

## **T'En Trilogy Book Three**

### **Extract**

#### **Chapter One**

Torn by conflicting loyalties, Imoshen knelt by Reothe's bed. With the arrival of evening, scented candles now burned in the chamber that had so recently been her prison. In the space of one day, their positions had been reversed, and the tower room had been stripped of its rich hangings in honour of its new occupant.

She should let Reothe die, for if he regained his gifts he would be too powerful to contain, and he had sworn to reclaim the throne whatever the cost. But to stand by and let someone die when she could heal them went against her instincts. All day she had fought to save him, easing his pain with herbs, and when this failed, drawing on her innate healing powers.

'Here, sip this.' She lifted Reothe's head and held the tisane to his lips. His suffering had pared back his features, emphasising his high forehead, narrow nose, prominent cheek bones. He grimaced at the bitter taste. 'It will lower your fever.' Obediently he drained the goblet. She smoothed the damp silver hair from his pale forehead and his hand squeezed hers in gratitude. Her heart contracted.

After what he had done she should hate him, but she could not. He was the last of her kind. Both Throwbacks to the T'En race which had settled Fair Isle, they were marked by their wine-dark eyes, striking colouring and six fingered hands. Last survivors of the old royal line, they possessed the T'En gifts, powers which were both a blessing and a curse. And since Tulkhan, the Ghebite General, had conquered their island kingdom they had both clung to life with determination and, when necessary, guile.

Even she had been a victim of Reothe's trickery. the memory stung, making Imoshen's cheeks flame with anger. Last night Reothe had come to her in General Tulkhan's form, slipping into her arms and planting a seed of dissension which she feared would drive Tulkhan from her. He would never accept another man's child. The prospect of losing his trust was particularly cruel for, though he had taken her as co-ruler to cement his hold on Fair Isle, she had let herself hope he had begun to love her. The General's bone-setter, Wharrd, entered the chamber, bringing warmed wine. With an effort she grasped the bed upright and came to her feet. 'Thank you. I think the worst is over.'

'I will watch him. Get some rest,' Wharrd urged.

'Yes.' However she clasped the goblet to her chest and stared down at Reothe. She had to admire his daring. In a decisive gamble he had kidnapped Imoshen and the son she had borne Tulkhan, luring the General into a trap. In exchange for a mercenary army Reothe had offered to deliver Tulkhan to King Gharavan. The Ghebite king was Tulkhan's younger half-brother and legitimate heir, but any love he bore Tulkhan had been eroded by the General's popularity and military success.

With the mercenaries and his own rebel army, Reothe meant to retake Fair Isle. He had come so close to making the exchange that Imoshen felt ill.

This time last year she would have given anything to see Tulkhan in chains, but now the thought brought her no joy. It was ironic that after surrendering her Stronghold, she had set out to woo the conqueror, only to fall in love with the man.

Through the partially open door General Tulkhan watched Imoshen tend his deadly enemy. She claimed to love him but

doubt ate away at Tulkhan's peace of mind. He could not understand the strange hold Reothe had over Imoshen. In his darkest moments he feared it was like calling to like.

Only last night when he had been held captive in the tower's dungeon, Reothe had come to him with Imoshen's scent on his skin, boasting that she carried his child. He refused to accept it.

Fury surged through Tulkhan. As a tactician he knew, if he was to hold Fair Isle, Reothe must die. The rebel leader commanded the love of the people and the loyalty of the old nobility who lived in the Keldon Highlands. Tulkhan had good reason to suspect high church officials quietly favoured Reothe's plans. But it was the thought of another man's hands on Imoshen that made Tulkhan resonate with rage. Reothe would die this very night!