

# Storm Warrior (The Grim Series) (38 page)

Morgan's mouth fell open. "What? When did we decide this?"

"I decided it a long time ago. And you decided it when you left the safety of the house to face down the Wild Hunt and return to the barn, my brave anwylyd."

"It seemed like a good idea at the time?"

"Twas not a sensible idea. You could have been killed."

"Maybe, but someone once told me that 'instinct often reveals the greater truth.' My instincts told me to do it, that we belonged together, no matter what."

"Aye, and that's why we're marrying."

Morgan opened her mouth and closed it again. The man had a point. So she acted on instinct again and simply kissed him with everything she had.

THE END

Read on for a sneak peek of  
***Storm Bound***  
CHAPTER ONE

*Black Mountains, Wales*  
AD 1124

H  
eavy muscles bulged as the tall man strained repeatedly against the fine silver chains that bound him, wrist and ankle, to the stone.

"Such an ungrateful mortal you are, Aidan ap Llanfor," she chided. "Is it not an honor to be a guest of the  
*Tylwyth Teg*  
?"

He lunged at her, but though she stood within an arm's length of him, she neither recoiled nor shrank. Aidan's chains had been forged with faery magic, and as such they would not break, not even for the largest

*bwgan*

, much less a human. The man's iron-gray eyes, however—were they daggers, she

thought, she would be pierced and her sapphire blood would be poisoned and pooling around her delicate silk slippers.

For the briefest of moments, she felt something, and thrilled to it, eager for more. But Aidan immediately stilled, bristling his anger and reining it back as if he could sense her craving for emotion—any emotion—and refused to give it to her.

“I have not sought to visit your land,” he gritted out between his teeth. “Nor have I trespassed upon it. I have given thee no cause to bring me here against my will.”

“Are you so certain of that? I seem to remember a bold and comely child playing on the faery mound beyond the village. Such a dear little wooden sword he had, hacking at bushes and slicing at trees as if they were dreadful monsters.” It was satisfying that she’d succeeded in surprising him, yet puzzling to her. How was it that mortals remembered so little when their lives were so short? Years had passed for him, but for her? It was scarcely a day ago that Aidan had traded his wooden sword for the business of adults. Mere hours since he’d apprenticed to the village blacksmith. Moments since he inherited the forge and took over the business. She had observed it all, fascinated, in the way that a cat is fascinated by a bird.

“I could have spirited you away that first time,” she continued, “Simply for setting foot on fae territory. But it was much more fun to watch you. You played often at the mound, though you saw me not. I was witness to not one but *many* trespasses, Aidan ap Llanfor. You’ve lived your life thus far in your tiny mortal world only because I permitted it.”

“A child is not held accountable for things he knows not of.”

“Human rules,” she sniffed. “Why do you waste so much time making them when you have such fleeting lives? You’re like the mayflies that dance above the water for less than a day. The Tylwyth Teg are ancient beyond your ability to count and our laws are ancient too—made once, to stand for all time. And by those laws, you are mine to do with as I like.”

“Release me, Faery,” he said in a dangerous tone. It was not a request.

“Think you to make demands?” She laughed and shook back her waist-length hair, well aware of her unearthly beauty and its near-hypnotic effects on most mortals. “Know to whom you speak. I am Celynnen of the Thorn House of the Tylwyth Teg, and my blood is pure.”

“You are a *tywysoges* then, a princess of the Fair Ones.” He gave her the slightest of nods, a scant acknowledgement of her station—and not one mote of reverence more.

Others had died for less, and Celynnen could have killed him herself if she’d been so inclined. Still, for the sake of the entertainment he afforded her, she could forgive him much—for a time. She had often watched him hammer hot metals into clever shapes,

particularly that most fearful of all elements, iron. Years of striking sparks amid the glow of flames had not bent his tall frame, only added strength. Even clad in his dull-brown tunic and scarred leather apron, his face streaked with soot and sweat, she had to admit that the comely child had grown into a very attractive man. Her people often took human lovers, and she had begun to consider the delicious possibilities—

Until this morning, when Aiden had not gone to his forge as usual. He had not donned blacksmith's clothing either. Instead, he had bathed at length and dressed in what passed for finery among these common mortals. His blue woolen tunic was open at the neck to reveal a pale linen

*pais*

beneath. His dark cloak was newly made and clasped with an artful brooch of silver and amber that she had not seen before. It was a gift that a woman would give, a human woman.

*Annwyl.*

The raven-haired Annwyl of the village of Aberhonddu was the woman that Aidan ap Llanfor planned to marry. Today. And that's when Celynnen made her decision to spirit him away to the kingdom far below the Black Mountains.

"Release me,  
*Your Grace*  
," he said.

The significance of the royal title was not lost on her. It was hardly filled with admiration and awe, but it

*was*

devoid of sarcasm. This was not a man who would beg, ever—but she had just won a major concession from him.

*What else can I win?*

The

thought of such a challenge excited her. She would enjoy playing games with Aidan ap Llanfor just as much as lying with him, perhaps even more. "Nay, I believe I will keep you."

"Do not do this,  
*Your Eminence*

. For the sake of my bride that I will wed this day, for the sake of the promises I have made to her and her family. Make me not an oathbreaker, for ye yourselves do despise such."

It was an eloquent argument. Once given, the word of any of the Tylwyth Teg was unbreakable. In fact, humans who did not keep their promises to each other often suffered justice at the hands of the fae. Celynnen brushed her fingers over the brilliant scarlet of her dress and traced the birds and flowers embroidered there in silver thread and seed pearls. "A man of his word

*is*

a rare commodity, so it seems fitting that such be rewarded. You may put your mind at ease on that point. No oath will be broken."

From her sleeve, she drew a solid cluster of brilliant yellow-green crystals—mortals would call it peridot—and cupped it in her hand, where the stone's many facets gleamed and flashed. Bringing it close to her lips, she whispered the words of the ancient language, then blew gently over it. A wisp of pale-green light, like an emerald spirit, spiraled from the crystals and floated toward Aidan.

He drew back, suspicious but unable to avoid the approaching wraith. "What are you doing?" He jerked as it touched him and enveloped his entire body in a caul of green light.

"I have simply granted you what you wanted." The green light flared suddenly, then disappeared, and she turned toward the high-arched doorway. "I must make an appearance at the court for a time."

"Wait," he called. "Release me! My wedding—Anwyll will be waiting for me!" He rattled the fine silver chains until they pealed like tiny silver bells.

Celynnen turned and arched a delicate eyebrow. "You did not wish to be an oathbreaker, and so you will not be. Your intended is *not* waiting for you."

The look of horror on his face was immediately eclipsed by rage. "What have you done to her?" he roared, straining so mightily against his bonds that for a brief instant she thought they might actually give way. Instead, blood ran down his wrists and splattered on the floor around him. A droplet struck her hand and she backed out of range, blotting the spot away hastily with her sleeve as it began to burn her skin. Human blood got its curious red color from the iron it contained—and iron was deadly poison to all fae creatures, including the Tylwyth Teg.

The precious fabric failed to clean the spot well enough, however. Her hand *hurt*

, and pain was not something she was acquainted with. She snapped at him. "You foolish mortal. Did you think I was going to

*let you go*

? You were concerned for your honor, and I have graciously protected it. Even more merciful, your precious Annwyl will suffer no broken heart over you because

*she does not remember you*

. Her family does not know who you are, and in fact, even your own family will not recall they ever had a son.

"In short, you have ceased to exist outside of this kingdom. You. Are. Mine."

On that note she swept from the room to find a healer before the tiny mark upon her hand became an abhorrent scar. Halfway down the vast hallway, the last thing she heard from Aidan was a full-fledged snarl:

*"I'll not be your pet!"*

A laugh burst from her lips then. "Oh, I think you will."

Here ends Chapter One of  
*Storm Bound*.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

W

hat would I do without my fearless team of beta readers? These are the people who let me know if the story's continuity has run off the rails or that I've run afoul of Canadian versus American phraseology again—and thank goodness, they're sworn to secrecy! My betas are also the ones who talk me off the ledge when I'm discouraged, hand me fresh coffee, and tell me to keep writing. On this particular project, a very special thank-you goes out to Ron Silvester, Samantha Craig, and Sharon Stogner.

I'd also like to express my appreciation to my agent, Stephany Evans of FinePrint Literary Management (who talks me off the ledge when my beta readers are busy), and to my new editor, Eleni Caminis of Montlake Romance, plus the entire Montlake and Amazon team. I feel very fortunate to work with such enthusiastic and talented people.

Most of all, I'd like to thank my readers. You are the reason I write. There is nothing like that moment of connection when the story becomes a cocreation between us. I might pen the words, but my story doesn't

LIVE

until it is read. I thank you for this shared joy.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**