

Alexandru's Kiss:
Magic, New Mexico Book 3



By S.E. Smith

Acknowledgments

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—S.E. Smith

Paranormal Romance

ALEXANDRU'S KISS: MAGIC, NEW MEXICO

BOOK 3

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Summary: A vampire/warlock suffering from amnesia wakes on unfamiliar world where the line between captive and captor is blurred.

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Synopsis

Far from home...

Alexandru Carson has a major problem and it isn't with the woman who captured him - it is the fact that he can't remember anything but his name. Confused by his inability to remember, he doesn't know where he is or how he ended up in the middle of a forest that feels bizarrely alien to him. If being lost wasn't bad enough, his fascination with and attraction to his captor is making the situation even more frustrating as he tries to unravel the mystery of what happened.

Ka'ya Stargazer is an outcast among her tribe. Born with the mark of the Huntress, she is feared for her ability as a warrior even while she is a prisoner to the tribe who shuns her. When she discovers an injured man on a scouting trip, she is forced to make a decision that will change her life forever.

Alexandru's kiss leaves Ka'ya craving for more than her life as a warrior. Yet, even as they grow closer, there are powerful forces threatening to

rip them apart. Will Alexandru accept Ka'ya's claim on him, or will she lose him forever when he regains his memory and discovers he does not belong in her world?

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Chapter 1

Alexandru Carson watched from the shadows of a Juniper tree as two men approached his parent's house. He had been waiting for one of the men – the tall man with the blonde hair and aristocratic air that clung to him. An aura of power and danger clung to Simon Drayton and spoke of someone who had lived for a very long time. If Alexandru had his way, that life was about to come to a very painful end.

A sardonic smile curved Alexandru's lips. Simon was so focused on his destination that he made the mistake of not making sure he wasn't walking into a trap. His gaze moved over the dark haired man walking beside Simon. Alexandru had spoken with the quiet, dark-skinned personal bodyguard of Simon on many different occasions. He liked and respected the man's attention to detail. It was obvious that Youssef was aware of what Simon was, yet he remained loyal to the man. Alexandru hoped it would not be a loyalty that cost the younger man his life. Youssef Sharif was human and of little threat to an immortal like Simon and him.

Alexandru's eyes narrowed when Simon stepped onto the path first. On silent feet, Alexandru surged forward. He struck Simon hard in the side, lifting him up into the air, before tossing him away from the front steps. If Simon had been human, the blow to his side would have broken several ribs – but, Simon wasn't human. Even as he twisted in the air Simon

shifted, the beast inside him recognizing he was in danger.

Alexandru circled around the enraged werewolf. He glared at Simon. The pinned up feelings of cold hatred burned through him when he thought of what werewolf had done to his little sister, Tory. Alexandru could feel the fire of his magic licked through his veins. It grew more intense when he saw Simon lift his head to sniff the air before turning his gaze toward Tory's bedroom window. Determined to pull Simon's attention away from his sister, Alexandru sent a powerful burst of electricity toward the werewolf.

"I knew you would come," Alexandru snarled. "I hope your friend told you that I plan to kill you." A soft, menacing growl escaped Simon. "She doesn't want to see you and I'll just make sure she never has to worry about that again."

Alexandru could feel the tension growing in Simon. Simon's back paws kicked up the bits of dark, red clay, grass, and rocks, scattering them behind him. The nails of his front paws grew longer and cut deep into the soil.

Alexandru braced himself, knowing that Simon was about to charge him. The second Simon lunged forward, Alexandra leaped to meet him half way. The two figures collided in a loud clash of rage. Simon knocked Alexandru back several feet, but Alexandru was able to twist and wrap his hands around Simon's throat. He jerked his head back when Simon snapped at him. The force of Simon pushing his massive back

legs against the ground had both men sliding backwards. Alexandru twisted when he felt his grip loosening. Extending his canines, he slashed his teeth across Simon's left ear.

"You are dead, Simon. What you did to Tory.... The penalty is death," Alexandru snapped in fury.

"Mr. Carson, your sister returned Simon's affections. She is his mate," Youssef said, backing away when the two powerful, magical creatures circled each other.

"She was an innocent," Alexandru retorted.

"She loves him," Youssef insisted.

Rage engulfed Alexandru and he attacked with deadly intent. He jumped at the last moment and twirled over Simon's back. Reaching out, he wrapped his arms around the middle of the werewolf. Simon struggled to throw him off, Alexandru locked his arms and began to squeeze. Alexandru felt Simon fall backwards in the hope of dislodging his grip on him, but he had already anticipated the maneuver. He began to apply more pressure.

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Youssef rush forward to help Simon. Alexandru drew up a ball of energy in the palm of his hand. Gripping his left wrist with his right hand, he twisted his left arm until he could release the ball of energy at the human. The powerful bolt struck Youssef in his left shoulder. The sound of bones breaking and Youssef's cry of pain mixed another sound – Tory's cry of horror.

"Stop! Nonny! Help! Alexandru, Simon stop!" Tory cried.

Hearing the voice of his sister sent a powerful surge of energy through Alexandru and he squeezed hard enough to feel Simon's rib crack under the pressure. Alexandru released the werewolf and rolled when Simon twisted around in pain. His gaze remained focused on the werewolf.

In the background he heard his sister's panicked cry for help. Determined to finish the fight while he had the advantage, he started forward. His eyes widened when a dark hole suddenly appeared in front of him. The sound of Tory's voice rising as she spoke an odd spell, the swirling of color of the magical portal, and his forward momentum all registered that this was not going to be good. Tory's magic was unpredictable when she knew what she was doing. It was chaotic when she did it without realizing what she was saying. There was no telling where – or in some cases when – he might find himself.

Unable to stop before he passed through the portal, Alexandru felt the magic surround him. For a moment, he thought his body was going to be pulled apart from the ferocious storm of magic swirling through the long, wormlike tunnel. He tumbled head over feet before being pushed out the other end. His feet landed on soft, uneven ground. Unable to keep his balance, he tumbled down the slope. The downward momentum seemed to continue forever before he felt a moment of weightlessness before he landed with a heavy thud on a path at the bottom. He

would have possibly made it if his head hadn't struck a rock when he rolled.

Darkness swam before his eyes, the world spun crazily, dizzily around him for a brief second before everything faded to a peaceful black. The last thing that Alexandru remembered before his eyes closed was that he didn't remember there being such a thick, lush forest near Magic, New Mexico. His head dropped down against the cool, damp soil and his body relaxed, blissfully silencing the thundering pounding that had begun to beat at his temple.

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Ka'ya Stargazer glanced away from the group of men that stood near the fountain. She placed the jug she had brought to retrieve some water for the night's meal on the wide rim while she propped the bow she was carrying in her left hand against the side. The men's voices faded to silence and she could feel their wary gazes watching her. Lifting her chin, she picked up her jug and filled it before retrieving her bow.

"Huntress," a voice called out from across the wide road.

Ka'ya turned and watched as two of the tribal elders approached her. Her lips tightened in annoyance. They never approached her alone. Glancing at their faces, she could see the wariness in their eyes. Fear – it had a smell to it that she was all too familiar with. At times, the fear of the people living in the tribe threatened to choke her.

“Yes, Elder Mayleaf,” Ka’ya greeted with a bow to her head.

“We were told you had returned from the caves. You were successful in killing the beast that attacked the outer farms?” Elder Mayleaf asked.

Ka’ya’s mouth tightened and she bit back the words that threatened to escape from her lips. The beast turned out to be two Cybear cubs whose mother had been killed by a farmer. The cubs were starving and had ventured into the fields looking for food. Ka’ya had spent half a day gathering berries and leading the creatures through a mountain pass to where a large supply of fresh berries, insects, and edible flowers grew. From the cave she discovered, she suspected the mother Cybear had been crossing back to its summer residence after birthing the cubs at a higher elevation. Ka’ya masked her true opinion of the situation and gave the elder a brief nod.

“Did you kill the beast?” Elder Direwolf demanded.

“Yes, the beast is dead,” Ka’ya replied, tightening her grip on the jug of water. “Is there anything else, Elders. It is time to break my fast. I have not eaten since yesterday morn.”

“Eat if you must, but make it quick. Raiders were spotted on the high trail to the north. We need you to see if they have moved on,” Elder Direwolf instructed.

“Yes, Elder. I will leave at first light,” Ka’ya replied.

"Why can you not leave before dark?" Elder Mayleaf asked in a trembling voice. "The raiders could come while we sleep."

Ka'ya shook her head. "That is why we have the boundary. The lines are secure. I checked them before I came for water," she said impatiently.

"You will leave tonight," Elder Direwolf ordered.

Ka'ya was about to argue, but bit back her frustrated retort when she saw the expression in Elder Direwolf eyes. His gaze swept the open area of the village, pausing on a young boy playing with a stick and pebble outside one of the huts. She stepped to the left, cutting off his view of the boy.

"I will leave immediately," she quietly replied with another bow of her head.

Neither Elder spoke again. They simply turned and walked away from her. Ka'ya stared blindly at the ground until she knew they were far enough away that it was safe for her to turn to look at the boy again. Her expression softened when an older woman had come out to get him from the small hut. For a fraction of a second, Ka'ya's gaze locked with the woman – her mother – before her brother said something, pulling her mother's attention away.

"Protect us, Huntress," one of the men by the fountain mocked, waving his hands in the air while his friends laughed.

"Off into the night with you, Huntress," another man taunted.

"Be careful how you mock me, peasants. While you coward in your huts, I live as a shadow in the

dark,” Ka’ya said, turning to give the men a cold, steady look. “All the lights in your hut cannot brighten the darkest corners. You never know when I might be in one of them, waiting for you to close your eyes.”

The men stumbled backwards when she took a step toward them. They nervously parted, watching her with a wariness that spoke of their fear of her, when she walked between them. Ka’ya kept her head held high. She had made a promise to herself when she was younger to never let the opinions of the others in her village affect the way she felt about herself. If she did, it would open her to pain. Self-doubting herself would also leave her vulnerable.

Her gaze swept to the hut where her mother and young brother had disappeared inside. It was dangerous to approach them. The Elders already used the unspoken threat that if she did not do what she was told there would be serious repercussions against what was left of her small family.

Her father had already paid the ultimate price to protect her. They had banished him from the village nearly ten years before when her brother was but a babe and she was twelve. All because of the mark she was born with – the mark of the Huntress.

The superstitions of the tribe were deeply rooted and one man, Jorge, the spiritual leader of her people used it those superstitions with the same deadly accuracy as she did her bow or blade. Ten years before, Jorge had the ear of the elders. Now, he ruled the village with a ruthlessness that bordered on

insanity. Over time, Jorge had replaced the elders with those in the village that supported his beliefs.

Jorge both feared and desired Ka'ya. It mattered not to him that there was near thirty years difference to their age. He believed if he possessed her it would give him power. Ka'ya's father believed slicing Jorge's blackened heart out of his chest would have been better. Days after her father's banishment for threatening to do just that, Jorge had ordered Ka'ya brought to him. Ka'ya had escaped Jorge's twisted plans for her because of a raiders attack.

A smile curved her lips at the memory. The few villagers who glanced her way quickly diverted their eyes. Amusement swept through Ka'ya. She suspected the grim pleasure showed on her face. When the raiders attacked, Ka'ya feared for her mother and newborn baby brother. She had escaped her guards in the confusion.

The swarm of Vikar raiders came searching for items of value – including those strong enough to make into slaves. Ka'ya could still smell the smoke and the blood that soaked the ground. It was the first time she had ever witnessed such a horrific attack. Instead of fear, though, the smell and the clash of swords woke something inside her. She felt a power and awareness unlike anything she had felt before.

..*

Ten years before:

Ka'ya stiffly stood between the two elders who had brought her to the spiritual leader's hut. Her nose wrinkled at the foul smell of burning spices. The smoke from it burned her eyes, but she refused to rub them. The woman on her right smothered a cough while the man to her left raised a hand and wiped at the corner of his eye.

The dim interior was depressing. It was nothing like the brightly lit interior of her home. The ceiling was covered in soot and made the little light that streamed through the ceiling look gray and dirty. She glanced around the interior with distaste. The bones of dead animals lay scattered across a long table and on the floor. Bottles of liquids lined several shelves against a wall. Everything looked like dirty and unkempt. Ka'ya did not understand how this man could declare himself better than her father. He knew nothing of what it meant to understand the spirit of the land and animals.

"She is here, Spiritual Leader," the woman called.

Ka'ya watched as Jorge appeared from another room. He was a thin man with beady, almost black eyes. Dark shadows under them made the sockets around his eyes appear larger than they were in reality. His alabaster skin was streaked with smudges of soot from his dirty fingers and made him look older than his forty years. He wore a dirty, off-white tunic over dark brown pants and boots. His hair was thin on top, with just a thin line on the top that was swept to the side.

He silently returned Ka'ya's stare, as if willing her to look away in fear. Instead, she lifted her chin in defiance. Even when he took a step forward and ran his dirty fingers down along her cheek, she didn't turn away. She knew he was angered by her lack of fear when he gripped her chin.

"Do you know who I am?" he demanded in a reedy voice.

Ka'ya pulled her chin free and glared at him. "Yes," she replied, biting her tongue to keep from saying anything else.

Jorge gazed down at her. She silently returned his stare. She didn't flinch when he raised his hand to strike her. The blow never came – thanks to the sound of the alarms. Jorge glanced up at the man standing next to her and jerked his head toward the door.

"Find out what is happening," he ordered.

Ka'ya turned slightly when the elder opened the door. The familiar sound of the thud and the elder stumbling back reverberated through her. In the center of the elder's chest the long shaft of an arrow protruded. The woman to her side screamed when several more arrows flew through the door. Jorge and the woman fell to the ground. Ka'ya took advantage of the open door and bolted.

Emerging outside, she could see more than two dozen Vikar swarming through the village setting fire to the carts of hay and slicing through the men who charged them. Her gaze moved to one of the raiders. He was dragging her mother out of their home. Her

mother was holding her newborn brother protectively in her arms.

Ka'ya started forward to help her mother. Her gaze fixed on her mother and brother, she bent near the body of a fallen guard and pulled the bloody sword from his body. The moment her hand wound around the handle, the power she felt exploded through her body and a flood of knowledge swept through her mind. It was as if she had lived through thousands of battles, had hunted the greatest beasts, and knew what needed to be done. Twirling, she gripped the sword with a strength that belied her tender years. She sliced through one of the attackers as he reached for her.

As she neared her family hut, her mother fell. The raider who had grabbed her lifted the long shaft of his spear to strike her mother dead. Ka'ya pulled her arm back and threw the sword. The blade sank deep in the raider's chest, driving him back against the stone wall of the hut. Racing forward, Ka'ya knelt and helped her mother to her feet.

"Inside," she said in a soft urgent tone.

"Ka'ya," her mother whispered, reaching out to run a trembling hand down her daughter's face.

Ka'ya smiled. "Go inside. I will protect you," she said.

Mayli looked worried back at her daughter, but hurried inside. Her brother whimpered, but her mother quickly soothed him. Ka'ya followed her mother into the bright hut. She could feel her

mother's gaze on her when she reached for her father's bow and arrows.

"Ka'ya, don't go," Mayli begged when Ka'ya turned back to the door.

Ka'ya glanced at her mother. In the background the sounds of screams and fighting continued. Her face tightened and once again she felt the pull of power rush through her. She knew that if the raiders were not defeated or driven off, there would be nothing left of the village – including her family.

"I have to," Ka'ya replied, turning and drawing an arrow when the door opened.

She released the arrow. The raider standing in the doorway looked down in surprise before he fell forward. Ka'ya pulled another arrow from her sheath and walked toward the door. Stepping over the body of the dead raider, she released three more arrows before disappearing outside.

Ten arrows – ten raiders dead by her bow. By her sword, she killed another five before the raiders realized that something was amiss. The few men in the village at the time of the raid that still lived drew back as she skillfully deflected the attacks against her. Revived by the dwindling number of raiders, they began fighting beside her until the remaining raiders retreated in defeat.

Ka'ya turned in a slow circle as the villagers slowly emerged from their huts and gathered around her. She could feel their gaze on her. When Jorge stepped out of his hut where he had been hiding, she lifted her chin in defiance. Gripping a bloody sword

in her right hand, she reached up with her left and pushed the thin tunic she was wearing to the side to reveal her shoulder and the mark of the Huntress.

“I am Ka’ya Stargazer. I am the Huntress,” she said in a clear voice. Her light green eyes glowed with the supernatural fire as she stared Jorge down. She slowly lifted the blood coated blade in her hand to point it at him. “You will never possess my powers.” Ka’ya could hear the soft gasps of the villagers. The mark that her parents had tried to hide, the one that Jorge had somehow found out about and decided to use for his own purpose, was now clear for all to see. She would not hide any longer. No one would control her – or so she thought. Love was a very powerful emotion. She would discover that love could also make you very vulnerable to those who could not feel it, and knew how to use it to their advantage.

This is a place holder. Preorder your copy today and don’t forget to check out Magic, New Mexico Kindle Worlds: Where being abnormal is the norm!

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About the Author

S.E. Smith is a *New York Times*, *USA TODAY*, *International*, and *Award-Winning* Bestselling author of science fiction, romance, fantasy, paranormal, and contemporary works for adults, young adults, and children. She enjoys writing a wide variety of genres that pull her readers into worlds that take them away.