

Wicked Deeds on a Winter's Night (Immortals After Dark)

By Kresley Cole



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If they defeat the evil that surrounds them, can Mari deny Bowen when he demands her body and soul—or will she risk everything for her fierce protector?



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Wicked Deeds on a Winter's Night (Immortals After Dark) By Kresley Cole Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Review

Leave it to the awe-inspiring Cole to dish up a combustible mix of sorcery and passion. One for the keeper shelf! -- Romantic Times Magazine, 4 1/2 Stars, HOT

About the Author

Kresley Cole is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of the electrifying Immortals After Dark paranormal series, the young adult Arcana Chronicles series, the erotic Game Makers series, and five award-winning historical romances. A master's grad and former athlete, she has traveled over much of the world and draws from those experiences to create her memorable characters and settings. You can learn more about her and her work at KresleyCole.com or Facebook.com/KresleyCole. Sign up for Kresley's email newsletter to receive the latest book release updates, as well as info about contests and giveaways (KresleyCole.com/Newsletter).

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1



Present day
Tomb of the Incubi, the jungles of Guatemala
Day 3 of the Talisman's Hie
Prize: Four Mayan sacrificial headdresses,
each worth seven points

Stalking me, Mr. MacRieve?" Mariketa the Awaited asked the Lykae behind her without turning around. In the dark of a corridor leading to a burial chamber, Bowen MacRieve had been following her silently. But she'd felt him staring at her—just as she had at the Talisman's Hie assembly three nights ago.

"No' likely, witch." How could such a rumbling Scots' burr sound so menacing? "I only stalk what I want to catch."

Mari did turn to slant him a glance at that, even knowing he couldn't see her face under the hood of the scarlet cloak she always wore. But by the light of her lantern hanging over her shoulder, she could see his, and used the cover to disguise her long, appreciative look.

She inwardly sighed. Lykae males were notoriously good-looking, and the few she'd seen had lived up to their reputation, but this one was heart-poundingly sexy.

He had black hair, stick straight and thick, reaching to the collar of his obviously expensive shirt. His body—which she'd found herself thinking about frequently over the past few days—was sublime. He stood a good bit over six feet tall, and though the corridor was wide enough for two normal-size people to pass, his

broad shoulders and big, rangy build filled the space.

But even with all his many attractions, his eyes were what made him so unique. They were the color of rich, warm amber, and yet there was a kind of sinister light to them, which she liked.

She was a little sinister, too.

"Look your fill?" he asked, his tone scathing. Yes, he was sexy, but unfortunately, his dislike of witches was well known.

"I'm done with you," she answered, and meant it. She didn't have time to pine after brusque werewolf warriors if she planned to be the first of her kind ever to win the Hie, an immortal scavenger hunt à la The Amazing Race.

With an inward shrug, she continued on toward yet another burial chamber. This was the tenth she'd investigated over the hours she and several other competitors had been down deep inside this never-ending Mayan tomb.

She might have surprised him with her curt dismissal because a moment passed before he followed her. The only sounds in the echoing space were his heavy footfalls, which he no longer bothered to muffle. The silence between them was grueling.

"Who opened the stone slab to the tomb?" he finally asked, trailing far too closely behind her.

"The three elven archers and a couple of demons." The archers, two males and a female, were deadly shooters with lightning-quick speed, and the male rage demons were incredibly powerful—second in physical strength only to the Lykae. Yet even for them, the stone portcullis sealing the tomb's entrance had been nearly impossible to budge.

They'd realized the entire pyramidal structure had shifted from time and earthquakes and now rested on the portcullis, making it weigh tons. Raising it had taken all of the others cooperating—with the two demons lifting it and the archers shoving an enormous boulder under it to prop it open.

"And they just let you enter after their effort?"

She stopped and faced him again. "What should they have done, Mr. MacRieve?" The others had not only allowed her to enter. Though she barely knew any of them, they had wanted to work together since there were four prizes. Cade, one of the demons, had even helped her climb down the dozen feet from the outer entrance into the first anteroom. Then they'd all split up to cover the maze of chambers and vowed to the Lore to alert the others of a find.

MacRieve's smile was a cruel twist of his lips. "I know exactly what I would have done."

"I know exactly how I would have retaliated." He seemed surprised that she didn't fear him, but the truth was that she didn't spook easily—when not faced with heights or unnecessarily large insects. And she was well aware of how vicious the Hie competitors could be as they raced around the world for prizes.

This ruthlessness in the Hie was why Mari had been sent by the House of Witches to compete, even though she was only twenty-three and hailed from the shady New Orleans coven, the slacker Animal House of witches. And even though she had not yet made the turn from mortal to immortal.

But Mari was not above trickery, and unlike many witches, she would not hesitate to use magick to harm another if they deserved it—and if she could manage it with her volatile powers.

MacRieve closed in until nearly seven feet of seething werewolf male loomed over her. He was at least a foot taller than she was and hundreds of times stronger, but she forced herself to stand her ground.

"Watch your step, little witch. You doona wish to anger one such as me."

The grand prize for the Hie was an object called Thrane's Key, a key that allowed its possessor to go back in time—not just once, but twice. For a tool like that, she knew he was ready to take her out of the contest. So she had to convince him that it was impossible for him to do so.

"Likewise, you shouldn't anger me." Her voice was steady as she looked up at him. "Remember that I could turn your blood to acid as an afterthought," she said, baldly lying.

"Aye, I've heard rumors of your power." He narrowed his eyes. "Curious, though, that you dinna open the tomb with one flick of your finger."

Yes, she might have managed to lift the portcullis—with concentration, an unprecedented bout of luck, and the absence of a hangover. Oh, and if she were in mortal danger.

Unfortunately, her power was adrenaline-based, making it as infinite as it was uncontrollable.

"You think I should use magick like mine to open a tomb?" Mari asked in a scoffing tone. Mistress of bluffing, working it here. "That'd be like calling you in to lift a feather."

He tilted his head, sizing her up. After what seemed like an hour, he began walking again.

Mari gave an inward sigh of relief. If anyone in the Lore found out how vulnerable she really was, she'd be doomed. She knew this, but no matter how hard she worked, whenever she manifested and unleashed significant power, things ended up exploding.

As her befuddled mentor Elianna explained, "Horses have powerful legs—but that doesn't mean they're prima ballerinas." The ancient Elianna trained with Mari daily to control the destructive nature of her spells, because she believed the subtle magicks invoked the most fear in their enemies.

And the House of Witches brokered in fear.

The corridor finally ended at a broad, high wall, covered in carvings of ghoulish faces and animals. Mari lifted her lantern high and the reliefs seemed to move in shadow. They'd apparently been put there to guard a small tunnel opening near the floor, which itself was made out like a gaping mouth with fangs dropping down.

She waved the Lykae forward. "Age before beauty, Mr. MacRieve." She sized him up again, then studied the small opening, which couldn't be more than three feet square. "If you think you can fit."

He stood motionless, clearly not about to be directed. "Only humans call me Mr. MacRieve."

She shrugged. "I'm not a human." Her mother was a fey druidess, and her late father had been a warlock of questionable repute. So Mari was a fey witch or a "weylock," as her buddies teased. "So would you like me to call you Bowen, or Bowe for short?"

"Bowe is what my friends call me, so you doona."

What an ass. . . . "No problem. I have a slew of other more fitting names for you. Most of them end in er."

He ignored her comment. "You in the tunnel first."

"Don't you think it'd be unbecoming for me to be on my hands and knees in front of you? Besides, you don't need my lantern to see in the dark, and if you go first, you'll be sure to lose me and get to the prize first."

"I doona like anything, or anyone, at my back." He crossed his arms over his chest and leaned a shoulder against a snarling visage on the stone wall. She'd never seen a Lykae turn into its towering werewolf form, but knew from those who had that this male could be as frightening as any monster, real or imagined. "And you'll have your little red cloak on," he continued, "so I will no' be able to see anything about you that might be . . . unbecoming."

"Twisting my words? I'll have you know that I am criminally cute—"

"Then why hide behind a cloak?"

"I'm not hiding." In fact, that was precisely what she was doing. "And I like to wear it." She hated it.

Even before her birth, she'd been predicted to be the Awaited One, the most powerful born to the House of Witches in centuries—but four years ago, it was also foretold that a male from the Lore would recognize her as his own and claim her. He would seek to lock her away, guarding her with a ferocity that no magicks could defeat, thus robbing the House of her powers.

Since the prediction, she'd been forced to cover herself every single time she set foot outside her home. Needless to say, the robust dating life of her late teens had taken a hit.

She sported the cloak—a red one because she was a Scarlet Letter-type rebel at heart—and as a backup, she also hid behind a magickal glamour that disguised her looks, the tone of her voice, and her scent.

If a male like MacRieve did see her, he would perceive a brunette with blue eyes—when in fact she was a redhead with gray eyes—and he would have difficulty recalling anything that was the same, like her features, her figure, or the length of her hair. The glamour was so second nature that she hardly thought about it anymore.

Even with all these precautions, it followed that unattached males in the Lore were to be avoided. Yet Mari had heard at the Hie assembly—a gossip fest if she'd ever seen one—that MacRieve had already found his mate and lost her more than a century ago.

Mari had felt sympathy for him. A Lykae's entire existence centered around his mate, and in his long immortal life, he would get only one—just one—chance in an eternity to find happiness.

When she saw he wasn't budging, she muttered, "Fine. Beauty before age." She unlooped her lantern strap

and crawled in. The space was tighter than she'd imagined, but she didn't have time to rethink her decision because he climbed in directly after her. Resigned, she exhaled and held her lantern up to light her way.

The stone was cool and moist and she was glad for her cloak—until she caught her knee on the end, and the tie around her neck yanked her head down. When it happened again, she shimmied, working the material back so that it flowed behind her as she made progress forward. There. Better.

Five seconds later: "MacRieve, you're on my cloak. Let up—"

Before she could react, he reached between her knees and then up against her chest to slice the tie at her neck with one claw. Her eyes went wide and she dropped her light to snatch fistfuls of cloth, but he jerked the cloak out of her grasp.

"Give it back!"

"It was slowing you—and therefore me—down."

She gritted her teeth, struggling to control her temper. "If you had gone first—"

"I dinna. If you want it, why no' use magick to take it from me?"

Did he suspect how volatile her power was? Was he sussing out her weaknesses? "You really do not want me to do that."

"You really must no' want your cloak back. Come then, witchling, just take it from me."

Glamour or not, she had grown used to the physical security of the garment. And when she realized she wasn't getting it back from him, Mari just checked the urge to rub her bared arms. All at once, she became very much aware of how high her hiking shorts were on her thighs and how her tank top was riding up, about to reveal the mark on her lower back.

She steeled herself and made her tone nonchalant. "Keep the cloak." Though she knew he was ogling her, she forced herself to put one knee in front of the other. "It'll be worth money one day."

After a few moments, he said, "Doona fret, witch. You're no' so unbecoming from my angle. Bit scrawny where it counts, but no' too bad."

Yep, ogling. Many adjectives could be used to describe her ass, but scrawny was not among them. He's just making these comments and brushing up against you to unnerve you. Knowing that didn't make his efforts less effective! "Scrawny where it counts, MacRieve? Funny, I'd heard the same about you."

He gave a kind of humorless half chuckle and finally followed. "No' likely. Maybe you're just too young to have heard the rumors about Lykae males. Tender wee ears and such."

No, she'd heard. And over the last couple of days, she had wondered about that rumor and if it applied to him.

How long was this damned tunnel—

"Still, lass," he grated. Her eyes widened again when she felt his hot palm lying flat against the back of her thigh. "There's a scorpion tangled up in all that hair of yours."

"Get your hand off me, MacRieve! You think I can't see what you're doing? I've been scanning every inch of this tunnel—I would have seen a scorpion." When she started again, he squeezed her leg. His thumb claw pressed against her skin, high on her inner thigh, sending an unexpected shot of pleasure through her. She had to stifle a shiver.

It was only after she felt a whisper of touch over her hair that she got her wits again. "Like I'm supposed to believe there's a scorpion and it just happens to be in the tunnel we're crawling in and then in my hair? Any other creature-feature props you'd like to reference? Is there a mummy's hand tangled up in there? I'm really surprised you didn't go with 'classic tarantula.'"

His arm shot out between her legs—again—jostling against the front of her body as he tossed something in front of her. Something with mass. She held her lantern farther forward—

The sight of a scorpion as big as her hand had her scrambling back . . . wedging herself firmly against MacRieve—a very awkward position to be in with anyone, but especially with a werewolf.

He stiffened all around her. Every inch of him. She felt his arms bulging over her shoulders and his chiseled abs taut over her back.

His growing erection strained thick against her backside. So the rumors about werewolf males are true, she thought dazedly. Exhibit A is quite insistent.

"Move forward," he said, grating the words. He was breathing heavily right over her ear.

"No way. Kind of between a scorpion and a hard place here." She bit her lip, wishing one of her friends had heard her say that.

He eased back from her. "I killed it," he said between breaths. "You can pass, just doona let it touch you."

"Why do you care?" She frowned to find herself feeling chilled without him over her.

"Doona. A sting will slow you down. And I'm behind you, remember?"

"Like I'm going to forget that anytime soon." Then his callous words sunk in. "Hey, werewolf, aren't you supposed to gnaw on your prey or play with it with shuffling paws or something? Want me to save it for you?"

"I could put it back where I found it, witch."

"I could turn you into a toad." Maybe an exploded toad.

Without warning, he fingered the small, black tattoo on her lower back. "What does this script mean?"

She did gasp then, as much from the shock of his touch there as from her visceral reaction to it. She wanted to arch up to his hand and couldn't understand why. She snapped, "Are you done groping me?"

"Canna say. Tell me what the marking means."

Mari had no idea. She'd had it ever since she could remember. All she knew was that her mother used to write out that mysterious lettering in all of her correspondence. Or, at least her mother had before she'd abandoned Mari in New Orleans to go on her two-hundred-year-long druid sabbatical—

He tapped her there, impatiently awaiting an answer.

"It means 'drunk and lost a bet.' Now keep your hands to yourself unless you want to be an amphibian." When the opening emerged ahead, she crawled heedlessly for it and scrambled out with her lantern swinging wildly. She'd taken only three steps into the new chamber before he'd caught her wrist, spinning her around.

As his gaze raked over her, he reached forward and pulled a lock of her long hair over her shoulder. He seemed unaware that he was languidly rubbing his thumb over the curl. "Why hide this face behind a cloak?" he murmured, cocking his head to the side as he studied her. "No' a damn thing's wrong with you that I can tell. But you look fey. Explains the name."

"How can I resist these suave compliments?" He was right about the name though. Many of the fey had names beginning in Mari or Kari.

She gave his light hold on her hair a pointed look, and he dropped it like it was hot, then scowled at her as if she were to blame.

"Right now you're working your spells, are you no'?" He actually leaned in to scent her.

"No, not at all. Believe me, you'd know."

As if he hadn't heard her, he continued, "Aye, you are." His expression was growing more savage by the instant. "Just as you were born to do."

But for some reason she wasn't afraid. She was . . . excited. He must have seen something in her eyes that he didn't like, because he abruptly turned from her.

As he surveyed their surroundings, she scrutinized him, searching for a single thing about his appearance that she didn't find sexy—and failing.

All immortals were "frozen" into their immortality when they reached the peak of their strength and were best able to survive. But MacRieve had turned later than other males she'd seen in the Lore. He appeared as though he'd aged to be at least thirty-five. And, damn, it was a good look for him.

His clothes were well made but raffish. A small, ancient-looking medallion hung from a short length of leather around his neck, and a large hunting knife was strapped to his belt. He made Indiana Jones look like a poser pretty boy.

MacRieve also wore a whip at his side, no doubt to be prepared for an encounter with the vampire who'd entered the Hie. Like many demons, vampires could teleport—or trace—making them impossible to vanquish. Mari knew that some younger vampires could be trapped with a whip, preventing them from tracing and making them easier to kill.

That night at the assembly, MacRieve had clashed against the vampire in a bloody, vicious brawl, yet never had Mari seen anything so beautiful as the way he'd moved. The fight had been broken up by a Valkyrie, but Mari could have watched him for hours. . . .

When MacRieve visibly tensed, she followed his gaze. There, toward the back wall was a sarcophagus, the first she'd seen. A headdress would have to be within!

They both raced forward, colliding right before it.

With a growl he grabbed her arms to toss her away, his gaze already back on the crypt, but then he did a double take, frowning at her. He faced her fully as his grip eased on her. "You actually think to play with me?" His hands skimmed down her arms, then rested on her hips.

She exhaled a shaky breath. "Why do you assume I'm working spells?" She might have the requisite adrenaline flowing, but knew she couldn't focus it. Especially not since she could feel the heat of his rough hands through the material of her shorts.

"For one hundred and eighty years I've no' touched another." He leaned in closer to her. "Have never even given a woman a second look. But now I canna seem to keep my hands off a slip of a witch," he rasped at her ear. "A witch who has me feeling like I'll die if I doona find out what it'd be like to kiss her." He drew back, his face a mask of rage. "O' course it's a goddamned spell."

He wanted to kiss her now? Why now? He'd been faithful to his dead mate all this time? The idea softened something inside her—even as alarm trickled in.

What if she was working a spell? Elianna had once advised Mari to be careful what she wished for. When Mari had nodded at the old truism, Elianna had added, "No. Really. Be careful. We don't know the extent of your powers, and many witches can effect their desires with a mere thought."

Did Mari want to kiss Bowen MacRieve so badly that she was enthralling him?

When he lifted her onto the sarcophagus and wedged his hips between her legs, she suspected she might. She swallowed. "I take it you plan to find out what it'd be like?"

The battle raging inside him was clear on his face. "Stop this, Mariketa." The way he rumbled her name with his accent made her melt. He removed his hands from her, but when he rested them beside her hips, his fingers curled until his dark claws dug into the stone. "Can you no' ken why I'm in this contest? I seek her again and wish to be true."

He wanted his mate back. Of course. He wanted to use Thrane's Key to go back in time and prevent her death. Surprisingly, Mari resented the woman who'd engendered such loyalty in this warrior for so many years. "I'm not . . . or I don't mean to be . . . doing anything to you," Mari whispered, but the way she was reacting to his scent, his mesmerizing eyes, and his hard body between her thighs belied the words.

There was an aura about him that was staggering to her, making it difficult to think. It wasn't mere male heat and sensuality. It was raw sexuality, animalistic in its intensity—and she was starving for it.

Ah, gods, she did want him to kiss her. Wanted it with everything that she was and willed him to do so. Want me as fiercely as I want you . . . desire me as you've never desired another.

He cupped the back of her neck, staring down at her. As she gazed up in fascination, the amber of his eyes turned to ice blue. He seemed desperate to recognize something in her, and when he clearly didn't find it, his hand on her began to shake. "Damn you, witch, I doona want another."

She suddenly knew two things: He was about to kiss her so fiercely she would never be the same again.

And he would hate himself for it afterward and despise her forever. . . .

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Paul Otoole:

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Mary Moore:

A lot of people always spent all their free time to vacation or go to the outside with them family or their friend. Do you know? Many a lot of people spent they will free time just watching TV, or even playing video games all day long. If you need to try to find a new activity honestly, that is look different you can read some sort of book. It is really fun for you personally. If you enjoy the book that you read you can spent all day every day to reading a guide. The book Wicked Deeds on a Winter's Night (Immortals After Dark) it is quite good to read. There are a lot of folks that recommended this book. These people were enjoying reading this book. When you did not have enough space to bring this book you can buy typically the e-book. You can m0ore very easily to read this book out of your smart phone. The price is not too expensive but this book features high quality.

Heather Killen:

This Wicked Deeds on a Winter's Night (Immortals After Dark) is great book for you because the content which is full of information for you who also always deal with world and possess to make decision every minute. This kind of book reveal it data accurately using great organize word or we can claim no rambling sentences included. So if you are read the idea hurriedly you can have whole facts in it. Doesn't mean it only will give you straight forward sentences but difficult core information with lovely delivering sentences. Having Wicked Deeds on a Winter's Night (Immortals After Dark) in your hand like having the world in your arm, information in it is not ridiculous one particular. We can say that no guide that offer you world throughout ten or fifteen second right but this guide already do that. So , this really is good reading book. Hey there Mr. and Mrs. busy do you still doubt which?

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