

## Chapter One

I strode along the walkway — the sunset shining down on me with a golden light and seemed to fill my hair with a shimmering radiance. It was almost surreal. The years spent between the initial moment of my soul crossing paths with His; it was the sort of thing you imagine lovers of olde experience, but you — you never expected it to happen to you. And why would it?

You were a broken and abused child — a forgotten and seemingly unloved and unwanted spectacle to many. It was this that drew you with magnetic frequency to the very obscure and fascinating fold by which you encountered the mysterious and philosophical intelligence that had eluded you for so long.

This was what now propelled me forward, and the only name that seemed to sit in the midst of my mind. A name that I held in such fondness that it had become so reverent that often I only regarded it as Him. Because he was the Master of my heart, and he always would be. If only my youthful mind had recognized this, and my naïve heart had seen then what I knew now.

Fate, often described as a cruel and toying mistress, had been just that for Him and me, and yet we were so eerily the same that the masochistic tendency of returning to what burnt us was typically perceived as proof positive of the love we so desperately desired.

In the years that had passed, fifteen to be exact, I had grown. And yet the poised woman I had become definitely had been impacted by the time I spent with him. He had embedded himself into the core fabric of my very existence and gave me a key to unlatching a chain on me I hadn't even realized was in place. I was in his debt, and I now knew that I was in love with him.

I wrung my hands, apprehension filling my flesh with a prickliness that somehow kept me on the edge and moving slowly toward the rendezvous point we had agreed on.

When you are manifesting the possibility of a dream, and the potential of correcting a mistake you made in the arrogance of your early twenties, a moment like this is expected to have some degree of nervousness associated with it. And yet, I had evolved so much that I now carried myself with the very composure that he had instructed me to gain. So long ago, he was courageous enough to face me in all my lashing ways — and my what a tongue-lashing could I give?

I do not envy him — to this day I admit that the words I used at times in his presence out of anger and uncertainty were regretful. However, he was so like me that I am sure the same can be said on his behalf and that is the beauty of a second chance. The realization that what you did before did not carry through to produce the result you truly desired, and reflecting on what you would do should such a thing arise in your life again. I did not anticipate finding myself in this moment, and yet the core of my soul had been praying for it for so long that I moved with a sense of both contentment and fantasy.

Such was so very meshing at the moment that when I came to stand just feet away from the bench, he said he would be at — I found myself in awe — the same sunlight filtering through

his greying blonde locks seemed to give him the radiance of a halo — and I relished the vision as he watched the water before him — still unaware that I had come so close for our meeting. He was every bit of my imagining — and more. A radiant king who I was still in awe of — even as the two of us now stood facing the fourth decade of our lives, and so very much had changed.

