

Storm Warrior (The Grim Series) (23 page)

“Often.” She hoped it didn’t sound crazy, then nearly laughed.

Why am I worried? This is the guy who once told me he was a dog.

“It started in Wales, before I even met you. I’ve dreamed about you most nights since.”

“Among my people, that’s a very serious thing. My mother read dreams, and she always said they bring instruction. What did you see?”

“This. We were together just like this.” She took his work-roughened hand with both of hers, kissed it, and held it between her breasts. “In every dream. I’m not sure what kind of instruction that’s supposed to give us. Maybe just some hope.”

“Do you only

hope

we’ll be together? I’d take it as a powerful sign that we’re meant to be.”

“It’s early yet.”

“Ah, but it’s not the number of days—”

“—that decides the strength of the bond,” she finished. “Yeah, I remember you said that. But it doesn’t mean it’s a good idea to take things any further just yet.”

“What do your instincts say?”

“I’m not talking about instinct, I’m talking about

intellect

. I need to be sensible about this.”

“Aye, of course. You’re a very intelligent woman. But there’s such a thing as thinking overmuch.” He nodded his head at the TV screen, where the credits had run their course and only an image of the shark remained. “The people of Amity Island thought they were being sensible. Sharks couldn’t be here, they said. Sharks don’t behave like this, they said. They wanted proof of it for their minds before they would believe, and until they believed, they refused to act. Many good people were devoured because of it.”

Morgan tried to suppress her smile. “Omigosh, are you actually using

Jaws

as some kind of relationship analogy?”

He simply shrugged. “It wasn’t until Brody followed his instincts instead of his orders that he was able to save the town from the monster. It’s the same with many things in life, including the bond between men and women: instinct often reveals the greater truth.”

Rhys had succeeded in surprising her again. “That’s very wise,” she said. “So I’ll admit that my instincts know what I want. But my head hasn’t decided if it’s good for me yet.”

“You mean if

I’m

good for you.” He leaned over and kissed her, long and deep until she thought she’d drown in the pure bliss of it. Then he rose. “Perhaps you need to try me in order to know,” he grinned. “My thanks for the pizza and the movie.”

Morgan watched him leave the room, then sighed as she heard the back door close. Why had she let him leave? Sometimes being sensible felt an awful lot like being stupid.

“Lucy looks really good. Far better than I expected.”

Rhys looked up to see Morgan in the doorway of the stable. The rising moon highlighted her hair with silver and sharpened her fine features. She almost looked like one of the Fair Ones, except there was genuine warmth in her expression, true feeling in her eyes. But exactly what that feeling was had him puzzled. Something was different, changed. “You did fine work on her,” he said as she approached.

“That was just the beginning. It’s your constant care that’s brought her around. I saw you walking her after supper tonight. She doesn’t seem quite as stiff.”

“The heat is gone from the wounds. She still has pain, but she knows she must move. It’s a very fine balance between moving too much and not enough.” He sensed that Morgan was the one walking a fine balance. She hadn’t come to talk about the horse, that was certain. At her house, she’d admitted she wanted him—but had she made a decision?

She nodded. “I guess we make a pretty good veterinary team then, you and I.”

“I think we would be very good together in all ways,” he countered boldly, daring her to reveal herself.

“I think you’re right.” Without any warning, she stepped into him, but she’d barely begun to slide her arms around his neck before he seized her. Cupping her lush bottom in one hand, he tangled his other hand in her hair and brought her lips to his. Torn between the need to feast and the desire to savor, he explored her mouth thoroughly and was delighted when she held him to her as fiercely as he was holding her.

He nuzzled her ear, alternately kissed and nuzzled his way to her throat, as his hands pushed under her blouse to cup her full breasts and thumb their peaked nipples. His cock had reared up hard to the point of pain, and his control trembled. By all the gods, he was hungry, nay starving, to press her skin against his, to touch and grasp, taste and nip. Ravenous to bury himself deep and hard in all that softness until he was insensible. The urge to take was overwhelming, and he fought to bridle it back as if it were a half-mad warhorse.

Morgan welcomed Rhys's rough palms on her skin, his textured caresses providing a rich sensory overload. She shrugged off her blouse and fought to unbutton his shirt, planting desperate rapid kisses on his chest as she exposed it. Her breasts were tight with arousal and she pressed them against the hard planes of male muscle. Something new was building in her, something primal. She gloried when his strong hands shoved her jeans down her thighs and gripped her bare ass, lifting her until her toes no longer touched the ground. Instinctively she rocked her bottom in the cup of his palms and rubbed her nipples over his chest, wanton and triumphant at the same time. The scents that surrounded her took her back to her dreams, ramped up her arousal until all her senses were electrified and begging for more.

Instantly Rhys responded to her unspoken need, tossing her lightly onto the quilt-covered straw that was his bed. He stripped away her jeans, then stood back as if to admire his handiwork. She should have felt self-conscious, normally would have half-covered herself with her arms and hands. Instead, she welcomed his gaze, reveled in it. She wanted his eyes on her. Suddenly she was inspired to open her legs and circle her fingers in the wetness there. He reeled slightly as if physically punched and quickly skimmed off his own clothes.

Omigod.

Morgan inhaled sharply as he revealed his rampant cock, ran his hand along its length as if brandishing it. "Yes," she breathed. "Mmm, yes."

Rhys knelt at once but didn't give her what she asked for. Instead, Morgan was certain she might die of anticipation as his hot, open-mouthed kisses roamed slowly up the insides of her legs. He nuzzled her inner thighs and pushed her legs wide, breathed on her inner folds. Then ran his tongue along them, in them, up and down, flicking his tongue lightly over her pearl before settling in to feast.

Morgan was wild beneath the onslaught of sensation, knotting her hands in Rhys's hair as he devoured her relentlessly. And when the orgasms burst through her, her screams were both helpless and jubilant, snapping the ropes of his control like weak threads.

He was inside her at once. She was hot and slick and pulsed around his cock like a tightening fist. He pounded into her, faster and faster as she urged him on, higher and higher until the sweet annihilation of release overtook them both.

Exultant, he sank to the quilt-covered straw and gathered Morgan to his heart.

Morgan awakened to the sound of geese overhead. The morning air was cool, and she snuggled deeper under the quilts, nestling back against Rhys, who tightened his arm around her. She breathed in the sweet scent of straw, the warm tang of horse, and sighed contentedly, her entire body still in a kind of languor.

Their lovemaking had been like nothing she'd ever experienced. Earthy and raw, tender and fierce, it had unlocked a depth of passion in her that she hadn't known was there.

It had unlocked her heart as well. Nothing had ever felt more right than being skin to skin with Rhys. Nothing had felt so much like home as being in his arms. She'd never felt such an intense connection in her life. Never imagined it was even possible.

That connection was even more apparent as they reached for each other twice more in the night. It sang in her very veins as he whispered to her in a language she didn't know, yet understood just the same. He was a strong man, but his touch was tempered with a tenderness that utterly disarmed her. And through it all, in his arms she felt the sense of belonging that she'd been missing for a very long time.

She snuggled closer, breathing in his scent, and slid back into sleep for a time until she startled awake and found herself alone. "Rhys?"

"Morning to you,
anwylyd

." His voice came from Lucy's stall, and Morgan sat up to look. There he was on his knees, gloriously naked, as he changed the dressings on the mare's wounded legs.

"Morning—what did you call me?" Morgan ran her fingers through her hair to remove some wisps of straw from it.

"Anwylyd. It means beloved or darling one."

A few days ago she might have protested, but today it sounded good. There was something solid and right about it. There was something solid and right about the defined muscle that covered Rhys's broad frame too, and she admired it openly. He moved slightly, and the early sun through the stall window illuminated an odd pattern of silvery lines crisscrossing his back. Clutching a blanket around her against the cool air, Morgan struggled out of the makeshift bed and stood by Lucy's stall.

The first time she'd seen Rhys naked—when she'd threatened him with a garden hoe—she'd noticed a number of wide white scars on his arms, legs, even chest, and thought them profuse. She hadn't seen his back at that time, hadn't seen his back in last night's darkness either. But her fingertips had felt dozens upon dozens of long raised ridges. In daylight, the damage was even more appalling than she'd suspected. Unlike the scars on his arms and legs, these stripes were narrow. They crossed Rhys's spine from neck to tailbone, wrapping tapered edges around his ribs and shoulders and hips. There was barely an inch of skin that wasn't brutally marked. Morgan felt shaky, almost ill, at the ghastly evidence of long-ago abuse before her and sat on the grain bin for support. "What the hell happened to your back? Who did this to you?"

Rhys didn't answer at once. Instead, he finished wrapping the mare's leg, before wiping the salve from his hands on a cloth and putting the supplies away. Finally, he came to stand in front of Morgan. His eyes still reminded her of ale and old gold, and his gaze was steady on hers. "To the Roman way of thinking, a man with the sign of a dog should be treated as a dog. They whipped me for sport as much as for punishment." He shrugged. "It was a long time ago, and their bones are naught but dust now. Truly, the Fair Ones were just as cruel, though they didn't lay a hand on me."

Dust. Romans. The Fair Ones. Morgan didn't know what to say. Her expression must have showed her bewilderment, because Rhys tried to brush her face with his fingertips,

and heaven help her, she shied from his touch. She didn't mean to, but her mind was racing like a rabbit from a lynx, panicked and desperate. She cared for this man—crap, she

loved

this man—and he had abruptly morphed into a deluded stranger again.

Suddenly furious, she was upset with him for changing, yet most of her anger was directed at herself. Wasn't this her very own fault? Why hadn't she asked more questions? Why had she rationalized away the strange things he'd said when she first found him naked? Had she thought that if she just ignored them, Rhys's mental problems would simply disappear?

"Look," she said, fighting to steady her voice and losing the battle. "I don't know what you're dealing with, but you don't have to do it alone. We can work on it together, find you some help—"

"Help?" He looked both puzzled and annoyed. "There is no help for the truth."

"The truth? All I'm hearing is fantasy here. You're still trying to tell me that you're over two thousand years old, for God's sake!"

"I told you about the Tylwyth Teg—"

"Those are goddamn faery tales! Stories for kids! They're not real!"

"They were real enough when they changed me into a grim."

Morgan stared at him for a long, long moment. His expression didn't change, his golden eyes remained steady. "Please tell me you don't believe what you're saying. You can't. It's not rational. Something's wrong, something's giving you these delusions, these hallucinations, and we need to find you some help, some treatment, medication, *something*