

Synopsis
HEART OF FIRE
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When fledgling firemage JESSALYNE BRANDBORN hires dark elf mercenary ERTEMIS ELTA-NAYA, she doesn't know he holds the key to her future, the salvation of Shaldar's threatened kingdom and an incredible chance at love.

Hurt by her mother's untimely death and the pain of being abandoned by her father after accidentally burning him with her untempered powers, Jessalyne tries to believe her sheltered life as a healer in Fairleigh Grove is for the best. There's no one to stir her powers into an uncontrollable firestorm again. No one to love and lose.

Still, she yearns for a life beyond the grove, to find her place in the world and understand her powerful gifts. Refusing to settle for less, she leaves to apprentice with the most powerful sorceress in Shaldar, the king's

magewoman. Unwilling to use her powers as a weapon, Jessalyne hires Ertemis to protect her as she travels.

With the Legion's bounty on his head for deserting, Ertemis is reluctant to escort Jessalyne into Shaldar's capital city but needs the money she offers. On the way, he discovers benefits to Jessalyne's naiveté; she treats him like an equal, not an outlaw. He imagines what a life with her would be like but feels unworthy. Ertemis resolves to forget her once the journey ends and concentrate on finding out who his father is.

Swayed by Ertemis' gruff charm, Jessalyne doubts the validity of his unsavory reputation. She starts to trust him and although her past has taught her those she loves never stay, her emotional walls begin to crumble.

Passion flares between them but Jessalyne is afraid of hurting anyone else with her unruly power. She pushes Ertemis away. Angry with himself for pressuring her and hurt by her rejection, Ertemis erupts and they quarrel.

Ertemis decides parting will be easier if Jessalyne despises him, so he doesn't apologize as their journey ends. With Jessalyne gone, Ertemis' world loses its color. He realizes he needs her. He decides to seek his mother's advice on winning Jessalyne's hand, although his mother has stubbornly refused to reveal Ertemis' true father.

Jessalyne discovers the dying king of Shaldar is Ertemis' birthfather. She calls to Ertemis, hoping his elven mindsight will detect her plea and he'll return so she can reunite him with the king. She wonders if Ertemis' disappearance is just her bitter past repeating itself.

Just as Ertemis begins his journey back, his mindsight focuses on Jessalyne's panicked cry. He charges back to find she's been kidnapped by the king's jealous magewoman. Before Ertemis gives chase, the king welcomes him as his son and heir to Shaldar's throne and pardons Ertemis for deserting the Legion.

Ertemis finds Jessalyne under the spell of the king's magewoman and possessed by her spirit. Ertemis kisses Jessalyne for what he thinks is the last time. His pure love rekindles her powers and Jessalyne incinerates the magewoman. Opening her eyes, Jessalyne realizes Ertemis is impervious to her blazing magic.

Once Ertemis and Jessalyne are wed, they are crowned king and queen. Not only has Jessalyne found her place in the world; she's won the heart of a loyal man immune to her fiery gifts. Never did she imagine just how much life awaited her beyond the grove.