

Kiera's Tale: Where there's smoke, there's usually fire

Author's note: For those who have read any of my Magic Abounds series – Helena and her shop 'Treasure Trove' will be familiar to you. The story only starts there – it doesn't stay there. The rest of the characters are all new. Whether this is your first time in Treasure Trove or not, go grab a cup of your favorite beverage, and settle in. It's about to get bumpy, and a little...weird. Well – weirder than usual. Lol, you've been warned.

Helena Craswell sat behind the front counter of her shop, perched atop her stool, and sighed. It was another one of those days, when you try hard to keep your vibe up, but situations just keep getting in the way. It was on days like this that she would look around and remind herself how truly lucky she was. She owned the whole building. She lived upstairs. Standing on the street facing the shop, Treasure Trove was to the right, and the other shop that took up the lower floor was Cuppa Love, a coffee shop that she leased to a former employee and friend, Val Bouvideira. There was even a pass-through door between the two shops. A large black cat sauntered up to the counter and leaped up. He meowed at her. "Hi, Mischief." He head-butted her arm, and she began rubbing his head, as Mischief began purring.

Helena started Treasure Trove in 1982, after her life took some unforeseen turns, and Val was one of her first three employees. It's in lower Manhattan, and the building is both old, and quirky, built in the 1870s. The floors are the original wide wood planks, and pleasantly creaky;

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there's always a whiff of some sort of incense in the air – Dragons' Blood is a favorite. There are crystals, tarot decks, and books are at the far back to the right. Jewelry and gift-type items are near the front counter/display case, and then the rest of her store, people argue about how to describe. One item that nearly always gets mentioned is the large, double-globed, antique 'Gone with the Wind'-style lamp. Some people admire it, others think it's old and ugly. Regardless of whether they like it or not, it's always lit, people always remember it, and it has the distinction of being the one thing in the shop marked 'Not for sale.'

Treasure Trove tends to have a little bit of everything. There's even a sarcophagus in the back, before you get to the staff room, and there's a lacquered red door, with a large, intricately carved dragon on it. Some of the items look valuable, and some...well, they don't. Helena's critics call it 'junk,' while others politely say, 'flea market.' As the old line goes, one person's junk is another person's treasure. Helena has long used her intuition as to what items to purchase from people – though some of it might seem questionable. Most simply chalk it up to either old age or being especially kind-hearted...or both.

Helena's been accused on any number of occasions of selling items that are...cursed. Magical. Do strange things they shouldn't. Cause customer's lives to suddenly take a veer into unusual territory or customers come back in later with tales of how an item upended their lives. Most stores have signs that say, 'You break it, you bought it,' or 'Shoplifters will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.' Here? The signs say, 'Be careful what you pick up,' and 'Returns gladly accepted.' Helena's quick to tell people that her items aren't intentionally magical – but people regularly add their own: their emotions, intent and desires add the 'special sauce.' She's also quick to add that she usually doesn't know which items will be magical or not. Helena, and her current employees, Chrissie, Gwen and Hope, have seen and heard a lot, especially recently.

Those days would've been memorable one way or another. It's always odd, Helena thought to herself, when you're living through events that you know will become history and talked about years later. However, Helena herself had different reasons for looking at the storm as a 'before and after' defining moment.

Something...odd...happened during the storm; something quite unexpected – and she'd become very used to the unexpected - so for Helena to call it unexpected? That's saying something.

During the storm, without electric, wi-fi, or most computer gadgets – quite a few people discovered they were witches. While many folks were in the process of realizing something within them had either changed or was discovered, she herself had a whopper of a nightmare, and something she could only term as 'malevolent' was either coming or was already here. Helena hesitated to say 'evil,' because usually good or bad merely depended on your point of view. No matter how you chose to frame the entity, it wasn't sweetness and light. In her dream, the witches and other spiritually attuned people were rising because they were the answer to the bad times the world found itself in, as well as whatever might be on its way.

While it was worrying to have so many new witches and new faces coming through the shop simultaneously, she also found a certain amount of joy in it. It was wonderful to discover that her own great-niece Marianne was a witch...along with Hope's five-year-old daughter Jenny. She also found it rewarding to be a 'go-to' person that new witches came to, looking for information, resources for training, or simply recommendations for a good book. Still, at this point, she'd begun trying to keep track, there were so many of them.

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The young woman's name was Kiera Scotti. She came in several times before last week, looking around as she nursed a cup of something each time from Cuppa Love, pausing briefly, then moving on to look at something else – then leaving. Chrissie and Hope had seen her also. What made last week different is that she came in and stopped to talk. She was so sad. Most of the new folks that came in had questions; many were excited to realize they were witches. Some were concerned because they were religious, and whatever group they identified with weren't especially jazzed with the idea of witches. Kiera was none of these. She said she'd had an 'experience' with the moon after the second storm, and it had taken up residence in her heart and mind. To Helena, all those things would be a cause for happiness. A celebration, eve!. If there were concerns, go slowly; giving respect to previous beliefs while looking for ways to incorporate some new ones. When she told her that, it didn't seem to make her feel better. Kiera absentmindedly rubbed Mischief, who was meowing loudly at her. "I don't know what you're facing," Helena said, "but I hope it works out for you. If I can ever help you; you know where I am. Let me know." Helena handed Kiera a business card with the shop's name, and her phone number, and nodded toward the card. "I'm Helena."

"Thanks," she said, as she walked away.

Kiera sat at her desk in her apartment, and stared at the card in her hand, then tore it up, and put it into the trash can.

The last thing she ever wanted to be was a witch. Her life was damned complicated enough; it didn't need any help.

"What am I going to do?" It made her want to cry. It meant her life would likely change, in all sorts of horrible ways. Or...if it didn't change immediately, it had the potential to. That

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lady Helena today was kind; Kiera knew she was trying to be helpful, but she would never understand, and there was no way she could ever make her understand the dilemma she found herself in. It wasn't that she didn't know how to explain it; she was forbidden to.

Her family would never accept her as a witch. Those she was oathsworn to would never accept it, either. It wasn't that they didn't or wouldn't believe she could be one, or that witches existed; they did...more so than most. It wasn't that they objected on religious grounds. They weren't especially religious.

Her great grandfather, Emilio Scotti, had immigrated here from Milan in the early 1900's, and began working for a family that originally lived in New York, but then part of that family split off, and they and her grandfather moved to New Jersey. The two families were tightly linked, even now, from all the way back then. Her brother Dean, and her father Joe were both bloodsworn to them, and her grandfather had been, before he passed away. She herself, when she turned 15, stood before her father and his patron, Bobby Davidov, and swore a solemn oath to them both to keep their secrets...everything from day-to-day information she might hear, to keeping a low profile, to keeping their very existence a secret.

Most folks, if you start talking about 'family,' bloodoaths, keeping family secrets, and the occasional weird ceremony involving knives and blood - it might get them wondering what kind of a family you come from. Once they discovered the Italian heritage, the Jersey home address, and that her father owns a construction business...their minds start to travel in certain...directions. Like...the mafia. Oh, it's family, alright; just not THAT kind of family.

Not even. The truth was far, far stranger. Shit, her life made the mafia look normal.

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She was born of a bloodsworn family and was herself an oathsworn member of the Davidov branch of the Sabin clan – which is how she fit in small measure into the picture. These people, for as long as she'd been alive, she'd known as the Virehnai.

You would know them by a much more pejorative name, that evokes all sorts of kitschy imagery, once you hear the name society calls them. Once you hear THAT, your mind blanks, switches gears, and poof! They disappear, falling squarely into the realm of Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, or other works of unlikely fiction people tell stories about. In fact, there's hundreds of works of fiction – some more famous or memorable than others. The word just...clarifies and nullifies them simultaneously, all while putting them squarely into the realm of 'not real.' What is that pejorative name that carries so much power?

Vampire.

That brought Kiera back to the crux of her problem. No matter what you call them, they have a long-standing dislike and distrust of witches going back centuries, if not farther. So, discovering two months ago that she was a witch was...unfortunate, at best. Life-changing, at worst, with the worst-case scenario being disowned. At least she was only oathsworn, and not bloodsworn.

But wait! There's more! It gets more complicated still.

Kiera was already skirting trouble with her family and their clan a year before discovering she was a witch. Truthfully, the name 'witch' only piled more trouble on top of already existing trouble! What would **really** get her in some deep shit is that despite being oathsworn, she was having a flaming, passionate sexual relationship with a 212-year-old Virehnai man. On top of that – it gets worse– they'd taken a blood oath between themselves. Why is that so important? There weren't supposed to be 'those kind' of relationships between the

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Virehnai and the humans who worked with them – particularly if oathsworn; usually because sooner or later, it ends badly for the human involved, and they have relatives, and it causes hard feelings. So, imagine the shitstorm that would be caused if they discovered she'd secretly taken a blood oath with one, to have and hold from this day forward until she died, or was made Virehnai.

Walter Conti was the Virehn she'd fallen in love with. Kiera wasn't fooling herself; she knew she was in love him. Walt had had lots of names and – different lives! - over the years; he was known now as Gualtiero Conti, or Walter - but the name he'd been born with was Giordano DeLuca. He was the most amazing man she'd ever met, but he wasn't one to flaunt his worldliness, his knowledge or his length of years. Despite being...what? Immortal, or damn close to it...he seemed like a regular guy.

Kiera wasn't a flirt, or easy. She never expected to become close to him, much less fall in love. Their relationship was doomed; she understood this. She was human and would age; he would not. The chances of her being raised to Virehnai and ascending were unlikely; she was the youngest of six children, and the Virehnai kept their numbers low on purpose to keep their chances of being detected down. Whenever one was lost for whatever reason, they discussed it, and carefully chose from the bloodsworn humans that were in their orbit, and they made that choice on who they thought would be best suited – both physically and emotionally – and who could bring the most value to their clan, all while fitting in. He couldn't turn her himself without getting into trouble. Unsanctioned turnings were for emergency use only, and a drop of blood would tell the truth of the matter. Even if she and Walt were discovered to be lovers, it was less likely that they would raise her to Virehnai, and more likely that Walt would be censured, and her father would get into trouble, and if they were really angry about it, she might possibly be

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banished from her life as she was living it amongst them. Maybe. Maybe not. She didn't want to find out. Now add to all that 'being a witch,' and her chances of being raised to Virehnai dropped to nil, while her chances of being banished increased exponentially. She was sure that Walt loved her – otherwise, he'd never have sworn a blood oath to her. They'd been able to keep the secret. Sooner or later, it might get out, and despite the possible ramifications, Walt said he would take her cause and fight for her – if not to become Virehnai, at least to solidify their blood oath legitimately, if they could.

Kiera's million-dollar question of the evening was this: could he get past her being a witch? Would he still be willing to be bloodsworn to one another knowing she was a witch, and what his clan's reaction would be? Would he still take up her cause then? Would he stick up for her even if they banished him? Did he love her THAT much? Tears slipped down her face. She hoped he did, and that he would; if he didn't, no matter how she turned matters over and over in her head, she would be in trouble.

The best thing she could think of to do was to simply keep it to herself. Try to ignore it, best as she could. If she did, maybe everybody else would, too. After all, whether to live as a witch was her choice. Kiera chose 'no.'

It might've worked; it did for almost a year – and then, something happened that she never would've expected, nor thought could happen. Walt came over to her apartment, and hugged her, and told her that he was sick. He didn't look sick, to her – his skin was a little redder than usual, and he had a weird, reddish mole on his neck.

"You don't look sick..." Kiera told him.

"I am. My skin color's off, and I've got...whatever this is on my neck." He gestured to it. "I can't chance it. We were all told that if we noticed *anything* we are to 'self-report.' I've

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called them already. I've got to go; right after I leave here. They're expecting me. I didn't want to leave without seeing you one more time before I go."

Kiera groaned. "When will I see you again?"

Walt looked at her, and said nothing, considering his words. "I...really don't know, babe." He reached for her, closing the space between them, holding her close, and so tightly that she thought he might snap her to pieces. It occurred to Kiera then that Walt was frightened, particularly when he buried his head into her long hair, and breathed in the scent of her, long and deep. He held her like that for a few moments, and then he pulled away enough that they looked into one another's eyes. It seemed like a long time, though time for Virehnai was relative.

"You're scaring me, honey."

"I'm sorry; I don't want to go, but I have to." He told her. "I don't know if this will be goodbye or not. I hope NOT." Walt paused, reaching for words. "I want to fix your face in my memory. I've heard horror stories about what's happening to other Virehnai, and..." His voice trailed off, and he sighed, and then he smiled at her the best he could, trying to reassure her, hoping that somehow it would reassure **him** also. "I love you, and if something unexpected happens, know I that love you. I know we aren't supposed to be together, but it doesn't change a thing. I'd do it all over again."

Kiera started to cry. "This IS sounding final."

"Realistically, it might be."

"Nooooo! Don't go, then!" she cried, as she burrowed herself back against him.

They stood there, tightly clinging to one another. She didn't want him to leave her, and he didn't want to face what he feared was the inevitable. He started to disentangle himself from her arms, but she clung to him tighter, and whispered, "Don't go, Walt. Don't go."

He pulled away, and reluctantly, her arms fell to her sides as she released him. "Stay," she whined. Tears streamed silently down her face.

"It's not what I would choose, babe. There's something going around that we've been told is making some Virehnai sick and sometimes killing them. I'd chalk it up to a rumor, except I heard it in a family meeting with Darren Wheeler. You've never met him, but he's Bobby's sire...my sire's sire. He said it can make you lose all your self-control. I could never live with myself if I stayed here, lost my mind, and killed and drained you. The murders in upstate New York that have been splashed all over the news weren't caused by a serial killer; they were by one of US who got sick. Killing you isn't a risk I'm prepared to take. The only way I can face the uncertainty of any of this is to know you'll be fine." He took her hands into his. "As much as I know it's hurting you to be...maybe...saying goodbye...I didn't want to 'self-report,' without letting you know where I'm going and why. I didn't want you to think I willingly left you, didn't care, or ghosted you. I've not the heart to do that."

While still crying, Kiera was considering his words and was marginally calmer. They embraced one more time, and he brushed the hair away from her eyes, and smiled. "How about we say, 'I'll see you soon,' instead of 'Goodbye?' I like the sound of that better."

"Me, too." She sniffled, as she tried to smile at him.

Walt kissed her once more, soundly, and walked out of her apartment. She watched him walk away from her, and she stood there by the door until he passed out of sight before closing it.

That was the last time she saw Walt. She heard two weeks later, as an aside from her father, that he died.

It was all Kiera could do to keep her head and heart together. She made it through about three weeks before she was called to a meeting with her father and her brother Dean in her father's office, which took a turn for the ominous when Bobby Davidov, who was Walt's sire joined them.

"Kiera, Bobby needs to ask you some questions about Walt."

Her lower lip began to tremble, as she tried to hold herself together. She knew where this would go. It wouldn't be pretty.

"It's recently come to our attention that you and Walt had a relationship."

Kiera looked down; she didn't want to look into Bobby's eyes, and she didn't want to see the disapproval in her dad's that she knew would be there. Kiera was fighting back tears. She was oathsworn. However painful, she would not lie.

"Kiera." Bobby said. It was in a stern enough tone of voice that she looked up instinctively.

His tone changed. "While we don't approve of your relationship with Walt, he's gone. What would punishing you accomplish now, other than making a sad situation worse? Were you both here, and the current situation different, my response might be different. We're facing many challenges right now, and this doesn't need to be one of them." He shook his head and took a different tone entirely. "I'm not blind, nor unfeeling, Kiera. I can see from your reactions that you truly loved him." He sighed. "What a mess," He sighed, sadly. "I'm sorry for your loss. You should know how we discovered your relationship: he left us a letter, telling us he loved you, and pleading for leniency toward you."

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Tears she struggled to hold while fearing the worst chose now to come, in the face of sympathy, and Walt's final act of love. Her father handed her his handkerchief, which she used to dab at her eyes. She looked at Bobby. "I'm sorry for your loss as well."

"Thank you." he told her, pausing for a moment as both remembered Walt. "I still need to ask you some questions, though, Kiera. Will you answer them for me?"

"Yes, sir." She looked Bobby directly in the eyes and nodded as well.

"Did he discuss any of his feeding habits with you? And while it may seem a hopelessly indelicate question, did he ever feed from you? I only ask because we're trying to figure out how the disease spreads."

"He didn't talk much about where or who he fed from; I only know he fed before he came over." Kiera paused. "As for him feeding from me...only a handful of times." She was still looking at Bobby, but heard her father's indrawn breath, and ignored it.

"How long had you been seeing each other?"

"A year, a month, and four days..."

Her father exclaimed, "A year? You've kept this from us for..." Bobby touched her dad's arm. "It's okay."

Bobby looked from father to daughter, reading the situation between them. In his long years of existence, he understood parental angst, as well as the need for children to follow their own path, but this wasn't the time.

"She is oathsworn, Joe – that's true. She's oathsworn to keep our secrets and has done her duty in that regard...but keeping our secrets doesn't imply she can't have any of her own."

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Her father put his anger aside, reading the tone in his patron's voice and manner. He'd deal with his careless daughter later.

Bobby turned back to Kiera. "Did you notice anything unusual about Walt before he got sick?"

"No sir. The last time I saw Walt, he stopped by and said he had to self-report, because he was afraid he was sick. He said his skin was reddish, though to me it didn't look different, and he showed me a weird red patch that looked like a mole on his neck. He said he'd heard in a meeting with your sire that there was something going around, and he didn't want to take any chances."

Bobby nodded, somberly. "Kiera, when was the last time he fed from you? I...I have to ask. I'm sorry."

"About a month ago." She looked down at her hands, as she crumpled and uncrumpled her father's handkerchief.

Before she could even answer, her father said, "Of course she will. We'll do anything you need, Bobby." Kiera could see already that things would be difficult with her father. Still, she looked up at Bobby, and said, "Yes, sir." She could answer for herself.

Bobby reached out and touched her arm, "I appreciate that." He looked around at all of them. "I think that's all I need for right now." He looked at Kiera. "Should I have any other questions, can I have my assistant Diane call you directly?"

Kiera nodded, "Yes, sir."

"Thank you." he said.

Her father was clearly unhappy. He looked at her and took a 'tone.' "You can go now; you're dismissed. We have other matters to discuss that **don't** revolve around you." Kiera stood and started to walk to the door. As she reached out for the door handle, her father's voice trailed out. "Be at dinner tonight."

Well, damn.

Kiera, ever the dutiful, oathsworn daughter, did as she was asked, and arrived early for dinner. She harbored no expectations of it being a happy affair. She had been surprised that Bobby wasn't angry; maybe it had to do with the fact he'd lost someone he loved, much as she had. Her father? Not so much.

Kiera had all day to think about it. What she didn't know was if he was angrier that she'd withheld something from him, or that she'd done something that potentially could've jeopardized his position with Bobby and his clan.

Sadly, she concluded that her father's ambition and his ambitions for her brother were the reason for his anger. While her father had a thriving construction business, he was well aware of where their family's money had come from. "You don't bite the hand that feeds you" was one of his favorite sayings. Aside from her father's business, her Uncle Max had a housekeeping company; her Uncle Dave had a "management company," that handled odds and ends that had to do with managing building maintenance for Virehnai businesses. All their businesses, while viable businesses marketed to humans, were patronized by Bobby, and his sire, and because of their oaths – whether by word, or blood – other Virehnai clans utilized them, too – piggybacking onto their oaths with Bobby, knowing they were sworn to secrecy. Virehnai business accounted for 73 percent of all the Scotti family's active accounts. Business was good.

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Kiera let herself in and went looking for her mom. She found her mom's housekeeper Dorothea first. "Everyone will be in the large dining room tonight."

"Thanks Dorothea," she told the woman even as she thought to herself, "That doesn't bode well, now does it?"

"As many of you know, we had a meeting with Bobby Davidov today about an unfortunate...situation...that arose recently. During that meeting, he decided to show my youngest daughter leniency. Our Virehnai benefactors have quite a bit going on right now, and apparently, they won't be punishing Kiera for her transgression." There was murmuring amongst themselves at the news.

He looked at Kiera, addressing her directly. "I hope your fling with that Virehnai was worth it, young lady. Do you realize?" He said, with sarcasm. "Do you?" He spat at her, voice clipped and hard. "All that we have - all that YOU have: your job, your lifestyle, your apartment, everything you enjoy is at the pleasure of those we serve. You put that in jeopardy – but selfishly, not just for yourself – but for ALL of us. Did you even use your brain, or were you only thinking with your twat? Collectively," he gestured around him to those seated at the table, "we have a good thing going, and you put it all at risk, without a second's thought or care to any of us, or what it could've meant." He pointed his finger at her, accentuating his words. "That's not how family operates."

Kiera sat, awaiting her father's pronouncement, which she knew was coming. She wasn't sure what to expect.

"Your mom and I, and your uncles have discussed this matter. We love you; you're still family, despite your recklessness and lack of regard for the rest of us. It's said 'absence makes the heart grow fonder.' As you've spent the last..." he snorted indelicately, "What did you tell

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Bobby? A year, a month and four days?...deceiving us, and putting us, and our livelihoods all at risk – for the next year, month and four days, let's see how you do without US. As of right now, Kiera, you're indefinitely suspended from work without pay. Find your own way in the world. Support yourself. You're uninvited from most family events. If we feel your presence necessary, we'll let you know. After that, we'll see if you develop a sense of appreciation for what you had, and discuss your return." He took a sip of his bourbon and set his glass down carefully. He looked down and then looked back up at her. "You're dismissed."

Her father's pronouncement, while not unexpected, still left her stunned. Not that she would've felt like sitting there, eating dinner and socializing with them after...what? Being fired from her family? She got up from her seat, wished them all a good evening, and walked out with as much grace and dignity as she could muster.

Once home, Kiera's bravado flagged a bit. She had a nice apartment, that she liked. She had no intention of losing it, and her job paid for it. At her father's company, she was a project manager; it's how she met Walt in the first place. He was her point of contact for all of Davidov's building ventures. She was good at what she did, even if she *was* the boss' daughter. She put her fears out of her mind for the evening. She'll work on that tomorrow. Tonight, she'd be nice to herself.

Once comfy, Kiera padded into her kitchen, pulled out yesterday's spaghetti casserole, put a slice of it between some buttered Italian bread, and poured herself a glass of wine. On the bright side, she could sleep in tomorrow, and she didn't have to worry about the weight of her family's expectations anymore.

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As she curled up into bed later, the weight of the day's events passed away, as thoughts gave way to slumber.

Kiera's attention was drawn by a rhythmic "tink-tink-tink," "tink-tink-tink" in groups of three. She awoke within her dream. It WAS a dream; it had to be. The linen clothing she wore covered her, but the garment was entirely too transparent for her comfort. Her bare, dusty feet padded through warm sand. The path she was on led to a small, but lovely oasis, with a pool of water, flowers, trees and the luxury of shade. Standing at the opposite side of the oasis was a statuesque woman; tall, willowy, with her long hair in braids accentuated with golden beads, and wearing a red crown.

"Welcome. I am Neith," she said, with a voice that was not unlike black velvet. "Come closer, child." Kiera did as she was asked.

"You do not know me or remember. I know you, and I remember you. You have served me previously, and again, I must call upon you."

"Who... What?"

"You are bound by your word to a people called the Virehnai, are you not?"

Kiera was stunned. "I am. I am oathsworn."

She laughed, almost like a purr. "You are beyond that. You once were Sulamet'Ani. In Virehnai, it means "she who binds in silence." In another life, long ago, you were once a human witch and were carelessly turned Virehnai as someone's weapon of war. After that war, you and your sister witches served me. As a Virehnai blood witch, you wrote the terms your fellow Virehnai swore to at the conclusion of that war, even as they forbade the turning of more witches."

"What?"

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"It is true, child. Come, look and I will show you. I am the opener of paths, and I shall open the path to your remembrance."

Neith squatted down beside the pool of water and indicated that Kiera should squat beside her.

Neith waved her hand across the pool, and the clear, cool water suddenly reflected something other than their own visages.

Instead, Kiera saw a ritual, in a room filled with Virehnai, and saw herself and two others casting a spell.

"That's...that's...me. But how can that be?" Kiera asked, in a hushed whisper.

"While a Virehnai lives, their soul, though dimmed, stays with them; they do still have one. When they pass on, that soul goes on to live and be human again." Neith turned to look at Kiera. "You have lived many, many times before, and in one of those lives, you were Virehnai."

"But the Virehnai hate witches."

"Some do, but like all hatred, it's born from fear, or jealousy. In the past – in their long experience - some of the best and the very worst things that have happened to the Virehnai were born of witchcraft and witches. A Virehnai blood witch is a powerful creature, indeed. It's why they no longer turn them." Neith paused, allowing Kiera's mind to catch up. After a few moments, she asked, "You recently took a Virehnai lover, did you not?"

Kiera was surprised by the question. "I did. He...got sick and died."

Neith nodded her head. "Something that witches – including yourself - accomplished centuries ago has begun to come...undone. As I said, I have need of you."

"What do you need me to do?" All Kiera could see was Walt's face as he was saying goodbye.

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"I need you to embrace the witch that you are."

I hope you've enjoyed this short preview of the Virehnai series I'm working on. There will be a short novelette that will be out soon, that this story is a part of; it's called "Tales of blood and Eternity." The first full book in the series is called "Not Quite Human." You'll meet Kiera Scotti again in a while. You'll know her when you see her. She'll be the bad-ass witch in Virehnai-land. Until you meet again, why not check out my "Magic Abounds" series?