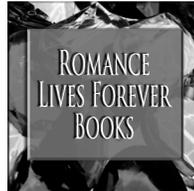


EXCERPT FROM
JAWK
TALES OF THE CHOSEN

Kayelle Allen



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Vow of the CHOSEN

We are Called to serve
We are Honored to protect
We are Obedient to the vow
We are Safeguards of the truth
We are Enablers of life
We are Neutralizers of threats

The Tales of the Chosen Trilogy

When the fate of hearts rivals the fate of worlds, victory costs everything. The Chosen serve immortals known as Sempervians. Like any group, it has its hidden alignments, mistrust, and mistakes. It also harbors enemies and spies within its ranks -- some known and tolerated, others hidden behind layers so convoluted even the ones who live forever haven't figured them out.

This trilogy, a complex tangle of alliances, focuses on relationships among immortals and the mortals Wulf Gabriel, Alitus Vivaldi, and Jawk Brighton.

Chapter One

Tarthian Empire, Tarth

Tarth City, Top Tier District

Batchelors Four

Sumertsag 77, 4664 Tradestandard date

Waiter Jawk Brighton bowed to the booth full of businessmen. "Have a safe trip home, gentlemen. I hope you'll come back to Batchelors again soon." He made no attempt to hide his fangs as he smiled. Ears down and out in respect, he placed a hand over his heart, bowed once more, then took a step back and walked away.

As he turned the corner toward the kitchen, he caught a glimpse of them in the mirrored wall. To a man, all seven leaned out to ogle his ass. *Haven't they seen a Kin before? Or maybe any ass will do.* Being the first Kin to work here had brought him plenty of attention last night, and record-breaking tips. *Geez, and they think cats are curious ...* Everyone wanted to see him up close, touch him, and ask questions. *Cool eyes. Can you see in the dark like a cat? Say something in meow. I thought Kin had fur. Do you have claws? Are they sharp? Is it true Kin can't whistle because of their fangs?*

But the worst had to be, "Here, kitty, kitty!" followed by laughter.

He blew through the right-side kitchen doors and scanned the staff ID bracelet on his wrist. Up popped a tray at his station, and the hoverbot underneath lassoed itself to his arm. Holding the tray overhead, he swept back out the other side. The time-elapsed-in-kitchen clock over the door read 2.7 seconds.

He chuckled. *Beat my trainer's best, and it's my second day on the job. Who's the best, now, huh?*

The human-oriented Batchelors Four with its crystal, and white tablecloths catered to the upscale gay crowd in the empire's capitol city. To be seen here, the powerful feigned a gay inclination even if they never acted on it. Whether a proper business lunch, a tycoon-style impress-the-hell-out-of-the-client dinner, a few friendly drinks, or a casual pick-up, business deals rose and fell like the fate of empires in Batchelors' candle-lit booths.

"Who's thirsty?" Jawk grinned at a table of three businessmen, all of whom looked up from notes they were making. He parked the hoverbot next to the table. "A Black Mystery for the handsome gentleman in white who seems to be all work tonight." He placed a napkin and the black vodka in front of the man on his left and was rewarded with an immediate smile. "Gin for my friend with the gorgeous ginger-colored hair." He held the gaze of the customer a moment longer than necessary, then served the last drink with a quick flourish of his wrist. "And whiskey straight for a fine-looking gentleman who..." He turned over one hand as if waiting for him to finish the sentence.

"Isn't," his friends finished for him, to laughter all around.

Jawk winked at him. He released the hoverbot, which rose to the ceiling and returned to the kitchen. "Gentlemen, your server's taking a quick break." He pulled a square paper napkin from his apron pocket and turned it on the table so it formed a diamond. His name was scrawled across one corner. "I'm Jawk. If you want me..." He widened his eyes in a flirty smile. "Oh, pardon. I mean if you desire my services..."

The men broke into chuckles. Jawk laughed with them.

"Just tap this button." He stuck out a claw and touched a glowing button on the table. Batchelors' holographic menu popped up. "I'll come immediately." He patted his chest as if flustered, flashing them another smile. "Oh, well--it might take me a little longer than that..."

More laughter. Jawk clasped his hands behind him. "Anything else for you, gentlemen? What other appetites may I satisfy tonight?"

He programmed their generous food order into the menu and shut it down before bowing away. He grabbed up an errant hoverbot that hadn't returned to its docking station, then picked up a pitcher and refilled three beers on his way back to the kitchen. His orders were up, and he served the trio of friends before routing to the other side of the club to fill in for another server going on break.

Two tables away, wearing a tuxedo and dark glasses, sat the man he'd come here to spy on.

No way to sugarcoat it. Spying was what it was. It had taken him three solid years undercover, posing as nothing more than a hard-working college student. Which he was, truthfully--he'd busted his ass getting those grades. But he'd gotten into Batchelors, *the* favorite hangout of Luc Saint-Cyr.

The Harbinger. The Man. Crime lord extraordinaire, whom no law enforcement in the empire could pin down. And also a legitimate businessman. Hell, the simple power of his name alone was a business. The number one mover and shaker, a tycoon and entrepreneur unlike anything the Tarthian Empire had ever seen or likely would again.

And unknown to all but a tiny handful of people called the Chosen, he was immortal. A Sempervian. He'd amassed generations of wealth and power he could use to his advantage. Taking Luc down would be the story of the year, defeating him the coup of a lifetime.

Jawk's college roommate, Nij, had given him two huge breaks in one. Since Nij was graduating, he needed someone to replace him at Batchelors, and Jawk jumped at the chance. Setting the cherry on top of the ice cream, he asked Jawk off the record if he was open to a threesome with a patron interested in meeting a Kin.

Always cautious, Jawk had wanted clarification. *"You mean, you, me, and a client from Batchelors?"*

"You, a client, and the client's lover. They're into Dom/slave games. He likes to tie him up and watch. You can't let the bosses find out. They'd fire your ass in a flash. Still, damn good money. I worked one party he threw, and it paid for an entire semester at school. Had spending money left over from tips his friends sent afterward. I shit you not. You into the scene?"

When the client turned out to be Luc Saint-Cyr and his lover, Wulf Gabriel, everything fell into place. After work tonight, Luc was giving Wulf a surprise.

"Jawk, how's it going?" Mr. Vandermeer, one of the owners, held out a tray, which Jawk took. "They keeping you busy out there?"

"Oh, yes, sir. We're packed." He grinned, ears forward. "This place runs smoother than a hoverbot on oil. Everything's right where you can find it. I'm having no trouble keeping up."

"You're doing a great job. I've heard good comments so far." He patted the side of Jawk's arm. "Keep it up. Glad to have you on board."

"Thank you, sir." He bowed. After he put away the tray, he started stocking the bar

near Luc's table.

The Man's ability to slug back whiskey and not get drunk was legendary. He sat alone, swirling his whiskey, watching the crowd. He had the biggest booth, all the way in the back, with a view straight to the door. Six different employees cautioned Jawk his first night never to seat anyone there. It was the Man's and no one else's, no matter how busy they got. He was a part-owner, and when the Man walked in, he got seated. Now.

The immortal had an impressive presence and an imposing height. Six-five, according to the dossier.

Luc sat up straight as a wistful smile bared his heart, but he steeled himself back into icy control and brushed a hand down his tuxedo jacket. "Finally."

With his Kin hearing, Jawk could hear the man's whisper, despite the noise of the club. He turned toward the commotion at the door. Wulf Gabriel had arrived.

The empress herself, showering jewels on one and all, could not have staged a more impressive entrance.

Even the staff, who knew better, flocked around him. Wulf's masculine beauty, strong jaw, and chiseled features had rocketed him to the top of the fashion modeling industry years ago, and time hadn't dulled them. In addition to his physical appeal, he was the producer for the hottest music groups on the scene today.

The club's two owners shooed everyone back to work and hugged him. Their dossier indicated Wulf had known them for years. He kissed them both like they'd been lovers, and started across the room toward Luc. Every person along the way stopped him to talk and shake his hand. Wulf cast his lover an apologetic smile and made a kissing motion.

"It never fails," Luc whispered. "Every time we meet in public." The drink stirrer snapped between his hands. He flipped the pieces on the table and drummed his fingers. "Patience, old man, patience."

Jawk's wrist ID buzzed, signaling he was wanted in another area. *Tonight's the night, Luc. Enjoy your freedom. After this, you're a marked man.* He pulled himself away from his quarry and hustled toward his new section.

About the Author

I am a best-selling American author who's been published since 2004. In 2006, as a response to questions from friends for marketing help, I founded Marketing for Romance Writers, a peer-mentoring group open to the entire literary community. MFRW is now a large online author peer-mentoring group, and provides no-cost training in book marketing skills as well as free promotional services its members. In 2009, I opened the Romance Lives Forever blog for authors. The site now has a reach of over three million. I teach workshops online, and I'm an invited speaker at numerous online conferences. I've been a featured speaker at Outlantacon since its founding and hold an honorary lifetime membership there. I was a board member for Gaylaxicon, and have been a panelist at DragonCon and a featured guest at NerdaCon. My books have won multiple awards, including the EPIC eBook Award for Science Fiction Erotic Romance, and one was a finalist in Fantasy. My motto is "romance lives forever" and my books include unstoppable heroes, uncompromising love, and unforgettable passion. I'm married to my personal hero and we live in the metro Atlanta area, near our three grown children and five grandchildren. My husband and I are both US Navy Veterans. We met while on active duty in Memphis, TN.

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