

## Chapter One

Niall felt Michael's hand on his arse, soft, caressing. Even through his dress pants, the warmth soothed and comforted. Or should have. But they were out in public, in a field before a great ruin of a castle in County Kerry, just west of Killarney, there to witness the joining of Niall's half-brother, Hank Mulligan, and his Canadian bride-to-be, Laura Foster, in holy matrimony.

The weather held fair, and was expected to according to Ciara, his younger sister who had, as many old people used to call it, 'the sight'. These days, people just said she was psychic. And she was. She'd predicted this wedding, this day, and said that if they all got together and had an early wedding, the rain wouldn't spoil it at all. So far, so good.

His identical twin brother was in attendance as well, as were all the O'Farrell siblings. Liam, the outgoing twin, the one who laughed and joked and dangled life from his little finger the way local fishermen played with a fish on a line. Nothing was too good for Liam. He had the world by the tail. An actor and a lady's man, he was the one who didn't care what people said, who thrived on rumor and innuendo. His photo was front page news, his antics made headlines. He was Ireland's hero, and he knew it. And loved it.

Not so Niall. The less people knew of him, the better. He was uncomfortable to the extreme in public, and having his brother's picture plastered in the news was bothersome to him. He neither wanted nor looked for attention from anyone, and so he stood, uncomfortable and edgy, feeling Michael's hand on his arse.

Michael pulled Niall close and kissed him quickly, fully on the lips.

"Change of heart?" Niall asked.

"Talk later. There's a wedding trying to take place," said Michael, his hand possessively resting on Niall's very delectable rear end.

"I thought you said ye'd never attend," he whispered hoarsely to Michael, ignoring the circular massage of Michael's fingers through the fabric.

"I had second thoughts," said Michael, his cultured English accent pouring into Niall's ears like a good whiskey. Smooth, intoxicatingly deadly. "Let's go inside."

They followed the family into the castle, to the one room that still remained with four walls and a ceiling. Hank was already standing at the altar they'd built, waiting for his bride.

Michael bent to say something in Niall's ear but was quickly shushed. "They're about to begin," Niall said.

Michael straightened, his hand once more straying to Niall's arse, his thumb hooked into the back pocket, almost, but not quite, concealed beneath the edge of Niall's jacket.

Niall shifted, felt Michael's hand cup the globe of his arse, and shifted again. The hand stayed. A look was exchanged; Michael winked. And so Niall stood with Michael's hand caressing his arse and the multitude of folk, there to witness Hank and Laura's wedding, also witnessing the possessiveness with which Michael claimed Niall. The only blessing was that everyone was standing in very close quarters because no one had thought to bring any chairs. It was an old castle, and they were in the only complete room—a room with a dirt floor and stone walls with niches where candles were lit and mirrors had been placed to reflect the candles' glow a hundred-fold. The effect had been staggeringly romantic and the old ruin seemed to glow with new life.

The room being small, any folk who could not squeeze in looked in from windows vacant of any coverings, or from the doors at either side of the room where entrance and egress to other parts of the castle lay. Niall felt lucky that only a few people would see the familiarity with which Michael possessed him in public.

Michael Johnson. A truly different sort. They had met at a conference in Amsterdam a few years back; they had been working for the same computer software company, Michael in London and Niall in Cork. Over the past year, though, Michael had relocated to Ireland to be closer to Niall and was prized enough to be re-hired in Cork to work alongside him. Neither of them worried too much about working in the same office, they just wanted to be together outside of work.

At least Niall thought they did. He was never sure where Michael was concerned. Michael, who was much more confident than Niall in his body, his looks, his sexuality. He was used to standing out in a crowd, him with his mixed Middle Eastern/English background. His swarthy good looks turned many heads, usually female. But those in the know would never mistake his masculinity as a tidbit for feminine wiles. Michael was as gay as they came.

Niall, also gay, was not so comfortable. Raised in a staunch Catholic family of four boys and one girl, he remembered always identifying with his younger sister, wishing he could play with

her toys, and later on, watching the boys she went out with as she got older. He didn't care what they wanted of her. He only thought they might be interested in him.

Ciara was now a young woman, and he and Liam young men. Liam could get any woman he wanted. All four brothers possessed the full head of black, wavy hair and midnight blue eyes that seemed to be a trait within the family, inherited from their father. The only one who'd missed those attributes was Ciara. She had taken their mother's coloring, the blonde hair and clear emerald eyes of the fey folk. Even though their mam had no psychic ability beyond a mother's intuition, it was said that in generations past there had been a few that were that way, and Ciara was one of them.

The priest had concluded the ceremony, the bride and groom had kissed, and Michael turned Niall's face toward him with a firm grip on his jaw and planted one full on his mouth.

Niall pushed him off. "Cop on," he scolded.

But Michael only grinned. "You're the finest looking man here," he said, his fine English accent so different from the chatter around them. Hank and Laura were walking out of the room and its makeshift altar that Liam had contrived with help from the design crew of the set of his latest film. His brother had connections, and no mistake, thought Niall.

Brandon, another brother, second oldest only to Henry, had pitched in to help. Brandon had been offered work by the men that delivered the altar and helped set up, but Brandon had only grinned and declined. It seemed he had a better gig going on down Kinsale way, with surfing, women, and something about taking tourists around. It was a craic gig, he'd said, and too good to give up in order to work for someone else where the women were maybe scarce.

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Liam watched the crowds go off to enjoy the luncheon after the wedding. He was proud of himself and of his brothers for helping to get the altar set up and turn the castle's one complete room into a makeshift chapel, ready for the wedding. He'd cajoled and bugged the design team to help him out by building an altar out of scrap materials. It looked like stone but was mostly plywood, Styrofoam, and a lot of paint. Hank and Laura hadn't wanted a wedding at any of the churches in Killarney; they'd almost refused a Catholic wedding at all. Hank had wanted a pagan

wedding. Laura hadn't cared. She was carrying their child and stated that, really, she just wanted it over and done with and legal in two countries: Ireland and Canada.

Liam had wanted to do it just for fun; to have the old castle look like something out of a medieval movie, with knights and damsels and all the trimmings.

And so he had. They'd "borrowed" more than one piece from the film's properties house and re-created a religious sanctum for Hank and Laura. Liam couldn't have been more pleased. The best part was that his brothers had been involved. Niall had hung back but even he had come up with his own touch at the end. The mirrors behind the candles reflected light from the deep niches in the stone walls, niches that were once used as storage cupboards, likely for dishes, hundreds of years ago. It was a magical effect and Liam was happy with his brother's contribution. Niall didn't often think of such things. He was entirely unemotional, in Liam's eyes.

The woman on his arm, a supporting actress with a substantial role in the film, put her arm around him. "Let's go," she whispered huskily, and Liam was inclined to agree. He'd hired some buddies from the set to stop by before nightfall to gather up the bits and pieces that belonged to the company and, since it was now midafternoon, he knew they would be there within the next hour or two. In the meantime, his little actress would provide plenty of entertainment. He'd teased her when they first met, calling her Sine of the Jungle. But Miss Sine Maguire was no joke. She was as foxy as they came, a tall, copper-haired woman with luscious curves that Liam was curious to find out if they were all hers or not. He was pretty sure they were.

Sine had giggled at the jungle joke when he met her, telling him she'd heard it before and rolling her eyes in a tolerant fashion. Liam didn't care; rarely a phrase came out of his mouth these days that wasn't a quote from some film or play he'd been in.

His success as an actor was ramping up. Over the past month he'd been seen, and photographed, with no fewer than five women. Intimacy hadn't been a part of any of those relationships but one read through the tabloids would provide the reader with enough innuendo to draw an entirely different conclusion.

Instead, Liam had been watching Sine Maguire, and had been doing so for a long time now. He'd first come across her in an American film, but then she'd dropped off the radar for a while and suddenly shown up in Ireland. He didn't care how she got there; had in fact been quite impatient to get to know her and so had followed her around once she arrived on set, waiting for

an opportunity to ask her out. While outwardly chasing the previous five females, he had set his sights on her alone. He could have asked the leading lady to be his date at his half-brother's wedding, and very nearly did. But Sine's arrival changed all that.

After the ceremony, everyone filed out of the castle to linger on the grounds and partake of the food and beverages that had been brought in, picnic style, for the event. Liam led Sine to the tables and grabbed two plates, then soon had them filled. While Sine carried two mugs of ale, he led her round to where some blankets had been spread and chose one in the shelter of the castle walls, away from the wind coming in from the sea.

He fed her, let her take food from his fingers, and was surprised when she held on to one lean digit, sucked the juices off, and let him slide it from her mouth to watch her lick her lips afterward. He was suddenly very glad she'd consented to spend the night with him.

And then it was time to toast the bride and groom and cut the wedding cake, and so they all stood around while Henry, as best man, and Sarah, Laura's best friend from home and maid of honor, said their speeches, encouraging the couple to kiss each time the gathering urged them to do so.

Liam wasted no time during such episodes, turning Sine's heart-shaped face to his to kiss the lips that seemed to cry out for it.

Niall, feeling Michael pull him into a hug, shrugged off his lover's touch. He was not an exhibitionist like his famous brother, and the fact that they were twins, which made his life more observable to the masses, convinced an introverted personality such as his to vigorously shun public displays of affection. Michael was not put off, he knew. There would be all the time they needed, later.

The crowd began to file out of the castle and down to the small parking lot at the base of the hill after the cake cutting ceremony. Friends helped load the excess into Henry's large van and soon Hank and Laura were on their way, leaving the revelers to party or go home as they chose.

The rest of the family all met up at a pub in Cahersiveen that boasted a large taproom with plenty of room to dance, if a band was in attendance, or just to gather round the tables in the center or the trestles at the room's edge. The place was hopping when they got there, and Liam noticed his twin, gaining more than his fair share of attention. He was used to that. Used to having himself and Niall confused by the masses who wanted an autograph and sometimes more, although right now, Liam's head had been shaved for the production they were still shooting. His

normal locks might be absent but that didn't throw off the crowds completely. They simply gathered around Niall instead.

Niall seemed to be handling it well enough, although one keen look told Liam that his brother was well onto becoming paralytic. He was flaming, no doubt about it. And Michael, Niall's love interest, wasn't far behind.

They were kind of cute to watch, thought Liam. Michael was all over Niall like a sailor on shore duty and Niall, for once, was letting himself go, acting as if it was an everyday occurrence. They held their heads together when talking, seated at the bar. Michael would slide his hand down Niall's arm in a possessive manner and Niall had his hand on Michael's knee. He expected them to kiss, any moment now.