



Snowe Grey

Don't Mess With...

the Fat Boy:

A cautionary tale of Cupid

By Snowe Grey

Erotiqué Press

Don't Mess With...

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Chapter One

Pool halls are always smoky and dim. This one was no exception. A light hung low over each green cloth-covered table and devotees bent over their cues as if in worship. Minds rapidly calculated percentages, English, and bank angles. It might have been a pool hall anywhere in the world, they were all so interchangeable, but this one was located in Hell. Literally.

Giovanni brushed the long, black curly hair out of his face, narrowed his black eyes, and pursed his lips in concentration. He had to make this shot. One more good run and he'd win. Oh, and what a sweet victory it would be. For a moment, he raised his eyes to meet the flinty ones of the rotund figure perched on the stool. Giovanni grinned.

The voice floated from the stool was low and gravelly. "You know, my friend. You could easily tick me off, and that wouldn't be nice. Just remember that when you take that shot. I'm not a nice loser."

The pearly whites flashed again as Giovanni drew the cue stick back and shot. It struck the three-ball squarely and began its journey, nicking this one and bumping into that one, careening around the table. Giovanni called out numbers and pockets as the balls obediently cleared the table as if directed. When there was nothing left but a speck of lint on the green felt surface, he leaned the cue on the floor, and slouched against the table.

Don't Mess With...

"Ah, so. The little fat boy has lost. Again." He emphasized the last word savoring it in his mouth. "Bambino should not try to play with the grown ups, eh? You can never beat me. In anything. Even with your puny little arrows, I could, what you say, whup you in an archery contest."

Giovanni moved over and picked up the pile of gold coins and gems. "I take my winnings and leave now. Perhaps another time I can take your money again." He laughed at the sound of grinding teeth from the stool.

"Help me down, you broads. Whadda here for anyway? Do I gotta do everything by myself?" Cupid kicked with his short legs as he tried to maneuver off the stool.

Giovanni watched the chubby cherub. His blonde hair curled softly over his soft pink skin and long dark lashes framed bright blue eyes. The rosy round cheeks and sweet red bowed mouth were as angelic as any painting of him ever was. Even to his round, soft diaper-covered body, dimpled elbows and knees, tiny miniature toes, in every way Cupid was the image of a god of love, except for the Jack Daniels in his right hand and the big, black Havana in his left.

A nymph on his right and a succubus on his left helped him down to the floor. Their hands lingered on him. He shook them off as he walked forward.

"You think you won, big man." Cupid stomped close to the laughing Incubus. He used the cigar to point at the laughing man. "Well I got a surprise for you—and some advice. Don't mess with the fat boy. One of these days I'm gonna find you in a vulnerable position, and badda-bing, that's it for you. Whadda think of that, funny guy?"

"I think you make me laugh very much. I am Giovanni, the worlds greatest Incubus and I do not fear you or your so-

called Arrows of Love. Ha! Love is just another word for passion or lust. And those, my friend," he pinched the right rosy cheek, "are my stock in trade."

"Hah," Cupid snorted. "As I heard, you ain't the greatest. Just the second. An also-ran. Jean-Luc, now he's an Incubus. Hell, I even saw his picture on the cover of *Demon Weekly Magazine*. You don't even rate a half column of gossip in that scandal rag." The diminutive figure blew a cloud of smoke up at the scowling face above him. "Don't sound so great to me."

"Him!" Giovanni spit his words out. "Politics. I am the greatest. Women swoon over me, they fall at my lightest touch, a kiss sends them swirling into ecstasy. Was it not me that seduced his sister, Desiree?"

"She threw you outta her room."

"A mere technicality." The Incubus waved his hand nonchalantly. "She felt she must do so because of her loyalty to her brother."

"Way I heard it; she chucked a shoe at you. Knocked you on the noggin."

"The passion I raised in her was too great to be held back. But enough. I must leave now. I have many women awaiting me. Although," he gave the two figures standing next to Cupid a long, hot look, "I can always add one or two more to my schedule. If they truly wish a night of transcendental bliss, wild passion, making love amid the stars, they only have to ask. Eh, *bella*?"

He watched as Cupid looked up into the faces of the two women. Giovanni smiled a devastating smile at them and watched as two tongues moved in identical motions to moisten lips. He looked back to see Cupid's eyes narrow. Giovanni's smile grew wider.

Don't Mess With...

"Not gonna give me a chance to win my money back, huh? Well, I can wait. One of these days you're gonna get yours, and I'm going to watch and enjoy every second of it. Relish every moment of your downfall."

"Although I am not really into that, I have no objection to a voyeur. If your lovely friends don't mind that is. I am," he glanced down at his bulging crotch, "up to it certainly."

"Get out, and don't come back. You ain't welcome here no more. Orange Blossom, where the hell are you?"

"Here, boss." Another cherub ran up. "You want I should take him out and teach him a lesson?"

"Nah, you birdbrain. We don't do that sorta stuff."

"We don't?" Orange Blossom's voice was surprised. "But yesterday, when that Devil stiffed you, you said..."

Giovanni snickered. He knew exactly what kind of place Cupid ran.

"Shaddup you!" Cupid clipped Orange Blossom on the side of his head. "My business ain't for talking about. Now show the gentleman out, nicely mind you." Cupid pasted an obviously insincere smile on his face. "So nice to have you drop by. Don't do it again."

Giovanni laughed and walked out the door, followed by Orange Blossom. The cherub barely reached his waist. Giovanni looked down at the ferocious expression he wore on his angelic countenance and laughed all the way out the door.

* * *

Cupid's smile didn't fade until the door shut behind the Incubus, then he chewed on the cigar for a moment.

"Rose Petal! Butter cream! I want you should keep an eye on him. Let me know what he's doing." Two cherubs detached themselves and hurried out the door.

"Marzipan, get down to the viewing center. I want at least one viewer on him at all times. There's gotta be a moment when a woman rejects him. And when she does," Cupid's perfect bow lips turned up into a nasty smile, "he's mine."

He turned to see the entire pool hall staring at him.

"What? You wanna play pool or you wanna have a little talk with some of my boys. This ain't some kinda social to-do. You play pool or you get out. Well?"

Activity resumed, and the click of balls resounded. The women helped the rotund figure back onto his stool, relit his cigar, and handed him a new drink. He chuckled.

"I can wait Giovanni. Just you remember that. One day when you ain't looking, we'll see how powerful my arrows are."

* * *

Two men carried the motorcyclist and laid him on the gate of the truck. The man standing inside the bed pulled the injured man by his shoulders while the others pushed the limp body.

"Sure woulda been easier to do this with the ambulance."

"True, but the ladies society needed it to transport the baked goods to the church for the sale. Besides, he's not hurt enough to make no difference. Can't you pull a little harder, oh wait, his jacket's caught on this piece here. There, now he should slide right in."

"You boys finished there? We've got the Harley loaded onto John's flatbed."

"Uh, where are we taking him? Doc Smith's still out of town till tomorrow and it's a long haul to the hospital over in Carol Creek."

Don't Mess With...

"Well, he don't look too bad. We'll just take him to Dr. Fitzhugh. She should be able to check him out and tell us if he needs to go to the hospital."

"Dr. Fitzhugh? But she's..."

"She'll do just fine. Now let's go. It's cold and fixing to rain, and I know that Mrs. Baines has only made six of her huckleberry pies for the sale. If I aim to get one, I have to hurry."

"Only if you get there before me, Sheriff, eating one of those pies is like biting into a little piece of heaven. Ken, you be sure to tie that man tight now. Wouldn't do to have him bouncing out of the truck now, would it?"

"Will do. He's tight as a bug in a rug."

* * *

Giovanni opened his eyes slowly. As near as he could tell, he hurt everywhere. A very bright light hurt his eyes. He winced and closed the lids tightly. He was a bit chilly, the room almost too cool. He wiggled his toes and then his feet. They moved freely. Too freely. His handmade leather boots didn't seem to be on his feet. In fact, as he moved his hips and flexed his shoulders, none of his clothing seemed to be on him. Well, that explained the lack of comfort. To confirm his guess, he peered through his eyelids. He was indeed naked, lying on a table, barely covered by a white sheet. He put his hand to his face. No, that wasn't covered. They didn't think he was dead. Good, that could have been difficult to explain.

Tentatively he opened his eyes and sat up. Slowly. He was dizzy and held on tightly to the too small table. His lower legs and feet hung off the end, his hands hung down almost to the floor. Looking around him, he could tell he was in a medical office. A jar of strange and dangerous looking

implements, the ultra clean look, and the stinging smell of antiseptic confirmed his guess. He must have taken a tumble off the cycle.

Gingerly he rose to his feet and balanced until he could stand again. The sheet fell off him and landed in a pool of white at his feet. He was reaching down for it, at an infinitesimal pace, when the door opened. Turning too quickly, he lurched forward off balance and had to reach out and grab onto something to keep himself from pitching over.

His hands latched onto something warm and soft. As he opened his eyes again, his right hand was clutching the right arm of a woman wearing a white lab coat. His left was holding onto a very nice breast. What better way to wake up could there be? Giovanni smiled.

The woman moved his hands to a nearby chair top and stepped back.

"You'd best sit down before you fall over. I'm Doctor Abigail Fitzgerald. How are you feeling? Any pain anywhere?"

"Yes," he moved his hand to touch his heart. "I have a pain here."

"Do you have a heart condition?" She looked concerned and pulled a stethoscope from her coat pocket.

"Not before I met you. Now I fear I have lost my heart, *Bella mia*, and my head, to your beauty. I can only be cured by a sweet kiss from those lips that I hunger for."

The woman's hazel eyes looked at him evenly. Giovanni smiled again. She was exactly the right height, the top of her head reached to his nose. He wouldn't have to stoop over to kiss her. His fingers itched to pull out the pins, which held her auburn hair in a tight bun. She wore no makeup, but her soft

creamy skin didn't need any. Those long dark lashes lay against high cheeks. His eyes roamed over her full, voluptuous figure. Giovanni favored women with a little padding on them. Warm, soft, and with smoothly pliable skin. She was perfectly suited for him. His smile grew wider.

"Right." She wrote something on a paper on the clipboard she held. "No complaints. I examined you and can't find any injuries that need immediate care. Everything seems to be in working order."

"It is." The tone in Giovanni's voice caused her to look sharply at him. He was staring down at his rising manhood. "It seems to be in fine working order. Do you think we should perhaps—test the equipment to make sure?" He walked towards her as she backed away. She backed right into the wall and he moved his arm to rest against the wall behind her, trapping her. She looked up, blinked at him, and ducked under his arm to move away.

"I doubt that's necessary. Uh, perhaps you wouldn't mind wrapping that sheet around you?" She motioned to the floor. "I wouldn't want you to catch cold."

"*Grazie, bella mia*, but I am not cold, not since the moment you entered the room. Shall I show you how hot I am? A heat I would wish to share with you."

The woman looked up and stepped further back.

"Just wrap the sheet around you and fill out these papers. You can leave when you're ready. But I'd advise you to see your personal doctor tomorrow and be checked out."

"I do not have a personal *doctore*. I would like to have a personal *doctore*. I think that a personal *doctore* would be so—personal." His voice was low and soft. "Perhaps we could

discuss this personal *doctore* over candlelight and champagne?"

"I don't think so. Well, if you stay in town tonight, you can see Doctor Smith tomorrow. He's due back from vacation then. Just ask anyone and they'll direct you to his office."

"Why Doctor Smith? Why not *Doctore* Abigail Fitzgerald?" His fingers touched her name tag as he read her name off. "It's so much more—personal. *Si?*"

"You aren't my type of patient." She frowned at him.

"I think that you are exactly my type of *doctore*. I can not think of anyone I would wish to play doctor with more than you. Do you want to give me the physical? The complete physical? I promise I will not object, I will be a very compliant patient."

"Yes, I am sure you are, however my practice has no room for you. Now, have a seat and I'll be right back. I'll tell Sheriff you seem fine, he's waiting to talk with you, then we'll see about getting you some aspirin." She turned and walked out the door.

Giovanni stared after her, a look of puzzlement on his face. He had given her his best smile, shown his physique off to the best advantage. He moved to look into the mirror hanging over the wash basin. His dark, curly hair was a bit mussed, but it looked as if he'd just gotten out of bed, so that was a good look. His black eyes were clear, no rings of discoloration around them. His long, Roman nose wasn't bent or broken; the cleft in his chin was fine. Even his fine, strong lips were not the least bit scratched or scuffed. He breathed into his hand and smelled it. No, still pleasant. Lifting his arm, he sniffed under it. Nothing there.

Don't Mess With...

He smiled into the mirror. White, even teeth flashed back at him. No change there. He stepped back to check the rest of his body quickly.

Wide, muscled chest, washboard abdomen, narrow hips, strong thighs, he even half turned to see his round, tight ass. No, there was nothing new here. His body was as it had always been, a finely tuned instrument of passion and physical pleasure. And, if she had not liked the rest of the body, how could she have failed to be impressed with his fully aroused rod? It was straight and tall in the air, the full seven and seven-eighths inches of it, proudly standing erect. He shook his head slightly and pondered this.

Maybe she was a lesbian? No, he had sensed a quickening of her body when she looked at him. The fine scent of female arousal still hung in the air. His Incubus senses picked it up clearly. But still, she had turned him down. Turned down Giovanni, the greatest lover in this world and all others? Perhaps she was not right in the head.

No matter, she would return and he would resume his male assault on her senses. It would not be long before her feeble defenses crumbled and he was making love with her. That was all, surely it was merely a matter of time. He carefully draped the white cloth around himself and posed at the side of the table.

Chapter Two

The pounding on the door was enough to wake the dead, and at this moment, Cupid was far from dead. He tried to ignore the steady beating, but finally rolled over, away from Lila. He sat up cursing fluently.

Patting Lila on her ass, he crawled across Sitka, and down off the bed.

"I'll be right back. Remember where we were. I just haft take care of some business and get rid of whoever is pounding on my door. Permanently." He stomped across the room, his feet sinking into the soft, white carpet. Throwing open the gilded door he screamed at the quaking cherub in the hall.

"What are you doing? Who told you to come here and bother me? I'll have your head for this. I'll have both your heads for this and the little one will go first. Now get outtalk here and don't come back."

He turned to slam the door shut and the cherub caught his elbow. Cupid looked down at the hand holding him and his gaze went up the arm into the eyes of the figure in front of him.

"What you doing? Touching me? You're touching me!?"

"S...Sorry, sir. But, ah, I was watching the viewer, and..."

"I should hope you watch the viewer. That's your job, right? The one you did before I decided to have you drawn and quartered?"

Don't Mess With...

"But, but you told us that if we saw, that is if the viewer, rather than if we should see, on the viewer..."

"Spit it out. You got thirty seconds before I call some troll to get over here and rip you to pieces. I got two broads waiting if you know what I mean."

"Uh, yes," Mochadelight looked anxiously at the ugly troll standing guard. He swallowed. "You said that if we saw that Incubus we was to tell you."

"What Incubus? Hell is full of Incubus, Incubusses, Incubi, damn. Full of them. What so damned important about one of them? Just keep an eye on them and leave me alone. Now scat."

Cupid turned to slam the door. The cherub turned to walk away.

"I just thought that you wanted to know when Giovanni struck out, but I'll write a report about it and...awwk."

Mochadelight was grabbed by the nape of his neck and pulled backward.

"Who? Who did you say?"

"G...Giovanni. Awk, Boss-I ...can't...breathe."

Cupid released him and he fell into a pile on the ground.

"Now tell me. You saw Giovanni? The Giovanni from the pool hall? That Giovanni?"

Mochadelight nodded as he rubbed his neck.

"What's he doing?" Cupid's voice rose.

"He's striking out with a dame."

Cupid smiled. One side of his mouth rose higher than the other. He knew it was not a pleasant sight to see.

"Let me get this straight. You telling me that Giovanni struck out with a dame? Some woman blew him off? He went to bat and didn't make even first base?"

"Yeah. It's still on the viewer screen if you..." Mochadelight's words fell into empty air. Cupid, chuckling gleefully, was already running down the hall as fast as his fat, little dimpled legs would allow him.

A crowd of cherubs gathered around one of the viewers and Cupid pushed his way into the group and up front. There on the screen was Giovanni, naked except for a white sheet, standing in some doctor's office. He was carefully posing his body to be seen to its best advantage from the doorway. The front of the sheet tented.

Cupid smiled again.

"What's happening?"

Puffing from the run after Cupid, Mochadelight arrived. He held his side as he filled in his boss with the happenings of the past hour. Cupid's smile grew bigger until it encompassed his whole face. He pulled up a chair and sat down, propping his feet up in front of him.

"Turn up the volume. I wanna hear every word of this."

On the screen, the door opened again and a woman entered the room.

"That's the doctor," whispered Mochadelight.

"Shut up. I wanna hear them." Cupid leaned forward. The rest of the crowd fell silent and they watched also.

"Here are some aspirin," the woman handed Giovanni a small envelope. "Be sure to be checked out as soon as possible. You're free to go now. The sheriff will want a word with you about your accident. That should be all. Be more careful riding."

"I am always careful when I am riding. Whatever I am riding." He raised one eyebrow and winked at her. "But I

Don't Mess With...

think that tomorrow I should return to see you. You are much more familiar with me than this *Doctore* Smith. *Si?*"

"*Doctore*, uh, Doctor Smith will be happy to see you and check you out. I've already told you, you aren't my kind of patient."

"I could be your kind of patient. I could be your kind of anything you wished me to be? Acquaintance? Friend? Lover? You only have to say yes."

"I think not. My schedule is rather full and you'll be leaving town."

Cupid hooted loudly.

"She is turning him down. Right on. Crush him, spurn him, and grind him down into the dirt."

The crowd cheered. Cupid raised his hand.

"Quiet all of house. I want to hear this."

On the screen, Cupid could see Giovanni's eyes widen in shock.

"You must not have understood me, *bella*. Surely that was why you say no. I will explain. I wish to see you again. I am sure you wish to see me again, yes?" Giovanni dropped the sheet and turned slowly in front of her, posing while he flexed his muscles. His back was turned to her and angled to show his lean build and his jutting cock.

"Not particularly," the doctor looked at him levelly. "You need to see your own doctor, and I haven't the time nor the inclination to see you again. Now take your ass-pirin out of here, I have work to do."

Cupid raised his hand in victory. He shot his arm into the air and pumped it up and down. Jumping up and down in his seat, he motioned for Pineappletruffle to hand him his golden bow and arrow.

"Let me have one of those. A real zinger. I want to nail this sucker and nail him good. No one laughs at me and gets away with it."

Cupid threaded the arrow into the bow and took aim at Giovanni's figure on the screen. He pulled back the drawstring slowly and carefully.

"Let's see you laugh this one off, funny man. See how you like it, dancing to someone else's tune." He let the arrow go and it flew through the screen, striking Giovanni's heart. The golden arrow dissolved in microseconds leaving Cupid's super heavy-duty love potion behind.

"Take that. That'll teach you, never mess with the fat boy." He turned to the audience and laughed. "This could quickly become my favorite show. Leave this screen tuned into him at all time. I'll want to come down and watch this developing romance."

"But Boss," one of his cherubs asked, "ain't you going to hit her with one of your arrows of love too?"

"No. No I'm not."

"But then she won't love him and he'll love her." The puzzled voice came again.

"Yeah, I know. I know." Cupid laughed. "Now pipe down, I wanna hear it all."

Back on the screen Giovanni was leering at the doctor. "If you insist, I shall get dressed. But I am not sure I am able to do so alone. I may still be a little weak. Perhaps if I had some help? After all, I was injured." The Incubus' voice was puzzled and his expressive eyes gave her a limpid gaze.

"I think you should be able to get dressed just fine. If you do need help, I'm sure the sheriff won't mind. I'll send him in to see you."

Don't Mess With...

"But, it's your Hippocratic duty to help your patient. Remember the oath you took? And I am a poor, injured soul who needs your assistance." He threw his hands wide in a gesture of supplication.

"Said the lion to the lamb. I have to go now."

"But I will visit you tomorrow. For the checks up."

"I told you, I don't see your kind of patient."

"But you could make an exception? For me, *bella*?"

"I doubt it. I'm a veterinarian. I don't treat humans. And right now I have a pug next door who is about to give birth. Don't let the door hit you on your way out."

Abbi left the room and closed the door firmly. Motioning to her nurse, she called her over.

"Pat, tell Sheriff Baxter he can go in anytime."

She started to walk down the hall, but was brought up short by a noise from the examining room behind her.

"What was that?" Pat asked her.

"Nothing, Pat, nothing."

She walked away, the sound of a wolf howling from behind the door echoed after her. Shaking her head, she smiled slightly and entered the next room.

"Well, Mrs. Dixon, how is Precious One doing?"

Cupid hooted and pulled a chair closer.

* * *

The room was small, but clean. It was not the usual place Giovanni would choose to spend a few days, but Plumbville was so small, it didn't even have a motel, just a few rooms that the Andersons rented out to tourists passing through or stopping to see the main tourist attraction. Every year 'The Lewis and Clark Memorial Westward Ho Outhouse and Gifte

Shophe' drew a few visitors to sit in the hollowed out wooden seat where their heroes had sat.

The room, however, did have one important attribute: his room overlooked the front door of the vet's office. Giovanni looked out his window and smiled. The delectable Doctor Abigail Fitzgerald would not be able to enter or leave without him seeing her.

By the time he had finished answering the Sheriff's questions and been driven to the house to rent a room, her office had closed. Ah well, he dropped the curtain, he would have to travel home to get some money and clothes to wear. Mrs. Anderson had asked several times about his suitcase, or rather his lack of it. He told her it was no doubt still out on the road where the accident had happened and he would collect it later. He would bring a small bag. No need to put anyone on the alert, he didn't anticipate it would take more than a day or two, he would romance the elusive doctor and then be off again.

Giovanni dropped onto the bed and laced his fingers behind his head. Somehow, the thought of taking off wasn't as appealing as it usually was. Perhaps the accident had shaken him up more than he thought. He might just have to spend a few days recuperating here. *It could be worse*, he thought as he fell asleep, *Cupid could have found me. Who knew what that little trouble maker would do?*

Chapter Three

The next morning, Giovanni was up early. By the time the vet's office opened, he had eaten some breakfast, shaved carefully, and dressed in clothing tailored to fit his body. He looked good and he knew it. Picking a flower from the bed outside the office, he walked through the door. The bell tinkled and the receptionist looked up.

"Oh, it's you. How are you feeling today?"

"I am fine. Recovered completely. La *Doctora* Abigail Fitzgerald is an excellent doctor. And this," he presented the flower with a flourish, "is for her lovely nurse. A beautiful woman should have a flower every day."

"For me? Why, thank you. How nice of you to think of it."

"It's from our flower patch out front, Pat. He no doubt picked it as he walked in." The doctor's voice sounded over his right shoulder.

"Ah, but from where it came is not as important as the fact that its loveliness pales in comparison to the beauty in your face." Giovanni took the nurse's hand and raised it to his lips. "Allow me to sip from your fingers as the bee sips the nectar from the blossoms."

He watched Pat as he kissed the back of her fingers and sighed. Her eyes glazed over and a silly grin crossed her face.

"What no flower for me?" Abigail's voice rose teasingly. "And here I was the one to practically save your life. How shameful of you to forget."

"For you, mi enchanting *doctore*," Giovanni crossed the room to stand in front of her. "I have many gifts to thank you with. You have but to say the word and everything I have is yours. My lips, my hands, my..."

"I get the idea. Thanks, but no thanks. Also, this is not Doctor Smith's office. Pat, be sure to show Mr., uh, Mr. I'm sorry, I never did get your name."

"Giovanni. My name is Giovanni."

"Just one name. Rather like Cher? Fabio? Beelzebub?" Abbi's eyebrows flew up.

"No, it is Giovanni d'Amour. But you may call me Giovanni."

Abbi rolled her eyes. "I should have figured it would be something like that. I think I shall call you 'goodbye'. Now I have a busy day. There's the door. Don't hurry back. Pat, ask Mrs. Henson and Pepper to come back into exam room two." Dr. Fitzgerald walked away.

Giovanni stared after her.

"Sorry Mr. d'Amour. She's really very nice, but..."

"Pat? Are you bringing Mrs. Henson back? We have a full day and we need to get started. You can show the gentleman out."

"Right, Abbi. We'll be right there." Pat smiled ruefully at Giovanni and led Mrs. Henson and her pet rabbit down the hall.

Giovanni spent the day wandering through the town, charming everyone he met. It would do him no harm to have as many people as possible rooting for him, you never knew who would give him an important piece of information he

could use in his pursuit. Shortly after noon he wandered by the clinic's door only to see Pat emerge and walk across the street to the diner. Giovanni hurried in behind her, slid onto a stool, rested one elbow on the counter, and looked as if he had been there for some time.

"Why, hello there Mr..." Pat began.

"No, please, you must just call me Giovanni." He stared deep into her eyes. "You are here for lunch? The food, it must be good then."

"No, I'm here to pick up lunch for Abbi, Dr. Fitzgerald. If I don't make sure she eats something, she'll go all the way to dinner and think that the Three Musketeer's bar was a fine lunch." Pat laughed. "And she won't even remember eating that."

"Perhaps I can carry the tray for you? I would be happy to do so. If the *doctore* must eat, perhaps I can join her? Surely she cannot refuse that little request."

"Well, I don't know..."

"Please, you do not need to wait. I know you have the much more *importante* medical things to do. I shall bring the tray and also a sandwich for me, and Abigail and I shall dine together. It is a good plan, no?"

"You can try." Pat smiled. "I swear I envy her. I won't tell her you're bringing it, so by the time she gets over her surprise, it'll be too late."

"*Grazie, mille grazie*. I bring the lunch *immediatmente*."

In less than fifteen minutes, Giovanni was walking through the clinic front door. At Pat's signal he went down the hall to the last door on the right and knocked.

"Bring it in Susie. Just set the tray on the desk. Thanks."

As Giovanni walked into the room Abbi bent over a book, reading and taking notes. She didn't pause, but pulled her book aside to leave room for the tray.

"I'll bring it back later."

Giovanni set the tray down, pulled up a chair, and seated himself. Then he pulled out two napkins, one he draped over his lap, the other he snapped open with a flourish. The motion caught Abbi's eye and she watched him in open astonishment.

"What are you doing here?"

"I bring to you your lunch. And this," he opened the napkin and laid it over her lap, "is now ready for you. I wish it were *foi gras*, fresh chocolate dipped strawberries, perhaps a truffle soufflé. But this, whatever it is, will have to do."

"It's chili."

"Hmm. It must be an acquired taste." Giovanni looked at the glop in the bowl. "I do not think I would care for it. The *Minestrone zuppa*, yes. This? No."

"I wasn't offering you any. Thanks for bringing the tray, now go. I'm busy."

"*Si*, you must eat. And if you must eat and I must eat, surely it cannot be so difficult if we eat together. I will leave immediately after we are done. And I will take the tray back to the diner."

"But..."

"That cannot be too much? Or shall I go and sit on the front stoops and eat my sandwich in the blowing dust? Ah well, I shall go then." Giovanni started to stand and looked at her beseechingly. "It shall, no doubt, ruin my digestion. But if that is your wish..."

"No, you can eat here. But don't bother me, and don't think that this will happen again. Agreed?"

Don't Mess With...

"*Si, Grazie.* My lunch will be one hundred times better when I look at you."

"Do you always talk like that?" Abbi stirred her chili and began eating. "You sound like some cheesy forty's B movie."

"Like what? I talk as I feel. *Italianos* are very emotional you know. Very passionate peoples, *in particolare* the men. What we feel is easy to see. Now relax and I shall tell you of my travels to entertain you during lunch. You will like my stories. The first female to fall to my seductive ways was three. Of course, I was only two. She was an older woman you understand, but she had such curls..."

* * *

It wasn't until after seven thirty that Abbi left the clinic. The after-hours vet tech had arrived to watch the animals remaining overnight. Abbi was glad the day was over. It had been busy, and emotionally unsettling. She looked around as she locked the door. *I am not disappointed. Silly, I am not feeling lonely because that Giovanni isn't here. He just finally accepted I mean what I said. I wonder what I have for dinner. Dinner for one isn't much fun. Maybe I am expecting too much in a relationship. Oh well, it's not like I'm going to be finding it here in Plumbville.*

It had grown downright cold when the sun went down and she pulled her coat closer, juggling the briefcase stuffed with papers and journals she had to read.

"Let me carry that for you. Like the schoolboy, I carry your homework. Yes, that is right? The boy carries the books of the girl he wishes to impress?"

Abbi jumped and then exhaled in relief. "Oh, it's you. I was wondering where you were."

"You were?" A big smile lit up the man's face. "And were you maybe, just a little missing Giovanni? Only a tiny amount?" He held his index finger and thumb up a scant quarter inch apart. Then he opened it up wide. "Or perhaps a little more? Good, we make the progress."

"We don't make the, uh, there is no progress. I didn't mean I was missing you. I was only worrying if you were lurking about ready to accost me."

"I am very good at the lurking. I shall be the bestest accoster you have ever had. If that is what you wish, prepare to be accosted."

Abbi looked at him, standing in front of her, a big grin on his open face. He looked like a mischievous little boy, caught out in some trouble. She couldn't help it. She laughed. He joined in.

"Don't be a goof." He took hold of the briefcase handle and she tugged it back. "You don't have to carry that, I only live..."

"Two streets over and one street up. Second house from the corner. With the white fence and the roses. Yes?"

"How did you know that?"

"Many people are ready to tell me many things about you. The peoples of this town like you very much. I think they wish you to have the grand romance."

"And you are that grand romance I take it?"

"Si, Giovanni of course."

"Do you ever give up?" Abbi laughed. "Very well, you may see me home, but you cannot come in. Agreed? You have to promise not to argue."

Don't Mess With...

"I promise," Giovanni crossed his heart. "Tonight I only walk you home. This I agree. Tomorrow night, well we will see what happens on that night."

"Nothing is going to happen tomorrow night either. You aren't going to be in town long and I don't plan to be another notch on your bedstead."

"A notch? You think that is what I wish. No. You are touching my heart and soul. How could I not wish to be with you? But tonight, I leave like the goods boy."

Chapter Four

Unable to sleep, and not wanting to check into headquarters for work, Giovanni decided to go walking in the local woods. Being a creature of the night, he was comfortable in the dark woods. He felt confused; he had always wanted to take his turn on the schedule. Slipping into the dreams of women, romancing them, fulfilling their sexual fantasies was not only his profession, it was his joy, and he took great pride in his work.

But the last few nights, he hadn't wanted to be in anyone's dreams or bed but Abbi's. This was causing him some concern. Giovanni wasn't sure what was going on in his own life.

He walked quietly over the ground, making no noise, aware of the movement around him. The darkness and the silence calmed him. A short cough caught his attention.

"Well, Gio. What are you doing here? I sure didn't expect to see anyone I knew this far from civilization."

"Who is there? Who is that talking to me? Come out here where I can see you." Giovanni looked around him, until he spotted a movement in the brush. A large wolf loped into the clearing next to him.

"Is that you Roland? What am I doing here? What are you doing here?"

"Well, there is a particularly hot she-wolf living in the area. And I've been pursuing her for weeks now." The wolf

put his nose in the air. "I can tell that she's just about in season, and I plan to be there. So I gotta hang around this place."

"Ah yes, *l'amore*. What we men, and wolves, suffer for it. And you, being both a wolf and a man must suffer twice as much, yes? Why do you not find yourself a nice female were-wolf? Would that not be easier?"

"Sometimes you just want something different. Besides why limit myself? I've never noticed you doing so. Always one more woman. Always the hunt." The wolf's sharp white teeth shone as his lips formed a lupine smile. "What was that?" Roland jumped and looked around.

"It was nothing my friend. Merely a small animal or such. Why so jumpy?"

"You better be careful too, Gio. There's some wild man running around here with a rifle. Thinks he's some sort of wolf killer. Everyone is careful around here."

"But unless he has a silver bullet, you don't need to worry. He can't kill you."

"No, he can't kill me. But if he shoots me and I lose enough blood, I can't change back. And I can't get back to Hell to get fixed up. I'll bleed into a state of non-being."

"Non-being? What is this? I have never heard of such a thing." Giovanni was puzzled. He thought he had learned all there was to know about his fellow denizens of Hell.

"You think we want to go round blabbing it? Give someone a way to knock us off? It means that if we lose enough blood, get weak enough, we can't heal, and we fall into a deep sleep. We aren't alive, we aren't dead. We just are."

"And you don't wake up?"

"Not from that. So you see why I'm just a little anxious about that madman running around shooting at wolves. Now,

I've got to get going. As soon as her scent reaches out, this place'll be crawling with males."

"Take care my friend."

"Yeah, wanna catch a game next Sunday? My place. The Devilish Devils are playing the Heavenly Shepherds. We're gonna cream those goodie goodies."

"Sure, well, let me see."

"Yeah, right. Night." Roland ran off into the underbrush, swallowed up by the night.

Giovanni watched him go. He realized he didn't really want to go watch the game with him. He'd rather spend the time with Abigail. You know, maybe settling down wasn't such a bad thing. Get a nice little house, have a family. Some children.

Giovanni stopped short and shook his head. Children? Nasty little rats of the rug running around, putting their dirty hands on his clothes, dripping who knew what from all sorts of places on their bodies. What was he thinking?

He was single. He lived a wonderful single life. He made more money than he could spend. He was famous. He lived in Hell, but then maybe she might like Hell. They could use a good veterinarian. I wonder if Abigail could treat a centaur. Of course, not a male one. You couldn't trust those sneaky males. She could have a new practice. All female of course.

A loud crack brought his head swirling around. On the air was a scent of gun powder. The hunter. And that sound had come from the direction Roland had disappeared in. Giovanni began to run, quietly so as not to alert anyone.

He came across the two of them. Roland had drug his hind legs and found himself with his back to a large rock wall.

A trail of blood shone black in the moonlight. Giovanni could see the blood welling up and flowing out of him.

Turning his head, Giovanni could see a man raising his rifle. He pointed it at Roland and the sound of a bullet being chambered sounded loudly in the still night. Quickly Giovanni picked up a rock, aimed, and threw it striking the hunter on the side of his head. The man fell to the ground, the rifle falling out of his hands. Giovanni ran to the gun, picked it up and holding it in both his hands, he bent it in half and tossed it aside. Then he turned back to the man, leaned over and picked him up by the collar. His hands went around the would-be killer's neck.

"No, Gio. Let him be. I'll see that he's punished. Let him feel what it's like to be pursued through the woods. My cousins and I will get revenge for what he has done."

"I would rather kill him here and now."

"I know, but justice will come to him. And I need help, my friend. This is bad."

Giovanni dropped the man and quickly moved to his friend's side. Kneeling by him, he felt the wound. It was deep and the blood flowed steadily.

"We must get you to a *doctore*. There is one in the town I am staying in."

"Can't go see a doctor. Can't change back, too weak. I have to stay a wolf."

"You must see a *doctore*. I cannot help you. Wait, I know a *doctore* for animals. She will be able to help you."

"Hurry, Gio. Hurry."

"Roland, I will bring her back here at once. You rest, don't move. I have the wound stuffed with moss that should slow the bleeding."

"I'll be here. I'm not going anywhere."

* * *

He stood in the darkness of the room, watching her sleep. Her full breasts rose and fell. She looked so beautiful sleeping in the moonlight that Giovanni wished he could stand there and watch her all night, but Roland was waiting. He moved to kneel next to her bed and placed one arm over her body and one hand over her mouth.

He could see her eyes open and she looked wildly around, then she started thrashing, trying to get away from the intruder holding her captive. She was strong and inwardly Giovanni was pleased. He was not overly fond of women who were so fragile he had to take great care not to harm. A sturdy female was much more to his liking. Soon he would have to see how sturdy Abigail was.

"Hush, Abigail, it is I, Giovanni. You must be quiet. I promise no harm will come to you, but I need help. It is a matter of life and death." She looked at him, skepticism in her eyes, but she nodded slowly.

"If I remove my hand you will not scream? I do not wish to alarm your neighbors. We must hurry or he will die."

Her body stiffened and she nodded again.

"*Buon*—this is good." He removed his hand. She remained silent for a moment.

"If this is some kind of trick, I swear you'll be sorry. This isn't funny. And I'm not impressed. In fact what are you, some sicko stalker? I think you'd better go and..."

Giovanni bent his head forward and kissed her. It was the easiest way to shut her up. And, he admitted to himself, something he had wanted to do for some time. Even though her lips were stiff under his; he deepened the kiss, running the

tip of his tongue along the seam of her lips. Gradually they softened. Giovanni smiled to himself.

Her hands crept up around his neck, holding him, pulling him closer to her. One of her hands slid into his hair and clutched a fistful of curls. Giovanni wrapped his arms around her and half raised her from the bed, pulling her into a deep embrace. Over and over he slanted his lips against hers and she responded back. His tongue questing inside her mouth, touching, exploring, and mating with hers.

Gasping for breath, he pulled back. She lay in his arms, silent, staring at him as he looked down at her. Again his mouth began its descent, but Abbi moved her hand to cover his mouth.

"Wait, you said someone was injured. Or was that just an excuse to get into my house?"

"Injured? Yes, of course. Roland is injured. We must go and help him."

"I told you Giovanni, I am not a doctor for people. I treat animals. I'm not trained to treat people; I wouldn't know how to go about it."

"That is good," he stood and pulled some clothes from her closet. "Here, put these on, it is cold outside and we have to hurry."

"Are you even listening to me? I don't treat..."

"Roland is the, wolf," he muttered under his breath, "at least for the moment."

"A wolf? You have a wounded wolf?"

"Yes, some crazy man is out in the woods, to shoot the wolves. Tonight he shot a friend of mine. It's bad, he could, uh, die. You must come." He watched as she examined his face, then threw the covers aside and jumped out of bed. She

Snowe Grey

was wearing a T-shirt and boxer shorts. Giovanni had never seen anything as sexy in his life. He wished she was wearing his shorts and shirt. Or better yet, not wearing his shorts and shirt.

"Turn." Abbi held her clothing and twirled her finger around.

"Turn?"

"Yes, I have no plans on getting dressed in front of you. Now turn around, if you're in such a hurry, do it now."

Chapter Five

"Are you sure this is the way you came?" Abbi's voice came through gritted teeth. Her aged rover bounced high and low. She was sure her backside would be black and blue from the trip over the fields. "If we break the axle, we won't be going anywhere. Damn, I have got get those shocks replaced."

"This is it, exactly. I remember. I came direct to your little house. I'm sorry I can't describe the place where Ro- the wolf is, but I can only retrace my-owww." He rubbed the top of his head where it had just met the roof.

"Well, if you and that motorcycle could make it, this Range Rover can do it. Just hang on, and pull your seat belt tighter."

"Motorcycle? Seat belt?"

"Yes, you did ride your motorcycle didn't you? I mean it's too far to have walked, no one could have done that."

"Of course I must have, I mean I did. After all, I am a mere man, not some immortal being. Just an average man. Except that I am the world's greatest lover."

"Of course," she chuckled "I'm a little nervous about treating the wolf. I mean I do well with dogs, but that's all. I don't get much call for wild animals."

"Well, no worry, he is not so wild. He thinks he is, but he is not really."

Abbi looked away from trying to steer the rover away from the worst of the ruts and holes. She caught a quick look

at him. "Not really wild? He's a tame wolf? Someone's pet? I don't understand. I don't know anyone around here who keeps a wolf as a pet."

"Uh, it's right there. See those two trees; if you park there, it's just a short walk. You can not drive any further because of the underbrushes."

Five minutes later, Abbi was muttering. "Underbrush hell, this is some sort of impenetrable thicket. And I seem to be leaving pieces of my skin and clothing with every thorn."

"It's here, just one more push through and we're there."

As she walked into a small glade she could see the figure of a man lying on the grass. He was lying very still. Ominously still.

"What the hell? I thought you said it was a wolf. This is," she approached, knelt, and rolled the man over. "This is Clem Dotson. He hates wolves. As far as I know his hobby is hunting them down."

Giovanni pulled her up and tugged at her to cross the open space.

"Not him. That one, he is the hunter. Over here, this is Rol—my fri—the wolf. Here, he has the hurt bad and needs your help immediately."

"I see him; stand back, a wounded animal, especially a predator like a wolf is very dangerous. We can't trust him and have to make sure he's out before I can help."

The sound of moaning came from behind them. They turned to see Dotson struggling to sit up. He was weaving in a circle but his hand searched for his rifle.

"Damnation, if he sees us here, he'll know we have the wolf and make all sorts of trouble for us. I don't think we can

Don't Mess With...

get away before he spots us. If he only had stayed out cold another half hour."

"He will." Giovanni walked toward him. "I will make the certain that he does not bother us for a while."

"Don't kill him," Abbi squealed in fear. "What are you doing?"

"Everyone keeps telling me that. I am not going to kill him, not now at least. I only make to tap him along side his head and put him back to sleep for a while."

"Well," she chewed her lip, "I guess that's for the best, but try not to hurt him too much. And while you take care of him, I'll take care of the wolf."

A long howl brought Giovanni spinning back around to face her. She was holding a large pistol aimed at Roland's heart. Using his unearthly skills, he vaulted across the clearing and knocked her pistol aside as she pulled the trigger. It was no longer pointing at his friend.

"What are you doing? I wanted you to help him, not shoot him." Giovanni yelled at her. Holding her by the shoulders, he shook her slightly. "If I want him dead, I would have let the hunter shoot him."

"I was only giving him a sedative. Now you made me miss. Where did the dart go anyway?"

Six eyes followed from the barrel of the pistol, along its trajectory, and found the sedative dart. In Dotson's chest. Dotson was staring down at it. His eyes rolled up in his head and he fell back. Out like a light.

"Hell, well it won't harm him. I guess that's one less problem we have right now. I only hope he didn't really see us. Uh, Giovanni would you get that dart? I don't want him to find

it and turn it into the sheriff. I don't think I could explain this away."

Giovanni did as she asked. After pulling it out, he turned back to find again she had the pistol aimed at his friend.

"Stop. Don't shoot him. He isn't dangerous."

"I know you think he's tame, but he's a wild animal. It's in his nature to defend himself, and he'll naturally turn on us when we approach him. He won't know we only want to help him."

"Yes he will know, watch." He loped across the glade towards his friend.

"Noooo. Don't get any closer. Get back here. At least stand to one side so I can tranq him if he charges you, you idiot."

Without hesitation, Giovanni approached Roland and knelt beside him, stroking his blood-matted coat.

"You must take care, my friend," he whispered. "She will help you, but we must convince her of your friendliness."

Roland eyed the woman, from her feet to her hair, and then appreciatively examined her breasts. His tongue fell out of his mouth and he panted slightly. The ends of his mouth turned up.

Giovanni looked at him sourly.

"Not that friendly."

He swung about on his heels to face Abbi.

"Hurry, you must see to him. He has lost even more blood and seems very weak. I doubt that he could bite you even if he wanted to. Which I am certain he does not." Giovanni's voice dropped and he frowned down at his friend.

A flicker of doubt crossed her face. He saw the moment she made her decision, firmed her jaw, and walked toward them.

Don't Mess With...

"Let's get him comfortable and then we'll have to take him...where? We can't take him to the office, they'll look there. It won't take Dawson long to tell the Sheriff that there's a wounded animal out here and every available man will be pressed into hunting it down."

She wrapped long bandages around the legs and trunk of the wolf. "We'll take him to my house for tonight. We can hide him there until he's better. I'll just have to keep everyone from visiting me. And we'll find some way to hide him from the sheriff."

"How? We? I know nothing about taking care of him."

"Yes, we. You want your uh, pet, uh, friend to live don't you? Well you're just going to have to help me keep him safe. There, I'm done for now. I can't do anymore here."

She rose to her feet. "You carry him back to my Rover. Be careful not to jiggle him too much. And we won't return over those fields. There's a road that will be a much more comfortable ride for him and for us. Now pick him up, careful."

Giovanni carefully picked his way back to where they had parked. They took a longer route, around the thicket, but it was much easier to walk and were soon were at the car.

"Shall I hold him while you drive?" Giovanni asked.

"No, I want to stay as close to him as possible. He might start bleeding again. I'll hold him while you drive."

"Very good, I can do that."

"Can you drive a stick?" Abbi climbed in the back of the rover, and directed as Giovanni laid Roland on a nest of blankets. "I mean you have done it before."

"Of course, a stick, a broom, destrier. I can drive almost anything. You just relax and let me take care of it." He

climbed into the driver's seat. "Start," he muttered as he waved his hand over the wheel.

They sat there motionless for thirty seconds.

"Well, you can't start without the keys can you?" She held them out for him, jangling them in his ear.

"The keys? Of course, I need the keys." He took them. "Now which one is the correct key?" His fingers flicked through them all.

"It's the big square one. And the ignition is located on the dash."

"Of course it is. Where else would it be?"

Giovanni's eyes searched all over the dials, windows, buttons and switches arrayed in front of him. What exactly was a dash? It must be here somewhere. He held the key with his right hand and searched for someplace to insert it.

"Just like making love."

"What?" came the voice from the back seat. "What's like making love?"

"Finding the right place to insert the key. The correct place where it fits of course. Just like a man and woman. Surely you know that. You are a *doctore* after all." He craned his head around to look at her. "Unless you are the virgin? Is such a thing possible at your age?"

"I know how to make love, but that has nothing to do with a car."

"Then you have not been making love with the right man. I will show you how to make much passion in a car. We will ride waves of pleasure into the sky, rocketing to a joyful satisfaction..."

Don't Mess With...

"For right now, you can just put the key in the ignition, right there, and turn on the car, not me. Now hurry, Dotson won't be out all that long."

"Very well for now. Ah, here." Giovanni inserted the key and turned it. The engine purred to life and he started off. It couldn't be that difficult. He had watched her after all, watching the play of the muscles of her leg as she moved her foot on the pedals. He could do it. He hoped. Maybe he had paid too much attention to leg and not enough to what she was doing.

They jerked down the road, causing her to clutch the wolf and try to keep him from bouncing all around the back seat.

"I thought you said you could drive a stick."

"I can. But this is a car. Now this is not so easy. But I took driving lessons."

"From who? Wally Mart?"

"No. Another Incu...person taught me. Jean-Luc. He is a good driver. He has only been in fifteen accidents. And every time he buys the new car."

"Fifteen? Stop the car. I've changed my mind. I'll drive and you ride back here with the wolf."

"I thought you said you needed to be there in case he started bleeding."

"That was before I realized my only choice was driving or being bounced to death. Now you get back here and let me get us home in one piece."

Abbi slid behind the wheel and smoothly drove them to her home. Helping Giovanni carry the wolf, she threw the door open.

"Here, let me turn the lights on. Carry him gently. Through this door there, we'll go into the kitchen; it's got the best light."

Giovanni followed her through the house into the small room. He waited in the kitchen while she took a sheet from the dryer. She took down a blanket from a shelf.

"One of my best," she sighed, but it's clean and soft. I'll just clear the table, put the comforter down, and spread out the sheet."

"Put him down now. Don't drop him, put him down carefully. Good. Watch him while I get my things and we'll dig that bullet out of him. Keep him as calm and quiet as possible. I'll need a few minutes to get ready."

Giovanni sat next to Roland. He was very weak; his breathing was shallow and rapid. Giovanni was afraid that his friend wouldn't make it.

Abbi re-entered the room carrying an armful of things. She began laying them out on a counter behind the table. She bustled around the small space, filling kettles and pans with water; setting them on the stove. Into one of them she dropped several nasty looking items. Giovanni was very glad that it was Roland who was injured.

She placed some sheets, towels, and blankets into the stove.

He looked at her strangely. What was she doing? Cooking them?

"I'm putting them in the oven to warm them."

"I didn't ask. You are the *doctore*, the expert."

"You didn't have to ask. I saw your face. Now," she looked around, "I'll need some more light." She moved several

lamps into the room. Finally, she stood back and looked around her.

"I think we're almost ready. Damn, he's lost so much blood even if I do get the bullet right out, I'm afraid he may be too far gone to save. I need blood for him. Hmmm."

"I can give you blood. You can have mine."

"That's so sweet, Giovanni." He liked the way she looked at him. So warm and soft. She had never given him such a look before and he found himself wanting to see it more and more.

"You can't. He needs canine blood. Actually, he needs wolf blood for a transfusion, but I know I can't get that. Mrs. Harrison's dog has given blood a couple of times. I'll call her and borrow King." She looked down at Roland. "It's not the best choice, but it's the only one we really have."

She turned to a small desk, pulled out the phone book, and began to leaf through it.

"Gio." Roland's weak whisper barely reached his ears. "I can't use wolf or dog blood, only were-wolf blood."

"And where do you think I can get that?" he whispered back.

"Did you say something to me?" Abbi turned to look at him.

"Me? No, I was only trying to soothe the wolf. He looked a little-afraid. He's only a dumb animal after all."

"Hmm, animals aren't dumb you know. They are very wise. Well," she gave him a skeptical look, "keep him as quiet as possible. Where did I write that number down?"

"Gio. Stop her."

"I can not stop her. You need the blood. What would you have me do?"

"My cousins heard my call and are waiting outside. Open the door and they'll come in and give me their blood. But warn them to keep their wolf shapes."

"Uh, just a minute Abbi. I have to...I need to open... Be right back."

"Whatever, Gio. Ah here's the number."

Roland howled in pain and she dropped the receiver and hurried over to him. She quickly ran a hand over him and picking up a hypodermic, she dropped a capsule in it, pulled the plunger back, and lowered the needle. Roland bared his teeth and she checked the descent of her hand.

"Don't be difficult. You need this pain medicine. I'm going to be digging inside of you and you need to be perfectly still so I don't cause more damage. Now stop that and let me do my job." She gave the injection quickly.

"You won't feel anything. What am I doing? Of course you don't understand. Good wolf. Quiet boy." She stroked him as he drifted into sleep.

"He looks dead." Giovanni's voice came from the doorway.

"He's not dead. I just sedated him. He has to be perfectly still and this is going to hurt a lot. Now let me call Mrs. Harris."

"No."

"No? I told you we need the blood. He needs the blood."

"Not dog blood. Werewo-where would you get wolf blood you wanted to know? I have provided it. Here." He stepped aside and a large powerful animal followed him into the kitchen.

Chapter Six

It was the biggest wolf she'd ever seen. *My gawd how big is he? He could eat me in just three bites.*

Abbi watched the wolf silently as it sniffed around the table. Laying its massive head next to the wounded wolf, it reached out its tongue and licked the blood. Then it turned its eyes on her. It showed its teeth, large teeth. Very large, sharp teeth.

"Now this one I'm sure I have to sedate."

"No, he is here to help. Just tell him where to go and do what you must."

"But Giovanni, he's twice the size of any wolf I've ever seen. And quite frankly, I'm afraid of him."

The wolf's tongue rolled out of its mouth and he approached her slowly. The tongue licked her ankles and he moved his cold, wet nose slowly up her legs. Reaching the back of her knees, it nuzzled her there, and then he licked her with the hot, raspy tongue.

"Oh, my. That tickles. Uh. Good dog, uh wolf. I think." Abbi was glued to the floor. The feel of the tongue and nose were actually a little erotic. And when that cold nose nudged higher and higher up her leg she gave a little shiver. Looking down into the wolf's eyes she could imagine that he knew exactly how she felt. It was like looking into the eyes of a man. She shook her head.

"He, uh, it is a he isn't it?" For some reason she hesitated to check herself. *Lord I'm being silly tonight. It's an animal and I've seen thousands of males. This wolf is just one more.* But somehow when she looked at him, she could swear he was laughing at her.

"Yes, just an animal. And what an animal. Bad animal. Animal I could beat the crap out of. Animal that deserves to have the crap beaten out of it."

"Giovanni. Shame on you. He's just showing that he wants to be friendly. Good wolf. Look at him, such a sweet innocent face."

* * *

Giovanni looked at Garth's face. *Innocent my ass.* At that moment, the animal's face safely turned from Abigail, one eyelid slowly closed over Garth's eye. Then he moved close to Abbi again and rubbed against her, watching Giovanni all the time.

"It is surely time to take the blood yes? Perhaps I shall help you."

"No, I can do it myself. You aren't a vet or a tech, it does take some training to do it right you know." Abbi turned back and watched as the great wolf jumped on her kitchen countertop and laid down, one leg stretched out.

"You might hurt him, Giovanni. I'll do it."

Giovanni snorted.

"I can get much more blood out of him that you can. And I will enjoy it ever so much more than you do." He muttered, half under his breath.

"Excuse me?" Abbi paused in shaving the hair from a small spot on the leg.

"Nothing. Just know that I am here to help you. I am here to assist you. I am here to comfort you. Just remember," he stared into the wolf's eyes. "Just remember I am here. Watching. Everything."

"I'll be fine. I'll collect this and start a transfusion on the patient."

"Roland." Giovanni put in, watching as Garth's tongue continued to lick Abbi's arms and neck. His nose nuzzled her. Absentmindedly she stroked the fur. Giovanni's eyes burned as he watched her hand.

"What's Roland?"

"Remember, I told you before, the wounded wolf, he is Roland."

"You did? Hmmm, you named the wolf Roland?" Abbi's voice was surprised and she looked at him. "Why would you name him Roland?"

"I didn't name him Roland. His mother and father named him Roland." Now Garth's tongue flicked across Abbi's breast, barely touching the nipple. Giovanni's fists clenched and unclenched as he had visions of exactly what he would do to Garth as soon as he got back to Hell.

"The wolf's mother and father named him Roland? How would you know that? And why would a wolf name one of their cubs?"

"Yes. No." Giovanni realized what they were discussing. "My mother and father of course. They called him Roland."

"Oh well that makes more sense. For a minute it sounded as if you personally knew his mother and father." She chuckled. "And that would be pretty improbable. Does this big fellow have a name?"

"It used to be Garth. Soon it will be 'Dead'."

"I don't think I heard you Giovanni. What did you say his name was?"

"Garth."

"He's done," she pulled the needle out and placed a bandage around the leg. "You have the strangest names for them."

Garth jumped down from the counter and walked over to the corner of the kitchen. He sat down watching Giovanni, he spread his legs wide. Giovanni's blood began to boil when he saw that Garth's penis was unsheathed. The long, pale spike gleamed wetly in the light. He saw Garth laugh silently.

You will be sorry. Now stop that. Giovanni mouthed the words to Garth. The wolf shifted and curled himself around and lay quietly watching the scene.

"That's a good start," Abbi said as she hung the bag of blood. It began to flow steadily into the wounded animal. "This should help him. If we could only get another unit or two."

A noise came from the living room.

"What was that?" she whispered. "Do you think someone could have found us already? Dotson couldn't move that fast."

Two wolves appeared in the doorway. They were identical from their sleek dark heads to their bushy tails. Both of them were lean and obviously young.

"Oh hell, the twins." He glared at Roland then Garth. "There was no one else? You had to bring the twins?"

"Sorry?" Abbi watched the new wolves. "Are these are friendly as the others?"

"Probably more so if the gossip is to be believed. They are said to be exceptionally friendly." Giovanni watched them like a hawk. "Maybe too friendly. I'm watching them too."

"Oh good." Abbi smiled. "I still think I'm in some enchanted dream. Wolves just aren't this friendly and well, sweet. That's what they've been, just sweet little lovers."

"Si," Giovanni snorted and looked back at Garth. "Very little lovers, from what I've heard. Nothing like seven and seven-eighths inches lovers."

"Seven and... Oh!" Abbi squealed.

Giovanni turned. The twins had moved to flank her, one on each side, and were now rubbing up against her. Moving, they entwined around her legs, their noses going up her legs and back. They pushed so hard against her that Abbi had to grab onto the edge of the counter to hold herself upright. She laughed.

"Aren't they just the sweetest things? I could just eat them up," she leaned down. Their tongues licked her face, neck, arms, and breasts. "I just could eat you right up, you sweeties."

One of the twins drew his head back and gently pushed his nose into her crotch, nuzzling his nose in.

"Stop that you naughty thing." His brother moved behind her and pushed his nose into the same place. "Now quit that. You two are something. Now stop. That tickles." Abbi laughed as she swatted at them.

Giovanni ground his teeth together.

"What a shame." He spit out. "They are probably just enjoying tonight because tomorrow they are due to be neutered."

"Neutered? Who neuters wild wolves? I've never heard of such a thing."

"I have, and I have the rusty butter knife to do it."

"Giovanni, how cruel. They're so sweet. That's not a funny joke."

"It wasn't a joke, and they know it," he whispered.

The twins turned two sets of eyes on him and Giovanni could see the mirth buried in them. Then one of them jumped up on the counter and lay down to allow Abbi to place the needle in his leg. As she withdrew the blood, his tongue stroked her, arm, neck, and breast while his brother curled around her legs, rubbing his soft fur against her. Abbi patted both wolves in turn.

When she had finished with both of them, she turned back to the sink and washed her hands well. Then using tongs to withdraw some instruments from the boiling water, she moved to the table and took a deep breath.

"I'm ready now. We need to get that bullet out. Giovanni would you remove the animals? I don't want to be distracted by..." her words cut off as the three wolves stood and walked out the door.

"Well, I'll be. Just like they understood." Abbi marveled. "I've never heard of such intelligent wolves."

"Do you need any help? I am most excellent around blood."

"No, if I need something I'll let you know. Just keep out of my way for a while." The scalpel began its incision and the blood welled up from the clean cut on his friend's body. Giovanni watched it, leaned over to retch, and crumpled to the floor.

"Good thing I don't need any help," Abbi muttered.

Chapter Seven

Giovanni snuggled next to the warm body next to him. He smiled. What a wonderful way to wake up. Obviously Abbi had not been able to resist him and it was only a matter of time before she succumbed to him entirely. He gently slid his hand under the cover and moved softly down her arm.

My, how strong she is. Her arms were well developed, muscular even. He grinned in anticipation. A woman whose strength could match his would make for an energetic coupling. There were positions one could take with a strong woman that one could not use with a weaker one. And a stronger woman promised a more vigorous love making. He sighed with pleasure.

Leaning forward, he nibbled on her bare shoulder. The skin was soft and smooth. He felt her stiffen beneath his lips and knew she was awake. Carefully he ran his tongue up and across her back to the base of her neck. He nipped it gently, biting with his teeth just a little.

At the same time he hand slid down the side of her body, the chest curved into a neat waistline and flared over slim hips. Puzzled he paused a moment, her hips had looked much fuller, more lush the night before in the tight pants she had worn. Silently he shrugged. Under the skin of her thighs, he could feel tight muscles.

His hand drifted over the flat abdomen and tangled with the curls between her thighs. The springy curls pulled at his

fingers as he touched them, played with them. He moved his mouth to whisper in her ear.

"I think maybe this game is a little to your liking, hey my sweet. Wait and I shall show you how the angels sing in ecstasy." Then his fingers touched the base of her manrod and ran up its hardened length to the hot tip.

His fingers and hand froze. His heart stopped. *Her manrod?* He touched it again, moving around the tip. His finger brushed the top and found a wet drop, waiting. *What the hell?*

Quickly he pulled his hand back and rolled the body next to him over onto its back.

"Why, Giovanni, I never knew you felt this way about me. What the heck? Why not? I'm game if you are, but be careful of my wound. That bullet left a nasty hole in me." Roland laughed softly. "Or could it be that you were expecting someone else maybe?"

Giovanni sat up. "What are you doing in my bed? Where is Abigail?"

"Ah, she put us both in here last night. I was still woozy from the surgery and you, my brave friend, passed out cold at the sight of blood. She struggled to put you in here."

"I am wearing no clothes. Still," he was triumphant, "she must have removed them and been able to feast her eyes on my body. Now, she will come to me after having seen what awaits her."

"Hmm, I doubt it. She had to take your clothes off because you vomited all over her kitchen floor and your fine clothing. I'm trying to think of the exact words she used as she stripped your clothing off and dumped it into the washing

machine. Let's see, odious, disgusting..." Giovanni's hand stopped the flow of words.

"Enough. One more word and I shall perform surgery on you."

"My friend, you are not a doctor."

Giovanni eyed Roland and smiled an evil smile. "I know."

"Yes, I see. Well I think I forget all the words she used. Although I did learn a new one or two. Who knew that such a lovely woman would know words like that? I am impressed. Perhaps I shall remain here, in her care for a while longer."

Roland threw back his covers and sat up slowly. He swiveled around and lowered his feet onto the floor. Gingerly he moved to try to stand.

"You are not a wolf."

"Very good, Giovanni." He grinned back over his shoulder. "No wonder you get all the women with that keen intellect of yours."

"But you must remain a wolf." A car's tires crunched on the gravel drive. "Damn, who is that? It is very early."

"Probably your doctor. She left a while ago. I heard her. You were snoring loudly. Very loudly. She will probably not wish to sleep with you now. You do snore very, very loudly." Roland moved hesitatingly.

"Shut up or you, my friend, will never snore again."

Giovanni rose and crossed to the window. Peeking from behind the shade, he could see the driveway. The blue range rover's door opened, and Abbi got out. Giovanni turned back to see his friend tentatively standing by the side of the bed. Rushing across the rug he pushed him with both hands back down.

"Damn you, Gio. That hurts. What the hell are you doing, trying to finish what that madman started last night?"

"Quickly, turn back into the wolf. Now, hurry." He ran and stood with his back against the door as the handle turned.

"But I'm better now. I can go home."

"No you can not," Giovanni hissed. "The minute you are better and out of here, I am too, and I am not ready for that yet. Now change back. Become the wolf."

"Giovanni? What's wrong? I can't get the door opened." Abbi's voice sounded from the other side of the door. "I hear talking in there. What's going on?"

"Nothing, my sweet, I am getting dressed and talking to the wolf. I want him to continue to get better, and not have a nasty relapse." Giovanni emphasized the last few words. "A very nasty relapse which might entail telling his mother about his brief fling with a wolf hunter," Giovanni whispered so that only Roland could hear him. "A female were-wolf hunter."

"Gio, that was years ago. But if Mom found out she'd still box my ears 'till I heard them ring into next week."

"And..."

"Come on, she was gorgeous, and it was too tempting not to do it."

"And..."

"Oh all right, but you owe me, Incubus. You owe me big time." Roland glared at him and shifted back into his wolf shape.

Giovanni moved away from the door and opened it. Abbi almost fell into the room. Giovanni grabbed her by the shoulder to hold her from hitting the floor. Abbi landed on one knee.

"Thanks, Giovanni. I..." She turned her head and stared straight at his fully erect shaft. "Uh, I. Well thank you."

"You are welcome," his face brightened. "He is wonderful isn't he? You do not have to thank me though, many people proclaim over him and his excellence." He looked down at his aroused staff with an expression of pride.

"Over uh, who?" she stared in fascination as the shaft moved a little. Her tongue darted out from between her lips and slid across from pink end to the other. His penis jumped again in response. As if on cue, her lips puckered and seemed to reach out towards that part of him standing so gloriously ready. Abbi shook her head and moved to stand up.

"What were we talking about?" She looked back down again. Then her eyes moved up the washboard abs, the tight waist, the broad chest dusted with dark curly hair, and the wide shoulders. They moved up his neck, across the cleft chin, lingered on his chiseled, firm lips, the finely cut nose and met his dark eyes, framed with long, curling lashes. She smiled at him. He smiled back.

Behind him, on the bed, Roland whimpered softly.

Abbi's hand moved towards Giovanni's face. Her fingers traced the deep cleft in his chin, then traced along his fine lips. He opened his mouth and caught her fingertip with his white, even teeth. He sucked on her finger, pulling it into the warmth of his mouth, closing his lips around it. He nibbled on it, and sucked it gently, rolling his tongue around it.

Abbi swayed slightly towards him. Her mouth rounded into an 'O'.

Roland cleared his throat and whimpered again, louder.

Abbi shook her head. She opened her eyes wider and pulled her finger away from the warm depths. "The wolf. I came to see how he was doing." Her voice was hoarse.

"That one. He is fine. He was just telling me...I mean, I was telling him..."

"You were having a discussion with a wolf? Perhaps you should be the patient." Abbi stepped back to look at him. "I haven't had anyone tell me they could communicate with a wild animal before. With a poodle, yes, their cat, sometimes, birds all the time, but a wolf? That's a new one."

"We understand each other."

"On the other hand, you're both wolves, so I can see that. Now if you would move aside, I'd like to see for myself." She pushed against his arm and moved him. "Oh, and although you may be God's gift to women everywhere, I would appreciate it if you put some clothing on. At least wrap something around you."

"Ah, the sight of my manhood responding to you arouses you? My maleness disturbs you? Your female blood heats to join with me? I understand." Giovanni felt a sense of pride; she was coming around quite nicely.

"My what does what?" Abbi swung around to look at him, patent disbelief filled her face. "I don't want you to catch your death of cold. You get sick and I'll have you to take care of too. And although the wolf may be a welcome patient, you wouldn't be."

She turned back to the bed, bending over Roland, Giovanni heard her mutter, "That's all I would need, that one lying in my bed expecting to be waited on hand and foot. I'd probably end up holding a pillow over his face."

Don't Mess With...

"I shall get clothed and go into the kitchen to fix us something to eat. Call me if you should need me. If it's an emergency."

"What kind of emergency would I need you for? I'm the doctor."

"In case your blood burns hot through you and you have the itch that needs to be scratched. I have the, the, the itch-scratcher."

He shut the door scant seconds before the pillow hit it.

* * *

Abbi was re-wrapping Roland's wounds when she heard a car pull up in her drive. She pulled the covers up over the wolves head, leaving a tunnel for air. She rumbled the bed to make it look as if she hadn't made it yet, rather than the fact that the wolf lay in it. "Don't move, don't make a sound. I'm not sure who it is, but it can't be good. And I don't want anyone to know you're here."

Abbi shook her head, "Great, now's he got me talking to the wolf."

She gathered her wits together, opened the bedroom door, and walked towards the living room. She could hear Giovanni speaking to someone.

"Yes, Abbi is here. She is still in the bedroom. You know these women, always they linger in the bedroom in the morning. I mean, she told me that I must get dressed and less than two minutes later, I am so. She is still in there."

Lord, there goes my reputation. Maybe he's not talking to anyone important, there won't be any gossip. I'll just cross my fingers that it's not anyone important.

Abbi turned and walked into the living room. The sheriff was standing with Giovanni. The sheriff who shared

everything that happened with his wife, the biggest gossip not only in town, but in the whole county. *Damn, damn, double damn.*

"Ah, here she is. My sweet Abbi." Giovanni pulled her close to him and put his arm around her shoulders, dropping a brief kiss on her cheek and another on the hollow in her neck. "See the sheriff comes to visit. But he does not ride a horse. And not the six-shooters. In Italy we always think the sheriff must ride a horse and wear the six-shooters. It is so in all the movies."

"Hi, Sheriff." Abbi tried to pull away, but Giovanni held her tightly. "What can I do for you? Kinda early to be out here isn't it?"

"Nah, been up all night. Dotson came into town last night blabbing on about how he shot some wolf and then some woodland ghostie knocked him down. Musta been drinking. Anyway, been out all night with a posse tracking it down. Wounded wolf ain't the sort of thing we want roaming around."

"Oh. Wounded wolf you say?" She cast her mind for something to say that would sound natural. "Cup of coffee?" *No, I don't want him to stay.* "I could fix it to go for you."

"Bella, we have not made coffee yet this morning. But if the sheriff wishes to wait..."

"No, gotta get back out. I was only stopping by to tell the doc since we know how she feels about wolves, and don't want her to get involved with this. A wounded wolf is a dangerous one. But I can tell that the four-legged beasties aren't what's on her mind." The sheriff smiled widely. "I see you're plenty busy right here. And now I'll be going and you can, uh, get back to what you was adoin'."

"That's not necessary Sheriff, there was nothing happening. I mean Giovanni's just here for..." Abbi's voice trailed away.

"Not busy now, I am hungry for breakfast. A man must keep up his strength, eh Sheriff? It is not good to be weak. A man cannot fulfill his...destiny if he is weak."

Abbi watched him wink at the sheriff. *I'm going to kill him for sure. I'll find an old, dull scalpel and peel the skin off him inch by inch.* Her gaze flew to the sheriff just in time to see an answering wink. Abbi blushed red, from the tips of her toes to the root of her hair. *Both dead men. And I'm the one that can do it.*

"I'll be going now. Bye Doc Fitzgerald, bye Giovanni." He tipped his hat and whistled all the way back to his truck. The smile on his face was so wide; Abbi wasn't sure how he would fit it behind the wheel of the Dodge. As the truck drove away she spun and faced that perfidious male.

"How dare you give him the idea that we're, that you and I, that, well you know."

"No, I don't. Explain to me." His eyes glinted with laughter.

"I don't need to explain anything to you. By this time he's already called his wife, told her what he found here, and she's started the gossip. I give it two, three hours tops and every soul in this county will know you were here."

"Good." Giovanni strolled towards the kitchen door. "It is easier without the competition. I wish to have the omelet for breakfast. Let's see, I will use the *crème fraîche*. Maybe the caviar? No, I think the white truffles. Yes, definitely the white truffles."

Shower Grey

Planning the meal he disappeared into the kitchen, leaving Abbi staring after him.

Chapter Eight

Flipping through the Rottweiler's chart, Abbi concentrated on the lab reports. Just as she expected, there were stones in the dog's bladder. She nodded in satisfaction. Now that she knew the problem she could work on fixing it. If only she could fix the problem at home as quickly. It was becoming all too easy to fall for a certain charming, maddening man currently invading her house.

"Good morning, Pat. How are you this beautiful morning? *Buon*, yes? And you, *il mio bello*. Is my *doctore* free? She left too early this morning. The café was not yet finished, so I bring it to her. Black with a teensy bit of crème, exactly as she likes. I study everything about mi *doctore*."

"She's in the back, Giovanni." The receptionist giggled. "So nice of you to bring her coffee. But what's that I smell?"

"Ah, that is me. My natural masculine scent. You like, eh?"

"Yes, as a matter of fact I probably would. But that's not what I was talking about. I smell coffee and...and...something else maybe?"

"*Si*, not only the café, but *voilà*! In the basket? Hot, fresh muffins. I make the blueberries for her. But I bring one for you also. I make them from the scratch. I think of my sweet Abigail and make the sweets for her."

"*Mmm-mmm*. Boy they do smell great, and *ooh*, they are still hot. I swear Giovanni, are there any more at home like

you? I would dump my husband and run off with you in a heartbeat."

"*Grazie*, Pat." Giovanni walked back down the hall. Seeing Abbi standing outside the door to an exam room he smiled. His eyes cut back to where Pat stood watching his ass. "But I think I must wait for Abigail to agree to escape with me to a romantic beach, under a star filled sky, soft, warm tropical breezes blowing over our hot, sweat slick naked bodies, touching, kissing..."

With one hand, Abbi grabbed him by the front of his shirt, with the other she reached behind him, and turned the door knob. Tugging at his shirt, she pulled him into the room.

"What are you doing? By now the whole town thinks that we're..."

Giovanni's mouth descended upon her. His tongue slid gently along the seam of her lips. Her arms rose and moved around his neck, holding him close to her until his fingers splayed across her ass, pulling her softness firmly against his arousal.

His lips hardened and his tongue demanded entrance. Abbi opened her mouth at his persistent probing. His tongue stroked the inside of her mouth and soon hers moved into the warm depths of his mouth. Their tongues moved into a wild dance of mating, bringing them higher and higher.

Deep in her throat Abbi moaned, a primal sound that spurred an answering groan in Giovanni. He lifted his face momentarily to look deep into her eyes.

"Never, *cara mia*, never have I felt so. I could continue kissing you forever. Existing only upon you, feeding upon your passion. I am not sure what is happening to me, I only

know that my life begins and ends with you and I crave your touch."

"I know. I don't understand this at all. Kiss me again, Giovanni."

"My pleasure. I will kiss you a million, no a million times a million. Kisses scattered from the tips of your toes, to the delicate arch in your foot. Your ankles, your calves, those perfect thighs, then I shall kiss that place on your inner thigh, and inhale the warm perfume of your very own scent. My tongue will capture the honey of your dew as you open..."

"Huh-Huh," an obviously fake cough came from behind them.

Abbi's arm dropped and she moved away from Giovanni. She now faced Mrs. Smythe and Thor. The big dog wagged the stump of his tail.

"Oh, sorry. Pat told me to wait in here," Mrs. Smythe's eyes moved rapidly from Abbi to Giovanni and back again. "I didn't mean to interrupt or anything."

"You didn't. I was just coming in to discuss Thor's lab reports. Uh, thanks for the coffee Giovanni. You can leave it on my desk; I'll get to it later."

"Are you sure I didn't interrupt? I can come back later." Mrs. Smythe's eyes dropped blatantly to the large bulge in the front of Giovanni's pants.

Abbi's eyes followed hers and she blushed. Giovanni looked down and a big, smug grin spread across his face. He shrugged his shoulders. "As you see, Abbi has a powerful effect on me. I am helpless before her."

Abbi gasped, opened the door, and marched out, grabbing Giovanni's hand as she swept past him. He paused and made an obvious show of looking at her swaying hips.

He grinned at Mrs. Smythe. "And I am helpless behind her, also."

Abbi yanked him hard and pulled him down the hall. Behind her she could hear the tittering from the exam room. She pushed open the back door and shoved him through.

"Go away. I have work to do. Provided I have any patients left." She slammed the door in his face. Leaning her face against the cool surface, she felt the bright red of her blush cool. Finally taking some deep breaths, she pushed away and walked calmly back down the hall. The tinkle of the clinic's front door rang.

"Oh Giovanni, I thought you were...but you and Abbi were..." Pat's voice sounded confused.

"Yes, we were. But I forgot to leave for her the muffins. You will give them to her, yes? I think maybe she has the hunger of the stomach and that is why she is so cranky. On the other hand, it could be the PMS, yes? Sometimes it is difficult to tell. Perhaps you know when her flow is?"

No, he is not standing out there in a room full of my patients and discussing my monthly cycle. He couldn't be doing that. God help me, he is.

Abbi peeked around the corner and saw him leaning up against the counter. Every one of the people in the waiting room staring at him, taking in every word that dropped from his mouth. The one that had those lovely teeth she planned on pulling out. She knew that Giovanni had seen her.

"No, I will wait to find out. Tell her when she comes home tonight; I will have a fire in the fireplace, chilled champagne, a hot bubbles bath, and a gourmet dinner ready. Then after dinner, I will give her a foot massage to relax her. I think she will like this. Then perhaps we continue what we

started in the examination room. I am ravenous for her body. I long to sink..."

"Pat," Abbi called out quickly and loudly. "Perhaps you should put the next patient in exam room two. I'll be there directly."

She heard the bell tinkle on the door as Giovanni left, his laughter trailing behind him. *That's it. Tonight I kill him for sure. I'll drown him in that damn bubbles bath while I'm drinking the champagne. And I'm not even that fond of champagne.*

Abbi smiled at the thought of his imminent demise and returned to Mrs. Smythe and Thor.

Much later, she was glad when the last patient left and she could lock the door behind her. It was odd, but lately going home had become anything but dull. Her house would be very empty when he was gone.

Delicious odors assailed her nose as she opened her front door. Whatever Giovanni was cooking smelled divine. The fire was burning sweet apple wood. There was even a faint scent of roses on the air. *My expensive bath salts. Oh well, they do feel wonderful. I could use a good soak.*

On the floor was a bright red ribbon, she followed along until she came across a glass. Picking up the glass sniffed it cautiously. Champagne. The bubbles burst and made her nose wrinkle. Sipping slowly, she continued to follow the ribbon.

Just inside the hallway was a plate with one piece of chocolate. Dark chocolate, her favorite kind. She bit into the piece. *Heaven, this is surely a little piece of heaven. Umm, pineapple truffle, my favorite.* Under the plate lie a gold box she recognized. Godiva chocolates. She scooped them up and continued down the hall.

Outside the bathroom was a chair and clothes valet. A big, plush terrycloth robe lay draped over the chair. The cloth was still warm and toasty. Abbi shucked her clothing in record time and donned the soft, warm robe. Sliding her feet into matching terry slippers, she opened the bathroom door and gasped.

Candles. Candles everywhere. There were tapers, pillars, votive, decorative, and in-betweens. Candles filled her bathroom. A CD player was softly playing Ravel's *Bolero*. The bathtub tempted her, piled high with lush white bubbles. Mountains of white bubbles. Next to the sinfully welcoming tub, resting on a delicate table was an open bottle of champagne, a plate of delicate chocolates, and one single deep, red rose.

Abbi wrinkled her brow in confusion. She looked again. That wasn't her bathtub. No way was hers that big, this one was large enough to hold three or four people. How had he done this? She shrugged it off, she'd ask him later. For right now all she really wanted was to sink down into the hot, rose scented water. Sink all the way up to her neck. At the end of the tub nearest the table was a terry covered inflatable pillow, exactly where she would rest her head. This tub was so glorious it was practically a religious experience. Or a sinfully decadent one.

Abbi dropped the robe, stepped out of the slippers, and perched on the edge of the tub. She felt the water; how had he known exactly the correct temperature; not one degree too hot nor too cold? Without another thought she swung around, slid her feet and legs in, and followed with the rest of her body. Only after she stretched out fully, sinking into the hot water did she realized she wasn't alone. Her toes probed flesh. Human

flesh. She probed further. Male flesh. There was no mistaking that particular piece of anatomy. She smiled ruefully as Giovanni's head arose from the tub.

She looked at him. Water streamed from his hair, a few drops glittered like diamonds on his dark lashes. He looked like a Greek god rising from the sea. Had there been one that was born like Venus from the sea? No matter, he would do. Then she started to giggle.

Perched on top of his head, like a crown sitting on the dark, wet curls, was a patch of bubbles. As she watched it began to slide off one side and plopped on his shoulder, then slid down his arm. By now, Abbi was whooping with laughter. Giovanni joined her.

"Shall I pour you some champagne?" she asked with a giggle. "Do you have a glass, or shall I just go and get my shoe? Didn't wear any slippers today. Good thing for you I wore my work boots today, that's one *big* drink." Abbi's laughter rose again.

"I have a glass here. Later we shall make a toast, for now, you will just lie back and relax."

"Yeah, right. And might I ask what you will be doing?"

"Me?" Giovanni smiled showing a great many white teeth. "I am naught but a tamed lamb at your feet. While you relax, I shall give you an excellent foot rub. You will like this very much, *cara mia*."

He picked up her right foot and began to rub it, rolling his thumbs over the pads of her feet until she groaned aloud. He held her heel and gently flexed her foot, lifting it to kiss the underside of the arch.

"Such a beautiful foot. Most women do not have the beautiful feet, but yours are excellent. Exactly the right size, so

smooth and aristocratic. Shall I show you something you can do with your feet that you did not know about?" He waggled his eyebrows.

Mirth bubbled up inside Abbi again. She tried to pull her foot back.

"No you may not show me anything. And why do I get the idea that if you did, it probably would have something to do with a certain portion of your anatomy?"

"Ah, you are incredibly brilliant and clairvoyant as well. Was ever such a lucky man as I? Everything a man could ever want, rolled up into one luscious body and guided by a witty intelligence. I am only amazed you do not have dozens of men worshipping at your feet."

"Dozens, I don't recall even having one. Most men look for someone a little smaller than I. Maybe someone who can look up at them and tell them how brilliant they are. Not someone who can stare at them as though they were a cabbage head."

"Me? I prefer the brainy woman. After all, most of a sexual relationship is in the brain. One must use it," he tapped the side of his head, "to know how to give pleasure to your partner. To think of new and exciting encounters. There must be many stupid men around here."

"What a lovely thing to say. I think."

"It is true. I am glad they are so blind, otherwise I would not have found you."

Giovanni half rose from the water and moved to place himself over her body. He lowered himself onto her, sliding up and down, moving through the water. After a moment's hesitation, Abbi's body responded.

Her nipples hardened and she moved under him. Pushing up against his body, she felt his silky, wet skin rubbing against her. His lips dipped under the water to take the hardened points of her breasts into his hot mouth, each one in its turn. Abbi felt her body dissolve. She arched up, offering more of herself to him.

"Such beauties." Giovanni kissed them and blew gently on them. "So large, like ripe, red raspberries. So sweet, they give me an appetite for more of you. Raspberries and honey, you are a gift for me."

He moved to kiss her, deeply. Pulling her through the water, he sat her on his lap and held her tightly while he curled around her, pulling her close.

Abbi wound her arms around him and held tight. She responded to him, sucking at his tongue, nipping at his lips.

Giovanni's mouth moved down her neck. He held her under her arms and pulled her upright, lifting her until her breasts were even with his face. Then he began to caress these with kisses and laving them until Abbi's blood beat throughout her body. The waves of passion moved up and down, every surge of her blood heated her, and in that sweet place, deep inside her, the thick moisture began to flow.

His lips pulled at her breasts, sucking them, and took them deeper into his mouth.

Abbi groaned and shook with passion. Giovanni lifted her further and his tongue quested lower on her body. He laid her back, draped her limp body over the tub and onto the wide surround. "I'll bet you thought this was only to hold the candles, yes? Now you will find why I had it made exactly this way."

Her upper body lay on the surround as Giovanni draped her legs over her shoulders. He kissed behind her knees; his lips climbed higher, kissing first one thigh, then turning his head to kiss the other. Slowly, all too slowly, he moved closer to the juncture of her thighs. Abbi's body shook, she could not wait.

She put her hands on his head and tried to pull him closer, make him move faster. Giovanni laughed into her thigh and nipped her. Abbi almost jumped clear to the ceiling.

"No, my sweet, we will do this slowly. Sex is pleasure, yet, but sometimes a little pain heightens the final act. You will suffer, as will I, in the waiting. My body has been ready for yours since the first moment I saw you. I wanted you so badly. I want you so badly."

"I don't want to wait," her voice was so hoarse she hardly knew it was herself speaking. "I want you buried inside me now."

"I will be, *cara mia*. But first, let us make this, our first joining, a great memory. There will be many more, but only one first."

"Will there?" Abbi's head moved back and forth on the tile.

"Will there what?"

"You don't have to make promises to me Giovanni. I want you as much as you want me. But let us be honest in our needs."

"I am." He raised his head and looked her in the eyes. "I have never known a woman like you. There could never be another to compare to you. This is only the first time for us, and when we are old, we will still remember this night." With that, he lowered his mouth and kissed her where she wished.

Abbi gave a small scream of pleasure which turned into a low moan.

"Open your legs wider, sweetheart. Let me taste you. Taste deep into you. When you come I want to feel your hot cum on my tongue, taste your fulfillment, know your satisfaction."

"Yes, yes. Oh god I've never felt anything so wonderful."

Giovanni blew gently on that tight feminine bud that he had sucked. His tongue rasped over her slick, soft skin. As she moaned, he closed his teeth over the nub and bit gently. Then he slid two fingers into her. Abbi's ass jumped and danced. Giovanni pulled his fingers back, she was so hot and wet, her passage gave way to his fingers.

Gently, he probed, sliding in two then three fingers and moving them in and out. Her hips followed his actions and her feet locked around his back. Giovanni continued to angle his fingers as he entered and left her.

He added a fourth finger. Abbi began to pant and moved closer to him. Deep in her throat she made a guttural sound.

"Can you take more, hot one? Is there room for this finger also? Do I hurt you, or can you accommodate me?"

"Like this, in and out, I can feel you. Your body clenches around me, holding me tight when I am inside you. It fits me like a fine glove; it pulls me deeper inside you. I feel that I can reach so far into you I will be able to touch your heart. Can you take more?"

"Oh god, yes. Give me as much as you want. I can take everything you give me. Do it, do it." Abbi was panting and half screaming. "I've never done this before, what are you doing to me? How can I feel this way? Giovanni!"

"We shall see." He moved his tongue and sucked that bud into his mouth, pulling at it, releasing it, over and over. Slowly he moistened his hand in her juices, the same juices that flowed over his chin and down his neck. Gently he pushed his whole hand into her; her body slowly opened up and accepted him. He was buried in her up to his wrist.

"By the stars, you take me where I have never been, my love. Can you feel me move my fingers? Does it hurt too much?"

"No," Abbi spoke through gritted teeth. "It doesn't hurt. I don't know how it feels. I can tell when you move your hand, oh, oh, AHHH." And she came around him. Her body clamped down on his whole hand, holding it tightly, a captive inside her. Giovanni sucked and licked her, bringing her higher and higher, the tremors wracked her body as they rolled through her. He held still as she tightened her whole body, held for a long intense moment, then she fell back and slowly softened around him.

"Gently, gently my sweet." He pulled his hand out slowly, taking great care not to hurt her. When he was done, he rose and picked her up, moving onto the rug lying by the side of the tub.

"I cannot wait, Abbi. I cannot make it to the bed. I must have you now; let me join with you now. I throb, I hurt, my whole body shakes with need of you."

Abbi slowly opened her eyes and smiled at him. She wound her arms around him and pulled him close to her. Kissing him deeply she moved under him. He held as still as possible, rubbing up against her, willing her to catch fire again, to share with him his fulfillment.

Abbi's movement became more rhythmic, and soon she was holding him tight and breathing into his ear with ragged breath. Giovanni held on to her tighter.

"You are ready for me?" He whispered into her ear. Running his tongue around the sensuous curves of her lobe.

"Yes, again. Make me come again, Giovanni. Take me with you." She reached down to hold him in her hand. "It's so big, I'm almost afraid. But I want it, I want you."

She stroked him, hard then soft, pulling him until Giovanni was panting with need.

"Nothing could stop me. I must be with you; I must have me inside your body." Slowly he slid the head of his penis inside her, in out, he drove in shallow dips, then deeper ones. He pushed all the way in, and pulled almost out. Deep and shallow, he varied the rhythm until she writhed beneath him, clutching at him, demanding that he finish it.

Giovanni threw back his head and propelled himself into her pulsing center, deep and strong. She took all of his length and he seated himself fully. Her body clutched him. He wouldn't last to pleasure her again, to bring her the orgasms he wanted to gift her with.

Chapter Nine

Still he tried as long as he could, counting to ten, trying to whistle, but to no avail. He pounded into her, over and over, until he felt her begin to come. Joy filled him; he'd given her pleasure again before he found his. Holding himself deep inside her, he spilled his seed, spurting endlessly until she was so full, he could feel it begin to drip over his balls. Still he moved inside her.

He fell beside her, pulling Abbi onto her side, buried in her. They wove their arms and legs around each other, exhausted, unable to move. Giovanni managed to stay awake until her breath was slow and regular. While she slept, his face relaxed into a big smile as he held her close. He took a deep breath, Abigail smelled exactly as he knew she would. She smelled, well, *Mine*. Giovanni fell asleep holding her.

* * *

Abbi snuggled under the big terry cloth robe. She was still warm and fuzzy. Her hand reached back to wake Giovanni up, but she couldn't find him. She rolled over onto her back and sat up. He wasn't there. *Ah, he's probably fixing breakfast. I've had breakfast in bed before, she giggled silently, I've never had breakfast on the bathroom floor. Maybe I should get up and slip into something slinky and surprise him.*

She had just opened the door when she heard men's voices. Who could be here? Well, forewarned is forearmed.

Abbi listened carefully. She recognized Giovanni's voice, but not the other. Who could he be talking with this early?

"Where do you think you are going?" That was Giovanni.

"I'm leaving, of course." The other voice was low and rough sounding.

"I think you are not leaving so soon, now get back in there."

"Look, I'm tired of waiting for your doctor to decide that your wounded pet wolf is ready to leave. I have things to do. Besides, now that you've bagged the babe, I'm sure you're just marking time for a repeat performance and then you'll split."

"I have no intentions of leaving."

"Sure, Gio. Hey it's me. Remember? I've known you for a lot of years. From what I heard last night, you better have had the best bloody damn fooking of your life, because I've been the one paying for it."

"Not that it is any of your business," Giovanni's voice sounded stilted. "But it was. And I will not be leaving. Abbi is too important for me to leave."

"Well, if she was that good, maybe I had better wait around. I wouldn't mind a little of the sweetness you've been getting. She's got one great set of headlights. And not a bad ass. I wouldn't mind sinking my snout in that hot little honey pot."

"And how would you like it if my fist rearranged your nose?" Giovanni sounded angry. But certainly no angrier than she was at this moment. She'd been played.

"Hey, Gio, it wouldn't be the first time we've shared."

"Not this one. If I catch you sniffing around her, even your mother won't recognize what's left of you."

"Hey, okay man. I got it. So I won't find my way through the dark forest back to Little Red's cottage. Not even to show her my big, bad teeth. Now you ready to go or not?"

"I'm not going anywhere."

"Gio. She's been tagged and bagged. Let's split. I know where a pair of twins are, lush, ripe and delicious. Hell, I know where a set of triplets live and you can have two first."

"You are disgusting my friend. I never noticed it before."

"Me? Everything I know I learned from you. Give me a break. You want to hang out here and play bedroom *boing-boing* some more, it's all yours. Me? I've been celibate too long and I've a need to spread a few wild oats. And I do believe I know just the fields that are ripe for a few plowings."

"Abbi is different. I've never felt this for anyone before. The more I know her, the more there is to find out. Every time I look at her, she's more beautiful than before, and every time I am away from her, I can hardly wait to be with her again. I don't understand, but with her I think of tomorrows."

"You mean tomorrow nights. Give over, Gio, I know you too well."

"Just get out. You have no idea what I think or what I feel about her. I did not even believe such a thing was possible. Wait. Where did you get those clothes?"

"Oh, nice huh? I especially like this cashmere sweater. Matches my eyes."

"Yes, I liked it too. When I bought it. Get out of my clothes. Get your own."

"Right, Gio. Like I'm walking out of here with nothing but a wolf pelt wrapped around me. It's cold outside."

"Very well, take them and get. I have to hurry back before Abbi wakes up. It is going to be difficult enough to

explain where Roland the wolf went, without needing to explain you."

Abbi shoved the door open wide. She put her hands on her hips and glared at the two men. Giovanni looked guilty. Her eyes narrowed as she looked at him, then she turned her eyes on the other man. He was a stranger to her.

"Well perhaps you should try. I'm waiting to hear whatever you have to say. Excuse me, whatever else you have to say. Seems I've heard plenty already."

* * *

Giovanni could not believe his eyes. She was supposed to be sleeping. He stepped in front of Roland in a vain attempt to hide him, but it was too late. His mind whirled furiously.

"Uh, good morning my sweet. This is, uh, Oland. He was just leaving."

"Oland? There's no such name as Oland." Abbi frowned.

"His family has strange names. He was just leaving."

"Fine," Abbi started across the floor. "I'm going in to check on Roland. And he'd better be there."

"He will be. I mean he is. Just give Oland a chance to leave first." He turned his face towards his friend and lowered his voice. "And allow him to run around and jump back in through the window."

"I don't care what you or your friend does; I am going to check on the wolf." She glowered at him. "Or did you turn him over to this, this wolf hunter? Was that your plan? I get him well again so you can shoot him?"

"Of course not. But do not go in there yet." Giovanni yelled as she flung the door open. He winced and waited in the kitchen. She bellowed and he winced again.

"I think she knows that I am not there, my friend. I should leave now."

"You set one foot outside that door and I cut it off. And I am not referring to your foot."

"Where is he?" Abbi hung on the door frame. "Tell me now. What did you two do with him? If you've harmed him, I swear you'll regret it. You saw how skilled I am with the scalpel. You'll be singing soprano when I'm done with you."

"No, you do not understand Abbi. He is not hurt. He is fine. Right, uh, Oland?" Giovanni elbowed the man standing next to him.

"Yes, he's fine. Just fine. Wants to go home and get out of here, but just fine."

"Where, in some zoo? I want to see him and I want to see him now." Abbi advanced on the two men. "There's going to be some blood shed around here if I don't see him pronto."

"*Bella*, let me explain..." Giovanni began.

"I think there's been a little too much explaining around here. Now I want action, and I want it now." She poked her finger in Giovanni's chest. "Try the truth for a change. If you know what the truth is."

"The truth? Well why not. You have to know sometime. Might as well be now."

"I'm waiting." Her foot began to tap. "This ought to be good."

"You are right. This man, his name is not Oland."

Abbi snorted in derision. She crossed her arms and her foot began tapping. She nodded at Giovanni. "Tell me something I haven't figured out yet."

"He is really Roland."

"Roland is a wolf. Oland is a man. Try again."

"No, it is true. Roland is not just a wolf; he's a were-wolf."

"Roland is a were-wolf?"

"Yes. See, it is easy to explain. Roland is a were-wolf. Sometimes he is a man and sometimes he is a wolf. When he was shot he was a wolf. Then he was too weak to change back into a man. Now he is recovered so you see the man."

"Prove it. I assume you have some sort of proof cooked up?"

"Easiest of all. Roland, shift back into your wolf form." Giovanni waved his hand and smiled a smug smile. He nodded his head sharply, crossed his arms, and waited.

Giovanni and Abbi stared at each other. She pursed her lips.

"Roland? Now would be a very good time. Show her that you are a were-wolf. Become a wolf so she will recognize you."

When no sound came from behind him, Giovanni turned around. Except for Abbi and himself, the kitchen was empty. Giovanni's eyes raked the room. He turned back to look at the angry woman.

"He was feeling better so he left."

"The were-wolf who wasn't a wolf?"

"Yes."

"He's a were-wolf. And who are you? The King of the were-wolves?"

"Do not be silly. The were-wolves have no king. They have a Grand Council of Were-Wolves. They have duly elected leaders. They are democratic."

"Ah, yes. Democratic were-wolves. And are the Vampires republican?"

"No. The vampires have a hereditary council. Titles are passed from father to son. Their leadership is very different."

"It would be wouldn't it? Are you a vampire then?"

"No, I am an Incubus. The most famous Incubus in the world. The greatest Incubus in the world. I am adored, I am worshipped. Whenever anything thinks of an Incubus, they think of, uh, Giovanni..." His voice trailed off as her expression grew sterner.

"Are you republican, democrat, or perhaps independent?"

"Incubi don't have politics. We are much too busy to worry about such things."

"Yes, let me think. Oh, I remember. An incubus is a nocturnal spirit that creeps into women's bedrooms, and bathtubs, to give them wild, sexual fantasies. Do I have that right?"

"Yes. No. Sometimes. I mean, that is what an Incubus does, that is what I did before I met you. Now I do not wish to creep, I mean enter anyone's dreams but yours. You are the only one I wish to fulfill your wildest, uh, sexual...fantasies."

"Uh huh. So let me get this straight. An Incubus sneaks..."

"I do not sneak."

"Creeps..."

"I do not creep."

"Enters into a woman's dreams to fulfill her sexual fantasies? Right?" Giovanni nodded his head. "And then to fulfill the sexual fantasies of an Incubus, it takes what? A veterinarian? Is that right?"

"Yes. No."

"And since I am such a vet, I need to put a ticket machine on my front porch so that every Incubus can take a number?"

Don't Mess With...

Perhaps I should put a pair of golden arches above my house and hang a sign that says, 'x-ety number' have been served. I'm so glad you warned me so I might be ready for the steady stream of Incubi beating a path to my door."

"Do not be ridiculous, Abbi."

"Don't *me* be ridiculous? You tell me that I've been treating a were-wolf, who today turned into a man, put on your cashmere sweater, and walked out of my house. And you are an Incubus. And you call me ridiculous? Out. Get out." She pointed to the door. "Get out now and don't come back. All you had to do was leave. You didn't have to tell me this cock and bull, pardon me cock and wolf story."

"Abbi, let us be reasonable."

"I am being reasonable. Do you see a rifle in my hands? No. Now out." Abbi turned on her heel, stomped into her bedroom, and slammed the door.

"Cara, we should talk about this."

The bedroom door opened again and Giovanni smiled. She could not resist him. The red rose flew through the air and smacked against his face. The door slammed again. He could hear her crying, and felt helpless. But he could not stay. No Incubus can stay when he told to leave. No matter how much it hurt to walk away.

With a sad heart, Giovanni turned and walked away.

* * *

"Abbi, I don't know where that nice young man went, but can't you call him up and talk out whatever happened between you? Men and women fight. You talk it out, put it behind yourself, and get on with life."

"Pat. There is nothing to talk out and I'd appreciate it if you never spoke of him again. Who's my next patient?"

"Uh, Exam room three. New patient. Three men and some big dog. They didn't fill out any of the paperwork, said they had to talk to you first."

"Fine." Abbi knocked softly on the door and entered the room.

A wolf jumped up on her, licking her face.

"Roland! It is Roland," she dropped to her knees to pet him. He licked her face and neck. She threw her arms around the wolf's neck. "How did you get here?"

Abbi looked up at the three men. One man was tall and big, probably the biggest man she'd ever seen, and the other two were obviously identical twins. They all smiled at her.

"I can't believe you brought him here." She rose and put her hand out to shake theirs. "What can I do for you? Where did you find him?"

"It wasn't hard to find him," the big man laughed. "He lives next door to me. I just walked out of my house there he was."

"Lives next door to you? He belongs to your neighbor?"

"Roland is my neighbor. But you don't recognize me at all do you?"

"No, I don't recall ever meeting you before. Any of you." She looked from man to man. "Do I know you?"

"We came to your house and gave you blood for Roland when he needed it. Maybe this will help."

In the time it took a heart to beat, where three men had stood, were three wolves. The big one she recognized at once, he was the wolf that had come to her house. Then she looked at the two younger ones, what had Giovanni called them? Yes, the twins.

"I, I feel a little lightheaded. Maybe I'd better sit down." She groped for a chair and her hand found a man's arm to lean against. She looked at him and it was the man she knew as Oland. Looking around she noticed that Roland was gone.

"Oh dear. I must be ill. I am seeing things. Having hallucinations. That has to be the answer. First there are three men and one wolf, then four wolves, then one man and three wolves and now," her eyes widened, "four men."

Abbi rocked back and forth on her feet and sank into a chair.

"Good heavens. He was telling the truth? He was really telling me the truth?" Her eyes searched the faces of the men. "All true?"

Four identical smiles crossed four faces. Roland spoke up,

"Yes, Abbi. He was telling you the truth. As unbelievable as it sounds, it was the truth."

"Oh my. Oh my."

She sat silent for a minute.

"Did he send you to tell me?"

"No, but Giovanni's our friend. He's been miserable without you, moping about. No fun. Quite frankly we're tired of it. So we decided that it was time you knew the truth. He may not know it, but Giovanni loves you."

"And," one of the twins started, "an Incubus doesn't fall easily in love."

"But," the other finished, "when he does, it's forever."

"And you?" the biggest man said. "How do you feel about our friend? It means a very great change in your life. Nothing will ever be the same, nothing you know will remain the same."

Your life will be turned upside down. Only for love could someone do this. So I ask you, how do you feel about him?"

"I love him. I miss him. I don't care about anything else but being with him. Can I be? Can I go to where he is? How do I find him?"

"Go into the woods after dark. He watches your house every night, watches your shadow on the window blinds. You'll find him in the woods. Waiting for you." Roland smiled at her.

Garth rubbed his chin. "He's been watching over you, protecting you. Making sure no one else came to your door. And believe me he has some left hook.

"But where is here? I can't just tromp through the woods..."

Abbi looked around. They were gone. The exam room door was open and she was alone. She heard Pat scream from the reception area and ran out there. Pat was standing on the counter.

"Abbi, did you see that? Four really big dogs just ran out of here. If I didn't know better, I'd swear they were wolves. What the hell is going on around here? Where are you going Abbi? Come back here, you still have patients to see. Abbi? Abbi?"

* * *

Cupid watched the man slumped on the fallen tree half-heartedly chucking small stones at a nearby branch. By the expression on his face, it didn't seem to matter to him if he hit the branch or not. He sighed and picked up a few more stones.

"I have no idea why I'm here. By rights I should just let you stew in your own misery." Cupid moved closer to him.

Giovanni didn't even raise his head.

Don't Mess With...

"Ah, Cupid. What are you doing here? Come to gloat? Very well, bambino, I surrender. You have won. Your arrows were stronger and even I, Giovanni, could not hold out against your power. Now you may leave. You have what you wanted."

"Yeah, I know." Cupid sat next to the Incubus on the tree. "And I don't know why it matters, it shouldn't, but it does. I guess I'm just a sucker for a happy ending. Hell, this really sucks. But here I am, and here you are."

"So? You do not need to do the rub it in any more. You have won absolutely and completely. You see before you the most of miserable men, more so than any one on earth or hell could be. And it will not be any better. My life is destroyed, I no longer care. Just leave me alone."

"I should. But I am the god of love and all that crap. Do you know what day it is?"

"No, I don't care what day it is. It is a day without Abbi. They are all alike."

"Moron. It's February fourteenth."

"As they say, big deal. How many shopping days before Christmas is that?"

"It's Valentines Day. The day of love and flowers and candy, yadda yadda. You know two lovers, one golden arrow, two hearts joined as one? All that jazz?"

"To me it matters not."

"Well, it will—in about," Cupid checked the hourglass hanging at his side, "I'd say maybe thirty seconds."

"Why, is the world ending?"

"Yours is." Cupid chuckled and rubbed his hands gleefully together. "I love it when a plan comes together. Hell I'm a patsy for a happily ever after."

"*Buon*, good for you. Now leave me alone. I have the misery." Giovanni sighed.

"And here it comes, right on time. You can look up, sap."

"Look up at wha...*cara mia*? Is that you?" Giovanni shot to his feet.

Abigail stood in the moonlight at the edge of the woods. She smiled and held her arms out to him. Hesitantly she took a step forward.

"I am searching for an Incubus. I have a few sexual fantasies I need to have fulfilled. Do you know of anyone who might be interested?"

"Yes, I know of an Incubus who would be very interested." Giovanni started walking towards her.

"I won't settle for any Incubus. I only want the best. The most famous, the greatest Incubus in the world, in all the world."

"That is, *il mio bello*, exactly what I had in mind. Although I must warn you, some fantasies take many, many years to fulfill." He was within a few inches of her.

"That's exactly what I had in mind."

The two of them embraced.

Cupid watched them for a moment. Then he turned away, his head cocked in thought. "What the hell? I'm out here in the middle of nowhere anyway. Video screen's going to be a little dull from now on. Hmmm. Where is that Roland? I think I've got an arrow with his name on it."

Cupid's wings flapped and he flew away. "Roland. Oh Roland. Where are you? I've got a little present for you my fine friend."

Don't Mess With...

Meet the Author:

Snowe Grey is the author of "That Succubus Factor." Her writing is filled with comedy, vampires, Incubi, Succubae, and a few other denizens of the dark thrown in for good measure. It's a comedy of errors when the underworld realm interacts with the world of mortals. She lives in the Pacific Northwest in the land of Sasquatch, lake monsters, trolls who live under bridges and who knows what else.