

Midnight

*Moon
Café*

Cora Zane

*Heart on
Fire*

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Heart on Fire

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Heart on Fire

Chapter One

"Miss Richmond, could I have a word with you, please?"

Hallie jumped at the unexpected male voice, and quickly looked up from her paperwork to find her boss standing in the doorway of her office. He leaned there with his hand rested high up on the jamb, his comfortable posture making her wonder just how long he had stood there watching her before he had called out.

Her heart flipped anxiously, and she lowered her pen. "I, ah—Is there a problem?"

"No, no problem. But I need to know if you have any plans for this evening. What with it being Valentine's Day, I thought I better ask. Are you able to stay late tonight?"

She floundered, didn't quite know what to say. Mitchell Draven had that effect on her, especially when in close quarters. One look into his steel gray eyes and a part of her brain effectively shut down.

She glanced toward the clock on the wall opposite her desk. It was a quarter to five now, and although she didn't have any plans for the evening, not since Greg had dumped her two weeks before, she still didn't like being out too late on weeknights. Her neighborhood could be rough after dark. She frowned over at him. "Do you think I'll be home by ten?"

"I don't want to have to rush things, but I'm pretty sure I can have you out of here by ten if it's necessary. Will you stay?" He searched her face, and surprised her by quickly adding, "I promise to feed you."

This last statement threw her for a loop. She almost giggled at the absurdity of it. Was this oh-so-serious man actually trying to bribe her with food?

A trill of glee zipped through her. *Men and their stomachs!* Her brothers often tried that very same "free meal" tactic whenever they needed her to help dig them out of some mess they'd gotten themselves into. She guessed some things about men, whether human or werewolf, never changed.

"That's fine. It won't be any trouble to stay over for a few hours."

He nodded. "It's settled then. I've ordered in Thai for us, so I hope that's okay. You do like Thai cuisine?"

Hallie looked at him, a little amazed. "Actually I do."

"Good. I'll go set up everything." He tapped the doorframe sharply as if to punctuate the deal, then he turned to go back to his office.

"Oh, wait! Mr. Draven—"

He stopped and looked at her, and Hallie's heart did a sudden flip. His hard gray gaze seemed to penetrate her right down to the bone. For a split second, something raw flash in those eyes—something heated. Or was it just her imagination?

A little shiver raced through her, prickling the fine hairs on the back of neck. She licked her suddenly dry lips. "Should I, um, go ahead and lock up for the night?"

"Go ahead," he told her, and as innocent as it probably was, the gravelly pitch of his voice wakened a slow, pleasurable pulse between her thighs. "The delivery guy should be here in about thirty minutes, but beyond that, we won't have anyone interrupting us once we get started."

Chapter Two

The minute Mitchell returned to his office, he flopped into his leather desk chair and loosened his tie with an anxious tug. He looked around the romantic setup and knew one of two

things was about to happen—either he was going to win the Hallie Richmond lottery, or she was going to take his advances in a *really* bad way.

Despite the risk of public embarrassment, or worse should she misunderstand his intentions, he had to do something. He wanted her. He couldn't stop thinking about her. For all his attempts at keeping a cool, professional distance from her, Hallie Richmond had somehow managed to wriggle under his skin.

He didn't care that she wasn't Werekind. Some of the wolves in his pack might not understand his choice to claim a human, but if she accepted him, he wouldn't bend. He didn't care who raised an eyebrow. Something about Hallie called to him, filled him with a strong urge to cherish and protect that went far beyond simple desire.

He glanced toward the brushed suede seating group opposite his desk. The spare area at the far end of the room typically served as a meeting area for project managers and engineers, but with Hallie in mind, Mitchell had tried to make it as cozy as possible. A fire burned in the hearth, and a dozen blood red roses stood in a crystal vase on the sofa table alongside the boxed chocolates he'd bought for her. *Too much?*

He wondered, and his stomach twisted, his nerves fraying just a little bit more. He'd never been very good in the realm of seduction, particularly with human women, but he'd given this scheme his best attention, and there really wasn't much more he could think to do. Still, he was hardly at ease with what he planned to say to her.

Shit. Maybe I should've told her outright, eliminated any surprises. But even as he thought it, he shook his head. He knew it was too late for that now. He already had the ball rolling.

Mitchell raked his hands through his hair, and abandoned his chair to pace in the space behind his desk. Despite all his careful preparations, he had this obscene fear that Hallie might completely freak out the minute she stepped into his office and saw what he'd arranged.

If she didn't, if she remained calm long enough for him to admit he had an honest interest in her, and that he wanted more from her than just a late day office fling, he thought he might be able to salvage things without making a complete ass of himself.

It was his hope that after working with her for six months, he knew her well enough to have pre-gauged her reaction with at least partial accuracy. Part of his attraction to her came from her level-headedness. If she was completely against a relationship with him, she'd probably fidget, since that's what she tended to do when she was uncomfortable. But she didn't come across as mean spirited. At her worst, he hoped she'd merely attempt to let him down gently.

Heaven help him if that happened. His brothers, Gary and Ronan, had been pressing him to approach her before one or the both of them gave up being civil and ripped him limb from limb.

Mitchell knew he'd been...well, a bit *grumpy* lately. What could he say, other than it was a territorial issue? The urge to ravish Hallie came over him whenever she walked into the room. Her scent—a mix of warm female skin and vanilla perfume—tormented him. Whenever she brought in the supply orders for his review, or even stopped in his doorway to inform him of an important visitor, a potent urge to claim her nearly took him over. He couldn't stop fantasizing about her, about taking her across his desk, in his car, in his *bed*...

That being the case, shouldn't it only be natural that he'd get a little cranky whenever another male stepped into his office territory—which, of course, encompassed Hallie? His brothers and his co-workers didn't seem to think so.

Valentine's Day and the threat of mutiny from his project foremen finally brought him around to this moment. Now it was time to face the piper. Hallie knew what he was, and although she seemed genuinely undaunted by the prospect of working with him on a daily basis, he only hoped her ability to accept him didn't drop sharply at the thought of taking him as a mate.

He groaned inwardly. *What the hell am I doing?*

He knew he couldn't put it off any longer. He had to be straight with her, tell her everything upfront—why he wanted her to stay late. He had to tell her that he just wanted time alone with her to talk, to get to know her better, to simply *be* with her. Just the thought of having her all to himself set his heart on fire.

I'm in love with you.

The words constantly swirled in his thoughts, and they were on the tip of his tongue every time he looked into her beautiful blue eyes. But how would she take the news?

Mitchell took a deep breath, and sat on the edge of his desk. As soon as she came in from locking the doors, he'd have the chance to discover her feelings once and for all.

Chapter Three

Hallie's hands shook as she locked the front door and set the security code. Mitchell—*Mr. Draven*—had never asked her to work over before. She knew it was all work related, and that the prospect of working in intimate quarters with him really meant nothing other than a few extra hours added onto her pay check. However, the evening so far had gone so very close to one of her closet fantasies about her gorgeous, raven-haired boss that she couldn't quite shake a lingering sense of excitement.

What was it about Mitchell Draven that drew her? It had to be more than just his chiseled features, taut body, and those sharp, all-seeing blue eyes. At the same time, Hallie knew it couldn't be because of his charming nature or his sense of humor either. If he had either of those things, she had never seen them in action. Mitchell always presented himself to her as Mr. Business, and so she'd never seen anything but his serious side. She knew his family relationships were rock solid, but even her knowledge of that had been called into question over the past few weeks. Obviously there was something going on in his life that she didn't know about. For the past few weeks, he'd seemed unusually snappish with his brothers and the engineers whenever they came around.

Nevertheless, she wouldn't deny that she harbored more than just a harmless little crush on her boss. Only the night before, she'd dreamed he'd joined her in the shower in her tiny apartment. In the dream he'd taken some of her vanilla body wash into his hard hands, and had slowly massaged her aching breasts, across her ribs, and further down and back, along the curve of her buttocks.

What a glorious, wet dream...

Hallie swallowed thickly, hot color flaring into her cheeks when she suddenly recalled just what had woken her from that dream; how she'd arched up from the mattress trembling, gasping, reaching out blindly for someone who wasn't there—someone she knew she couldn't have.

She glanced off toward the back hallway before she shut out the lights in her co-worker's end of the office, and lingered a moment to try and compose herself. The sweet pulse between her thighs intensified every time she thought about where she was, who she was with. When at last she moved from the light switch and started toward Mitchell's office, she noticed the slick moisture dewing her inner thighs.

"Ah, great, let's hope he doesn't smell you," she berated herself, and slipped into the restroom before attempting to face her boss again. While she freshened up and straightened her blouse, she wondered if her attraction to Mitchell might have something to do with the fact that he was a living, breathing predator, and that she worked in close proximity to such a danger. It seemed possible, but at the same time, unlikely. She'd lived in Silver all her life, had gone to school with werewolves. So it wasn't the novelty of what he was that drew her. There was something almost magnetic about him; something she sensed ran deeper than his business ethics and dark, good looks. His quite, down to earth nature made her want to dig deeper, to find out just what made Mitchell Draven tick.

Once she left the restroom, Hallie walked back to Mitchell's office, stopped outside the door, which he'd left open a crack, and rapped softly with a knuckle. "Mr. Draven?"

"It's Mitchell, not Mr. Draven, and you don't have to knock."

"Oh, sorry, I didn't realize you—" She pushed the door open, and had barely stepped into the firelight ambiance of his office when her gaze fell on a huge vase of roses, and what probably

had to be the largest heart-shaped chocolate box she'd ever seen in her life. She drew up short, her gaze searching him out. He sat on the edge of his desk, his angular features wary, and perhaps, she thought incredulously, even a little disappointed. She opened her mouth, but couldn't seem to speak—a knot had lodged in her throat.

He leaned up from his desk and huffed out a breath. "Listen, Hallie. I know what this looks like, and I'm sorry. Come in and have a seat." He turned to gesture toward one of the leather conference chairs. "I know I never should've even attempted this, but now.... Well, I think we need to talk."

The way he raked his hand through his hair made her stomach clench. Confused, exhilarated, she brushed past him and stood in front of the leather chair he offered, but didn't sit in it. She glanced back toward the sofa table with the roses and the chocolates. Her heart raced so suddenly fast, she thought it might burst. "Is... This is for me?"

"It's not what you think," he said brusquely. "Well, maybe in some ways it is, but the difference is since it's Valentine's Day I thought— Oh, hell. I don't know how to say this, without making it sound like some kind of 'boss stalking the secretary' kind of situation. It isn't like that at all, Hallie. The truth is I'm... Well, I'm—"

"You're attracted to me?"

His mouth snapped shut and crossed his arms. "Yes."

A thin silence stretched between them. Hallie licked her lips, and glanced toward the open office door in an effort to tamp down the beam of joy that suddenly speared her heart. At last she took a deep breath and looked him in the eyes. "Well, I guess you picked the right time to tell me."

"I did?" He frowned. "Because of Valentine's Day?"

"No," she said gently. "I'm simply saying that I'm attracted to you as well." His handsome face flushed, and Hallie smiled nervously. "At least, I am if you promise you don't make it a habit of hitting on your secretaries?"

"Who else would I hit on?" he asked dryly. "Pearl?" he asked dryly.

Pearl, his elderly secretary, was only months away from retirement. Hallie stared at him blankly, and then burst into laughter. "Okay, you're right; I'm sorry. It's just that you're— well, you're—"

"I'm Werewolf," he supplied for her.

Hallie detected a hint of bitterness in his voice and she shrugged. "Well, yes, you're that too," she admitted, feeling a wisp of heat come into her face. "But I was going to say gorgeous." *And possibly sexy. And confident, and wonderful...*

Her breath hitched as the weight of the situation sank in more firmly. Was this man for real? She licked her dry lips. "Mitchell, are you the faithful type?"

"I want you, and no one else," he said in a raw voice. "Does it bother you that I turn into a wolf?"

"Does it bother you that I don't?"

His eyes flashed heatedly, and then he surged across the room to her and pulled her into his arms. Hallie cried out softly, he moved so fast it startled her. But then he was there, warm, and strong, his arms surrounding her like steel bands that pulled her flush against his hard body. When his lips crashed down on hers, she whimpered in sharp desire, and wrapped her arms around him. He nipped, teased her lips until she opened for him, allowing his tongue to plunder, and duel with her own.

It was like a wicked fantasy come to life—one of her erotic dreams of him, only better. She ran her hands up the front of his shirt, felt the starched fabric under her questing fingers. She sought the buttons and worked them free one by one, until his shirt was open, revealing taut tanned flesh over lean muscle.

"Hallie!" he gasped huskily as she ran her hands over his abs, his obliques, and then leaned forward to nip the flesh of his chest. She couldn't stop herself, she wanted him. *She loved him.*

Her tongue flicked over one of his flat nipples, and he growled or made a sound something like it. She stopped to stare up into the mystery of his dark blue eyes, her hand on his chest, savoring the odd sensation she felt emanating from his chest—like a deep, satisfied purring.

"I can do stuff more impressive than that," he said thickly, and kissed her fingers before he lifted her and sat her on the edge of his desk and proceeded to show her just what he meant.

Chapter Four

Mitchell's skin prickled as she ran her hands up into his hair. The heavenly sensation streaked across his nerve endings like an electric charge. He could smell her arousal, a thick luxurious cream. His cock stirred at the sensation, the hair stood up on his arms and the back of his neck. He snarled, desperate for her, for more even as every muscle in his body hummed to life.

Hallie trembled when he eased her legs apart to make room for his hips in the cradle of hers. He needed to get closer, oh so much closer. His hands worked swiftly down the front of her blouse, flicking aside buttons to reveal her lacy, white bra. He moaned at the sight of her rounded breasts. Thoughts of sampling them had tormented him for months. Now, he indulged himself. He eased the thin straps down her arms until the cups loosened, and her pert, rosy tipped nipples came into his view.

"Oh, yes!" he moaned, and leaned down to suck on one of her nipples into his hot mouth. She threaded her fingers through his hair, her hips shifting closer to his, her thighs straining against the tight material of her business skirt.

He molded her breasts with his hands, plumping them with his, massaging them while alternately flicking the peaks with his tongue.

Hallie moaned low in her throat. "Mitchell. Now. Please."

"Ah, God, you are beautiful!"

She cupped his face in her hands and forced him up to meet her mouth. She teased his lips with hers, licked him so that he opened, and she took the lead. His hands explored, dropped down to her firm thighs. She slipped his shirt from his shoulders, and he pushed at the hem of her business skirt, breaking free of the kiss just in time to see the red material slink up her thighs. He groaned when his effort revealed the lacy tops of her nude stockings. He buried his hand in the back of her cropped flaxen hair, and pulled her toward him for yet another kiss.

His body burned—on fire for her, his mate. He knew it then without a doubt. His tongue tangled with hers, a mad duel for domination. His heart beat like the wings of a caged bird, his love for her soared into the sky. She smoothed her hands down his chest, and when her hot hands at last dipped inside the top of his pants and touch him, he almost went off like a rocket. Trembling, he quickly shrugged loose of her and reached down to unbuckle his belt. When he had unzipped himself, and slinked out of his pants and his boxers, his cock strained toward her heat in throbbing agony.

When he stood naked, he reached for her hips again, slipping her lace panties from under her hips before tugging her closer to the edge of his desk.

Hallie reached between them, cupped his hard sex in her hands, and stroked him against her body. She tilted her hips and ran his dick up against her moist juncture, cherry shaped head slipping in her wetness, nudging him against the hardened pebble of her clit.

"Ah, shit," he groaned, the visual stimulation sending a heated tremor through his body. If she kept that up, he wasn't going to last. He was pretty sure he'd never witnessed anything quite so erotic in his life; the object of his affection mastering his body, pleasuring him by pleasuring herself.

"This isn't going to work," he growled sharply, and Hallie jolted, looked up at him, slightly dazed.

"No?"

"No," he gritted. "I need to taste you, to make this last. Here, wrap your legs around me." She did as he commanded, and he picked her up off his desk, his erection nudging against her belly as he carried her to the couch across the room.

"I want to make it good for you," he explained as he placed her against the cushions and knelt down in front of her. He splayed her legs, his cock jerking as he took in the full view of her glistening pinkness. The sight of her smooth, bare pussy shook him; he'd never before wondered if she shaved. Seeing now that she did made his desire spike. His nostrils flared, his body shuddering as he exhaled. He took her calf in his hand, and eased her leg up over his shoulder.

Mitchell forced himself to go slowly and traced his finger along her delicate petals, the feather light touch gathering creamy moisture from her slit. She shifted slightly, her breathing a heavy in the crackling silence of the room. He traced his thumb over the swollen clitoris, swirling against it with faint pressure. She moaned, her glacial eyes taking on a glassy sheen, as he dipped first one, then another finger, into her moist heat.

"I love you," he whispered, his gaze locking with hers.

"I love you too," she choked out, and her admission made his heart swell, and his cock feel so suddenly full and heavy, he thought he might burst.

Determined to take his time, he lowered his head and kissed her first along her inner thigh. She shuddered in response, and his heart kicked against his ribs. He traced his tongue along her thigh, down to the open apex of her body. There he lathed her pussy lips until they glistened with her fragrant dew.

"Mitchell," she gasped, and widened her knees, allowing him further access. He slowly traced his tongue over her erect bud, and she undulated against him, her hands threading in his hair, welcoming him closer, urging his tongue and fingers to further invade her body. Her hooded eyes fixed on him like crystalline stars—drowsy, ever so sexy. She licked her lips, a gesture he recognized, "So good. Oh, yes... Like that."

He did as she bid him, his tongue swirling and flicking around her hard clitoris. Her whole body trembled, and he knew she was close. His own needs built to the point of pain, and yet he drew on her erotic energy, holding back until the heated fever of his own desire nearly spiraled out of control. His bones creaked, a sudden jab of movement beneath his skin. His desire became a threat. She was on the edge, but he couldn't hold back any longer.

He needed to fuck her, to claim her—his Hallie, the keeper of his heart. If his animal side took over, he could inadvertently hurt her.

Mitchell pulled back, easing her calf from his shoulder, so he could rise up over her. She stroked her hands along his shoulders and down his muscular back, welcoming him to her body as he'd fantasized so many times. He snarled in satisfaction when she nipped at his chin, and then his cock brushed the edge couch and he groaned in agony.

"Hallie, now! I need you now!"

Her hands guided his hips, welcomed the intrusion of his body into hers. His cock slid easily into her tight velvet heavy, every sweet thrust seating him deeper inside her. She wrapped her arms around him, and clutched his buttocks, sending him higher with each thrust.

"Mitchell!" she barked hoarsely as she tumbled over the edge. He pulled back, watched the orgasm sweep over her flushed face. It was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen.

Her legs locked around him; her inner muscles sucked hard at him as she rode out her the final dying embers of electric pleasure on his cock. She moaned, the grip of desire shaking her body, vibrating through him, vibrating everywhere, sweeping him up into wave after wave of bliss.

Mitchell withdrew from her sharply, his final thrust slipping up between their bodies, nudging her clit. He groaned so sharply, it was nearly a cough; his cock twitching as he spilled his seed against her belly. Hallie reached between them, gripped him in her sure hand, and milked

him of his last. He jerked against her, and when at last he could take no more, he clasped his hand over her own to stop her.

Immediately, he found her mouth and kissed her lingeringly, deeply. Love, lazy and sweet, zinged through his body.

"Mm..."

He eased off of her, and watched in shocked amazement as Hallie proceeded to rub his essence into her skin. Of course, she had to do something, he reasoned. Still, his heart lodged in his throat as his eyes zeroed in on her slender hand. She couldn't know what she was doing, the intimacy of such a gesture. Beyond the smell of sex, she couldn't know how rubbing his cum into her skin infused her with his scent, essentially marking her. A gesture reserved for mates.

"I wish that could have lasted longer," he admitted, his voice rough and gravelly with emotion. "I'm sorry, but I couldn't help it. I've wanted you too long." He kissed her eyes, the tip of her nose, and she smiled at him.

"That was amazing and you know it," she rumbled softly, and laughed. "We can try again in a little while, if you like. But first, I think one of us better get dressed."

"Why's that?"

"Well, if we answer the door like this, the delivery boy might get the wrong idea."

He frowned at her, and then remembered. "Shit, I forgot about the takeout."

She nodded, her gaze sliding heatedly over his body when he stood up to find his clothes. At the last second, he gave in to his instincts and turned back to her. "Don't you go anywhere," he warned, and cupped her cheek.

He turned her face to his, and kissed her, amazed by the feelings of love and tenderness he felt for this human woman. His Hallie.

She didn't know it yet, but tonight was only the beginning.

About the author:

Cora Zane has written several erotic romance novellas in the past year. Her current titles include *Crossing Borders*, *Bonding Experience*, and *Wicked Temptation*, all of which are currently available through Cobblestone Press (<http://www.Cobblestone-Press.com/>)

She also has a free novella entitled [Under A Midnight Moon](#), which available as a free download through the Midnight Moon Café website.
www.midnightmooncafe.bravehost.com

Cora loves hearing from her readers, and hopes you will drop by to visit her at either <http://www.corazane.com> or <http://corazane.blogspot.com/>.