’s true nature.

“Unfortunately, that’s not an uncommon name; it might take awhile to track him down,” David responded and Elisa nodded, she had thought of that already.

The clearly shouted yell of ‘kill the demon’ drew everyone’s attention back to the monitor. Angela watched, first in concern as the Quarrymen threw bricks at her mother and then in amazement as her mother knocked out a Quarryman with a well-timed and placed kick to his chin. Looking at the shoes on her mother’s human feet Angela understood Fox’s earlier comment about her mother’s heels and being impressed that she was fighting in them.

The manner in which her mother dealt with the second attacking Quarryman had all the males in the room wincing upon hearing the human male’s scream of pain. “Garters,” murmured David Xanatos, pausing the picture as Demona brought her knee up into the Quarryman’s chin. Angela stared at the screen not certain to what he was referring.

“What are these garters you keep mentioning?” Hudson asked looking over at the dark haired man.

“They’re used to hold up stocking hoses,” Elisa explained briefly, understanding now why garters
had been mentioned a few times. The dress Demona was wearing had ripped up the side far enough for the black garters she was wearing to be just barely seen along with a flash of pale flesh above her black stocking hose. Men...

“So?” Hudson inquired, confused, that didn’t really explain why it seemed to be important.

“Never mind,” David grumbled, as his wife smirked at him. Angela was confused, she understood now what garters were and that her mother was wearing them to hold up her stocking hose, but she didn’t understand why that fact would be significant enough for Xanatos to make a point of mentioning it.

They heard her mother order the security team to escort the limousine out of the area, leaving Kendra and she behind to keep the Quarrymen’s attention. Angela frowned; this was starting to look a lot like what mother had done when she helped them escape from the staged Quarrymen attack. “They’re actors,” Brooklyn announced his opinion, “and it’s a trick just like what she tried to pull a month ago,” his tone clearly indicated that he felt his suspicions had finally been vindicated. Angela clenched her hands, but she couldn’t disagree, the same thought was on her mind as well.

“Except for one thing,” Fox replied freezing the monitor on the wall, “John Castaway’s already issued a statement repudiating their members’ actions tonight and denying that the Quarrymen leadership had any involvement in the planning of their attack.”

“What?” the brick red gargoyle said confused.

“She’s right,” Elisa confirmed, “Matt’s already looked into it, those were real Quarrymen and they were definitely trying to kill Demona. The first thing they did when they regained consciousness was to try and defend their actions by claiming that what we’re seeing is an illusion and underneath she’s really a demon.” She had initially thought the same thing as Brooklyn, but this had all been very real.

Angela let out an inaudible breath, relieved, and then she felt ashamed that she had been so willing to believe the worst of her mother. As incredible as it seemed, Demona really had been protecting the humans in the limousine. She drew in a sharp breath as she realized the significance of that, her mother never protected humans, she hated the entire race, and yet she had done just that rather consistently tonight. What was so special about those humans and especially about the younger human in the wheelchair that Demona would protect them?

“That should go over well as a defense,” Fox commented dryly, interrupting Angela’s thoughts, “I wonder if they’ve noticed this is 1997 and not 1597.”

“If it’s a real attack then why does she look like she’s having fun?” Broadway asked staring at the monitor, which had stopped with the redhead mid-screen caught with a clear look of amusement on her face as she turned away from the human male who seemed to be in charge of the security team.

“Because she likes to fight? And she’s been being very good lately?” David said with a grin that said he understood Demona’s motivations entirely.

“Or maybe because he just said something funny,” Fox added.

Angela glanced at the two humans dubiously and then back at the monitor, she frowned, Broadway was right Demona did appear to be having fun.

“He ordered some of his men to stay behind to guard her,” Owen spoke up, “and then he added, ‘not that she looks like she needs the help’.”

Everyone turned to stare at the blonde man, “Good eyes Owen,” David complemented him after a
surprised second. “I guess that answers it then, she was amused at what he said.”

Angela’s lips curved upward as she looked at the amused expression on her mother’s face again, it did make sense now. When the taped broadcast began playing once more, Angela began paying attention to more than just her mother, that was when she realized just how well Kendra Canmore fought. Her mother was an excellent warrior, but the black haired woman looked like she was playing with the Quarrymen she was fighting, disarming them with noticeable ease and in one case grabbing one of the hooded men that attempted to run away and yanking him back so she could knock him unconscious.

Then one of the few remaining Quarrymen drew a handgun, Demona shouted ‘No’ and started running toward him. Angela had heard that truly frightened tone in her mother’s voice only twice before, once when Thailog was about to kill her and then a little over a month ago when the human her mother had hired to kill Goliath had tried to kill all of them.

Kendra, all in one smooth motion, leaned to the side, scooped up a brick and threw it. “Every time I see that I’m more impressed,” Fox noted as the Quarryman screamed, dropped the weapon and fell to his knees, “amazing reflexes to dodge that correctly, and she barely looks before throwing the brick.”

Her mother ran up to the kneeling Quarryman, Angela heard the fury in her mother’s tone and she watched anxiously as Demona snatched the hood from the man’s head. Only the Quarryman was barely a man and they could see that fact register as Demona kicked his weapon away instead of attacking him, leaving him to the two humans that came up as she turned to Kendra Canmore.

Angela’s jaw dropped in numb amazement as she watched her mother grab Kendra Canmore’s coat, opening it and looking the other woman over closely before pulling the black haired woman into a tight hug. Weeks ago when they had both come back from Canada, Angela had thought that Demona kept Kendra Canmore alive because she had some use for the human woman. The young gargoyle hadn’t revisited the question of what Kendra Canmore was to her mother since the clan started learning about what the Weird Sisters had done to Demona. She had been too busy worrying about her mother’s temper and the possibility of her deciding to attack Goliath and Elisa, while at the same time worrying about Elisa being undercover with the Quarrymen to wonder about Kendra Canmore. It had never occurred her that her mother would help Kendra simply because she cared about the human, yet here was the clear evidence that she did care.

One didn’t need to be a lip reader to decipher the discussion between the two when Demona released Kendra. Her mother looked around and counted the Quarrymen, made some comment, and then the black haired woman glanced down at the heels on her mother’s feet laughed and nodded in response. It was easy to guess that they were comparing numbers of Quarrymen defeated and that Demona had blamed her footwear for having less than Kendra. What was different was the humor with which the comparison took place; Angela would have expected her mother to be more annoyed that she hadn’t defeated as many Quarrymen as Kendra, not smiling about it a moment later.

The young lavender female continued watching the monitor intently, not paying any attention to the reactions of the other’s in the room. That was somewhat unfortunate, for if she had she would have seen the Xanatos’ sharing knowing, satisfied looks, and Brooklyn’s expression of continued suspicious disbelief. She would have seen Elisa’s narrow eyed intentness and the slight frown on her face as she watched the interaction between the ancient gargoyle and the human woman, and Goliath and Hudson’s puzzlement at Demona’s friendliness toward the human woman. Lastly, at the back of the room behind everyone, she might have noticed the pleased and somewhat incredulous smile on Lexington’s face as he watched Demona and Kendra and saw for himself what Greywolf had talked about in the chat room.
Then the reporter came up and asked Demona if she had a comment to make about the attack, her mother told him she would consider it and then she turned to Kendra. Angela watched the intense quiet conversation between the two, the attention Demona was paying to Kendra’s words, how closely they were standing to each other and how at ease they seemed with one another, and suddenly the lavender female could see how the Xanatos’ could misinterpret her mother’s relationship with the human woman. At the moment, they did look very much like mates.

Elisa stared at what she was seeing on the monitor, she had been so sure weeks ago that the only reason the ancient gargoyle was keeping Kendra around was to help her persuade the clan she was right to war against humanity. Then Demona had hired the black haired woman when they returned from Canada, and the clan had heard the tale from Macbeth, and then things had gotten so confusing with trying to figure out if what Macbeth had told them was the truth or another scheme and if Kendra was involved in it for some unknown reason of her own… If she had been asked why the two were cooperating before seeing this, she would have suggested that both of them had their grudges against the Weird Sisters and that was why Demona was willing to put her hatred of humanity aside long enough to work with a Canmore. Demona wasn’t looking as if she had any problems with Kendra being a human or a Canmore right now. As a matter of fact, it looked very much like Demona was consulting with Kendra before deciding whether or not to make a statement to the reporter. The idea that the ancient gargoyle would seek a human’s opinion before making such a decision was startling to say the least.

Angela watched as her mother turned around and summoned the human reporter over with a gesture, she motioned toward the young man who had tried to shoot Kendra and then essentially accused the Quarrymen of purposefully turning him into a murderer. Angela’s eyes widened in alarm as her mother asked the reporter who the people had to fear the most from, the gargoyles or the Quarrymen, and in the process, Angela feared, making herself even more of a target for the Quarrymen than she had been before.

Goliath had thought that the gargoyle he had known so long ago had died, that there was nothing left of his Angel of the Night in Demona. Yet tonight he had seen glimpses of her once again, she had protected the humans with her by sending them away to safety while she fought the Quarrymen. She had even tried to protect Kendra Canmore from the Quarryman who had attempted to shoot the human woman, and then she had controlled her temper and hadn’t harmed the injured young Quarryman even thought it was clear she had wanted too. A few days ago, she had ordered the clan to stay away from her so that they would not become targets of the Weird Sister’s vengeance, and now she was making herself a target for the Quarrymen. Was it possible that she was doing these things because she regretted her past actions against the clan and wished to atone for them?

“Elisa I have to say I’m impressed that you managed to defeat her that day you met her in the park,” David Xanatos’ voice drew Goliath out of his thoughts, the lavender gargoyle looked over at his human clan member remembering the day she had protected them from Demona.

The dark haired woman stared at Xanatos suspiciously wondering just how he had heard about that incident. “That’s because she didn’t fight anything like what I just saw,” she finally replied, “not at all.” She didn’t like to admit it, but she wasn’t sure she could have beat Demona that day if she had fought anything like how Elisa had just seen the gargoyle fight.

The other night the question of whether or not the Weird Sisters enchantments upon Demona had something to do with her attacks on the clan had given Elisa a pounding headache. Tonight she was forced to once again consider the same question, before the kidnapping Kendra Canmore had told her that Demona was an accomplished fighter. The comment had puzzled her then because she didn’t really think that the ancient gargoyle fought all that well considering how long Demona had to learn how. Watching the gargoyle tonight, even if she had been in her human guise as Dominique
Destine, had made it clear to Elisa that Demona had never fought them to the extent of her true abilities, she had held herself back and that brought up the question of why.

“What are you saying lass?” asked Hudson.

Elisa stared at the monitor; the picture was paused on the limousine that Demona had gotten into after the fight with the Quarrymen. “That the Demona I fought didn’t fight nearly as well as the Demona we saw fighting the Quarrymen tonight.”

“Are you saying that’s not Demona?” Broadway asked wide-eyed.

“No,” Elisa said turning to him, “that’s not what I meant at all. I just mean that when I fought her she obviously didn’t fight as well as she could have, she held herself back.”

“Interesting,” David Xanatos commented thoughtfully.

---

Almost Midnight – Library, Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan

Elisa followed Goliath into the castle library wondering what it was her friend wanted to talk to her about, he had been rather quiet ever since they watched the tape of Demona’s altercation with the Quarrymen.

“Elisa, I do not believe that Demona has told us the entire truth,” the big lavender male spoke as soon as the door shut behind them.

The detective smiled wryly, “No, I don’t think she’s told us about everything either,” she agreed.

“Before Demona was kidnapped we agreed that we should speak to Kendra Canmore,” Goliath said, “perhaps she can tell us something Demona has not.”

“Maybe,” the detective commented, somehow she didn’t doubt that Kendra might know, but whether or not the black haired woman would share that information was another matter. “Kendra and Demona appear to be a lot closer than I would have thought given who Kendra is,” she finally broached the subject that had been on her thoughts since seeing the ancient gargoyle hug the human woman.

“Mmm,” Goliath rumbled thoughtfully, “Demona was treating her…” He paused a puzzled frown on his face that slowly shifted to more of a bemused expression, as if he couldn’t believe his own thoughts, “As if she were clan,” he finally finished softly.

Elisa stared at him, she hadn’t quite known what to think of the obvious concern Demona had shown for Kendra Canmore. At least Goliath’s interpretation of it was much more believable than the Xanatos’. “They did seem rather close; I can even understand why David and Fox thought they might be lovers.”

The big male was already shaking his head, “They are not,” he said with certainty. Goliath stared at Elisa for a moment, he took a step towards her and reached down and took one of her hands in his own. He met her dark eyed gaze earnestly, “Understand that I do not believe there is anything wrong with accepting a human as clan when they have proven they are a true friend to us as you have proven yourself to be since you first met us.”

The detective smiled up at him, she could guess what he was about to say, “But Demona has never thought that way.”
He smiled back at her, “No, Demona has never thought that way,” he agreed. The smile on his face faded. “Until tonight I would have never believed that she would accept a human as clan,” he said quietly, almost as if he were speaking his thoughts aloud, “even though Macbeth did tell us that she was very close to his son and that the Weird Sisters had to take her memories of him away before she would betray them.”

“Shared adversity does bring people closer,” Elisa pointed out, “and they both have reason to hate the Weird Sisters. It does give them a lot of common ground.” She took in a deep breath, she had to know if what she suspected he was considering was true, “You’re thinking of allowing her back into the clan.”

He didn’t immediately deny it, instead he looked thoughtful, “No…” he finally responded, “at least not yet. I do not understand why she appears to have changed so suddenly and completely.” He stared down at her, his expression troubled and confused, “Elisa, she was acting like a true gargoyle tonight.”

She could see the renewed hope in his eyes; he had given up on Demona only after it became painfully clear that his ex-mate would not and did not want to change. Even then, it had pained him that he had failed to persuade her to give up her hatred and bitterness. “You’re hoping that Kendra Canmore can tell us why.”

“Yes,” he agreed simply.

“I’ll find a way to ask her to come to the castle and speak with us,” Elisa promised quietly.

“Thank you,” he said on a deep exhale, the troubled expression on his face never easing.

Elisa nodded hiding her anxiety, what would this mean for the unspoken relationship between them if he allowed Demona back into the clan? She knew Goliath had feelings for her, but they had never openly spoken about it because she was human and he was a gargoyle and that seemed like an insurmountable barrier between them. If Demona had been behaving the way she had because the Weird Sisters’ enchantments had somehow altered her personality and forced her to attack the clan… her thoughts trailed off troubled. The detective wouldn’t have willingly considered it before, but after seeing how Jon was acting and what he had said, she simply didn’t know anymore. If the Weird Sisters were capable of addicting the Canmores to killing gargoyles just to make sure they kept hunting Demona, what had they done to the ancient gargoyle herself to make sure she stayed alone, bitter and angry as the Archmage wanted?

If what she was starting to suspect was true, would Demona want Goliath back now that she was free of the Weird Sisters’ enchantments, and what would Goliath do if she did, now that she was acting like the gargoyle he had fallen in love with so long ago, his Angel of the Night?

---

*Almost Midnight – Battlements, Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan*

“Angela?” Broadway followed the lavender female outside hesitantly, not certain if she wanted company right now or not. She turned and held out her hand to him, and with a sigh of relief, he quickened his pace. “What’s wrong?” he asked as he took her smaller hand in his. She ducked her head away from his gaze, looking shame-faced, “Angela?” he repeated her name softly.

“We should be with mother,” she finally responded, looking up at him, her tone conveying her anger, disappointment, and resentment.
He glanced down at her intently, not missing the fact that she had probably really wanted to say I instead of we. “Are you mad with Goliath for not letting you go see her?”

“I’m mad at both Father and Mother,” she admitted, turning away from him to look out over the city. “She’s changed Broadway, really changed,” she turned back toward him. “You saw what she did tonight; she’s taking on the Quarrymen for us. How many more battles can she fight by herself?” she asked him passionately.

“She has Kendra Canmore,” he said, and then shook his head. That sounded so very odd, but no odder than realizing that it seemed to be the truth after seeing how Demona acted toward the human woman.

“Isn’t that just more proof of how much she’s changed,” Angela responded quietly, “that she has a human friend?”

“She’s changed,” he agreed wholeheartedly. “It’s just that it’s been so sudden, it’s hard to trust that it’s real this time,” he glanced at her apologetically. “It’s been less than two weeks since she came back from Canada, and we started learning about what those three fey did to her. I think everyone just needs more time to let everything we’ve learned sink in.” Under his breath, he added, “I know I need it.”

Angela slumped, she knew he had a point, everything had been happening very rapidly. “Is she more like how she used to be?” she asked.

Broadway thought back, dredging up his memories of the scarlet haired gargoyle before she became Demona, when she had been Goliath’s mate. He remembered her being stern, watchful, but kind and in rare moments playful and fond of the occasional joke. Even then though, she had been angry and resentful of the humans in the castle, and he had overheard enough talk from the clan elders to know that the clan’s second in command hated Princess Katherine and the Magus for the way the two humans treated and spoke of them.

“Maybe,” he said thoughtfully, “but even then she didn’t like how the humans in the castle were treating us. She did have a sense of humor though, and she was never unkind to any of us back then.” He was unaware of how wistful his voice had gotten as he remembered.

Angela frowned, Princess Katherine hadn’t talked much about those days, but she had readily admitted that she bore a share of the blame for what had happened because of the shameful way she had broken her vow to her father to honor his word to the gargoyles that their family would protect them.

“She didn’t look that unhappy tonight, even with everything that happened,” Broadway offered quickly seeing the frown on the lavender female’s face.

Angela focused upon him, “No she didn’t,” she agreed, her emotions ambivalent.

Remembering her earlier concern he added, “She’s not totally alone like you were worried about,” trying to cheer her up.

The lavender female flushed feeling the shame of her jealousy, “No and I’m happy about that,” she forced herself to say in a light tone.

Broadway frowned, confused, “Angela what’s wrong? I thought you would be pleased about that.”

“I am happy about that,” she looked up at him, “it’s good that mother has human friends now. That she realized they aren’t all the same, that some of them can be trusted.” She let out a deep breath,
turning to look out over the city once again, “We should be there too though, showing her that she can come back to us.”

“Oh,” he responded quietly and noncommittally, unless pressed he wasn’t going to mention that he wasn’t really certain about welcoming Demona back into the clan just yet. A few more months to make sure that she wouldn’t just as suddenly change back again to the old Demona would be nice.

“But we’re not the ones with her,” Angela continued, “and I’m worried that she believes that we won’t ever accept her as part of the clan.” She turned back to him, regret in her eyes and voice, “The last thing I told her was that I would never trust her again.”

Broadway knew that hadn’t been exactly her words in the cargo hold of the ship, but that had been the message behind them. “I’m certain that she knows that you would give her another chance if she shows that she’s really changed,” he tried to reassure her.

“But does she care anymore?” the question was out before she could censor it.

“Huh?” Broadway stared at her completely surprised, “Why wouldn’t she?”

The lavender female sighed, her wings drooping slightly, “She hasn’t tried to talk to us at all, and she seems to be really close to some of her new human friends.”

Broadway frowned, wasn’t that a good thing? As he stared at Angela, taking in the discontented expression on her face, a possible reason for it slowly dawned on him. Angela had always yearned for a close relationship with her mother, however now that Demona seemed to be changing into what the lavender female had always wanted, it was not Angela who was getting Demona’s attention and affection. He had noticed the displays of affection Demona showed the young human male named Robert and Kendra Canmore, obviously so had Angela. He reached out and placed a gentle hand on her shoulder, as soon as she looked up at him, he said, “I’m certain that she’s thinking about you, and she’s only staying away to keep you safe.”

“Do you really think so?” she asked him, staring up into his face intently.

He nodded, “Yes, I do,” he responded honestly, thankful that he was as certain about this as he was, Angela was sure to spot a lie, but he had never doubted Demona’s desire to keep her daughter from harm. What Demona was willing to do to ensure that safety was entirely another matter.

“I hope so,” she replied softly and moved closer. He wrapped his arms around her, hoping that Demona wouldn’t disappoint her daughter yet again.

_Almost Midnight – David Xanatos’ office, Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan_

“I almost believed that Goliath could be right and we were misinterpreting things,” Fox commented, “until I saw how Demona reacted to Kendra almost being shot tonight.”

David replied thoughtfully, “He’s very certain that homosexuality doesn’t exist in gargoyles, isn’t he.”

His wife nodded, “I suspect the truth is that those who are gay bury the feelings and chose a mate of the opposite sex because that’s what the clan expects from them.”

The dark haired man looked thoughtful, musingly he asked, “Do you think that’s what Demona did?”
Fox was surprised at the question. She had never really considered it; though she had always thought it odd that Demona went through all the effort to persuade David to buy the castle and bring her remaining clan members here to break the spell on them only to do everything she could to thoroughly alienate them.

“I don’t know,” she responded with a one-shouldered shrug, “she could be bi after all.”

“True,” he conceded, then in a complete change of subject, “Would you like a drink? I was going to ask Owen to bring me some cognac.”

“That sounds nice, I’ll have some scotch on the rocks,” she watched idly as her husband contacted Owen and made his request.

“I’m thinking that Demona might be right about this being the right time to support PIT,” David said when he hung up the phone, “Castaway being so quick to disavow their actions shows that he’s fully aware that tonight’s events coming so soon upon his actions last week will damage the Quarrymen’s public image even more than it already is.”

Fox frowned, “I don’t think they really have the resources to put any more funds to good use though,” she pointed out, “Demona gave them quite a healthy amount.”

“I agree,” he said with a smile, “Which is why I suspect that the services of a few good public relations people might be of use to them in designing their advertisement campaign.”

Fox met his dark eyes, “What an interesting idea,” she commented, “I like it, the more unpopular the Quarrymen become the safer things are for all of us.”

A quiet knock on the door interrupted them, “Come in Owen,” David called, fairly certain it would be no one else.

The blond man entered and sat down the tray he was carrying on Xanatos’s desk. “So Owen what did you think about tonight’s show?” David asked as the blonde man used tongs to place two ice cubes in each glass and then poured cognac into one and scotch into the other.

“That though Demona’s sudden improvement was commented upon; Kendra Canmore is the more skilled fighter of the two,” Owen immediately responded as he handed the couple their respective drinks.

“No, I noticed that,” Fox replied, “she was toying with them.” That had been both a fascinating and troubling fact. Kendra’s fighting moves were a study of grace and deadliness, and all that skill was on Demona’s side, not theirs.

“Yes,” the blonde man agreed.

David gave Owen a sharp look, there had been something different in his normally cool tones, “I noticed that as well,” he agreed still staring at Owen, “especially the one that tried to run away after she snatched his hammer out of his hands.” Xanatos noticed a flicker of something in the blonde man’s eyes, at his words. “Owen? Is something bothering you about Kendra Canmore?” David frowned as the normally cool and controlled blonde actually shifted uneasily, the dark eyed man waited, becoming more concerned the longer the fey in human form stared off into space as if searching his memory and didn’t respond to his question.

“Owen,” Fox finally said sharply, causing the blonde man to start slightly in surprise, “what is it?” she asked, concerned now because of his behavior.

The blonde man stared at her for a moment, a faint crease between his brows; he exhaled in a light
sigh before saying, “There is a certain resemblance in the way Kendra Canmore moved as she fought the Quarrymen to someone I have seen before.”

“With whom?” David questioned, troubled, he had seldom seen Owen so obviously disturbed.

“The were-jaguar that delivered the spirits message,” Owen responded, the crease between his brows becoming more noticeable.

David and Fox looked at one another, uncertain as to what if anything that meant. It didn’t seem as if there could be any connection between the woman and the events of over two thousand years ago.

---

_Almost Midnight – Destine Manor, Forest Hills Gardens, Long Island_

A black Chevy Suburban with the Masada Security logo on the side was waiting for them when the limousine pulled up to the house. “Ms. Destine,” Gregory said, introducing the dark haired, dark eyed, stocky man who got out of it and came up into the garage to meet them as they got out of the vehicle, “this is Azarel Mayer the owner of Masada Security.”

The redhead was surprised; she hadn’t expected the owner of the company himself to respond this late at night. Apparently, Gregory’s mate had been able to contact him directly. Obviously, Michael had a much more friendly relationship with this man than Kendra had with Marla.

“Nice fighting against those Quarrymen,” Azarel complemented the both of them, “I understand from Michael that you would like some security around your home to make sure those whack jobs don’t get any bright ideas about attacking it.”

Dominique’s eyebrow rose at his choice of words, and her lips curved slightly in amusement, “I take it you don’t agree with their views,” she commented.

“No,” he answered firmly, meeting her green eyes, “I know better, my father and mother owe their lives to a gargoyle that saved them when they were young. If it weren’t for her saving them I wouldn’t even be here.” The slight widening of her green eyes betrayed her surprise at his answer, “So, since you’re coming under fire from them for supporting PIT, as well as the fact that Michael was the one that asked me on Gregory’s behalf, I’m interested in making sure you get the security you need,” he finished his eyes determined, intent.

It was the determination and intentness that startled Dominique, this seemed to mean entirely too much to the human. She searched his eyes looking for any hint of deceit, some hidden agenda; she sensed none, which confused her. The redhead glanced quickly over at Kendra, meeting her blue eyes, a minute reassuring nod told her that her mate sensed nothing threatening from him either. Perhaps his intentness came from the fact that he felt he owed gargoyles a debt because of his parents and this was the first time he had found a way to repay it, Dominique decided. “I don’t know yet how many days I’ll need your company’s services,” she told him.

He nodded, “We’ll play it by ear then. I’m stretched a bit thin now,” he admitted, “but in a few days I’ll have people getting off other contracts. Since Castaway has already distanced himself and his organization from the ones that attacked you tonight, I’d say he isn’t planning on doing anything too overt against you any time soon so it should be all right. In the meantime, I’ll take some watches myself to make sure we have enough coverage.

That was certainly unusual, Dominique thought, “If you’ll bring over your contract I’ll look it over and we can come to an agreement tonight.”
“Tomorrow’s good enough,” he waved her offer away, “you have a good night Ms. Destine.”

She stared at him bemused for a second, “Thank you,” she finally replied appreciating the fact that she didn’t have to stay up late tonight waiting for the contract to be delivered and then checking it over.

He just nodded and turned to walk back to his vehicle. Dominique found herself smiling after him; he was starting to remind her of Wayne.

An hour later, after everyone had settled down from the excitement of the night…

Well this dress certainly needed some mending, Dominique thought, staring at the long rip up the seam in the side that extended to mid hip, almost revealing the thin lace of her underwear. An arm wrapped around her waist as Kendra stepped up close behind her, pulling her against the black haired woman’s body as Kendra’s other hand rested upon the bared flesh above her stockings exposed by the ripped seam. The redhead inhaled sharply, stiffening just slightly as a wave of tingling arousal danced down her body before she relaxed into the woman behind her, letting her head fall back against Kendra’s shoulder.

It had been so long since this morning when she had wanted to touch her lover as she stretched after awakening, and so many things had happened since then, especially the moment of pure fear when she had been certain that the Quarryman would shoot Kendra.

Kendra stroked the pale soft skin between the hose and garter for a few seconds before her hand slipped underneath one of the garters and slid underneath her dress. The warmth of her hand rested upon the front of Dominique’s thigh her fingers stroking slowly over the sensitive flesh of the redhead’s inner thigh so very teasingly close to the lace that covered her femininity. The redhead drew in a deep breath, her eyelids lowering over her green eyes as she focused on the sensations Kendra’s teasing hand was causing inside her.

But she hadn’t been injured, that graceful agility that Dominique had so often admired had allowed her mate to evade the shot and disarm her attacker.

“Kendra, please,” Dominique begged, wanting the reassurance of the black haired woman’s touch, proof that they were both alive and well and had defeated their enemies.

“Yes,” the hand around the redhead’s waist tightened possessively as Kendra drew her even closer, and warm lips pressed against the side of her neck.
Chapter 14

Sunday, December 21th 1997

Early Morning – Destine Manor, Forest Hills Gardens, Long Island

Dominique moved carefully so as not to disturb the sleeping woman next to her, stretching her arms above her head, extending her legs fully, and even pointing her feet as she lay in bed. There was a smile upon her face as she did so, for today was Solstice day. Her new beginnings had actually begun three weeks ago, the night she had gone into the spirit realm for the first time and learned what had happened on Avalon, but today was the day to celebrate the fact that her life had changed so radically. She turned her head and looked into the peacefully sleeping face of her mate, and so wonderfully.

Of course, there were some not so wonderful things that she had to worry about as well, the redhead thought, turning her gaze from Kendra back to the canopy over the bed, the smile on her face fading. Such as when the Weird Sisters would come after her and Macbeth, and what the Quarrymen would do next. She didn’t trust Jon Canmore’s seeming retreat last night at all; she would be highly surprised if he didn’t try something against her soon. Then there were the still unknown reaction of Robert’s aunt and uncle to last night’s events, they hadn’t been watching the news, and thus were completely unaware of the Quarrymen’s attack on the group when Sharon and Margaret had escorted Robert to the door.

The arm around her waist tightened briefly, “What’s bothering you so early,” Kendra’s soft voice asked, surprising Dominique for she had thought the black haired woman was sleeping.

She turned her head to the side, met Kendra’s blue eyes, “The Weird Sisters, your cousin and his Quarrymen, Robert’s aunt and uncle,” she responded frankly.

Kendra breathed out a long sigh, “Ah.”
“Yes,” agreed the redhead, “Ah.”

A crease etched itself between Kendra’s black eyebrows as she frowned thoughtfully, “I guess a visit to the spirit realm is in order for this morning then. We can ask the Ancient One to give us an update on what the Weird Sisters are doing and ask him and the Jaguar about what, if anything, can be done about my cousins.”

“Go after we’re done with breakfast?” Dominique inquired.

Kendra sat up, the sheet falling from around her shoulders to her waist, “I wonder if Azarel has brought over that contract for you to sign yet.”

Dominique took a moment to admire her lover’s body, the soft fullness of her breasts and the tautly muscled stomach, before admitting, “I had forgotten about that, we can go after I sign that and breakfast is done.”

“That sounds like a plan,” Kendra responded, leaning over to kiss her lingeringly on her lips before rolling out of bed, “dibbs on the shower,” she said as she strolled into the bathroom.

“You’re both rather popular this morning,” Rachael greeted them as they entered the kitchen, a newspaper in her hands.

She looked at Dominique, “You so slightly more than Kendra.”

The redhead glanced warily at the spread out stack of newspapers in front of the Cree woman, Rachael sorted through them for a second before laying the front page of the NY Times on the table. “Quarrymen Attempt to Murder Nightstone CEO in front of the Majestic Theater,” read the front-page title, below it was a picture of Kendra and she surveying the unconscious Quarrymen lying on the wide sidewalk in front of the theater.

“The Times stayed rather tame,” Rachael noted before pulling out the NY Daily News. They had a picture of Dominique, her leg fully extended as she kicked the first Quarryman that had attacked her, underneath their headline. “The Daily a bit less so and then there is the Daily Tattler,” her tone was amused as she found and laid down that newspaper on the table. “Dominique Destine Decisively Handles Attacking Quarrymen!” read their headline, and underneath it was a picture of her slamming a Quarryman’s hooded face down upon her rising knee. The rip in her dress clearly showed the top of her stocking hose and the garter's holding them up.

“And they all sprung for color printing,” Kendra noted dryly, looking at the papers on the table. She smirked, and glanced over at Dominique, “Somehow I don’t think my cousin’s attempt to distance his organization from the attack worked very well for him.”

Rachael chuckled, “With this type of press,” she tapped the picture on the Tattler, “hardly, last night’s altercation was entirely too sensational for the newspapers not to make the most of it. They all buried Castaway’s statement toward the end of their articles.”

Bemused, Dominique picked up the Daily Tattler and started reading the article. By the time she finished, she wasn’t certain whether to burst out in incredulous laughter or call her lawyers to see if they could sue the newspaper for libelous speculation about what it indicated about her personal life that she wore garters and fought so expertly. She handed the Tattler to Kendra who was staring at her curiously.

“I guess it could be worse,” Kendra noted after she finished reading the Tattler’s article. Dominique raised her eyebrow at the black haired woman, wondering how the newspaper article could have been much worse. Kendra shrugged, “They could have titled the article “Mistress of Nightstone Whips Quarrymen into Submission,” she commented with a smirk, her blue eyes dancing with
amusement.

A startled snort of laughter from Rachael coincided with Sharon asking in a surprised sounding tone from behind them, “Which paper said that?”

“None of them,” Dominique replied, shooting a reapproving glance at Kendra, who was now laughing aloud, while trying to stifle her own amusement, that had pretty much been the insinuation made by the paper.

Morning – Destine Manor, Forest Hills Gardens, Long Island

The amount that Azarel Mayer wanted for a week long service contract had been surprisingly reasonable, Dominique had read over the contract and immediately signed it. Now, an hour later, she and Kendra were sitting together on the living room couch, the black haired woman supported by pillows behind her back and the arm of the couch, and Dominique resting against Kendra’s chest. “Ready?” she asked quietly, the redhead nodded, closed her green eyes and transitioned into the spirit realm.

Before they could orient themselves and go searching for the Ancient One, the great stag spirit appeared out of the mists around them, stepping into the shadowy reflection of Dominique’s living room. He came to a halt in front of them and looked around at the decorated room, “You have brought more nature into your home,” he observed staring at the red and gold decorated Fraser fir dominating one corner of the room.

“It seemed like a good idea,” Dominique commented, looking around as well, “and I like it,” she admitted hesitantly. She felt rather reticent about admitting such a thing since she couldn’t really point out any concrete reason why and she had never felt the need to have living plants around her before.

“Not surprising,” the Ancient One responded his head swinging her way, “even when you are not actively looking at it you are aware, even if not consciously yet, of the energy that surrounds you.”

That was news to Dominique, though it did explain why she felt more comfortable both here and at work since she had the potted plants delivered. “I didn’t know that,” she commented, staring at him curiously.

“The awareness is part of the same ability that allows you to see and manipulate life and nature energy,” the spirit explained further.

The redhead considered that for a moment before nodding, it did make sense she guessed, “Is it something I can develop further?”

“Might be a useful thing to know without having to look,” Kendra commented, “you might not have time to check someday.”

Dominique glanced over at the black haired woman, that thought had been on her mind as well.

The Ancient One dipped his antlered head, “It is a simple sense to develop, simply focus on feeling the energy around you, and then verify the accuracy of what you sensed by looking at the life and nature energy. Once you become adept at sensing the energy around you, you should also be able to feel the health and sickness of the living things nearby and of the land as well.”

“That sounds interesting,” Kendra commented, intrigued.
“Indeed,” the redhead commented thoughtfully, “it does.” She could think of a few different circumstances in which that ability might be useful. She glanced over at Kendra, “Learning about that though, as interesting as it is, was not the reason for our visit today.”

The Irish Elk turned his attention to the young Jaguar as well, “You have something you wish to ask me?” he inquired of the black haired woman.

Kendra hadn’t expected to start with her question, it took her a moment to order her thoughts, “It was pointed out to me that my cousins, unlike Demona, do not know about what the Weird Sisters did to them or why it was done. Would it be possible to show them enough of the past for them to realize the true history of the Canmores’ and in the process hopefully persuade my cousin Jon to stop what he’s doing before I have to kill him.”

Dominique winced, she knew her mate was only being honest, but this was the Ancient One, not the Jaguar spirit, she was talking to.

“You fear he will force you into doing so to protect others lives,” the great stag spirit commented, staring at the Jaguar’s chosen.

“I’m almost certain that he will,” Kendra stated grimly.

The redhead stared at her mate, concerned; she hadn’t realized that Kendra felt she would eventually be placed in a position where she would have no other choice but to kill her cousin. She turned toward the great stag, “Margaret thought that perhaps you or other spirits had witnessed enough pieces of the Canmores past to persuade them of the truth.”

His massive head turned and he regarded his chosen thoughtfully before turning back to the black haired woman, “It might be possible,” he allowed, “I will need to speak with a few of the other spirits before I can give you an answer.”

“That’s better than an outright no,” Kendra replied, relieved. If the spirit was considering it, she suspected there was a decent chance something could be done, “Thank you.”

The Irish Elk’s gaze shifted back toward Dominique, “Was there something you wished to ask me as well chosen?”

The redhead nodded, “Do you know if the Weird Sisters have discovered that they no longer control Macbeth and I?”

He looked at her intently for a second before responding, “They do not appear to have,” he said slowly, while watching her keenly, “What has happened since the last time we met my chosen?”

Dominique immediately went up to him and looked into his eyes, steadying herself with one hand upon his great muzzle. A minute later, she blinked and pulled away, “I would be nice to know that I don’t have to worry about the Weird Sister’s right now as well as the Quarrymen,” the redhead commented.

The Ancient One swung his antlered head back and forth, looking at both of them, “They are being kept under constant watch by me, the Wise One, the Jaguar spirit, the Wolf spirit and the Horse spirit. You should not be surprised by their sudden appearance.”

The redhead let out a relieved breath; there were too many people around that needed to be defended if the three fey showed up. Besides Rachael and Sharon, she and Kendra now needed to also protect the security people guarding her home from the Quarrymen.
The Ancient One commented, “Is is good that you have been progressing with your tasks my chosen. You seem, however, to have stepped onto an ant hill,” he noted, his tone dry.

“I didn’t expect my donation to PIT to excite Kendra’s cousin like this,” she commented ruefully.

“Then he regards the actions of this group of humans as a threat to him and those he leads,” the great stag spirit noted.

The redhead’s green eyes narrowed thoughtfully, the spirit was correct, Jon Canmore wouldn’t be reacting this strongly if he didn’t feel that her donation to PIT was a threat. Perhaps she would accomplish more than she originally thought she would with her donation.

“Here they are,” the Eagle Owl commented as she came winging out of the mists. All of them, Dominique, Kendra, and the Irish Elk spirit, turned to look at her curiously as she landed upon the ground and turned her head around to look back the direction from which she had come. Dominique followed the Eagle Owl’s amber-eyed gaze, her eyes widening as she saw Robert appear from out of the mists.

The young man looked around at the shadowy image of the house and living room as he rolled his wheelchair closer, “Is this your home?” he asked the redhead, “It looks very nice.”

“It is,” Dominique responded, “and thank you.” She stared at him, her concern growing with every second he failed to say why he had been looking for them, “Robert is something wrong?”

He sighed, “My aunt and uncle read the paper this morning,” he paused, looking very unhappy. “They don’t want you to have anything to do with me and they don’t approve of gargoyles?” the redhead guessed.

His eyes widened for a brief second and then his face fell, “I guess it’s not a surprise to you,” he said quietly.

Dominique stepped up his wheelchair and knelt on one knee, placing a hand upon the locked wheel to steady herself and stared into his face, “I had hoped I would be wrong, and they would only want you to stay away until it was safer, but yes that’s what I suspected might happen,” she said regretfully.

“No matter what they can’t stop you from working at Nightstone,” Kendra reminded him again, just as she had the night before, “you’ll be eighteen by then and an adult.”

Robert looked up at the black haired woman briefly; he didn’t want to wait five months before seeing them again, so that didn’t sound very encouraging to him. He returned his attention to the redhead kneeling before him. “I’ll try my best to make sure it doesn’t come to that,” Dominique said. “I don’t want to wait that long to see you again, but as I mentioned last night we need to let them calm down some and then I’ll try and talk them into letting you visit. Hopefully, the Quarrymen will cooperate and stop trying to attack me so directly.”

Dominique watched his face, the expressiveness of his grey eyes. He wasn’t happy with this and neither was she, but there was little she could do about it right now. She wasn’t even certain that she really wanted to; her main priority was to keep Robert safe, and if that meant that he had to stay away from her then that was the sacrifice she would make to protect him. “It would have to wait at least a month or so anyway, right now the safest place for you to be should be with your aunt and uncle, the Quarrymen shouldn’t pay any attention to you if you’re not with me.”

His jaw set as he drew in a breath to argue with her, and then he felt her emotions, the fear, the
concern, and the fierceness of her determination to protect him. Over and above all of them, was the fondness she for him. The words he had been about to say stilled in his throat, he hadn’t realized she was so fearful that he would get hurt, and even though she had told him last night that she cared for him, he hadn’t realized that she cared this much. “Alright,” he yielded, “but I don’t want to wait until summer to see you again.”

“Neither do I,” she assured him.

He stared at her for a moment longer, “I need to go they think I’m taking a nap,” he said looking uneasy.

Dominique stood up, tousling his hair affectionately as she did so, “Kendra’s phone that she gave you has my cell phone number in it as well as my private work number. You can give me a call whenever you want,” she stated.

“I’ll text my new cell phone number to you as soon as I get the new phone on Monday,” Kendra added, “once you get that you can call me whenever as well. Don’t worry about the minutes either, I always have far more left at the end of the month than I use anyway.”

Robert glanced between the two women, “Thank you,” he said softly. His eyes widened abruptly and he sat up straighter in his chair, “I think someone’s in my room, I’ve got to go, bye,” His body disappeared in the next instant. Dominique stared at where he had been, unsettled with the suddenness of the young man’s departure.

“You are very fond of him,” the Wise One observed after a moment.

The redhead turned toward the Eagle Owl, nodded, “He reminds me of Luach,” she confessed softly. “He looks at me the same way Macbeth’s son did.”

“How is that?” Kendra asked, curious. Dominique had told her quite a bit about Luach, but the redhead had never mentioned that Robert reminded her of him.

“He has that same sensitivity, the same deep seeing eyes,” the redhead reflected, “I never had the feeling that Luach saw me as anything other than who I was without any other thoughts of what I could do for him or what he wished I actually would be.” Her green eyes met Kendra’s sapphire blue ones, “You look at me in somewhat of the same way,” she said with a smile.

Kendra grinned, “Well I would hope there would be a few differences in how Robert looks at you and how I do.”

“A few, yes,” Dominique agreed, her smile extending to her eyes. Turning to the Wise One, the redhead said, “Once I think it’s safe, I will try and change their minds.”

“Hopefully, as you said, things will calm down soon. Their attack last night does not seem like the most sensible course of action they could have taken,” the Eagle Owl noted.

Thinking of the newspaper articles she had read this morning, Dominique could only agree with the owl spirit, “No I don’t think it was.”

Sunset - Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan

Angela greeted the Solstice Day sunset with a roar, when she turned around to jump off her perch she was surprised to see Xanatos and Owen, holding a small package and letter, waiting for her
instead of her father. “A package and a letter were delivered for you today,” the blonde haired man said, “from your mother.”

“What!” said Brooklyn, his eyes flashing white and sounding alarmed, “did you check them?” Several eyes swung his way, none of them sharing his level of concern.

“Of course,” Owen replied stiffly.

“Mother wouldn’t hurt me,” Angela said angrily, stepping down from her perch.

“Right…” Brooklyn drew out the word, staring at her in disbelief as he wondered how she could so quickly forget that her mother had almost gotten her killed while trying to have Goliath assassinated only a month ago.

“Brooklyn enough,” Goliath rebuked him gruffly. “Did you find anything suspicious?”

Owen hesitated, “I am not certain,” he finally admitted sourly, as if that fact offended him.

The reddish male straightened and turned toward his clan leader with a gleam in his dark eye though he did not say anything. “There is some type of magical energy within the gift Demona sent, but I do not recognize it,” Owen continued.

“Sorcery,” Brooklyn finally blurted out, unable to keep silent.

“I would recognize sorcery,” the blonde man replied curtly before Goliath could, though the look the big lavender male turned on his second was enough to discourage the younger beaked male from any more outbursts. “Whatever type of magic Demona used to make the item is completely unknown to me,” the words sounded forced out of the fey.

Hudson took a few steps toward the two humans, “Make it?” he asked curiously.

Xanatos spoke for the first time, “From what Owen can tell, it seems that Demona used magic to create the item. When examined under magnification, it becomes apparent that she certainly didn’t use any conventional means to make it. It’s too detailed and there’s no mold marks on it at all.”

Exasperated with the fact that they had opened her gift and examined it before she had even seen it, Angela took a step forward and held out her taloned hand, “It’s my gift and my letter. May I have them?”

“Angela,” Goliath took a step towards her, eyeing the small box warily as Owen handed it to his daughter.

Xanatos commented reassuringly, “Owen and I have both handled it without harm.”

“The magical energy I sensed does appear to be left over magical energy from whatever process Demona used to construct the item,” the blonde man stated to Goliath.

Broadway frowned, “But you aren’t sure,” he asked in concern as he watched the lavender female open the box.

“Without being familiar with the type of magic used, no, I cannot be entirely certain,” the blonde man reluctantly admitted.

“Oh,” Angela breathed out in admiration as she lifted the gold dragon charm by its chain from the box. She held it up so everyone could see it and examined it closely, “It’s perfect,” she said after a moment.
“Indeed, it does appear to be,” Owen agreed, “that is what caused me to examine it more closely.”

Angela turned her attention away from the charm to frown at him, confused. The blond man sighed, “It will be easier for you to understand if you allow me to show you the charm under magnification.”

“Very well,” Goliath said, Angela looked over at him sharply, but she didn’t argue as she was curious now to see what Owen meant as well.

Normally the gargoyles wouldn’t enter this part of the Eyrie Building, but it was Sunday night and the laboratory areas were completely deserted. Owen had Angela place the charm under the lens of the digital microscope and pulled the magnified image up onto the large monitor hanging from the ceiling above it. “If you will notice the fine detail of the hide and scales,” he paused for a moment letting them notice the realistic way each scale was etched even down to the ridges in each single scale. Rotating the lens, he focused on the charm’s side, “The level of detail extends to the wings.”

He gave them a minute to appreciate the fact that the only place the wings touched the body were the wing joints and one place where they rested against the body of the golden dragon, but were not attached to it. “The feet,” he moved the lens once again so that they could see the detail of each foot with its taloned toes. Owen rotated the lens around once again, this time so that it magnified the detail of the dragon’s face, “If you will notice that the charm’s mouth is anatomically correct, teeth, gums, lips and tongue, all exactly as you would see if you had the misfortune to be looking into a real dragon’s mouth.”

“It’s not actually a dragon is it?” Broadway finally had to ask hesitantly.

“No, it is not a real dragon Demona has shrunk down to miniature size and then turned into gold,” Owen assured the teal colored gargoyle dryly.

“So mother used magic to make this,” Angela said looking down at the dragon charm underneath the microscope, fascinated with it. She understood now why it had attracted Owen and Xanatos’ attention; the detail with which it was made was extraordinary.

Goliath turned toward his daughter, his face stern, “You will not wear this until Puck can guarantee that this strange magic on it is not a danger to you.” Angela’s head wiped up, and she stared at him outraged. “No,” he growled before she could begin arguing with him, “You will not change my mind about this. You will not wear Demona’s gift until we understand more about this new magic and are completely certain that it does not present any danger to you.” His face softened just slightly as he took in his daughter’s hurt and angry expression, “Hopefully it will not take Puck long to determine whether it is or not.” His instincts for once were telling him that the gift was not a trick, that there was not a spell on Demona’s Solstice gift to her daughter. That Puck was right and it was just left over magic from how the gift was made, but this talk of Demona casting a new unknown type of magic unsettled him, and he would rather be certain the gift was safe before letting Angela wear it.

Brooklyn nodded his head, fully in agreement with the clan leader; at least Goliath wasn’t forgetting what Demona was really like. He gave the golden charm a suspicious look; there was no telling what Demona had done to the thing or what it was supposed to do to Angela. Maybe even try and control her daughter’s mind like the ancient gargoyle had tricked him into helping her do to Goliath.

A few minutes later, in a secluded place up on the castle battlements, Angela found a place to be alone from the other gargoyles. She couldn’t ever remember being so angry with her father as she was now or at Brooklyn who had looked pleased with Goliath’s ordering her not to wear her mother’s gift. At least her father hadn’t mentioned anything about her mother’s letter, she thought, opening the envelope and pulling out the single sheet of paper within.

Angela,
I wish you a very happy Solstice night, and I hope you like the gift I sent you along with this letter. May the following year bring you and those you care about happiness, fulfillment and continued well-being.

I spent a long time trying to think of what you might want, only to realize that I really didn’t know what you might like as a gift. I spent so much time during the times that we spoke together, trying to make you believe as I did, that I didn’t really listen to you when you spoke. I regret that very much now. Because of it, I have to acknowledge that I don’t really know you that well except to know that you passionately believe that humans and gargoyles can learn to coexist. Perhaps sometime soon, when it is much safer, and of course, only if you wish it, we can speak again. If that happens, I promise that I will listen to you.

I have so much to ask forgiveness from you for, from the very first moments we met until only a few weeks ago, I look back on the past and can only wish that I could change all of it. But I cannot, I can only apologize for my actions, for all the ways that I hurt you, and hope that someday you can forgive me for them.

Keep yourself safe, and obey your father for he does have your safety in mind. Once everything has settled down with the Quarrymen and the Weird Sisters have been dealt with I hope that you will consider letting us begin to get to know one another. Though I must confess that in so many ways, I feel as if I am just beginning to know myself now that I am free of the Weird Sisters enchantments. I hope that you will find the person I am becoming to be better than the one you knew.

I love you my daughter,
Your mother

The lavender female drew her wings up around herself and rested her forehead upon her arms, the letter from her mother tight within her hand as she wept. Angela wanted to go to her mother, to reassure Demona that her daughter could forgive her for what she had done in the past.

Night – Destine Manor, Forest Hills Gardens, Long Island

“I’m sure she got it,” Margaret said reassuringly to Demona, “I delivered it directly to the fey there.”

“I hope she likes it,” the flame haired gargoyle said softly, placing the last china plate down upon the ivory tablecloth. The two of them were in the dining room, setting the table for the Solstice dinner, which had been delivered by the catering service only half an hour ago.

“I’m sure she will, it was very lovely,” the tall woman assured her. Dominique had given her the box containing the charm and her letter on Friday and asked her to deliver it sometime during the day today. The Bison’s chosen glanced over at the gargoyle, noting the melancholy expression on her face. The longer she knew the newest chosen the more admiration she had for Demona, what the gargoyle had learned about her long past and the things she had done because of the Weird Sisters enchantments’ on her would surely have sent a less strong person into a deep depression. Margaret suspected that without Kendra’s love and encouragement the gargoyle might have done just that, and watching the two of them together was proof enough of how powerful love could be in a person’s life. She had seen Demona watch Kendra with a look of awe and thankfulness enough to know that the gargoyle was certainly not taking what she had with the Jaguar’s chosen for granted.

“That’s a lovely china set,” Rachael commented as she entered the room from the kitchen bearing a covered sterling silver serving dish.
“Thank you,” Demona replied, looking at the set table with satisfaction, the silverware and crystal glasses glittered underneath the dining room lights, while the white bone china with its ruby and gold design around the rim shone with a more subdued reflection. The two sideboards on the left of the room already held the soup and vegetable dishes for the dinner as well as a selection of breads and two different red wines breathing in decanters. The main course, Chateaubriand, which Rachael was placing on the table, and its accompanying béarnaise sauce were among the last of the dishes they needed before sitting down to the meal.

Demona sat down at the head, Kendra on her right and Rachael on her left and then Margaret and Sharon. She knew she was expected to say a few words, but she took a moment to look at her mate and friends, absorbing the fact that she was celebrating Solstice once again after so very many years of resenting this night because her life had been empty of anything to celebrate. “Tonight is the longest night of the year, the night when my race is awake for the longest time. For my clan and many others, it marked the beginning of the New Year and the night when we gave thanks for the good fortunes of the past year.”

The flame haired gargoyle took in a breath, “I have so many things to be thankful for this year. The Ancient One choosing me to be his first chosen, his freeing Macbeth and I from the Weird Sister’s enchantments and returning my memories of the past to me.” She looked over at the black haired woman on her right, meeting her sapphire blue eyes, “For Kendra persuading me to spar with her that day we first met and for the love that has grown between us since.” Her voice faltered slightly as she continued, speaking directly to the woman she already thought of as her mate, “Your love means so much to me, whenever I’ve been tempted to falter you’re there supporting me, giving me the courage to continue. Of all the things I have to be thankful for this year your love is the gift I’m most thankful for,” the blue eyes staring into hers mirrored the love she was feeling. After a second Demona continued with a smile, “Followed very closely by being the Ancient One’s chosen.”

“No I suspect he doesn’t,” Demona agreed, looking over at the Cree woman. “Meeting and getting to know you,” her eyes went to the other two women at the table “Margaret, Sharon and Robert is another thing I’m thankful for this year. In less than two months, I’ve gone from being completely alone and estranged from my clan, to this,” she indicated the table and the people around it, “thank you for being here and celebrating this Solstice night with me.”

“No need for thanks Demona, it has been a pleasure visiting with you and Kendra and getting to know Robert, Sharon and Margaret better,” Rachael assured the redhead, “that’s what I’m thankful for.”

“I’ll second that,” Margaret said, “it has been wonderful getting to know all of you better, and especially you,” she said to the gargoyle, “and Kendra. Though it has been somewhat more of an exciting trip than I anticipated,” she commented with a smirk.

Sharon grimaced slightly at the tall woman’s comment, and the gargoyle gave her an apologetic look. To Demona’s surprise, the news of the attack had been carried on the national networks and the younger woman had received a rather upset phone call from her father and mother this morning. The brunette saw her expression and shook her head, a determined expression crossing her face, “Even with last night I’ve really enjoyed myself, getting to meet everyone and finding a place to live and a stable for Brie that I’m happy with…” She stared directly at Demona, “I’m looking forward starting working for you in a few weeks.”

“We’ll see,” the gargoyle responded firmly, not sure whether she was more exasperated or pleased
by Sharon’s persistence.

A quiet snort drew her attention back to the one person who had yet to speak; Kendra was watching the interaction between her and Sharon, amusement brightening her blue eyes. The black haired woman raised an eyebrow at her, “I guess it’s my turn?”

“It was tradition for us to mention a few things that we were thankful for before beginning the night’s meal, but it’s not required,” the flame haired gargoyle responded hesitantly.

“I want to,” Kendra assured her quickly, “I have quite a few things to be thankful for myself,” she said her eyes fixed steadily upon Demona. “I had started to wonder if I would find someone to love as much as my mother and father loved one another. I had even given up looking for it, and then I met you.” Demona’s eyes widened in surprise, she knew that Kendra had stopped dating for a few years before meeting her, but had never known it was because her mate had given up on finding someone to love. The black haired woman’s expression lightened, she grinned, “And as I remember,” Kendra said, “I left your office in a hurry so you didn’t have time to change your mind about us sparring that evening.”

Demona was glad she was in her true form, it was much harder for anyone to notice that she was blushing, “I do believe that I was trying to figure out how I let a Canmore talk me into sparring with them,” she admitted.

Kendra continued, her expression more serious, “I’m thankful that you didn’t, and that we got kidnapped and treked across Canada together. That we got to know one another and fell in love, and that we have what we do now,” Kendra reached out and took Demona’s hand in hers, and stared into her love’s eyes trying to convey wordlessly how thankful she was that they had found one another. After a moment, she turned towards the other women at the table, the smile on her face returning, “I’m also thankful that Jaguar finally decided to tell me what I was so I could meet the rest of you.” Laughter broke out around the table in response to the quip.

When the laughter died down Demona looked around the table, “Does anyone have something to add?” she inquired. When no one replied, “Then let’s eat.”

After dinner, Demona stared pensively at the burning Yule log in the living room fireplace, her thoughts going to Macbeth and wondering what he was doing this night. She had no idea if he even celebrated Solstice anymore or if he only celebrated the modern human holiday.

“What are you thinking about so seriously?” Rachael inquired, coming over to her.

“Macbeth,” the gargoyle responded, looking over at her friend, “I was wondering what he was doing tonight and if I should see what he’s doing tomorrow night.”

The Cree woman gave her a quizzical look, “What’s stopping you from inviting him?”

“I don’t know how to explain your, Margaret and Sharon’s presence with me,” Demona admitted frankly. She knew that Macbeth and the clan had probably seen the news of the attack by now, and were undoubtedly wondering who the humans were with her. Kendra’s presence she could explain, but the others…she could think of no plausible reason for them to know her well enough for her to have invited them to stay with her. Even explaining that they had stayed with Rachael in Canada, didn’t fully account for why she and the Cree woman had become friends so quickly.

“Tell him a small part of the truth,” Rachael suggested, “everyone’s already seen all of us together, so there’s no use anymore in hiding the fact that we know you. If you explain that we have all been touched by the spirits that gives a reasonable explanation for how we know one another without
revealing the full truth.”

Demona frowned in concern, “But that’s so close to the truth,” she protested.

Rachael shrugged, “The only ones who can figure it out are Macbeth and your clan, as well as the one fey, Puck.”

“And the Xanatos’,” the flame haired gargoyle said darkly.

The Cree woman stared at her, “Do you think Macbeth would share that information with them?”

“No,” the flame haired gargoyle responded immediately. She hesitated, thinking about her answer and why she had given it so quickly. Macbeth had always kept his own council and secrets well, it had been one of the reasons she had been so willing to believe that he might follow Bodhe’s advice that night. “No, he would not if we gave him a reason not to.”

Rachael smiled at the gargoyle conspiratorially, “Then let’s find that reason, because I’m actually rather curious to meet him.”

Demona’s eyes widened in surprise, she didn’t think that the Cree woman had actually seen Macbeth either of the two times he was in the spirit realm. She gave her friend an inquisitive look, wondering whether it was her old ally’s history or something else that interested the other woman.

“What?” Rachael asked, seeing the expression on her face.

The flame haired gargoyle responded, “I was just wondering why you would say that.”

“His history sounds interesting,” the Cree woman admitted.

Demona regarded her for a moment longer before nodding, “We should ask Margaret and Sharon’s permission as well.”

Five minutes later, after the other two women gave their permission and admitted an interest in meeting the former king, Kendra suggested, “Why not the same one we gave him for not telling the clan everything before, we don’t want the fey to find out because it could endanger all of you. It has the benefit after all, of being the truth.”

The gargoyle thought about it for a moment, turning it over in her mind, her lover was right it did have the benefit of being the truth, if not the whole truth, and thus easily believable. She slowly nodded her head, “He will certainly understand the need for caution so it should work.”

“Merry Solstice night my old friend,” Demona said when Macbeth answered the phone. She had moved into her study to make the phone call, everyone else was in the living room listening to Margaret relate a story from her time as a Yeoman during the Second World War as a member of the WAVES.

“Demona,” he replied, recognizing her voice, “It’s been awhile since you said that to me,” he said, a hint of wistfulness in his voice.

“It’s been 940 years since I said that to anyone,” the gargoyle replied softly, “I haven’t celebrated Solstice since that last winter’s night at Moray.”

“That long?” he commented sadly.

“I haven’t had anything to be thankful for until now,” she said with a sigh. “Tonight though,” her
voice deepened with emotion, “tonight I have many things to be thankful for,” her voice lightened, “and one of those is that we are no longer enemies, but friends once again.”

“Aye that is something to be thankful for,” he agreed his voice stronger, “Merry Solstice to you as well Demona.” He paused a second, “I saw the Quarrymen attack on the news.”

“I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to hide the fact that I can stay human at night from you,” she said before he could say anything else, “though I was hiding it from the clan and Puck. I should have told you that day in my office, but honestly, my mind wasn’t on it,” she finished ruefully.

His responding chuckle sounded slightly incredulous, “Are you saying you have more important things on your mind these days than the fact you can remain human at night?”

“Honestly…yes,” she replied with a chuckle, “I was more focused on the change in our relationship and how to limit the information revealed to the clan and Puck than the fact I could remain human appearing at night. And then I was thinking about how you would react once you found out that Kendra and I were involved.”

“Alright, I can understand that,” he sounded bemused, “but it’s hard to believe that the fact you can remain human at night isn’t significant to you.”

Demona’s mind went back to that night that she had remained human simply because it was more convenient, and the insight she had gained, “At the beginning, yes it was,” she confessed to him, “but honestly I don’t think much about it now. After all, it’s just a change of form not a change in who I am.”

There was silence from the other end of the line, “That very statement shows just how much you’ve changed,” Macbeth finally responded.

“Yes, I guess it does,” the gargoyle responded, amused by his reaction. “I didn’t just call to wish you a good Solstice though, are you busy tomorrow night?” the flame haired gargoyle asked, feeling a slight flutter in her stomach, despite their preparation she really didn’t know how this was going to go.

“No,” Macbeth sounded puzzled.

“Nightstone is having its Christmas party tomorrow night, a dinner cruise; I would like to invite you to go with us.”

There was a moment of silence and then he asked, “Tuxedo formal or suit formal?”

“Either,” Demona replied, surprised that he hadn’t commented on who else was going with her.

“What pier and when should I be there?” Macbeth responded.

The gargoyle offered, “If you want we can pick you up in the limo, that way you can meet everyone beforehand.”

“Everyone?” he sounded startled, “I thought you meant you and Kendra, who else is coming with us?”

That explained why he hadn’t commented before, Demona realized, “Everyone you saw in the news report except for Robert, which is unfortunate, since I would really like for you to meet him. He reminds me of Luach in many ways.”
There was silence on the other end for a long moment, before Macbeth finally spoke again, “Were those Kendra’s friends?”

Demona raised an eyebrow, his assumption did make sense even if it was inaccurate, “They are Kendra’s friends, but they’re mine as well.” She could easily imagine how much that statement startled him, “We all share something in common, including you.”

“Fey,” the response was a low growl.

Her brow rose even further, “Not in every case. The spirits involve themselves in people’s lives for other reasons besides the fey.”

Macbeth was quiet for a moment, undoubtedly absorbing what she had said, “Do they know about you?” he finally asked.

“Everyone but Robert is here, and I’m in my true form,” Demona responded, “and he knows as well.”

“Do they know about me?” she could hear the uneasiness in his voice.

“Some,” she responded, “They know who you actually are and how long we’ve both been alive. You don’t need to worry Macbeth, they’re trustworthy.” From Macbeth’s end of the call, there was a strangled sounding snort, and Demona started laughing in amusement, recognizing the inherent incongruity of her making such a comment, especially about humans. After a moment, the sound of Macbeth’s own laugh joined hers.

When they both calmed down, Macbeth said, “After hearing you say that I’m very curious to meet them now, when do you want to pick me up.”

“Six o’clock?” she responded.

“I’ll be ready.”

There was a beep on the line indicating that she had another caller. Demona frowned, she seldom had any phone callers. She pushed a button on the base station to get the identity of the other caller and her eyes widened as the display read Xanatos Enterprises Headquarters. “Macbeth someone from the Eyrie building is calling me, I need to go.”

“I’ll see you tomorrow at six,” he said just before he hung up the phone.

“Dominique Destine’s residence,” the gargoyle said in a crisp voice, expecting it to be David Xanatos or Puck’s human persona Owen Burnett that was calling her.

“Mother?” the hesitant voice on the other end of the phone belonged to neither.

“Angela?” Demona replied, her voice rising slightly in her disbelief.

Sounding more confident, the younger gargoyle on the other end of the line answered, “Yes, its Angela, merry Solstice Mother. I got your letter and gift tonight.”

The fiery haired gargoyle’s wings instinctively tried to wrap around her, but the fact that she was sitting in a chair prevented them. Demona sucked in an irritated breath, annoyed with her reaction. She forced herself to relax, “Merry Solstice daughter. Did you like the gift I made you?”

“Yes I do, it’s beautiful,” Angela replied, the immortal gargoyle frowned hearing the undertone of
anger in her daughter’s voice, “but Father won’t let me wear it. Puck sensed magical energy on it that he didn’t recognize and Father and Brooklyn think you put some type of spell on it to harm me.”

The frown on Demona’s face deepened in confusion before she realized what the fey must have sensed, “I didn’t even think about him being able to sense that,” she said musingly, “it’s a good thing to know that he can though.” Her mind was already calculating the strategic implications of the information she had just gained and what the risks might be now that Puck knew she was learning a new type of magic.

“Sense what?” her daughter asked her confusion apparent.

“Hmm?” the flame haired gargoyle responded absently, her mind still occupied with evaluating the possible consequences. It took her a half second to realize what Angela had asked, and once Demona did, she began trying to estimate the chances of the Xanatos’ and Puck finding out the information if she told her daughter what she had done to the charm. Fairly high she guessed unhappily, and she’d really rather Puck learn as little as possible about how she had made the charm and what she had done to harden the metal. She believed him when he said he wouldn’t help the Weird Sisters in any way, but that didn’t mean that he would not tell other fey, perhaps even Lord Oberon about anything he learned about her, especially if she and Kendra succeeded in defeating the Weird Sisters.

If only she had chosen a less pure form of gold, one that wouldn’t have needed hardening this wouldn’t have happened, she thought, angry with herself for not realizing that the way she had hardened the gold would leave traces of nature magic on the charm. She had however, and now she needed to deal with the situation. Making a big production of keeping the information away from Puck would probably only draw more attention to the fact that she was being taught a new form of magic. Therefore, it was probably best to treat this casually, as if it was of no particular import and then be more careful in the future. Besides, she consoled herself, if she did have a big battle with the Weird Sisters, chances were the other fey would learn about her abilities anyway, so she was really just trying to keep that information from them for as long as possible.

“He probably sensed the enchantment I used to harden the metal daughter, the charm is almost pure gold and thus too soft. It would have gotten scratched and damaged too easily,” she responded calmly, keeping any hint of the grimace on her face out of her voice.

“If I tell Father that perhaps he will let me wear your gift,” Angela said, not sounding very certain.

“Yes,” Demona agreed, “if not I can always buy you something from a jeweler, I’m certain that would reassure your father enough to let you wear it.”

In the silence that followed her words, the door to her study opened and Kendra slipped in, giving her a questioning look, “It’s Angela,” Demona told her, a slight smile on her face. The gargoyle didn’t try to hide that she was talking to someone else in the room. She wanted her daughter to know that Kendra was here, celebrating the holiday with her; it would only help when the time came for her to tell Angela about their relationship.

Kendra gave her a concerned look, “I would have thought you would be happier about that,” she said quietly.

At the same time Angela asked, “Was that Kendra Canmore?”

“No,” Demona explained what the problem was to Kendra. Then into the phone she said, “Yes, Kendra is here,” to her daughter.
“Ah,” her mate commented, crossing the room to lean on the edge of the desk where the gargoyle was sitting, “I didn’t think about that possibility.”

Demona looking up at the black haired woman, she shrugged, “Neither did I until Angela mentioned it.” She carefully covered the phone and whispered, “I figured it was best to treat it as if it weren’t that important, I don’t want to draw too much attention to it, but he knows it’s a magic he’s never seen before.”

Kendra nodded thoughtfully, “It’s not like they wouldn’t have eventually figured it out anyway.”

“That was my thought as well,” Demona commented before turning her attention back to the phone and lifting her hand away from the receiver. She took in a deep breath, “Did Goliath allow you to read the letter I sent with your gift,” Demona asked her daughter, her voice tight with her tension.

“Yes,” Angela answered, “I really liked the dragon,” she said in a reassuring tone, “perhaps you know me better than you think you do.”

“But not as well as I should for all the time we spent talking in the Labyrinth,” Demona said sadly. Kendra leaned forward and placed a comforting hand on her forearm, and the gargoyle gave her a quick smile before speaking to her daughter again. “I meant everything I said in the letter, I do regret all the things I have done that have hurt you, and most especially I regret what I did last month. You don’t know the number of times since the spirit freed me of the Weird Sister’s enchantments that I’ve wished that Jon Canmore had kidnapped us a few days earlier, before all of that happened.”

Angela asked doubtfully, “Would that have made a difference?”

“Certainly,” Demona answered without any hesitation, “After learning what I did from the spirit, I wouldn’t have hired that human or tried to kill your father.” The flame haired gargoyle sighed, “So many things I thought were the truth turned out to be lies, and so many things that I thought I was doing for one reason were actually for another.”

There was a long silence from the other end of the line before her daughter asked, doubt clear in her tone, “You don’t want to harm father anymore?”

“Oh, I still think he’s putting the clan and you in unnecessary danger, but no, I don’t want to harm him anymore,” the flame haired gargoyle stated. She smiled wryly and added, “Nor Eliza Maza either. I wish them the joy of one another; maybe the detective can deal with your father’s hard headed surety that he’s always right better than I ever could.” A dark brow over the brilliant blue eyes watching her rose at her statement, Demona moved her free arm a little and when Kendra took her hand away, the gargoyle swiftly captured it with her hand and brought it to her lips, pressing a kiss into the palm while giving the black haired woman a reassuring look. One of the things the gargoyle truly appreciated about Kendra was the fact that she actually listened to her.

“You don’t want to lead the clan?” Angela asked in a bewildered tone.

“Oh no,” Demona shook her head, “I barely have time to do all the things I need to do each day, and I certainly don’t have the time to lead a clan. If something were to happen to Goliath, I’d suggest the clan ask Hudson to lead again until Brooklyn is older and a bit less hot headed.” The silence went on so long that she finally asked, “Angela are you alright?”

“Yes, I mean no…oh I don’t know,” her daughter replied, sounding exasperated and confused. “Mother you’ve wanted to lead the clan yourself and been angry at father for as long as I’ve known you.” The disbelief in her daughter’s tone was painfully clear to the blue-skinned gargoyle and Demona did understand, this was a radical departure from how she had acted in the past.
“Angela,” Demona paused, sighed, trying to figure out how to explain why she had been so angry with Goliath. “I spent almost five hundred years waiting for the proper time to bring Goliath out of his stone sleep,” she began. “In my mind, everything was supposed to be perfect once they were freed. Only it wasn’t because everything that made me miserable and angry was still there, humans had grown ever more powerful and the feys’ enchantments were still on me,” she said, “and then your father chose Elisa Maza over me. I had been faithful to him for nine hundred years and had spent the last five hundred years existing only for the time to come when I could free him and the rest of the clan. Five hundred years of running from the hunters and Macbeth, only to have Goliath turn his back on me and chose another to be his mate.” Demona explained, unaware of how tired she sounded. “Yes, I’ve been rather angry with Goliath. Yes, I wanted to hurt him, both for not being as faithful to me as I was to him and for not making everything magically right in my world when he awoke. And yes, I do know the last was unfair of me to expect of him, but it is how I’ve felt for the past few years. When I found out about you, I added being angry at him for not protecting you as well as I felt he could, to all of my earlier anger.”

Kendra’s hand squeezed hers, causing the gargoyle to refocus on the black haired woman. Her mate’s blue eyes were filled with concern for her. “I love you,” Kendra’s lips silently formed the words. A wide smile formed on Demona’s lips and she mouthed the words back at the black haired woman.

“How has what you learned from the spirits stopped you from being angry with father?” Angela asked. Demona could almost see her daughter’s confused expression as she struggled to understand what her mother was trying to explain to her.

“Ever since Canada and the spirits freeing me from the Weird Sisters, I’ve been happy. For the first time in over nine hundred years, I’m happy with my life and starting to be happy with myself.” Demona hesitated, uncertain whether to even bring up the past, but she wanted to be honest with her daughter. “I’ve hated myself for so long for what I did to our clan, for agreeing to Robbie’s plan and for being too much of a coward to tell the other’s when my temper finally cooled down enough for me to realize how dangerous it was to trust that one human could protect us from an army of Vikings. As Kendra has told me many times,” she was unaware of how her voice changed as she said her mate’s name, the warmth that briefly infused it, “there are several people that share the blame for what happened that day, but that fact does not absolve me from my part of it,” she finished in a harsher tone.

When Angela did not immediately reply, Demona continued, “I know you’re struggling to understand how what happened in Canada changed me so much. All I can say is that this past month has been a process of understanding things for the first time, accepting the truth of the past, letting go some things that I’ve been angry about for a long time,” she smiled up at Kendra, “and letting myself be happy and thankful for the gifts in my life.” Demona paused, thinking about how to phrase what she wanted to say next, “As for your father, I don’t care anymore what Goliath does with his life. I’m done with my anger toward him; I’m done with being concerned at all about whatever he does with his life.”

“Father’s calling for me,” Angela’s statement was unexpected, and Demona wondered with some disappointment how much of what she had just said her daughter had heard. “I want to talk with you again,” her daughter said hurriedly, making the fiery haired gargoyle suspect that her daughter hadn’t called her with her father’s permission. “I don’t really understand everything you’ve said to me tonight, but I can tell that you’ve changed, and I wanted to let you know that I can forgive you for what you’ve done in the past.”

Demona sucked in a startled breath, she had hoped that Angela would be able to forgive her, but she had feared that she had lost her daughter’s trust forever. “Thank you Angela, that means quite a lot to
me,” she said, her voice thick with the sudden tears that filled her eyes. Kendra’s hand around her own tightened and Demona glanced up to see the black haired woman smiling at her in pleasure.

“I’ve got to go,” Angela said.

“I understand…I love you Angela.”

There was a moment of hesitation, “I love you too mother,” it was said quietly and with an underlying uncertainty that tore at Demona’s heart.

“I’ll try my best never to hurt you again,” Demona promised earnestly.

“Angela,” the flame haired gargoyles heard her ex-mates displeased voice in the background.

“Goodnight,” her daughter said quickly, and Demona barely had time to say the same before Angela hung up the phone.

She looked up at Kendra, “She said she can forgive me,” the tears that had been threatening finally slid loose.

“I heard,” her lover replied before pulling her up from the chair. Demona buried her face into Kendra’s neck as the black haired woman’s arms wrapped around her, one at her waist and the other around her shoulders above her wings, pulling her close against the reassuring comfort of her mate’s body. The gargoyle wrapped her wings around Kendra in return, wanting to feel as close to the black haired woman as possible. “I’m very happy for you; I know you’ve been worried that she wouldn’t,” Kendra said softly.

Demona drew in a shaky breath, “I have been, I am fortunate that she is so forgiving.” Her wings tightened around them, “Now to figure out how to tell her about us,” she said, her trepidation quite apparent.

“It doesn’t need to be done tomorrow or even this week.” Kendra pointed out, shifting the arm around the gargoyles shoulders so that she could stroke the fiery red hair. “And chances are with the way we’ve not been hiding it, you’ll be responding to her asking if we’re together.”

“True,” Demona responded, her lips twisting in a wry smile. They weren’t making much of an effort to be discrete, and she certainly planned on dancing with Kendra tomorrow night at Nightstone’s Christmas party, which she knew would set the company gossips into overdrive.

Night - Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan

Goliath frowned as he watched his daughter hang up the phone and turn toward him with a defensive but determined look in her dark eyes.

“I called my mother,” she said before he could ask, “to wish her a merry Solstice night.”

His eyes narrowed, but he didn’t immediately say anything. He crossed his arms over his chest, “What did she say,” he finally asked.

“She wished me a merry Solstice,” Angela responded, eyeing him warily. She had expected him to be angrier with her.

“You did not speak with her about her gift?” the large lavender male asked, unable to believe that
hadn’t been a major reason his daughter had called Demona.

“She said it was an enchantment to harden the gold because otherwise the charm would be too easily damaged,” Angela replied, some of her outrage over the charm creeping back into her tone.

“Hmm,” he considered it, it was possible, and he knew that gold was usually mixed with harder metals for just that reason. “We will tell Puck perhaps he can determine whether that is the case.” He ignored the glare she gave him. Angela could be as angry as she wanted with him, but he was not letting her wear Demona’s gift until he was certain it was safe.

Her mother’s statement about Goliath’s hard headed surety went through Angela’s mind as she saw her father’s expression; it was obvious that he would not change his mind about the charm. She frowned, there had to be a way to get her father to see how much Demona had changed, “Mother said that she would have never hired that human to kill you if she had met the spirit earlier.” She could tell by his expression that he was at least listening to her, “She also said that she doesn’t want to hurt you or Elisa, and she doesn’t want to lead the clan anymore.”

Goliath shook his head, “I cannot believe that, Demona has wanted to take over leadership of this clan ever since I refused to take part in her war on the humans.”

“But she no longer wants to do that,” Angela swiftly pointed out. “Mother said that she doesn’t have the time to lead a clan, that she doesn’t have time to do what she needs to do each day. She suggested that Hudson lead again if something happened to you, because she thinks Brooklyn is still too young.” She left out the hot headed comment, though personally she agreed, especially with the completely unreasonable way he was acting lately.

The lavender male stared at his daughter, disturbed by the fact that his ex-mates thinking so closely followed his own. Brooklyn was not acting like a proper second, the younger male was refusing to let go of the past, and was holding on to his distrust of Demona to the point that he was starting to lose the respect of his clan because of it. Everything they had learned pointed to the fact that something significant had happened to Demona in Canada, and they had Puck’s verification that these spirits Macbeth and his ex-mate were talking about were real. Brooklyn’s continued refusal to even consider that what they had heard was the truth was disconcerting, he had thought the younger male was mature enough to set his feelings aside long enough to consider the facts in a more reasoned manner.

“Father, why does mother believe that you and Elisa are mates and have been since the Magus’s spell on you was broken?” she finally asked. It had been something that confused her when her mother spoke about it, as far as she knew the two of them were interested in one another but were not mates, at least not yet.

“What?” Goliath responded, completely baffled both by the abrupt change of subject and the question itself.

“Mother believes that you and Elisa are mates and that you left her for Elisa,” Angela stated. Her mother had said a lot, but in all the talk of centuries of fidelity and waiting, Angela had clearly gotten the point that her mother was still rather resentful of the fact that she had spent so much time waiting to free the clan only to have Goliath leave her for Elisa.

He scowled, “That was not the case, Demona is the one who drove us apart, who broke our vows to one another. I kept trying to persuade her to give up her hatred and rejoin the clan until it became clear that she would not and I was not willing to join her in her hatred.” How dare Demona try and lay the blame on him for the fact that they were no longer mates.
“I know that,” Angela said impatiently, she had heard all of this before. “I’m asking why mother believes that you and Elisa are mates, and have been for a long time.”

Goliath had no idea why his ex-mate would think that, but some of the baffling things Demona had said in the past made a lot more sense now that he knew she thought he and Elisa were already mates. “I do not know,” he said gruffly, “I did not see Elisa’s beauty until the night Puck’s spell changed her into a gargoyle,” he admitted.

“Oh,” Angela was surprised, she knew about that night it was the same night Puck placed a spell on her mother so she would be human during the day. She hadn’t known that was the night when Goliath first noticed Elisa as a potential mate. “Mother thinks that you and Elisa make better mates than you and she did,” Angela decided to leave out the fact that Demona thought Elisa could deal with her father’s stubbornness better, from what she had observed of her father and Elisa’s relationship she would have to say Demona was right. The human woman was very good at getting her father to listen to her.

Goliath stared at his daughter nonplused; he couldn’t imagine his ex-mate willingly admitting such a thing. He had been even more convinced after she fell in love with Thailog that she still wanted him, she just couldn’t give up her hatred of humanity and she knew he would never take her back as his mate until she changed. Of course after a certain point, he had known that there was no love left in him for her anymore, she had hurt him, the clan and her daughter too many times for him to forgive her. At least that was what he had thought until he saw her protecting humans the night before. Now he didn’t know what to think, in less than a month Demona appeared to have changed radically since the spirits freed her from the Weird Sister’s enchantments. He settled his wings around his shoulders, “What else did your mother tell you,” he asked.

Angela stared at him for a moment, before sighing, “I didn’t understand a lot of it,” she admitted, “she said that things she thought were the truth turned out to be lies, and that she learned that the reason she did some things were not the reason’s that she thought she was doing them for.” She studied her father’s frowningly thoughtful face. “She also said that she’s hated herself for a long time for her part in what happened to the clan, for being too afraid to tell them what she had done when she realized that the Captain of the Guard couldn’t protect the clan by himself from the Vikings when they attacked the castle.”

Another piece of his mental image of who Demona was, crumbled away. Goliath had thought that his former mate would never accept that she and not the humans were to blame for what happened to their clan. Not only that, but from what Demona had said to Angela she had always known that she had been the one to blame despite all of her protests that the humans were solely at fault.
Chapter 15

Monday, December 22th 1997

*Early Morning - Nightstone Unlimited HQ, Lower East Side Manhattan*

Dominique glanced approvingly at the younger woman standing beside her as they waited for the elevator to descend. Sharon looked every inch the part of her personal assistant this morning in her new tailored navy suit. The brunette would spend most of the morning with human resources signing her employment contract and other assorted paperwork, and then work with Dominique for a few hours before they needed to return to her home to prepare for the party tonight. Tomorrow morning Gregory would drive her to the airport to fly back to Arizona for a few weeks. During that time, things would hopefully calm down some and Dominique would feel more comfortable with the idea of her coming back.

At the end of the small hallway where they were waiting, there was an embossed decorative metal surface which was polished enough to mirror the area. Dominique noticed Sharon’s narrow eyed disapproving stare at the reflective metal surface about the same time as she noticed the reason for it. Mr. Cline, the Contracts Manager in the Procurement Department, was examining certain parts of her anatomy rather closely with a speculative and interested look on his ruddy face. Her eyes narrowed, she had suspected after the news coverage that she might have this issue, but she had hoped that her employees would be both more professional, and too wary of her, to dare be obvious if they chose to speculate about her fashion choices or her personal life. It was unfortunate for Mr. Cline that he had chosen this morning to be neither professional nor wary.

“Do not react to what I’m about to do,” the redhead whispered commandingly to the woman beside her. Their eyes met in the mirrored surface, Sharon’s brown ones a little wide and surprised before she nodded. “Mr. Cline,” Dominique’s voice was sharply edged and arctic cold and raised enough to carry over the entire entryway area. The redhead saw the human male’s entire body jerk as both the
summons and the tone in which it was said, registered. Those employees nearby him edged subtly away, leaving the poor unfortunate alone in whatever punishment he had drawn to himself.

Dominique didn’t bother to turn around and face him. Instead, she stared into the reflective surface until Mr. Cline finally realized what she was doing and his brown eyes met the reflection of her narrowed green ones. The man’s eyes widened as he finally realized what it was that he was in trouble for and even with the imperfect reflective surface the redhead was fairly certain that his normally ruddy complexion paled to a pasty white. She pivoted neatly on her heels to finally look directly at the man; he did look rather pale she decided with satisfaction.

“Mr. Cline,” Dominique said once more this time indicating with one pointing finger where she expected him to place himself in front of her. Like a condemned man walking to the gallows, the tall man slowly made his way over to stand in front of the redhead, and with every second that he cost her in getting this over with so that she could get up to her office, Dominique grew more irritated with the man’s overly melodramatic behavior.

“Ms. Destine,” he stammered nervously once he was finally standing in front of her, “I apologize…”

She didn’t let him get any further, “An apology will not suffice for your behavior,” the redhead snapped, “I expect you and Mr. Parker in my office in thirty minutes, I’ll leave it to you to explain to him why.” The elevator arrived with a chime and the doors opened, a few employees got out, giving the scene in front of them uncertain looks as they hurried by, Dominique gave the man one last chilly glare before stepping swiftly into the now empty elevator. Sharon, just a second behind her, managed to enter just before the doors closed. The redhead pushed the button for the thirteenth floor and turned to the younger woman with a smirk. “I wondered if someone would be foolish enough to do that after the Tattler article,” she commented.

Sharon looked at her with wide-eyed uncertainty, “Are you going to fire him?”

“No,” Dominique replied, “but by the time he’s done with today he will certainly never behave in that manner toward me again. And, as a bonus, since quite a few people saw me reprimanding him, it should take the news about two hours or so to make it around the building, therefore I won’t have to concern myself with doing it again. It was rather efficient of Mr. Cline to choose that particular time and location to forget how unwise it would be to do what he did.”

The younger woman stared at her, her expression a strange cross between admiration and appalled disbelief, “Are you even actually mad at him?” Dominique raised one eyebrow, her expression disapproving; at least they were alone in the elevator. “I’m sorry,” Sharon said, ducking her head slightly.

Dominique sighed, this was proving to be just as difficult to balance as she had suspected it would be, “I understand that us starting off with you staying at my house as my friend instead of as my personal assistant will make things slightly more difficult for you. And I need to figure out what the boundaries are as well. I’m not used to anyone questioning my decisions.” A faint smile curved her lips, “Except perhaps for Kendra, and she doesn’t question as much as point things out that I may not have considered.” She looked at the brunette thoughtfully for a moment, “I think it was more your expression that was problematic rather than the question itself,” she finally commented. Sharon nodded solemnly; the redhead looked at the utterly serious expression on her face and couldn’t help but smile. “I’m sure we will be able to work through it together if we try,” she said encouragingly. “As for your question, yes I am annoyed with him, but it’s tempered with the certainty that if it had not been him it would have probably been someone else.” Dominique watched the comprehension dawn on Sharon’s face with satisfaction.

The brunette frowned, “So what are you going to do to him?” she asked.
The redhead smirked, “Make his day miserable, I’m sure he will be calling me all sorts of unflattering names by the time four o’clock arrives.” Their usual closing time was five, but she was closing Nightstone an hour early today to give everyone a chance to get home and prepare for the dinner cruise.

The elevator doors opened and the two of them stepped out on the top floor. As they neared her secretary’s desk, Dominique paused and said to the dark skinned woman sitting at it, “Excellent catering choice Candice, dinner last night was superb.”

“Thank you Ms. Destine,” the woman replied, obviously startled. A hesitant, yet determined look crossed Candice’s face as she mustered up the courage to ask, “Your holiday party went well then?”

A brief smile warmed the redhead’s face, “Yes it did,” she confirmed. Dominique turned to the short haired brunette beside her, “Candice this is Sharon McDonald my new personal assistant, Sharon this is Candice Greene my secretary.”

“Pleased to meet you,” Sharon said politely as she held out a hand to shake.

Dominique waited until they were finished before telling Candice, “Mr. Parker and Mr. Cline should be here in approximately twenty-five minutes, let me know when they arrive. Also, please inform Mr. Burns that I’ll be sending Ms. McDonald down to Human Resources in about an hour.”

“Yes, Ms. Destine,” the woman replied.

“My office is there,” Dominique indicated the door with its plate announcing that it was the CEO’s office. “And this is your office,” Dominique said as she opened the first door on the left back towards the elevators from the reception area, and motioned for the brunette to enter first. It wasn’t a very large office, but because of its placement, it did have a window.

“Oh, this is nice,” Sharon commented as she looked around the area. She walked over to the desk and trailed a hand along it on her way to look out of the window.

The redhead watched her for a few minutes as she explored the room before commenting, “I need to go to my office and decide what reports Mr. Cline needs to finish before close of business today.” She stared at Sharon for a few seconds, wondering if it were best that the younger woman be present for the meeting or not present. “Do you think you can maintain a neutral expression during my meeting with Mr. Parker and Mr. Cline?” Before the brunette could reply Dominique warned, “He’ll be looking at you hoping for a clue as to what my intentions are, I don’t want that to happen.”

“It won’t,” Sharon vowed, “I’d like to be there.”

Approximately twenty minutes later the intercom line in Dominique’s office lit up. “Ms. Destine, Mr. Parker and Mr. Cline are here to see you,” Candice said when she picked up the line.

The redhead looked up at the younger woman who was standing beside her, she had been giving Sharon a quick overview of the company before Candice called. The brunette looked nervous. Dominique remembered Sharon talking to Kendra about playing poker with her brothers, and about how she had to develop a good poker face before she could win against her older siblings. “Poker face,” Dominique lowered the phone and murmured to her, the younger woman’s face instantly smoothed out into a noncommittal mask, and the redhead smirked. “Show them in,” she said into the phone before hanging it up.

She turned back to her computer and pulled up a few reports, ignoring the sound of her office door opening and then the two men entering. She continued to ignore them for several seconds as she
looked over the information on her monitor. “Mr. Cline,” she said as she finally turned her attention to the two men standing stiffly in front of her desk, “Mr. Parker.”

“Ms. Destine,” they replied almost in unison.

The two men looked appropriately nervous, and Dominique could see both men’s eyes darting between herself and Sharon, doubtless wondering who the younger woman was and why she was there. Even though she couldn’t see the brunette because she was slightly behind her, the redhead knew that Sharon must be maintaining her neutral expression because neither man’s expression changed appreciably. The redhead gave her Procurement Division manager a chilly look, “Mr. Parker I trust that Mr. Cline has informed you of why you’re both standing in front of me this morning?”

The blonde haired man stiffened, “He was staring at you in an inappropriate manner,” he turned his head slightly and glared at the taller man beside him.

“I trust that it will not happen again,” Dominique finally addressed Mr. Cline.

“It will not Ms. Destine,” the tall thin man promised her emphatically, relief entering his eyes as he realized that she was not going to fire him.

She stared at him, her green eyes hard and still unforgiving, until his gaze dropped from her own uncertainly. She continued staring at him for a few seconds longer before turning to Mr. Parker, “Since Mr. Cline has the time on his hands to spend in such a manner, I would rather it be spent more productively since I am paying him for it.” She leaned back in her chair, “I see that the annual contract review hasn’t been completed yet, I would like to see substantial progress made on that today.”

He grimaced briefly before responding, “Yes, Ms. Destine I’ll make sure of it.”

“Please do,” she shifted her gaze to the brown haired man standing beside him, “I suggest you work quickly Mr. Cline since I expect to see you and your wife this evening at the Christmas party,” she said with cool disapproval.

His adam’s apple actually bobbed up and down as he swallowed nervously, “Yes, Ms. Destine,” he responded weakly.

Her eyes flicked away from him dismissively, “By the way this is my new personal assistant Ms. Sharon McDonald,” she said indicating the younger woman standing behind and off to the side of her, “Ms McDonald, Mr. Parker the Procurement Division manager and Mr. Cline the lead Contracts Officer in that Division.”

Sharon returned the two men’s greetings and when the door closed behind them, she turned to Dominique, a respectful look in her hazel eyes. “I don’t think he’ll do that again,” she noted

“That was the point of that exercise,” the redhead said with satisfaction.

Morning - Nightstone Unlimited HQ, Lower East Side Manhattan

“Mr. Robinson,” Dominique greeted the gravelly-voiced human who answered the phone, “I have some information I’d like you to track down for me.” This certainly wasn’t the first time she had spoken to this man, only in the past her requests had been for much less benign reasons and she hadn’t cared what he did to get the information she wanted. What had counted to her, and what still
counted to her now, was the fact that he was thorough; she knew if the information was out there he would find it. “I’d prefer that you use legal methods when possible, I may need to use the information you gather in legal proceedings.”

There was a brief hesitation before he answered, “Alright, what information did you need?”

Dominique gave him the information she had on Robert, his parents and his aunt and uncle, “I’m specifically looking for information on the starting amount in his trust fund and the current amount, as well as where the Social Security payments he should be receiving are going. Also take a look at the Uncle’s tax information, I’m fairly certain that he’s using Robert’s trust fund to pay for Robert’s care and then claiming everything on his taxes.”

“We talking about the young guy in the wheelchair I saw on TV?”

The redhead frowned, apparently everyone had watched that broadcast, “Yes,” she answered shortly.

“Nice moves by you and that other woman,” he complemented her. “As for the info you want, a lot of that will be impossible to get completely legally even with a PI license. I can find the beginning trust fund information from when the courts set it up and where his Social Security payments are going, but current bank account balances and personal tax records are all non-public information, so getting access to them will be on the shady side of legal.”

“Do not take any risks, I do not want Mr. Edward Collins to realize that I’m looking into this,” Dominique instructed. She already knew that most of the information she wanted could not be legally obtained, and in the past she wouldn’t have even hesitated a second. This time she had, but she decided to proceed because she needed this information. She was almost certain that she would eventually need to either threaten Robert’s uncle with legal action or actually take legal action against him on Robert’s behalf.

“I never do,” he commented matter-of-factly, “I don’t want to get caught on the wrong side of the legal line either.”

“Very well,” the redhead replied, “let me know when you have something. I’m very curious to know how much Robert’s trust fund held initially.”

“Will do,” he assured her before he hung up.

Five minutes later the intercom line lit up, “What is it Candice?”

“Ms. Destine,” Dominique frowned, her secretary sounded upset, something that was rare for Candice.

“It’s that Quarryman, Castaway. He’s accusing Nightstone of making biological weapons and accusing you of attempting to release one of them last year in October. He was on the news just a few minutes ago.”

Dominique’s mind froze for a second, remembering the disc Robyn Canmore had stolen from Nightstone’s vault. Then she realized that Candice hadn’t mentioned gargoyles or a blue-skinned woman. “Ridiculous, and doubtless easy provable as such,” she commented dismissively, while hiding her relief. Obviously, Jon didn’t have the disc Robyn had stolen, or he would have certainly used it to support his claim and to renew his accusation that Dominique Destine turned into a gargoyle at night. She paused for a few seconds to consider her next course of action. “Candice please contact Mrs. Alford, Mrs. Sanders and Mr. Weiss and tell them to meet me in the conference room in thirty minutes. I’ve had enough of Mr. Castaway’s baseless attacks.” His announcement that she was actually a gargoyle had been more amusing than worrying given her recently acquired
ability to remain human at night, but making accusations about her company was another matter.

Only a few minutes later, as she was scanning through a news report reading the rambling accusations Castaway had made against her, the intercom line lit up once again. “Yes, Candice?” Dominique queried absently, her attention still focused on what she was reading.

Her secretary responded uncertainly, “Ms. Canmore, Ms. McDonald and Ms. Jackson are here.”

The redhead glanced away from her monitor toward her office door with a smile, “Send them in,” she replied. She should have guessed they would hear the news of Jon’s latest announcement and want to see her. The door to her office opened and Kendra entered first, her expression tight, closed, betraying her upset with the situation and, Dominique suspected, her upset with her cousin. The other two women followed close behind her.

The black haired woman waited until the door closed before commenting in an annoyed tone, “I guess this is his response to your comment to the reporter Friday night,” an apologetic look followed her words.

Dominique returned it with a reassuring one, “I did suspect he would do something,” she responded. “I wasn’t, however, expecting this. It’s a good thing I had Dr. Sanders keep enough information on the carrier virus to show that it wasn’t capable of replicating.”

Margaret frowned, “What is D/I-7 anyway? Castaway called it a deadly chemical agent.”

Kendra snorted, “It’s nothing more than industrial strength Lysol,” she said dismissively.

“Lysol?” repeated Sharon, sounding confused, “you mean this stuff is cut with water and then used to mop the floors?”

“It’s an industrial strength cleaner and germicidal agent,” Dominique expanded some on Kendra’s explanation.

“I don’t understand,” Sharon frowned, her bewilderment clear, “what could that do when bound to a virus that can’t replicate? I mean unless you had a lot of it, and its deadly when ingested?”

Kendra gave the brunette a wry look, “A lot of it might have been bad, but she had maybe a quart of it and there was a sorcery spell on it to spread the liquid in the container across the entire planet.”

Margaret looked over at Dominique, “More of the Weird Sister’s work?” she asked quietly, her eyes sympathetic. The redhead nodded.

“I don’t understand” Sharon said looking back and forth between the redhead and Margaret, “Why would they want Demona to spread a small amount of cleaner around the globe? It doesn’t seem to make a lot of sense.”

Dominique sighed, she wished she didn’t need share this, but she didn’t want Sharon or Margaret to think that the incident with the carrier virus was something that it wasn’t. “They didn’t. The Weird Sisters cast an enchantment on me so that I would drive away any gargoyle I cared about to protect them from the Canmore hunters. The carrier virus and D/I-7 mix along with the sorcery I cast on it was to make the clan believe that I meant to wipe out the human race so that they would hate me. Not that I knew any of this at the time,” she said bitterly, “I only realized recently that the mixture would have done nothing even if it had been released.”

The younger woman stared at her, her hazel eyes revealing her dismay and sympathy. “If you prove that what Castaway is claiming is nonsense because the carrier virus can’t replicate on its own, then
the clan will know the truth as well,” she pointed out.

The redhead was startled, she hadn’t thought about this situation being an opportunity for her to reveal at least some of the truth of what had actually been going on the night of the hunter’s moon. Was she ready for the clan to figure out the spell the three fey had placed upon her? Every time she contemplated the clan knowing just how much the Weird Sisters had controlled her behavior and actions over the past few years, Dominique felt embarrassed and humiliated. In many ways, it felt less terrible for the clan to go on thinking of her as evil, than for them to know the truth. The closest she had come to admitting it had been in her conversation last night with her daughter, when she had mentioned that so many things she had thought she had done for one reason were really for another.

“I’m sure Angela would like to know that you didn’t really intend to kill off humanity that night,” Kendra commented softly. Dominique stared at her mate indecisively, she didn’t doubt that Angela would rather know that the cylinder of fluid she had tossed in the air for Goliath to catch that night hadn’t actually been filled with a deadly plague. She just didn’t know if she were quite ready for her daughter to know just how completely she had been under the three feys’ control.

Forty five minutes later in the conference room, “My primary concern is that Castaway’s lawyer will use the discovery process as a cover to go through the company records including those detailing our current research,” Mr. Weiss said, “Once they’re discovered they go into the court record and then they’re public records that anyone can read.”

Dominique frowned at him, “Just how likely do you think it is that the judge in the case will let them do that?” She didn’t like the idea of Castaway being able to use being prosecuted for libel as an excuse to go through her company records. Not that there was anything he could use to support his accusation in them, but there were several things that she didn’t want her competitors to know, such as what the company was currently researching and the company’s plans for their future acquisitions.

He grimaced, “Judges have been very lenient in several cases with letting the defense lawyer go though just about any type of company record they want, and arguments that they’re revealing proprietary company information to the public haven’t been very effective.” He shrugged, “Judges typically side with the defendant when it comes to giving them access to records to prove their innocence.”

The redhead scowled, “So prosecuting John Castaway for libel would likely end up hurting the company more than it would punish him.”

“Most likely,” the company’s lawyer agreed unhappily.

Dr. Sanders spoke up, “We have the information to prove that what he’s claiming simply isn’t possible and we can voluntarily go through a CDC review to prove that we haven’t been developing any biological weapons.”

The redhead clenched her fists under the table, either way this information would have to come out. She glanced over at the woman sitting beside her, Kendra didn’t say anything, but her sapphire blue eyes held understanding and sympathy. Dominique turned her attention back to the other’s at the table with a sigh, “Very well, do what needs to be done to prove that Mr. Castaway’s accusations are lies. I won’t have Nightstone’s reputation tarnished in this manner.”

After Sunset - Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan

The clan had watched Jon Canmore’s accusation and then the press release by Nightstone’s public
relations person explaining why what Castaway was claiming was impossible because the virus he was referring to had been specifically designed not to be able to replicate. Given that the cleaning agent Castaway mentioned couldn’t replicate either, the combination of the two would at most be hazardous to someone who came into direct contact with a significant amount of the material. Now they were watching the CDC investigator, who had been invited by Nightstone to audit their company, release his preliminary findings.

“I have reviewed the company records on the carrier virus and wish to assure everyone that all statements made by Nightstone in reference to it have been truthful and accurate. Though the virus was designed to have a wide range of infection vectors, it was also engineered to not be able to replicate. When combined with an agent that is itself also unable to replicate such as the D/I-7 mentioned, it would take several thousand gallons of the combined substance to present any widespread threat to the general public. The small amount mentioned would have presented no significant risk to the public health.” The man on the podium waited a second for the press people standing in the room to quiet, “Furthermore all stocks of the carrier virus were destroyed several weeks ago and any information which would lead a researcher into replicating how the virus was made has also been destroyed.”

The CDC investigator had to wait once again for the noise in the room to die down, “Nightstone has in the past had in its possession a few hazardous viral agents for research purposes, however, all of those agents were disposed of at the same time as the carrier virus. In addition, Nightstone Unlimited has turned over to the CDC all their research papers detailing their efforts to design a vaccination for diseases such as Ebola and Hantavirus that have some very promising leads. I wish to thank the CEO of Nightstone, Dominique Destine, on behalf of the CDC for turning this valuable information over to us for further research.”

As they watched the man exit the room Xanatos muted the broadcast, “Well that proved to be more interesting than I had anticipated,” he noted thoughtfully. “I didn’t realize that Nightstone had been doing any research into infectious agents.”

“I don’t understand,” Broadway commented, puzzled, “Why did Demona say that she had created a plague when she hadn’t?”

“They’re lying,” Brooklyn responded confidently, “Demona must have changed the company records to make it look like the carrier virus couldn’t replicate. She’s still trying to pretend that she’s changed.” The reddish male would have said something more, but the frowns on both Goliath and Elisa’s faces stopped him. He looked around the room, no one looked as if they agreed with him and Angela was looking at him as if she really disliked him and was not just angry with him anymore.

Angela turned away from the clan’s second in command dismissively, “Or she didn’t realize that it wasn’t at the time,” she commented, looking at her father. Her mother’s cryptic comments about learning that she had been doing things for reasons other than what she had thought they were started making more sense to the young female. She felt a flare of concern for her mother; she couldn’t imagine how the prideful gargoyle she knew was dealing with the idea that some of her actions hadn’t been under her control.

“Hmm,” Goliath rumbled thoughtfully, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with his daughter. He turned to the human woman standing beside him, “We need to speak to Kendra Canmore.”

Elisa nodded, “Nightstone is having their corporate Christmas party tonight. I’ll try tomorrow.” She didn’t know quite what to believe; just a week ago, she would have sided with Brooklyn unhesitatingly. Now though, she wasn’t so certain, and in fact, she suspected that this might be the truth. The dark eyed woman turned toward Xanatos, “What did you do with that canister?” she
asked curiously.

“We destroyed it after exposing it to ultraviolet light and radiation to kill the carrier virus,” David responded.

“So no way to find out if she’s telling the truth about it,” Elisa commented.

He shook his head, “Honestly it never occurred to me that she wasn’t, so we immediately took every step we could to neutralize whatever was in the canister and then we incinerated what was left.”

Brooklyn looked around disbelievingly. After everything that Demona had done to the clan, he couldn’t understand how everyone was falling for this scheme of hers. Grimness filled him; he would remain quiet for now, all he had to do was to wait for Demona to reveal her true nature as he was certain would eventually happen.

\[ \textit{Night – Chelsea Pier, Lower Manhattan} \]

Nightstone employees making their way towards the ship paused to stare in curiosity as the limousine carrying Dominique Destine’s party pulled up to the pier preceded and followed by black Suburban’s with the Masada Security logo on the front doors. Security personnel exited from the two SUV’s forming a perimeter around the limousine, staring with stern looks toward the few freelance photographers hanging around the area. After a few seconds of listening to the headset in his ear, the team leader nodded toward the driver’s window. The photographers started converging only to pause nervously as the dark suited men and women from the security company took up aggressive stances and gave them cold glares, letting them know they wouldn’t be particularly gentle with them when it came to protecting the occupants of the limousine.

The limo door opened and Gregory got out with a quick look around at the area before he walked around the limousine to open one of the wide passenger doors. Kendra, her glossy black hair tied back in a ponytail at the nape of her neck and wearing a black tuxedo with a sapphire blue cummerbund and bowtie that matched the color of her eyes, exited first. She paused and looked around the area, ignoring the photographers madly clicking away after a quick searching glance at their ranks. The next person to exit the limousine was Macbeth, looking stern and dignified in his black tuxedo and wine red bowtie and cummerbund as he took position on the other side of the open limo door from Kendra.

Together the two of them held out a hand to help the next occupant from the vehicle. Dominique Destine, her brilliantly red hair partially swept up into an intricate bun, and the remainder left cascading down her back, was wearing one of her trademark red full-length gowns and a cream-colored cashmere cape. She stood for a moment between Macbeth and Kendra, regally ignoring the photographers who were taking pictures of her before stepping forward so that the others could get out of the limousine. Rachael, wearing a cream-colored gown, was next, followed by Sharon, in a black tuxedo, and finally Margaret, dressed in a burgundy gown.

As soon as everyone had exited from the limousine, Kendra offered her arm to Dominique, causing a fresh wave of bright flashing lights as the photographers immediately took note of the action. Behind them, Macbeth did the same for Rachael, leaving Sharon standing by Margaret, who was almost a foot taller in her heels than the shorter woman. The brunette grinned at the taller woman as she offered her arm to her and with an amused look Margaret accepted the offer.

The security force closed in around them as the group moved towards the gangplank, keeping back the photographers who were shouting questions at Dominique about the nature of the relationship.
between her and Kendra Canmore. “Well that didn’t take them long,” Kendra commented quietly to the redhead as they stepped onto the gangway and were immediately motioned forward by the ship’s crew. From here, they could hear the Christmas music playing on the ship.

“I didn’t figure it would,” Dominique responded calmly. Oddly, now that it was done, she felt better. Her hand tightened around Kendra’s forearm, this was the one she wanted to be her mate and she was tired of feeling as if she was hiding that fact, of acting like it was something that should be hidden. She felt more than saw Kendra glance over at her, her green eyes met her lover’s blue-eyed gaze and she gave the black haired woman a reassuring smile.

Her decision for Kendra to be her escort tonight had instigated a rather long discussion between them earlier, the black haired woman more than willing, but questioning the wisdom of doing this so soon after the Quarrymen’s attack and the resulting publicity surrounding it. Dominique knew Kendra was right, doing this tonight meant that the news would generate more interest than if they had waited even a few weeks. She, however, wasn’t regretting her action, or at least she hoped that she wouldn’t regret it. The only person that could make her rue this decision would be her daughter, and she hoped that Angela was open minded enough to accept the idea that her mother had chosen a woman for her mate.

They stepped onto the deck of the ship, through the perfectly clear windows showing the interior of the ship Dominique could see waiters finishing setting the first deck dining hall, which stretched almost the full length of the interior space. “Ms. Destine, Ms. Canmore” Ms. Ann Wright’s cultured voice drew the redhead’s attention, the tall, slender blonde was wearing a wine red dress. Beside her, in a black double-breasted suit, stood a shorter woman with curly brown hair, brown eyes and a warm, friendly smile. Ms. Wright’s blue eyes focused on Dominique’s hand upon Kendra’s forearm and she smiled. “This is my partner Jennifer Taylor,” she introduced the woman beside her.

Dominique felt her jaw drop just slightly in surprise before she regained control of her expression. “Ms. Taylor, pleased to meet you,” she managed to respond. Reminded by the clearing of a masculine throat behind them that they were blocking the other’s from boarding the ship, she and Kendra moved out of the way so that the other’s could step onto the deck. Dominique introduced her Operations Division manager and her partner to the other’s, hiding her amusement at the surprised look in Ann’s eyes at seeing Sharon escorting Margaret onto the ship. Really, it was only fair that she be able to surprise the blonde in return after being so completely blindsided by the revelation that there was yet another gay Division manager in her company. She hoped there was no one else. Kendra, Ann Wright, Jean Pierre, and Jordan Conrad made up exactly half of her senior management; no one would ever believe she hadn’t done this on purpose.

“Ms. Destine,” Jean Pierre’s deep, distinctive French accented voice announced his arrival onto the ship. The redhead smiled as she took in the handsome, slender man standing next to her Research and Development Division manager, she could guess who this was from what Kendra had said about Jean’s partner. “May I introduce my partner Andre LeClair.”

“Enchanted to meet you Ms. Destine,” Andre had a pleasant tenor voice Dominique noticed as he introduced himself.

“Mr. LeClair, I’ve heard quite a few things about you from Kendra,” the redhead commented with a smile, talking in the tailored expensive looking tuxedo he was wearing. Kendra had described him as dapper and from what she saw the description fit Andrew LeClair very well.

Bowing slightly he lifted her hand and kissed the back of it, “Everything flattering she said about me is entirely true, and anything less than flattering is an outrageous lie,” he declared as he released her hand.
Kendra’s laugh rang out at this, “Andre,” she greeted him warmly, “it’s been too long.”

He smiled at her, “Darling, you are saving me some dances aren’t you?”

To Dominique’s amusement, Kendra drawled in reply, matching his cadence and accent almost perfectly, “Of course darling, how could I possibly do anything else.”

Twenty minutes later as the ship pulled out of port, Macbeth and Rachael found Dominique and Kendra standing on the upper deck watching the city skyline. The constant scrutiny and interest in them had worn on the redhead’s nerves, so they had retreated up here before she stopped simply glaring at the watchers and started snapping at them. “Well you two are pretty much the topic of conversation right now,” he commented, his tone carefully neutral. Dominique thought, looking at his expression, that her old king probably thought this hadn’t been the most prudent idea she had ever had and she had to admit that she hadn’t expected simply having Kendra escort her would attract this much attention from everyone. They hadn’t even danced together yet.

“Except for those discussing the number of Division managers who are gay,” Rachael added.

The former king inquired, “How did you manage that anyway?” He’d been rather curious ever since he realized just how many gay managers in Demona’s company there were, as far as he knew she had still hated humans when she began the company.

Dominique ignored the quiet snicker from the woman beside her as she gave him a wry look, “I didn’t. It’s completely accidental.”

Macbeth stared at her disbelievingly, but he could see the truth in her green eyes.

“I have to admit that I find it hard to believe that it was completely accidental,” Rachael commented thoughtfully. “Have you ever had much to do with gays before this?”

The redhead stared at her, nonplused, “Not closely,” she responded after a moment, glancing around the area to make sure that no one could overhear the conversation. “And certainly not well enough to allow me to pick them out from the other’s I was considering for such a position after only ten or fifteen minutes of conversation with them.”

Rachael frowned, “There is that.”

“So this is where you got off to,” Margaret’s voice drew all their attention as she came up the stairs and headed their way. “It’s almost time for dinner and everyone’s waiting for you,” she said to Dominique.

“Wonderful,” the redhead muttered under her breath. “Where’s Sharon,” she asked in a more normal tone as she noticed the younger woman hadn’t accompanied the Bison’s chosen.

Margaret sniffed self-pityingly and mimed dabbing at her eye, “She dumped me for another woman.”

Dominique’s eyebrow rose, and her lips curved in a small smile at the taller woman’s antics. It didn’t take but a second for her mind to bring up a possible name. “Jordan Conrad?”

“That would have been my guess,” Kendra commented as she started leading them toward the staircase.

Margaret nodded, “I believe that was the young woman’s name that lured her away from me.”

“Tisk, tisk,” the black haired woman commented with a grin, “I’ll have to have words with her about
being such a heartless cad.”

The tall woman laughed, “I knew I could depend on you to defend my honor, Kendra.”

The redhead heard Macbeth’s amused sounding snort from behind her as they started down the winding staircase.

Kendra leaned over whispered in her ear, “Whose company is this?”

Dominique glanced over at her with a frown, “Mine,” she responded in just as quiet a tone.

“Remember that and you’ll remind them of that fact,” the black haired woman commented softly.

The redhead’s step slowed for the merest faction of a second as she thought about Kendra’s statement. Her back straightened and her chin lifted just slightly as they continued down the staircase past the second deck and on their way to the dining room on the first. Nightstone was her company and these were her employees, it would indeed be wise for them to remember that and quit gawking at her and Kendra as if they were some type of carnival sideshow. During dinner, Dominique didn’t care whether it was her attitude or simply that enough time had passed for everyone to get over their surprise, she was relieved that she was able to eat her dinner, a decent if not excellent prime rib, without feeling as if everyone in the room was watching every bite she took.

As soon as the waiters cleared away the plates, Mrs. Merrill stood up and walked to the podium and microphone near the front of the room. “Good evening everyone. I hope you enjoyed your dinner, I know I certainly did,” she commented. There was some appreciative back and forth commentary about the meal before she waved for them to be quiet once again. “Some of you have heard rumors of new employee benefits being instituted next year…well the rumors are true.” This time the murmuring that filled the room held more of a surprised note. “Without any more ado, I want to introduce the person who came to me and gave me a list of new benefits she wanted to provide to her employees, our CEO Dominique Destine.”

As everyone turned their attention her way, Dominique rose and made her way to the podium, trying to ignore the unexpected nervousness she felt at seeing the dumbfounded surprise in most of her employee’s eyes. Apparently, most had either not heard or dismissed the rumors that she was the one who had initiated this and not someone else. Of course before Canada and before the Ancient One had asked her to be his chosen, she would have never done such a thing, so she guessed she couldn’t really blame them for not expecting this from her. That thought reminded her of why she was here, and that tonight was the beginning of her fulfillment of one of the tasks the Irish Elk spirit had set her. Her nerves calmed, and she took Mrs. Merrill’s place in front of the podium with renewed confidence.

She had debated for hours about what to say tonight, whether to refer even obliquely to what had happened in Canada and the influence it had on her. “I suspect it comes as no surprise to any of you that I expect each of you to give me your best effort while you are at work,” she began, looking around and seeing the expected puzzled look on several nearby faces. “I expect that because I’ve been giving Nightstone my own best effort over the past two years as we’ve grown from a small startup company to the third largest in Manhattan.”

Dominique paused a second to draw in a breath, what she was about to say was as personal as she felt comfortable with admitting tonight. “Recent events have given me time to reflect both on Nightstone Unlimited’s past and where I want to see the company go during the next five to ten years. To get to that future that I’m envisioning however, I needed to make some changes in how I see the company. Nightstone Unlimited is more than just a building and financial reports of how well the company is performing. None of what I’ve accomplished at Nightstone in the past few years
would be possible without your efforts,” she said sincerely looking around the room and meeting the
gaze of several different people. Ms. Wright, Mr. Pierre, Mrs. Merrill, Mr. Tanaka, Mr. Parker and
Mr. Burns, who had replaced Mr. Cleveland, and Ms. Conrad. Dominique looked around some more
searching out the last person she was looking for and nodded to Candice, who was sitting with her
husband near the back of the room. She had to smile just a little at the dumfounded and pleased
expression on her secretary’s face as she singled the woman out for acknowledgement.

“In recognition of everyone’s efforts and Nightstone’s resulting success, starting in two months the
company will be instituting flexible working hours and opportunities for telecommuting. In June,
during our regular benefits open season, Nightstone will be adding elder and child care pre-tax
savings accounts to our regular benefit offerings. Also at that time, the medical benefits currently
offered to legal spouses will be extended to the domestic partners of our gay and bi-sexual
employees.” She let the noise that followed her announcement die down before continuing,

“Nightstone Unlimited will do more than just guarantee an equal employment opportunity, it will
treat all of its employees equally in every respect and from now on that will include the benefits
extended to the significant other’s of all Nightstone’s employees. If you come across a company
benefit that is offered to legal spouses and not domestic partners please bring it to the attention of
Mrs. Merrill and she will bring it to my attention and I will see what I can do about extending the
scope of that benefit.”

This time when she paused there was almost no noise at all, she smirked briefly in amusement and
then grew serious once again. “These will not be the last of the changes at Nightstone Unlimited, as
we move forward into the new year I will be asking for suggestions on how to make all company
processes more environmentally friendly, from the basic such as how to reduce the amount of paper
we use each day to our manufacturing processes and waste disposal systems. In addition, I’ll be
asking Mrs. Merrill to head up an employee committee to choose a maximum of six worthy causes
for the company to officially sponsor.” She glanced over at the woman who had an obviously
astonished look on her face, “I’ve noticed that you seem to do this unofficially so I hope you don’t
mind adding this to your regular duties?”

The woman gathered herself together and shook her head, “I don’t mind it at all.”

“Good,” Dominique replied. She turned her attention back to everyone else, “In addition to officially
sponsoring these charities, Nightstone Unlimited will match all employee donations.” She glanced
over once again at the chestnut haired woman, “I believe the current unofficial one is a donation to
the local food bank?” Mrs. Merrill nodded, staring at her wide-eyed. “We’ll start tonight then and
match whatever donations you’ve collected for them.”

“Ms. Destine,” Jean Pierre stood up. She gave him a curious look before nodding for him to speak.
“Some of us haven’t yet made our donations to Mrs. Merrill for that,” he gave her a winning smile.

Dominique could feel her eyebrow rise, she shook her head slightly, “Indeed,” she commented dryly.
She wasn’t quite certain how she felt about this turn of events, but then she had expected that her
employees would want to donate more if they knew she was doing this, it was just starting earlier
than she had anticipated. She gave the ebony skinned man one last considering look before turning
back to Mrs. Merrill, “Very well, I’ll wait for your final amount until the ship docks.”

“Thank you Ms. Destine,” the chestnut haired woman’s stunned expression faded, replaced by a
pleased smile at this news.

The redhead turned back to the rest of her employees, more than ready to finish this speech, “I know
I don’t express it very often,” her voice softened slightly, “but I do appreciate and value the efforts
each of you have and will continue to make towards making Nightstone Unlimited one of the most
successful companies in New York City. With that I’ll turn the podium back over to Mrs. Merrill,” she breathed out a silent sigh of relief as she stepped away. The sound of clapping surprised her and she turned around to stare in surprise, her employees were standing and clapping for her. Dominique didn’t know quite what to do, she hadn’t expected this reaction, and she found the reality of humans applauding her actions extremely odd to say the least.

“I’m sure the food bank will appreciate Nightstone’s donation Ms. Destine,” Mrs. Merrill assured her as soon as everyone took their seats once again. Dominique nodded in acknowledgement and then as dignified as possible, retreated back to the safety of her table.

Dominique settled into her seat with a feeling of relief, she glanced over when an olive toned hand settled on her own, Kendra’s fingers intertwining with her paler ones. The black haired woman’s blue eyes held pride and gentle amusement, “I didn’t know you were going to do that.”

“It’s something I’ve been considering for the past few days, most companies have a few charities they donate to,” the redhead explained quietly. Kendra nodded, and turned her attention back to the room. Dominique did the same, watching quietly as people started making their way to the lower deck where the dance floor and bar were located. After a few minutes, the fingers woven between her own squeezed lightly and she turned her attention back to her lover.

“Would you like to go downstairs?” Kendra asked. Dominique nodded, between the looks they had gotten when Kendra escorted her to the ship and the glances toward their intertwined hands a few minutes ago; she suspected very few of her employees would be that shocked when they danced together. The smile on Kendra’s face brightened as they descended the staircase side by side, “I like this song,” the black haired woman commented. Dominique turned her attention to the music playing, hearing the beat of the music and then the soft jingling of bells. It wasn’t anything she immediately recognized.

“The mood is right.” Dominique glanced over as Kendra began singing along with the male singer, “the spirits up,” the sapphire blue eyes were warm as they gazed back at her. “We’re here tonight, and that’s enough.” The redhead smiled as Kendra continued, “Simply having a wonderful Christmas time, simply having a wonderful Christmas time.”

“The party’s on
The feeling’s here,
That only comes,
This time of year;”

As Kendra turned to look at her with an astonished and pleased expression Dominique quietly joined her on the chorus, “Simply having a wonderful Christmas time, simply having a wonderful Christmas time.” The redhead elbowed the black haired woman in the side to get her to quit staring; she hardly wanted anyone else to notice her doing this. Her reputation had surely been damaged enough tonight without her employees noticing her singing a Christmas song.

About an hour later, Dominique and Macbeth were dancing together, while Kendra was dancing with Rachael. “I don’t know which shocks your employees more,” he commented quietly and Dominique glanced up at him curiously wondering what he was referring to, “Seeing you and Kendra together, or seeing how happy you are with her.” Dominique’s green eyes widened in surprise and he smiled gently, “It’s pretty obvious how much you care for her when you look at her, and it’s just as obvious when she looks at you.”

She felt her face heat and noticed the smile on Macbeth’s face grow wider, “I love her,” she admitted, “and I want her to be my mate.”
He studied her face for a moment before asking, “So what’s stopping you from asking her?”

Dominique sighed, looking longingly at the beautiful woman dancing with Rachael, “It’s just been over a month now that I’ve known her.”

His smile was bittersweet, “I knew from almost the moment I met Gruoch that I wanted her to be my wife. Sometimes it doesn’t take long, you just know.” The redhead squeezed his hand holding hers as they danced even as her eyes sought out the Cree woman. Rachael and Macbeth had appeared to be getting along very well this evening. “Ach, don’t turn into a matchmaker at this late date Dominique,” he grumbled, his gaze following hers.

His words had her glancing up into his eyes, “Why not,” she challenged him, “Gruoch wouldn’t mind you seeking happiness again, she wasn’t a selfish person.”

He looked sadly thoughtful as he replied, “I’ve only got twenty or thirty years left, remember the enchantments on us are broken.”

Her eyebrow rose, and she snorted at him dismissively, “If you hadn’t noticed Rachael isn’t a young hatchling either, you two are about the same age. And what difference does it make whether it’s five or ten or fifty years? If you two find out that you can love one another, why shouldn’t you spend that time together instead of alone?” It did help that she knew full well that Macbeth wouldn’t die of old age until he was ready to leave this life, Dominique thought as she finished speaking.

Macbeth gave her an exasperated look, but before he could say anything else the song was over and the redhead was stepping away from him. Kendra and Rachael had stopped next to them and Dominique had eyes only for the woman that she loved as the next song began and she stepped into Kendra’s waiting arms.

“A drink?” Rachael commented as she took his arm and walked toward the edge of the dance floor.

Macbeth listened to the words of the song now playing and flushed slightly, this was definitely a lover’s dance, no wonder Dominique had wanted to dance this with Kendra. “That would be nice, I’m a bit parched.” As they made their way through the crush of people around the bar he commented to the dark haired woman, “I didn’t realize Dominique was that familiar with much popular music,” he said thinking about how the redhead had known what the song was before the first words had even been sung.

“She and Kendra were practicing their dancing earlier today for tonight; this was one of the song’s they danced to,” Rachael responded.

“Oh,” Macbeth gave her a surprised look as they finally found an open space to attract the bartender’s attention. He hadn’t considered the fact that Demona wouldn’t know how to dance until now. “Another Perrier water?” he inquired.

“Please,” the Cree woman nodded.

He turned and looked for the two women as he waited for the bartender to get the two drinks. Kendra was leading the redhead through a series of intertwining steps and hand exchanges before they came together once again. Demona certainly wasn’t looking like a novice dancer out there, “They look good together,” he said

“They do don’t they, I don’t think I’ve ever seen two people fall harder or faster for one another.” Rachael observed quietly, a pleased expression on her face, “Dominique’s changed so much from when I first met her, it’s hard to remember the suspicious closed off person I first met.”
Macbeth paid for the two drinks and handed Rachael’s mineral water to her before looking at the two women dancing together once again. There was a calm, confident, serenity to Demona that he simply didn’t recall ever seeing before in the gargoyle. His eyes went to the intriguing woman standing beside him sipping her water. There was something in this woman’s eyes, a wisdom that called to him, whispering that this was an equal despite the fact that he was nine centuries older than she. Perhaps Demona was right and there was something to be said for not being alone anymore.
Tuesday, December 23rd 1997

_Just after Sunset - Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan_

Brooklyn headed toward Xanatos’ office instead of toward the kitchen, as the rest of the clan was after waking up. He knew Broadway wouldn’t be finished with dinner for at least thirty minutes, and that would give him plenty of time to ask if Xanatos had found out where the young man in the wheelchair, Robert, lived.

The reddish gargoyle couldn’t get his mind off the young human. He remembered only too well what it felt like to have Demona’s attention and approval, the feeling that you were special, unique, worthy above all the others. The way he had felt as a young gargoyle because the clan’s second in command was paying more attention to him and his training than she was to his other rookery brothers and sisters. He had reveled in her interest in him, looking to her first for approval whenever he did something correctly and feeling as if he had let her down whenever he failed.

He had been overjoyed to find out that she had also survived the centuries when they had awakened in this time. That his mentor and teacher hadn’t been killed along with the others as they had thought when the Magus had cast his spell upon them, sending them into their long sleep. Only then she had quickly betrayed him, used his naivety and his trust in her to first have him steal the Grimorium from the castle, and then lure Goliath into a trap so that she could cast a mind control spell on him. She had actually believed he would allow her to take control of the clan like that, but she had been wrong. Her hold on him hadn’t been so strong that he would betray his clan for her.

That hadn’t been the end of her manipulative attempts, she had lured Goliath into thinking there was a chance for reconciliation between them to get the other half of the Phoenix Gate and go back in time. She had tricked them all with her supposed capture and imprisonment in the Labyrinth so that she could steal DNA samples from them. And then there was what she had done to Angela, tricking
her own daughter into helping her in her attempt to kill Goliath and take over the clan. He couldn’t understand why Goliath and Angela were forgetting all of that, why they were falling for her current scheme. Sometimes he felt as if he were the only one who remembered the past, who remembered that Demona had proved over and over again that she wasn’t capable of anything but being manipulative and deceitful.

Brooklyn paused outside Xanatos’ office when he heard the sound of voices. “What do you think Goliath will think of the Tattler headlines today?” it was Xanatos.

“I don’t know,” Owen replied evenly. “I find it interesting that Ms. Destine would choose to have Ms. Kenmore escort her to a corporate function. I would think such an astute business woman as she would have known that such a public action would start such rumors.”

“In other words she doesn’t care, or she wants everyone to know,” Xanatos commented thoughtfully, “interesting point you bring up Owen.”

“Yes, sir, also sir I have located the young man in the wheelchair, his name is Robert McKenzie. Both of his parents died in the same accident that left his legs paralyzed. He currently lives with his aunt and uncle, Nancy and Edward Collins in Union City, New Jersey.”

“Did you find his address and phone number?” Xanatos asked.

“Yes sir,” Owen replied promptly, and Brooklyn heard what sounded like paper. He gritted his teeth together; he needed that information. He had to warn Robert or someone who cared about his safety to stay away from Demona and not to trust her no matter how caring and interested she pretended to be. The beaked gargoyle wished that someone had warned him before Demona had lured him into trusting her, that someone had saved him from the disillusionment and pain of finding out that her attention had all been a carefully designed pretense. No one had though; no one had realized what she was truly like until it was too late. He could do for Robert however, what hadn’t been done for him. He could warn the young human not to trust her, and maybe in some way it would salve the still stinging pain of that betrayal and his anger at himself for being so foolish as to trust the scarlet haired gargoyle.

Of course, maybe he didn’t need to see that piece of paper, Brooklyn thought as he remembered Lexington getting a phone number just from knowing the name and place where the person lived. He quietly turned away from the open doorway and made his way back down the hallway headed toward Lexington’s computer room.

“Press one if you would like to dial this number,” as he took the phone away from his ear and carefully pressed the one key. Brooklyn was feeling fairly proud of himself for having managed to do this without any help.

“Collins residence,” an older sounding male voice answered the phone.

The beaked male paused for a second; not having really thought out what he was going to say. “Mr. Edward Collins?” he asked deciding quickly that the first thing to do was verify that he had the right house.

“Yes,” the man was starting to sound suspicious.

“Does Robert McKenzie live there?” the gargoyle was feeling hopeful.

“Who are you? One of those damn reporters?” the man asked angrily.

“No, no I’m not a reporter,” Brooklyn rushed the words out; afraid the human would hang up on him
before he could explain why he was calling. “I’m calling to warn you about Dominique Destine, you
can’t trust her.” The room seemed brighter to him as his eyes glowed, betraying his rising emotions.

There was silence on the other end of the phone before the man demanded, “Who is this?”

“Who I am is not important,” Brooklyn responded, “You have to protect Robert from her. She’s
leading him on, making him think she cares about him, but she’s only capable of caring for herself.
She’s planning on using him for something, that’s the only reason she would have anything to do
with him. You have to protect him, keep him away from her,” the reddish male implored the human.

The last thing he expected was what he heard, a derisive chuckle. “So what, you’re some past guy
she used to get what she wanted? Of course she’s using him. She needs some handicapped guy to
make her employment record look good,” the human’s tone was dismissive.

Brooklyn gaped; he hadn’t expected this reaction, but then this human thought that Dominique
Destine was just another businesswoman. He didn’t know that she was actually a human hating
gargoyle. His thoughts darted around, seeking something, anything that would cause Robert’s uncle,
the young human’s equivalent of a clan leader, to halt any contact between Robert and Demona. He
remembered Xanatos’ comment about rumors starting of Dominique Destine being Kendra
Canmore’s lover. “She’s gay,” he blurted in desperation, remembering that a lot of humans didn’t
approve of homosexuals.

“What?” the human’s tone had changed; this he was taking more seriously.

The gargoyle felt a twinge of discomfort over doing this, but he had to protect the young human.
“She’s gay,” he repeated his words, “she and Kendra Canmore are lovers.” He knew it wasn’t
possible for it to be true, but this human didn’t know that.

“You mean that Tattler article was right?” the human sounded angry, “We thought it was just another
publicity attempt by them when none of the other papers reported anything like that.”

Brooklyn had no idea what the article in the Tattler was about, but it didn’t matter to him right now.
This was sounding like it would work, “Yes, it was right, they’re lovers, they go home every night
together,” he said remembering what had caused Fox and David Xanatos to bring up the suspicion to
the clan.

“God damn it I knew there was something wrong, a successful woman like that being interested in a
crippled boy” the human snarled, “but then she seemed so reasonable and business like. A damn
pervert, god damn it. Did Robert know he was inviting perverts to our home?”

Brooklyn was feeling increasingly uncomfortable with this, the human sounded really hateful, but he
had to keep Demona away from Robert, he couldn’t let her do to the young human what she had
done to him. “I’m sure they hid it from him, but you can’t let him be around her there’s no telling
what she would try and persuade him to believe is right.”

“Damn it,” the human cussed again, apparently not paying attention now at all to Brooklyn, “I bet he
did know, always thinking he’s so much smarter than his aunt or I because he’s always got his head
inside those books and computers. Damn faggy acting kid…” the man’s voice trailed off. “God
damn it,” the humans voice was suddenly very loud in the beaked male’s ear, “if that’s it, if he’s a
little fag, no damn way I’m having a damn fag living in my house.”

No,” Brooklyn said alarmed at the sudden turn in the conversation, “I’m sure he’s not like that, he’s
normal, he’s not gay,” there was no response from the other end. Desperately the reddish male tried
again, using the human’s own words, “Robert’s not a pervert.” There was no response and Brooklyn
was starting to suspect that the man had hung up the phone already.

“What did you just do,” the cold voice from behind Brooklyn startled him and he whirled around to stare at Lexington, the phone still held in his hand. The smaller male’s eyes were burning brightly white, and the look on his face held no friendliness at all.

“I had to save him from Demona,” the reddish male explained, shocked at Lexington’s display of anger.

“What did you say, why were you telling someone Robert wasn’t gay?” the web winged gargoyle demanded.

Brooklyn almost answered, but then he began to be irritated at the tone Lexington was using, he was the clan second in command. “I don’t answer to you,” he snapped back.

The smallest member of the clan hesitated only a second before responding in a chilly tone, “Fine, then let’s take this to Goliath and see what he thinks.”

*Early Evening – Destine Manor, Forest Hills Gardens, Long Island*

“So when are you two going to come up and visit me?” Rachael asked as Gregory packed her bags into the trunk of the limousine. Sharon had left this morning on a flight back to Arizona, and Margaret would be staying to work with Mrs. Merrill until after the New Year.

“Either spring or summer,” Dominique responded glancing over at Kendra, “we haven’t discussed a specific time yet.”

“Is there a time you would recommend?” the black-haired woman said, looking inquiringly at the Cree woman.

Rachael responded immediately, “Spring, in early April.”

Kendra’s cell phone rang interrupting her reply; she slipped it out of its holder and looked at the number. “It’s Robert,” she said with a frown flipping the phone open. “Robert?” She listened for a few seconds, her body tensing and her jaw clenching, “Don’t hang up the phone, hide it somewhere close so I can listen and make sure you’re ok,” she ordered, her words coming rapidly one after the other.

“What is it?” Dominique asked sharply.

“We need to get to Robert’s house; something’s going on, his uncle just came into his room and is yelling about us being gay.” She listened to the cell phone for a moment longer, her hand over the microphone, “He’s demanding to know if Robert’s gay and that’s why you offered him the job.” She pulled her keys from her pocket, “We need to get over there,” she said to Dominique urgently, “he’s calling Robert names and telling him he won’t let a fag live under his roof.”

“I’m coming with you,” Rachael stated, “There’s no way I’m leaving right now.”

Kendra shook her head impatiently, “My car won’t fit three and the limo can’t move through traffic fast enough.”

Dominique frowned at the two of them, they didn’t have time for this, Robert needed them, “We may need to bring him here if his uncle is serious.” She turned toward the man standing uncertainly
near the trunk of the limousine, “Gregory can you see if you can get the other vehicle?”

“Yes Ms. Destine,” he responded, immediately pulling his cell phone out of his coat pocket and turning slightly away from them.

“We need to go soon,” Kendra said urgently, having brought the phone up to her ear to listen once again.

“I’ll go with Gregory,” Rachael said, not looking happy at all with this, “you two go ahead.”

She and Kendra were on their way less than a minute later. The black-haired woman had handed the cell phone over as soon as Dominique fastened her seatbelt. “God damn it; you’re a damn fag aren’t you?” Edward had asked the question several times, each time getting louder and angrier sounding and completely ignoring Robert’s continued denials. In the background, she could hear Robert’s aunt trying to calm her husband down, it wasn’t working.

“Why would it matter if I was?” Dominique heard Robert snap angrily, “There’s nothing wrong with being gay.” Her green eyes widened in concern; the younger owl’s chosen had kept his temper until now. This wasn’t good, and she couldn’t help but remember what had happened to those two women in the woods so long ago.

“Robert!” the redhead heard the aunt’s appalled response to his statement.

Edward growled loudly, “Damn pervert, I knew it. I’m not having a damned faggot living in my home.”

“Fine, I’m gay then, and I’ve never wanted to live in your home,” Robert’s tone was harsh with anger and pain, “I wish my parents had never died. I wish I had never had to come live where I’ve never been wanted, where you’re always telling me that I’m a cripple and a burden. Dominique’s never told me that, she’s never treated me like a cripple or like I’m stupid because I’m handicapped, or like she doesn’t want me around.”

Her hand gripped tightly around the phone; Dominique didn’t know quite what to think upon hearing Robert’s declaration. She didn’t really think that Robert was gay…surely he would have said something before now. As for the other things the young man had said, her heart ached for him that his aunt and uncle had made him feel that way, even as she was pleased with the fact that Robert knew she didn’t think that way about him.

“She’s a goddamn gargoyle-loving pervert is what she is,” Edward yelled.

“She’s kind and tolerant, and you’re a hateful bigot,” Robert replied, his voice almost as loud as his uncle’s.

There was an incoherent yell, the sound of flesh striking flesh followed by a pain-filled cry, and then frighteningly the sound of a crash and a loud thump followed by a groan.

“Edward!” Nancy Collin’s upset voice spurred Dominique into action.

“What is it?” Kendra asked as the redhead opened her cell phone while still holding Kendra’s up to her ear.

“How dare you talk to me that way you damn fag.”

As she hit three numbers on her own phone Dominique snarled, “Robert’s uncle hit him; I think Robert fell out of his wheelchair.”
“Edward stop this instant, don’t you dare kick him,” Robert’s aunt actually sounded threatening, and the redhead was relieved to hear it even as she was alarmed to hear the reason for it.

“911 Operator, what is your emergency?”

Her voice terse, Dominique began explaining what was going on and the fact that she was currently listening to it via a second cell phone. All the while, she was praying that Robert’s aunt would continue to keep her husband from attacking the young man. She knew only too well how violent some humans could be against gays.

_Early Evening – Library, Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan_

“I had to do something to keep Demona away from him,” Brooklyn defended himself. He didn’t like the disbelief in Goliath and Elisa’s faces, or the way they looked at him as if they couldn’t believe what he was saying.

“You told him that Demona was gay because you suspected he would react to that information with anger and in the process you jeopardized Robert’s safety,” Goliath growled at him.

Elisa glanced over at Goliath briefly before demanding of Brooklyn, “What information did you use to find Robert’s number?”

“His parents are dead, he lives with his aunt and uncle in Union City, New Jersey,” the reddish gargoyle responded, taken aback by how she was acting.

“Their names?” Elisa asked tersely.

“Edward and Nancy Collins.”

She turned to Goliath, “I’ve got a friend on the police force there. I’ll give him a call and have him go check up on Robert. If he’s really prejudiced…” she shook her head, looking apprehensive, “There’s no telling what might happen,” she said as she headed toward the library door. “I’ve seen situations like this get violent before,” she said as she left the room.

The reddish gargoyle stared after her, feeling more uncertain and upset by her response than Goliath’s disapproval. It was clear that she thought Robert was in danger, and he was the one that had done that to the young human. That thought caused his heart to sink. He had never meant to harm Robert.

Brooklyn glanced over at Lexington; his web-winged rookery brother had refused to talk to him on the way here. Even now, the smaller green male wasn’t looking at him. Instead, he was staring out the library window, his arms across his chest.

“You will not make any further attempts to contact Robert or his aunt and uncle,” Goliath’s command had him whirling around to face his clan leader his eyes wide.

“But…” he protested.

Goliath cut him off, “No,” he growled, his irritation and anger clearly apparent. “Nor will you take any action or attempt to contact Demona or Kendra Canmore or anyone associated with them. If anything needs to be done, Elisa or I will be the ones to make that decision and we will be the ones who make the contact.”
The reddish male gaped at him open mouthed for a moment in disbelief, then he said bitterly “Why don’t you just make her clan second then.” He couldn’t believe the clan leader was doing this to him.

“That is a thought,” the lavender male responded coolly. Goliath’s words had Brooklyn staring at him in alarm, taking in the seriousness of his expression. “You are letting the past cloud your judgment of what is happening today. Elisa has just as much if not more reason to hate and distrust Demona, yet she is not letting her emotions cloud her reasoning.”

“It’s another scheme of hers,” the reddish male said desperately, “Hasn’t Demona proven time and time again that she’s not capable of anything else?” He had to get Goliath to see this, to stop being taken in by the treacherous gargoyle’s latest attempt.

The lavender male stared at him for a long, silent moment, “This is the blindness I was referring to. You refuse to consider that there is another possibility behind her actions,” he frowned, looking disturbed.

Brooklyn said incredulously, “You can’t believe this tale about spirits?”

Goliath scowled, “Did you hear nothing of what Puck said?”

“She found out about that incident from somewhere and is using the information to pull this off,” the reddish gargoyle responded immediately. He had already considered an alternate explanation for the tale Macbeth had given them. A sound from behind him reminded Brooklyn that they were not alone in the library, he glanced around, but to all appearances, Lexington was still ignoring him.

“Do you think I have not considered that?” Goliath rumbled.

Brooklyn turned back to his clan leader, his spirits rising, “Then you don’t believe this tale of Demona’s,” he said his voice rising in his relief.

The big male shook his head disapprovingly, “I am considering all possibilities. That is why your behavior concerns me; you will not consider the possibility that everything we have heard is the truth.”

The reddish male stared at him, not quite certain how to respond. He was still convinced that he was right, that this was another of Demona’s schemes.

Elisa strode into the room, “Robert must have called Demona right after Brooklyn’s call,” she informed them in a hurried tone, “Dominique Destine called 911 on Robert’s behalf. The local police are already headed to his address along with an ambulance. The dispatcher’s notes mention that Dominique’s listening to what’s happening on an open cell phone connection and she heard Robert’s uncle hit him and knock him out of his wheelchair.” She grabbed her red leather jacket from the chair back it had been hanging upon and put it on, “I’ll head that way, see if I can’t find out some more of what’s going on and how badly Robert was hurt.”

Brooklyn stared at her aghast. He couldn’t understand how his effort to protect the young human had turned out so badly. How had what he said to the young man’s uncle lead to the man attacking Robert? Then to make matters worse, Demona was headed there. “You have to keep her away from him,” Brooklyn said urgently, taking a step toward Elisa.

The dark-haired woman turned toward him, she frowned and her eyes were concerned as they rested upon him, “Brooklyn you need to talk with someone about how Demona hurt you when she used you to place that spell on Goliath.” Her voice was soft with her concern for him, and the reddish gargoyle could only stare at her numbly, his mind grappling with the fact that she thought he was the
one with the problem. “You’re letting that event color everything Demona does. I was doing the same thing with Demona using Angela to get to Goliath. I let my anger over that cloud my judgment, and it was only Matt pointing out what I was doing that got me to stop and look at what’s been going on with Demona in a less emotional manner. I don’t know if this is just another scheme by her or not, but I’ve got to wait and withhold judgment until I get enough evidence to prove it’s one or the other. Right now, the evidence is all pointing toward it not being a scheme, but you won’t even consider that possibility, will you?”

Brooklyn’s hands clenched, “It’s another scheme by her, why can’t you see that?”

The frown on her face deepened, and her eyes grew less sympathetic, “You’re starting to sound just like Demona with her ‘humans will always betray’, only with you it’s ‘Demona will always betray’.” The reddish gargoyle rocked back as if she had slapped him. “Don’t let yourself become as embittered by the past as Demona did Brooklyn.” She looked at him for a moment longer before turning to Goliath, “I need to go.”

Goliath nodded, “Be careful Elisa, if Demona is still human then she will likely head there as well.”

“Already thought of that big guy,” the dark-haired woman assured him, “there will be a lot of cops around, she won’t try anything.” Elisa glanced toward Lexington at the window with a concerned frown before shaking her head and leaving.

The reddish gargoyle stared after her, still shaken by her comment. He was nothing like Demona, he wasn’t he told himself.

As if hearing his thoughts Goliath commented, “You are beginning to sound like Demona.” Brooklyn turned toward his clan leader, his denial dying on his lips as he saw the concerned, thoughtful look on Goliath’s face. “If you will not talk to me, you will talk to Hudson about this. I will not let you go down the same destructive path she did, I do not want to lose you to bitterness and hatred as we lost her.”

Brooklyn couldn’t believe what was happening; nothing had gone as he had planned. Instead of saving Robert, he had put him in danger and now Goliath and Elisa were telling him that he was acting like Demona. “I didn’t mean for Robert to get hurt,” he apologized quietly.

“I’m sure Demona didn’t mean for the Vikings to smash our clan along with driving the humans away from the castle either.” The cold, hateful tone of Lexington’s voice was as much of a shock to the reddish male as his words were, “Why don’t you place the blame for Robert’s uncle attacking him on Demona too, that way you will really sound like she used to.”

“Lexington,” Goliath rebuked the web-winged male, his tone appalled.

The reddish male stared into his rookery brother’s eyes, seeing the hurt and anger in them. Lexington was almost never angry, and had never said anything purposefully hurtful to him before this. “I didn’t mean for Robert to get hurt, I didn’t know his uncle would react that way,” he repeated, confused as to why the smaller male was so angry with him. “I’m not like her; I know Robert got hurt because of what I did,” he said emphatically. As if the words made everything more real to him, Brooklyn felt his guilt intensify, no matter what he had intended, his actions had led to Robert getting hurt tonight.

**Evening - Collin’s Residence, Union City, New Jersey**
The blue lights of the five police cars and the red lights of the ambulance cast a garish light over everything, including the black Jaguar pulled up in front of the Collin’s residence. Elisa slowed her red and white Fairlane and pulled up next to the curb on the opposite side of the street. Activity around the door of the house attracted her attention as soon as she stepped out of her car; the ambulance crew was carrying someone out on a stretcher. “Oh no,” she whispered to herself, it didn’t take much to guess that it was Robert. Her eyes widened as she recognized Demona in her human form and Kendra Canmore come out of the house following them. Somewhat bemused she took in Demona’s casual attire, black jeans, a cream-colored sweater and a black leather jacket. Elisa had never seen Dominique Destine wearing anything so casual looking before.

Not wishing them to see her just yet, Elisa darted over to the ambulance, letting its bulk hide her. She edged toward the back of it, and peered through the thin gap between the open door and the body of the vehicle. The stretcher was getting closer. She stepped back a bit, not wanting anyone to see her standing there.

They were very close now; she could tell by the sound of the footsteps. “Wait,” a young male tenor voice said from very close. “Dominique.”

“Robert?” she heard Demona respond, her tone soft, concerned.

“I don’t want to live with them anymore,” Robert said, his voice shaking slightly.

It was a moment before Demona replied, “Is there any danger in giving me a few moments to talk with Robert?”

“No Ma’am, this is pretty much just a precaution to make sure he’s not been hurt from the fall he took. We can give you a few minutes to talk to him,” one of the EMT’s replied.

“Thank you,” Demona replied. Elisa pressed against the side of the vehicle ready to turn and walk away nonchalantly if she heard steps coming her way. Luckily though, they headed in the other direction.

“I’ll probably have to take legal action against them to prevent that, they’re your legal guardians for another four months,” Demona commented quietly after a few seconds.

“I don’t want to hurt my aunt; she tried to protect me from him tonight,” Robert said, almost too quietly for Elisa to hear.

“I know she did Robert,” the listening detective’s eyes widened, not expecting to hear the understanding tone in Demona’s voice, “but I won’t lie to you, once everything comes out about your uncle, I don’t see how she won’t be caught up in everything.”

“You found something already,” the young man’s voice sounded resigned.

“The private investigator I hired did,” the redhead acknowledged. “Robert, your parents left you twenty million dollars, there’s no way your medical care over the past ten years has cost that much. Your uncle has obviously been stealing from your trust fund if there isn’t the money to send you to college anymore, and your social security checks are going into your aunt and uncle’s checking account. I’m even more certain that he’s been submitting fraudulent tax returns, and claiming you and your medical costs while taking everything for your care from your trust fund. The IRS will go after both of them if they filed joint returns and knowingly lied on them.” It was a tossup between which surprised the listening detective more, what she was hearing about Robert’s uncle or the protective undercurrent in Demona’s voice.
“Oh,” was the quiet response from Robert.

“Robert, I promised you that I wouldn’t do anything without your permission and I won’t,” Elisa shook her head in disbelief at what she was hearing, “but your uncle definitely doesn’t deserve any of your compassion,” that at least sounded more like the Demona she knew. “Not after the way he’s treated you all these years, you are not a burden, you are a bright, intelligent young man, one that I would be proud to call clan.” Elisa couldn’t stop the disbelieving sound that escaped from her throat. Clan, the use of the word by Demona stunned her, not only that the, apparently now formerly, human hating gargoyle was actually extending that relationship to a human, but that it meant that Robert knew Dominique Destine was a gargoyle.

“There’s someone nearby,” Elisa froze and looked wide-eyed toward the edge of the door, as she recognized Kendra Canmore’s voice. Damn how had the woman heard that, Elisa thought, the detective started easing backward in the faint hope that she could still escape notice.

Elisa froze once again as Kendra stepped around the ambulance door, the woman’s blue eyes narrowed dangerously, “I guess you’ve never been told that it’s rude to listen in on other people’s private conversations Detective Maza.”

Demona stepped around the door next, “Detective Maza, what an interesting surprise,” the redhead said, her voice silky with threat. “I guess that answers the question of who called Robert’s uncle.”

Elisa’s dark eyes narrowed, “It wasn’t me,” she defended herself angrily.

“Then who was it,” Kendra growled, and the detective couldn’t stop herself from taking a step backward away from the blue-eyed woman, her heart beginning to pound.

Elisa clenched her jaw and remained silent, not wanting to give the two women any information or put Brooklyn in danger.

“Brooklyn,” Demona stated quietly after a second, her voice carrying over tones of regret.

The detective cursed herself for the betraying surprised glance toward the redhead. Kendra made a small sound of understanding and glanced over at Demona and the two women shared a glance. Elisa’s eyes widened as she realized that Kendra needed no explanation as to why Brooklyn would have made the phone call, which meant she knew about the incident with Brooklyn, the Grimorium and the mind control spell Demona had cast on Goliath.

“The detective and I will step away while you finish talking to Robert,” Kendra stated firmly, staring at Elisa with a disapproving expression.

Demona nodded, “I’m going to invite Robert to live with me if he wants,” the redhead’s voice held a questioning note.

Kendra turned back toward the redhead, “I expected,” she responded gently. A faint smile curved Demona’s lips; she nodded once, and then turned and stepped back around the ambulance door. A frown formed on Elisa’s face as she stared at where Demona had been, to all appearances the gargoyle had just asked for Kendra Canmore’s permission.

“Detective,” Kendra’s stern tone drew Elisa’s attention back to the blue-eyed woman. She frowned, not liking being treated like a misbehaving child, but one look at Kendra Canmore’s steely expression persuaded her that it was probably just wiser to accompany the woman than to make a scene. The detective headed toward her car across the street, feeling reassured by its visibility and the fact that she could see several of the local police standing around talking.
Kendra made no attempt to talk to her as they stopped by her Fairlane, instead, the blue-eyed woman stared back at the ambulance intently. That was fine with Elisa, she needed a moment to gather her thoughts and think about what she had heard and seen anyway. Was she right about Robert knowing that Dominique was Demona? Did Demona’s statement about clan really indicate that? The more Elisa thought about it, the more certain she became that it did, she simply couldn’t see any other reason for the gargoyle to make that particular statement with those specific words unless Robert knew the significance of them.

She drew in a breath, glanced over at Kendra Canmore briefly before focusing on where the black-haired woman was focusing, on the rear of the ambulance. It was becoming very clear to her that there was a whole lot more going on with Demona than she or the clan knew.

Late Evening – Library, Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan

“Elisa,” Goliath got up from the stool he was sitting upon as soon as the human female entered the room. His eyes scanned quickly over her to confirm that she was unharmed, before returning to her face and the frown etched between her brows.

“Hey big guy,” she responded softly.

“How is Robert?” he rumbled, concerned.

“They’re keeping him for observation at the hospital overnight. He’s shaken by his uncle’s attack of course, but he’s fine,” she replied.

The lavender male let out a sigh of relief, “That is good news, both for Robert and Brooklyn.”

Elisa nodded, “It is,” she replied, “I was concerned when I got there because they were bringing Robert out on a stretcher, but it turned out that they were only taking him to the hospital make sure he was alright.”

He took in her quiet, thoughtful demeanor, “What is troubling you? Did Demona do something?” he asked, his temper rising at the thought.

Elisa shook her head, “Not exactly, we did have a bit of a confrontation, but that was because they initially assumed that I had made the phone call. It didn’t take Demona very long to guess that it was Brooklyn after I told them that it wasn’t me.”

“I was surprised by her lack of anger too,” the detective commented, “but then she’s been surprising me a lot lately.” She thought back to the part of the conversation she had heard between Demona and Robert, “Before they noticed I was there, I overheard her talking to Robert.”

“Hmm,” Goliath rumbled with a frown, “Do we need to be concerned for Brooklyn?”

“I don’t think so,” Elisa responded slowly, thinking back, “Demona sounded more regretful than angry when she realized it was him.” The lavender male’s bony ridged brow rose at this statement. “I was surprised by her lack of anger too,” the detective commented, “but then she’s been surprising me a lot lately.” She thought back to the part of the conversation she had heard between Demona and Robert, “Before they noticed I was there, I overheard her talking to Robert.”

He frowned, looking at her curiously, “What did she say to him?” Elisa began relating what she had heard as she hid beside the ambulance.

Goliath shook his head, “Clan,” he repeated what Elisa had just said disbelievingly.

She gave him a wry grin, “I was so surprised that I made a sound and Kendra heard it,” she flushed slightly. “That’s when they found out I was there.”
“What happened?” he asked, concerned.

“Kendra told me it was rude to listen to a private conversation,” the flush deepened as Elisa remembered the moment, “that’s when Demona initially thought I was the one to make the call. I told them no, and that’s when Demona guessed it was Brooklyn. After that, Kendra escorted me to my car and Demona finished talking to Robert. Presumably, she told him he was welcome to move in with her if he wanted.”

He frowned and Elisa said, “I know, it concerns me too, but I would be more concerned if it weren’t for the fact that I don’t see why she would tell him he was clan to her if he didn’t know she was a gargoyle.”

The frown on Goliath’s face deepened as he considered what she had said, “Why would she tell him though? We are certain that she has killed humans in the past to protect that information.”

“Either she or Thailog, I was never really certain which,” Elisa felt compelled to correct him; after all she didn’t know which of the two had done the killing. Reluctantly he rumbled his agreement, she knew he didn’t like being reminded that his own clone could do such things.

“As to why she would tell him, I don’t know,” Elisa started pacing, “but my instincts are telling me there’s a lot more going on with Demona than we’ve been told, and whatever it is would probably make it clear to us why she’s been acting so different lately.” Abruptly she halted her pacing, turning to face him, “They only stayed with Rachael for two days, and then the woman’s visiting Demona for Solstice? She’s only known Robert for a month and she’s telling him he’s clan?” She brought up a few of the things that had been bothering her, “Something’s causing her to trust these particular humans so quickly and completely, but what is it?”

“Hmm,” Goliath rumbled thoughtfully. “Do you believe Kendra Canmore will tell us anything?”

“I don’t know, she and Demona appear to be rather close now,” Elisa frowned remembering the moment when it looked very much like the gargoyle had sought Kendra’s permission before telling Robert he was welcome to stay with her. “Honestly I don’t think she’ll tell us anything Demona doesn’t want us to know.” She watched as the frown on Goliath’s face deepened.

When the lavender male didn’t say anything Elisa continued, “In other news, Robert’s uncle was arrested for assault; they brought him out shortly after Robert left for the hospital.” She shook her head, “Demona and Kendra glared at him, but that was all. I believe she’s planning on going after him legally rather than physically. It sounds like she has enough evidence to at least get a court to look at how he’s been managing Robert’s trust fund and where Robert’s Social Security Dependant Survivor benefits have been going, as well as getting the IRS very interested in his tax returns.” She could tell that he didn’t quite understand everything she was saying. No surprise, she doubted he had come across these particular concepts in the last few years since the clan had awoken from their century’s long sleep.

Elisa’s eye fell upon the latest Daily Tattler lying upon a nearby table and she did a double take at the front-page headline, “Millionairess Match: Dominique Destine and Kendra Canmore a couple?”

“Owen delivered it a short while ago,” Goliath said following her gaze. He didn’t sound very interested in the article.

She picked up the paper, glancing at the picture of Demona in a long dress and cape walking with her hand on the arm of Kendra Canmore who was dressed in a tuxedo. Elisa stared at the picture, thinking of the interactions she had witnessed between the two women recently: the obvious concern and hug the night Kendra had been shot at by the Quarryman, tonight when Demona had asked
Kendra’s permission before making the offer to Robert, the fact that Xanatos said Kendra spent her nights at Demona’s house, and now this. If it were anyone else and not Demona, Elisa had to admit that she would be wondering by now if maybe there was something between the two of them as well.

_Late Evening – Lexington’s Computer Room, Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan_

Marvin has entered GayChat

Furrybear: hey Marvin

Marvin: hey Furry

Greywolf: long time no see, how ya doing tonight Marvin

Marvin: not too well actually

Furrybear: What’s wrong?

FireIslandBoy has entered GayChat

FireIslandBoy: hey everyone

Marvin: you know my friend I told you I liked

Greywolf: ya

Furrybear: yes

Marvin: I heard him tonight saying that gays weren’t normal and were perverts

FireIslandBoy: damn man that sucks

Furrybear: I’m sorry Marvin. I know you liked him. Its hard hearing people talk like that especially one’s whose opinion matters to you

Greywolf: At least you know now how he feels, and didn’t like tell him and then get that directed at you. I did that once, not fun, not fun at all.

Marvin: yea there is that, I am glad I didn’t say anything to him

Furrybear: how are you doing?

Marvin: it hurt, I’m pretty angry at him right now

FireIslandBoy: not surprising

Greywolf: that’s understandable

Furrybear: is there anyone in your family that you can talk to?

Marvin: No, I know my dad doesn’t approve of gays. His girlfriends ok, but I know she would tell him
Furrybear: Isn’t there someone else you can talk to, maybe a school counselor? Someone who won’t tell your dad?

Marvin: Maybe

*Late Evening – Battlements, Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan*

“Brooklyn?” Broadway called out searchingly. The reddish gargoyle huddled further back into the niche he had found; he really didn’t feel like talking to anyone right now. He was still too shaken by everything that had happened earlier. He was worried about Robert, troubled by what Goliath and Elisa had said to him, and then there was the way Lexington was acting toward him. As far as he knew the only clan members not currently upset with him were Broadway, Hudson and Bronx, and he wasn’t sure about Hudson if Goliath had spoken to the elder already.

He had never meant for what happened to Robert to happen. He stared out over the city, Elisa’s words running though his mind, ‘instead of humans will always betray its Demona will always betray’. He was nothing like her he assured himself. ‘You will not even consider that what we have heard is the truth’, Elisa’s other words ran through his mind. Brooklyn shook his head, “I’m nothing like her,” he whispered to himself desperately.

He could feel the doubt creeping in, he trusted Goliath and Elisa, and for them both to say the same thing to him... He couldn’t do what they were doing when it came to Demona. He couldn’t hold both possibilities in his mind at the same time and weigh them without his emotions getting in the way. Thinking of trusting Demona in any way filled him with a nameless dread, a chilling certainty that he was about to get hurt once again. He sucked in an unsteady breath through his open beak, he actually felt slightly ill to his stomach.

His wings, which were caped around him, tightened even further as he lowered his head to rest his beak upon his knees. Was this how Demona felt when she thought about trusting humans, he wondered, this fear that welled up so strongly and filled one with the conviction that things would go horribly wrong if you let down your guard? “I’m not like her,” he whispered again. He couldn’t be like her; he couldn’t, because he hated her for what she had done to him.

*Close to Midnight – Destine Manor, Forest Hills Gardens, Long Island*

“Mr. Henderson, sorry to call you so late in the evening,” Demona said. She assumed the lawyer was answering from his home, but she wasn’t sure since her call had been forwarded by the twenty-four-hour call service the law firm employed.

“Ms. Destine,” the man sounded surprised, “how can I help you this evening?”

“I need to get custody of a minor from his current guardians. The young man’s uncle attacked him a few hours ago and put him in the hospital,” she responded, her tone curt. There had to be a way to make sure that Robert wasn’t released from the hospital tomorrow back into his aunt and uncle’s care.

There was a long silence from the other end following her statement, and then, “Would the young man be the one in the wheelchair I saw on the news with you a few nights ago?”

Demona sighed, had everyone watched that broadcast? “Yes, that’s the minor I’m speaking of.”
"I’m sorry to hear that he was hurt," Mr. Henderson commented quietly, "I’m assuming the uncle is his current guardian?"

"His aunt and uncle, his parents died in the same accident that paralyzed Robert," Demona corrected him.

"How old is the young man?"

"Seventeen," she could hear him writing on a piece of paper after she spoke.

"And how many months from his birthday is he?"

"Four, his birthday is in April," she responded promptly.

"Hmm," the lawyer murmured, "Since he’s so close to his eighteenth birthday it might be easier to have him declared an emancipated minor than to challenge their custody of him. Then he could decide to live wherever he wanted to live."

"Will that be enough to keep him from having to return to their home tomorrow?" the flame haired gargoyle inquired, "He’s only being kept for observation one night, he’ll be released tomorrow morning."

"Why did his uncle attack him?" Mr. Henderson responded with another question instead of an answer.

Demona grimaced; she hadn’t had the opportunity to ask Robert why he had said what he had said to his uncle. “Someone called Robert’s uncle and told him that I was gay, that apparently was enough to cause Edward to accuse Robert of being gay and start swearing at him and calling him names.” She paused; knowing from the way the room was glowing in her vision that her eyes had gone red with her anger. She drew in a calming breath, before continuing, “For some reason, and I honestly think it was because Edward simply would not accept Robert telling him that he wasn’t gay, Robert eventually told his uncle that he was gay. The situation disintegrated from there with Edward yelling he wouldn’t let a fag live under his roof, and Robert replying that he never wanted to live there anyway. That was when Edward struck him and knocked Robert out of his wheelchair. Robert’s aunt, Nancy, stopped her husband from attacking him further, from what she said when she told him to stop, he was going to kick Robert.” The room was glowing bright red again as she thought about hearing Robert’s aunt telling her husband to not kick Robert. She badly wanted to hurt Edward Collins for what he had done, but she couldn’t, not without hurting Robert.

The lawyer on the other end of the phone made a distressed noise, “I’m glad that didn’t happen. How do you know about all this? Did the police discuss it with you?” he sounded confused.

“Robert called us as soon as his uncle started yelling; Kendra told him to hide the cell phone and keep the line open, which he did. While Kendra drove us there, I listened to what was happening and called the police when Edward struck Robert.”

“So, the uncle has been charged?” the lawyer asked.

“Yes, he has,” Demona replied with satisfaction.

“Good, that will definitely help our case; at the very least we can get the state to take custody of him rather than sending him back into his uncle’s home.” The redhead gargoyle frowned; she didn’t like the idea of Robert going into some foster care situation instead of coming here. “Are you gay?” the lawyer’s next question caught her completely by surprise.
“Does that matter,” she responded in a steely tone.

“Not if we go after getting him declared an emancipated minor instead of being released into your custody,” he responded readily, “but I don’t like to be blindsided by the opposition and that could be used as a diversionary tactic.”

Demona frowned, what Mr. Henderson was saying made sense, he needed to know this. “I wouldn’t say that I was gay, since I’ve had relationships with men in the past,” she responded.

“You and Kendra Canmore are in a relationship then?”

She raised her chin slightly as she answered firmly, “Yes we are.”

“Congratulations Ms. Destine, she’s a very beautiful woman,” he sounded sincere.

The flame haired gargoyle hesitated for a moment, completely surprised by his response, “Thank you,” she managed to respond finally.

“I’ll get someone out to get the police report and then I’ll start the paperwork tonight,” Mr. Henderson’s tone was entirely professional once again, “we’ll have this on the Family Court docket first thing in the morning Ms. Destine.”

“Wait,” she didn’t want him to hang up yet, “That isn’t all you need to know, I’ve had a Private Investigator looking into Mr. Collins. Robert has a trust fund left to him by his parents, it began with twenty million dollars and now Robert’s uncle is telling him that he doesn’t have enough money in it to pay for Robert to go to MIT. Also, his parent’s Social Security Survivorship payments are going directly into the aunt and uncle’s checking account while they give Robert an allowance of fifty dollars a month.”

There was a moment of quiet with more scribbling on the other end as the lawyer presumably wrote down this information. “This will certainly give us what we need to make sure that Robert doesn’t stay in their care, and it should help our case for him to be allowed to decide where he wants to live. I think we should get that settled first and then ask the court to order a review of how Robert’s guardians have been using his trust fund. I’ll need to get the exact language of how the trust fund was set up and what if any safety measures his parents put on it.”

“Good,” she replied, feeling more confident that she would be able to keep Robert away from his aunt and uncle as he had asked her to.

“Don’t worry Ms. Destine, I’m certain that with this information we can persuade the judge that Robert’s aunt and uncle are not suitable guardians for him.”

**Wednesday, December 24th 1997**

*Family Court, Union City New Jersey*

“All rise for the Honorable Judge Taylor,” the bailiff declared as the woman in black judicial robes entered the courtroom from her chambers and walked swiftly to her seat.

Dominique and Kendra rose from their seats behind the table where Robert and Mr. Henderson and Mrs. Pallin were seated. The redhead glanced over to her right, watching as Nancy and Edward Collins rose along with their lawyer. Robert’s aunt looked confused and tired, no doubt from her long night at the police station trying to persuade them to release her husband.
The judge sat down, stared at Robert for a moment, undoubtedly taking in the large bruise forming upon his face, and then briefly glanced over toward Edward Collins. She didn’t look very pleased as she gave everyone permission to be seated. The woman glanced down at the papers on her desk and began scanning through them. Apparently finding the document she was looking for among them, she looked up once again and focused upon Robert. “Mr. McKenzie, I understand that you’re asking for this court to declare you an emancipated minor so that you can live elsewhere instead of with your current legal guardians.”

Robert glanced briefly at Mrs. Pallin beside him before hesitantly answering, “Yes, Ma’am I am.” Dominique stared encouragingly at the young man’s back, wishing that she could reach out and reassure him. He needed to be more confident, show the Judge that he was capable of making his own decisions.

Judge Taylor gave him an encouraging smile, “I understand your eighteenth birthday is in four months, you can’t wait until then?”

“I don’t feel safe there anymore Ma’am,” he responded quietly.

“Where would you feel safe,” she asked him, just as quietly.

“With Ms. Destine Ma’am,” he replied promptly. Dominique’s lips curved upward in a pleased smile at his words, she felt Kendra shift beside her and briefly squeeze her hand between them.

“Let the little fag live with that dyke,” Robert’s uncle snarled, “I don’t want him living in my home.”

Edward,” Nancy Collin reproved him, her low voice revealing her embarrassment.

The redhead whipped her head around; Edward was staring at her, his eyes full of loathing. She gave him a narrow green-eyed stare in return, letting all of her dislike for him show and her determination that he would pay dearly for striking Robert. She heard an almost inaudible growl from Kendra beside her and guessed that the blue-eyed woman was glaring at him as well.

The Judge’s gavel came down on its sound block, interrupting their glaring match, “One more outburst like that Mr. Collins and you can add contempt of court to the charges you’re already facing.” Judge Taylor declared, giving him a stern, disapproving look. He glared back at the Judge, looking as if he would like to respond, but chose not to say anything more.

Seeing that she had regained control of her courtroom, Judge Taylor turned her attention to the redhead woman sitting immediately behind Robert. “Ms. Destine are you ready to have Mr. McKenzie live with you? There will be a few modifications that will need to be made to your home for him.”

“I’m aware of that, and I already have people putting in a ramp and modifying my downstairs room for him,” Dominique responded promptly, “they should be finished by this afternoon.” It had taken her almost an hour to get a call back from a company willing to get the modifications done today in exchange for almost three times the normal amount they would charge.

“You managed to get someone to come out today?” The Judge looked surprised.

Dominique shrugged, “I’m paying them well.”

The redhead met the Judges measuring gaze calmly, “I understand you bought him the wheelchair he is currently using.”

The question caught Dominique by surprise, she hadn’t expected this type of inquiry and wasn’t sure
where it was leading. Her glance went to the wheelchair; she had managed to persuade one of the
police officers to deliver it to the hospital last night. “I did, and the second one I placed on order is
being delivered to my home today.”

“And the clothes he’s wearing,” the woman’s brown eyed gaze went back to Robert, examining the
black slacks, blue oxford shirt with a black and blue pinstriped tie and black coat that the young man
was wearing.

Robert responded before Dominique could, “Ms. Destine, Ms. Canmore and Mrs. Wabanago
brought them for me this morning.”

Judge Taylor nodded, “You haven’t known Mr. McKenzie for very long Ms. Destine,” the woman’s
sharp eyes returned to the redhead.

“No, I haven’t,” Dominique admitted, there was nothing else she could do, it was the truth,
“nonetheless he is welcome to live in my home for as long as he needs.” She met the Judge’s
searching gaze steadily, feeling rather certain that the woman would at least not send Robert back to
his aunt and uncle. The judge seemed to be taking her role very seriously as she considered what was
best for Robert.

“I understand you have an internship at Nightstone Unlimited this summer?” the judge returned her
attention to the young man.

“I do,” Robert replied, his voice livening, “I’ll be Ms. Canmore’s intern.”

Dominique saw the brief smile on the Judge’s face as she heard the excitement in his tone. “And
what will you be doing for Ms. Canmore.”

Robert sat up in his chair, squaring his shoulders slightly, “I’ll be learning how to evaluate new
technologies and the companies that have developed them to determine which ones Nightstone is
interested in pursuing either as joint ventures, investment or acquisition targets.” His voice deepened
slightly as he spoke, making him sound older than he had so far and giving a hint of the confident
man he would become if Dominique had anything to do about it. “I’ll also be representing
Nightstone along with Ms. Canmore when she goes to visit those companies that have been
selected.”

Judge Taylor’s brown eyes widened slightly, betraying her surprise, “That sounds like quite a lot of
responsibility.”

“I know,” Robert sounded his age once again, “But as Ms. Canmore pointed out to me, I’m not the
one making the decisions about the companies, she and Ms. Destine are.” Out of the corner of her
eye, Dominique noticed Kendra grin at this comment.

This time the smile on the Judge’s face stayed, “True.” She turned her attention back to Dominique,
“I suspect you work late most evenings Ms. Destine, what arrangements have you made for Robert
should he need any assistance during the afternoons?”

“Mrs. Wabanago is staying until after New Years to help Robert, after that I will hire a nurse to assist
Robert and work on his physical therapy with him,” the redhead replied promptly.

The judge nodded, and then she turned her attention towards Robert’s aunt and uncle. “Mr. and Mrs.
Collins, do you have anything to say to the court to show why Robert should be allowed to stay with
you despite what occurred last night?”

Edward Collins just scowled fiercely at the judge, his jaw jutting out slightly in his anger. Nancy
stared at him for a moment her countenance distressed, before turning her attention to her nephew.
“I’m sorry Robert…”

“Don’t you apologize to that little fag,” Edward snarled, interrupting her.

Nancy Collins didn’t look like she liked her husband very much at the moment, “Or what? You’ll hit
me too?” He looked shocked, whether at the fact that his wife was standing up to him or what she
had said or both, Dominique couldn’t decide. She turned her attention back to her nephew, “I’m
sorry we made you feel unwanted and that you were a burden on us…”

“That’s cause he was,” Edward mumbled rather loudly interrupted her again, crossing his arms
across his chest.

Nancy glared at him, but he wouldn’t look at her, instead staring steadily in front of him a mulish
look on his face. Her expression changed to one of tired despair and she looked over at Robert sadly,
mouthing ‘I’m sorry,’ silently before turning to the Judge and shaking her head as she sat down once
again.

Judge Taylor stared at her for a moment longer before turning back to Robert, “Mr. McKenzie I’ll
consider your petition to the court to be declared an emancipated minor. In the meantime, I’m
declaring you a temporary ward of the state and releasing you to the custody of Ms. Destine. As to
the other matters brought before me, Ms. Destine you need to open a bank account for Robert’s
Social Security payments, once your lawyers tell me that’s done I’ll instruct that Robert’s Social
Security benefits be deposited there.”

Dominique nodded, feeling very pleased that things were turning out the way she had wanted, “I
should be able to get that done on the twenty-sixth.”

“What?” Robert’s uncle broke his silence abruptly.

The judge ignored him, “Also, since allegations have been raised that Mr. and Mrs. Collins have
misused the funds from it for their own use instead of solely Mr. McKenzie’s care. I’m ordering a
hold on any withdraw of funds from Mr. McKenzie’s Trust Fund while a full audit and review of its
management is conducted. After the review is completed, I’ll decide whether the Trust Fund will be
turned over to Mr. McKenzie or his lawyers for management.”

“You can’t do that!” Edward protested as he rose abruptly from his seat.

“Mr. Collins sit down,” his lawyer hissed at him urgently.

“Incorrect Mr. Collins, I certainly can do that,” Judge Taylor snapped, her temper clearly at the end
of its tether with him.

The man paled, and Dominique smiled in vindictive satisfaction as she watched him realize that no
Robert meant no Social Security payments and no Trust Fund for him to steal from for his own use.
Her smile faded as she noticed the shocked look on Nancy Collin’s face, it was obvious that the
woman had no idea that her husband had been doing any of this.

“Judge Taylor,” Mr. Henderson spoke up, he waited until the woman nodded to him before
continuing, “Mr. McKenzie’s clothing and the computer he uses for school is still at the Collin’s
residence.”

“Wait a second that’s our computer,” Edward immediately complained.

“No it’s not, you specifically said you bought it with money from his trust fund,” Nancy retorted, as
she stared at him with a disillusioned expression. It brought him up short, he looked worried for the first time and it occurred to Dominique that he had hid what he was doing from his wife for a reason; she certainly wasn’t looking as if she approved of his actions.

Judge Taylor looked at the couple for a few seconds before turning to Mr. Henderson, “Child Social Services,” she nodded toward someone sitting in the seats behind Dominique, “will go with you to obtain his belongings from his former residence. Mrs. Peterson can that be done today?”

The redhead turned around in her seat, curious to see whom the judge was referring to, “It can,” a salt and pepper haired older woman sitting a few seats away responded.

“Good, then I believe we are done for today. Mr. McKenzie I’ll see you and your lawyers on the fourth of January, I’ll have my decision for you then on your petition for emancipation.”

“Thank you, Judge Taylor,” Robert replied. Dominique couldn’t see his face, but she could tell by the tone of his voice that he was pleased.

Dominique stood up and turned toward the aisle, intending on stepping around the wooden railing that separated her from Robert. As she did so her eye fell upon a familiar face, “Lennox,” she said, her surprise clear. She stared at him curiously wondering why he was here, it certainly couldn’t be by chance, he had to have known about the hearing today.

“Dominique,” Macbeth replied, “I thought I might like to meet the young man you’ve been telling me about.”

Her confusion cleared, of course, she had mentioned to him that Robert reminded her strongly of Luach.

“Robert I’d like you to meet someone,” she said as she stepped around the wooden railing.

The young man’s eyes grew wide as he realized who was there, “Mac..Duff,” he caught himself quickly.

“Professor Lennox McDuff,” Dominique said firmly, it was enough of a reproof to have Robert blush slightly, “I’d like you to meet Robert McKenzie.”

“Pleased to meet you Robert,” Macbeth said as he stepped forward and shook the younger man’s hand.

Kendra stepped up beside her and Dominique looked over, giving her a warm, happy smile, things were going very well. Robert would be staying with her and this was an opportunity to bring Macbeth into Robert’s life. She was certain that the young man would only benefit from knowing her old friend; Macbeth was everything Edward Collins was not. “Would you like to have dinner with us tonight?” she asked him. Macbeth gave her a wary look, and she smirked realizing that he thought she was matchmaking again. She hadn’t been, but her invitation would serve that purpose too, she thought her eyes sliding briefly toward Rachael.

“I think I’d enjoy that,” Macbeth finally responded looking at Robert and the young man’s face brightened.

As they left the courtroom, none of them paid attention to the blonde woman hunched over a pad of paper and furiously writing away along with the other reporters seated nearby. Elisa risked looking up as the group left, her eyes still showing her stunned surprise. She had heard the abrupt correction; Robert knew that Professor Lennox McDuff was actually Macbeth.
“Robert knew who Macbeth was, even though it was obvious that they hadn’t met one another in person before,” Elisa said, “and Demona invited Macbeth over for dinner tonight,” she finished telling them about what she had seen and heard during the court hearing.

“So not only does Robert know that Demona is a gargoyle, but it is likely that he also knows something about her past,” Goliath commented thoughtfully.

“Isn’t anyone at all concerned about Robert living with her?” Brooklyn asked harshly.

Elisa eyed him sharply, “Not really, especially since she was the one who told Macbeth about Robert and she invited Macbeth over for dinner specifically so that the two of them could get to know one another. Demona wouldn’t let Macbeth know anything about Robert if she was planning on doing anything underhanded to him.” Seeing that the clan’s second didn’t have an immediate reply to that she turned back to Goliath, “There’s something going on between Robert, Rachael and Demona that we don’t know, and the only thing I can think of that makes sense, is for it to be the same something that she has in common with Kendra.”

“The spirits,” the lavender male caught her meaning immediately, “that would indeed make how she is behaving toward these humans more understandable.”

“You think they’ve been victims of some fey and the spirits saved them like they saved Demona and Kendra,” Lexington stated, “and that’s why Demona is helping Robert.”

Elisa shot an apologetic look toward Angela before she responded to him, “Even with learning what the Weird Sisters did to her, I just can’t see Demona changing so much that she would suddenly make close enough friends with humans to be inviting them into her home. Having a shared grudge against the fey however, that might be enough for her to overlook the fact that Robert and Rachael are human, just like it’s been enough for her to overlook the fact that Kendra is human.”

“Hmm,” commented Broadway tapping his chin, “that would also explain how she knew about Robert or those other two women.”

Elisa looked at him surprised; sometimes Broadway could surprise her with his flashes of insight, “Exactly,” she agreed.

“I wonder how many humans these spirits have helped,” Lexington mused.

“Or how many humans the fey have hurt,” Angela said, her tone sharp as she pointed out the other side of his statement.

The detective grimaced, “I don’t know, given how many people died the night Oberon put the city to sleep and he’s supposed to be one of the better fey…” her voice trailed off.

“It could be many,” Goliath finished for her.

Night - Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan

“Angela?” her mother’s tone was questioningly hopeful as she answered the phone. In the background, the lavender female could hear what sounded like carols playing, and the sound of conversation.
“Yes, mother its Angela,” the younger female replied.

“Are you alright?” the older gargoyle asked, concern coloring her tone.

Angela smiled, “Yes I’m fine. I just called to see how you were doing.”

“You did?” her mother sounded surprised and dubious.

The lavender female’s smile faded, “Yes I did,” she repeated firmly.

“I’m doing fine,” her mother answered, “I have a few friends here tonight and we’re having a small Christmas party.”

“That’s good,” Angela replied feeling rather guilty over hiding the fact that she already knew this. She really wished the clan would stop spying on Demona; it put her in a rather uncomfortable position.

After a moment, her mother commented coolly, “I guess Maza’s already told the clan I have a guest for the next few months before he goes to college.”

The younger female frowned, “Yes,” she replied shortly, “I didn’t call about Robert though,” she wasn’t aware of how much her resentment of the human was coming out in her tone.

“So you didn’t call to check up on him,” Demona said slowly, puzzlement in her tone.

“No,” Angela replied instantly, “Brooklyn thinks you’re planning on hurting him, but the rest of the clan doesn’t. We saw how you treated him the other night.” When the silence went on for a bit too long following her comment she inquired, “Mother?”

“Angela, are you jealous of Robert?” her mother asked hesitantly.

“Of course not,” the younger female winced; if she heard the lie in her own voice, she knew her mother would hear it.

There was a long silence, “Angela you’re my daughter and I love you. You don’t need to be jealous of Robert, he’s not replacing you in my heart,” Demona said gently. “I’m very fond of Robert and I care about him, but that doesn’t in any way mean that I love you any less.”

Angela was embarrassed that her mother had guessed what was bothering her so easily, and reassured by her mother’s words. “I’m sorry.”

“There’s no need to apologize,” Demona reassured her.

Angela searched for something to say. “Is Robert alright, it must have been hard on him to have his uncle attack him that way. I don’t know why Brooklyn did something that stupid.”

“He’s doing very well considering,” her mother replied immediately, “and Brooklyn always thinks the worst of me, unfortunately I’ve given him plenty of reasons to in the past. Macbeth came over tonight though, and the two of them seem to be getting along really well.”

“You seem really pleased about that,” Angela replied bemused by the way her mother’s tone had changed from regretful to upbeat so quickly.

“Macbeth is a good elder male for Robert to look up to,” Demona explained, “much better than that uncle of his.”
“Demona you keeping all the rum for yourself?” Angela heard Macbeth’s voice in the background. The lavender female’s eyes widened as she realized by what name Macbeth had called her mother, Elisa was right Robert and Rachael knew her mother was a gargoyle.

“No, my daughter called me, the rum’s right here and another gallon of eggnog is in the fridge. How many have you had anyway?”

“Bah, I can hold my liquor woman,” he protested gruffly, “and tell Angela merry Christmas for me.”

“Macbeth says merry Christmas,” Demona repeated into the phone dutifully, and then without missing a beat she said to him, “Why don’t you stay the night, you can use the room Sharon was in.” Angela frowned confused by what was going on, she had heard her mother and Macbeth were getting along now but she didn’t think anyone realized they were getting along this well.

It was a moment before Macbeth replied, “I’ll consider it. At least you’re not trying to put me in Rachael’s room.”

“It’s too soon for that,” her mother replied calmly. The young female’s jaw dropped in surprise; her mother was trying to find Macbeth a mate?

“Interfering woman,” Macbeth grouched without any heat in his tone, “mind your own love life and I’ll mind mine.” Angela heard her mother chuckle in response, “I think we’re going to sing carols in a bit,” he said next.

“Bah humbug,” her mother replied evenly.

“Alright Scrooge,” Macbeth sounded amused.

“I’ve got to keep up what little of my old image is left,” Demona protested, “my employees barely twitch when I walk into a room anymore.”

Macbeth laughed, “You poor thing you,” he teased, “next thing you know they’ll be greeting you with welcoming smiles when they see you.”

The next thing Angela heard was Macbeth roaring with laughter, “And how many of these have you had?” he asked through his chuckles.

“Oh, get out of here,” her mother actually sounded slightly embarrassed.

Angela frowned, confused by the exchange, “I’m glad that you’re making friends mother,” Angela said after he left.

To her surprise, her mother didn’t get upset at the comment, “So am I,” Demona agreed happily.

Angela shook her head; her mother had really changed from how she remembered her. Her eye fell upon the clock and she realized how late it had gotten. “I need to go; it’s almost time for my patrol.”

“Take care daughter,” the concern was back.

“I will.” Angela stared at the phone for a moment after she hung up; Demona hadn’t tried to persuade her not to go or railed about humans not being worth protecting because they would only turn on you. If it weren’t for the fact that she recognized Demona’s voice, Angela might have wondered if she were actually talking to her mother. She closed the door behind her as she left the room and headed toward the TV room where she would likely find Hudson and Broadway. Her steps paused, stopped and her eyes opened wide as she suddenly realized something, Macbeth’s
comment to her mother implied that Demona had a love life to mind.
Thursday, December 25th 1997

Morning – Destine Manor, Forest Hills Gardens, Long Island

Dominique leaned back into Kendra, savoring the warmth and feel of her lover’s body behind her and then the embrace of her lover’s arms as they wrapped around her waist. The radio was playing music in the background and the space underneath the gaily decorated fir tree was almost full with colorfully wrapped gifts, several of which had been brought first by Margaret and then Macbeth, who had stayed the night, and then driven home this morning to change clothes and pick up gifts before returning. Dominique had noticed Robert looking at the wrapped presents before breakfast, his expression a curious mixture of embarrassment, anticipation and curiosity as the young man realized how many of the gifts had his name on them. The dark bruising on his face looked much better this morning, the result of the time she had taken yesterday afternoon to heal as much of the damage as she thought prudent. It would be too suspicious for it to heal overnight.

Breakfast was done now, and everyone had moved to the living room to gather around the fir tree and the presents underneath it. Margaret was handing out the gifts and the redhead smiled as she watched Robert open the computer game Kendra had bought him yesterday morning. Rachael, Kendra and she hadn’t had much time to do any shopping for gifts before the court hearing, but they had managed to get a few things to put underneath the tree for the young man. He looked excited for a few seconds before his face fell, “I don’t think I can play this on my computer,” he said disappointedly. Dominique grimaced; she didn’t know why she had been surprised to find out that the computer Edward had been so intent on keeping wasn’t that up-to-date, the only reason to claim it had been that all of Robert’s schoolwork was on it.

“Why don’t you open the biggest package next,” Margaret and Kendra said almost together and Dominique smiled in amusement at the two of them. She knew that Kendra had snuck upstairs to call
Margaret after seeing the computer Robert had been using. The redhead looked on curiously as the large wrapped box was placed before the young man, she suspected she knew what it contained.

Robert’s grey eyes widened as he pulled the brightly colored wrapping paper away from the box, “Oh wow,” he exclaimed. Dominique’s eyebrows rose as she saw the picture on the front. It certainly didn’t look like any computer she had ever seen before, the curving lines of the case, gleaming black paint and blue lighting on the front seemed more at home on a sports car than a computer.

“I believe that computer will have no problems handling your new game,” Kendra said, sounding rather smug.

“I would think so from the way it looks,” Rachael commented from where she was sitting by Macbeth. Without turning her head and making it obvious that she was looking at them, Dominique eyed the two. They seemed to be getting along rather well. Certainly when given the choice, both Rachael and Macbeth seemed to prefer each other’s company to anyone else’s.

Another package was placed in front of Robert, when he opened it; it turned out to be a matching monitor for his new computer. “You didn’t have to, my old monitor’s fine,” he protested, obviously embarrassed by the gifts.

Margaret grinned at Kendra, “But we wanted to.”

“You’ll just have to suffer thru having a screaming gaming box,” Kendra added teasingly.

Dominique’s lips curved upward and she shook her head minutely at their banter, leaning back further into Kendra’s embrace and enjoying how the black-haired woman’s arms tightened around her.

“Well my gift can’t top that, but I think you’ll find it more useful for work and school.” Macbeth said as he pointed out a smaller box underneath the tree. Kendra starting to hum softly behind her distracted Dominique from the scene, and she wondered why until she realized that her lover was humming along with the song that had just started playing on the radio.

We watch the children playing,  
Beside the Christmas tree,  
The presents are wrapped up,  
It's beautiful, and secretly the gifts still hide,  
The fun awaits for you inside.

The redhead smiled; the song was rather appropriate. She watched as Margaret placed the gold foil wrapped gift on Robert’s lap, and he began pulling the wrapping paper away revealing the box for a fifteen-inch ultra light laptop. “Oh that is nice,” Kendra commented.

Christmastime has come,  
There'll be toys for everyone,  
Cause Christmastime has come for you.

It certainly had, Dominique reflected, the only thing that could make this moment more perfect for her would be for Angela to be here, but it was daylight and her daughter was sleeping in her stone form. At least Angela was talking to her once again, and that was a wonderful gift in and of itself considering their past.

I remember dreaming,
Wishing, hoping, praying for this day,
Now I sit and watch them,
The little ones I love, so excited by the wait.

The words of the song caused a poignant lump in Dominique’s throat, she and Kendra would never be able to experience watching their own children opening their presents on a morning like this. What would they look like, she wondered, would they have her red hair or Kendra’s black, or a shade in between such as auburn or brown? She pushed the wistful thoughts away after a moment, there was no use wishing for what could never be.

Christmastime has come,
There’ll be toys for everyone,
Cause Christmastime has come for you.

“Dominique,” Margaret’s voice was a welcome distraction, “This is for you and its rather heavy so come here.”

Behind her Kendra whispered, “Merry Christmas my love,” giving the redhead an idea of who had gotten her a gift. Of course, there was a package underneath the tree for Kendra as well, and Dominique hoped that her lover would like the diamond and onyx platinum bracelet the redhead had made to go with the onyx necklace Rachael had given Kendra. The gold and red wrapped package was heavy; Dominique gave Kendra a quizzical look, but only got an amused smirk in return.

And now the word is given,
It's time to peek inside,
It's time to let the toys out,
So anxious for your look of joy and delight,
Waiting for just your surprise.

So soft and supple, the redhead caressed the brown leather of her new jacket before lifting it from its box to see that it was the same high collared style as the jacket Kendra usually wore. “I thought you might like one of your own since you keep borrowing mine,” Kendra’s sapphire eyes were twinkling with amusement.

“I like how yours smells,” Dominique responded before her brain caught up with what she was admitting in front of everyone. She blushed, and tried to ignore the amused looks she was getting.

Kendra sauntered over to her and bent down to whisper in her ear, “I’ll wear yours every once in a while then.” Gentle fingers lifted her chin and warm lips covered her own, and Dominique lowered the jacket to her lap so that she could reach up and pull Kendra closer. When their lips parted, they both tilted their heads forward just enough for their foreheads to meet for a moment.

Christmastime has come,
There’ll be toys for everyone,
Cause Christmastime has come for you.

Late Morning – Destine Manor, Forest Hills Gardens, Long Island

Macbeth had left after lunch, and Margaret was only staying for another hour or so before heading back to Kendra’s apartment to change and go out to a production at the Metropolitan Opera. Currently it was quiet in the living room as Kendra, Margaret, Rachael and Robert were all in Robert’s room setting up his new computer.
Dominique hadn’t been to the spirit realm for a few days, not since Robert’s phone call the night his uncle had attacked him. She had no doubt that the Ancient One was aware of what was happening with Robert and his family, but that wasn’t precisely the reason she was taking this quiet moment to seek him out. She needed to discuss with the spirit how she was feeling about what was going on, the anger she felt towards Edward Collins for striking Robert, the desire to hurt the man, despite the fact that she knew Robert wasn’t interested in any revenge and certainly wouldn’t approve of her hurting his uncle.

“Chosen,” the Ancient One’s voice greeted her the moment she entered the spirit realm.

She stared at him, surprised that he had been waiting for her; she had expected to have to go looking for him. “How did you know?”

“I do not know your thoughts chosen, but I can sense when you desire my presence if that desire is strong enough,” he answered calmly.

“I do need to speak with you,” the redhead acknowledged, troubled. This time she didn’t need a reminder or encouragement to walk up to the Irish Elk and look into his great brown eyes. When the connection between them ended, Dominique took in a steadying breath, the memories of how helpless she had felt listening to Robert’s aunt stopping her husband from further attacking Robert hadn’t been pleasant to relive. The entire time she had known that Kendra and she were at least fifteen to twenty minutes away from Robert’s house and there was nothing she could do if Robert’s aunt failed, except hope the local police arrived there in time to stop him from badly hurting the young man.

“You are very protective of your clan my chosen,” the Ancient One commented. Dominique frowned, that wasn’t quite the response she had expected. For one thing, it wasn’t something that she didn’t already know. “Do you feel that you succeeded or failed in protecting the young Owl’s chosen?”

The question following on the spirit’s initial statement surprised her, “I failed,” she replied bitterly, glancing away from the Irish Elk.

“Is he not safe now?” the Ancient One asked mildly.

She looked back over at him, taking in the calm way the great stag stared at her. It aggravated her; the spirit didn’t seem to be taking this very seriously. “Now,” she replied unhappily, “but he was hurt, and I didn’t do anything to prevent that.”

“You believe you could have predicted the other gargoyle’s actions?” the Ancient One asked yet another mildly stated question. Dominique grimaced, she knew she couldn’t, what Brooklyn had done had been entirely unexpected. “You are upset because you could not protect the young Owl’s chosen from his uncle. In part, your desire to seek out and punish this human stems from the feeling that you need to do something to erase what you see as your failure.”

Dominique stared at him, a crease between her brows as she thought about what he had said. Slowly she nodded once in assent, “That is part of it,” she agreed reluctantly, it certainly was not all of the reason for what she was feeling and thinking.

“What would have been your response before the Weird Sisters enchantments were removed?”

His next question surprised her, but the redhead didn’t even need to spend any time thinking about the answer, “I would have killed him.”
“Yet he is still alive, and you truly have no intentions of killing or maiming him, despite your thoughts,” the great stag pointed out.

She frowned at him, “I’m not so certain of that,” she disagreed. She wouldn’t have bothered him with this if she wasn’t worried about just that possibility.

“Would the young Owl’s chosen trust you if you did kill or hurt his uncle?”

“No,” she whispered, “I would lose it, just as I lost my daughters’ trust when I lied to her.” She turned away from his gaze that was too perceptive for her to face right now.

“You will not break your promise to him chosen, that is why your thoughts are what they are,” she sensed him moving closer. His next words were from right behind her, “because you know that in your thoughts is the only place you can punish him for his actions,” his tone was not judgmental, but matter of fact.

Her shoulders slumped, the Ancient One was right, she already knew that Robert wouldn’t chose to punish his uncle. He seemed to be focusing on putting the past behind him and enjoying the relative freedom of her home. She knew he had visited the Wise One last night, he had mentioned it to her briefly this morning before Macbeth arrived. The most she suspected he would agree to would be to try and get back the money his uncle had stolen from his trust fund.

“You were incorrect before my chosen,” the great stag spirit remarked. His statement interrupted the redhead’s less than happy thoughts; Dominique frowned, wrong about what exactly? She turned around and looked at him inquiringly. “What you dismissed as impossible this morning will not be beyond your abilities once you become skilled enough in manipulating life energy,”

“What?” she stared at him, her mind was coming up with just one possibility for what he was talking about, but surely that couldn’t be true.

His ears flickered once, “It is not impossible for you and the young Jaguar’s chosen to have offspring,” he stated, each word pronounced very carefully.

“What?” she repeated her question numbly; unable to believe she was hearing what she was hearing. The Ancient One stared at her for a moment and then shook his head, his ears flickered a few times and then stilled as he watched her patiently. Offspring, children, she remembered her earlier thoughts as she watched the joy on Robert’s face as he opened his presents. Would her and Kendra’s children be human or gargoyle or something in between? “But she’s human and I’m gargoyle…how?”

“You would bring suitable genetic material from both of you into close proximity and then encourage them to combine,” the Irish Elk suggested mildly.

“Suitable…” the redhead’s mind finally caught up and she fell silent thinking about what he was saying. “Ova fusion?”

The stag spirit seemed to consider the words a moment before responding, “Correct.”

Dominique felt like sitting down, but wasn’t certain the ghostly images of the furniture would actually hold her. “The fact that we’re of different species wouldn’t matter?” she pressed for clarification on the issue.

“Once you are skilled enough in the manipulation of life energy, it will not be beyond your ability to overcome the difficulties caused by the genetic differences between you.” Dominique frowned, that wasn’t one of the most enlightening of answers she had ever gotten from the spirit. “You will better understand how it may be accomplished as your skill grows my chosen,” he reassured her.
The redhead grimaced; she wanted an answer now, but understood what he was saying. Much about what she was learning from the Ancient One she couldn’t see herself really understanding three weeks ago.

In an abrupt change of subject, the great stag observed, “I believe we have time for a lesson.” Dominique stared at him incredulously, he expected her to be able to concentrate on a lesson after informing her it was possible for Kendra and she to have children? “You have learned how to add heat and excite the bonds between molecules during your last lesson. Now,” the Ancient One began the lesson, “you will learn how to manipulate those bonds to change the nature of the lattice structure and thus the properties of the material.” Apparently, he did the redhead realized.

Kendra’s faintly concerned face was the first thing Dominique saw when she opened her eyes thirty minutes later. “Hey,” the black-haired woman said softly, “I didn’t realize you needed to go to the spirit realm today.”

“I needed to speak to the Ancient One,” the redhead explained absentmindedly. Robert’s uncle and her vengeful feelings against him seemed so unimportant to her now. She stared into her lover’s features, thinking about what the spirit had told her. “Where is everyone else?”

“They decided to start lunch,” the black-haired woman responded, glancing over toward the hallway leading to the kitchen.

“Good because I need to talk with you,” Dominique sat up from where she had been leaning against the couch arm.

Kendra looked startled, “Alright,” she replied, her confusion apparent as she stepped back so the redhead could rise.

“Let’s go upstairs to our room,” the redhead said as she rose from the couch. She reached out and took Kendra’s hand, wanting the connection with the black-haired woman and started leading her out of the living room toward the stairs.

“Dominique?” Kendra questioned, staring at the redhead in confusion even as she allowed herself to be pulled along behind her.

The redhead shook her head, “Upstairs,” she repeated firmly. She didn’t want anyone else overhearing this conversation, no matter who they were. What she had to talk about should be private between them until they decided otherwise.

Once they were in the bedroom, Dominique shut the door behind them and turned around to face Kendra. “This morning, that song you were humming to…” she paused and Kendra’s frown intensified along with the bewilderment in her blue eyes. “Part of the lyrics mentioned children and I began wondering what…if it were possible of course, what our children would look like.”

Kendra’s expression softened, “What does that have to do with the Ancient One?”

Dominique took in a deep breath, “I must have shared that along with the other things that were concerning me.” The black-haired woman’s head tilted questioningly when she didn’t immediately continue. “The Ancient One told me that it wasn’t impossible for us. I can’t do it yet, but he believes I will be able to use life energy to fuse an ova from me with an ova from you,” she finally said in a rush.

Kendra stared at her, her face revealing plainly her astonishment. It made Dominique feel better, at least she wasn’t the only one dumbfounded by it. “Children? You and I? Our children?” the
questions were spoken in tones of disbelief. Dominique nodded, in the next instant she was wrapped up in Kendra’s arms, “Our children,” there was belief there now.

“Our children,” the redhead confirmed, returning the embrace tightly and resting her cheek on her lover’s shoulder.

“Well…” Kendra began and then hesitated a moment pulling far enough away to look down into Dominique’s face, “You said once that you thought I was the one you wanted to be your mate, do you still feel that way?”

The redhead’s green eyes widened in surprise at the question, she looked into her lover’s sapphire blue eyes, saw the seriousness there, “I’m more certain than ever that I do,” she replied. Kendra gently pulled away to kneel down in front of her. For a moment, the redhead remembered Macbeth doing the same thing, but this was not at all like that time, her love for Kendra was not a lie and a carefully planned deception.

“Demona, I never realized how lonely and empty my life had gotten until you came into it and filled all those empty places with shared joys, laughter and love. Whenever I think of the future now, I always think of you with me. Will you be there? Will you be my mate and my partner?”

This was not something the gargoyle in human form needed to think about; after all in the privacy of her own mind she had been thinking of Kendra as her mate already, “Yes, I will.”

Friday, December 26th 1997

Early Morning - Nightstone Unlimited HQ, Lower East Side Manhattan

“Good morning Candice,” Dominique said as she walked by her secretary’s desk on the way to her office.

“Good morning…” Candice looked up from the work she was doing and paused in surprise as she noticed first that her employer was not alone, and second how the redhead was dressed, “Ms. Destine,” she finished sounding bemused. Candice had never seen the woman in anything less than an expensive skirt suit the entire time she had been working here. Today though, Dominique Destine, owner and CEO of Nightstone Unlimited, was wearing black jeans, a scarlet shirt, black boots and a nut-brown leather jacket.

Robert offered the African American woman behind the desk a shy smile, “Good morning Mrs. Greene,” he said politely. He was dressed as casually as Dominique, and was in his new wheelchair, the one she had gotten for him to use in school.

“Good morning…” Candice’s voice trailed off; she had no idea who the curly haired young man in the wheelchair was except for remembering seeing him on the news with Ms. Destine the night the Quarrymen had attacked her.

“Robert,” the young man offered.

“Good morning Robert,” Candice smiled back at him.

“Oh yes,” Dominique turned around and came back to stand beside Robert’s wheelchair, placing a hand on his shoulder, “Candice this is Robert McKenzie he will be working with Ms. Canmore as her intern this summer.” She paused and looked down at him thoughtfully for a moment before turning back to her secretary, “He’s also living with me, and in my temporary custody, so if he ever
calls or comes by and needs anything find me and let me know,” she said firmly.

Her secretary stared at her nonplused for a second before managing to respond, “Certainly, Ms. Destine. Oh, Ms. Destine, you had a phone call this morning from a Mr. Robinson, he asked that you contact him as soon as possible. Here’s his number,” she held out the yellow slip with the message and number on it.

For a second the redhead’s face was expressionless, and then she took the offered slip with a nod, “Thank you Candice.” She turned to the young man in the wheelchair, “Robert.” He wheeled his wheelchair around and followed her into her office, turning and closing the door behind him once he was inside.

Quietly he asked, “Wayne Robinson?”

Dominique, who was walking towards her desk, replied without looking back at him, “Yes, I contacted him about something a few days ago. I suspect he has an answer for me.” She sat down in her chair, and looked over at him, “You’ll have to speak louder than that for Candice to overhear you. My office is fairly soundproof.” He gave her a curious look, so she explained, “My transformations used to be fairly painful and I couldn’t have the security guards doing their rounds rushing in here to see what was wrong with me.”

“Oh,” Robert said quietly with a dismayed expression.

The redhead smiled reassuringly, “It’s alright, I barely feel it now.” He looked relieved at that and she motioned for him to come further into the room, “I need to call Wayne back, but it shouldn’t take very long. Once that’s done and I check my email, I can show you around the laboratories, most of the researchers are on vacation, but there should be a few in today including my Research and Development Division manager Mr. Jean Pierre.”

“Ok,” the young man acknowledged as he rolled his wheelchair across the floor toward the window that was the entire exterior wall of her office.

Dominique dialed the number Candice had written down, and the phone rang only twice before it was picked up. “Wayne Robinson, Federal Bureau of Investigation.”

“Good morning Wayne.”

“Good morning Dominique,” well at least he sounded cheerful, the redhead thought, “I just wanted to let you know that the FBI will be sending an investigator early next week to work with your IT staff about Mr. Thailog’s embezzlement of funds from your company.”

“Ah,” she smiled, that must mean that Wayne could find no evidence that one Mr. Thailog was anything other than human. “That is good news,” she paused briefly, “and the other matter?”

“I’m still working on the paperwork you sent me. It’s pretty complete, but you did leave a few things blank that needed to be filled out for completeness,” he replied.

Dominique grimaced, that meant he had found some holes in her human identity, “Thank you for helping me with it.”

“As I said, it’s good practice for us,” he said gruffly. The redhead smiled slightly at his answer, thinking that he really didn’t do well with thanks. “I heard you have a new houseguest,” it was a rather obvious change of subject.

“I do,” she looked over at Robert who had gone to the window to stare out at the city.
“Good job on calling the local police to protect him since you couldn’t get there immediately and getting him out of that situation so quickly,” he said approvingly. Dominique’s eyebrow rose at how well informed the Wolf’s chosen was, Margaret had said that gossip made its way around the chosen quickly, but this seemed excessive.

“Hey, Wayne did you find out… oh sorry, didn’t realize you were on the phone,” a male voice said in the background.

“Mmm,” Wayne murmured, then apologetically he said, “Dominique I need to go. If anything comes up, I’ll give you another call.”

The redhead frowned, there were a few things she still wanted to ask him, “At another time could you let me know what was left blank in the documents I sent you?”

“When I get done with everything, sure,” he agreed readily. “I may have missed a few, so I want to go over it again when I get done with the one’s I found.”

“Alright, have a good day Wayne,” she told him.

“You too,” he replied and then hung up the phone.

Dominique shook her head, looked over at Robert who had rolled his wheelchair away from the window and toward her desk when he heard her hang up the phone, “Let me check my email and then we can go downstairs,” she reminded him. He nodded, and turned back to the window.

There were a few messages in her inbox, but nothing that couldn’t wait till next week for a reply. There was really only one thing she really needed to do, and Dominique spent a minute typing out a tersely worded request for Jordan Conrad to meet with her at nine on Monday morning to discuss the accounting irregularities the IT Division manager had found. Once the message was sent, the redhead shut down her mail client and logged out, “All done, let’s go.”

Outside Nightstone Unlimited and then El Parador Café, Lower East Side Manhattan

Elisa had gotten lucky in spotting the distinctive wheelchair accessible limousine waiting outside Nightstone. She found a parking space where she could watch it and waited, suspecting that the vehicle wouldn’t be double-parked there if the driver wasn’t expecting Ms. Destine and Robert shortly. She was right, and as soon as Demona and Robert were inside the vehicle and it pulled out into traffic the detective began following it hoping that the fact that it was noon meant that they were going to meet Kendra for lunch.

When the limousine pulled up outside of a well-known Mexican restaurant, she knew at least part of her hunch was correct, but were Demona and Robert eating alone or were they meeting Kendra here? She looked around the area; there were no open parking spaces, no surprise given the time. “Jalapena,” she muttered knowing that she would have to spend time finding a parking space.

Fifteen minutes later, Elisa knew she had been fortunate to get a seat where she could see the table where Demona’s group was seated without it being too obvious that she was observing them. Demona had met more than just Kendra for lunch, Elisa recognized Rachael, who had been in the courtroom the other day and the woman Owen had named Margaret from the newscast. The only person who wasn’t there that the detective remembered seeing with Demona that night on the news was the young shorthaired brunette.

Watching the other table, Elisa felt like she had dropped into some odd Twilight Zone episode as she
saw the waiter deliver glasses and a pitcher of beer to the table along with margaritas for all the women. At least Robert looked like he was getting some type of cola. She had offhandedly discounted Margot Yale’s comment about Dominique Destine’s table being the party table at the restaurant when the woman had mentioned it to Captain Chavez. Looking at the drinks the waiter was placing in front of all the women, and what certainly seemed to be the general jovial mood of all of them, including a smiling Demona, was making her reconsider that.

“Can I get you something from the bar ma’am or perhaps a Pepsi or Sprite or water?” the waiter asked her as he came up to the table,startling her since all of her attention had been focused on Demona and the others at her table.

“Pepsi will be fine,” she told him. He went away and she picked up her menu, she had been here a few times before and enjoyed the food, at least she would eat well while she was waiting for a chance to speak to Kendra alone. When the waiter came back with her drink, she gave him her order and waited until he had left before turning her attention back to Demona’s table. Robert seemed to be the focus of the women’s attention as he talked animatedly about some subject. In sharp contrast to how timid and afraid he had sounded the night of his injury, he looked happy and confident now as the center of their attention. The young man’s face looked much better today than it had the day before Christmas when she had seen him in the courtroom, the bruise was still very noticeable, but it was already starting to fade.

As for the redheaded woman at the table carefully dipping a chip into the chili con queso and carefully lifting it to her mouth, Demona was watching him with a pleased, fond expression that the detective had never seen on the woman’s face before. Glaring, sneering, superior, angry, hateful… those were the expressions she was used to seeing on the redhead’s face, not the soft caring one she was seeing now. Elisa turned her attention back to her own drink with a slight shake of her head, had the spells the Weird Sisters placed on the gargoyle really made so much of a difference in the blue-skinned female’s personality that she would act so completely different now from how the detective remembered? She frowned uneasily, was this the gargoyle Goliath had fallen in love with? She glanced over at the other table and the warmly smiling red haired woman sitting there, if this was who Demona had been before she became so bitter and angry, no wonder Goliath had tried so hard for so long to reach her before giving up.

Elisa’s own food arrived shortly after the food for the other table and she turned her attention to it inhaling the rich aromas from the enchiladas’ red chili sauce as her stomach woke up and decided it was hungry. Besides, nothing much was happening right now at Demona’s table as they focused on their food as well.

She had just finished her meal when noise from the other table drew her attention. From the way the tall woman named Margaret was raising her glass and toasting Demona and Kendra, Elisa could guess that she was congratulating them about something, but what? As the detective was watching for some clue to make sense of what she was seeing, Elisa saw Demona look over at Kendra Canmore with an expression on her face that stunned the detective. The last time she had seen an expression anything like that on the gargoyle’s face, it had been directed toward Thailog. Her mind seemed frozen for a moment grappling with the reality of what she had just witnessed; the rumors couldn’t possibly be true could they? In the next instant, it was gone as the redhead directed a glare toward Margaret that didn’t look very serious considering that Demona was also smiling. Had she really seen it? Elisa immediately began questioning herself, Goliath seemed so very certain that gargoyles weren’t homosexual.

“Are you finished with your meal ma’am?” the waiter asked as he walked up, looking at her empty plate.
Elisa glanced at it, “Yes.” She needed more time, “could I see the dessert menu please?”

The dark-haired man nodded, “Certainly, I’ll be right back with it,” he efficiently stacked her silverware on her empty plate and took it away with him.

The detective glanced over at Demona’s table, her eyes going back and forth between the redhead and the black haired, blue-eyed woman. She thought about what David and Fox Xanatos had said about Kendra Canmore spending her nights at Demona’s house, about the Tattler linking the two together after they arrived and danced together at Nightstone’s Christmas party, and about the expression she had just seen on the redhead’s face. If Goliath wasn’t so certain, she knew what she would think by now, and that was as unbelievable as it seemed Demona had a human lover, a human lover that was a woman.

Elisa shook her head slowly as she considered that thought, it didn’t seem possible. How could Demona change so much and so quickly that less than four weeks after being freed of the Weird Sister’s spells she would accept a human as her lover? She frowned, her memories nagging at her about something that had been bothering her for a while. Her gaze went to the olive-skinned woman, who was laughing at something Rachael had said, was Kendra Canmore entirely human? There had to be some reason she kept reacting to the blue-eyed woman the way she did, it just wasn’t normal the way Kendra could put her on edge. Even Oberon hadn’t frightened her as much as Kendra had that first night she had spoken to the black haired woman outside Nightstone.

She caught sight of her waiter returning, a tall slim menu in hand, and turned back to her table. “Thank you,” she said as he handed her the dessert menu.

“You’re welcome ma’am, I’ll be back shortly to take your order,” he replied before moving off to check on another table.

She glanced back toward Demona’s table and stared into Kendra Canmore’s narrowed blue eyes; she froze for a second and then fought with her desire to flush. There was nothing wrong with her sitting here, she reminded herself forcibly. It wasn’t as if she had made an effort to hide after all, she was sitting in plain sight of Demona’s table.

Elisa saw Kendra lean over and whisper in Demona’s ear, and the next instant irate green eyes turned her way. She ignored the redhead; the anger in those green eyes was almost reassuring it was so familiar, and she did have a purpose for being here after all. The detective motioned toward the empty seat across from her while looking into Kendra’s blue eyes, making it obvious for who she intended the invitation. The blue eyes briefly narrowed further before turning away from her. Elisa’s dark eyes widened as she saw the reassuring look the black-haired woman gave Demona before leaning over and whispering in the redhead’s ear. Whatever Kendra said to the redhead wiped out the anger that had been there previously as if it had never been and replaced it with a joyful, pleased smile.

Elisa sucked in a sharp, shocked breath at the transformation in the human appearing gargoyle’s expression, she could think of only one reason for such an abrupt change. As incredible as it seemed, it was looking more and more likely that the two were lovers. “Jalapena,” she whispered to herself, if she was right this was going to set the clan on its ear. Everyone, including her, thought they knew who Demona was, if this were true it shattered all those assumptions to small pieces.

Just after Sunset - Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan

“Goliath,” Elisa greeted the lavender male as soon as he shattered the stone shell surrounding him,
“Kendra agreed to come over tonight. She should be here soon.” The other clan members jumped
down from their perches and came over to join them. Elisa decided not to mention her suspicions to
him for now. For one thing, she didn’t have any more concrete proof for him than the Xanatos’ that
Demona and Kendra Canmore were lovers, and secondly she didn’t want to mention it in front of the
other’s especially Angela. One just didn’t announce publically and without any advance warning that
you thought their mother was bisexual.

“Good,” he responded with a pleased expression, “how did she react when you invited her?”

She grimaced remembering the conversation; Kendra hadn’t been very happy with Elisa’s presence
there and hadn’t become much friendlier when she learned why the detective had called her over.
“Not too pleased at first,” she confessed, “she thought we wanted to talk with her about Demona’s
past.”

Brooklyn’s eyes glowed briefly white at her statement and the beaked male looked as if he wanted to
say something, but a quick sharp look from Goliath dissuaded him. “Hmm,” the clan leader rumbled,
“I do not think that is necessary now, though she should know what Demona has done in the past.”

“I would think so,” the reddish male couldn’t resist mumbling loudly, earning himself a quick
narrowed eyed glance from Goliath.

“I don’t think that would go over very well,” Elisa cautioned both of them. “Her first words to me
were that there was nothing we could tell her that would cause her to rethink her friendship with
Dominique, and we shouldn’t even bother to try because she doubted we could tell her anything that
Dominique hadn’t already.” She remembered looking over at Demona in disbelief after Kendra’s
statement and the lifted chin and cool, confident gaze of the redhead that seemed to be say that they
could do their worst and it wouldn’t accomplish anything. “I don’t think she was lying; I think
Demona’s told her about her past.”

Goliath and the others stared at her with varying amounts of disbelief. Angela was the first to speak,
asking hesitantly, “Mother’s told her about the things she’s done?” The detective could see by the
frown on the lavender female’s face that she struggled to understand what could have prompted such
unusual honesty from Demona.

“I doubt she’s told her everything,” Brooklyn stated in a grim tone. “Demona doesn’t even know
what the truth is,” he scoffed, “she’s still blaming the humans at the castle instead of herself for the
clan’s destruction.”

“No, she is not,” Goliath said, his eyes briefly meeting his daughter’s, “Demona has told Angela that
she accepts it was her actions that lead to our clan being killed by the Vikings.”

“You’re joking,” Brooklyn blurted out, incredulously. Everyone’s attention was now on Brooklyn,
except for Angela who was still largely ignoring the beaked male. Elisa saw the way the female
gargoyle frowned at her father and wondered why.

Owen Burnett’s blonde head, as he came up the stairwell to the battlements, caught the detective’s
eye. She watched him as he came over to the group, “Ms. Canmore has arrived,” he announced in
his characteristic cool tones. “Mr. and Mrs. Xanatos wish to ask questions of her as well. They
request that everyone gather in the dining hall where it is warm and refreshments can be provided so
that the conversation appears to be more of a discussion rather than an interrogation.”

Elisa scowled at him, she knew Xanatos was right, but the blonde man didn’t need to deliver the
man’s message in such a superior tone.
Angela was very curious to meet the human that seemed to have gained her mother’s trust and friendship. The night they had watched the broadcast of the Quarrymen’s attack on her mother the young female had seen what Kendra Canmore looked like and how well she fought, but that certainly didn’t prepare Angela for the power and confidence the human projected as the blue-eyed woman watched the clan enter the dining hall. She had a drink of some amber liquid with ice in her hand, and she took a sip from it before setting it down on the table as they came nearer.

“You must be Goliath,” the woman’s voice and expression carried overtones of disapproval as she greeted the clan leader.

The young lavender female’s dark eyes widened slightly and she looked nervously back and forth between her father and the human woman. “I am,” Goliath’s eyes were narrowed as he stared at Kendra Canmore, it was enough to usually cower most humans. The brilliant blue eyes of the woman however, didn’t waver away from the big lavender male’s and she didn’t look impressed, if anything her expression seemed to say that she was confident that she would win if there were any battle between them. The human woman rolled her shoulders, the tight dark blue turtleneck she was wearing showing the flex of the well-developed muscles underneath the fabric, her blue gaze hardened and a dangerous seeming smile played on her lips.

“Thank you for coming,” Elisa’s overly loud voice broke the staring match between the two. “Goliath is, as you probably already know, the clan’s leader, and this is Brooklyn his second in command,” she started introducing the rest of the clan members. It didn’t escape Angela’s notice that Kendra gave Brooklyn an even chillier look than her father had received. “Angela,” Elisa introduced the lavender female, the blue-eyed woman’s expression noticeably warmed and Angela returned the smile she got from the human. “Broadway and Hudson,” the detective introduced the large aqua male and the oldest gargoyle. Kendra gave both males evaluating looks and then returned their greetings.

There was only one gargoyle left to introduce, “You must be Lexington,” the blue-eyed woman said with a warm smile before Elisa could introduce the web-winged gargoyle. “Demona talked about you when we were traveling across Canada; she told me that you have an unusual gift in understanding electronics and computers.”

“She did?” the smallest male looked both surprised and pleased by the compliment.

“She did,” Kendra confirmed, with a grin.

“Now that the introductions are done,” said Xanatos watching the scene with obvious interest, “perhaps we can all sit down now and get to know each other a bit better.”

Kendra glanced over at him, and nodded, “Indeed, why don’t we get this started, I don’t want to be all night at this. No offense, but I would like to get home in time for dinner if possible.” She pulled out the chair nearest where she had sat her glass on the table and sat down in it.

As she seated herself in the chair nearest her, Fox asked before anyone else could comment, “Home to have dinner with Demona?”

Something about the way the redhead woman said it reminded Angela of the fact that the Xanatos’ thought Kendra and her mother were lovers. Angela saw no reason to doubt her father’s assertion that there were no gay gargoyles, but if there were, the idea of her mother involved with another female didn’t really bother her, just like those gay humans they rescued hadn’t bothered her. She thought it unlikely given that her mother had been with only males previously, her father and her father’s clone Thailog. A human mate though, that seemed impossible to the younger female, the one constant about her mother was that she hated humans. Angela couldn’t really believe that Demona
would ever take one as a mate. Of course, she had to admit to herself, until recently she could hardly
believe that her mother had become friends with a human either, much less multiple humans as it
now seemed.

The blue-eyed woman stared at Fox measuringly for a moment before answering, “Yes, along with
Robert, Rachael, Margaret, and I believe Demona invited Macbeth over for dinner tonight.”

David Xanatos took a seat by his wife, “Demona seems to be getting along well with Macbeth these
days,” he observed. Angela noticed the frown on her father’s face at the Xanatos’ asking questions,
but he didn’t say anything and she guessed he was curious to know the answer.

Kendra shrugged, “They used to be friends before the Weird Sisters decided they should be enemies.
They’re just rebuilding that.” The blue-eyed woman stared at David Xanatos with apparent
calmness, but the watching female gargoyle caught the hint of watchful stillness to the way she
leaned back casually in the chair and the intenctness of her gaze.

Going back to her previous thoughts of her mother having human friends, now that she had met
Kendra, Angela could see why her mother might make an exception and befriend this human.
Everything about the human woman, from the confidence she projected in what she obviously saw
as unfriendly territory, to the way she moved and the evident strength in her muscled body
announced that she was a warrior. Even lounged as she was now in her chair, Angela had the
impression the human could be standing and ready for an attack before anyone else barely moved.

“And yet Demona believed he was going to betray her and betrayed him first, she doesn’t make
friends with humans,” Brooklyn’s said challengingly, “so what’s her real reason for pretending to be
friends with him this time? Is she after his money again?”

“Brooklyn!” Goliath, Hudson and Elisa said loudly and disapprovingly, almost all at the same time.

“No, you can’t trust her,” the reddish male argued, “This is all another scheme of Demona’s,”
Angela frowned at how desperate and pleading Brooklyn sounded. “Remember what she did to me
and to Angela. She’ll trick us into trusting her and then she’ll betray us just like she always has
before,” he insisted.

Goliath frowned at him, his disappointment obvious “Brooklyn,” he shook his head, “We will talk
about this more later, for now you will…”

Kendra interrupted him, “This is who you’ve selected as the next clan leader?” she asked him
contemptuously, “Someone who’s so ruled by his fear of getting hurt again that he can’t consider
there’s any other possibility than this must be another scheme of Demona’s?”

The big lavender male whipped around to face her, his eyes glowing white at her words, and
Broadway protested angrily, “Hey, Brooklyn’s a good clan second!!”

“Poor Brooklyn,” Kendra said mockingly, rising from her chair and ignoring all of them except for
the clan second, “poor, poor gargoyles so cruelly betrayed by his mentor,” the reddish gargoyles glared
back at her as his eyes beginning to glow white. Her tone changed abruptly from mocking to sternly
disapproving, “You’re wearing that badge of betrayal out,” she said as she stalked toward him, to all
appearances not afraid of him at all. “Demona might accept that as an excuse for what you did the
other night,” the black-haired woman stopped in front of Brooklyn her fisted hands on her waist and
stared coldly at him, “but I don’t.” The glow in Brooklyn’s eyes faded and he actually took a few
steps back from her. “Robert could have been hurt very badly as a result of that stunt you pulled, as it
was it was only his aunt stopping his uncle from kicking him as he laid on the floor helpless to
protect himself that prevented just that from happening.”
The beaked male looked shocked and appalled, “What?” Brooklyn looked over at Elisa, “Is that true?”

Reluctantly the detective nodded, “Robert’s aunt stopped her husband from attacking him, but it could have gotten very ugly very quickly. It was a good thing Demona called 911 and had them send the local police over.”

“What is she talking about,” asked Broadway confused. Angela wondered that as well, she had no idea what they were talking about, why had Robert’s uncle attacked him and what did Brooklyn have to do with it? She noticed that Hudson and Lexington did not look confused, and glancing around the room it seemed that only she and Broadway of the clan didn’t know what was going on. Why had they been left out Angela wondered angrily.

“I’m wondering that as well,” David Xanatos commented, staring at Brooklyn, “How did you get Robert’s number?” he asked curiously, his eyes going to the blonde man standing nearby.

“He did not obtain it from me,” Owen responded immediately.

“I overheard you and Owen talking about his aunt and uncle,” the reddish male confessed, “all I needed were their names and where they lived to get the number from information.”

Xanatos’ eyebrow rose, “Surprising, I don’t think I’ve seen you use anything other than the communication devices Detective Maza brought you.”

“Yea, it was only my second or third time using the phone,” the reddish male didn’t sound too thrilled. Brooklyn turned his attention back to the woman standing in front of him, his wings drooping with his dismay. “I never meant for him to get hurt,” he apologized.

Kendra shook her head, her expression stern, “You never know how someone’s going to react to being told that someone is gay, you played a game of chance with Robert’s safety and you lost and put him in danger.”

“You told Robert’s uncle that he was gay?” Angela stared at Brooklyn in confusion, why would he have done such a thing? He had been there when they had saved those two men from those attacking them just because they were gay; he knew, or should have known, how violent some humans could be about that.

“No,” Brooklyn shook his head sounding appalled, “I told him that Demona was gay and was with her,” he indicated Kendra with a taloned finger.

“Why would you do that?” Broadway asked him, “You know Demona isn’t gay.” Angela immediately noticed the frowning look Kendra shot the potbellied male at his response and wondered at it; the human had barely reacted to learning what Brooklyn had said to Robert’s uncle. Of course, she probably already knew what the clan second had said, decided Angela.

“I was trying to get Robert’s uncle to stop Robert from seeing Demona anymore,” the reddish male answered, “I don’t know why he got angry and jumped to the conclusion that Robert was gay.”

“Because the only reason to hang around gay people is if you’re gay yourself,” Lexington answered before anyone else could. To the curious stares he got in response he hurriedly explained, “I did some research after we saved those two humans.”

After a quick intent look at him, Kendra confirmed, “And you’re right it’s not an unusual assumption in a certain group of people, even though it’s a wrong one. You can have gay friends without being gay, but the bigots like Edward Collins can’t make that distinction since they wouldn’t have any
themselves - therefore they can’t imagine that other people who aren’t gay would have gay friends.” She turned her attention from Lexington back to Brooklyn, her expression turning sternly disapproving again, “Which is what you failed to recognize. You figured out that he was bigoted enough to stop Robert from having anything to do with us if he thought we were gay, but didn’t think about the fact that he was bigoted enough to assume that Robert had to be as well since Robert wanted to be around us.”

“I didn’t realize he would do that,” Brooklyn responded defensively.

“Enough,” rumbled Goliath commandingly, “I have already spoken to him about this matter.”

Kendra stared at Brooklyn for a few seconds longer before neatly pivoting away from him to face the clan leader, “Fine, then let’s discuss the fact that wasn’t the only time he’s shown poor judgment and critical thinking skills,” she said in a terse tone. “Something that in the case I’m thinking of was shared by all of you except for Angela who wasn’t here yet.”

The annoyed sounding rumble from her father, followed by his standing taller and snapping his wings slightly further out, didn’t surprise Angela. She suspected he thought he would be asking Kendra Canmore questions about Demona and trying to get answers from the human woman, not defending the clan to her because of what Brooklyn had done, and it was frustrating him.

Everyone usually backed down from her father when he did that, he was large and intimidating when he was angry. Instead of daunting Kendra Canmore however, his actions seemed to annoy her even more. She strode over to stand right in front of him, “You’re posturing and growling does not impress me,” she said, her voice chillily angry. The two of them stared at one another in a silent battle of wills; Angela could see that Kendra was several inches shorter and slighter than Goliath, yet somehow the human woman didn’t seem that much smaller than her father. She saw the woman’s blue eyes narrow and suddenly her instincts started warring with what her brain was telling her. Her eyes started glowing red as instinct informed her that the human was a threat to her father and that she should protect him, and yet the woman was unarmed and not making any move to attack him. To Angela’s surprise, her father blinked, the brief white glow of his eyes fading as quickly as it had appeared, and backed up a pace first, giving the human female a startled look.

As suddenly as the tense moment began, it was over. Kendra’s stance relaxed and she gave the large male an almost sympathetic look, “Very few beings intimidate me,” she said matter of factly, “I wouldn’t feel bad that you are not one of them if I were you. Now, what were we about to discuss before we got into that small pissing contest?” Ignoring the dumfounded look he gave her, she frowned thoughtfully for a second, “Oh yes,” the frown cleared, “Demona’s so called attempt to take over the clan by casting a spell on you to control your mind,” her voice still had an edge, but it was much less than it had been before.

No one immediately responded to Kendra’s statement, everyone just stared at her, still trying to adjust from the tenseness of the confrontation a moment before to the blue-eyed woman’s almost relaxed attitude now. Elisa was the first one to get her wits back and protest, “So called? I was there, she did do that, it was only us telling Goliath to act as if he had no spell on him that broke it.”

Kendra looked away from Goliath toward the detective, “And exactly what chance of success did that plan have?” she asked her sarcastically. “Was there ever really any possibility of Demona coming up with Goliath so obviously mind controlled and having the clan go…” Yea ok, turning over the clan leadership to Demona sounds like a fine idea to me?” As plans go that one had a zero chance of success from the very beginning, and it doesn’t really say much that none of you thought about that when it took me about two minutes to realize it when Demona told me about it.”

Elisa had an odd look on her face, and only briefly glared at Kendra for her sarcastic statements
before saying, “You’re saying that Demona knew the effects of the spell.”

“The green eye glow and zombie like voice? Yes,” Kendra replied. There was a flash of anger, “Another thing the Weird Sisters have to pay for,” she growled. Angela had the impression that had the human woman been a gargoyle, her eyes would have glowed brightly red. Kendra turned toward Brooklyn, “So the grudge you’ve been holding all this time because Demona used you to try and take over the clan…you might want to rethink that entire matter.” The lavender female was finding the rapid changes of the human’s moods from angry, to mocking to light hearted disconcerting, of course, she wasn’t certain that the blue-eyed woman wasn’t doing it on purpose just for that reason.

“You’re claiming that what she did is the Weird Sisters’ fault?” Angela almost sighed at the familiar doubtful tone of the clan’s second. At least he didn’t sound quite as skeptical as he had in the past.

“Claiming?” Kendra turned to frown at him, “No, I’m saying it is,” she stated firmly.

“It is likely,” Owen commented, gaining everyone’s instant attention, “I noticed several control spells on Demona when I placed the transformation spell on her.”

“What?” Brooklyn was only the first to utter the question, followed by the rest of the clan, Elisa and Fox in a veritable chorus. Angela noticed that Kendra Canmore did not look surprised by the information Owen had just revealed. Almost as if sensing the gargoyle watching her, Kendra’s brilliantly colored blue eyes turned her way, the human woman’s gaze met hers for a long moment before her attention turned back to the rest of the clan.

“You didn’t mention this before,” David Xanatos did not sound pleased, “The other day when we went to see her would have been a very good time.”

“I judged the situation too potentially dangerous to mention it before,” the fey in human form commented tersely. That had almost everyone staring at him questioningly. “I did mention that they took a dim view of anyone opposing them, and that Oberon has in the past shown little interest in disciplining them for their actions.” The blonde man pointed out, sounding almost passionate, “I did not dare expose any of you to their notice.”

“What would they have done,” asked Fox, she sounded as if she already suspected she would not like the answer.

“Since the Weird Sisters do not want Queen Titania as an enemy, they probably would have cast a spell to make you and Mr. Xanatos forget what I had told you.” Owen responded tersely, “As for everyone else, they most likely would have done the same.” He paused for half a second before adding evenly, “I could not be certain of that however, as they have chosen to kill mortals in the past for knowing things they didn’t want known. At that time, the clan didn’t even have the protection of Queen Titania’s interest in them protecting Alexander to sway them that their actions would be noticed and an explanation demanded. Afterward they would have come after me for interfering with their plans.”

Puck’s response to Fox’s question didn’t surprise Angela, though she could see that Brooklyn, Broadway, Lexington and Hudson were shocked. Of course, they hadn’t been on Avalon when the three sisters had tried to use her mother and Macbeth to kill the Avalon clan. Nor had they been there when the Weird Sisters had tried to trick Oberon into doing the same thing. They really should be less shocked though, after learning that the Weird Sisters had arranged everything that had happened the night her mother had changed the city’s humans into stone, simply so that they had a reason Oberon would accept for controlling Demona and Macbeth.

“So telling us about the spells on Demona would have put the clan and Elisa and you in danger,”
Fox summarized, “and perhaps even David and I.”

“Correct,” he confirmed his usual cool unaffected demeanor firmly back in place.

“Is that why you’ve never treated Demona as a serious threat?” Elisa asked Owen slowly. From the dawning realization in her expression, it was clear to Angela that the detective was beginning to make sense of his past actions, “Because you knew that the spells they cast on her were influencing her actions?”

“That and I knew some of her history,” he admitted.

Elisa’s tone turned interrogating, “What exactly did those spells make her do?”

Uncharacteristically the blonde man looked embarrassed, “I do know that one of them amplified her anger…the rest I’m not as certain what they did, they were like no other fey spells I’ve seen before or since. From their appearance, I believe they manipulated Demona’s emotions and thoughts in certain circumstances,” he offered, sounding hesitant.

“Her anger…,” Elisa’s voice trailed off thoughtfully, “Is that why she seems so calm now? Well, comparatively that is,” she added, Demona hadn’t looked too pleased with her earlier today.

Owen nodded, “The spirits have supposedly removed all fey spells from her, so that would be my guess, detective.”

The detective grimaced, her gaze turning toward the blue-eyed woman that had been noticeably silent throughout all of the recent conversation. Kendra shook her head, “If you had been a puppet on their strings for a thousand years would you care to share how completely they had controlled you or exactly how they had done it?” She asked the detective instead of answering the unasked question, though in a way it was an answer. The warmth of her own wings settling around her as she caped them comforted Angela; it distressed her to think of her mother saying these things about herself.

“Thank you for the vote of confidence by the way” Kendra smirked at Owen. Noticing Elisa’s confused look the blue-eyed woman explained, “I’m assuming he’s telling you now instead of earlier because he’s certain Demona and I will successfully deal with those three fey.”

“That would be best,” the blonde man agreed calmly.

Brooklyn looked back and forth between Kendra and Owen, his uncertainty and doubt easy to see in his expression. Angela was relieved to see it; the beaked male had become very annoying lately with his thickheaded determination to believe the worst of her mother.

“If she knew it wouldn’t work, then why did she do that?” he asked, his voice ragged with suppressed emotion. Angela stared at him in surprise; she hadn’t realized that what her mother had done to him had hurt him so badly.

“An intelligent question,” Kendra responded, her tone unexpectedly gentle considering how she had spoken to him until now.

“That’s all you’re going to say?” Brooklyn said angrily when it became clear the blue-eyed woman wasn’t going to say anything else, “An intelligent question?” Kendra nodded; her expression regretful.

“The answer’s getting too close to those specific how and why’s Demona isn’t interested in sharing isn’t it?” David Xanatos commented, stroking his beard thoughtfully.
Kendra didn’t respond, and her expression gave nothing away, but that in itself was an answer Angela realized. “It is, isn’t it? That’s why you won’t say anything, because mother doesn’t want you to answer these types of questions.” The woman’s blue eyes swung her way, studying her, the woman’s’ brow rose and her lips quirked in a small smile. Her look seemed a challenge.

Hudson’s commented, “The only thing she did was turn Brooklyn against her. He looked up to her, trusted her before that, afterward…” the old gargoyle shook his head, his hands resting upon the thick belt around his waist.

“They were to make sure we remained alone, that we had no ties to anyone but each other,” Brooklyn said, as if to himself.

Angela along with everyone else, including Kendra Canmore, stared at him with varying expressions of puzzlement. The lavender female frowned as she tried to remember when she had heard those words. Then it came to her, Macbeth had said that the night the clan went to ask him why he and Demona were no longer enemies. Dumbfounded, she said incredulously, “That’s one of the things Macbeth said the Archmage told the Weird Sisters.”

“Just because I didn’t believe what Macbeth said, it didn’t mean I wasn’t listening,” Brooklyn replied defensively.

“Well, well, perhaps there is something to you after all,” Kendra commented, giving the reddish male an assessing stare that had him straightening up and staring defiantly back at her. His effort elicited only an amused smile from the blue-eyed woman.

Goliath, who had been watching Kendra Canmore as if she were a puzzle he was trying to figure out ever since their brief confrontation, gave a thoughtful sounding rumble that drew the blue-eyed woman’s attention away from the clan’s second. “Demona drove us away from her,” Goliath said once he had her attention, “She freed us from the enchantment the Magus placed on us and then destroyed the clan ties between us starting with those that were strongest, the ones between her and I and Brooklyn. She told me of her betrayal of our clan and attacked me, and then she betrayed Brooklyn’s trust.” He stared at Kendra questioningly, “The Weird Sisters caused her to do this because the Archmage wanted her to remain alone?”

“That would seem to be the obvious conclusion, wouldn’t it,” the blue-eyed woman responded evenly. She could have been doing her impersonation of Owen her expression was so inscrutable.

The big male narrowed his eyes, “Why will you not just tell us the answer?” he rumbled in an annoyed tone.

“I’ve already told you that Demona isn’t interested in sharing the details of exactly what the Weird Sisters did,” Kendra replied firmly.

“It is obvious that you do not agree with her,” Goliath said, staring at the blue-eyed woman challengingly. Angela silently agreed with her father; it did seem as if Kendra wanted them to find out what the Weird Sisters had done to her mother.

“Agree, disagree,” Kendra shrugged, appearing completely unconcerned, “it’s not my decision to make.” The blue-eyed woman didn’t look as if she would change her mind or give them any more information, and Goliath finally gave a frustrated sounding growl when she didn’t say anything else.

“Even if what she’s done since we were awakened has all been because of the Weird Sisters, she’s still responsible for the clan’s massacre,” Brooklyn stated stubbornly. His arms were crossed and he had a sullen look on his face, “The Weird Sisters weren’t controlling her back then.” Angela sighed
quietly; irritated with him once again, he seemed stubbornly determined not let go of his anger towards her mother.

Kendra turned toward the reddish beaked male; she stared at him, her head slightly tilted to the side, for a moment before shaking her head and smirking. “Darn it, I know she’s responsible for something!” the blue-eyed woman said with a stomp of her foot. Angela had to hide her smile as Brooklyn glared at Kendra for mocking him. “Thank you for bringing that up though,” Kendra sounding and looking quite sincere. The reddish male gave her a wary look that elicited a soft chuckle from the blue-eyed woman.

She turned toward Goliath, “Speaking of the clan’s massacre, and what I’ve heard is your habit of placing all the blame for it on Demona…” her eyes narrowed as her expression hardened, “What a load of complete and utter bullshit. There are several people, including yourself and Hudson, that contributed to that situation coming to a head as it did, Demona is hardly solely responsible for it.”

Angela stared uncertainly between Kendra and her father, as she stared at him disapprovingly and he glared back at her. “What do you mean I’m partially responsible for it,” Hudson asked quickly, interrupting the staring match before it could perhaps turn into something more.

With one final hard look, Kendra turned her attention to the older gargoyle, “You let the humans get away with forgetting why the castle was built in the first place, and you took on additional duties not originally agreed upon in the clan’s agreement with Prince Malcolm.” She explained, “In exchange for helping Malcolm’s brother, Kenneth II, in his battle against Culen to regain his throne and become King of Scotland, Prince Malcolm and his people were to protect the clan. Correct?” she asked.

Hudson gave her a long look, “Demona did tell you about her past didn’t she,” he said thoughtfully.

“She has,” Kendra confirmed with a minimum of words.

The older male nodded, “That was the agreement between Prince Malcolm and the clan in exchange for our help in their battle against Culen,” he agreed slowly.

“Then Malcolm persuaded you to have the clan help them build this castle so that they could fulfill that promise.” Kendra indicated the stone walls of the room, “This castle was built with the clan’s help so that Prince Malcolm could fulfill his promise to protect the clan and the rookery.” She shook her head, “It wasn’t built so that the human’s had better protection during the day while the clan protected them at night in exchange for being allowed to continue to live there. That was your error, letting the humans forget the first and allowing them to believe the second. Then Goliath continued to let them believe that, compounding the problem.”

The older gargoyle looked as if he had swallowed something sour, “I didn’t know humans that well then,” he admitted. “Prince Malcolm though never needed reminding;” he defended the long dead human, “he never forgot his promise to us; it was the other humans around him that seemed eager to forget it as soon as the castle was built, that and his daughter.” Goliath looked shocked at the older male’s words, and Hudson just shook his head looking old and fatigued as he fell silent, refusing to say anything more. The lavender male frowned at him, looking concerned.

“The clan helped build this castle?” Elisa commented filling the abrupt silence that had fallen, “I didn’t know that.”

“I did,” David Xanatos commented, a slight smirking smile on his lips, “Demona’s still quite angry about it, or she was at the time when she told me about it.”
“I had almost forgotten,” Broadway said, a faraway look in his eyes as he remembered, “I can remember watching Goliath and the other clan members help the humans move the stone blocks into place.”

“I knew,” Angela said quietly, “the Princess told us about the agreement between the clan and her father. That was when she told us she had broken her promise to her father to fulfill his promise to the clan to protect them and that she had treated the clan badly.”

“Good for her,” Kendra commented, sounding sincere, “Demona was quite shocked by how different Princess Katherine acted on Avalon from how she remembered her.”

Goliath stopped staring at Hudson, turning his attention back to the blue-eyed woman talking to his daughter. “What role does Demona believe I had in what happened,” he asked her challengingly as soon as she finished speaking.

“Both her and I,” Kendra immediately corrected him, “I think there were a few things you could have done to either keep the situation calmer or even improve it, instead of just ignoring what you didn’t want to hear.”

His eyes narrowed, “Princess Katherine feared us, but the danger was not as great as Demona believed,” he said dismissively. “She just needed time to see that we were not the monsters her father scared her with as a child.”

The blue-eyed woman shook her head, “It wasn’t just Princess Katherine that was the problem by that time. It was the entire castle. The Princess feared and hated you and wasn’t shy about letting everyone know it, and because of that it gave all the rest of the castle inhabitants the reason they needed to let their own fear and doubts about you grow and flourish. How many times did Demona try to tell you the humans were talking about driving the clan away from the castle?”

“Demona never thought the clan’s alliance with the humans was wise,” Goliath said impatiently, “She began worrying about the humans at the castle even before Prince Malcolm died, and her fears only grew after.”

“So you thought her fears were unfounded and ignored them?” she didn’t give him time to reply before asking, “How many times though did she try to tell you they were talking about how much food the clan ate and how much better off they would be without you, especially after the refugees started coming in?” Broadway shifted uneasily and Angela looked at him startled, seeing in his eyes the truth of Kendra’s statement. She hadn’t realized that the humans at the castle had resented the amount of food the clan needed to eat.

“A few times,” the lavender male conceded reluctantly “and I did not think her fears were unfounded, only that patience and tolerance were the best ways to deal the humans instead reacting with anger which would only have increased the danger to our clan.”

“I’m not disagreeing with you,” Kendra said calmly, that elicited a surprised look from the clan leader which the blue-eyed woman ignored as she continued without pausing, “I am pointing out though that ignoring Demona’s concerns only drove her to confide in someone else, someone who wasn’t as careful and cautious as you.”

“The Captain of the Guard,” it didn’t take Goliath long to guess, and he didn’t look pleased.

“How many times did she tell you that they were talking about how much more food and resources the clan would need if the eggs in the rookery were allowed to hatch?” Kendra asked him instead of responding to his statement, an obvious emphasis on the if in her question.
Angela’s eyes widened in dismay, she could easily imagine how frightened and angry hearing such things would have made her mother. Goliath frowned, “What?” he eyed the blue-eyed woman dubiously, “Demona never spoke to me about the humans threatening the eggs in the rookery.”

Lexington said quietly, “I heard the humans talking about that,” the web-winged gargoyle glanced apologetically toward Angela, “the Magus was one of the ones saying it, he also told people that we were monsters and would attack them some night in their beds.” The lavender female made a sound of dismayed surprise that made Lexington wince, “I heard the other two things said as well,” he said even more quietly than he had begun.

“What?” said Broadway sounding shocked, “I heard the one about us eating too much food, especially after that last group of humans arrived, but I didn’t hear the humans at the castle mentioning the rookery.”

“I heard all of them,” Lexington said bitterly, “I was small and the humans either didn’t notice me or didn’t care if I heard them.”

Goliath who had been staring at Lexington in dismayed surprise turned toward Kendra, “She did not inform me of any of this,” he rumbled, a deep frown etched upon his face.

“I guess by that time, since you hadn’t done anything the times before, the only person Demona mentioned it to was Robbie,” Kendra commented neutrally.

His voice raised, the lavender male protested, “She should have told me.”

“She should have,” Kendra agreed evenly, “but Robbie listened to her, and didn’t tell her that things would get better if only she were more patient with the humans and Princess Katherine.” Goliath scowled at her, but the blue-eyed woman merely gave him an unimpressed look before continuing.

“So, when she heard the humans talking about the eggs in the rookery, she went to him and asked him to make sure the guards on the rookery during the day weren’t ones that would look the other way if anyone demanded to be let in. He did as she asked and made sure that only guards that owed their lives to the clan, and didn’t join in on the talk of you being monsters and demons were on guard duty during the day.”

Goliath’s scowl had faded as Kendra spoke, now he demanded of her with angry frustration, “What would she have had me do?”

Kendra stared at him in silence for a second, her expression firming, “She never felt that you listened to her, either as your clan second or mate, that probably would have been a good place to start.” The lavender male straightened his previous frustrated expression turning defensive, but before he could respond to her statement she continued. “As for me, I think you should have publically reminded the Princess of the pledge that had been made between the clan and her father and why the castle had been built in the first place. By allowing Princess Katherine to get away with her behavior, you tacitly acknowledged that the humans had the right to think of the castle as theirs, when in reality, if it had been during this day and age, a good lawyer could have had them in court and removed from the premises for breach of contract.”

“If the contract had been written correctly, that’s probably true”, David Xanatos remarked with a grin, surprising everyone since he had been silent for quite a while. “Is that why Nightstone’s failure to meet the terms of the contract clauses are so harsh?”

Kendra’s lips twitched in amusement, “Probably,” she agreed, “I’ve noticed Dominique is pretty strict about meeting contractual obligations.” She turned back to Goliath who looked a little confused at their banter. “Before you say anything, let me cover the night that was the breaking point for
Robbie and Demona,” she requested of him, “then you can disagree with my version of events if you feel I’m wrong.”

Goliath’s eyes narrowed, “Very well,” he rumbled after a second’s thought.

“I’m sure you know the night I’m speaking of was the night that you saved the castle from being overrun by the Vikings and Princess Katherine told you beasts had no place in the dining hall while the castle dogs were lying there gnawing on food tossed on the floor,” the blue-eyed woman waited for his nod before continuing. “It was also the night that Robbie was told to report to the Magus instead of to her. Now this is pure conjecture on my part, but I’m pretty sure Robbie was smarting over being told to report to a young whelp half his age, and the triumphant look the Magus gave Robbie when the Princess told him to report to the younger sorcerer didn’t help matters any.” The clan leader looked a little surprised at her knowledge, “I gather you noticed that?” she commented.

The lavender male reluctantly nodded, “I did.”

Kendra sighed, not looking very happy, “Again this is pure speculation on my part based on what Demona’s told me, but I think that was exactly what the Magus had wanted to happen and what he had been trying to bring about with his whispering campaign against the clan and against Robbie. He wanted to be her sole advisor, and that night he got his wish.” Angela stared at the blue-eyed woman disbelievingly, would she say such a horrible thing about the Magus.

“Why do you think that?” Elisa challenged her.

Kendra turned her head to look at the detective, “Because he wanted to be with her,” she answered, “but a young man of no family would normally have no chance of taking a noble woman as his wife, much less the niece of the King. A powerful sorcerer who was her sole advisor however, might…”

“You’re wrong,” Angela said angrily, interrupting her, “the Magus wasn’t like that, and he wasn’t Princess Katherine’s mate, Guardian Tom was.”

“That’s because he felt too guilty to pursue her,” Elisa said, her dark eyes widening, “He admitted to me that he was in love with the Princess, but never approached her after what happened to the clan because he felt responsible for it.”

Kendra looked back and forth between the shocked looking lavender female and the detective who looked like she was starting to put things together and didn’t like the answer. “As I said its only conjecture,” the blue-eyed woman repeated, “but it does fit if he were the one spreading the rumors as Demona believes he was doing.”

Lexington remarked quietly, “I already said I heard him doing that, and it wasn’t just one time.”

“I did too,” Broadway reluctantly acknowledged with an apologetic look at Angela, “When the humans were complaining about how much food we ate, he was there and he was the one who started talking about it first.”

“I heard him talking with the other advisors about how Robbie would side with us against the humans of the castle,” Hudson added, drawing surprised looks, “and him advising that they should remove him from his position as the Captain of the guards because of it.”

“Well,” Kendra commented softly, “I guess nothing more really needs to be said about that.” She met Angela’s confused and disappointed eyes, “He gave his life to save you and the other gargoyles on Avalon. Whatever he did at the castle, he never intended what happened to happen, and he seems to have tried his best to make up for it in what he did since for you and the others. Don’t forget that just
because of what you’ve heard tonight.”

Angela stared at her for several silent seconds, her eyes searching the human’s blue one’s and then nodded, “I won’t,” the lavender female agreed. She felt torn, she would have never thought that the kindly white-haired human who had so patiently taught her and the others to read would have been behind so many of the clan’s problems at the castle.

“Did Demona forgive him,” Brooklyn asked, his tone challenging.

Kendra turned and looked at him, “Last we spoke of it she said she couldn’t forgive him yet,” she answered mildly, “but she couldn’t fault his efforts to atone for what he had done to the clan.” The reddish male’s beaked mouth gaped almost comically open at her answer.

The blue-eyed woman stared at Brooklyn for a second before turning back to Goliath, “To continue on with the events of that night. Robbie was the one who came up with a plan for dealing with the Princess, the Magus and the other humans in the castle. He was the one who thought up approaching the Vikings to get them to raid the castle while the gargoyles were away and when he approached her with his plan Demona agreed. After Goliath refused to take anyone but Hudson with him, Robbie was the one to come up with the idea of having the Vikings attack during the day, swearing to Demona that he would protect the clan from them.”

“Demona couldn’t have believed that he could actually protect the clan from the Vikings during the day,” Elisa interrupted, “No one person could have done that.”

Kendra inclined her head in agreement, “Demona’s temper cooled down just before dawn. That was when she realized how dangerous Robbie’s plan was to the clan, but she was too afraid of their reaction to admit what she had done. Instead, she remained silent and flew down to the beach to spend the day, afraid of what might happen, but hoping that Robbie would keep his word. He didn’t, and she’s hated herself ever since for being too scared and ashamed to tell the others to sleep on the beach with her and face up to the repercussions of agreeing to Robbie’s plan to have the Vikings sack the castle.”

The silence stretched on after the blue-eyed woman fell silent, Goliath looked lost in his own thoughts as did Elisa. Angela shifted uneasily waiting for someone else to say something first, she certainly didn’t know what to say after hearing everything Kendra Canmore had to tell the clan. “So,” the blue-eyed woman said her voice startlingly loud in the silence, “that’s why I say you’re wrong to only blame Demona for what happened. To me there seems to be plenty of blame to go around.”

All eyes were on Goliath, waiting for the clan leader to respond. It took several more seconds for the big lavender male to become aware of that fact, and when he did, he took the time to briefly meet each of his clan member’s eyes before finally looking toward Kendra Canmore. Angela was aware that her father was not happy, he did not like surprises and he didn’t like not being informed of things that affected the clan. “There was obviously much more happening between the clan and the humans at the castle than I was made aware of,” he rumbled. “What Demona did was wrong,” he stared hard at Kendra, “but as you say, she is not the only one to blame for what happened.” He hesitated briefly before offering, “I was wrong to place the blame for what happened solely upon her.” Angela stared proudly at her father; she could tell that he wasn’t eager to admit that he had been wrong, but he had done it.

“That’s all I wanted acknowledgement of,” Kendra said, her voice mild. She looked at the watch on her wrist; “I need to get going if I’m going to be home in time for dinner.” Angela stared at her mother’s friend in bemusement; the changes in the blue-eyed woman’s moods were rapid and unpredictable to say the least.
“First though,” Kendra said turning toward the smallest member of the clan, “Lexington, you and Robert both have an interest in electronics. I was wondering if you’d be interested in corresponding with him by email.”

“He knows about me?” The web winged male asked uncertainly.

“What?” Kendra looked puzzled for a brief moment before realization dawned, “Oh yes, Robert already knows about the clan, you don’t need to hide who you are from him. If you’re willing to give me your address, I’ll give it to him so he can contact you.”

Lexington looked over toward his clan leader for permission; he didn’t want to do anything to upset Goliath any more than the lavender male was already. Upon receiving a short nod, the web-wing said, “I’ll write it down for you. My computer room is just down the hallway I have a pen and some paper there.”

“I’ll come with you then,” the blue-eyed woman offered.

“Ok,” he offered her a smile before turning and making his way toward one of the wide hallways.

Before following Lexington out of the room, Kendra turned and stared at Brooklyn, “Oh and Brooklyn…” her tone wasn’t particularly friendly, “just for the record… I am gay, and despite what you think, gay people are as normal as everyone else.”
Friday, December 26th 1997

Night – Main Dining Hall, Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan

“Well that was certainly entertaining,” David Xanatos commented after Kendra Canmore left the castle, drawing scowls from several of the gargoyles as well as Detective Maza and a grin from his wife.

“It was also rather informative,” Owen added.

“Speaking of informative,” Xanatos sounded much less amused as he turned toward the blonde-haired man.

“Yes, sir,” the fey in human form straightened, “I noted the night we watched the broadcast of Kendra Canmore’s fight with the Quarrymen, that I had seen the same level of grace and deadliness in only one other being.”

“What?” Goliath took a few steps forward toward the Xanatos’ and Owen, it was the first he had heard of this.

David gave a casual shrug, “It was a comment Owen made later that night to Fox and I.” A slight frown formed, “What does that have to do with the control spells on Demona?”

“Because from that same being is one other time that I felt the same type of a…” he hesitated searching for the right words.

“Aura of threat,” Elisa supplied quietly. Everyone turned toward her with surprised expressions
except for Goliath, whose eyes widened in remembrance.

“Indeed, that term will work nicely,” Owen noted after a quick intent look at the detective.

“From the were-jaguar that threatened my mother,” Fox Xanatos said her tone and expression ambivalent.

“Yes,” the blond man confirmed, “I felt the same type of threat from the were-jaguar that delivered the spirit’s message.”

“But she’s human,” Broadway said looking confused, “I mean,” he hesitated looking toward Elisa, “we’re pretty sure she’s human right?”

“She is human,” the answer came from David Xanatos instead of the detective, “her parents were Robert Canmore and Maria DeSantos. We know the Canmore line is human, and as far as I can tell, the DeSantos family is as well.”

“You’ve done a background check on her,” Maza commented sounding as if she weren’t quite certain whether or not she approved.

“After Owen mentioned the resemblance in how she fought to the were-jaguar, yes,” he confirmed, meeting the detective’s dark eyes frankly.

Elisa stared back at him for a moment before nodding her acceptance. She turned toward Goliath, “Well, I guess it wasn’t that I was tired,” she said meeting his dark eyes.

“No, I felt it as well,” the lavender male confirmed, “It was…unexpected.”

“Kendra was right then,” Fox commented to Owen, “you mentioned the spells because you think she and Demona can deal with the Weird Sisters.”

Owen nodded, “Considering what the were-jaguar was able to do, it does not seem unreasonable to believe they will.”

“And if you’re wrong,” asked David.

“Then the Weird Sisters will not be pleased with any of us,” the blonde man said grimly.

Night – Library, Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan

“That certainly didn’t go quite as planned,” Elisa commented as they entered the room. Rows and rows of books surrounded them and she felt herself relaxing, the two of them had spent many enjoyable evenings in this room discussing current events and the books Goliath read.

“No,” the lavender male’s deep tone was a curious mixture of rueful and wary. “Kendra Canmore was not as I expected.”

The dark-haired woman turned toward him, her curiosity peaked, “What did you expect?”

Goliath hesitated a moment, his face thoughtful as he considered the question. “I am not certain,” he admitted, “perhaps for her to be more like the other Canmore’s, certainly for her to be more like other humans.”

Elisa’s head tilted to the side as she considered it, “The family resemblance is there, but no, she’s not
really like the other Canmore’s. And no, she’s not really like any other human I’ve ever met before,” she agreed dryly.

Goliath rumbled his agreement, “Most humans are afraid of us, she was not.”

“She’s been around Demona,” Elisa pointed out, “it’s not like she hasn’t seen a gargoyle before.”

“That is true, but it does not explain the certainty in her eyes that she could defeat me if we battled,” his eyes betrayed his bewilderment.

“Maybe she’s just overly confident,” the detective suggested, walking over to him and placing a comforting hand on his thickly muscled forearm.

“Perhaps,” he allowed, staring down at her, “Or perhaps Puck is correct and she is more than she appears to be.”

Elisa didn’t immediately respond, at one time she would have scoffed at such a suggestion, but after what she had seen during the past two years… “I don’t know, we haven’t seen any evidence that she can transform, but then we haven’t really been looking for it,” she finally responded. A low rumble from him was all she got as a reply. “How are you doing?” she asked, finally broaching the subject she had really wanted to address this entire time.

He turned curious dark eyes her way, “I am fine.”

She sighed, “I mean with what Kendra Canmore told us tonight.”

“Oh,” he breathed out the sound, his expression turning melancholy as it often did when he thought of his lost clan. “Do you believe she was right,” he finally spoke, “that the Magus was behind many of the things the humans said about us? That he was…” he searched for the correct modern phrase, “stirring up trouble for his own purposes?”

“I don’t know Goliath,” Elisa responded quietly, “I remember thinking when we were on Avalon fighting against the Archmage, Demona and Macbeth, that the amount of guilt he still felt seemed rather extreme for the spell he cast on you guys to make you sleep.”

“But perhaps not if he felt in some way responsible for the clan’s massacre,” Goliath finished her unspoken thought.

“No, not for that,” she agreed, “he pretty much devoted the rest of his life to protecting the clan’s children, and he never felt worthy of approaching Princess Katherine with his feelings for her.”

Goliath responded with a slow nod of acknowledgement, looking lost in his thoughts. There was something had been bothering Elisa ever since Kendra mentioned it, and now seemed a good time to bring it up, “Why didn’t you tell me that you guys helped build this castle?”

Goliath frowned, “Does it make that much of a difference?”

Elisa was silent for a moment, “Yes it does,” she finally responded, “it makes the way Princess Katherine and her people treated the clan even more wrong, and knowing the threats Demona was hearing I understand better why she was so angry and afraid.” He stared at her in astonished surprise, “Oh I’m not saying that what Robbie and Demona did was right, it definitely wasn’t,” she hastened to assure him, “or at all well thought out,” she added in a lower tone, “Just that I understand her motivations better.”

He frowned, “Even if she does not bear the entire blame for what occurred, what she did was wrong.”
The detective stared at him, taking in the sternly judgmental expression on his face. She suspected she knew whose condemnation Demona feared so much that she decided to keep silent that morning rather than admit what she and Robbie had done. “Was Demona ever as calm as she seems now?” she asked, changing the subject. It was another question that tonight’s conversation with Kendra brought up in her mind. If the Weird Sister’s spell had been the cause of Demona’s temper, then why did it sound like she had been just as easily angered back then as she had been before the kidnapping? The detective had always assumed that Demona had always been the short-tempered, bloodthirsty gargoyle she was familiar with before Demona returned from Canada with what seemed like a radically different personality.

The lavender male looked slightly bewildered by the change in topic, yet he gave it due consideration before giving her an answer. “I do not remember her becoming so easily angered when we were younger. It was only as the Princess began treating the clan less well that her temper and patience with the humans became so short.” Elisa didn’t know what response she had been expecting, but that answer was not particularly helpful. “Hudson was correct,” he continued, “it was only after Prince Malcolm died that things started to become strained between the clan and the humans. The Prince never allowed his people to forget why they were there and what we had done for the King.”

“I’m sorry,” she said to him softly.

Goliath looked at her in puzzlement, “Why?”

Elisa explained in the same soft tone, “That the humans living in this castle acted so badly toward the clan.”

“You had nothing to do with that, Elisa,” he responded firmly. “You have no need to apologize for them. You have been a true friend to this clan and are now a part of it.”

“Still I wish you hadn’t experienced that,” she said staring into his eyes.

Silence fell between them until Goliath said, “I did try reminding the princess of her father’s promise to the clan.”

Elisa’s dark eyes widened in surprise, “Let me guess, she wouldn’t speak to you,” she remarked.

“That was true the second time, but not the first,” Goliath replied. “The princess was afraid of me, but she listened and relations between the clan and the humans of the castle improved for a while. Unfortunately, they did not stay that way. When matters grew worse again, I went to speak to her again, but she refused to talk with me a second time.”

“Was the Magus one of her advisors by then?” The detective asked.

His dark eyes narrowed thoughtfully, “Yes,” he rumbled, his expression hardening, “the princess had made him one just a month before.”

The detective shook her head, “I guess we’ll never know what his role in everything was exactly,” she commented with a frown. “All we have is Kendra’s speculation, and what Lexington, Broadway, and Hudson witnessed him doing.”

Goliath clenched his hands, “I do not understand why I did not hear these things, and I do not understand why Lexington and Hudson did not come to me and tell me what was being said by the humans.”

Elisa looked up at the huge male, “I think I can guess why the humans of the castle didn’t say
anything in your hearing.” He looked down at her inquiringly, “You’re rather large; I doubt they wanted to risk making you angry. The younger gargoyles would have been less intimidating, as would have Demona. Hudson probably thought what he heard had nothing to do with the clan and Lexington probably felt too intimidated to come to you with what he heard; he was fairly young then.”

“They are all young,” he rumbled angrily.

“I know,” Elisa replied. They had talked before about putting such pressure on the trio so early, but Goliath felt he had no other choice. Brooklyn had to be able to lead the clan if something happened to him.

“Why did Demona think I would not protect the clan’s children?” he asked with a somewhat plaintive tone.

Elisa stared at him sadly, seeing the bewilderment in his dark eyes, “I don’t know the answer to that,” she responded quietly. She had some suspicions, but she didn’t really feel like discussing with him what might have already been going wrong in his prior relationship. “Goliath.” Elisa paused, not really certain how to phrase what she needed to tell him, but she didn’t want to be someone else that kept things from him. “What did you think of Kendra Canmore’s statement that she’s gay?” she fought to hide her grimace at the weak question.

He gave her a puzzled look, “It perhaps explains Xanatos’ insistence that she and Demona are mates. Apparently, it is not only those who are bigoted against gays that make the assumption that those who are friends with gays must be gay as well,” he commented. “Why do you ask?”

As astute as his observation was, it was not the one Elisa had hoped he would make, “From what I observed in the restaurant they seem very close to one another and Demona looks very happy with her.”

Goliath frowned, giving her a searching look, he shook his head with a sigh, “You are beginning to believe that it is true as well,” he stated. “Clan sisters are close and act affectionate with one another, it is natural and it does not mean that they wish to be mates with one another,” he sounded upset.

“So you think Demona’s treating Kendra Canmore as a clan sister?” Elisa thought back to the interaction between the two women that she had observed and couldn’t help but be dubious of his explanation.

“Yes,” he responded firmly, “as odd as it seems that she would accept a human as clan, Demona is treating Kendra Canmore as a clan sister.” He gave an irritated rumble, “That is the only explanation for her behavior since gargoyles are not gay,” he stated quite firmly.

Elisa stared at him, there was no doubt in his tone, and it was clear from the stubborn, annoyed expression he had that he was not pleased that she was now wondering if Demona and Kendra were involved in addition to the Xanatos’ and the Tattler reporter. It was becoming clearer to her that his ego and pride were becoming heavily involved in his belief that Demona could not possibly be interested in another female. Of course who would take it well that their ex, who had previously only been with you and your clone, was now involved with not only someone of a different species from you but a different sex from you as well. Elisa winced in sympathy, put like that it did sound rather ego bruising. In a mollifying tone she said, “I didn’t realize that clan sisters were so close.”

Goliath visibly relaxed, “They are,” he confirmed.

Elisa nodded, choosing not to argue the point anymore, she had mentioned it and he had chosen not
to listen, he couldn’t fault her if it turned out to be true. Her eyebrow rose as she realized this was probably exactly what had happened between Demona and he over her concerns about what the humans in the castle were saying about the clan. Only then, his refusal to take direct action against the humans, no matter how well reasoned, had not been something the scarlet haired gargoyle felt she could accept, not when the humans’ threat expanded to the rookery where her own unhatched egg rested.

Night – Western Tower, Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan

With a sigh, Angela wrapped her arms around her knees and then her wings around her body as she curled up in the deep casement of the tower window and looked out over the city. Broadway hadn’t wanted to leave her alone and it had taken her awhile to reassure him that she was all right; she just needed to be by herself for a while to think.

She remembered her last sight of the Magus’s body resting upon the slab where King Arthur had slept the centuries away. He had looked so peaceful, so much like he was only sleeping, the sorrow that had always seemed to weigh him down finally gone. He had always been so kind and gentle with them, and so patient as he taught them to read and write and do mathematics. It was hard for her to reconcile what Kendra had said he had done, and what Lexington, Broadway and Hudson had confirmed they had overheard him doing, with the gentle man she had known for all her life.

She recalled the one time she had seen him cry, he had been watching her rookery brothers and sisters play. She had been off to the side resting and had looked over and noticed his anguished expression and the tears. Concerned she had went over to him, “Magus?” she had whispered quietly, not wanting to draw attention to him.

She had startled him and he hurriedly wiped his tears away before turning to face her, “Angela what did you need?”

She had stared at him uncertainly, “Why were you crying?” she had finally asked, keeping her voice low.

He had sighed, looked over at her brothers and sisters, “I wish your parents were still alive to see you, they would be so proud of all of you.”

“Oh,” she hadn’t known quite how to respond.

“We’ve done the best we can, but there are only three of us. You should have your parents and your older brothers and sisters to look after you and teach you,” his voice grew harsh, self-condemnatory.

“But we don’t,” she laid a gentle hand on his arm, “We have you, and the Princess, and Guardian Tom instead, and I think you’ve been the best foster parents anyone could wish for.”

He had stared at her, the sadness in his eyes only deepening, “You truly deserve your name, for you are like an Angel in your kindness, but of all of you I deserve your forgiveness the least.”

She sighed in exasperation, “You made a mistake in casting the spell to put our clan leader and the others to sleep, because you believed Goliath had killed the Princess. That doesn’t make you unforgivable to me, not after all that you’ve done for us, all the kindness and care you’ve given us.” He had given her a look of such great sadness, shook his head and then walked away making it clear he had wanted to be alone.

Angela drew in a shaky breath of the cold night air, now she suspected she knew why he had felt
such terrible guilt over what he had done. It had not just been the sleep spell he had cast on the
remaining clan members, but what he had done before that. She still didn’t understand though why
he had said that he deserved her forgiveness the least of all of her brothers and sisters. The Magus
couldn’t have known that it was Demona who had conspired with Robbie to let the Vikings into the
castle. None of them had even known that her mother had survived until Demona had attacked them
along with the Archmage, Macbeth and the Weird Sisters.

Kendra had told her not to forget what he had done for them just because of what she had learned,
and she wouldn’t. It would take awhile though for her to reconcile what seemed like two entirely
different people: the kindly teacher she had known that had given his life to protect her and her
brothers and sisters, and the mage who spread lies and stirred up the humans in the castle against the
clan and schemed against the Captain of the Guard to increase his standing and favor with the
Princess.

No wonder her mother had stared at her disbelievingly when she told the scarlet haired female about
how the Magnus had treated them during the two months her mother had spent in the Labyrinth,
Angela realized.

Night – Battlements, Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan

Perched within one of the battlement embrasures, Brooklyn stared moodily out over the city. Kendra
Canmore had certainly not been anything like he expected. Commanding, confident, she had walked
in and promptly taken over the meeting, using it to address the issues she had wanted to address and
not even given the clan the opportunity to bring up their own concerns.

Her scathing comment about him being ruled by his fear still stung, more so because he knew it was
true. Over the past few days Goliath, Elisa and Hudson had all pointed out the same thing, only more
gently. He had let his fear of being hurt by Demona guide his actions and thoughts, refusing to even
briefly consider that what they had been hearing might possibly be true. He had never considered
what chance Demona’s scheme of using the Grimorium to control Goliath and take over the clan had
of succeeding until Kendra had pointed out how unlikely it was that the plan would work. Now that
he thought about it without letting his anger over it cloud his mind, it seemed obvious to him that
there had never been any chance of the clan accepting Demona as their new clan leader. He
remembered what Goliath had looked like, and all one had to do was take one look at the lavender
male to see that he was controlled in some manner.

That the rest of the clan had never thought about it either was only scant consolation. Brooklyn was
fully aware that Goliath had chosen him to be the clan second because he was better at planning and
tactical thinking than either Lexington or Broadway. He snorted self-depreciatingly, tactical thinking,
he had hardly been showing any signs of that lately, no wonder Goliath was so disappointed in him.
It was a good thing Elisa didn’t have wings or he probably would have already found himself
demoted in favor of her.

He recalled Kendra’s firm response to his questioning that the Weird Sisters had been responsible for
Demona’s actions in some way. “Claiming?” she had said staring at him, “no I’m stating.” There had
been no hesitation, no sign of doubt in her eyes or tone, and then Puck had dropped his little
bombshell about seeing control spells on Demona. He hadn’t known what to think about that piece
of information an hour ago and he was no closer to sorting out his thoughts on it now.

“If you had been a puppet on their strings for a thousand years,” Kendra’s words echoed in his mind
sending a shiver through him. He remembered his shock and horror when he learned that the three
fey had conspired with the Archmage to kill Angela and her rookery brothers and sisters, making it
brutally clear they were hardly as moral as they had pretended to be during the events of that night Demona had turned the city’s humans into stone. As much as he hated Demona, he wouldn’t wish that on her, if only because of the use the Weird Sister’s might make of anyone in their control. Like forcing you to attack and try to kill your own child? His mind reminded him of what he already knew the three fey had done to Demona. “Yea, like that,” he whispered to the night air.

“Like what?” Elisa’s gentle question startled him; he hadn’t realized anyone else was out here with him.

He turned his head, the clan’s human member was standing a few feet away, “I was just thinking about how the Weird Sisters tried to make Demona kill her own daughter,” he admitted.

He saw her flinch slightly before she grimaced, “Yea, that makes all of…” she waved her hand vaguely, “what we’ve heard about control spells on Demona sound possible. I certainly wouldn’t put it past them.”

That summed it up pretty succinctly, Brooklyn thought. “Trusting Demona… I don’t know if I can again,” he admitted reluctantly.

“What about trusting her only slightly,” Elisa inquired. The reddish male turned puzzled eyes her way. She sighed, looking at the battlements around them. “Brooklyn how do you feel when you think about trusting Demona?”

His wings closed tighter around him at the question, “Sick to my stomach,” he reluctantly answered.

Elisa nodded, “She hurt you pretty badly. It’s not surprising that you don’t want to risk being hurt like that again.”

Brooklyn frowned; there was more to it than just that, “Isn’t that my instincts telling me that it’s a really bad idea?”

She tilted her head slightly to the side, “Maybe, maybe not,” she answered after a second, confusing him. “I fell off these battlements twice,” she said, and Brooklyn frowned wondering what that had to do with what they were discussing. “Goliath saved me both times,” she said. Elisa took in a deep breath and took a step closer to him and the beaked male looked on in concern as he realized from her tense posture that she was afraid. “It took me quite a while to be able to walk up those stairs without feeling like I was going to throw up I felt so sick to my stomach, and even though I knew it was irrational, I felt like these stones were going to reach out and grab me and pull me over them.”

Brooklyn got down from the embrasure where he had been sitting as Elisa forced herself to take a step closer. He took her by the arms and gently pushed her further back away from what was obviously a terrifying drop for her no matter that the parapet was almost three feet high at its lowest. “You don’t need to do this for me,” he said quietly, “I get your point.”

She looked up into his dark eyes, “Sometimes when something hurts or frightens you badly enough you just want to avoid it, because if you avoid it then it can’t possibly hurt you again. It’s not bad reasoning, but it doesn’t mean that it’s certain you would get hurt in the same way again.” The beaked male scowled, but he couldn’t disagree with her, what she was describing was too close to how he felt when he thought about trusting Demona. “Brooklyn, I’m not certain I trust that Demona has actually changed,” oddly, given the topic she smirked, “even though seeing her knock back a margarita today certainly helped.”

“Huh,” he said, blinking at her, unable to believe that she had just said what he thought he heard her say.
“But I’m willing to give her the chance to prove that what we’ve heard is the truth,” she continued as if she hadn’t said anything odd at all.

“Wait, go back to the margarita,” demanded Brooklyn.

Elisa chuckled at him, “Demona went to El Parador today with her friends, that’s where I spoke to Kendra. I was quite shocked when the waiter delivered a pitcher of beer to the table and margaritas to everyone but Robert. She looked happy and relaxed and was smiling and laughing with them,” the detective grimace, “at least until Kendra spotted me.”

Brooklyn stared at her as if she had grown a second head, trying and failing to imagine the scene she was describing. He knew Demona had to eat; he just had a hard time imagining what her words were describing. “Are we sure this is actually Demona,” he said weakly. Elisa chuckled in response, which was encouragement enough for him to continue, “Maybe there’s one of those pods from that movie we watched the other night up in Canada with the real Demona in it.”

“And we have pod Demona?” Elisa smirked, “it’s almost easier to believe,” she allowed.

Brooklyn felt relieved, at least someone understood what he was feeling, “Brooklyn,” the dark-haired woman said, “Goliath doesn’t expect you to trust her without proof. He’s just asking that you make the attempt to not let your hatred of her blind you from seeing that something significant is going on and to keep an open mind about what it might be.”

The clan second gave her a slow nod, “I can do that.”

Night – Destine Manor, Forest Hills Gardens, Long Island

“So,” Kendra finished describing what had happened during her meeting with the clan and paused to stretch, her arms above her head and her back arching. It had taken her awhile to go over everything that was said and her observation of their reactions. “I think I managed to get everything accomplished that I wanted to accomplish,” the black-haired woman commented sounding satisfied. Demona had interrupted her only a few times, once to laugh hard enough to hold her sides at the description of the brief altercation between her and Goliath.

Demona smirked, “Oh to have been a fly on the wall as humans say, I would have enjoyed watching that.” She turned more serious, “Do you think Brooklyn listened to you?”

Kendra gave the question some thought before responding, “I don’t know if he believed everything I said, but I think I shook his self-absorption enough that he’s at least questioning himself.”

“That at least is a beginning,” Demona commented, her eyes betraying that she was thinking once again about what she had done to the reddish male and regretting it. “So, Puck noticed the anger spell and the control spells, but didn’t mention them to the clan or Xanatos’ until now,” she changed the subject.

Kendra nodded, “I don’t know whether to be flattered or suspicious of his faith in our ability to deal with the Weird Sisters.”

Demona’s brow ridge rose, “Knowing Puck as I do, I would be suspicious,” the gargoyle said dryly. “That’s what I suspected,” Kendra agreed wryly, “I wonder if he suspects the truth somehow.”

The scarlet haired gargoyle frowned, “I don’t know how he could,” she said puzzled.
“No, neither do I,” Kendra said thoughtfully. She shook her head, “In other news… I got Lexington’s email address to give to Robert.”

Demona gave her a surprised look that turned thoughtful, “That’s a good idea,” she commented after a moment. “They do have similar interests, and it will help reassure the clan that I’m not trying to hide Robert away from them,” she ended with a wry grin.

“He said something interesting to me as he was writing it down,” Kendra said giving her an intent look. Demona glanced at her curiously, wondering what Lexington could have said to cause this reaction from her mate, “He asked if we had been out dancing again lately, and mentioned something about hearing about it in a chat room.” Demona’s eyes widened in surprise, “Unfortunately,” Kendra continued, “Goliath and Elisa came in and he didn’t say anything more.”

“A chat room?” Demona repeated, “But…” her voice trailed off confused.

“The only kind of chat room he would have heard about that one night we went out would be a gay chat room,” Kendra informed her, “and since I announced to the clan that I was gay, it makes sense that he would try and let me know he was as well.”

“Hmm,” Demona said thoughtfully, “perhaps he and Robert can meet somewhere neutral like your apartment? It does have a balcony large enough for a gargoyle to land on, I noticed that the day you showed it to me.”

“I’d let them talk by email for a week or so and then bring that up, Goliath and Brooklyn’s asses are probably still smarting right now,” Kendra commented with a smirk.

Demona shook her head and laughed quietly, “I do wish I could have watched somehow,” she said with a regretful sigh and a not entirely nice gleam in her green eyes.

**Sunday, December 28th 1997**

*Just before dawn – Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan*

“I’m sure Goliath and the others will be alright lass,” Hudson reassured Angela as he leapt up on his favorite spot to sleep during the day.

“Do you think Elisa’s informant was right and they found new gargoyles?” the lavender female asked as she did the same.

Hudson shook his head, “I don’t know lass. I’m sure they will be back early tonight to let us know.”

Angela’s worried gaze turned back to scan the horizon for her father and the trio even as dawn froze her in stone sleep.

*After sunset – Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan*

Angela waited thirty minutes after waking up before contacting Elisa to tell her that Goliath and the trio had not returned from investigating the reported sightings of new gargoyle statues the night before. Then she and Hudson, who had carried Bronx, had met up with Elisa and Matt Bluestone, who were both on duty tonight, to investigate the building where Goliath and the others had gone to search for any sign that there were new gargoyles in the city. They had found nothing suspicious and
no sign of the rest of the clan or any sign that gargoyles lived there, and a call over their radio about an armed robbery interrupted any further searching. Before Elisa left with Matt to respond to the call, she cautioned Angela and Hudson to be careful, she didn’t want to be looking for them as well. Angela and Hudson had flown over the city for a while looking for the other clan members, she had suggested going back to the castle to see if Xanatos had heard anything when she noticed how tired the older gargoyle was looking.

The lavender female didn’t know what to do now; she didn’t want to just wait here at the castle hoping that her father, Broadway, Brooklyn and Lexington would show up and she didn’t want Hudson to overextend himself helping her search for them either. Owen and David Xanatos were at some meeting that Xanatos swore he couldn’t afford to not attend, and Fox was taking care of Alexander. Xanatos had promised to help look for the clan as soon as he got back, but in the meantime, no one was searching for her clan. Her dark eyes narrowed, her father and Brooklyn wouldn’t like it, but there was one other person she could ask for help.

“Destine residence,” her mother’s voice answered after three rings.

“Mother, I need your help.”

“What’s wrong Angela?” Demona’s tone turned concerned.

“Goliath, Brooklyn, Broadway and Lexington are missing and Elisa’s on duty tonight and Xanatos is at some meeting he couldn’t miss,” she was aware that she was babbling a little, but she couldn’t help it she was scared for her father and Broadway and the others.

“When did they go missing?” her mother asked as soon as she stopped speaking.

Her mother’s voice was steady and confident and Angela felt herself relax a little, “Last night, Elisa had a tip that new gargoyle statues had shown up on one of the buildings in the city and father and the others went to investigate.”

“Which building?”

Angela gave her mother the address, “But we’ve already been there and didn’t see any sign of them.”

“We’ve?” her mother asked.

“Hudson, Bronx and I met Elisa and her partner there and we searched for them, but then Elisa and Matt got a call about a robbery and had to leave.”

There was silence for a moment from her mother’s end before Demona replied, “Even though you’ve already been there we’ll start at that building. It’s the only place we know they’ve been, and I have a few ways of searching for them that Detective Maza doesn’t. Can you meet Kendra and I on the roof of Nightstone in thirty minutes?”

“Yes,” Angela frowned, wondering what her mother was planning to do. It sounded like she was going to use sorcery.

Night – Destine Manor, Forest Hills Gardens, Long Island

Azarel suspected he knew why Ms. Destine insisted that none of the security team be too close to her home at night. If what he and his family thought was true, he couldn’t blame her. The redhead would
hardly want the world to find out that Castaway was right and she could turn into a gargoyle at night. That didn’t mean though that he was going to permit such a large security hole to jeopardize the woman and her friends safety, it just meant that he was the one who did the sweep through her back yard at night.

Crouched behind a tree to keep himself out of sight of anyone looking out the mansion windows, he scanned the area for any sign of intrusion. With his night vision goggles on, the world was black and green to him, there was no sign of anyone else in the large yard but him. He glanced toward the mansion and movement caught his eye on the second story balcony. He stared, it was one thing to suspect and another thing to actually have those suspicions confirmed, and there was not one but two of them.

Azarel ducked behind the tree and froze remembering his father’s comments about how good a gargoyle’s sight was at night. He didn’t want either of the two females to know that he was there. Cautiously he lifted the night vision goggles from his eyes and waited a second for his vision to adjust before peering around the tree. One of the gargoyles had scarlet red hair the same shade as Ms. Destine’s and azure blue skin, the other female was almost uniformly black in color, and her wings appeared to be feathered instead of bat like wings such as the red-haired one’s. If this wasn’t the same gargoyle that his father had met as a boy 53 years ago, then they were probably related, because this female looked exactly like his father’s description of the gargoyle named Demona.

Night – Roof of Nightstone Unlimited HQ, Lower East Side Manhattan

Angela and Hudson stood on the roof of her mother’s company scanning the skyline. Surprisingly, Hudson hadn’t argued with her decision to ask her mother for help, though he had insisted on going with her. They had left Bronx behind to guard the castle. “There,” Angela saw the winged outline first and pointed it out to the older gargoyle. Then her eyes widened as she realized that she was seeing not one but two winged forms in the sky. “There’s another gargoyle with her,” she exclaimed in surprise.

As Demona and the newcomer landed on the rooftop, Angela stared at the strong looking female, who was much more muscular than either Demona or she, taking in the dark sapphire sleeveless belted tunic covering midnight black fur, glossy black feathered wings, feline features and long flowing black hair. The new gargoyle did not have a brow ridge Angela noticed with surprise, and then she stared harder. The feline gargoyle had familiar amused blue eyes and a smirk on her lips. “Kendra Canmore?” she said disbelievingly.

“Very good,” came the approving and amused reply, it was definitely her mother’s friend.

“What sorcery is this?” Hudson asked, staring at Demona suspiciously.

“Not sorcery,” Demona corrected him calmly, “but the spirit’s magic.”

“This allows me to assume this form,” Kendra held up a medallion of dark stone set in silver so that the older gargoyle could see it. On the medallion was inscribed the form of a cat.

“The spirit,” Hudson said in a surprised tone, giving the winged feline appearing woman an intent stare. His eyes shifted from Kendra to Demona and back again, “Hmm,” he murmured sounding thoughtful now, “very well then.”

Angela’s eyes widened as she realized what the clan elder was thinking. Owen had told them the other night that Kendra Canmore was as graceful and deadly as she fought as the were-jaguar, that
she was able to project the same sense of danger or aura of threat as Elisa had called it, and now she
looked very like the were-jaguar with the addition of feathered wing. The being Owen had described
didn’t have wings, but then he had been protecting humans from their fey tormentors, not a gargoyle.
The obvious conclusion was that the were-jaguar that had held Titania hostage while delivering the
spirit’s ultimatum to leave the humans alone, hadn’t been a supernatural being, but a human given the
power to transform with a talisman like the one Kendra was wearing. Perhaps it was even the same
talisman, Angela thought to herself.

The lavender female looked over at her mother. Demona was wearing a similar medallion, only it
was set in gold and the stone was reddish with white lines running through it. The scarlet haired
gargoyle took a step nearer, “Yes, the spirit gave me the gift of turning into a human whenever I
wished,” she confirmed, touching the stone with one finger, though Angela had already guessed that
once she saw the form of a woman inscribed on her mother’s medallion.

Angela met her mother’s eyes and they stared at one another, Demona was the first to break the
silence, “Well, I guess we should go to the building you said they went to search last night and see if
we can find any sign of your father and the trio.”

The lavender female had seen the uncertainty and regret in her mother’s eyes and as the older female
moved toward the roof’s edge, she realized that Demona was waiting for her to make the next move
in their reconciliation, “Wait.” Her mother stopped immediately, turning back to look at her
questioningly. “Thank you for coming to help.”

“Of course, daughter,” Demona’s eyes softened, “I understand you are worried about what has
happened to them, this is very unlike Goliath.” Reminded of exactly why they were there, Angela
could only nod, all of her fears returning at once.

“I’d like to approach this building cautiously,” Kendra said as the four of them headed for the edge
of Nightstone’s roof, “if it was a trap for Goliath and the others, then I’d expect there to be external
surveillance on the building. If it is there, I don’t want us spotted by it.”

Angela paused, “How will we be able to tell?” she asked, remembering how small the security
cameras at the castle were that Lexington had found.

“Aye the things are small and hard to find,” added Hudson, obviously remembering the same thing.

Kendra looked over at Demona inquiringly, “Do you think you could use your magic to recognize
them?”

The scarlet haired gargoyle frowned thoughtfully, “Perhaps,” she replied after a few seconds, “let me
examine the ones by the loading dock here.” She took the last steps to the edge, “I’ll be back in a few
minutes,” she paused briefly to say before gliding off the building.

The lavender female went to the parapet and leaned over looking curiously for her mother. She
immediately spotted her descending in a slow spiral down the side of the building. A few stories
above the loading dock, her mother’s wing dipped and she flew closer to the building. Just before
she would have impacted into the building’s side, Demona flared her wings bringing herself almost
to a halt in the air as she reached out and dug her talons into the concrete. Angela sighed enviously,
someday she wanted to ask her mother for gliding lessons, Goliath was skilled glider, but he wasn’t
as skilled as her mother. Curious, Angela continued watching her mother wondering what spell she
was going to cast to allow her to see the cameras. Demona was just staring at the side of the building;
she didn’t move around or do anything else except stare as if she were seeing something besides
concrete and glass windows. The next moment her mother pushed herself off the side of the building
and began rising gradually back toward the roof.
“I can,” Demona confidently announced as she landed on the edge of the roof.

“Alright then,” Kendra said, “I’m thinking that the greatest concentration of cameras would be on the roof which is where Goliath and the others probably landed. We need to get close enough for Demona to detect if there are any cameras without being seen ourselves. Suggestions?”

Angela glanced over at her mother uncertainly; she hadn’t expected Kendra to take over the leadership of their little group. Demona however wasn’t paying attention to her; instead, she was looking in the direction they needed to go. “If we glide northeast up…” the scarlet haired gargoyle started describing a path that would get them close to the building while keeping taller buildings between them and it. Apparently, it was not only ok with her mother that Kendra led the group, but also it was something she expected.

Kendra was silent for several seconds, her brows drawn in thought as she stared down the street Demona had indicated. Finally, she nodded, “Took me a second to think of what the buildings along that route might look like from the air,” she explained. “That does sound like a good way to approach the building we want without being spotted,” she glanced over at Angela and Hudson, “either of you have another path in mind, or any comments about the route Demona suggested?”

Angela shook her head, the way her mother wanted to glide there sounded fine to her, it would keep the taller buildings between them and where they wanted to go until the last moment.

“Sounds like it will do the trick,” Hudson concurred.

“Very well,” Kendra’s tone turned briskly efficient, “Demona if you will lead the way.” As their route brought them near where Goliath and the others had gone to investigate reports of gargoyle statues, Kendra pointed to the roof of the building they were approaching. “We should land on this side of that building’s roof,” she indicated a building a block away. “Hopefully it’s close enough that Demona can use the roof access for cover while she searches for cameras on the other building.”

“I believe it will be,” Demona responded, “and if it isn’t, we’ll have to think of something else.”

The group began rising slightly up to just below roof level and when they came to the building Kendra had indicated, they turned sharply toward it, rising to glide just over the edge and land with the walls of the access level between them and the building on the other side. They landed in deep shadow and Demona hurried toward the corner of the wall to peer around it cautiously.

Kendra caped her wings around herself as the three of them waited silently for the scarlet haired gargoyle to tell them whether there were cameras on the roof of the other building or that she would need to get closer to tell. Angela eyed the woman’s glossy black wings curiously; though they were feathered like the English gargoyles she had met; their structure was like her own. Instead of rising above her back as Una, Leo and Griff’s wings had, Kendra wrapped them around herself and clasped her wing fingers together across her chest to hold them in place.

Demona drew back from the corner she had been peering around and came back to them, a grim expression on her face. “Just as you suspected,” she said to Kendra, “there are cameras all around the building’s roof. We should see if the ground level is as well covered, maybe we can get in undetected there.”

“It was a trap then,” stated Hudson.

“That’s looking like a definite possibility,” Kendra concurred. She went over to the edge of the roof and looked around, “Go up that alleyway?” Everyone else came to lean over the edge near her and look to where she was pointing.
“That should work,” Demona agreed, “We’ll have to climb around the building because there’s not enough room to glide down and we don’t want to be seen by the humans on the street.” It took them about ten minutes to make their way around and then down the side of the building, Demona stayed near Kendra, giving her low-voiced suggestions which made it clear that this was not something the human in gargoyle form had done before. Considering that it was Kendra’s first time, Angela thought the blue-eyed woman did very well, the lavender female hadn’t been nearly so graceful the first time she had tried climbing down the side of a building.

As soon as they stepped into the alleyway, Demona dropped to all fours and staying close to the building, crept forward slowly. Kendra crouched down and watched the scarlet haired gargoyle intently, her cat like ears pricked sharply forward and her furred tail still except for the very end which flicked side to side and up and down in an irregular pattern. Angela watched her wide-eyed, this was the first time she had seen Kendra act so…cat like. It made her wonder how the transformation affected the human woman’s thinking, if it did more than just make Kendra look like a winged feline.

Demona began backing up swiftly, turning as soon as she was a few feet away and hurrying back toward them. “There are a few cameras by the door, but more importantly the building has subfloors, and that’s where I saw Lexington,” her tone was hurried, tense. “He was being attacked by a mechanical cat.”

“We must save the lad then,” Hudson drew his sword and started down the alleyway.

“Stop!” Kendra's command was low voiced, but no less authoritative for it, and froze the older gargoyle in his tracks. “Demona I believe you had something more to tell us?”

The scarlet haired gargoyle nodded, “There are several humans on the sub levels, we need to get in without being seen or we’ll have all of them to fight. For now, Lexington seems to be evading the mechanical cat easily, he hasn’t been hurt.”

“How do you know this?” Angela asked bewildered, she hadn’t known her mother knew any magic spells to let her see through things.

“My magic,” Demona explained non-helpfully, “give me a moment and I think I can disable the cameras,” she leapt up on the building next to them and started climbing up. As soon as she was a few stories up she began moving sideways toward the corner of the building, once there she paused a moment gathering herself before making a powerful leap that carried her to the other building.

“Stay here,” Kendra said to Angela and Hudson as she dropped to all fours, she crept forward, keeping near the building’s wall in the shadow to where Demona had paused to scout out the other building. It wasn’t very long at all before she turned her head and motioned for them to come forward and then started running down the alleyway toward the other building.

Obviously, thought Angela, as she and Hudson dropped and started running after Kendra, her mother had disabled the camera. Demona had also managed to open the door and stood waiting by it as they quickly crossed the open space between the two buildings. The door opened onto a wide well-lit hallway with the occasional door and at the end an elevator.

“Down one?” Kendra asked Demona quietly. At the scarlet haired gargoyles nod she started down the hallway, “If there are stairs, we should take those and not the elevator.”

“That would be best since there are people coming up it,” Demona tersely whispered back, “they must have already noticed that they lost their camera feed.” They all saw the door with the word’s stairs stenciled across it at the same time as they approached the end of the hallway. Kendra reached
it first and held it open as the others entered and then closed it completely behind them instead of letting it close itself. Her mother was already headed down the stairwell; Angela glanced hesitantly toward Kendra, uncertain whether to follow or stay. The black furred female silently motioned for her to follow Demona down the stairs.

The lavender female didn’t know quite what to think about how well her mother and Kendra worked together, seemingly needing a minimum of conversation to understand what the other was doing. The lavender female was still getting used to the idea that her mother actually had a human friend. She had noticed the other night, when the human woman had talked to the clan, how much of a warrior Kendra Canmore was and had considered how that might have influenced her mother to set aside her normal dislike of humans to befriend this one. Now there was another reason for her mother to accept the human woman, transformed, Kendra looked very much like a gargoyle.

Demona was waiting for them six flights of stairs down, “Lexington is on this level,” she whispered. She looked back at the door and along the wall by it, looking as if she could see through them, “There’s no one in the hallway.” Angela stared at her mother; she hadn’t known that Demona could use her sorcery to see through walls. Had she always been able to or was this something new? Angela noticed Hudson staring at her mother as well. From the slight frown on his face, he didn’t seem certain what to think of this either.

“Will they suspect someone disabled the cameras?” Kendra whispered as she eased the door open and stepped out into the hallway with a quick glance up and down it.

“There was only one and I burnt out the circuitry, so they shouldn’t suspect it was anything but a malfunction,” the scarlet haired gargoyle whispered back, pointing up the hallway. “We need to go that way.”

“Good, I’d rather they not realize we’re here just yet,” Kendra commented. She looked in the direction Demona had pointed, “Why don’t you lead since you can see which way we need to go and if there’s anyone coming.”

With a quick acknowledging nod, the scarlet haired gargoyle started up the long hallway at a quick pace. Angela wasn’t sure why they weren’t running to rescue Lexington, and then she realized that her mother was scanning the hallway and occasionally looking behind them where Hudson was keeping watch as well. They stopped in front of the third doorway from the stairwell, “There are cameras in the room,” Demona announced quietly.

“Can you disable them like the one at the door?” Angela asked her mother.

“No, they’re too far away,” Demona answered with a shake of her head. She waved them forward, past the doorway, “Move further down the hallway, I’m going to open the door and I don’t want us to be spotted.” Demona reached out and gripped Kendra’s forearm stopping the woman from moving with them, “The mechanical cat will probably follow him out.”

Kendra moved to stand against the wall, “Bad choice for it if it does,” she responded lightly. Demona smirked in reply and then she knelt and placed her hands on the door and wall next to the locking mechanism and stared at the door intently.

Angela wasn’t certain what to think of Kendra’s confidence, if Lexington could only stay away from the robot and not disable it, why did the human woman think she could defeat it? She saw Kendra crouch slightly as Demona pushed the door open and stepped away from it hurriedly to avoid being spotted by the cameras inside the room. Angela’s eyes widened as wickedly curved inch long black claws extended from Kendra’s fingers, light reflecting off of each as if they were made of polished stone or metal.
Lexington came running through the door at full speed skidding slightly on the floor as he made the turn in the hallway, “Lexington,” Angela called him and motioned him toward where she and Hudson were waiting.

A yellow spotted panther with glowing red eyes followed the web-winged gargoyle out of the room. It only made it a few feet out of the room before Kendra moved in a rapid blur of motion slapping the robot on the side of the head with enough force to lift it off the floor and send it slamming up against the wall on the other side of the hallway. The mechanical cat bounced off the wall already sparking and smoking and the were-jaguar slapped it again, catching it before it hit the floor and sending it spinning into the wall. Angela watched in astonishment as another ripping swat sent the mechanical panther spinning even more rapidly to bounce off the wall yet again and she realized Kendra was playing with the robot as if it were a large toy.

The irritated clearing of her mother’s throat interrupted the winged were-jaguar’s fun. Demona was standing with her arms crossed over her chest staring disapprovingly at Kendra as the robot fell to the floor sparking and twitching from its rough treatment, the fake fur along its sides ripped and torn. Kendra looked over at Demona and vocalized a soft questioning churring meow. Angela fought to keep from laughing, the noise the gargoyle looking woman had made sounded so cute and innocent as if Kendra were asking what she had possibly done to warrant such a look. The lavender female could tell by the twitching of Demona’s lips that her mother was having the same difficulty, the scarlet haired gargoyle shook her head and pointed down the hallway. The feline gargoyle’s upright ears flattened slightly as she turned in the direction Demona indicated.

“Ken..” was a far as a wide-eyed Lexington got before a black furred finger held up to dark lips indicated that he should remain silent. Angela noticed, from the slight grin on the were-jaguars’ lips, that despite the flattened ears she didn’t seem all that abashed by her mother’s admonishment.

Kendra reached down and gripped his shoulder as she came up to him, “Later, when there aren’t cameras and microphones around,” she bent down and whispered to him. “Glad to see you’re unhurt.” The web-winged gargoyle glanced down the hallway toward the smoking mechanical panther and the room he had just escaped from and nodded.

Demona, who had been staring along the walls and down the hallway, suddenly hissed urgently, “Brooklyn is down this way,” she dropped to all fours and started running, swiftly passing all of them. Realizing her mother wouldn’t be in such a hurry if the clan’s second wasn’t in danger, Angela dropped and followed behind Kendra who had already taken off after the scarlet haired gargoyle.

The hallway they were running down was very long, abruptly Demona slid to a halt midway along it, and Angela dug in her talons to keep from sliding into Kendra who had come to a stop as well. The sound of gruff male grumbling behind her let her know that Hudson didn’t appreciate the abruptness with which they had stopped at all. Demona’s eyes glowed red with anger and Angela stared at her, wondering at the cause of it, but the glow lasted only a second before fading as the scarlet haired gargoyle placed her hands on the bare wall, staring at it in frowning concentration. The lavender female looked at her mother in confusion; there wasn’t anything here, just a hallway with no door nearby.

“What is she doing?” whispered Lexington after a moment.

Angela admitted, “I don’t know exactly, she did something like this when she unlocked the door to the room where you were.”

As abruptly as she had stopped, Demona stepped away from the wall and began running up the hall once again. Kendra immediately started after her leaving the others a second or two behind before they reacted and began chasing after them. Another hallway crossed the one they were running
along, and Demona turned left down it ahead of them. Angela turned the same corner to see the were-jaguar was standing in the middle of the hall holding up a hand for them to stop, her mother was kneeling by a door further up the hallway. The lavender gargoyle heard the click from the door and saw her mother push it open and then run down the hallway toward and then past Kendra. Demona stopped in front of Angela, Hudson and Lexington, “One of you should be up there to help him. I doubt that he would trust me enough to let me,” the scarlet female said, keeping her voice low.

“I will,” Hudson said, already moving toward the newly opened door, the elder gargoyle got there just in time to offer the beaked male a helping arm as he limped out of the room. It was only Kendra making a very emphatic zipping motion across her mouth, which prevented the clan’s second from saying anything when he spotted the black furred female. The reddish male paused, and Angela could see from the widening of his eyes and the way his beak gaped open that he had just realized who the new gargoyle actually was, “Later lad, we’ll explain later when the walls don’t have ears,” Hudson whispered to him.

Demona wasn’t even paying attention to the clan second when Brooklyn spotted her and his eyes glowed briefly white in anger. Angela frowned at him; at least he had the sense to mouth her name, instead of saying it aloud. “Broadway is headed this way and there is a human male with him,” her mother whispered sounding confused. Demona pointed at the wall, and it took a half second for Angela to realize that her mother meant she could see him in that direction. Ignoring her mother’s worried, “Angela wait,” the lavender female started running back down the hallway they had just come up.

When the lavender female reached the hallway crossing it, she turned left and almost ran into the large teal colored male. “Broadway,” she threw herself into his arms.

“Angela?” he sounded confused even as his arms folded around her, “What are you doing here? They didn’t capture you too did they?”

“Well I didn’t expect to see you here,” the voice of the human in the scarlet robe was very familiar.

“Xanatos,” Demona hissed as she rounded the corner at the same time as the dark-haired man removed the hood covering his head.

The scarlet haired gargoyle was followed by Lexington and then by Hudson helping Brooklyn.

“Well I see everyone is here,” Xanatos said, sounding amused. Kendra finally appeared around the corner, and Xanatos stared at the black furred gargoyle, “Who is the new…” his voice trailed off as he stared even more intently. “Kendra Canmore?”

“We don’t have time for this I think we’re about to have company judging from the group that just got off the elevator on this level,” Demona hissed quietly, pointing down the hallway in the direction from which they had originally come. “Where is Goliath being held? We need to get him and get out of here.”

“He’s no longer here,” David glanced down the hallway a startled look on his face, the elevator Demona was referring to was not in sight from here, “we need to hurry to save him from what they’ve got planned.” Angela stared at the dark haired, alarmed, what were these humans planning on doing to her father and how much time did they have to prevent it?

“How do we get out of here then?” Demona turned to Xanatos, “they’re between us and the stairwell to the surface that we came down.”

Angela turned her head and looked down the hallway frowning, she thought she heard something from that direction. Voices, she couldn’t hear the words but she could hear voices, she turned back to
Xanatos noticing as she did that the other gargoyles and Kendra were also looking up the hallway. “There are people coming,” the lavender female confirmed in a hurried whisper to the dark headed man.

“Back this way,” Xanatos hesitated no longer, turning and leading the way quickly up the hallway. “There’s another staircase and elevator on the other side of the building.”

They were in sight of the elevator and staircase door when Demona hissed, “Hurry, there’s another group coming down the elevator, they’re almost here.” The group broke into a run, Kendra sprinting swiftly to the front to hold the door open for them as she stared at the still closed elevator doors further down the hallway.

Everyone was almost ready to breathe a sigh of relief as Kendra pulled the door shut behind Brooklyn and Hudson, who were the last to enter the stairwell, thinking that they had evaded detection when a shout in the hallway announced otherwise. “They’re in the stairwell!” Angela who was waiting on the steps with Xanatos frowned in dismay and prepared herself to fight.

“Damn it,” Kendra hissed as she grabbed the doorknob and held it. Demona moved up by Kendra and knelt placing her hands on the doorway and door. “Can you lock it?” the blue-eyed woman whispered to her.

“Done,” Demona rose, “let’s go.” Kendra released the door and waved for the group to continue up the stairs.

“Open the door!” Angela heard the angry shout from the hallway as she turned back toward the stairwell.

“I can’t it won’t budge,” another voice answered as she took the last few steps to the first landing.

“Shoot it then,” the first angry voice commanded. Alarmed, Angela whirled, looking back down toward the door in time to see her mother wave a hand commandingly at the door. The door seemed to blur for a moment before coming into focus once again.

The lavender female blinked, uncertain what she had just seen. “Keep going, that won’t last for forever,” her mother whispered, motioning urgently toward the stairs.

Angela started up the stairs once again, wondering what spell her mother had just cast on the door and when exactly she had begun to be able to do so without a scroll or book or without saying any words. “What are you doing, using the lowest setting?” the lavender female heard the angry yell drift up from below as she began running up the stairs once again.

They made it to the exterior door of the building without further incident. Xanatos reached the door first and tried to open it unsuccessfully, “It’s locked.” He didn’t sound very surprised, “They must have locked down the building when they discovered the escapes.”

“That door’s not going to stop us,” rumbled Broadway as he stepped around Angela. The large teal male had a determined look on his face as he set himself to bust the door down.

“Broadway stop!” Demona’s whisper was rather loud and urgent. Broadway had already taken a couple of steps toward the door and had to set back on his tail to keep from ramming it. “There are humans outside, three there, two there and three more there,” the scarlet haired gargoyle indicated different directions.

“The alleyways,” Xanatos, Kendra and Hudson all commented almost together. The dark haired male grinned, “Glad we all agree,” he commented. He turned toward Demona, “The roof?”
“Wait, how do you know there are human outside?” Brooklyn asked suspiciously, “and how did you know they were coming down the elevator.”

“I recently acquired a spell to allow me to see through walls,” Demona answered him evenly, “but this is hardly the appropriate time for a long-winded discussion about it.” The reddish gargoyle glared at her, but it wasn’t as if he could disagree, Xanatos had made it clear they didn’t have a lot of time to waste.

Kendra glanced at him briefly before turning back to Demona with a grimace, “I’d rather leave as unannounced as we came in, but if that’s the only way…”

“Let’s go a few stories up, I can get us out one of the windows,” Demona decided, turning back toward the stairwell door.

“Are you sure,” Kendra asked her, her tone concerned, as the group turned started back down the hallway, “a window’s a lot of matter.”

“I can do it,” Demona responded confidently.

Angela stared at her mother’s back, as they hurried up the flights of stairs, not even trying to be quiet now as they raced against the group trying to break into the stairwell. She had no idea what Demona and Kendra had been talking about, only that it was clear that the were-jaguar knew a lot about her mother’s new magic. The lavender female breathed a sigh of relief as they exited at the fourth floor and closed the door behind them. “That side of the building,” Kendra announced, pointing toward what Angela thought was north.

Demona set off in that direction working her way along the hallways with only a few pauses to scan along the walls before setting off again, “Here we are,” she paused at a door, putting a taloned hand on the lock for a moment before there was an audible click and the door swung inward to reveal a darkened room. Her mother was getting faster, Angela noted as she caught sight of Xanatos staring at Demona and then at the lock with a worried frown.

The group stepped into the room and Demona shut the door behind them, without the light from the hallway the only source of illumination was the moonlight streaming in from the four large windows on the north wall.

“Stay over there just in case I don’t do this right,” the scarlet haired gargoyle pointed to one side of the room as she crossed over to the window furthest from where she had indicated they should go.

Kendra paused in the middle of the room, staring at the blue-skinned gargoyle, “I don’t want to be picking pieces of molten glass off of you,” she growled. Angela paused and looked back at the winged were-jaguar; despite the growl, the lavender female could easily hear the sharp concern in Kendra’s voice.

“I don’t want you to either,” Demona gave the winged were-jaguar a soft, gentle look that stunned her watching daughter. For another second or so the two of them stared at one another, and then the scarlet haired gargoyle tilted her head toward the other side of the room. Kendra nodded and ushered the others on in front of her, the stern look on her face enough to dissuade even Brooklyn and Xanatos from arguing with her.

Angela watched in concern as her mother stood in front of the window and raised her hands in front of, but not touching it. Kendra’s comment had given her some idea of what Demona was planning on doing and she was concerned about what could go wrong, she didn’t want her mother to be hurt helping her rescue the clan. Her mother’s expression became peaceful, calm, even serene, and then
the window began to melt from the center, a rapidly widening hole forming as the glass rippled and thickened at the edges. It took only perhaps half a minute before there was an opening wide enough for them to exit. The lavender female stared at the hole in the window, feeling a sense of incredulity at what she had just seen her mother do.

Demona turned toward them, “Broadway if you would get Xanatos, we should get going before they start searching every floor,” she said keeping her voice down.

“Uh,” the teal colored male pulled his attention away from the opening in the window. “Sure,” he turned toward the human male.

“This should be interesting,” Xanatos commented wryly, “I hadn’t really planned on needing to escape with you.”

“Yes, and that’s something we will be discussing later along with why you seem to be associated with their kidnappers,” Demona commented staring at him, a hint of silky menace in her tone. Xanatos stared back at her, his expression carefully unrevealing. “In the mean time,” she turned away from him and motioned toward the window, “we’ll meet at Nightstone to start the search for Goliath. I’ll be a little behind you since I’ll be sealing the window behind us.”

Angela watched as first Broadway carrying Xanatos and then Brooklyn and Hudson stepped up to the hole in the window and leapt out into the night air. The lavender female looked over at her mother standing with Kendra Canmore; she didn’t want to leave her mother alone. “Go on, I’m staying to guard Demona,” the blue-eyed woman assured her, “I’ll make sure that no one hurts her.”

The lavender female’s eyes widened slightly at the serious way Kendra stated the last, it sounded like a promise. “Alright,” her eyes shifted to her mother, “I’ll see you at Nightstone.”

“I shouldn’t be long,” Demona assured her.

Angela stepped up to the window, glancing at the rippled and thickened glass at the edges of the hole for a second before leaping out into the air and spreading her wings. She dropped a few feet before catching the air and began gliding down the alleyway towards a street where she could see cars passing. It took her a second to orient herself and then she realized why Kendra had insisted on the north side of the building, it was the side that was just one block away from the street and thus least likely to have many guards on the outside without them being noticed by passersby’s.

She knew she had told her mother she would go, but both curiosity and instinct were telling her to stay. She exited the alleyway and did a quick turn above the street before gliding back into it and tried to duplicate the precision and grace of the move she had seen her mother make earlier. She wasn’t nearly as skilled; Angela expelled a soft grunt of air as she used her arms and legs to keep from hitting the side of the building. She could certainly do this better than any but Lexington and her father, but she knew she hadn’t done it nearly as well as her mother.

Angela quickly made her way across the side of the building until she could just see the window that she had exited. Only her keen eyesight allowed her to pick out the darker patch against the concrete of the building next to the window. The dark spot was Kendra with her wings slightly outstretched, but where was her mother? She noticed the opening in the window was getting smaller and harder to see which meant that her mother must be…of course, Angela realized, Kendra must be covering her mother with one of her wings to prevent her from being seen from the ground.

Kendra launched herself from the side of the building, her back toward the ground. Angela watched amazed as the winged were jaguar spiraled in a 180-degree turn as her wings gradually extend the entire turn and then snapping open on a strong downward beat as she leveled out. It was only then,
as Kendra came closer, that the lavender female saw her mother’s scarlet hair against the midnight black fur. The winged were-jaguar hadn’t been covering Demona with one of her wings she had been holding her. Angela stared, Kendra wasn’t carrying her mother in her arms. She was holding her pressed tightly against her body, Demona’s back against the winged were-jaguar’s chest and Kendra’s muscular arms wrapped around her mother’s chest and waist. Both Kendra and Demona’s faces turned toward where she was hanging on the side of the building as they passed her. Angela leapt away from the building and followed as Kendra continued to gain altitude and then let go of Demona who fell only a few feet before unfurling her wings and soaring up to glide beside the winged were-jaguar.

The two weren’t gliding that swiftly and it was only a few seconds before Angela caught up to them. Her mother looked over at her, “I thought you were headed with the others to Nightstone,” she commented sounding uncomfortable and perhaps slightly embarrassed.

“I wanted to make sure you both got out of there all right,” Angela responded quietly, she still wasn’t certain what to think of what she had seen or about how her mother had reacted to her seeing it. She knew Xanatos and his wife thought her mother and Kendra were lovers, and she had seen the human newspapers claiming the same, but her father was so certain that it was not possible. Between the look her mother had given Kendra earlier and what she had just seen, Angela had to admit to herself that she wasn’t quite so certain anymore. Right now however, was not the time for her to wonder exactly how close her mother and Kendra Canmore were; the Nightstone building was just ahead of her and her father was still a captive.

“Now Xanatos what is going on, where is Goliath and what plan were you speaking about?” Demona demanded as soon as they landed, striding toward the human in his scarlet robe.

“Xanatos told us already,” Brooklyn stepped in front of the scarlet haired gargoyle, forcing her to stop or run into him. “We have to go stop him now,” he glared at her, “We don’t have time for Xanatos to repeat himself just for you.”

Kendra lifted her lips, revealing white fangs and growled at him threateningly, “Remember what I said last night about me having little patience with your pity party?” Brooklyn stared at her, his angry expression turning wary as he took in her stance and the decidedly unfriendly way she was regarding him.

“Brooklyn,” Hudson rumbled disapprovingly.

Before the elder could say anything else, Angela stepped forward, staring at the reddish male challengingly, “I want to know.”

“They’ve got a mind control device on him,” Broadway said his eyes shifting uneasily between the clan second and Angela.

“And they’ve sent him to kill Egon Pax,” Lexington added frowning at Brooklyn. The beaked male stared at each of his two rookery brothers looking betrayed.

“Egon Pax?” Demona repeated sounded confused.

“Lavtonia,” Kendra spoke up, “he managed to get the warring sides to declare a cease fire. Something no one thought could be done. He’s in town this week to speak to the United Nations.”

“We do need to get moving,” Xanatos interrupted, “Goliath has already been sent to intercept President Pax on his way back to his hotel. We need to stop him before he does.”
Demona and Kendra shared a look, “Very well,” the scarlet haired gargoyle replied, she gave Xanatos a narrow-eyed look, “but you will explain later who imprisoned them and what connection you have with this group.” She didn’t give him or Brooklyn a chance to say anything before turning and leaping off the Nightstone building, Kendra following immediately behind her.

“She came because I asked her to come help me find you and the others,” Angela hissed angrily at Brooklyn, “and you just had to act like a jerk,” before following behind her mother completely ignoring his surprised exclamation. She had to focus on the air currents to catch up to the Demona and Kendra, right now she didn’t care what the other clan members were doing, she felt horribly embarrassed about how Brooklyn had acted toward her mother after everything Demona had done to help her and the clan tonight.

“There,” Demona pointed toward the roof of a building in the distance ahead of them. “I’m seeing something that’s big enough to be a large gargoyle or a very large human. Since it’s the only living thing of the right size in this area, I suspect its Goliath.”

Angela looked toward where Demona was pointing; the building was too far away for her to discern anything just yet. She turned her attention back to her mother, Angela didn’t know what spell Demona was using to see living things, but it was obviously the same one she had been using to find the clan and to keep an eye out for the humans’ movements. Her mother seemed to have gained several new spells lately.

“It is Goliath,” Kendra’s tone was relieved, “and it looks like he’s watching the traffic on the street below so he probably hasn’t gone after Pax yet.”

“We can’t let him get near this Egon Pax,” Demona said as they approached the building, “It will be impossible to persuade humans that gargoyles aren’t monsters if Goliath attacks and kills him in front of everyone.” She pointed at the busy street below that the mind-controlled male was watching so intently.

“I have to question why they’re even using him,” Kendra commented as they gained altitude so they could land on the roof of the building, which was now right in front of them, “wouldn’t it have been simpler just to hire an assassin if they only wanted Pax killed? Whoever laid that trap wants more than just this,” she said as she landed, leaving neither Demona nor Angela any time to respond to her thought-provoking comment. “Goliath,” she called out commandingly to the large male near the roof’s edge.

With a growl the large male whirled around, his eyes glowing brightly white, “Must destroy Egon Pax,” the lavender male growled, sounding as if he were talking to himself.

Angela wasn’t certain that her father was even seeing them, “Father?” she called out taking a step toward him.

“Careful Angela,” Demona held an arm out blocking her way, “I’m not certain he knows we are really here.”

“Angela?” Goliath sounded confused.

“Yes, father I’m here,” she pressed against her mother’s arm and reluctantly the scarlet haired gargoyle let her pass thought she kept pace with her.

“No,” he howled, sounding tormented, “they can’t have taken you as well. I will destroy Egon Pax!” he raged turning back to the roof’s edge.
“No, you won’t, because I won’t let you,” Kendra said challengingly.

“You cannot stop me!” Goliath whirled back around to face her, “I will destroy him for killing my clan.”

“We aren’t dead,” Lexington came running forward, the rest of the clan and Xanatos having arrived a few seconds ago. Broadway and a limping Brooklyn followed him.

“Goliath we aren’t dead, we’re right here,” Broadway said staring at his clan leader with a confused frown.

“Goliath, we’re fine,” Brooklyn added his reassurance to everyone else’s.

The large lavender male gripped his head in both taloned hands, groaning as if he were in pain, “No!” he growled, “you’re trying to confuse me, Egon Pax must be destroyed!”

“Got anything yet on what’s controlling him?” Kendra asked, glancing over at Demona.

“There is a small chip embedded into his neck, that appears to be what they’re using to control his thoughts.” The scarlet haired gargoyle pointed and Angela followed to where she was indicating, finally seeing something small and rectangular on her father’s neck.

“Can you destroy it?” Kendra asked.

“Not without getting nearer,” Demona replied, sounding frustrated.

“Easy enough,” Kendra said and without any other notice leapt forward ducking gracefully under Goliath’s punch and then leaning to the side to avoid his follow up blow. The lavender male whirled, fast for his size but Kendra was swifter, leaping over his tail and then seizing him from behind in an immobilizing hold, her arms wrapped around his and her hands interlaced behind his neck in one quick move. Her wing hands seized the larger male’s wings and pulled them back keeping him from using them to buffet her. “Now would be good,” she commented, her voice sounding slightly strained as she struggled to hold him.

Demona darted in, reaching out and touching the chip, Goliath groaned once and then whispered sounding confused, “Demona?”

“Yes, it’s Demona, Goliath,” she said as the chip came off and she took a step back from him and held the device up between her fingers examining it. “I think you can let him go now,” the scarlet haired gargoyle remarked calmly.

The winged were-jaguar didn’t immediately release him, “You do see that your clan is alive and well and standing here with us?” she asked.

“Yes, now let me go,” Goliath said sounding annoyed as he flexed his arms and wings and discovered that he could not easily break her hold on him. Kendra released him stepping back as she did so, the lavender male turned around, an angry look on his face and then he just stared, his jaw dropping slightly in his astonishment. “Kendra Canmore?” he finally said, his disbelief very apparent.

“Funny how everyone’s saying my name like that tonight,” the winged were-jaguar commented to Demona, her blue eyes twinkling in amusement, “you’d think they’ve never seen me before.”

Demona smirked, “They do seem to be rather surprised don’t they,” she sounded smug. She held out the chip to Goliath, “This is what they used to mind control you. The circuitry is fused, it’s harmless
now.” He held out his hand and she dropped the chip into it, “There’s a symbol on it, but I don’t recognize it.”

“The Illuminati,” growled Goliath, “I had thought they had decided to leave us alone.”

“You’ve had dealings with them before then I take it,” Demona commented glancing down at the symbol on the chip in her ex-mate’s hand.

“Yes,” he clenched his hand, destroying the chip. “What did I do?” he asked hesitantly, his tone holding dread.

“Nothing,” Demona was actually the first to answer, “We got to you before you had a chance to do anything.” To Angela’s surprise, her mother’s voice held no superiority or gloating. If anything, she actually sounded understanding, even sympathetic. Of course thought Angela, perhaps that wasn’t surprising considering what Kendra and Puck had said the other night about the spells the Weird Sisters had placed on her mother to control her.

“You did nothing and none of the humans even saw you up here,” Demona crossed over to the edge of the building and looked down at the street for a moment, she turned back to Goliath. “Which is good, because an attack on Egon Pax would have destroyed all the work you and PIT have done to persuade the general populace of the city that you aren’t a threat, and given the Quarrymen the ammunition they need to keep claiming we are monsters.” She glanced over at Kendra, “You’re right, if all they wanted was Egon Pax dead they hardly needed to set a trap for the clan and use that chip on Goliath to make him their assassin, they could have just hired a human one.”

“Like you did just two months ago,” Brooklyn said pointedly.

Demona only glanced over at him briefly, “Exactly,” before turning back to the large lavender male, “so why did they go through all the trouble?”

“Two thoughts come to my mind,” Kendra said, drawing everyone’s attention to her as she walked over to stand beside Demona, “One they wanted to test their chip on a gargoyle to see how well it worked. You would make excellent soldiers or assassins if they could be assured of their control over you. Two, they wanted to destroy the progress the clan has made in getting humans to accept them.” She shrugged, “It’s the why I can’t figure out on the second possibility. Why would they care if people thought you were a threat or not?”

“Hmm,” Goliath rumbled, “Either are disturbing possibilities.”

“If it’s the first, maybe they’ll assume the chip didn’t work well once you got out of their direct control,” offered Kendra optimistically.

“Perhaps,” he agreed, staring at the winged were-jaguar. His eyes narrowed on her, “How do you appear this way?”

Kendra held up the medallion, “The spirit gave me this, it allows me to transform into this form.”

Her father’s eyes widened and Angela knew he had just made the same connection she and Hudson had made when they saw the medallion. His eyes shifted thoughtfully between Kendra and Demona, “Interesting,” he rumbled. He glanced around, taking in Xanatos and Hudson’s presence before turning back to his ex-mate, “What are you, Kendra and Xanatos doing here and where is Elisa?” he asked frowning.

“Xanatos helped me escape,” Broadway explained, “and then we met up with Angela, Demona and Kendra who had helped Lexington and Brooklyn escape.”
Angela took a step forward, lifting her chin slightly, “I asked mother to help because Elisa and Matt are on duty tonight and had to go to investigate a robbery.”

Goliath stared at his daughter for a moment before nodding; he turned his attention back to Demona and Kendra, “Thank you for helping them…,” he hesitated briefly, “and me.”

The scarlet haired gargoyle glanced over at her daughter, “Angela was worried about you, I’m just glad that no one was seriously injured,” her eyes passed over Brooklyn before returning to Goliath. “I’d like more information about these Illuminati.”

“I’d like more information about how you melted the glass in the window, and opened and locked the doors, and were able to see through walls and doors,” Brooklyn looked determined as he limped forward, ignoring Angela’s glowering look at him, “I didn’t see any spell book or hear you say anything,” he asked suspiciously.

“The spirit is teaching me a different way of using magic,” Demona shrugged as if were of no particular import. Turning back to Goliath she said, “Now, what are the Illuminati and if he is a member, why are you trusting him to keep the clan safe during the day instead of turning you over to them?” she pointed a taloned finger at Xanatos.
Monday, December 29th 1997

Very early in the morning – on the way back to Destine Manor, Forest Hills Gardens, Long Island

“She hugged me,” Demona almost sounded as if she didn’t believe it, even though it had happened only a few minutes ago just before they left.

Kendra, who was gliding beside her, looked over at her lover with a warm, gentle smile, “Yes she did, and she looked pretty pleased when you hugged her back.”

“Well of course I did,” Demona said, “She's my daughter and I love her. I don’t know why she looked so surprised afterward.”

“That might have been at how tightly you hugged her,” Kendra teased gently, giving her a fond but amused look.

“Yes, well,” the scarlet haired gargoyle admitted, sounding slightly embarrassed.

Kendra smiled at her mate; it had been heartwarming to watch Angela determinedly cross the distance between her and Demona to hug her mother and tell her that she loved her in front of the clan. The blue-skinned gargoyle had looked surprised for an instant before her expression softened and she had hugged her daughter tightly back, her eyes becoming suspiciously bright. “I love you too my daughter,” Demona had declared ignoring the watching gargoyles, who, all except for Lexington, hadn’t looked thrilled with what was happening. Kendra was certain she had heard a whosh of exhaled breath from Angela as her mother’s arms tightened even more around the lavender colored female before finally releasing the younger gargoyle.
“Do you think she noticed?” Demona suddenly asked.

Kendra glanced over at her; she was fairly confident that she knew what her mate was referring to. “I think she noticed something. She was giving us some questioning looks as we glided over to Nightstone after seeing me holding you. She’s got to get past believing in Goliath’s certainty that it isn’t possible for you to be attracted to me first though.”

“Humph,” Demona made a scornfully dismissive noise that had Kendra chuckling in response. Changing the subject, Demona observed, “At least Brooklyn didn’t attack me, nor did he spend the entire time glowering at me. That is an improvement,” she said wryly.

“He acted about the way I thought he would,” Kendra agreed with a shake of her head, “He’s not quite ready to give up his grudge.”

Demona sighed resignedly, “Hopefully in time he will realize that I’m not going to attack the clan again.” She glanced down at the streets passing below them, checking where exactly they were in their journey home before glancing back over at her mate and asking curiously, “What do you think about this Illuminati society?”

“That they sound dangerous, and too much for you and I to handle by ourselves,” Kendra stated, meeting her gaze and looking quite serious, “I think we should bring Wayne and the others in on this.” In response to Demona’s surprised look, she commented, her tone clearly disapproving, “They’ve infiltrated the government to promote their own interests and to manipulate it to give themselves more power and influence.”

Demona first looked taken aback by the comment and then thoughtful, “The same charge could be leveled against us,” she remarked, thinking of Wayne and undoubtedly other high placed chosen. Wayne’s efforts to make sure her fake human identity would hold up under any scrutiny definitely weren’t legal

“Yes, but you don’t see us assassinating people so we can sell more weapons and make more money to buy more power while not giving a shit how many people are going to die in the process,” Kendra pointed out tersely.

“True,” Demona agreed, with a sideways look at her mate. It was clear that the Illuminati’s self-serving purpose and lack of morals greatly offended Kendra. “Broadway mentioned Bluestone before Goliath could stop him, I think we should plan to have a talk with Elisa’s partner, see what he’s willing to tell us about them.”

“That sounds like a good idea,” the were-jaguar commented, looking thoughtful. “The way Broadway said what he did; I’d guess that Detective Bluestone isn’t a fan of the organization even though he’s a member. He might be willing to give us names we can turn over to Wayne for investigation.” Kendra continued on a slightly different topic, “Xanatos was rather closed mouthed considering how high up in the organization he seems to be, and the look on his face when I asked him what would happen if he asked for help and then later refused to do whatever they asked in return because he objected was rather interesting.”

“He’s wary of them, perhaps even slightly afraid,” Demona had seen the same signs of uneasiness in Xanatos’ dark eyes. “He probably got involved with them a few years ago when all he wanted was more wealth and power. Now that he has a family and seems intent on reforming his image, he doesn’t dare leave.”

“Did you believe him when he said he was there for a meeting and heard about the gargoyle’s capture?” Kendra asked as they left Manhattan and started gliding over the river that separated the
“No,” Demona responded immediately, “I think he knew something about it before it happened and was taken by surprise when they actually got caught. Then he had to act to free them and prevent Goliath from killing that human. With the gargoyles living at the castle, he has almost as much to lose as they do from renewed public hysteria.” Kendra gave her an inquiring look, so Demona explained further, “When the public first realized that the clan actually existed and rumors spread that they lived in the castle, the Xanatos’ couldn’t go out without reporters following them around and their limousine was even attacked one night by a mob of humans. He wouldn’t want to risk that happening again.”

“Hmm,” Kendra didn’t exactly sound reassured, “that’s something at least.”

“It doesn’t exactly make me happy either,” Demona admitted, “but I know Goliath, and he won’t budge from that castle unless there’s no other choice,” she said sourly. She dipped her right wing just a bit to correct her flight path; they were just a few minutes away from home now.

“We need more information on them to determine how much of a threat they are, and we need to be extra cautious in how we investigate them,” the winged were-jaguar remarked grimly. “I’d rather they never notice that it’s occurring if at all possible.”

“That’s probably a very good idea,” Demona concurred, thinking of the wariness in Xanatos’ eyes. This was obviously not a group to cross lightly if he didn’t dare to cross them. He usually thought such situations were challenges to be overcome, not threats to be avoided.

Very early in the morning – Dining Hall, Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan

“Jalapena,” Elisa couldn’t help but swear as Goliath finished the tale of their rescue. “So Demona and Kendra know that the Illuminati exist, and Demona is being taught some new type of magic by these spirits that allows her to manipulate objects and matter.”

“Mother helped the clan escape and stopped father from killing that human,” Angela countered defensively, looking at Elisa with a betrayed and hurt expression.

Elisa looked over at the younger female, catching sight of Goliath’s concerned glance at his daughter as she did so. The detective’s expression softened, “I’m not saying that she didn’t Angela, I’m just thinking of what might happen if she decides to go after the Illuminati.” Elisa left unsaid her worries of how the thousand-year-old gargoyle might use her new magical abilities. Demona was a firm believer in the adage that information was power and though Elisa didn’t doubt anymore that the scarlet haired gargoyle had changed, in the past Demona had never been one to pass up an opportunity to get information about anyone she felt was an enemy or could be one in the future. “Stirring them up could be a hornets’ nest that could get all of us stung.”

Angela frowned in concern, “She’s already waiting for the Weird Sisters to attack and taking on the Quarrymen to protect us,” the lavender female stated looking more worried the longer she considered the possibility. “The Illuminati are even more dangerous than the Quarrymen are,” she looked over at her father, “maybe I can talk to her.”

“I will contact her and reassure her it has been two years since their last attempt and it is likely they will not make another attempt against us anytime soon,” Goliath rumbled and Elisa wasn’t the only one staring at him in complete astonishment after he finished. “Perhaps I can persuade her of the danger to us if she were to provoke them into an attack.” He didn’t need to specify that he actually
meant the danger to Angela if Demona were to provoke them into more attempts to capture the clan. The lavender female blushed; she knew very well what her father actually meant.

“That’s a good idea, Demona’s obviously more concerned with the entire clan’s safety now than she has been in a very long time,” Hudson commented, sounding thoughtful. Elisa couldn’t help but glance over at Brooklyn; she knew the older gargoyles was referring to Demona’s disabling of the heating and cooling elements in the walls of the room where the beaked male had been imprisoned. The clan second had looked confused and baffled when he had learned that Demona had been the reason that the walls had quit heating up and freezing almost a minute before he was freed. Hudson added, “And she’s got that young human, Robert, living with her now as well.”

“True,” remarked Goliath thoughtfully, “yet another reason for her to be cautious about drawing their attention.”

“So, we know for certain now that Kendra Canmore can transform into a were-jaguar with wings,” Xanatos remarked to Owen and his wife as the three of them walked into the dining room from the hallway. He had gone to look in on his sleeping son about twenty minutes ago; evidently, he had also taken the time to fill Fox and Owen in on the events of the night as well.

“Mother can fly,” Angela observed. Xanatos, Fox and Owen turned their attention toward her, as did the clan and Elisa.

“Kendra needs wings to protect Demona because she can fly. The humans didn’t, so the were-jaguar didn’t have them,” David Xanatos picked up on her meaning immediately.

“A logical conclusion,” Owen observed, nodding approvingly toward the lavender female gargoyles.

“So, Kendra is Demona’s protector?” Broadway asked, sounding uncertain.

“Demona was letting her take the lead,” Hudson commented, “I noticed that immediately because it surprised me.”

“I noticed that as well,” Angela added her voice to the clan elders, “Mother mostly used her magic.”

“Aye, she let Kendra handle the fighting,” the elder male remarked.

Elisa stared at him, that didn’t seem much like Demona at all…except, her mind reminded her, that Kendra had acted like a bodyguard the night the Quarrymen had attacked them coming out of the theater. This was not the first time that Demona had let Kendra take the lead, which implied that the human woman was the better fighter of the two of them. That didn’t really jive with Kendra’s comment before the kidnapping that Demona was the more skilled fighter.

“Intriguing,” Owen commented thoughtfully, drawing everyone’s attention.

“What is?” Xanatos asked him, his dark eyes narrowing on the blonde man. The clan also eyed him curiously wondering what had caught the fey’s attention.

“Kendra Canmore’s mother is from Brazil in South America,” Owen stated. “The feys encounter with the were-jaguar was in what is now modern-day Mexico, which is just north of Brazil in South America. There are several Mayan and Aztec legends of were-jaguar warrior shamans; they were reputed to be exceptionally skilled warriors and battle leaders.” He glanced over at the confused gargoyles and helpfully added, “The Mayans and Aztecs were native tribes that lived in South America.”

“You think they’re related,” Fox commented to the blonde man, “that the legends are referring to
humans that were given the power to transform like Kendra Canmore.”

Lexington questioned, “So the amulet Kendra was wearing could have been passed down from protector to protector?” Elisa noticed Owen grimacing at the way the web-winged gargoyle phrased his question, obviously, the idea of humans having protectors against the fey didn’t thrill him.

“I wondered about that,” Angela added, “if she were the first to use it.”

“Maybe she inherited it from her mother,” Broadway offered, sounding intrigued with the idea.

“Maybe, but we don’t know, this is all conjecture,” Elisa felt duty bound to point out that they had no evidence backing up their theories as interesting as they sounded.

“True we do not know,” Goliath rumbled discontentedly, “and Kendra Canmore and Demona are not being very forthcoming about sharing such information with us.” His expression turned thoughtful, “But perhaps there is someone who will answer our questions.”

_Early in the morning – Library, Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan_

The library was definitely turning into their private discussion room, Elisa mused as she and Goliath walked into the quiet room with its book filled shelves lining the walls. “Macbeth?” she questioned as soon as he stopped and turned around to face her.

“Mmm,” he rumbled, “It occurs to me that Macbeth knows more than he revealed to us.”

Elisa inclined her head, that sounded reasonable, “He and Demona did talk for a long time that day before you went to visit him. Time enough for them to agree what to tell the clan and what not to mention.”

Goliath nodded, “What he told us that night was so surprising, and he was so furious at what the Weird Sisters had done, that I decided we should leave immediately after he threatened us if we cooperated with them again. Now I have questions for him.”

He stared off into space, his expression a strange mixture of anger and frustration, “And I wish to speak with him about what happened tonight.” The lavender male clenched his fists, his body tense with whatever emotion was tormenting him, “Tonight has given me an appreciation of how it feels to be compelled to do something against one’s will, something against one’s own nature.” He focused on Elisa, “I would have killed that human if Demona and Kendra Canmore had not stopped me and destroyed the mind control chip.” His eyes looked haunted and Elisa crossed the few feet of space between them to put a comforting hand on his muscular forearm. “Demona did not gloat,” he said quietly, “she did not say anything about me being too weak to fight them. When she looked at me her eyes held only sympathy and understanding as she informed me that they had stopped me before I did anything.”

“She does have some experience with it, and I’m not just referring to what happened on Avalon,” Elisa commented softly, thinking of all they had learned the Weird Sister’s had done to Demona in the past few weeks. A regretful expression crossed the tall lavender male’s face as he nodded in agreement. The dark-haired woman stared at him, wondering exactly what his feelings were toward his ex-mate now. She really hoped that he wasn’t thinking about trying to win Demona back, because she suspected that Kendra Canmore might have some rather strong objections to any such attempt.

Elisa thought Goliath felt more than just friendship for her, she knew she felt more than that for him,
but neither of them had spoken about it, or about the kiss she had given him after the night of the Hunter’s Moon. Now that this was going on with Demona, Elisa wasn’t sure if Goliath felt the same way about her anymore. If it took so little to have him hoping that he and Demona could become mates again, what did it say about the strength of his feelings for her? Not feeling confident enough to bring up the topic absorbing her thoughts, she asked instead, “What about the Illuminati?” They needed to discuss the possibility that the secretive organization might attempt to capture the clan again, no matter what Goliath had claimed in front of the others.

“I had thought they were not longer a threat to us,” he rumbled unhappily, “it was a trap,” now he looked angry and embarrassed.

“Do you really think they won’t attack again soon?”

He grimaced, “I do not know,” he admitted, sounding reluctant, “the two possible motivations for their actions that Kendra Canmore mentioned are troubling.”

Elisa made a small noise of agreement, “I hate to say it but she’s right you would make good soldiers or assassins for them to use.” She grimaced unhappily, as the clan leader shuddered at the thought, she didn’t blame him it wasn’t a pleasant idea at all. She frowned, thinking of the other thing the woman had brought up, “As for the Quarrymen, we know they have funding from somewhere, but I can’t see a reason for the Illuminati to be the source of it. I just don’t see what they would get out of persuading everyone you’re a threat…” her voice trailed off and she shook her head with a frown, it just didn’t make sense for such a powerful organization to care about whether the clan was accepted by the city’s human population.

Early evening – Nightstone Unlimited HQ, Lower East Side Manhattan

Dominique glanced at her watch as she looked up from her computer monitor, it was past five o’clock and Macbeth had probably already picked up Robert for their night out together. She rolled her head from side to side trying to relieve some of the tension in her neck from sitting in one position for too long as she worked.

There was a knock at her door, “Enter,” she called out wondering curiously if Candice was still here or if it were Margaret or Kendra. She smiled warmly as her mate entered the room and closed the door behind her.

The blue-eyed woman said, “How much longer do you need to work tonight?”

The redhead glanced at her computer screen, “Not very long, I just need to finish some notes.” She rolled her head once again, first to the right and then to the left.

“Neck stiff?”

“Just a little,” Dominique said with a hopeful glance, Kendra gave such wonderful neck rubs.

The black-haired woman chuckled softly as she came around the desk to stand behind her. “What did you ever do without me?” she asked as her hands started kneading the stiff muscles in the redhead’s neck and shoulders, pressing in gently with her thumbs and squeezing the tense muscles between palm and fingers.

“Snapped at my employees even more than usual and cursed the weakness of my human form,” Dominique admitted sheepishly as she bent her head forward and groaned in appreciation of how good Kendra’s massage felt. She heard her mate laugh softly once again and then her hair was
brushed aside and soft lips pressed against the nape of her neck. This time her soft moan held a slightly different note and she felt Kendra still behind her for a second before her mate’s lips returned this time brushing ever so lightly along the sensitive skin of her neck.

“Kendra,” Dominique whispered uncertainly glancing toward the door.

“Candice is already gone for the night,” the black-haired woman breathed out huskily her warm breath stirring the sensitive hairs on the back of Dominique’s neck. “And I told Gregory to not wait around any longer that I would take you home.” The redhead’s eyes fluttered closed at the feel and her hands gripped the edge of her desk as she felt her body respond to Kendra’s tone and closeness. She sensed movement and opened her eyes in time to see an olive toned hand press underneath her desk; there was the audible click of the office door locking.

“Kendra,” Dominique breathed out, not knowing herself if she were protesting or pleading. When the blue-eyed woman turned her chair around and claimed the redhead’s lips in a possessive kiss Dominique threaded her hand through her mate’s silky hair and pulled her closer.

“Rachael’s at home,” Kendra paused breath against her lips, “but the next room is soundproof enough for you to make as much noise as I know you’ve been holding back lately.” The blue-eyed woman nipped gently at her bottom lip sending a shiver of arousal through the redhead’s body before trailing kisses across her jaw toward her ear.

Dominique moaned, tilting her head to give her mate better access to her neck, she had been trying to be quiet during their lovemaking with both Rachael and Robert still in the house. “I love you my mate,” Kendra whispered once she reached her ear, “let me love you,” her lips began brushing delicately along the outside of the redhead’s ear.

“Oh yes,” Dominique breathed out.

*Early evening – Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan*

“So, do you agree that my mother made the charm with the magic the spirits are teaching her as she said?” Angela asked Owen, her tone quite firm.

“Yes, I do,” the blonde man replied stiffly.

“Then may I have my mother’s Solstice gift,” her tone clearly indicated that she thought it was well past time that she should have been given it.

“It is in the vault,” Owen said after a moment’s consideration, “I’ll have to get it for you.”

The lavender female looked triumphant, “I’ll go with you.”

Ten minutes later, Angela looked down at the golden dragon charm where it rested on her chest with satisfaction. Her mother’s Solstice gift was beautiful, and knowing that Demona had taken the time to make it for her made it even more special to Angela. She took a wary look around as she crossed the main hall. She had second patrol later, but until then she really didn’t want Brooklyn or her father to notice that she was wearing her mother’s gift. It was too early for the first patrol to have left, and Brooklyn would look at her like she was crazy and probably follow her around in case she started doing something strange like shutting down the castle’s defenses for her mother to attack. Goliath, who was leading the second patrol, would frown and insist that Owen should have cleared it with him first. Angela really didn’t want to listen to either one of them right now.
From the main hall, she took the spiral staircase leading up into the western tower, her favorite place to get away from the rest of the clan and look out over the city. She had more than a few things to think about tonight, Angela thought as she settled into her favorite window casement. She knew the clan was concerned about what Demona was able to do with her new magic, and she wasn’t unconcerned herself, but right now her thoughts were more focused on what she had seen before her mother had melted open the glass of the window and afterward as Angela clung to the side of the building. The way Demona had looked tenderly at Kendra Canmore for being concerned about her, the way Kendra Canmore held her mother so close to her as they flew past, and then her mother’s embarrassment when she realized Angela had witnessed the way she and Kendra were flying together.

Angela knew her father and Hudson believed that gayness didn’t exist in the gargoyle race, but what if they were wrong? First, there had been the night they had watched the broadcast of her mother and Kendra Canmore fighting the Quarrymen. After checking to see if Kendra was injured, the way her mother had hugged the human woman had been her first hint that Demona and Kendra were friends. Then there had been the newspaper articles linking her mother’s human persona romantically with Kendra Canmore after they had gone to Nightstone’s Christmas party together. Goliath had completely ignored it, but she had noticed how David Xanatos had taken it as confirmation that he and his wife were right. Third, there was the night she had called her mother and had overheard Macbeth make a comment about Demona needing to mind her own love life and let him mind his. Angela had realized that night that it implied that her mother had a love life, but had dismissed it later because she knew there weren’t any other unattached male gargoyles in the city except for Lexington and Brooklyn, and neither of them would become involved with her mother.

The night that Kendra Canmore came over and talked to the clan, Angela had seen how much a warrior the human woman was and had started to understand how her mother might have overlooked the blue-eyed woman’s humanness to become friends with her. Last night…last night they had discovered that Kendra Canmore was like the were-jaguar Owen had told them about, and evidently her mother’s protector. The question was, was she more than just her mother’s protector? Were the Xanatos’ right and Kendra Canmore was her mother’s new mate?

Angela stared out over the city somewhat blankly, her mind trying to grapple with the strange idea. She wouldn’t have even seriously considered it if it hadn’t been for last night and the look her mother gave Kendra. That hadn’t been a look one gave a friend, or even a clan sister. She cared for her rookery brothers and sisters, but she wouldn’t look at any of them in such a…loving way. And the way Kendra held her mother, even Goliath hadn’t carried Elisa that way, at least not that she had ever seen, and Angela knew her father and the human woman were attracted to one another.

The lavender female sighed, frustrated, she knew the easiest way to get an answer to her question was to call her mother, but what if she were wrong and Goliath were right? Her mother would… Angela shook her head, she didn’t know what her mother would say, but if she was wrong and they were just friends… Angela cringed; Demona probably wouldn’t be pleased with the suggestion at all.

*Evening – Nightstone Unlimited HQ, Lower East Side Manhattan*

“Change for me,” Kendra whispered as she raked her teeth across the top of one shoulder, pausing to bite down briefly at juncture of shoulder and neck and elicit an aroused gasp of breath from the redhead as her hands stroked up and down Dominique’s now bare back. The redhead’s jacket, shirt and bra were draped across her desk atop the reports she had been working on earlier, and her black heels had been carefully placed underneath the desk.
The gargoyle in human form shuddered, knowing how much better this would feel in her true form, “I need to take the rest of my clothes off.”

“Mmm,” the blue-eyed woman murmured, “stand up love,” as she moved back enough to give Dominique room to rise from her chair.

The redhead ran her fingers through Kendra’s black hair as her mate knelt in front of her brushing kisses across the smooth skin of her stomach as she slowly unzipped and lowered the skirt she was wearing. Dominique steadied herself with one hand on Kendra’s shoulder as she carefully stepped out of it. The black-haired woman folded it in half and then laid it with the other pieces of clothing before turning back to her and nuzzling the sensitive skin of her hip, right above the line of her lacy briefs, a quiet growling purr resonating from between her slightly parted lips. Dominique felt herself grow more aroused at the sound. She loved hearing the various growls and purrs Kendra could make now, and she suspected it was because the jaguar and human spirits within her mate had merged even more.

With deft fingers, the blue-eyed woman carefully undid the redhead’s garters and then rolled each stocking down her legs, pausing frequently to press kisses and brush her lips along the newly exposed cream-colored skin of Dominique’s thighs or trail her fingers down the length of the redhead’s calf. Eventually Dominique was left with only one remaining piece of clothing, lacy black briefs. Kendra rubbed her cheek gently over the soft material, eliciting an indrawn gasp of breath from her mate before finally slipping a finger underneath the material at either hip and dragging the flimsy piece of clothing downward. Before Dominique could step out of the cloth now around her ankles, the blue-eyed woman ran her hands back up the back of the redhead’s legs to her cup her rear and then pressed her lips against the soft red curls she had just uncovered. Kendra inhaled deeply and then made the same growling purring sound she had made earlier.

Dominique arched against the black-haired woman’s mouth, “Kendra,” she pleaded, though she suspected it wouldn’t do much good, as her mate seemed to be in a mood to be both teasing and intense. Not that she really minded that… she thought on a shaky indrawn breath as the blue-eyed woman’s lips moved from where they had been teasing her to her upper thigh and began suckling on the skin there. “Yes,” Dominique hissed, pressing her thigh against Kendra’s mouth and holding her lover to her in silent encouragement. She didn’t know why, but her mate marking her in this way felt so very good. The small pain of the reddened mark on her thigh seemed to radiate into her and Dominique closed her eyes and concentrated on the sensation, feeling desire rise within her hot and swift as Kendra began brushing her lips tenderly over the now sensitized skin. “Kendra,” she pleaded once again.

The possessive sounding growl in response was deeper, slightly louder and Dominique couldn’t help the shudder that ran through her body at the sound. Then the black-haired woman rose from her knees and pulled the redhead into an embrace while claiming her lips in a long deep kiss. “You have too many clothes on,” Dominique whispered when her mate’s lips finally left hers.

“So I do,” Kendra’s tone was an invitation, one that the redhead was only too happy to take. Once the last piece of the black-haired woman’s clothing had joined the pile on top of Dominique’s desk, Kendra lifted her in her strong arms and carried the redhead into the secret room behind her office.

Evening – Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan

Angela growled softly, she had thought and thought again about what she had seen, and then thought more about her father and Hudson’s staunch insistence that such a thing was simply impossible. Perhaps a glide would clear her mind; she still had a few hours before her patrol. It only
took her a few moments to open the window, slip through it and then close it again from the outside before leaping off the tower and catching the night air with her wings.

As she flew over the city below, her altitude gradually decreasing from the castle’s height, the lavender female thought about the way Kendra had been holding her mother the night before. Angela could think of no reason why, even if Demona had needed Kendra’s support as she was concentrating on closing the window, that her mother would have needed to be carried away from the building. No reason except for her mother had wanted Kendra to hold her, which would definitely explain the way her mother had acted after she realized that Angela had seen them.

The lavender female frowned; there could be other explanations for their behavior, even if she couldn’t think of what those reasons could be right now. She glanced down, noticing that she was now gliding over Central Park. Well even if it wasn’t her patrol time there was no reason why not to keep an ear out for any trouble, Angela thought as she dove and then leveled out to glide above the trees. She would hate to find out there had been a mugging or even worse a rape that had occurred because she wasn’t paying attention. She made it all the way to the other side of the park without hearing anything but the sounds of the few animals still active in the cold.

As she angled her wings to gain altitude after gliding low over the park, Angela looked ahead and spotted her mother’s building, Nightstone. She hadn’t really taken the time the night before to really see where her mother spent her time during the day, Angela thought, staring at the building with rising interest. She might even be able to figure out which of the offices her mother worked within, if Demona were anything like Xanatos, it would be near the top of the building and be one of the windowed rooms. A quick glide around the building wouldn’t take much time, Angela reassured herself even as she glanced around to make sure that the current patrol wasn’t anywhere nearby to see her exploring this particular building. She could imagine what Brooklyn would say about her interest in Demona’s company and the fact that she was wearing her mother’s Solstice gift.

Evening – Secret Room, Nightstone Unlimited HQ, Lower East Side Manhattan

Demona had no sooner taken a quick look over herself and flexed her wings after her transformation than her mate’s warm body pressed up against her back and Kendra’s arms wrapped around the redhead’s slender waist while her lips trailed up the blue-skinned gargoyle’s neck toward her ear. Demona arched back against the black haired woman, and tilted her head to the side to give Kendra’s lips better access. Thankfully, the change from human to gargoyle barely hurt at all, so it did not take very long at all for the caressing hands on her breasts and the lips and teeth nibbling and brushing along her neck and ear to have Demona in the same state of arousal that she had been in before her transformation.

As much as she loved what Kendra was doing to her, Demona wanted to hold and wrap her wings around her mate for a little while. She carefully grasped her lover’s hands and pulled them away long enough for her to turn around and wrap first her arms and then her wings around the human woman.

“Mmm,” Kendra murmured in appreciation. “I hope this never feels any less wonderful to me, not even when it’s the hundredth or thousandth time,” she commented with a pleased smile.

“So do I,” agreed Demona pulling the black haired woman tighter against her, and nuzzling her neck. The flame-haired gargoyle drew in a deep breath of her lover’s uniquely musky scent.

“So I need to use more or a different deodorant?” Kendra asked, amusement clear in her tone, “You’ve been sniffing at me a lot recently.”
“No, I just love how you smell,” Demona admitted, lifting her head from Kendra’s neck and looking into her blue eyes.

The black-haired woman grinned, “You do?”

“Yes, I do,” the statement was made with quiet sincerity.

“That’s good,” Kendra replied softly, “because I’m rather partial to how you smell as well.” the black haired woman tilted her head and nuzzled at the blue skin of the gargoyle’s shoulder before quite deliberately biting down firmly on it long enough to almost cause Demona’s knees to buckle at the almost mating bite. The gargoyles whimpered unabashedly as Kendra released her and brushed her lips softly over the small reddened area. “Especially at certain times,” the black-haired woman whispered her tone deeper as she drew in a second deep breath. Kendra growled softly and her hands moved from Demona’s waist up her back to gently begin caressing her wing joints.

“Oh yes,” Demona whispered as her mate began kissing her way down across her chest. “Kendra,” she cried out softly as the delicious torment began and she was torn between arching into the sweet caresses along her back or the warm mouth on her breast.

---

**Evening – Outside Nightstone Unlimited HQ, Lower East Side Manhattan**

Angela’s eyes widened as she noticed the ledge running around the outside of approximately half the western side of the top floor of her mother’s building. She had already flown around the other sides, so she knew this was the only place where there was a ledge such as this on the entire building. It was about a foot wide and ran along the outside of only two rooms from what Angela could discern from one fast glide around that side of the building.

She tilted her wings and came back around, this time landing on the roof as she had the night before. Angela crossed over to the west side of the building and cautiously looked down. Lights shone brightly from one of the rooms and from what she could see from this angle, the lavender female thought it might be an office. No lights were on at all in the large room next to it with the curved window that protruded outward, and with the distortion of the thick glass, Angela couldn’t see into the dark room at all. The lavender female went over to the corner of the building and carefully lowered herself over the roof’s edge. She made her way down the side of the building and then paused, hanging from the side of the building by her talons, as she realized from the marks in the concrete that she was hardly the first gargoyle to take this route.

“I knew it,” she whispered to herself, the ledge only made sense if her mother used it to get into and out of the building, but how did she open the window? A small keypad set in the concrete answered that question when Angela stepped carefully down onto the ledge. Cautiously, because she wasn’t quite certain that this was her mother’s office or that there might not be someone else in it if it were; the lavender female peered through the glass into the well-lit room on the other side.

Lushly green plants leaves obscured the rest of the office from her sight. Angela frowned; she hadn’t realized the plants she had seen from above were so tall. Still they offered excellent camouflage incase someone was in the office, thought Angela, as she peered through different open spots between the plant leaves until she was sure there was no one in the office. She moved further along the ledge until she was past the row of potted plants on the interior side of the window and looked inside. She hadn’t really realized her mother liked plants so much, Angela thought as she looked into the office and noticed that besides the plants at the window there was another one by the desk and two more large potted trees bracketing a short couch along one wall of the office.
Her gaze focused upon the large desk that dominated the room, besides a computer monitor like the one Xanatos had in his office, there were papers and folders and piled on top of those, red and black clothing. What looked like a pair of black slacks, were hanging on the back of the chair. Angela frowned, had her mother perhaps changed into her night clothes and left her human clothing here and gone gliding? She turned around and looked over the city, she hadn’t seen any other gargoyles earlier and she didn’t see any around now.

She turned back toward the office, her gaze sweeping over it again, searching for some clue as to her mother’s whereabouts. A small piece of lacy black material on the floor behind the desk caught her attention and she stared at it, tying to make out exactly what it might be. Her eyes widened slightly and she flushed as she finally realized what she was looking at, human female underwear. Well neither Demona nor Kendra were here, but there was still the room next to her mother’s office.

Evening – Secret Room, Nightstone Unlimited HQ, Lower East Side Manhattan

“Oh Kendra,” Demona’s legs felt shaky as her kneeling mate continued to tease her with her mouth and tongue without actually touching her where she ached to be touched most, “I can’t stand much longer,” she panted.

The black-haired woman pulled away, “Give me a second,” she murmured. Demona watched curiously as her mate bounded up to the second level, pulled the cushions off the couch and chair there and then quickly returned with them stacked in her arms. The raised area of the floor bordering the large curved window was right behind them, and Kendra tossed the cushions in a row on the floor, “It’s not as nice as our bed at home, but I think it will do.”

Demona smiled, the floor would have been fine if hard, but her mate was right this would be much more comfortable.

Evening – Outside Nightstone Unlimited HQ, Lower East Side Manhattan

Angela crouched down, pressed herself against the concrete side of the building and remained motionless, her heart beating slightly fast as she stared into the curved window of the room next to Demona’s office. She had thought there was no one in the room, but only a few seconds before what looked like seat cushions landed on the floor next to the window startling her. In the next instant, her eyes widened as her mother laid down upon the cushions, her distinctive red hair brilliant against the grey leather covering them. Her mother was here but…Angela stared in shock as another figure appeared, she didn’t have to see the human woman’s blue eyes to recognize the athletic build, black hair and olive toned skin of Kendra Canmore. The human woman’s hands were braced on either side of her mother’s shoulders and then the black-haired woman leaned down and their lips met in a decidedly unsisterly kiss. Neither one was wearing any clothing, and her mother’s hands upon the human’ woman’s waist were not pushing her away.

It was one thing to suspect and another to have one’s suspicions confirmed in a completely unmistakable way. Angela stared unmoving at the couple for a long moment her mind grappling with the fact that her mother had a human lover, a human lover that was a woman. It was almost unthinkable except for the evidence literally in front of her eyes. Demona’s wings moved, startling Angela as they wrapped around the human woman now lying on top of the azure blue gargoyle, pulling her even closer. The lavender female turned her head, blushing profusely, and began backing away until she was certain that she could no longer look into the room. She flushed even more, embarrassed that she had actually stared at her mother and her new mate as they were mating for
several seconds because she couldn’t believe what she was seeing.

David and Fox Xanatos had been right all along, and her father and Hudson were wrong. Her mother was with Kendra Canmore and apparently had been ever since they both returned from Canada, or perhaps even before. Angela shook her head bemused at the thought that had passed through it; surely not, her mother had only known the human woman for a week or so before they had been kidnapped by the Quarrymen.

A slight sound caught her attention and Angela frowned listening, in the next moment, her expression clearly showing her shock and embarrassment, she turned and leapt hastily from the building her wings opening and glided away as if someone were chasing after her. Angela knew she had to be blushing more than she had ever blushed in her entire life, she felt horribly embarrassed that she had overheard what she had heard. Who would have thought that the thick glass in the window would have picked up her mother’s voice so well? She just wished she could unhear what she had heard too clearly before she had left, “Kendra, my love, my mate, I need you so much, take me, claim me.” The words were shocking enough, but even more shocking had been her mother’s pleading tone and the depth of emotion with which she spoke leaving her daughter in no doubt that she meant every word.

Evening - Macbeth’s Castle, North of Manhattan Island, New York

“Hmm,” Macbeth stroked his beard as he contemplated the chessboard between him and Robert, “not a bad move at all.” The curly haired young man’s face brightened at the praise and then he frowned in consternation as the older man moved one of his rooks to block Robert’s queen. While Robert examined the board and figured out his next move, Macbeth studied him.

The former king of Scotland had bluntly asked Demona why she was so intent on throwing the two of them together. Her answer had surprised him. Robert needed a male elder to look up to, someone to guide him in the proper ways of being a man in human society. Now that he wasn’t obsessed with finding and killing her, Demona had smirked at him as she said it; she thought he was the perfect choice to be that role model. Even though he was certain that Demona knew very few males well enough to ask them to take the boy under their wing, Macbeth was flattered that she thought so well of him.

The sound of the perimeter alarms ringing interrupted Macbeth’s thoughts, “Come with me,” he ordered Robert as he pushed himself away from the table. He would never forgive himself if something happened to the young man, and he didn’t even want to think about what Demona would do to him if so much as one curl on the boy’s head were harmed. She was very protective of Robert, and Macbeth suspected it had quite a lot to do with the young man reminding her of his son. He knew that Demona still anguish at having contributed, however unwillingly, to Luach’s death.

Striding over to the fireplace, Macbeth pressed on one particular brick. The painting above the mantle rotated revealing a small selection of laser rifles and pistols. He grabbed a rifle for himself and a pistol for the young man before closing it again. Turning to Robert, he showed him the pistol. “This is the safety,” he showed the young man the slider on the weapon’s side, its markings clearly indicating that the safety was currently on. “Switch this to safety off and point and fire.” He placed it in Robert’s lap as the young man stared at him, looking shocked, “Do not aim it at anything or anyone you don’t intend to shoot. Now follow me to the control room.”

“Is the sound an alarm?” Robert finally asked as he wheeled his chair down the hallway behind Macbeth.
“The perimeter alarm and I’m not expecting any guests tonight,” the older man said grimly. “Demona knows I have a defense system and would call me before coming over, so it’s not likely her.”

“Goliath,” Macbeth sighed a few minutes later, looking at a monitor that showed the dark night sky above the castle and the distinctive outline of a single male gargoyle gliding just out of the range of the castle’s defenses, but close enough to trigger the sensors. “I guess he has more questions for me.”

“The leader of Demona’s former clan?” Robert asked, watching the monitor curiously.

“Aye, and her ex-mate,” Macbeth answered as he reset the castle’s defenses to ignore Goliath’s approach.

Robert nodded his expression thoughtful, “She doesn’t talk much about the clan except for Lexington and Angela.”

“Not surprising,” Macbeth commented, thinking of all the things Demona had done to the clan over the years because of the Weird Sister’s spells. He hefted his rifle, “Guess I won’t be needing this,” he held out a hand and Robert quickly handed over the pistol the former king had given him. “Speaking of Lexington, I understand you and he are talking to each other by email,” the older man said as they left the castle’s control room.

“We are,” the young man’s tone turned more enthusiastic, “he knows a lot about computers and robotics, and he even has a lot of the same computer games as I do.”

“That’s good, you and he aren’t that far apart in age,” Macbeth commented as they made their way back to the living room.

“I’d like to meet him someday,” Robert confided as they walked back into the room and the young man’s grey eyes widened as he saw they were no longer alone.

Macbeth glanced over at the large lavender colored gargoyle now standing in the middle of the room, “I’m sure that could be arranged,” he commented. “Goliath,” he greeted the Manhattan clan leader, who was eyeing the weapons in his hands warily. “I wasn’t certain who was coming calling,” Macbeth explained as he put the weapons away.

“I did not mean to alarm you,” the big male rumbled, turning his attention from Macbeth to the younger human in the wheelchair behind him.

Macbeth shrugged, “Just being cautious.” He turned away from the fireplace as the hidden weapons cache rotated and recessed into the wall, hiding behind the innocent looking landscape painting once again. “Goliath meet Robert McKenzie,” he introduced his young guest.

The young man wheeled his chair forward until he was only a few feet away from the big lavender male. “Pleased to meet you,” Robert said, craning his neck to meet the seven-foot tall gargoyle’s gaze and politely holding his hand out.

A brief expression of surprise crossed Goliath’s face before he carefully grasped the young human’s hand in his own and shook it, “I am pleased to meet you as well Robert.”

Macbeth cleared his throat, “What did you need Goliath,” he asked bluntly.

Macbeth followed Goliath’s gaze as the big lavender male glanced uncertainly toward the younger man in the wheelchair. “Somehow I feel there’s not anything you could ask that would surprise Robert,” he commented dryly.
A red tinge colored the younger man’s cheeks as he smiled and quietly agreed, “Probably not.”

The lavender male stared at Robert appraisingly for a few seconds, “Very well,” he finally rumbled, turning his attention to the former king. “I have questions about these spirits that broke the Weird Sisters spells upon you and Demona,” he hesitated a moment before adding, “and I wish to know why she seems so different now even from how she was long ago.”

“Mmm,” Macbeth stared at him for a moment, “I suspect last night has something to do with your being here as well.”

“She spoke with you about it,” Goliath’s eyes narrowed, he didn’t look pleased.

“Demona wanted to know if I had heard anything about a secret organization called the Illuminati,” Macbeth replied. “I told her what I knew. That I first heard of them several hundred years ago and that everything I’d heard since indicated they were very powerful, very dangerous and definitely not to be trifled with.”

The annoyed expression on the lavender male’s face shifted into a more thoughtful one, “I hope that she listened to you. Even Xanatos is wary of provoking them, and the clan cannot afford another enemy at this time. Not with the Quarrymen stirring up the humans of this city against us.”

“She’s aware of that,” Robert commented, causing both Goliath and Macbeth to look over at him in surprise. “She doesn’t want them as an enemy at this time for the same reason.” The younger man’s tone was quiet, but also carried an assurance and confidence that was unexpected considering his age.

Macbeth stared at the young man for a second before grunting out, “Good,” and turning to face Goliath once again. “I don’t remember much about the spirit that showed us the past and revealed how the Weird Sisters had manipulated us,” Macbeth looked lost in memory. “Only that he was noble, kind and compassionate to Demona and I,” he said his voice growing softer as he spoke, “at times he was stern, but even then he was never unkind.”

Goliath stared at Macbeth, surprised by both the description and the emotion evident in the former king’s voice. Out of the corner of his eye the lavender male noticed the younger human male looking at Macbeth, the boy’s expression was gentle and understanding. It reminded Goliath of the clan’s suspicion that all the humans Demona was befriending had also been tormented and saved by the spirits, and the expression he was seeing now on Robert’s face seemed to support that idea. Obviously, this spirit made a strong impression on everyone who met him.

“He had an aura of majesty around him that I have never before felt the like of before,” Macbeth’s next words startled Goliath, who turned his full attention back to the former king, “not even Arthur came close.” Macbeth smiled crookedly as he noted the lavender male’s surprised reaction, “I guess you weren’t expecting me to say anything like that?”

Goliath frowned thoughtfully, and it was a moment before he responded, “I am not certain what I expected to hear,” he finally admitted. “What did this spirit look like?” the lavender male asked curiously.

“Mmm,” Macbeth mused, “I can’t really remember a definite shape, just an indistinct form and my sense of what he was like. Perhaps you should ask Demona,” Macbeth commented, “I know she’s still in frequent contact with him so I’ve no doubt she knows much more about him than I. She seems very fond of him whenever she mentions him, and she’s commented more than once that she trusts him.” The former king met the gargoyle’s dark gaze, “And trust is not something that Demona gives lightly, especially with what we’ve recently learned.”
Goliath had been startled by Macbeth’s description of the spirit, now he was dumfounded by the silver-headed man’s description of his former mate’s attitude toward the spirit. As soon as he got over his surprise, Goliath agreed, “No, I would not imagine so.”

“As for your second question...,” the former king stared at the lavender male for a long moment, his expression quite serious. “Goliath even though Demona and I have learned that certain events in the past were not what we thought at the time, and it’s changed our view of each other and her view of humanity, both of us have still lived for a thousand years.” He sighed unhappily, “If Gruoch were to somehow reappear before me, she would feel as if she didn’t know me any more either.” Macbeth gave Goliath a moment to let that sink in before he continued, “Living as long as we have has changed us Goliath, she’s not the gargoyle you knew anymore just as I’m not the man I was nine hundred years ago. There’s really no way we could be, not with what we’ve experienced, seen, and lived through over the centuries.”

Late Evening – Wyvern Castle atop the Eyrie Building, Upper Manhattan

Angela pushed open the door stared nervously into Lexington’s computer room, as she had suspected the web-winged male was busy typing away at the computer’s keyboard. The green colored male looked up as soon as the door opened, and his taloned fingers paused in their typing, “Angela?” he didn’t exactly sound welcoming.

She stared at him in surprise, “I’m sorry,” she apologized not quite certain why he was acting this way, she didn’t think she had done anything to upset him.

“No, it’s ok,” his tone softened, “just give me a second,” he turned back around to the computer and typed a few lines and then the computer’s screen cleared. He turned back toward her, “What did you need?”

Angela shifted uncomfortably, trying to push the image of her mother with Kendra Canmore away from her mind. She was finding that thinking that her mother might be with another female was quite different from knowing that her mother was with another female. Now she had so many questions and no idea where to find the answers. “You said that you had done some research after we saved those men; I was wondering where you found it.”

“Curious because Kendra Canmore is gay?” Lexington asked, he had already turned back to the keyboard and was typing away at it.

“Yes,” Angela eagerly jumped on the excuse, “especially since she is mother’s friend,” the lavender female fought to keep from blushing. “I just have some questions.” The human woman was much more than that to her mother, but she didn’t want anyone to find out about that, not yet.

The web winged male glanced over at her curiously, “Like what?” When she didn’t immediately answer, he stared at her intently for a moment before explaining, “It will help me know what sites to pull up for you to look at if I know what questions you want answered.”

“Why” Angela answered quietly, “I want to know why someone is gay, what makes them decide that they are instead of being attracted to someone of the opposite gender.”

Lexington’s eyes widened slightly, “Alright,” he turned back to the computer and began typing. After a moment, he said quietly “From what I’ve read you don’t decide to be gay, you’re either born that way or you’re not. The only decision you make is whether you accept that you are or if you try and hide it and pretend to be someone you aren’t.” He pushed away from the desk as a web page
loaded, “This is a good place for you to look at,” and got out of the chair so that she could sit down in it. “There are also some people who are bi-sexual as well,” he commented as she took his place, “they’re attracted to both sexes to one degree or another. I know that Xanatos keeps saying Demona is gay and with Kendra Canmore, but I think he really means that they think she’s bisexual since she was with Goliath and then Thailog.”

That made more sense to Angela than thinking that her mother was gay, she looked at the web page Lexington had chosen PFLAG it declared at the top of the page and then underneath explained the acronym Parents and Friends of Gays and Lesbians. “Gays and lesbians?” she questioned puzzled.

“Gays are homosexual males, lesbians are homosexual females,” the green male explained, “though most people use gay to refer to either, like Kendra did the other night when she told Brooklyn she was gay.”

“Oh,” Angela replied, absently already more interested in the web site than his explanation, especially the link marked ‘Frequently Asked Questions about Gays and Lesbians’. She was uncomfortable exploring the site too much with Lexington watching, but this seemed like an obvious and relatively safe place to look first.

“I was thinking about getting something to snack on before our patrol, would you like something too?” the web winged male asked after a few seconds.

“That would be nice thank you,” Angela replied. She sighed in relief as he left the room. There were other links she wanted to look at, but not with someone else in the room with her.

Thirty minutes later Angela was back up in the tower, she didn’t have very long before second patrol, but she wanted some time and privacy to think over what she had learned. One of the most helpful and reassuring statements she had read was the reminder that that one’s family member or friend was the same person they had been the day before, you just knew more about them and who they were today than you had yesterday. Her mother was still the same gargoyle that had dropped everything to come help her daughter find Goliath, Broadway, Brooklyn and Lexington, and who had looked as if she were about to cry when Angela had told her she loved her in front of Goliath and the others.

Before reading the information on that web site, Angela hadn’t really thought about how difficult it had to be for gay people to acknowledge to themselves that they weren’t attracted to members of the opposite sex, that they were different in that way from almost everyone else around them. The fact that Goliath and Hudson believed that there were no gay gargoyles because they had never heard of one before, implied that it was incredibly rare for a gargoyle to be gay. Demona must be feeling terribly alone right now, wondering if there were any others like her. Kendra at least had the knowledge that there were other gay humans, but her mother didn’t have that reassurance.

Angela had also never considered how frightening it must be to risk rejection by your own clan if they could not accept you. She wondered how it had been for those two men they had rescued that night. Had their father and mother accepted them or had they cast them out because they wanted another male as a mate instead of a female human? Angela knew she didn’t want to be like that. Seeing her mother and Kendra together had been unexpected and terribly embarrassing, but she would have felt almost the same way about stumbling upon her father and Elisa mating as well. Angela knew she would rather that her mother was with a gargoyle male, but she wouldn’t reject her mother for choosing Kendra Canmore. She remembered all too well her mother telling her that she was happy now, and Angela strongly suspected that the human woman who had defended Demona so passionately and loyally to Goliath and Brooklyn was a large part of the reason why.

The PFLAG web site clearly stated that it was not a good idea for her to ask her mother if she was
gay. She would have to wait for Demona to decide to tell her. In the meantime, the only thing she could do was figure out a way to let her mother know that she wouldn’t reject her or think that something was wrong with her for taking Kendra as her mate. Then Angela would hope that her mother would tell her, because she had so many questions for her mother, and the first one she wanted to ask was if Demona had ever loved her father or if she had only chosen him because she thought she had to take a male as a mate.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!