

MIDNIGHT SHOWCASE

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Spellfire's

Sinful Sundaes

MIDNIGHT SHOWCASE

www.midnightshowcase.com

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WELCOME TO SPELLFIRE, TEXAS

***Where things aren't what they seem, no—
they are so much hotter!***

The First of the Spellfire Collections

SINFUL SUNDAES

Sinful Sundaes Ice Cream Shop is a special type of novelty desert parlor. It is in the large town square of Spellfire, Texas. This a very unusual town in that its inhabitants are mostly made up of hot-blooded paranormal beings and some unusual normals, most whom have a sweet tooth or sweet fetish in some form or fashion. Enjoy seven diverse stories that will make you think twice about how to further take pleasure in sundaes and other deliciously hexed, sweet concoctions.

***Sundae Strawberry Veinilla & Vamperians* by Mae Powers**

Electra Spellfire has a special Strawberry Veinilla Sundae that Vamperian chef Alexander Ruveaux can't help but want second helpings of it and of her.

***Mondae Mummies & Marshmallows* by Jennifer Metz**

What do mummies; marshmallows and love have in common? Find out in this spellbinding paranormal romance short.

***Tuesdae Toppings & Temptations* by Ann Regentin**

Gina falls hard for the handsome man who stops to help when her car breaks down near Spellfire, except he isn't really human at all!

***Wednesdae Witches & Walnuts* by Anne Leland**

Marissa is failing Relationships Spells 101. To make matters worse, she's in love with her professor. What's a modern day gypsy witch to do?

***Thursdae Twilight Shadows & Just Desserts* Katrina Marlowe**

Ella always suspected she'd go far in her quest to find true love; she just hadn't expected it would be in the afterlife.

***Fridae Fairies & Cherries* by Leigh Ellwood**

How does a sexy Faerie exact justice from a lovely driver whose ice cream company is committing copyright infringement? One orgasm at a time!

***Saturdae Shifters & Hot Fudge* by Leanne Strange**

Adam Spellfire a demvir and Tristine Havoc, a witch, always feuded. Yet Tris can't help but succumb to Adam's special hot fudge delights.

*** Mae Powers ***

>From Science fiction to fantasy romances, to paranormal and humorous romances; and in cross-genre erotica romances; you'll find something different to tickle all your fancies through the lively imaginations of ...

Mae-Ann Powers

<http://www.jirr.bravehost.com>

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MaejicalPowers>

***Sweet Seductress*, by Mae Powers**

Available Now

ISBN 1-59426-519-4

In *Sweet Seductress*, the bewitching healer Kaelyn is bequeathed by her old mentor powerful sex magics. To keep and harness these powers, she must go through several sex rituals. In order to get the healer to cure his ailing sister, Yarron must do all that she asks of him, even if it means giving up his "honor blood." She ravishes him to enhance her sexual energies, and causes him to want revenge when she misplaces his trust in her. The lovers soon learn that revenge and power are not the most import driving forces in their world, but the love they discover for each other is the one and only true magic their hearts and bodies will ever need.

The opening sex scene gripped me until I had to finish this book. Mae used her imagination well to fit in chocolate chips, handcuffs and a flying saucer in her contest-winning tale, but she manages to do it with style. A worthwhile read from an exciting new author.

Reviewed by [Bridget Midway](#), Author Adam and E.V.E.

For More of Mae's Info go to www.jirr.bravehost.com

The Orb

June 2005

Rating: 4 Cups

Telk D' Pornah, an intergalactic businessman has a consummate eye for the finer things and people in life. However, when Telk meets Alyta Moon, an alluring enterprising woman from Earth, he knows that keeping his hands and mind on professional matters is going to be hard, especially since all he wants now is to get her into his bed. The situation becomes even more interesting after Alyta becomes curious about a mysterious and glowing alien Orb. Seeing this, Telk quickly assures her that the Orb, otherwise known as the Guista, as it is called on his world Kissra, is nothing. However Alyta suspects different.

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Will she take his word for it or will she touch the Orb and determine it for herself?

Ms. Mae-Ann Powers chronicles the first tentative but powerful feelings of sexual attraction between strangers. The storyline is both plausible and believable. The plotline is appropriately paced, leading in the culmination of both characters desires being expressed. I enjoyed this light sexual romp through her imagination.

Katherine L. HuntReviewer for Coffee Time Romance

For More of Mae's Info go to www.jirr.bravehost.com

Title: *The Mating Tree*

ISBN:1-59426-526-7

Reviewer: Julie Esparza

Rating: 4 Stars

Heat level: H

Eria is out of time. She must find a mate at one of the three full moons or she will never have one. She hopes the Tree God will give her a good mate for if not, her future is servitude. As she faces the past and the present this night, the Tree God watches, waiting to see if she is truly ready to find The Mating Tree and her true love.

The Mating Tree is a short but sweet erotic romance story. Ms. Powers' quickly establishes the urgency of Eria's situation. She also shows Eria's strength and also her passion to NOT settle. Her perfect love is a surprise but works well within the story. The sex is hot ... Ms. Powers' creates a beautiful atmosphere for the romance to take place. Overall this is a good short story with an interesting plotline. If you enjoy fantasy romance, then you will enjoy The Mating Tree.

Julie Esparza Just Erotic Romance Reviews

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COMING SOON from Midnight Showcase

Ménage, A New Kind of Threesome

A Statue For All Seasons,

Part of **A Spellfire Season**, A Paranormal Holiday Digest

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Sundae ***Strawberry Veinilla & Vamperians***

By
Mae Powers

Chapter 1

Alexander Ruveaux didn't mean to walk in to the Sinful Sundae's Ice Cream Shoppe with the intent to show disdain, yet somehow he felt as if he did. Maybe he thought it beneath his culinary talent and experience. Or maybe he was still piqued that his brownie-vanilla cream sandwiches didn't make first place in the Lone Star Connoisseur magazine, the most elite periodical in Texas for distinguished tastes.

Even vamps had particular tastes. Well, his sort of vampirish clan did. Vamperians needed more than blood to sustain them, something different for their discerning, varying appetites. His mother and her tea-traveling friends always came up with something different to tell him about those odd food tastes anyway, which often gave him the ideas for his famous concoctions. His mother had entered his brownie-vanilla cream sandwich recipe in the TCM on a whim. And he had come in second place.

A renowned chef of a five-star restaurant and a long time Chef Manager at one of Houston's most elite hotels had come in second place! He shouldn't have been aghast at the thought, but it bothered him--especially when his mother Elenor thought it was a toss-up. His own mother, the traitorous witch-vamp, thought the second-rate, first place winner was close to his talent in pastries. So he had night-flown

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to Spellfire, where the winner lived. Elenor had only visited the town briefly with her traveling cronies, but that they had had a marvelous time. Lex remembered some of the descriptions she had told him. He'd always loved his mother's lively chats about her travels. His father was regal and dour. Lex often wondered how the two met, but his mother always said that was a story best left buried, like his father's bi-annual hibernating period.

He felt he was often too fastidious like his father, but he had his mother's curiosity and stubbornness. He had to know just what made Strawberry Veinilla frozen cream puffs better than his brownie concoctions. He stood just inside the door, scanning the place over. It was a fairly large shop for an ice cream parlor. Yet, on second glance he saw that more than ice cream was served. The place was bustling on this Sunday afternoon. He'd thought small towners would be shopping at Sears or some other old department store.

He looked to his left and noticed a large, refrigerated display unit that contained frozen cakes, pastries and other delights glaring up at him, tempting him to partake of their ethereal, mouthwatering sweetness. His nose twitched, and his uncanny sense of smell detected the delectable, teasing scent of vanilla, not just any ordinary vanilla, but a soothing, lip-lingering flavor that sent spells of shiver up his long spine. There was something else in the air. He hadn't quite figured out what it entailed, when the parlor door swished open and hit him smack dab in the ass.

He jerked back, and his jaw dropped. A ghost wearing a pinstriped suit and derby hat floated in front of him. He stared at the transparent dead man astralizing in the corporeal world. The ghost man gave him a cursory glance, snarled his nose and *harrumphed* at him before floating off into the crowd of customers. Lex shook his head and did a double take around the large dining area. A rude ghost in a public place? Yes, he knew ghosts existed and often made themselves known, but to enter a place as if it were a regular customer to the eatery was another thing. Lex widened his eyes as it finally hit him that trays of empty plates floated towards the back of the main counter into another room, probably the cleaning area of the establishment.

Several witches in hats taller than a wizard's cap sat hunched together in one booth. At another of the dozen or so booths huddled a

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group of mummies in various Egyptian garb, and at a table across from them, a boisterous group of goblins, gremlins and trolls dressed in construction gear ate hamburgers and hot dogs. That's when it hit him. His mother had said this establishment was different. He just hadn't realized she meant supernaturally diverse. His bones twinged with some uneasy familiarity. The shop catered to the paranormal set. Did that mean the whole town with a population of some fifty thousand had paranormal inhabitants?

His shades darkened within the lighted place. The specialty lenses kept him from burning up in the sunlight. As long as he kept his eyes shut or wore self-darkening sunglasses, he could withstand any light intensity. Unlike some legendary vampires, or TV and movie vampires, he could walk around in warm sunlight and not go poof or blow up, as long as he wore them. Sometimes he needed his rose-colored glasses to tone down the glare of overhead lighting.

He moved further into the shop, feeling several pairs of eyes upon him. Perhaps, he thought, he should sit down and order so he would be less conspicuous. He looked towards the main counter and almost froze on the spot. His fangs moistened with need as his scrutinized the dark-skinned beauty. Tawny red curls crowned the amply endowed vixen's tall, peppery body. They teased and framed her oval face, making her look like she was aglow with an extra aura of life. Her graceful arms and elegant hands moved swiftly but confidently as she moved back and forth behind the counter, waiting on customers sitting on the stools and ringing up departing customers at the computerized cash register.

Her full lips widened with a teasing smile at some, while at others her golden brown eyes seemed to darken. He wondered how golden they would get if she lighted up with passion. His fangs tingled and he knew he needed a sweet fix if he was going to keep them and his hard-on from showing. He sat down at one of the small bistro tables. A medium-height buxom blond bounced up almost immediately. Her chest badge read "Harpy", but he didn't know if it was her name or her species.

Her green eyes lit up appreciatively, and his male delight made his chest puff a bit outwards. "What can I get for you today, fine sir?"

"I need ice cream."

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“We have forty-two flavors and many tasty pastries and cakes to go with it. Would you care for the house specialty? The Strawberry Veinilla Surprise Sundae is on sale only on Sundays.”

She was a bit too animated for him, but he remained polite. “What’s in it? I only like certain kinds of ice cream.”

“Why, our Strawberry Veinilla is so scrumptious even fairies and shifters like it.” She shuffled from foot to foot waiting for his order. “It’s vanilla ice cream with swirls of sweet strawberry jam buried within it. Our beloved shop’s owner created it.

He glanced at the counter quickly and saw that the amazonish beauty behind the counter scrutinizing him. “That the owner?”

She nodded. “So what’ll you have, stranger?”

His nose took in the smells again, and he couldn’t resist the temptation of the competition. “I’ll try that. No, nuts, my fangs...er my teeth are sensitive to them.”

She nodded her head and was off to take another order as fast as she had come to him. Like the word “Harpy” on the name badge she almost flew off like a legendary mythical creature. While he was waiting, he took another look around the place. This was definitely not a normal Texas town.

Chapter 2

Electra Spellfire almost dropped the Sinful Sundae's Strawberry Veinilla Special on the gremlin she started to serve when she saw the newcomer walk in. A year of fastidious sexual abstinence just went down the drain. And a sundae piled high with sugary and fruity sundae fillers, almost as tall as the wee gremlin, nearly flew out of her hands. *Oh, frig and damnation*, she thought. *I'm sure as hell in trouble now.*

She quickly apologized to the construction manager of the Troll Bridge and Building Association and plopped his concoction down. She glanced back over at the stranger while wiping up the spilled droplets. Tall, even for a Texan, he strode in as if her shop was a quaint little bistro. Something about the man suddenly irritated her. His large nostrils flared as if he were sniffing the deepest scents one could pick up. Electra didn't detect any wolfhound in him. No, he wasn't a were-shifter. Not with those dark, silver rimmed glasses her wore.

Why would anyone wear glasses on a cloudy day anyway? Oh, he had that Texas air about him as if he owned everything, but he didn't look like the laid-back kind of person that normally and abnormally inhabited Spellfire. She furrowed her brows when he opened the display case that held her state-famous concoctions like her Strawberry Veinilla Ice Cream Cake. Her Strawberry Veinilla Puff Pastry had been entered on a whim in the Texas Connoisseur Magazine and won first place. Besides those town favorites, she had other delectables like her demvir cousin Adam's favorite, Maple Pecan Fudge Brownie Mini-Cupcakes. She let out a breath of frustration when she saw him turn his nose up in disdain.

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Hot tempered as she was known to be, she might have gone over and said something to him, except that she espied Perry Normil coming into the shop with Frightful Frieda. The two sat down at one of the tables in a row in front of the booths. Poor Harpy Collins, her Sunday best waitress was going to have her hands full. Those two thick-as-thieves loved to come in on Sunday afternoons and indulge their rotten sweet teeth while gossiping over the trouble they caused and see what they could cause. She harrumphed, and finished cleaning the counter.

“Hey, Lectra.” Harpy Collins hustled up to the ordering area. “Get a load of the tall guy at the second table. He’s kind of good-looking, but keeps sniffing the place out. I have the feeling he’s not a regular tourist. Ordered one of your specials.”

Electra took the order from her and glanced it over. “Tell ya what, Harpy, I’ll take it to him.”

Harpy chuckled and moved on. Electra let her assistant Paula Vandress take care of the counter while she fixed up the special sundae. Minutes later she took the large, laden glass bowl over to the stranger’s table. The minute their eyes met, Electra knew her days of abstinence were over--even if something about him didn’t set well with her.

She had just set the concoction down when Horrible Henry whisked by, his ghostly winds thrusting her towards the stranger. She thought she was going to hit the floor, but at the last second his large arms grabbed her, pulling her towards his lap. The table rocked, but the sundae didn’t fall over. She felt herself shiver as he shifted her onto his lap. Lectra leaned back and really got a good look at him.

Gray tipped curls played devilishly around his sandy colored, gaunt face. She could see over the rims of his dark sunglasses and liked the dark emerald green of his deep-set eyes boring deeply into her own. His mouth was wide, with a full bottom lip just made for suckling. She wondered what else he had that could tempt her to lavish her tongue on. Oh, dear, she really was in trouble. All her sorceress instincts told her to run and hide in the nearest basement.

“Will you be okay now?”

His deep, cultured voice sent shivers of raw need up her back. “I can manage. I’m Electra Spellfire. I hope you’ll disregard Henry’s behavior. He likes to stir up a storm in here at times.”

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“Alexander Ruveaux.” His delectable lips widened further. “I had a feeling you were the one.”

Electra drew in a breath and felt his hips move upwards. Now she knew why something about him didn’t set well with her. “You’re the one that came in second in Texas Connoisseur Magazine’s annual cooking contest. I recognize you from the picture.”

His smile slowly went away, and she felt as if she’d been dipped in water to cool her off. “Yes.”

“So big city chef decides to come slumming to small town to see what the competition is like.”

“You don’t hold back do you?”

Electra realized the precariousness of her situation when the buzz in the main dining room quieted down. She was sure he had noticed it also, though it didn’t seem to perturb him as much.

“But we had to meet, you know.”

She slowly slid off his lap, standing up. “No, I don’t think we had to. Enjoy the sundae. It’s on the house, Mr. Ruveaux.”

The moment she walked away from him, the regular buzz in the room started back up. Electra hurried back to the main counter. Hell’s bells, it was going to be a long afternoon if he took his time eating her Strawberry Veinilla Special Sundae. It would be an even more intolerably long Sunday if he knew what she really wanted him to be eating right now. She let out a long breath again and resumed her work, filling orders to keep him off her mind. It wasn’t going to be easy.

Chapter 3

A paranormal town with the most beautiful paranormal woman he'd ever met, Alexander Veldus Ruveaux now knew what really drew him to Spellfire. Just like when his mother met his father, the world stopped and Hell had come to Texas. He had come to Spellfire for more than checking out the competition. Her name and her picture in the magazine had called out to him. When first viewing the beauty he grumblingly admitted her vivacious picture blared out to his male libido. Now, seeing her in person, he realized that she had hit him like a cloud of bats fleeing a blast of bright light. There was only one reason he could think of besides her fantastically sexy body that made him feel like a blathering idiot, a drooling pubescent teenager.

He had gone and fallen instantly in love. Talk about being hit in the head with a brick, she had done it to him. Oh, and he couldn't forget that head-on locomotive rushing feeling of having her in his lap. She had to have known how hard his cock grew, the way she deliciously squirmed on his lap. His teeth were drooling over more than the ice cream sundae he so thoroughly enjoyed. He wanted to do more than nip her neck. He wanted to gently sink his teeth down into the tender flesh just above her clit, and bring her to the best, most fulfilling sexual peak she would ever experience. Next to the intense lovemaking he had in mind for her.

The smile on his face widened at the thought of doing to her what his kind were not so famously known for. As a vampyrian, he had the power to use his fangs to draw more than blood. When biting a sexual partner he had the ability to heighten the sexual act for a very, very long time. And he used that particular power extremely carefully. In fact, he thought pondering the startling instance over, he'd never

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completely used it on a female of any nationality or breed. His father had often told him that deep-fanging during sex was best left reserved to your life mate. Now, Alex felt he knew why. His unusual destiny had brought him to Spellfire and the woman that was meant to be his wife.

Now his only problem was going to be how he'd get the stubborn spitfire to know fate intended they should be together, for how ever long their lifetimes lasted. He had to plan what he was going to do. He needed to hit her with full force. He needed another sundae. Especially, when it came to her special sundae. It was indeed better than any of his famous pastries and cakes. Oh, he definitely needed another Strawberry Veinilla Sundae Special.

It was several hours later, but with his tooth and libido chilled down and his stomach needing rest, he left to go find the nearest hotel. He walked northward, a few yards and saw the sign pointing to a hotel called Havoc House. Less than a half hour later, and about five blocks later he came upon the one of the downtown area's two main hotels his mother had told him about.

Havoc house was grandiose, yet austere. The semi-Southern, English mansion stood tall amongst lush old trees and grounds where a variety of intimate garden walkways, flowing fountains, and aromatic varieties of floral and foliage plant. After going through the commanding, columned entry, he walked into the main foyer, directly to the front counter. A petite and delicate-looking woman with soft brown waves flowing around her shoulders smiled up at him, friendliness in her eyes.

She made him feel at home instantly as she checked him in and told him about the hotel's modern amenities, such as the mini kitchen in each old-fashioned suite with a complimentary coffee maker, cooking and eating utensils, a luxurious bathroom, and a thirty-six inch cable-ready, color TV. She also mentioned the large back yard patio, which over looked an enormous man-made lake where you could sit at your leisure, or eat some good ol' Texas barbeque while watching the swans, the fascinating wildlife, and all the colors of the season in the lake and the forest behind the property.

She didn't ask or seem to think it peculiar that he had no luggage with him, and he was glad. He'd have to fly home later and grab some clothes, or shop in town for toiletries, which appealed to him more.

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His company was in good hands for the time being so he didn't worry over that. His mom and her cronies and his assistants could handle all of that quite well because he intended to do some courting over the next week. Electra Spellfire didn't know what was going to hit her, and Alexander was pleased with that thought.

He noticed the hallways and entryways shimmered with a quiet glowing life, and he could hear the shifting and sashaying of the large building. His psychic nerves and ancient luke-warm blood tingled with the *knowing* that the mansion-like hotel teemed with life both normal and paranormal. His feelings were confirmed when a short mummified being in jeans and a bright red t-shirt that read "Havoc House is a Happy House, Enjoy Your Stay", showed up to escort him to his room.

The mahogany floors and walls enhanced the warm, intricate decorations of the large elegant room, and it reminded him of the old English manor he'd once lived in as a child. He sat down on the edge of the bed, letting the comfort and beauty of the room relax him. He needed all his attention on how he was going to get that vivacious bundle of Texas Spellfire beauty to see that he was interested in her for more than her incredibly tasty Strawberry Veinilla Sundae Surprises. Oh, those had been deliciously scrumptious. His whole body shook with need and anticipation. If she made love half as well as she could put together the most incredible ice cream delight he'd ever tasted, she was going to send his love-fangs into maximum over bite.

He wanted to taste more of her mouth-watering goodies, to feel that soft warm ass of hers on his lap, making the heat in his cock rise to a crescendo of hot hardness. He sensed those hidden fires in her raging to get out. Ms. Electra Spellfire had not been in any hurry to leave his lap, yet he knew she wasn't going to be a quick and easy bed partner. She possessed an alluring passion that was greater than any magic he'd ever come across. He sensed that and more in her, yet he believed it was the passionate nature of hers she hid and not her aptitude for making and cooking up spells and pastries. Alexander leaned back on the big bed, closed his eyes and dozed off thinking of strawberries, homemade vanilla ice cream, and one big buxomy, dark skinned beauty that had him craving seconds.

Chapter 4

Electra couldn't wait to send the last of the late night dawdlers out of her sundae parlor. The wretches couldn't get out of there fast enough for her. She needed to close up shop now and go take a cold shower. All she had been able to do the rest of the evening was think of Alexander Ruveaux, the man whose recipe had come in second to hers. His body could win first place with her in any contest. Hell and damnation, she was hungry, and for more than just sweets. It's no wonder she'd packed on a few pounds over the last year.

Being without sex...no, a good, feisty bout of whoopee had done that too her. When she had looked at him the first time she had been tired and wondered what he was doing sniffing around the shop like he found something disdainful about it. Then Horrible Henry had hit him in the door and she'd seen that plump high butt of his. Oh heavens then he had looked at her and her libido went out of whack. The man had killer sexy eyes and a body to match. He had to be over six and a half feet and damn his sandy beach colored body would feel good next to her own six foot two inch rubenesque frame. Electra finally closed the shop down and went upstairs to her working apartments and kitchens.

She had permanent rooms at the Bodoirs Bed and Breakfast, but mostly used them during the week to get away from the shop. Upstairs here in her small five room living-working area, she made her sweet concoctions for the Sinful Sundae's and in her Spell- work room she made potions for Trinkets and the other new-age shops around the world, the paranormal set, and occasionally for the paranormally unendowed who believed in the occult worlds. She and some of her friends didn't mind helping out mortals who really needed the help.

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Somehow, though, she felt that the stranger who had walked into her shop today was anything but a mortal needing her help. No, there was definitely something absolutely uncanny about the man. And not just his drop-dead sexy body. Not any of her past lovers, including her ex-husband of three years, had made her want sex so bad she could feel it in every iota of her aura and being, both magically and physically.

No, she corrected herself; the man wasn't a stranger any more. He was one of the finest chefs in the country. She recalled vaguely that he had once had his own TV show on the food cable channel and had read somewhere he had been head chef at a four-star restaurant and five star hotel. In the TCM it stated he was now doing his own Internet business. She too had her own, besides the shop and her work with spells and potions. Even though the work was fascinating and enjoyable, she knew she was missing something...and in walked Alexander Ruveaux to stir up her life.

How she had gotten back behind the main counter of the parlor with out showing her growing wetness on her sleek form-fitting pants, she would never know. But she wasn't complaining. That man made her cream too much. Hell, she hoped he didn't stay long in town. She had to keep out of his reach or she'd certainly loose all the self-composure and control on he life she'd tried so hard to accomplish. Her ex and his mother had tried taking the shop from her, but she'd retained a good lawyer to find loopholes in the property laws. The shop had belonged to her long before Mikhail added his two cents into it, or his mother's four bits. She'd had to reimburse them a pretty penny, but Sinful Sundae's was all hers again.

And she'd be damn if anyone took it away from her or tried to again. Would Ruveaux be like that? She could almost feel his disdain by the way his nostrils flared at the smell of her goodies and confections. And yet he seemed to have been surprised. He certainly fit in though. Now why she thought that, she had no idea. Then of course, the thought came back to her that he was much more than a normal being. Her extra senses were running amok, and not just those in her lower regions. There definitely was something uncanny about the man.

She went to take a long hot shower, still thinking about him. As she washed her plump dark body, she wished it were his strong hands

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soaping her down and getting her hotter than the steamy water. She groaned, fighting back that fated feeling of desire and wanting to feel his cock deep inside her. What was it about him that shook her so intensely? She knew she had to have at least one night with the man. Did he want her as much as she wanted him? By the evidence of his erection hardening under her butt, she was sure he did want to sheath himself inside her.

She quickly massaged herself to rid herself of her frenzy and relaxed once more under the warm water. After washing off, she went into her small bedroom and threw on a robe. She was glad she worked alone. She went to her computer and decided to play. It was going to be awhile before she could get any sleep tonight. Alexander Ruveaux just wouldn't stay out of her mind and elsewhere. She didn't turn on the computer, but let her mind dwell for a moment on his name. She had met someone with that name not too long ago. Instantly she recalled meeting a very nice woman in her late fifties, though she didn't look that old. She'd been traveling with friends.

Elenor, that's who. It had to be Alexander's mother. She'd mentioned briefly that her son cooked and should find someone like Electra who had some similar interests. And this all happened in the few hours that Elenor Ruveaux had visited Electra's shop. Electra frowned. Why, that woman had set her son up to find a mate. Electra thought how comical it all was, then she remembered sensing the dainty woman's aura. She had sensed that Elenor Ruveaux was a witch of some kind. Then what was the woman's son? She hadn't sensed that he was a male witch or a powerful wizard, but there was something else about him. He definitely irradiated some other supernatural force. But what kind? She'd known all kinds of mysterious beings, but none like Alexander Ruveaux.

She groaned again, hoping that sleep would not elude her. She had to be at Trinkets early tomorrow morning for the opening of their new line of potions and lotions promotional debut. She shivered and her extra senses told her she hadn't seen the last of the famed Texas chef. She wondered what he would be personally cooking up tomorrow. For the first time in a long while, Electra felt her self lighten with giddiness. Would it be that bad to have a fling at least?

This time she sighed lightly, and her tenseness started leaving her. Why not? At least she wasn't going in with blinders on, and the

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man had his own business so he wouldn't likely want hers. No, she had the feeling that it wasn't professional interest Alexander had in mind for her. She hoped like heck that he indeed would want to trade recipes with her. She wouldn't mind a gander at his special ingredients one damn bit.

She rose from her desk and sauntered into her bedroom. *Yes, maybe I can sleep now.* Wild thoughts of a very tall Texas man infiltrated her dreams that night, filling her mind with all sorts of sweet sexy ideas and images of what she hoped he'd do to her soon right here in Sinful Sundae's Ice Cream Shoppe.

Chapter 5

Morning couldn't come soon enough for Alex. He dressed quickly and went back to the ice cream parlor. Yet even with a small crowd there and several wait staff, he didn't see her around. He went over to the main counter, hoping the waitress working behind the counter could tell him. With a little sweet talk, he learned that Electra Spellfire was over at the spell-enthusiast gig at the new age establishment across the street called Trinkets.

He dodged oncoming traffic to hurry across the wide country lanes. A few cars parked parallel to the store, and some people entered ahead of him. The three-story building had withstood time, the weather, and all sorts of complications from the looks of the sturdy, weather-beaten, gothic western edifice. He opened one of the double doors and the bells on the outside tingled. Immediately, he heard voices and the Middle Eastern music often favored by new age addicts. The main room of the lower level was fairly airy with tall windows decorated by tapestries on each side and electronic candles as decorations. Chairs for reading and display cases adorned various areas of the room. Shelves filled with books, bottles, and other bric-a-brac cluttered the room here and there. It was quaint and interesting combination of varying items and décor.

Alex saw her near a small group of people gawking over some bottles of lotions and potions two people demonstrated. It seemed like stuff one bought in new age shops. Not that he visited many, but he had been in a few in Houston with his mother to know what kind of establishment this was. As if she felt his presence, she looked towards him and almost smiled.

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When she turned away, he suddenly felt downcast. Alex moved closer, examining several shelves. He decided to keep away from the small crowd and went behind the throng towards the back rows of books. He wasn't surprised at most of the Wicca, new age, and occult books, but a few titles surprised him the farther he got into the room. Why, these were the same books on all types of supernatural creatures that his father had in his extensive research library.

Spellfire, he guessed, from some of the things he'd seen, really was a town that catered to real paranormal people. When he'd first come to the town, he had not seen the floating trays or smoky ghosts floating around, but as his eyes became more accustomed, he was sure that the town had been spelled to prevent outsiders, non-magical or paranormal people from seeing what really went on. He figured, too, that the town itself was teeming with supernatural life and magic and therefore guarded the inhabitants from the outside world. He just sensed this, and felt that the town showed him this once it realized he was of the supernatural set also.

He went farther down the rows of books and was instantly intrigued by a section called Heat Spells. Streams of steam actually rose from a few of the books. He started to reach out for one of them, but a hand stopped him from doing so. He glanced to his right, seeing none other than Electra Spellfire holding on to his wrist. He liked the way her hand warmed his skin.

"I wouldn't touch those. They really are Heat Spelled books."

He couldn't resist. "You mean as in physical heat?"

She nodded and her curls swayed seductively around her face. Her golden brown eyes darkened to russet amber. "I mean as in sexual heat. They teach people how to cast sex spells or look for ways to enhance their natural sexual aura. In the wrong hands they can be dangerous or used wrongly they can harm instead of help."

"Do you always prevent people from admiring the charms and curios of the shop?"

She withdrew her long elegant fingers from around his wrist. "Why are you really here, Mr. Ruveaux? What kind of being are you? You were shocked to see Horrible Henry floating in my shop yesterday, along with serving trays and the eclectic group of townsfolk. You would not have seen that if you were a regular tourist."

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For some reason, he felt it would be a wise thing to be completely honest with her. "I came in search of you." He hoped that answer threw her off-center a bit. When she widened her sexy eyes and stepped back a step, it made him smile. He had disconcerted her. This pleased him very much.

Her hands went immediately to her hips and her big chest jutted outward. Her low-cut shift enticed him, and he wanted to touch those pouty orbs of pleasure. Her curls seemed to react of their own accord, turning a golden russet brown with almost live sparks. He intrigued her, and he had the most unusual feeling that Ms. Electra Spellfire wasn't easily disconcerted by anything or anyone--except him. That pleased him even more. She was definitely affected by him. He pushed the point further by taking a step closer to her. Whatever she was about to say, he stopped it by placing his mouth over hers and kissing her luscious lips thoroughly.

Chapter 6

Electra saw him come into the shop and almost felt his drop-dead sexuality slam-dunk her head-on. Oh hell, he was more gorgeous than she remembered from last night at her Sinful Sundae's Ice Cream Shop. She glanced at him and immediately knew he had come in search for her. It was her intense psychic awareness of him and his awesome aura and personality that made her know these things. Oh, but he was so blatantly hungry. His aura was just jumping. And when she saw him move down the book isles, waiting for her to get away from the crowd, he had stopped curiously in front of the Sex Spell Books Section of the long-time establishment of Trinkets.

And the steam had started rising from the books. She had to act quickly, because those particular books he was near were live spell books and just “knew” when a person wanted sex or had it on their mind. And those two well-worn antique, brown leather volumes were glowing with sparks and streams of steam. That's why she had snuck away from the crowd and softly trans-shifted to where he stood, to stop him from opening one of those books. Particularly she didn't want him to open the Cloak and Dagger sex volume, which allowed one to have sex anywhere without being seen or detected or bothered by intruding, curious parties. And then he had had the nerve to kiss her.

She leaned into his hot body and his lips mesmerized her soul. He deliberately suckled her trembling bottom lip. She felt sweat and heat mingle between her upper thighs. The books or her libido were doing their job correctly. She tried not to moan, but that soul-shattering kiss sent her sorceress psyche into realms of psychically charged sexual worlds she'd never before experienced in all her two hundred years.

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She was definitely in trouble where this man was concerned. Electra pulled back quickly before his arms came around her. "You are an impudent, conceited, advantage-taking jerk, Mr. Ruveaux."

His grin widened, irritating her. "I'm attracted to you too, Electra Spellfire. Do call me Alex, and let's find a more private place to continue this delicious discussion."

Electra harrumphed and deliberately trans-shifted out of the building to Barnabas' Bar. She had to get away from the devilishly arrogant and sexy man before she ravished him. His sexual aura was more powerful than anything she'd ever come across in all her experience. The mid-morning bustle of the Barnabas Bar & Grill was something she was accustomed to, and even though not everyone knew that the bar was open at an illegal hour (noon to two am being the legal hours), she knew it's proprietor enough to know he wouldn't care that she "popped" in.

Electra glanced around the darkly lit place and the few customers at the bar or the tables didn't any more than glance her way and resume what they were doing. She moved towards the back, where the bar purported private booths with curtains that could be drawn down. She waved her hand and a wine cooler floated toward her. She heard a chuckle followed by the "cha-ching" of a cash register. One of Angus Sinclair's fairy bartenders knew she had an account and rang it up on her tab. The owner of Barnabas' Bar, Angus had been a long-time friend of the fairy realm and her family, so it was normal for her to come in here and not be bothered by them. On a Monday, when most of the fairy folk rested up from weekend hangovers, they didn't concern themselves with her or anyone else who walked in the large one story bar.

She slid into the booth, opened the black cherry wine cooler, and then took a large swig. Oh, that felt nice going down, she thought, just before a soft blur of wind thrust by her. Seconds later she saw Alexander Ruveaux sitting across from her in the booth. He waved a hand towards the outside of the booth and the curtains were released from their bindings, sliding closed upon his command. She knew for certain now, that he was not your ordinary mortal or abnormal paranormal.

He flicked his other hand, and a candle, contained in a small oval jar, flared to life. "I am glad you took me up on my suggestion. Now,

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Electra Spellfire, how long have you had that rare talent of trans-shifting? Very few witches and sorceresses can do that. It's even faster than flash-transing."

Electra slammed her drink down. "You've some nerve, Alex Ruveaux. Just what kind of creature are you. A warlock?"

His eyes glittered ominously...no she thought, they glittered with sexual attraction. Oh, if she didn't know for sure he hadn't opened any of those sex-spell books, she might have thought he was spell-casted now. She gulped and thought quickly. Very few beings in the world could flash-trans, the only power that was close to her own ability of trans-shifting. And warlocks were not capable of it, unless they were only half-warlock.

"I'm a halfling vamp, my dear. A vampterian in fact."

She sat back in her seat. "Well, I'll be damn. You had a father for a vampire and a mother who was a half-witch."

He nodded and his long maple colored hair swayed sensuously with his movements. The gray tips sparkled like silver fire when he leaned forward, placing his arms gingerly on the tabletop. He removed his glasses, and she got an even better look at those gleaming emerald green eyes. Golden instead of black, irises glittered back at her. She was nearly lost when his hungry lips parted and she saw his fangs for the first time.

"Yes. I know an unusual combination. But I would love to show you how different I am from other vamp-kind. You, Electra Spellfire, have completely made me lose what calm I had left. Do you know just how lovely and luscious I find you?"

Her jaw dropped. In his lust-filled orbs, she saw the predatory nature of a man on the prowl with desire. Oh, hell and damnation, he really did hunger for her! She felt the sexual heat oozing from him in infernal mounds. Why her? Why had he chosen to lust after her?

"You are very open right now, my Electra, and I find that very attractive. Do you realize how much you turn me on?"

Electra let out that groan. She melted. And she wanted. Wanted him to take her right here and now. "You're incredibly sure of yourself.

"But you do want me, don't you?"

She leaned forward, not taking her eyes off his face. "Damn right I do!"

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Then she put her hands on either side of his face and kissed him just as hungrily as he had kissed her. She sucked on his lower lip, teased his tongue with hers, and savored the hot sweetness of his lips. Oh, hell, he'd taste good with Strawberry Veinilla coming off his tongue. The thought made her groan against his lips. Yes, she wanted him and her libido just came out of seclusion. She wanted to fuck him right there and then.

He next thing she knew, his big hands grasped her forearms and he pulled her up from her side of the booth and over into his lap in one swift movement. He glanced down at her, grinning. "I won't take no for an answer."

"Good." She wound her hand in his thick hair and brought his face back down to hers. "Let's make love now."

His long growl-groan made her cunt moisten. She grasped his shoulders, pulling herself closer to him. No room in the booth, she trans-shifted them both to her large suite of rooms at the Boudoirs Bed and Breakfast Inn. He was not startled, she noted, that they appeared in another room and was glad. Her ex hated the fact that she could appear and reappear at will, but Alex didn't. Funny, and sexy at the same time, that she wanted him, knew he had enjoyed the flash-like transporting of them to her bed.

He made quick work of removing her clothes, and Electra was damn glad of it. She was wet, so very wet for him. Yet he didn't take her right away. His soft white-brown body was a turn on next to her darker skin tone. Oh, he was magnificent to look at with that long hard cock of his jutting out to tease her and tempt her to want him so damn explosively. They entwined closely, and his lips were even harder and more demanding over her wet pursed lips.

"I've wanted this since the moment I first laid eyes on you, sweet Electra. Your Strawberry Veinilla ice cream is not nearly as special as you are. But when I sank my fangs into that juicy center all I could think about was giving you a special treat of your own—to take you to the stars and beyond."

She gulped. No one had ever wanted to do that to her. She could only nod her need. He pressed her backwards to lie down, and she relaxed, panting under his ministrations. His fangs lengthened and explored her neck. She shivered as those wet sexy tips trailed, almost scraping over her long neck. He kissed and nibbled with teasing bites

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of his lips, fangs, and tongue. Slowly, he moved down over to her breasts, tasting and teasing each one in turn. His front fangs and lips suckled and scraped over her dark nipples. She writhed beneath him opening her legs for him, needing him inside her desperately.

“Hell, I want you now, Alex. Fuck me now.”

“Not yet, Electra, first my own Sundae Special just for you.”

“Oh, heavens, can it get better than this?”

He chuckled. “Wait, sweet one, soon.”

She shivered at his soft commanding tone, and then he moved lower, to her longing cleft of desire. Her cunt ached for his tongue to explore her deepest depths and bring her to several orgasms. He softly explored her pussy with his tongue and fingers, stroking and feeling her, making her cream heavily for him. Then to her surprise he snarled and sank his long fangs down into the skin just above her cunt.

Chapter 7

He thrust a couple of fingers in and out of her as he kiss-fanged her. Alex felt her spasm beneath him but he did not stop. Her squeals of unexpected pleasure made his cock harden to heavier and longer proportions. Oh, hell, he wanted to shove himself inside her, but he sucked her with his fangs and he felt her deep, deep ecstasy. Felt her go over the brink from reality to beyond. Her orgasms coursed through her body and spread over into his. She'd had one incredibly soul-shattering culmination of sexual pleasure. He'd nearly climaxed himself, after tasting her delicious orgasm.

“Oh, Alex, fuck me now!”

She was his, oh hell yes, she had survived his sexual fanging. Well, at least the preliminary run. He slowly pulled his fangs away from the top of her vagina and licked his way back up her fleshy, wondrous body. She pulled her legs apart for him and cried out with another instant orgasm as he sheathed himself completely within her wild and wet depths. Alex threw back his head and pumped her with all his vampiric might. Oh, she was a glorious, sexy woman and had the most delicious cunt he'd ever fang or cock fucked. And he loved her.

He howled like a banshee screwing a werewolf, but didn't care. He was coming inside the woman that was meant to be his life-mate. She thrust to meet his strokes, shivering uncontrollably beneath him. The minute he knew they were coming together, he leaned down and sank his teeth gently into her neck, suckling her as he fucked her. But he didn't drink her blood. Instead, he mixed his life-essence with hers. He tasted her bold liveliness, feasted on her deeper passionate nature, and became one with her as their souls and bodies thrust over

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completely in the extreme blissfulness of total physical and mental harmony.

He collapsed over her, and wrapped her body within his long arms. “Damn, you’re one helluva special woman, Electra Spellfire. How soon will you marry me?”

Electra pushed him off of her. “What the hell are you talking about?”

Alex grinned impishly down at her. “I’m not in the habit of fanging women. Vamptarians only have fang sex with their chosen mates.”

“Oh, dear. You didn’t just suck my blood just then.” She was wide-eyed and full of wonder. “Oh, Alex, I don’t know what you just did to me, but it was the most incredibly wild experience I’ve ever had.”

“Sweetheart...” He glanced down at her, love filling his eyes and heart. “After tasting that incredible concoction of yours and having two of those mouth watering Strawberry Veinilla Sundae Specials, I knew that I’d come to this unusual town to do more than check out the competition. I came for you. The minute my fangs touched your delicious concoction I fell in love. I know it’s rushing you and we just met, but with all my heart and soul I love you, Electra.”

She glanced up at him in wonder. “You really do care for me, don’t you? This is so gosh-damn unbelievable! Hell, how often can you fang-sex in one night?”

He laughed loudly and freely and then captured her within his arms once more. “Ah, Electra, I’ll fang that delicious cunt as much as you want. Just marry me.”

Electra looked at him impishly. “I need courting first and lots of convincing. You can’t walk into town and expect me to marry you just like that.” She snapped her fingers in the air and chuckled. “I want more proof of how sincere you are.”

He looked at her questioningly. “What more can I do than taste you with my fangs and gobble down more of your tempting goodies?”

“You can fang me while licking bits of Strawberry Veinilla off of me. I think that would be a great step towards convincing me.”

Alexander pulled her down beneath him at the sexy mischievous glance she gave him. “Why, you devilishly delightful sorceress. I

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want to make love to you on the shop counter and flying beneath the moon and with any of your sweet concoctions thrown in between us.”

“I’ll let you know in a week or so if I’ll marry you. A girl’s gotta have her courtin’, ya know. And seducing me is a great way to start, my freaky chef. Now let’s trade some recipes, shall we?”

Alex had no problem concurring with her. And he spent the rest of Monday night and the whole of the following week convincing her in any way he could just how much he wanted her to be his mate for life. They made love in the upper kitchens above Sinful Sundae’s Ice Cream Shoppe on Tuesday--and on the counter during her closing hours on Wednesday; and back in Trinkets where they snuck in late on Thursday night and browsed the Heat Spell Section. Then on Friday he flew her above the city during a full moon night and made lover to her in the air. On Saturday they tried it in full swing at Barnabas' in the closed bar. Then on Sundae she served him her special again, and this time agreed to become his wife. And from then on Sundays, for Alexander Ruveaux, became his favorite day of the week.

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Jennifer has a short story called Star Light, Star Bright, in an erotic anthology called Who's Your Daddy? **Mummies and Marshmallows** is her second piece of fiction, which is published by **www.midnightshowcase.com**. She is working on more stories and novellas for Midnight Showcase, and projects for other publishers.

Sensual Reads:

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Mondae

Mummies & Marshmallows

by

Jennifer Metz

Brock Edwards glanced down at the buttons on the cream whirl machine, one of the largest in the Spellfire Sweets Factory. They were some of the oddest he'd ever seen on any cream maker vat. The star-shaped buttons didn't cause a roar when pushed like normal square ones. These hummed and chimed, Freddie had said. Right now, however, they weren't making a sound of any kind.

The owner, Freddie Faeren, also told him that the machine had never been down. Yet Freddie was an odd sort who said even witchcraft and sorcery hadn't been able to fix it. Brock touched the machine, looking for the way to remove the button housing. It was a small, almost elongated piece of metal. Shiny and just plain different. In fact, all the machines had similar control panels. Definitely not standard issue for any machine.

It was unusual for him to travel so far from Galveston. However, when Freddie called and quoted the astronomical amount he'd pay if Brock could get there as soon as possible, he couldn't turn it down. His company, Repairs R Us, needed the cash. He'd never heard of the town of Spellfire and couldn't even find it on a map. He'd had to call Freddie back and ask for directions.

He stopped trying to open the button housing and instead tried to figure out what exactly he could do. Freddie had said that it was a special, sensitive machine and not that old, but Brock figured that was

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an oddball statement. Machines were not sensitive, not like Freddie meant it, anyway. This particular one, Freddie stated, made the yearly Mummy Cream Marshmallow figures that had become very popular in the southern states the past few years. Even though Brock had seen them, he had never eaten one. He didn't like marshmallow.

Maybe because it was a mummified machine it was sensitive. He laughed inwardly at his own joke. Then the machine hummed. He took a step back and looked around it. What was that noise? Probably an echo from another machine. He poked at it with his screwdriver. This time a button flashed on the top panel. That was indeed odd. He tapped another button with the handle of his screwdriver. That one flashed too and the whirring hum sounded again.

Then he heard voices coming down the factory corridor. He was in an enclosed room, with tall ceilings and lots of light and just a few conveyer belts connected to the huge, wide vat. He turned around as the voices grew louder, and behind him the machine started humming louder.

"I'm telling you, Ms. Jameson, you don't wanna inspect the mummy cream vat right now. It's not working." That squeaky voice he recognized as Freddie's.

"I inspect everything, every year, like before, Mr. Faeren. No exceptions. Now, move aside and let me in."

Brock sighed. A short, long-eared man and a slightly taller woman entered the room. Freddie was dressed in a dark green business suit and looked like a cross between a horny toad and a watermelon. But the woman standing next to him in a dark gray pantsuit was a stunner. Strawberry blond hair, a soft rosy complexion, and a slender but curvy frame accentuated her austere business attire. He felt a sudden tingling sensation in his crotch. Even with her hair pulled tightly back, her tiny black-framed glasses, and that professional demeanor and clipboard she carried, she caught his attention.

She sniffed the area in disdain. "Who is this?"

Brock had an almost instant dislike for her, even though his cock thought otherwise. He brushed off his hand and held it out. "Brock Edwards, ma'am. I'm here to repair the vat controls."

She stopped, but didn't take his hand. "Well, just don't let it interfere with my work."

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Brock frowned and looked over at Freddie. "Strange machine and company you have here, Mr. Faeren."

Freddie looked from the woman to him. "Yeah. Both are pretty sensitive. Did it hum yet?"

"As a matter of fact it did. I just tapped it with my screwdriver and it flashed me. Strangest thing."

Freddie smiled at him. "Oh, good, then she's starting to perk up."

"She? You call that thing a she?" Ms. Jameson asked. "Machines don't have a sex."

Freddie's green eyes glittered, and it made the hair on Brock's arms stand on end. Something unusual was definitely about to happen in this room. "Everything in Spellfire is more than an *it*, Ms. Jameson. Now, you just do your inspection and let Brock give Creamy there her needed adjustment. I'll be in the office if you should require anything. Brock, just push that buzzer by the door if you need me."

Brock nodded with a smile as the little red-faced man left. He started to turn back to the machine, but he noticed Ms. Jameson's eyes still on him. "Well, you gonna stand there and watch, or let me do my work?"

Her delightful full bottom lip quivered causing his balls to tighten up. The machine seemed to hum in response, too.

"You just do your work and I'll do mine," she snapped.

Ms. Jameson apparently wasn't a people person. "Not very polite, are you?"

She let out a sigh, her blue eyes raking him up and down. "I'm Melody Jameson, and I inspect this factory every year as required by state regulations whether the machinery is down or not. Now, the sooner I finish, the better I'll like it. This is not one of my favorite places to be."

He crossed his arms and leaned against the machine. "This is the first time I've ever been here, and I've seen enough to give me the willies for years. There are some very unusual people in this town. Or have you noticed in all the years you've been coming here to inspect?"

She tossed her head to one side and again he felt she was sizing him up. He wondered what her hair would look like falling around her shoulders, and his cock jerked in response to the mental picture. He'd never liked the professional, cold businesswoman type before, but

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something about her just turned him on. Maybe it was the challenge—she needed sweetening up. The machine whirred behind him as if in agreement with his thoughts.

“I’ve only been here twice before. And, no, I don’t like coming here. I do the job and get out. Now, you do yours and keep out of my way.”

His brows knitted. “You know what they say, you catch more flies with honey than with vinegar. Fine woman like you shouldn’t be so cold and rude.”

She crossed her arms tightly. “I am not rude. I am a professional. I do my job and get on with the next project. Nothing wrong with that.”

He shook his head. “If you say so.”

He turned back to the vat after her face reddened with annoyance. “I’ll probably get better company out of this machine here than I would you anyway. Now, you stay out of my way and let me do my job.”

She harrumphed and moved away from him, to look around the room. Brock tinkered with the controls, but they were quiet again. He noticed she watched him as she took her clipboard and pen and started circling around the vat. She lightly touched other equipment, made notes on her pad, and often glanced back to let her eyes linger on him.

Oh, he liked the way she walked. Her cute bottom moving softly from side to side was a wicked tease. Then the machine whirred again. In a kneeling position, he looked at the shiny silver wall of the machine. He observed his reflection in it, and tried to imagine how Ms. Melody Jameson saw him. He had never paid much attention to his looks. Dressed in khaki shirt and matching pants, he didn’t think his dark brown hair and brown eyes were too impressive, but then at six foot he figured that was impressive enough.

The machine hummed again. He stood up and looked inside the vat, resting his arm on the rim. Nothing but a shallow layer of marshmallow cream. His eyes strayed to the panel. Another light flashed on. He reached out and touched it with his other hand. A tiny quick surge of energy shot out at him. It didn’t hurt, just startled him. He glanced away from it towards Jameson. She was immersed in her work. Silly, he thought, the machine couldn’t have done this on its

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own, could it? He shrugged and started to move away from the panel, when all the lights on the cover started blinking.

Then the nearest conveyer belt whirred to life. "I'll be damn."

"Looks like you got it to working." Jameson's heels clicked as she moved over to him. "You're amazing with a screwdriver."

He frowned. "I didn't do a thing. Did you touch one of the panels on the far wall over there?"

She shook her head, and he wanted to reach over and kiss that puckering bottom lip of hers. "I don't particularly care to be around machines, even if it is my job to inspect them."

"Then how'd a classy babe like you start working as a health inspector?"

She let out a sigh, and he was glad to see her let her guard down. "My father was one. He paid for the degree of his choice. What's with the machine anyway? I thought it was pretty weird last time I was here, but it seems to be unusually touchy today."

"I try to read up on a place before I come out on a job, but this was an emergency. I've never seen machinery that seems to whirl on its own at the slightest touch."

"That is unusual." She neared the controls, and her hand went out to touch it. "Especially considering the power button is still in the off position."

"Well, I've seen enough. I'm going to tell Mr. Faeren he can find someone else to fix this machine. He couldn't pay me enough to stay here one more minute. Ms. Jameson, it was a pleasure to meet you."

Brock started to walk off, but he rebounded back toward the vat when he found that the arm he had rested on the rim wouldn't budge. He looked closer and saw he'd somehow gotten some of the marshmallow cream on his hand. He noticed that the level of cream in the vat was nowhere near the rim. He looked down into the vat as something stirred within it, on its own. What the heck made the marshmallow concoction come to life? Before he could even wonder how the cream had gotten on him, more gooey stuff slithered up his arm.

He tried to yank away, but the ribbon of cream held him fast, then started pulling his arm into the vat. He jerked with all his might, but it dragged him over until his head was in the vat and his feet dangled in mid-air.

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He heard a startled scream, followed by the thud of a clipboard hitting the floor.

“Ms. Jameson,” he yelled, his voice echoing in the near-empty vat. Using his other hand to brace himself, he pulled against the cream that now covered his entire arm in a mummy wrap pattern until he could peer over the rim. “Ms. Jameson, find Freddie now!”

She didn’t move, but seemed frozen in place with a look of pure horror etched into her beautiful features. One small hand covered her mouth, while the other fisted her slacks. Little miss cool and collective appeared to be in shock, and it couldn’t have come at a worse time.

“Melody! Get Freddie now!” He tried to keep the panic out of his voice, but the crazy marshmallow goo had taken on a life of its own. Surely, he would die if it managed to get him all the way in. Drowned by marshmallow cream! Why did he ever agree to this job? He should have left as soon as he met Freddie. That man’s eccentricity was enough to drive any sane person away.

“Earth to Melody Jameson!” He kicked his feet in the air in one last attempt to bring her out of her dazed state. “Push the buzzer by the door!”

At the mention of the buzzer, she seemed to spring to life. Brock watched her dart across the room, and hit the big red emergency button. Sirens began wailing, deafening the roar of the machine, while strobe lights flashed in a multitude of colors. The door slid open immediately, and several employees rushed into the room. They stared in shock, much the same way as Melody had only seconds before.

“Would you quit gawking and get me out of here!” he bellowed, but it was too late.

The machine had a mission and it would not be deterred.

The last thing Brock saw before his body was pulled over the edge and submerged in marshmallow cream were Melody collapsing against the wall and Freddie’s short little body rushing through the door screaming, “What’s going on?”

* * * *

Melody had seen a lot of things in her line of work, but never anything so terribly frightening as what she had just witnessed. A broken machine *came* to life, sucked up the mechanic working on it,

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and submerged him in a vat of melted marshmallows. The vat now tumbled gently round and round.

After the initial shock had worn off, anger moved in with a vengeance. She threw herself at the man responsible, both fists swinging.

“What sort of place are you running here, Mr. Faeren?” She couldn’t hide the hysteria in her voice. “Do you have any idea what your machine just did?”

He held up a pudgy hand in defense. “Now, wait just a minute, Ms. Jameson--”

“No, you wait a minute. I’m shutting you down this time, buddy. I’ve always felt this place was strange, but now I can really see it is. This is not only weird, but also dangerous. I cannot authorize a machine such as this to stay in operation. Get him out of there!” She pointed a shaking finger towards the vat.

“Look, he’s coming out on the conveyor belt!” Someone yelled from the back of the growing crowd of employees.

Melody looked towards the vat. The machine had stopped its tumbling, and a giant marshmallow cream wrapped mummy man lay on his back on the moving conveyor belt. Her legs trembled as she ran towards Brock’s still body, holding Freddie’s wrist the entire way. “You better hope he’s not dead or you’ll be going to prison for a very long time. I’ll make sure of it.”

“Don’t make threats, little lady. You cannot hold me responsible for anything.” His face flushed beet red, a combination of anger and shortness of breath. Freddie wrenched his wrist free of her grasp. “Besides, how do I know he didn’t bring this on himself?”

“Don’t be ridiculous,” Melody snarled in response. “I don’t have the time nor the patience to argue with you right now. We have to help him.”

Brock’s body lay motionless as the conveyor belt wound to a stop. The machine instantly shut off with the sirens and lights stopping simultaneously. Then for a split second, the room became filled with an eerie silence.

“I don’t believe it...” Freddie didn’t finish the sentence. He didn’t have to.

Melody couldn’t deny what lay right in front of her, as unbelievable as it might be. Brock had been wrapped from head to toe

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in wide strings of melted marshmallow, resembling the wrappings of a mummy. Other than nose, eyes and mouth slits, not one inch of his tanned flesh could be seen through the thick film clinging to his body like a second skin. Brock Edwards had been transformed into a living mummy.

“Quick, Freddie, see if he is still breathing.” Melody shouted at the rotund man. “Heavens, what can we do?”

Freddie reached up and scratched his head. “Well, I’ve never seen Creamy get this decorative with the nugget marshmallow concoction. She must have been upset about something the two of you said. Just so she don’t do it again, I’m going to go visit the Witches Guild and see what they can come up with to stop this wayward situation from happening again. I shouldn’t be gone more than an hour?”

“An hour? The Witches Guild?” Melody’s voice rose in pitch, and she cleared her throat. What kind of nonsense is that? Get him out of that covering before he’s creamed to death.”

The frustrating dwarf turned back to her. “You have to watch him while I go get a witch specialist. Can’t afford for any of the employees to be Creamy’s next victim.”

“What kind of nonsense is that? What about Brock’s situation? You can’t leave him like this. Just what am I supposed to do while you’re out gallivanting on some fantasy mission?”

“Why don’t you try licking as much of the marshmallow off of him as you can until I get back, Ms. Jameson?”

“Wait a minute here, you want me to lick marshmallow off a guy I’ve known for less than an hour?”

The idea caused butterflies to dance in her stomach. She should be repulsed by the very notion of putting her tongue on this man, but for some reason, she actually wanted to. She’d been very aware of what a hunk he was from the moment she saw him. He had such a tasty-looking body. What had gotten in to her? She, Melody Jameson, the cool businesswoman with the cool exterior, the woman who put her career before all else—

including members of the opposite sex— *wanted* to lick the man. She couldn’t believe she was contemplating the tasty endeavor, and was ready to throw caution to the wind.

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She could barely believe the words that flowed from her mouth. “Do you think it will do any good?”

“There isn’t really any other option. I’m afraid if we don’t get this marshmallow off of him in time, he will stay like this forever.” Freddie took a deep breath. “For the harder candies, there is a hardening agent in our secret recipe that reacts with the chemical compounds in human skin. While it doesn’t harden into rock when it comes into contact with chocolate or other sugar based substances, it will definitely encase a human in an unbreakable wrapping.”

“And you put this crap in your candy? What about all of your employees who work here, if they were to come into contact with this substance? This alone is enough to shut your operation down, and you damn well know it.” Rage bubbled at the surface of her already boiling temper.

Freddie jerked a thumb at the employees still gathered at the door. “In case you haven’t noticed, they all wear hazmat suits, coveralls and head gear to protect them from hazardous material. And once the cream hardens on the nougat base, it’s harmless.”

Melody threw up her hands. “What makes you think licking it off will help?”

“Human saliva dissolves it.” Freddie hurried out of the room, his short stubby legs carrying him as fast as they could go. He shooed the crowd of employees ahead of him, and the door swished closed again. “Must get to the Witches Guild before Creamy acts up again.”

Melody turned and glanced down at Brock. “If I didn’t know better, I’d say Freddie and the machine arranged this. Well looks like it’s just me and you, mummy guy.”

* * * *

Inside the warm and sticky goo, Brock was stunned to hear the plan. Lick him clean? What was even more shocking was the instant the word “lick” left her sweet mouth; his cock decided it liked the thought. It was a good thing he had closed his eyes while he was being wound up in the marshmallow cream and managed to open them before the stuff started to harden. His eyes were now the only things he really had any control over, except for his breathing. Blinking was a bit sticky, but he was grateful he could even breathe through both his nose and mouth. He watched as she walked around him, her eyes seemed to eat him alive.

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Melody leaned over and looked into his eyes, her mouth so close to his. "You know, Brock, it's a good thing I like marshmallow." Her tongue sneaked out and touched where his lips should have been. "Suddenly, I have an incredible sweet tooth."

She placed her mouth over his and kissed away the sticky sweet from his mouth.

If it wasn't for the fact his limbs were beginning to harden, Brock would have had her on the floor already. He felt the moment her tongue cleared away the goo, and he brought his own tongue into play, growling in frustration when she pulled back.

"Hmm..." She licked her own lips. Leaning forward again, she proceeded to lick every smear from his face and neck. "This really gives a woman ideas."

"Melody." His voice was rough from pleasure and frustration. "As much as I'm enjoying the foreplay, I really want this stuff off." She licked her lips again, and his body tightened in its already snug shell. "If you hurry, I will give you something even sweeter."

Her eyes flared. Shocked by her own actions, prim and proper Melody looked ready to get sticky. It was a total turn on for him. He'd never been this attracted to anyone before, but he found it was a very desirable feeling.

"What could possibly be sweeter than this?" Leaning forward, she licked the goo from the buttons on his shirt, and the fly of his slacks. Her eyes widened, and Brock was sure she had noticed his erection. "Oh, my..." she whispered.

Brock was lost and he damn well knew it. The minute he could move he intended to switch roles. Suddenly, the thought of marshmallow was a craving.

He tried to move his arms, but they were useless. "Did you clear the buttons?"

"Mmm-hmm." She groaned, but her mouth kept working.

"Help me get this shirt off."

"Uh-Uh." Her tongue worked along the zipper of his slacks. "I think we'd better concentrate on this first." Her hands came into play as she pulled the material aside. Luckily, the goo seemed to give since she had licked most of it off.

He was helpless. Helpless and loving it. The woman had a wicked streak. "Payback is a bitch, Melody." He sucked in his breath

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as her fingers found what they were searching for. He couldn't contain his groan. "You know, there is no reason you can't help me out of these clothes."

Her laugh was positively wicked, and her warm breath caressed his already painfully engorged cock. "I'm counting on it, Brock."

From head to toe, his whole body convulsed as she took him into her mouth. She wanted to play, that was fine. Let her play. But when he could move again, he would make sure her payback was just as sweet and tortuous.

"God, woman, you will kill me yet," he rasped as his body hummed. "Freddie will be back soon you know."

He groaned when she pulled away and walked slowly around him. He couldn't believe how quickly she took off her clothes. Soon she was crawling over his body, moved on top of him, and then straddled his hips. Reaching between them, she positioned him to enter her body.

"We can't let this go to waste now, can we?" Her body started to slowly take him inside.

"I can't move." He grunted as her wet heat surrounded him. She felt so good and tight. "But I think you like that, don't you?"

"Do you want me to stop, Brock?" She paused in her movement. He was halfway home.

"God, no."

Her smile turned to one of pure rapture as she took him fully into her.

* * * *

It had been so long since she had made love to a man. Her body had a mind of its own in its movements. He felt so good and his shaft stroked places she had no idea existed. She slowly rode his delicious feeling cock up and down. She was enjoying this as much as she had suckling him.

"Get me out of these clothes, Melody. I want to run my hands over your body."

Momentarily she stopped riding his long shaft. When she looked into his eyes, her heart jammed with intense feeling. This man wanted her, badly. Her body wasn't enough though. He wanted to take control of her heart too. The whole ideas turned her on even more. She shivered as she reached for his sleeves. They wouldn't budge.

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"It won't be easy." She held tight to the opening she had made while cleaning his buttons. With a mighty pull, his shirt cracked. With his chest free, he sat forward and pulled his arms from the very stiff sleeves. "Then again..."

She never finished the thought. Brock wrapped his arms around her waist, and moved hard within her. He kissed her until she thought he was her very breath. With one hand, he let loose the tight bun of her hair, wrapping his hand in the silk of it. With a slight tug, her head fell back, and his lips moved to her neck. His other hand caressed her breasts through the shirt she wore.

Melody gasped as her belly began to tighten. Her cheeks flushed, and she could feel the warmth moving across her breasts. Her breath hitched again, her muscles clenching around him. "Oh, my mercy..."

"Are you ready then, Melody, girl?"

"Yes. Please. Yes."

"Just let it go," Brock urged her on. "I'm with you."

Her body rocked hard, and her muscles clamped down. Brock's shout matched her cry, and they seemed to go on forever. When her breathing did slow, and she was able to look him in the eyes, she waited for the shame...but it wasn't there. As she watched, his face took on a tender look. He stroked her hair and kissed her gently.

"I can't believe that just happened," she whispered.

"Well, for one thing, I'm damn glad to be free of that shell." He kissed her again. "But if you're looking for regret, you won't find it here."

Her smile was radiant, and she returned his kiss. "Thank you."

"For what?"

"I took major advantage of you."

"Do I sound like I'm complaining?" He tugged her hair gently. "You have beautiful hair. You should never wear it up in a tight knot. Let it flow around your shoulders."

The feel of his mouth and the pull of his hand in her hair was about to drive her crazy. She rocked her hips, feeling him twitch inside her.

"Brock, I have a room here in town."

"And?"

She nibbled her lower lip. "I don't suppose I could convince you to stay for awhile?"

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“Keep moving like you are, and I think I just might follow you anywhere.”

“I’m from El Paso. That’s a long drive from here.”

“Or from Galveston, my home town. But it doesn’t matter, Melody. I never thought to find something so suddenly right.”

“I always wanted something magical to happen in my life. This is wild.”

Before either one of them spoke another word, they heard loud voices coming towards them from outside the door. It broke the spell of heated intensity between them. Melody jumped off Brock, and he tucked himself back inside his slacks. “What timing.” He groaned at the tightness of the mummified pants.

* * * *

Just as Melody straightened her clothes, Freddie entered followed by a woman all in black. Her dress alone was sin, and she was a beauty. Self-conscious, Melody reached up to pat her hair. Smoothing it down as much as possible, she smiled at the two.

“Well, I see you have survived.” The look in the woman’s eyes said they were not fooling anyone. “I’m Candy Piper.”

Melody raised her chin, and put on her cool and professional air again. “This is Brock Edwards and I’m Melody Jameson. I hope you have a way to remove this stuff.”

Candy’s laugh was almost musical. “I think you may have found a better way to remove Creamy’s misdemeanors.”

Melody blushed to her toes, Brock cleared his throat, and Freddie looked confused.

Candy pulled her wrap from her shoulders and placed it over Brock’s lap. “I’m afraid you will just have to shimmy out of those, since they’ll never be wearable again.” She waved her hand towards Brock.

Brock felt perspiration oozing softly over his skin. Soon he could wiggle his legs back to life. “Thanks. I always carry spare clothes in my work truck.” He wrapped the shawl around his hips, unzipped the slacks and began to scoot out of them.

“Wait...” Melody rushed to his feet. “Your shoes.” She started to pull them from his feet.

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Luckily the slacks had protected the upper end of his tall work boots, Brock felt, and some of the wetness from the witch's dewy magic had helped to loosen them.

"Thanks." It took awhile, but Brock managed to get free of his jeans and stand up.

"Brock, I'm so sorry the machine went haywire on you." Freddie was suddenly too eager to please. "Allow me to replace your clothing."

Melody scowled at him. "Mr. Faeren, you have no idea just what I intend to do to you."

Freddie seemed ready to defend himself and his business, but Brock stepped in. He reached over and grabbed her hand, pulling her to his side.

His thumb rubbed her palm. "No one was hurt. Just take care of your temperamental vat."

Freddie beamed. "I swear this will never happen again." He pointed to Candy. "She's here to see that Creamy behaves."

Well good. "Melody opened her mouth to speak more, but Brock's light pressure on her wrist silenced her protest. " But Brock—"

"Let it go, Melody. It turned out better than ever." He winked and she blushed. "I don't regret coming to this weird town now. Something magical really happened to me today. In more than just one way."

She smiled and nodded. "Yeah, me too."

"Is there anything I can do?" Freddie seemed desperate to make things as right as possible.

Brock looked from Melody, to the conveyer belt, and back to her again. The wicked gleams in his eyes made Melody narrow hers. His smile was a 'this-is-gonna-be-so-good type of smile.'

"Actually, Freddie, there is something you can do."

"Anything."

"You got any of that super marshmallow goo in a jar?"

Candy laughed and floated over to the vat, waving her hand over it. It chimed, went quiet, and then she floated from the room. Melody thought she might faint. Freddie looked confused, but nodded his head. He then opened his palm and a small jar of the marshmallow

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stuff appeared in his hand. Much to Melody's chagrin, Brock willingly took it. There was more he intended to do with this tonight.

* * * *

"Brock, not so much!" Melody squealed as they lay in her hotel room on the very large bed. "It's too much. I don't think it got this hard before."

"Well, hold still. I almost got it."

"Stop, Brock. Please."

"It will only get harder unless you let me finish. It won't give you mummified tits unless we leave it on too long."

Melody giggled and then took a deep breath. "Well mummied cock and marshmallows were pretty tasty today."

He chuckled as he drizzled more of the warm marshmallow goo over her breasts. "You know, until today I hated anything marshmallowy." He leaned forward and flicked her coated nipple with his tongue. The stuff dissolved until she could feel his tongue swirling around her hard peak. She squirmed when he withdrew. "But, damn, it sure tastes good on you."

With no intention of rushing, Brock slowly licked the rest of the sticky sweet from her breast. He finished and was about to anoint the other when a knock at the door made him pause. "Expecting someone?"

She shook her head and reached for her robe. "I have no idea who it could be."

When she opened the door, all she found was a cart with covered dishes, and cool steam coming out from the sides. She looked into the hall, both left and right, but saw no one. She shrugged and wheeled the cart inside.

"Did you order room service?" she asked as she removed the cover off the first tray.

"Nope. I planned on dining in." He wrapped his arms around her from behind.

The tray was loaded with a variety of flavored ice cream--marshmallow, strawberry, chocolate, and more. Melody picked up the card and opened it.

"What does it say?" He leaned around her and dipped his finger in a dish of strawberry ice cream.

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“Enjoy the romantic magic of Spellfire,” Melody read out loud. “May your night be magical and sensual. With sweet regards, Candy Piper and Freddie Faeren. Ordered from Electra Spellfire’s Sinful Sundaes Ice Cream Shoppe.”

“It’s named well. You should try this.” He placed a dollop of the strawberry ice cream on her tongue. Her lips closed around his finger and his eyes flared.

“Delicious!”

“I agree.” She squealed when Brock picked her up and tossed her on the bed. “Don’t move,” he ordered.

Melody watched him walk away, enjoying the view. His ass would pass her inspection any day and would be stamped Grade A. Her juices began to flow when he wheeled the cart to the bedside. She shivered with anticipation. “What are you planning?”

Reaching over, he opened her robe. “My own buffet.” When he removed the cover of the other dish, he laughed. “Well bless Freddie.”

“What are you grinning about?” Her look was mixed with wariness and pleasure. “What’s Freddie done now?”

“Just you wait and see.” He dropped whatever was in the dish beside the bed before she could catch a glimpse. “I’m going to play.”

“What was under that dish?” She was more than worried if it came from Freddie. “No more goo, please.”

Brock sat beside her and his gaze raked over her body. Damn, but the way he looked at her made her feel like the sexiest, most desirable woman in the world.

He reached over and gently pushed her hair from her face. “Where do we go from here?”

“What do you mean?”

“After tonight. Do you get in your car and me in my truck and we both just drive away?”

She started to rise, but he placed his hand on her stomach, preventing her from sitting up.

“I don’t know.” She covered his hand with hers. “Where do you want it to go?”

“As far as it will take us.” His look was so sincere she didn’t doubt his words.

“We barely know one another.” She half mumbled.

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“That didn’t stop what happened, what is happening.” He slowly rubbed circles around her navel. “Tell me you don’t feel it. Tell me you feel no connection with me, and I’ll walk away tomorrow without an argument.”

She couldn’t deny it and she didn’t want to. She did feel something. From the moment she first looked at him, she felt a pull. Even now, with his hand stroking her flesh, the fire was almost ready to consume her. It was real, but it was magical too.

“I felt it.” Her back arched as his hand moved lower. The chill that raced through her brought her up short, then melted into warmth. “What are you doing to me?”

He didn’t answer, just stroked her again. First something cold touched her, followed by pleasant warmth. Melody raised her head and looked at his hand. The man was rubbing ice cream all over her lower body, beginning with strawberry on her mound, and now chocolate across her belly. It gave her both chills and hot thrills.

“I’m going to feast on your beautiful body. Tonight you are my buffet.”

Melody cried out when his mouth touched her. Holy hell, but the man knew how to dine. Her fists clenched in the sheets, and her body began to splinter. He didn’t stop until she was begging him to.

“Tell me, Melody,” he whispered as he crawled up her body. “Tell me there will be no tomorrow, and I’ll stop all this now. But if you tell me there will be a tomorrow, I can dine all night.”

“Is that what you want?”

“Oh, very much.”

“But we live in different worlds.”

He laughed at that and kissed her. “No. Just different areas of the state.” Leaning forward, he whispered in her ear. “I’m starting to think I really like this town.”

“You planning to move here.”

“It’s a magical town.”

She couldn’t argue with that. “Can we talk later?” she wiggled her hips. “I’m getting another sweet tooth.”

His smile was pure sin. “Close your eyes.”

“Why?”

“Trust me.”

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“Said the spider to the fly.” She teased as she closed her eyes and waited.

“No peeking or I’ll have to tie you down and blindfold you.”

Melody decided that would be a game for another night. It didn’t surprise her that she anticipated more nights with this wonderful man. She knew without a doubt that whatever happened earlier and what was happening now, was all a part of some great plan. Maybe living in Spellfire would be a good thing. A very good thing. She gasped as cold covered her breasts.

“No peeking,” he warned.

Heavens, the man would kill her with pleasure. Already the cold was warming, and she felt the pressure of his touch. What was he doing? Another cold spot on her other breast, then a warming and a gentle pressure. She knew she couldn’t hold her eyes shut much longer, not him driving her wild with all these incredible sensations. She quivered with anticipation and suppressed desire.

“Open your eyes.”

She did as he directed and almost choked on her laughter. He had decorated her breasts in mounds of marshmallow ice cream, and resting on the peak of each was a miniature marshmallow mummy.

“That’s what Freddie sent you?” she asked between giggles. “Marshmallow mummies?”

“I figure this marshmallow mummy is a lot easier to deal with.”

Melody caressed his hair as she looked up at him. He was so handsome, and she was glad she had found her wild side.

“I don’t know what will happen tomorrow or next week,” she whispered. “But I do know I want to go as far as it will take us.”

“What if that brings us right back here to Spellfire?”

“As long as I’m with you, I don’t care where we are.” She winked. “Let’s just stick to the candy mummies. I like it so much more when you’re sticky, sweet, edible, and can move.”

“Sounds good to me.” Brock smacked his lips. “Hmm. Dessert.”

Melody’s laugh soon turned to a moan, as Brock worked a magic of his own across her body. Finally, she had found her own bit of magic in a quirky town known as Spellfire, Texas.

Ann Regentin

Ann was introduced to erotica early, when as a child, she raided her mother's bookshelves. Since then, she's been published both online and in print in America, Canada and Europe. Most recently, one of her poems was nominated for *The Pushcart Prize*. Ann plays a lot of video games with her kid, does scrapbooking, studies German, teaches music and creative writing, and does Yoga. Check out her erotica releases.

For more information on Ann Regentin and where to purchase her books, please visit

<http://www.annregentin.com>

Aural Sex

by Ann Regentin

For Max Schwarz, a violinist who grew up in the former East Germany, a chance to tour America looks like nothing so much a needed change of pace. A public, acrimonious divorce from his diva wife left him in a tailspin and America looks like as good a place as any to distract himself.

Nothing, however, goes as planned. His schedule leaves him little time to see the country, his manager for the duration of the tour will not give him the benefit of the doubt on anything and there are conflicts with conductors, as Max's interpretations of the pieces he must play often varies from that of the men holding the batons. And then there is Bianca.

She's the second bassoon in the orchestra in Chicago, a single mother with a pixie face and violet eyes. The attraction is immediate and, for Max, terrifying. Only when he has to say goodbye does he have to courage to say other things.

What begins, as a passionate farewell backstage, becomes an ongoing, erotic telephone conversation as Max moves from city to city, learning more about both America and himself in the process. The better he gets to know Bianca, the harder he falls for her, but how can he form any kind of relationship with a woman he may never see again?

The Dream Ring

Ann Regentin

Cecilie is supposed to be weaving silks for the Princess' wedding, but she's distracted by dreams of an acrobat, dreams that seem a bit too real.

Achim, the acrobat, is having the same dreams and he knows they are a bit too real. Someone, he believes, is tampering with their minds. Achim knows he can't act without more information, but his only source of answers is Cecilie, whose deceptively fragile beauty tempts him to acts of cruelty he denounced years ago. But is it cruelty when the victim is not only willing but eager?

He tells himself that it's only dreams, that the worst he can do is give Cecilie nightmares. What he gives her, though, is the fulfillment of desires buried so deep

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that she never knew she had them, at least not until she felt the stinging kisses of his whips. For Cecilie, the real nightmare is waking because Achim is, after all, only a dream.

Although he is now a juggler, Achim was once Lord Pretender, the heir to the throne, raised by his grandmother to be a despot. He left when he realized exactly what he was becoming. Now his grandmother wants him home, and she is using the dreams to tempt him, hoping to waken in him an insatiable appetite for inflicting pain.

Reviews:

Fallen Angel: "Ms Regentin has created a unique and skillful universe, filled with full-bodied and well-developed characters."

Romance Junkies: "Achim is a master in every sense of the word, taking the innocent Cecile deeper and deeper into her nebulous desires for submission and pain. His torment of Cecile is wickedly erotic, engaging every sense, and keeps you on the edge of your seat, desperately turning pages wondering if they will ever meet in the real world.

The Measure of a Man

Ann Regentin

The best part about Alison's new job is the man who trains her. Walter, a.k.a. Crash, is everything she could wish for: handsome, funny, intelligent and dynamic. It's a shame, she thinks, that he's in a wheelchair.

Walter, however, has no such concerns, and begins a patient, steady campaign of seduction. Although his spinal cord was crushed, there's nothing wrong with his heart and he's determined to show Alison that a man who can't walk can still sweep a lady off her feet and into his bedroom where she belongs...

Reviews:

Road to Romance

<http://www.roadtoromance.ca/reviews7104/reviewmeasureofaman.htm>): I have to applaud Ann Regentin for taking a sensitive subject and making into a beautiful and believable story.

Just Erotic Romance Reviews

<http://justeroticromancereviews.com/features/bookreviews/reviewdetail.asp?id=669>

I believe *The Measure Of The Man* deserves the Silver Star Award because it has an intriguing plot, there is a deep emotional connection to the characters which keeps you turning the pages, and the sex makes you drag out your partner for some hot passionate, sex with a lot of sexy talking.

For more about **Ann Regentin** visit:

<http://www.annregentin.com>

Tuesdae

Toppings & Temptations

by

Ann Regentin

Chapter 1

She had the qualifications to do better, but getting good jobs required sharing things like Social Security numbers, mailing addresses and telephone numbers, and Gina was too paranoid to even have a cell. Bobby had proven far too adept at tracking her down. He may have been a bit of a good old boy, but he wasn't stupid and he had connections in all kinds of places, including banks, police departments and the DMV. He'd already chased her all over Houston, managing to find her even after she moved in with her aunt. She had no intention of letting him find her again.

It didn't help to know that every woman had a Bobby of some kind in her life. Usually they were shiftless, irresponsible or reckless, but every once in a while, they were dangerous and it had been just Gina's luck to draw a psycho-stalker. Dating Bobby hadn't been bad, and he'd been an imaginative, enthusiastic lover, but the trouble started as soon as she tried to break it off. No way, he'd said. She belonged to him.

"You think I'm a pervert," she insisted, incredulous.

"Don't worry," he leered, "Enough hot-blooded male should fix that."

"I doubt it, and you're not going to get a chance to find out," she'd said.

Then he hit her.

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After that, the real fun began. She had him arrested for assault and he pled out. She got a restraining order, and he broke it. When his policeman buddies warned him that a second offense would land him in more trouble than they could get him out of, he managed to find every loophole and bit of fine print the legal language would allow. He had his friends call her, he followed her everywhere he could while staying outside of the technical red-zone, he sent anonymous letters. She moved house more than once, but that didn't seem to stop him. One way or another, he found her, usually with disconcerting speed.

It didn't take Gina long to figure out that her only recourse was flight. Cursing both Bobby and her stupid libido, she emptied her bank accounts, transferred certain assets to her aunt, bought her third car in six months, and hit the road. With luck, she could hide herself in Galveston until Bobby lost interest.

She didn't get very far before the oil light went on. Gina knew this meant she had to pull over quick before the entire engine died, so she did, cursing and swearing. Stupid car! She got out and gave the tire a good kick before she popped the hood. Where was that dipstick? There. She pulled it out and discovered that she was down to about half a cup.

Shit! She wondered how many other little quirks the salesman had neglected to tell her about. She stared at the filthy engine for a while, willing the problem to go away, but the only thing that would work was more oil and she had no idea how long four new quarts would last. Probably about ten miles.

A silver BMW convertible pulled up behind her and Gina swallowed a knot of panic. Given the sort of day she was having, it was sure to be a rapist or a murderer. The car door opened, and she held her breath as a man got out. He was about medium height, with a look of Native American about him. He had a powerful body that filled out his jeans and T-shirt nicely and the kindest eyes she had ever seen. Then again, Ted Bundy had been good-looking, too. "Hi," she said as firmly as she could.

"Can I help you, Miss?" he asked.

"Do you have any oil?" Gina asked.

"Oil?" he asked, his eyebrows raised.

"Motor oil," she clarified.

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“No,” he said. “Why?”

“Because I’m all out.”

He blinked, then pulled out her dipstick himself, shaking his head at the result. “When was the last time you checked your oil?”

“Never,” she said, a bit defensively. “I’ve only had the car since this morning.”

He made a grim face as he shut the hood. “There’s a good garage at the next exit. I know the guy who runs it and I’ll have him bring out some oil, but I’d strongly suggest letting him have a look at this before you go any farther today. You’ve got a real problem here.”

That was an understatement. “Thanks,” she said. “I hope it’s not too much trouble.”

“Not at all,” the man said. “It’s on my way home and he owes me a favor.” He gave Gina a look, and she braced herself, but instead of going after her, he opened the driver’s side door of her car. “Lock yourself in,” he said, “and don’t open this door for anyone but my friend. His name is Roca and he’s older, about my height but thinner.”

“Thanks,” Gina said, blinking back tears at this unexpected kindness. Why had she even considered Bobby when there were men like this in the world? “You’re a lifesaver, a real-life angel.”

He snorted with laughter. “No, Miss, not an angel that’s for sure! But I’m glad to help. You wait here for Roca and remember what I said, right?”

“Yes. Thanks.” She got into the car, and he closed the door for her before driving off down the freeway.

Roca showed up in a tow truck with a case of oil in the front seat. Like his friend, he looked native but he also looked about ten years older than God. Gina had never seen so many wrinkles on a human face. His hair was white and he was almost skeletally lean, but his hands were strong and competent as he popped her hood and peered under it. He muttered to himself in a language she didn’t recognize as he filled her crankcase with oil and examined everything he could see or reach, then he let the hood fall and frowned at her.

“It’ll drive,” he said shortly in a voice that sounded like a bullhorn raked over sandpaper. “Follow me.” He turned on his heel before she could say yes or no.

She followed him cautiously a mile or two down the freeway to the next exit, then to a gas station only a few hundred feet down the

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road. Once there, he got out of the truck and gestured for Gina to pull the car into one of the big bays. She did, and went to a bench under a tree to await the verdict.

After a while, Roca reappeared wiping his hands on a damp, greasy rag. "Engine's shot," he said. "Transmission's about ready to go. Brakes are down to ten percent. Problem with the front end, too."

Gina's heart sank into her toes. "How much?" she asked.

"Not worth it," he said, which left her with no doubt about the honesty of his verdict.

Gina lost what little control she had left. "I can't buy a new car," she said, tears trickling down her cheeks. "I just bought this car. And I have to get out of here, I can't stay, I'm still too close to Houston."

She felt a hand like a collection of dried twigs on her shoulder. "Are you in trouble?"

"No," she said. "I mean, I'm not wanted by the police or anything, but..." How on earth could she explain Bobby to this man?

He nodded briefly, then went into his office without a word, leaving Gina to wonder if he was just going to leave her there, then he came back out with two names and addresses on the back of an old envelope. "This man will give you a place to live, cash. This one will give you a job, cash. It will do until you can go home."

"Thanks," Gina said, astonished. "Why...I mean...how did you know?"

Roca nodded. "Pretty girl like you's bound to attract trouble at least once in her life. Not your fault. Stay here for a bit. Let it cool down." Then he handed her her keys and turned on his heel before she could sputter a retort or even offer to pay him.

And that was how Gina ended up in Spellfire.

One of the addresses on Roca's envelope was The Eighth Deadly Sin, known locally as the Eighth. The owner was always happy to pay extra staff off the books, especially if it meant that he could treat them like slave labor. Gina had been hired on a whim and she could be fired the same way. She also had to put up with more hands on her legs and ass than she would normally tolerate, and then she had to go home to Shepenwepet.

He was the second name on her list, and her first glimpse of him was not reassuring. The left half of his nose had somehow caved in and he was missing a bit of that ear. The eye was under a patch and

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the skin of his cheek was pulled up a bit, giving him a permanent sneer. "Did Ramses send you?" he asked.

"No," she said, stunned as much by his words as by his face.

"Who did then?"

"Roca," she said.

"That old Inca?" Shepenwepet's remaining eyebrow twisted itself into a frown. "Or did Ramses tell you to say that. Did he sent you here so you can spy on me?"

"Look," Gina said, "I don't know any Ramses. I just need a place to live and Roca said that you have a room to rent."

"Yes," he said, and she recognized the gleam in his eye as greed.

"I'll pay cash," she said in a desperate pounce, "and I'll never say a word to Ramses. I promise."

"So you do know Ramses," he said, greed replaced by suspicion.

Gina gritted her teeth. "No, but if I meet him, I promise I'll cut him dead."

Shepenwepet stared at her for so long that she nearly walked away, then he grunted. "I have a few rooms. You pay cash. I hear anything about Ramses, and you're out, understand?"

"Fine," said Gina.

After a while, she found out that Ramses was a mummy who had spent a fair amount of time in the Spellfire museum before being uncursed, resurrected, and reunited with his true love. It sounded like a great story to Gina and she thought that Shepenwepet would have had some sympathy for a fellow creature. After all, Shepenwepet was a mummy himself, but Ramses, according to her landlord, was a two-bit nobody who should have been put back into the ground. But then again, some thrice-cursed idiot had botched Shepenwepet's mummification, leaving him permanently scarred and ruining his chances with any woman he didn't have to pay for.

Gina didn't tell him that the problem wasn't his whole face, just the parts of it that moved when he talked. Instead, she snuck in the side door and made a beeline for the two-room mother-in-law apartment she rented for a hundred dollars a week, grateful that she worked weird hours. It meant that their paths seldom crossed, but between him and her boss, she was seriously considering going back to Houston, on a bicycle if necessary, Bobby or no Bobby.

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Gina went to the drug store en route to work about once a week in search of bandages. The shoes she had to wear to work were not only precariously heeled but had straps that felt like razor blades, especially after she'd been in them for a few hours. Once she learned where the blisters developed, she started putting clear bandages there. The light was so bad that her boss didn't notice, and it saved the tops of her feet from being cut to bloody ribbons.

It was only Tuesday, and she was all out of bandages.

She bought yet another box and stopped just outside the store to apply her new purchases. That was much better. Then she stood, wiggled her feet briefly to test her handiwork, took one step and ran smack into something hard and cold.

It knocked her flat on her ass, spilling the contents of her purse all over the sidewalk. She grabbed for a stray tampon before she glanced up to see what she'd collided with.

What she saw was a man, who was kneeling down in front of her, her wallet in his hand. "I'm sorry, Miss," he said. "I think this is yours."

It was the man with the BMW who had rescued her on the highway, and she felt herself blushing, utterly mortified. There she was, in her slut-waitress uniform and flat on her ass to boot, her tiny skirt hiked all the way up to her panties. She dropped the tampon into her purse and retrieved her wallet, pulling the duster around her to protect what little modesty she had left. "Thank you. I am so sorry. I wasn't watching where I was going."

"No," he said as he reached for a stray lipstick, "it was my fault." His eyes met hers and she got the full effect of their kindness, the sort that one could curl up and go to sleep in. Her favorite teddy bear had had such eyes.

"No," she insisted, "it was me. I was in a hurry and...you know, I don't usually dress like this," she blurted out, then blushed even more. "I mean...I..." And she sputtered to a stop, unable to figure out why she'd even mentioned her clothes. Her clothes were none of his damned business.

"I know," he said, grinning. "How is your car, by the way?"

"Dead," she sighed.

"I was afraid of that," he said. "Are you all right?"

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“Yes,” she said, reaching for a pen that had rolled into a crack in the sidewalk. “I mean, I guess I’ve been better, but I’ve been worse, too. Thanks for your help that day.”

“And now I’ve knocked you over,” he said, pouring once-scattered coins into her palm. “Let me make it up to you. We can go to Sinful Sundaes and I’ll buy you some ice cream.”

Gina’s heart sank. She really didn’t want to blow him off, but she couldn’t afford to be late to work, not with a demon for a boss. “I can’t,” she said, “I have to get to work about five minutes ago but maybe tomorrow? Are you free about one?” That would give her time to wake up properly.

“Yes,” he said, standing. He did not offer her his hand, so she struggled to her feet, trying to show as little of her underwear as possible.

“Then I’ll meet you there. And thanks again.” She held out her hand.

He hesitated, then took it.

His skin was ice-cold and Gina shivered, but it wasn’t an uncomfortable shiver. It was a very sensual shiver.

Gina had always been fond of the cold. It was why Bobby had called her a pervert. During a European vacation, she’d been the only one of her friends who had dared leave a sauna to roll in the snow, and she’d been known to masturbate with ice cubes, the plastic ones made for cocktails because they didn’t make a mess of the sheets. She’d even put her silicone dildo in the freezer, just to see what would happen, and had liked the results so much that she’d kept it there. Now here in front of her was a whole man, or at least something shaped like a man, whose body was just the temperature she liked, and he was a nice man to boot. He was still holding her hand, although the kindness in his eyes was now laced with apprehension.

“What are you?” she whispered.

“I’m an Agloolik,” he said, “an Inuit guardian spirit.”

“An Agloolik,” she repeated, trying to get her tongue around the unfamiliar word. “You’ll meet me at Sinful Sundaes at one?”

“Do you still want me to?” he asked.

Gina felt a flutter of panic in her chest. “Yes! Yes. Please. I have to go now but please. Promise.”

“I promise,” he said.

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“Thanks.” She let go of his hand reluctantly, but she would have to run for it if she wanted to keep her job, and in those stupid shoes, too. “Tomorrow. One.”

“Right.”

And she wobbled off as fast as she could, not thinking anymore about her boss or Shepenwepet, but about what on earth an Inuit guardian spirit was doing in Spellfire.

Chapter 2

At the moment, he was kicking himself, hard. He was how many thousands of years old and he'd just made a stupid tactical error: he had asked a woman out but hadn't asked her name. How dumb could he get?

Probably she wouldn't show up. Probably she was just being nice, which was more than he deserved. Oh, he'd be there. He was like any other guy, chasing after every shred of hope when it came to a beautiful woman, but he was well aware that it was only a shred. He'd just made a complete ass of himself.

It was not something he was accustomed to. In his many centuries in the ice, he had rarely lost one of his charges and never without a good fight. He hadn't changed much since.

Al, as he had come to call himself, hadn't left the ice voluntarily. He'd been driven out, but not by any single thing. His foe was technology, an amorphous force that rendered him redundant, by making his charges far more powerful than any of the threats they faced. He left his frozen wasteland in disgust and ventured toward the cities that were the source of his problem.

He was not sure if technology had conquered him or he had conquered it. Like any intelligent, resourceful creature, he had taken stock of his enemy and although he had discovered no single source of the menace, he had found in the process that it was a pretty interesting menace. Fascinating, actually. And lucrative. Nothing like getting into a major growth industry at the barest of ground floors. He bought stock in Microsoft, IBM and Apple right after their IPOs, and continued with companies like Dell, Nintendo and Sony. After a while, he started a company of his own, one that designed games for

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console systems. It had just gone public, with excellent results. Now all he needed was some new blood, someone who could shake up his creative department a bit. Success had made them complacent, and he had little tolerance for complacency.

Al had also discovered heat. He'd spent most of his time in the vicinity of the Arctic Circle, so his notion of warmth was fairly limited. As he moved south, first to Anchorage, then to Silicone Valley and then to Spellfire, he discovered that heat was comfortable, quite comfortable indeed. Perhaps a bit too comfortable. He'd been a walking hard-on for months.

The problem was that he had nothing constructive to do with the hard-on. Adapted to the Arctic cold, he wasn't anything that had to work to keep itself warm. It wasn't that he was cold-blooded, only something with a default body temperature that matched his natural habitat. The Texas heat seemed to warm him somewhat, but not nearly enough for human comfort, and there were no females of his own kind. Even vampires got disconcerted by his utter lack of body heat. Getting a girlfriend was bad enough. Keeping one was damned near impossible.

So why was he flirting with a woman who wore an inappropriate denim coat over an equally inappropriate bit of cheap seduction? He wasn't sure. Perhaps it was because she looked like a living sun, with pale hair, hazel eyes, skin tanned nearly as dark as his own, and a smile that lit up her whole face. Perhaps it was something else. Both times he'd seen her, she'd been down but not out, and he admired that kind of stubborn fight. The need to survive against the odds was something he understood very well.

Al stared for a moment at the drugstore, trying to remember what he had been going in there for in the first place. After a while, it clicked. He hadn't actually been going into the drugstore at all. He'd been going home. The woman had been coming out of the drugstore. He laughed at himself and set off down the street toward home.

He knew it made him look like an idiot, but he got to Sinful Sundaes half an hour early. The problem was her panties. He'd caught a few glimpses of them and had liked what he saw, even though they weren't black or lacey. Women didn't usually wear those walking down the street. Still, her panties hadn't seemed like grannie undies, either. They were pink, and they looked awfully soft, inclined to cling

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to the parts they covered in a way that was more seductive than bare skin. He'd spent about half an hour that morning contemplating those panties while lying on his bed in a patch of sunlight, but he'd never confess that to her or anyone else.

She came in fifteen minutes early, wearing a skirt that was short enough to be interesting but modest compared to her costume from the day before, and a floral V-necked T-shirt. Her hair was down, instead of pulled back into the functional ponytail of the day before, and she looked bright, warm and wonderful. "Hi," he said. He didn't offer his hand because he avoided handshakes when he could, but she offered hers and he took it. She didn't seem afraid to touch him, which was good, but he still had to swallow a surge of hope. "What would you like?"

"Oh! Um, a sundae, I guess. Mint chip with chocolate topping. Thanks."

"I'll be right back," he said, and he was half-way to the counter before he started kicking himself yet again. He still hadn't asked her name.

The red-haired sorceress behind the counter winked at him as she poured a bit of mint syrup over the sundae in addition to the chocolate. "This is her usual," she whispered.

"Thanks," he said, and took it back to his table, where the woman had settled herself and was smiling at him. He handed her the sundae and went back to his ice cream soda. "My name is Al," he said finally.

She giggled. "I'm Gina." Then she took a bite of her sundae and closed her eyes, her face filled with a bliss that bordered on sexual. "Thanks," she said, looking at him again. "Sorry. I love ice cream."

"No problem," he said, trying to reroute his blood flow back to his big head. That look was enough to do him in right there. "So where were you going when your car broke down?" His old instincts had never faded, and he could sense disaster here somewhere. She dressed well, when she wasn't dressed for work, and had the look and poise of a professional woman, so what was she doing driving a junker and working in a dive? He wasn't sure which dive, but yesterday's uniform reeked of sleaze.

"Nowhere, really," she said, looking glumly at her ice cream. "It's a long story and I'd rather not get into it. So what about you?"

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You told me that you were a guardian spirit. What does an Agloolik guard?”

“Hunters,” he said, impressed that she remembered what he was. “I used to watch over the men who went out onto the ice for game.”

Was he mistaken or did she wince a little. “But not anymore, right?”

“No. I left the arctic a long time ago.”

“Why Spellfire? Isn’t it kind of hot for you?”

She had no idea! That morning wasn’t the first time he’d masturbated in the sun. “It’s one of the few places where someone like me can blend in,” he said. “It’s also far enough from California so I can stay sane, but close enough so I can stay in touch.”

“Why do you need to stay in touch with California?” she asked, smiling happily again as she savored another bite of ice cream.

“I run a software development company,” he said. “Blue Ice Games.”

“Blue Ice?” she said, her eyes lighting up. “You guys wrote Death’s Herald! The graphics on that were incredible!”

“You play?” he asked, surprised. Video games were very much a male province.

“Yes,” she said. “I write games, too, although I did mostly web-based work.”

“What kind?” he asked.

She took another bite and sighed, smiling. “It varied. The last thing I did was an online educational adventure game. It’s used by groups that share a common password, to make sure that all of the kids know each other before they use the chat function. It’s a role-playing game with the usual features of children’s games, items to collect, goals to meet, that kind of thing. It helps the kids learn to work together, and it’s a sneaky way of teaching math and spelling.”

“Who uses it?” he asked, unaware that he was slurping the remains of his soda. Of all the things she might have been, this was the last thing he expected.

“Mostly private schools,” she said, “although they had a query from a home schooling support group last year. They can handle groups as small as five and as large as thirty.”

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“That’s impressive,” he said, astonished. There were relatively few woman programmers, and he’d just stumbled over one in Spellfire of all places.

“Not by your standards,” she said, making a wry face. “It’s nothing compared to the console games and it’s literally kid stuff. I’m proud of it because it’s very popular, but it doesn’t mean much to the big boys.”

“Oh, I don’t know,” Al said, teasing her. “I’d like to see it if I’m supposed to pass judgment on it.”

She took the bait. “Just get me to a computer with a broadband connection, and I’ll show you.”

He took her to his apartment on the top floor of the James Building, and she showed no sign of awe as she walked in. She definitely wasn’t used to her current poverty. She also wasn’t kidding about her proficiency with computers. It took her two confident minutes to pull up the windows she needed, and she typed in an administrative password. “Here you are,” she said.

He took a look. The graphics were smooth and clean, and it was surprisingly demanding. The kids needed to have a solid command of basic math and the chats were spellchecked. Vocabulary could be customized, and the full logs could be printed so that teachers could look for consistent mistakes and help students correct them in the classroom. It was fun and sophisticated, proof that video games didn’t need to be dull to be educational.

“This is incredible,” he said. “It’s your work?”

“It was my team,” she said, and he could hear the pride in her voice. “Like everything else, it took too long and went over budget, but everyone thought it was worth it.”

So did Al. He clicked around a bit, watching how the game responded. If she was this good with browser-based work, what could she do with the added power of a console? “Why did you leave?”

“Oh,” she said. “Long story. I plan to get back to it as soon as I can.”

He swiveled in his chair to look at her, and saw a thin layer of defiance in her eyes that was masking something akin to terror. Someone had frightened her badly, but she wasn’t going to tell him about it. “You won’t have a problem getting your job back, I think,”

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he said, “or getting any other job, for that matter. This is excellent work.”

“Thanks,” she said, smiling, then she glanced at her watch and sighed. “Speaking of work, I need to go home and change.”

There was a lot he wanted to ask her, like why she’d left work she obviously had a real aptitude for, why she was now working wherever she was working, why she hadn’t replaced her car. Instead, he rose as she did. “It’s been a wonderful afternoon,” he said. “Thank you.”

She looked at him and smiled. “Thank you for the ice cream.

She wasn’t moving, though, and Al began to panic. Was he supposed to do something? If so, what? Kiss her? He thought it unlikely, and then he thought it a disastrous proposition. What would she do when she felt the chill of his lips on her skin? Run screaming?

Gina’s smile softened and she reached for his hand, not for a handshake, but a gentler, softer touch. “I really had a good time today, and it’s been great actually getting to know you.”

Now he had to do something, and the decision was rapidly making itself. He might not have been precisely human, but in this form at least, his impulses were pretty much the same and Gina was presenting an inviting picture, face tilted upward, lips parted. He was moving before he was thinking, his free hand reaching for the back of her neck and his mouth looking for hers, looking for a taste of the sun.

Gina moaned at the contact and he braced himself for the flinch, for the push at his chest, the inevitable end, but what he got instead was a hand on his waist, just above his belt. Her small tongue slid into his mouth, filling it with delicious heat, and she sighed with unmistakable desire as he returned the favor, and he felt her nipples harden against his chest.

No longer able to even pretend to control himself, Al let go of her hand and took her in his arms, holding that fiery body tight against his. She was panting into his mouth as her small, scorching hands roamed over his back, stiffening his cock to the point of pain and erasing all hope of rational thought. Possessed by lust, he walked her across the room, pushed her up against the wall and ran his hands under her shirt, searching for more of that soft, hot skin as her breath got even more frantic and her legs parted around his.

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He kept expecting her to stop him, but she never did. Instead, she tugged his T-shirt out of the waistband of his jeans and set his skin ablaze. He was getting drunk on the touch of her skin, losing all reason in his need to get more. He kissed his way down her neck, down to the base of the V in her neckline, then lifted her shirt so he could kiss a lace-covered breast. She pleaded in an incoherent soprano as she unsnapped the fastener of her bra, leaving him to do as he pleased while she undid the buckle of his belt and moved to the button of his jeans.

It was moving too fast, much too fast, but he was unable to stop it or even slow it down. He lifted her skirt until it was bunched around her waist, covered her crotch with his hand, sliding a finger under the elastic. Gina shuddered, but still didn't push him away, and she was wet, aroused. Unbelievable, and much too good to argue with. She had already freed his cock, and although the touch of her warm hand was exquisite, instinct was telling him to bury himself, hard and quick, in the only place that had a hope of easing the ache.

He slid her panties down over her hips and thighs, let them drop to the floor, and she stepped one out of them, lifting her leg and bracing her foot on the wall behind her. He dropped his jeans and briefs together, centered his cock at the entrance to her cunt, and shoved in.

"Oh my God!" Gina gasped, her voice a quavering soprano.

"Should I stop?" As if he could.

"No!" She grabbed at him, tilting her hips toward him and wrapping her leg around his waist. "No, don't stop! Fuck me!"

A request or a command? Did it matter? He obeyed, lifting her off her remaining foot, forcing her to grab on for dear life as he pounded her into the wall. Their mouths locked, teeth colliding as their tongues wrestled and Gina's cries got lost in his throat. Pure, primitive bliss. The last shreds of civilization fell from him and he became the wild creature he thought he'd left behind on the ice so many decades ago, blind to all but immediate need. He felt the warning tension in his balls and broke the kiss, sank his teeth into her neck, coming in sharp, agonizing bursts as Gina cursed in his ear.

He vaguely felt her relax, felt her legs ease back down the floor, felt a soft kiss on his neck. His head was still spinning and he was willing his cock to stay hard just a little longer. He didn't want the

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embrace to end. But his dick had never been the most obedient part of his body and it softened, slid out, broke the connection, forcing his brain back online. What had just happened? Should he apologize? He hoped not. He didn't ever want to have to regret this.

He risked a look at Gina. Her head was sagging against his shoulder, but it lifted as if she'd sensed his gaze.

"Hey," he said, for lack of anything better.

She smiled. "Um. Would it be too much of a cliché for me to say that I don't usually do this?"

He laughed. "Me, neither. Would it be too rude of me to ask why?"

Gina blushed burgundy and looked at his chest. "It's kind of complicated. I mean...it's not that I don't like you as a person, but...." She stroked his arm. "Are you always this cold?"

"Yes," he said. "I'm adapted to the Arctic. I couldn't afford the energy loss required to conserve body heat and I didn't want to be a seal all of the time. Hunters sometimes reacted badly. Why?"

She went one shade darker. "I...um...." Her eyes flickered back up to his, wide, uncertain and a little too bright. "I like it."

He hugged her hard, laughing with joy and relief. "Good."

He felt her relax, return the hug, felt the soft vibration of a happy, vocalized sigh. Then she pulled back a bit. "Does my body heat bother you?"

"Oh, no! Not at all." He winked at her. "I like it."

She blushed yet again, grinning. "Oh!"

"But I like you as a person, too."

Gina burst out laughing. "Good! Listen, I hate to fuck and run, but I really have to go to work."

"What time do you get off?"

She made a face. "About three in the morning."

"How about lunch tomorrow? When can I call you?"

"I don't have a phone," she said with a sigh, "but name the place and I'll meet you there."

"Where do you live?" he asked, frowning.

"Granger and Franklin," she said.

That was awfully far away, and she didn't have much time. "How about I drive you home?"

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She glanced at her watch and winced. “That would probably be a good idea, thanks. Just let me grab my purse.”

He dropped her off at a two-storey stucco house that had been painted a nondescript yellow about thirty years ago, and watched as a curtain twitched. Someone was keeping an eye on her and he wondered who and why.

She kissed him goodbye with a great deal of enthusiasm and agreed to meet him for lunch the next day, but on the subject of eyes, he had seen the look in hers before, far too many times. Men trapped under the ice, frigid water turning their thick, protective clothing to lead, had looked at him like that. He put the car into gear and drove home, deep in thought.

Chapter 3

Gina woke late the next morning feeling a little sick. A hunter guardian, of all things! Bobby had a nice collection of rifles that he used whenever he could. Yes, Al was nice, but so was Bobby in the beginning. She'd been blinded by lust, by something she knew was either a fetish or its close kin, and now she was going to pay again.

The worst part was that she knew she'd keep that lunch date. She was already too far gone.

She showered, dressed and covered the bite mark on her neck, but Shepenwepet had already seen it, and when she passed him in the living room, he glared at her in a way that tightened the knot in her stomach. There was speculation in that glare, and she knew that although her tiny apartment could be locked, it was only a formality. He owned the house; he had a key. Suddenly, she didn't want to sleep there anymore.

Once she got into the sunlight, though, her mood softened. Maybe she was misjudging Al. God knew she'd misjudged men before. He couldn't know that Bobby was a hunter, and it was unlikely that he'd ever find out. This line of reasoning, she knew, was coming straight from the more lizardy parts of her brain, but it was so nice not to get the "Are you out of your mind?" look when she suggested something cold. Al was already cold. Nothing had to be kept in the freezer because he was the freezer. Being fucked by him wasn't her favorite fantasy come true only because she had never imagined such a thing was possible. She didn't even believe in ghosts before she moved to Spellfire, much less Aglooliks, and the notion of what one might be like in bed was beyond her wildest dreams.

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From a physical standpoint at least, he was her perfect man, and there was that kindness in his eyes. Surely that couldn't be fake. And he was a computer nerd, too, just like her. His eyes wouldn't glaze over when she started talking about code.

He liked heat the same way she liked cold, and it gave her an idea. Along with her purse, she had taken a small carryall bag, and she'd left early so she could make a quick stop before she got to the restaurant.

That stop was Sinful Sundaes, and she went straight for the front counter. The owner was working there, a lovely woman whose green eyes twinkled with wicked mischief. "I need every topping you have that's made to be heated," Gina said.

The owner grinned, but went over to the display case and started taking out jars. "This is that topping that hardens when it cools. It needs to be heated until it's just warm, then poured as quickly as you can manage. This is hot fudge. Here's some hot caramel. The fruit syrups are good warmed, too, so just take your pick. They all microwave fine, but be careful because microwaves heat unevenly, so stir them well to avoid hot spots. And this..." She took out a small jar with a bright red label. "This is made with cayenne peppers. It doesn't even have to be heated. Be very careful where you put it, though, because it can cause chemical burns on sensitive skin."

Gina felt the heat rush to her cheeks. How did this woman know?

The owner smiled. "Don't worry, honey. A friend of mine dated Al a while back and I heard all about it. He's a great guy, if you can stand the cold."

"I don't mind it," Gina said quickly.

"Then you're in excellent hands. Let me ring all this up for you."

Al was waiting for her at the restaurant and once he kissed her hello, the rest of lunch was a miserable formality. She was glad they were sitting opposite each other because that way, they couldn't easily touch and anyway, he didn't try. Maybe he was having the same problem, but every time Gina looked at him, she remembered what it was like to be pushed up against the wall and she was having a hard time controlling herself. Food was irrelevant. All she could think about was that cold skin on hers, an amplified shiver that went down her spine and deep into her groin. Forget the frozen dildo. It was a

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faint echo of what was possible, and now that Gina knew it, she wasn't inclined to wait.

It didn't help that Al seemed disinclined toward conversation. Talk start with computers, then stalled. A little bit about Alaska and Yukon Territory, then nothing. A feeble attempt at the weather, a disastrous flutter of eye contact. Jesus! That kindness mixed with lust was a health hazard! Gina choked down another bite of pasta with another drink of water, but the ice reminded her of Al's tongue in her mouth. It was never going to end.

"Would you like to come over to my place for ice cream?" Al asked, and Gina started. Somehow, they'd managed to clean their plates, more or less, and the waiter was bringing the check.

"Yes," she said, although the image in her mind was more along the lines of chocolate-covered Agloliik. She wanted to see the look on his face when warm syrup trickled down over his ribs.

He really did have ice cream, but he'd just gotten it and a few other things out when Gina lost every bit of self-control she had. She came up behind him and put her hands on his waist, pressed her body to his back, felt the cold seep through their clothes. Lovely!

"Stop that," he said.

"Why?" Gina murmured, resting her head on his shoulder blade.

"Because I'm trying to be a gentleman this time."

"Why?" She ran her hands over his flat belly, feeling the muscles tense. She didn't want a gentleman, she wanted a hard cock and she was sure he could oblige her.

"Well, if you're going to behave like that, why should I bother?" He turned in her arms and kissed her.

There was a reason why they had not touched in public, because once they got started, it was impossible to stop. She wanted more, but more was never enough, and she found that she was losing clothes with remarkable speed. Her blouse, once unbuttoned, fell off her shoulders and her skirt, similarly treated, dropped easily from her hips. He had a harder time with her bra, but once she unhooked it, it too showed a marked disinclination to stay on her body.

In the meantime, his clothes weren't so much coming off as coming apart. His shirt got unbuttoned and tugged out of his jeans, exposing a smooth, powerful torso. He had very little body hair, just a ring around each nipple and a trail that started at his belly button and

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led down toward his fly, which was bulging anxiously. She tugged open his belt and unzipped him. Yes, he could indeed supply a nice, hard cock, and she smiled to herself as he moaned.

He worked her panties over her hips, then lifted her onto the kitchen counter before pulling them off entirely. The cold slate felt wonderful on her ass, but then a cold finger traced the outlines of her slit and that felt even better. There was only one thing she could think of that might improve things, and she spread her legs wide in anticipation.

Unfortunately, his finger withdrew, as did the hand that had been on her hip, steadying her, but he did not break the kiss so she couldn't see what he was doing. He seemed to be messing with something behind her back, but in doing so, he brought his erection into direct contact with her upper thigh, distracting her. She was just shifting over, so as to redirect it slightly, when something cold hit the side of her neck and drooled down over her collarbone.

She cursed, then cursed again as Al tracked it with his tongue. He'd had the same idea she'd had, and it was doing to her what she'd hoped to do to him. The second dose was poured over her breast, and she felt the telltale sting of menthol on her nipple. Electra at Sinful Sundaes made her mint syrup very strong and the cold of Al's mouth just increased the burn. Gina started to beg, for him to stop or never stop she wasn't sure which, she couldn't make up her mind whether it was too much or not enough.

Two fingers slid deep into her cunt, a mouth worked its way down over her belly, leaving a trail of delicious chill in its wake. A cold tongue dug into her belly button, making her gasp with a mix of shock and delight. Then lower, as she held her breath with anticipation, knowing what was coming and wondering how good he would be at it.

Once his tongue touched her clit, she realized that it didn't matter. Ice cubes were no match for this sweet, wet mouth that would never warm up and he knew what he was doing, which made it even worse. Her clit was subjected to a prolonged, expert torture that took her slowly and miserably to the edge. His fingers kept up a steady rhythm inside her, a counterpoint to the light, quick dance of his tongue, and Gina's legs started to shake uncontrollably. If he kept that up just a few minutes longer, she was going to come.

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He did, and Gina convulsed on the counter, babbling, her cunt grabbing at his fingers. It went on for ages and he pushed her mercilessly, thrusting harder, licking harder until it almost hurt but she would have killed him if he'd stopped. She had never felt so helpless in her life, coming and coming at the whim of another and in the end, it didn't stop until she pleaded with him to stop it, said she'd had enough, that she could take no more.

He stood, stepped out of his jeans and pulled her to the very edge of the counter, his erection in his hand. She sighed as he entered her, so soothing and kind compared to the earlier storm. He went slow and steady, and Gina just relaxed and felt it. No heat, because he didn't generate any, but there was also no sense of merging, either, the way it often felt once body heat equalized. He remained distinct inside her, something different from her, a presence both alien and beloved.

She was not ready for the trickle of syrup that covered her breast again, for the renewal of the menthol burn. "Oh my God, don't start again!" she said, laughing weakly.

"Why not?" he asked.

"Because I'm done in," she said.

"I'm not," he said indistinctly, his mouth full of nipple, "and this is fun."

"It's torture," she moaned.

"I know." He went to her other breast, anointing it first and then licking and sucking away the mint. Her cunt, in the meantime, was still hyperaware of his cock. He would never warm and she would never cool, and it made each thrust feel like the first. Deep inside her, something stirred, spurred on by his constant attention to her breasts. It made a feedback loop of sensation between her nipples and her cunt, her clit caught in the middle. She leaned into him, reaching for touch, and he reached down to put his thumb squarely on top of that small, anxious nub. "Is that what you want?" he asked, his mouth now a fraction of an inch from hers.

"Oh no!" Gina gasped.

"Is that the kind of no that means no, or the kind of no that means yes?" He didn't stop any of what he was doing.

"It's the kind that means 'Are you trying to kill me?'"

"This isn't going to kill you," he said.

"If I come again, I'll pass out."

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“Good.” He grinned. “I’ve always wondered what it would be like to fuck an unconscious woman.”

She swatted at his chest. “You wouldn’t!”

“Only because I won’t be able to,” he said in her ear. “I’ve got only one shot in the chamber, but you....” He picked up the pace with his hips. “One more. One more, before I come inside you, and I want to so bad you wouldn’t believe it. You drive me absolutely insane. Every time I look at you, I want to fuck you. The second you walked into the restaurant, I wanted to bend you over the table and ravish you.”

From anyone else, it would have inspired a mix of rage and fear, but from Al, it inspired a flood of reciprocal desire. “Any time,” she whispered, looking down between their bodies at the thick brown shaft that vanished over and over again inside her, the thumb that spread the lips of her sex. Then she closed her eyes, concentrating on what she felt and to her amazement, he got his wish, a small, soft orgasm like a postlude.

He wasn’t kidding about the ravishing part. When she was done, he lifted her knees under his arms and drove in hard, forcing her to lean back on her hands to give him space. She held perfectly still, watching him go completely berserk until he held his body tight against hers and she felt the pulse and jerk of his orgasm.

Al’s semen didn’t cool as it leaked out, it warmed. After a while, he looked at her, a bit of apprehension in his eyes. She had no idea where it came from, but she kissed him to reassure him and it seemed to help. “Are you working tonight?” he asked.

“No,” she said. Thankfully!

“Would you like to have dinner here, and maybe stay?”

“Yes,” she said, feeling perfectly content.

Chapter 4

Al woke the next morning hard and wondering how on earth he'd managed to get that way. Gina had, he thought, drained him of every bit of strength the night before. The memory of cayenne syrup oozing down his spine made him even harder. He could not believe his luck. Not only was she funny, adventurous, and sexy as hell, but she liked the very thing about him that everyone else hated. His body temperature had gone overnight from a problem to an asset. For the first time ever, a woman actually wanted to cuddle with him.

He would do anything for her, absolutely anything to keep her.

At that moment, though, he was distracted by the way her ass was pressing against his erection. It wouldn't take much, he thought, to find a nice, comfortable home for it a bit lower. He'd been kidding when he'd said that he'd always wanted to fuck an unconscious woman, but the idea was beginning to appeal more and more. Really, he just wanted to fuck Gina, whether she was conscious or not.

Probably she'd wake up.

But would she be angry?

She had no business being angry. It was her own fault. She was the one who had curled up with her back to his chest and her rear in his crotch. What did she expect? Women who did that were just asking to get fucked. Anyway, being naked in his bed had to be some kind of consent.

Actually, there was one potential sticking point here. Could she take him? He reached down, easing his fingers into the hollow between her thighs. Gina was soaking wet and swollen, a perfect invitation. He coaxed his cock down and eased it carefully in.

Blessed relief! It was an awkward angle, but if he shifted back a bit, he could coax another inch into her. He had to bite his lip to keep

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from thrusting too hard and waking her, but the cling of her inner walls against his shaft was maddening. He wanted to feel the pull as he slid out, the give as he slid in, over and over until he could take no more. He shifted his hips just a little, pushed in a bit more, but he knew that one way or another, he was going to wake her.

He already had. He felt the shift in her breathing, then she arched her back, taking in a bit more of him as she did so. "Is this your normal idea of a wake-up call?" she asked.

"Do you mind?" She didn't seem to, and it was such a relief to be able to fuck her properly.

"Actually, it's a mixed blessing," she said.

"Why?"

"Because I'm a bit sore, and you feel like an ice pack, which is good, but what you're doing is going to make it worse in the end."

"Guess I'll have to keep doing it until you get used to it."

He felt her laughter on his cock, and buried himself in it. "You're insatiable," she said.

"It's all your fault," he said, wanting to go deeper and harder. He eased her slowly onto her stomach, her ass in the air, and spread her legs with his knees, driving himself in to the hilt. That was much better.

"Why?" she asked.

"Because you're so damned hot," he said, "in every sense of the word."

She made a small noise somewhere between a giggle and a groan. "You're so good."

Good. Not something to be tolerated, but something to be enjoyed. He leaned his head down to hers. "Make yourself come," he said. "I want you to come like this."

She reached down between her legs, and he felt small, hot fingers caressing his balls for a moment before she turned her attention to her clit.

Now he could be selfish. Gina would come quickly that way, he'd discovered, and she wasn't shy. That was good, because it would have been a nightmarishly awkward thing for him to do in that position and he liked that position. He liked it a lot. In fact, he was starting to like it too much and he slowed down, giving her a chance to catch up.

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She was off in her own little world and dangerously close to the edge of it. He watched her face flush, felt sweat break out on her back, yes, she was nearly there, nearly there. Then she gasped, shuddered, coming on his cock and cursing under her breath. When she was done, pulled her hand out, and he ground herself into her, lacing her fingers with his and holding her down as he came.

They collapsed on the bed in a satiated puddle. "Oh my God!" Gina sighed. "Now I just want to go back to sleep."

"You could," he said, rolling off of her and stroking her back.

"No, I can't. I have to work tonight."

It seemed absurd to him that she had to go back to whatever hellhole she worked in. He could use someone like her at Blue Ice. She had the skill and the imagination he needed. "Do you really have to?"

"Yes," she said firmly. "Not forever, but yes."

Even now, she would not ask his help. "I'll tell you what," he said, stroking her back. Her skin was so amazingly soft as well as warm. She was perfect, just perfect. "I'll make you something to eat and drive you home. Okay?"

She smiled lazily at him. "That would be great."

So that was what he did, wondering all the while what she would tell him and when. She had the kind of bloody-minded courage that he was designed to reward, a will to survive that went beyond the ordinary, but unless he could see the threat, he could not intervene.

As soon as he turned down Granger, he saw the threat. It was sitting on Gina's doorstep, a beer in one hand and the other resting under its shirt in the vicinity of its belt. He felt a surge of energy of a kind he hadn't had in so long he'd almost forgotten what it felt like, and he barely heard Gina's muttered curse. There on that porch was the thing in the world he liked the least: a coward.

It was about six feet tall, maybe a hundred and eighty pounds, and it still thought it needed a knife to deal with a woman barely more than half its size. It took another pull at the bottle, and Al assessed its inebriation level: mild buzz. Just enough to make it mistake its lack of impulse control for brilliant strategy. There was no avoiding it, since it was camped out on Gina's doorstep, so Al didn't try. He unbuckled his seatbelt, then pulled up to the curb and cut the engine.

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The coward got up and sauntered over to the car. "Hey, Baby!" it said to Gina.

"Bobby, what the fuck are you doing here?" Gina was pale and shaking with rage.

"Came to pick up my girl. How you been, Baby?"

"I am not your girl!" Gina fumed. "How the hell did you find me?"

"You used your password on that game you designed. Took a buddy of mine about ten minutes to find the computer. Spent last night doing some bar hopping until I got to the Eighth. Hell of a job you've got there, Sweetheart. Been moving up in the world since we broke up, haven't you? And then I came down here and had a nice chat with old Shepenwepet. You've been playing around on me, you little slut, but if you come back home, I just might forgive you."

"I'm not going back," Gina said, but Al knew it was pure bravado. Still, he said nothing and made no move. It wasn't time yet.

"Oh, yes you are." Bobby pulled out the knife and laid it on the convertible's frame, deliberately and audibly scraping a good-sized line in the door in the process. It was a hunting knife, with a six-inch blade, and Al saw Gina swallow hard. "You come with me right now," Bobby said, "and nobody gets hurt."

That was the chance Al was waiting for. Lightning-quick, he reached across Gina and put his hand down on Bobby's wrist, fingers tightening until he felt a gratifying crunch of bone. Bobby screamed and turned white, and the knife clattered to the asphalt. "You set foot in Spellfire again," Al said, "and I'll know."

That was all it took. Blubbering apologies, Bobby backed off, cradling his broken wrist, and staggered to his truck, laying down his length in rubber as he hit the accelerator.

"My God!" Gina said.

"Are you all right?" Al asked.

"Yes, but...." She gave him a long look. "He's a hunter. I thought...."

"That I'd side with him?" Al laughed. "No. Gina, I left the ice when technology made men more powerful than the environment, when courage was no longer necessary and they came after baby seals with enough firepower to win a war. They disgusted me." He reached

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for Gina's hand. "Once men like him became hunters, there was nothing left for me to guard."

"I'm sorry," she said.

"I'm not," he said. "Not anymore. Look, would it be presumptuous of me to tell you to go in and pack your bags, and that if you want a job at Blue Ice, you've got it? I'll give you enough of an advance on your salary so you can get a real apartment. Unless you want to go back to Houston," he added, praying that she didn't.

Gina's face cycled through a handful of emotions before finally settling on affectionate skepticism. "Are you doing this just because we're sleeping together?"

"No," he said, "I'm doing this because my creative department is stagnant and so is the children's game market. I've seen what you can do when you're limited to browsers and being overtly educational. I want to see what happens when your only limit is the available technology. I want Blue Ice to own the rights to the next big franchise, and I think you can deliver them."

Gina's jaw dropped and her eyes widened. "Me?"

"Yes, you."

"Why?"

"Why not? I've seen your work, and I want it."

"You can't..." she spluttered. "That game isn't..."

"No, but it could be. Are you in?" he asked, grinning.

"Are you serious?"

"Only if you are."

She didn't have to think it over for very long. "All right," she said, returning his grin with interest "You want me, you've got me, but I get to pick my team."

"You get anything you want," he said. Then he leaned over and kissed her hard. "Go in and pack. You can stay with me until you can find your own place."

She unbuckled her seatbelt and kissed him back. "Thank you! I'll be right back."

He settled back into his seat, watching her skip up the steps, wondering how long he could persuade her to stay.

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Wednesdae

Witches & Walnuts

by

Anne Leland

Chapter 1

The crimson red F scribed on the parchment burned her retinas and shot a spike of pain through her forehead.

How could she have failed? Outrageous! Had any third-year witch at Alchemy Academy ever failed Relationship Spells 101? Surely, she must be the first.

She'd studied, she'd practiced, and she even paid homage to the muse, Iris. Okay, so she'd used dried apricots instead of figs, and pancake syrup instead of honey, but heck, Iris must understand the limitations of a modern witch's pantry.

Marissa glanced back down at the red F. Obviously Iris's tastes were discriminate.

A shadow fell across the desk, dampening the glare of her failure. She looked up into the silver-gray eyes of her tormenter, Professor Raven. She quickly brushed her skirt down as far as it would reach to cover her quivering knees. If only she didn't dream about running her hands through his long brown hair, well, she might show him a thing or two about relationship spells.

If only she knew anything about relationships. Her line of botched dating games rivaled the length of the line of customers at Sinful Sundaes on a hot July day.

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Professor Raven placed his hand on her desk, casually splaying his long fingers as if to caress the wood. "Something wrong Ms. Gael?"

Marissa swore the makings of a smile tugged at his lips, as if to mock her dismay. Yes, something's wrong, for starters, this grade! She wish those were the words that popped out of her mouth, instead, as usual, she was rendered mute in his presence and merely shook her head in reply.

Professor Raven leaned closer to her, and his hair spilled forward. Gingerroot and the elusive scent of some exotic spice tickled her nose. Her fingers itched to reach up and touch the wavy temptation, stroke it along her skin and fully inhale the delicious cologne.. She latched her hands tighter to the edge of her skirt and willed them to behave.

"It's not your technique, nor your talent that is hindering your performance in this class. It's your spirit."

Hello? "Wha...what?" Curses! Why did she sound like a bumbling idiot around him? He was her professor. Not a prospective boyfriend.

"Your spirit, Marissa. The soul, the desire, the *passion* you put into the spell to claim it as your own."

He straightened up and turned as if to move on.

"Professor Raven?"

With the blink of her lashes, he returned to her side. Marissa's heart skipped a beat. "I truly don't understand. There's nothing in the guidebooks about spirit." Maybe he had her confused with some cheerleader Harpy? "I'm putting everything I can into these charms."

His eyes narrowed. "Not everything, Marissa."

She shrunk back into the curve of her seat and contemplated a response. She knew damn well what he referred to but had no idea how to unlock the reservoir caged in her heart. It had long been closed to everyone, including her. Giving him the best "take pity on me face" she could manage; she shrugged her shoulders and blinked innocently in response to his challenge.

He squatted down and leaned in closer to her, the bulge of his thighs stretched the fabric of pants to its limits, showing off every mouth-watering muscle. "There are no easy rides in this class. Save the theatrics for your Elementals Dance teacher."

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Damn, why did he have to be so hunky, intelligent, *and* perceptive? The scowl settled onto her face before she could think to remove it. “This grade,” she made a motion with her hand towards the demonic paper bearing the mark of her shame, “I just don’t...I just don’t feel this grade is completely justified.”

“You don’t?”

“No.” Surprised by her own bravado, she continued to pursue her defense. “No, I really don’t.”

Professor Raven straightened back up and Marissa swore his eyes twinkled with hidden laughter. Was he amused by her? Probably thought her to be some simpleton or silly college girl. At twenty-six, she was hardly either. A twitch of anger tightened behind her shoulder blades.

A barely invisible strand of electricity snapped between them causing her to jump in her chair. The room grew eerily silent as the full attention of the students riveted to her and Professor Raven.

He smiled a cool smile as if nothing out of the ordinary transpired. “We’ll finish this conversation later. Meet me in my office after the last passage of the day.”

She watched him stroll towards the front of the classroom and call the class to attention. He looked just as good on the backside as he did on the front.

Focus, Marissa.

It was her grade that was on the line here, not her virtue.

* * * *

What the hell had he been thinking inviting her to his office? No student crossed the threshold of his sanctuary before. But Marissa Gael wasn’t merely a student. Whether Darien would like to admit it or not, was another matter.

Truth be told her summoning of quick lightening today captured his intrigue and more than warranted further exploration. He knew she came from gypsy blood, the very reason she’d begun her training so late in life. When Marissa’s mother settled in Spellville, none of the patrons expected their beloved Tarot mistress to linger, but months turned into years, and years into decades.

Rumor had it that Lady Gael’s permanency had more than a little something to do with the eccentric Chase McGregor, a reclusive werewolf. The pair never took to public affair though, so the union

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remained little more than a theory. Perhaps Lady Gael simply tired of roaming or longed for a more stable environment for her daughter, Marissa?

Whatever the reason, apparently Marissa inherited more than her penchant for witchcraft from her ancestry.

A short rap on the door interrupted his musings. "Come in, Ms. Gael."

She entered the room and immediately illuminated the dark interior with her vibrant aura. The power of her beauty lie not only in the curvaceous sway of her hips or the pout of her full lips, it sprung forth from a rich well of inner beauty, fighting to burst free. He'd more than love to be the one to undo the straps that bound her emotions.

As she walked towards him, he watched her drink in the surroundings.

"Have a seat." He gestured towards an antique leather chair next to his desk.

She nodded and perched on the edge of the seat as if readying herself to flee at any given moment. "Your statue collection is very interesting."

He smiled at her polite wording. Many had called him unconventional, others compulsive, and still others, obsessive. In reality, he admired the delicate beauty found collecting artifacts of the past. "Have you an interest in the Greek arts?"

"No." Marissa hung her head demurely then perked up, her curly, jet-black hair nearly bouncing as she flipped it back. "I particularly like that grouping, though. Exquisite." She pointed a neatly manicured nail towards the window ledge behind him.

"Ah, yes. They are depictions of the muses. A rare find. One I'm admittedly proud of." *And nearly lost my life recovering.* Battling a Fox Fairy for the prize hadn't been the smartest decision he'd ever made.

"The muses, figures."

"They disenchant you?"

"I just don't seem to have must luck asking for their favor."

A woman like Marissa hardly needed favors from the Muses. He wondered what blinded her to the strength of her power. "Perhaps

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they know the blessing you need is already within you.” What on mother earth possessed him to reveal his intimate thoughts to her?

She crossed her legs, revealing a slip of thigh from under her skirt and the air caught in his lungs. “Is that this spirit you speak of?”

He cleared his throat and raised his eyes from her legs to her smoky-black eyes. Bad mistake. They were equally spell-binding. “In many respects, yes. Your spells are flawless, your methods could use a little improvement.” He smiled inwardly as he reflected on her frequent creative substitutions of spell ingredients. “But what’s really holding you back is the lack of emotion you fuse into the charm. A spell without spirit is a witch without magic.”

A frown settled into her delicate features and he wished he could reach out and smooth it away. How would the silk of her skin feel to his touch? The unsettling thought trailed downward and his pants suddenly felt strained against his urgent need. By all that is holy and unholy, an erection in front of a student? Preposterous! What was he thinking? Shit, he knew what he was thinking. No other student, no other woman for that matter, ever evoked this strong of a response from him. Indeed, it served to be the reason he still found himself to be a bachelor at the age of thirty-seven.

“Professor Raven—”

“Call me, Darien.” What did he just say? The head master was going to have his head for his indiscretions if he didn’t slow up.

Marissa scrunched her nose for a second, pulled back into the leather chair, and clasped her hands together calmly atop her knee. “Professor Raven.” She enunciated each word, clearly dismissing his intimate gesture. “I’ve passed through nearly three years of courses including Power Spells, Life Spells, and Business Spells without ever dropping below an A minus. If this so called, spirit I’m lacking mattered, how do you explain my success in the other spell courses?”

He leaned towards her, placed his palm on the edge of the desk, and looked deep into her eyes. As much as he wanted to discipline her, he couldn’t help but offer a tease instead. “Then perhaps it’s time you encountered a challenge.”

Her black eyes clouded over creating a dreamy effect and her lips invited the taste of his own. “Challenge me then.”

Darien drew himself from the fog of lust dampening his brain cell. Certainly it was only a projection of his desire that created the

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illusion of Marissa's invitation. He jerked himself upright, away from the temptation and stepped backward towards the windows to place even more distance between them. "The class itself is the challenge, Ms. Gael. The question is, are you going to cloak yourself in your past success or open you mind and rise to the occasion?"

Jumping up from her seated position, she stood facing him, fists clenched at her sides. "How can I do anything when you still haven't told me how to tap into or read about this so called spirit you keep preaching?" A neon-blue spark of lightening snapped in the air between them.

"Relationship Spells, Ms. Gael, require a bit more than pretty prose and fancy ingredients. As you may recall from the curricula, emotions are the third corner of the relationship spell pyramid. You seem to have anger down pat, but that will only lead you to failure with matters of the heart and soul."

"I get it," she looked down at the Persian carpet beneath them. "I just don't get how I'm supposed to tap into it. I mean, I'm happy when I cast a motivation spell or a—"

"It's not the basic charms that elude you," he cleared his throat, "but the...shall we say, spells of a more love-based nature." And he could think of nothing more than his longing to show her all about the loving, erotic side of relationship spells. "I usually don't offer private lessons to students, but um, perhaps I could tutor you a bit?"

The head master was sure to burn Darien now if he caught wind of this arrangement. Interestingly enough, Darien hardly seemed to care at the moment. What he cared about was the glimmer of hope flickering in Marissa's eyes as she looked up at him.

"You would do that for me?"

Too late to go back on his word now, wasn't it? "Yes."

"Okay."

"Fine, it's settled then."

"Okay." She pursed her lips and glanced toward the doorway as if assuring herself it still existed. "Thank you." She quickly turned to leave. The heat of her presence faded as she darted towards the door, leaving an empty chill in its wake. He had to suppress the urge to reach out and draw her warmth back to him.

Stepping forward, he braced his arms on his desk and called after her. "Tomorrow then, we'll begin...Say, same time?"

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“Yes. Okay, I’ll be here.” Marissa never missed a step, simply continued through the doorway, shutting the door behind her. The heavy oak settled into its groove as if she’d never even passed through the barrier earlier.

Only the strawberry-like perfume still lingering in the air affirmed she’d ever been there at all. And the rage of backlash he hurled upon himself for letting his passion take precedence over his prudence.

What exactly did he think he was doing?

He turned to the window and looked out over the sprawling campus. Fall settled in with its rich hues and crystal skies like a colorful cloak adorning the grounds. As he took in the splendor, he realized he’d neglected to address Marissa’s quick lightening ability, even though she’d burst off another display. If he could get her past the emotional blocks she contained, she might be able to harness the power of the lightening. A powerful witch she would become, perhaps even more so than he.

Though the quick lightening was the least of his concerns, rather the quickening of his heart which betrayed him.

Could he really make it through several tutoring sessions with her, let alone one?

* * * *

Marissa’s heart thudded against her ribcage with the force of fairies running from a rooster’s crow as she fled down the narrow hallway. Pushing the exit door open, she burst into the bright sunlight and gulped the crisp October air. One more minute in Professor Raven’s office and the whole room would have been subject to spontaneous combustion.

She probably looked foolish leaving so abruptly, but what did it matter? He already thought her an incompetent and spirit-less witch. Then she’d gone and offered her lips to him as if he’d even notice. Puckered them for Artemis’ sake!

Damn Darien, anyway!

Darien. Had he really asked her to call him by his first name, or was that another bloody figment of her under-sexed imagination?

Autumn leaves skittered to the edges of the path to avoid her stomping fury. No sense in dallying. Times like this called for advice from a much higher console. Time to pay a visit to Electra.

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Tempted to fly, Marissa chose to walk the six blocks to the ice cream shop instead, using the reprieve to devise a reasonable explanation for needing Electra's help.

Marissa's plan dissolved the minute she opened the double swinging doors to Sinful Sundaes. She knocked elbows with a harpy and plowed straight through the seating area to the counter.

"I'm desperate. Where's Electra?" The words plunked on the smooth Formica.

The old, mummified waitress behind the counter turned and gave her a pointed look. "Aren't we all, dear?"

"Sorry Nitocris. This is an emergency. Is Electra around?"

"The boss lady is always around." Nitocris arched her long, bony arm towards the back room, layers of golden cuffs chimed as they fell from her wrist to her elbow with the movement.

Marissa always wanted to delve into Nitocris's history with her, she must have been someone of great importance in her time to have earned such a dazzling array of jewelry. When she walked down the street in the daytime, Nitocris eclipsed the sunlight with her brilliant adornments. Now was not the time to speculate or ask, though. There were matters of great importance at hand, namely Marissa's heart.

"Could you get her for me, please?"

"Electra!" Nitocris screamed the name as if commanding a slave to her bidding.

The gate behind the counter swung open and Electra stepped into view, her auburn curls glowing their customary halo around her perfect features. Her eyes sparkled when she caught sight of Marissa.

"What a wonderful surprise. Marissa, what brings you here?" She turned slightly towards Nitocris and spoke in a hushed tone, "You know we really have to work on your demeanor."

Nitocris offered a wry smile and a raised eyebrow. Electra laughed, waved her away, then turned back to Marissa. "She's really something else, isn't she?"

Marissa nodded. "Interesting, to say the least, in a colorful eccentric kind of way."

"Well, what can I get you today? Some pastries for studying? How's that going anyway?"

"No. No pastries today." Marissa slid her fingers back and forth over the edge of the counter, trying to choose her next words

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carefully. How could she explain that being within five feet of her professor drove her wild with desire?

“Something wrong?” Electra quizzed, obviously picking up on Marissa’s hesitation.

“Not exactly...Maybe. Yes.”

“Okay,” Electra leaned towards Marissa, bracing her palms on the countertop. “Which is it?”

“I need your help. Desperately.” Marissa gave a quick scan of the shop to make sure no one stood near enough to overhear before continuing. “I need one of your spells.”

“I don’t understand. You’re long past needing my help, Marissa. You were past that stage even before you enrolled in the academy.”

Marissa leaned across the counter to get as close as she could to Electra. A delectable scent of vanilla tickled her nose as she whispered. “I need a love spell, or actually, an un-love spell. Can you help me?”

Electra fell back from the counter, clutched her trim stomach, and nearly doubled over with laughter. “To be so young again.”

The customers in the shop glanced over curiously towards Electra and then went back about their business, gobbling up their frozen treats.

Drawing in a deep breath, Electra straightened up. “Marissa, love is not something to be undone. Even I don’t have the antidote for that.”

This was going nowhere. What had she been thinking? How could anyone possibly take her seriously? “This isn’t funny. I have to do something. Please, you got to help me.”

Electra’s features softened. “Maybe you’d best explain your dilemma to me, and we’ll see what we can come up with.”

Now they were getting somewhere. Marissa only hoped that somewhere was one step closer to erasing Darien Raven from her body and soul.

Chapter 2

Darien dawdled in the classroom after the last passage on Wednesday. He quickly ran out of reasons to linger. What was he hoping for anyway? Did he really think his tardiness to the tutoring session would chase Marissa away?

No, if anything, it would probably anger the feisty gypsy. Good. He needed her to be angry with him, seriously even considered casting a spell to coax her towards despising him. Then he could be certain she wouldn't return his affections and he might back off from his wild fantasies of having her. Last night's dreams still gripped him in their lusty fever. Then again, maybe angering her would tap into her primal passion. Oh, what he'd give to see those smoky eyes burn with desire.

Enough! He mentally checked his thoughts as he strode up the steps towards the back entrance of his office. Reaching the landing, he opened the door and found the room vacant. At least she hadn't let herself in. Or perhaps she'd chosen not to show. He let out a simultaneous breath of relief and disappointment. Only one way to find out.

He strolled over to the front of the office and flung open the heavy wooden door. Its protesting thud echoed down the long hallway and a small gasp escaped from Marissa's berry-colored lips.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to startle you." He ushered her inside the office with a sweep of his hand, trying hard to avert his gaze from the sway of her hips as she sashayed past him.

"You're late."

Darien pulled the door to the office closed. As it clicked into place he considered reopening it to be safe. A second later, he

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seriously considered locking it to ensure no interruptions. Thanks be to the Goddess, the headmaster wasn't clairvoyant. He'd be sunk if anyone could read his thoughts. Darien had even neglected to mention his tutoring session at the morning staff meeting, not even wanting to take a chance that his less than noble interest be revealed.

Turning towards her, he marched resolutely past her and found refuge behind his desk. "Come, have a seat." He gestured to the antique leather chair she'd sat in yesterday. He'd conveniently repositioned it on the opposite side of the desk. The generous oak desktop would serve as an effective barrier.

Marissa ignored his invitation, strode right up to him, and thrust a cold cylinder into his hands. As she scooted atop the edge of his desk, he registered the contents of the container. "Ice cream?"

"Not just any ice cream," she said, crossing her legs, knocking another thread of his reserve to the winds as her skirt slid up, "it's Wild Walnut Wave. Another one of Electra's famous concoctions. Try some."

She held out a silver spoon and he tentatively plucked it from her fingertips, successfully avoiding the touch of her flesh. Oh yeah, something cold would be good about now.

"Thanks, but, we should get going with your session."

"I'm sure a little ice cream won't disturb the lesson. Besides, I concentrate better with snacks."

Her smile was no doubt meant to be reassuring, but Darien sensed she was holding something back. Maybe she thought the ice cream would soften him up, sort of a bribe.

As she flipped the lid of her pint and dug her spoon into the frozen swirl, the hair on the back of his neck spiked. Something didn't jive here.

Marissa scooped a spoonful into her mouth, and looked up at him with wide, innocent eyes. He wasn't convinced.

She was definitely up to something, but what?

* * * *

Arrgh! He wasn't taking the bait. Why not?

The cool, creamy texture of the vanilla ice cream infused with a chocolate ribbon and walnut chunks enslaved her tongue. Electra had really outdone herself. Who knew an anti-love potion could taste so sinfully delicious?

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She reluctantly swallowed her first bite and focused her attention on Darien. When did his eyes get so brown? They were like cousins to the dark chocolate swirls still tempting her taste buds. "Something wrong? I assure you, it's really good."

He furrowed his brow and gave her a skeptical look.

Oh shit! He probably thought she was trying to gain his favor, or bribe him for a better grade. She had to convince him otherwise. Electra swore the only way to rid Marissa of feelings for Darien was to have him consume the same potion. "It's not a bribe. It's my, well, it's more of a peace offering. I felt like I might have been a little outspoken yesterday."

His features softened and he leaned back against the windowsill. "I understand. No harm, no foul. How about if we get started?"

There were a few things she'd love to get started on, but none of them had anything to do with school lessons. Oh, there she went again. *Hurry up and eat the ice cream already, Professor, will you?* She took another scoop and savored the delectable taste.

Darien's eyes widened, as if he found something fascinating about her tongue rolling along the edge of the spoon to gather every last dreamy drop. Finally, he popped the lid of his quart and sunk in his spoon. As he brought the scoop to his lips, she had a last minute surge of momentary panic. This is it. In a minute or two, she'd no longer feel anything toward Professor Raven other than, well, what a student should feel about their toughest teacher. She didn't expect the wave of sadness and loss that shuddered through her when he took the first bite.

All for the best. All for the best. She chanted the words over and over as he dug in the container for another scoop. Marissa braced herself for the spell's effect and took pleasure in the last moments of viewing Professor Raven through a lover's eyes.

Unable to bear the wistful sadness of the moment any longer, she lowered her eyes from him. The statues of the Muses on the window sill drew her attention and she slipped off the desk to admire their beauty more closely. "Professor Raven?"

"Marissa?" His voice hung in the air, heady and thick. No doubt an effect of the ice cream, but still it traced a shiver along the nape of her neck.

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It took her a moment to recollect her thoughts. "Tell me, how did you find these exquisite statues?"

"Let's just say, it was during one of the lesser phases of discretion in my youth." She felt the heat of his body as he moved closer. "Not something I'd care to repeat, nor discuss."

"Oh? You have secrets?" A smile tugged at the corner of her lips and she looked over towards him. Big mistake. Her knees went weak.

"As do you."

"Touché."

Darien slid closer to her until they were nearly shoulder to shoulder. She jerked her gaze back to the statues. Why wasn't the ice cream working? Maybe she needed to eat more? She dug in the container and stuffed a huge scoop into her mouth.

"Marissa, may I ask you...why are you trapping your feelings inside? Do you realize the nature of the power you possess?"

She swallowed hard. A cold streak shot down the back of her throat. "Power? What power?"

"Your ability to produce quick lightening. Do you know how to harness it?"

His tone was almost suggestive in nature, as if he were speaking of much more intimate things. She drove her spoon back into the pint, dragging up a huge mound of walnuts. "No, I don't." Marissa stared at the statue in front of her. Gracefully carved trains of flowers flowed from an intricate marble wreath adorning the muses head. "Is that Thalia?"

Before she could bring the spoon to her lips to gulp down another hearty bite, Darien slipped his hands on her shoulders, halting even the beating of her heart. "No." His breath caressed her neck. "It's Erato."

"Goddess of poetry and..." The words escaped her lips.

"And the erotic arts," he finished.

The room tilted and she felt the floor slipping from under her feet. She turned to him as if in a dream—the good, don't-wake-me-up-from-this-anytime-soon, kind.

His reached his hand to her face, and brushed the side of her mouth with his fingertips. "You missed a taste."

"Ice cream?"

"Yes." His eyes called to her, mouth begged to capture her.

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“The ice cream.”

“What about the ice cream, Marissa?”

She melted against his body as he slipped his hands around the small of her back. “It’s not working.”

“What’s not working?” He nuzzled against her neck and teased her flesh with a soft kiss.

Her head swam with disbelief as her thighs clenched in reaction to his touch. “The ice cream.” she arched her back as he continued to tease her neckline. “Electra...oh...um...it’s an anti...potion, but it...oh...doesn’t seem to be working.”

Darien snapped back and stared into her eyes. “A potion?” His voice deepened. “What’s not working?”

“It’s supposed to make me forget about you,” she blurted.

With a press of his hand on her lower back, he nudged her closer to him. “Now why would you want to do that?”

“Because it’s hopeless. Because you don’t feel the same way. Because the last thing I need—”

“What you need I can’t teach you, but I sure as hell want to try.”

He silenced her protests with his lips. Darien tasted of vanilla and she drank in the scrumptious flavor as she explored every inch of his mouth without restraint.

The ice cream container slipped from her hand and rolled across the floor, the spoon clattering after. She ran her hands through his hair, delighting in the silky texture, drawing him into a heated lip lock.

She had the feeling this was one lesson she’d never forget.

Chapter 3

Darien couldn't believe his boldness, nor the delicious feel of Marissa's body as it pressed against his. Her lips were divine temptation, inviting him deeper to sin with each flick of her tongue.

He knew part of his inhibition was probably attributable to the charm of Electra's concoction, but didn't care. Rules be damned, no woman ever made him feel the way Marissa did with just one kiss. He made a mental note to thank Electra the next time he saw her.

Their lips parted and Marissa buried her head in his chest. He slipped his hand under her chin and tilted it upward. Her eyes held a mixture of what he could only guess to be desire or fear. "Do you trust me?"

She blinked and her lips trembled, "Y...yes."

"I want you to let go, no matter what happens." He rubbed his hand along her cheek. "Just trust, Marissa."

"I do. This is just so, so unreal. I can't believe—"

"Oh, believe it. Pulling her closer, he kissed her hesitation away, trying his best to convey the depth of his feelings for her. She responded with equal intensity.

His lips found the hollow of her neck, her hands roamed along his back gently tugging at his shirt as he sensed the pleasure rising within the heat of her skin. Cupping his hands around her bottom, he lifted her. Marissa straddled his waist and his cock pushed hard against the constraints of clothing, aching to fill her. His need would have to wait; he wanted desperately to show her the untapped pleasure she denied her body and soul. Then, only then, would he bind her to him and never let go.

Swinging towards the desk, he cleared it with a sweep of his hand. Quills, books, and a slew of papers flew across the floor. Using

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his other arm to hoist Marissa onto the cherry oak top, he carefully set her down.

Darien's hands moved of their own volition, unbuttoning Marissa's blouse as his tongue slowly teased her mouth. The cotton fabric slipped effortlessly from her shoulder, exposing the cool olive tone of her skin. His cock grew harder, kisses pushed deeper, his hands unlaced her bra exposing new wonders to explore.

He trailed hungry kisses down her neckline, stopping to sample the ridge of her breastbone which triggered her to respond with a low moan. Darien smiled in response to her aural approval.

His mouth found the slope of her breast and he swirled his tongue around her nipple. Marissa wriggled underneath him, nails dug into his back as he cupped his mouth around her breast and drew the sweet flesh in.

"Oh...Darien."

The sound of his name spoken in the fever of the moment thrust him into a plane of ecstasy.

Her voice was magic.

Her body enthralling.

His need insatiable.

As he suckled her breast, he swept his hand along her thigh, pushing her skirt upward, caressing the silk of her panties along her hip. She dug her fingers deeper and pushed against his hand, willing him to move closer to her sweet spot. He teased her thighs, kneading the pliable flesh between his fingertips while he trailed a line of soft kisses down the slope of her stomach.

He slipped both hands onto her thighs and gently parted her legs. Reluctantly, he parted his lips from her flesh and moved down to position himself to explore the center of her heat. The purple daisy design on her white silk panties made him grin. He glided them down the length of her muscular legs, exposing a soft tuft of dark hair. A mystic haven calling him to explore the intimate recesses.

Marissa wriggled and her hands found the nape of his neck as he bent forward. He spread the tender lips of her clit and slid two fingers inside. She rose to meet his thrust. The air crackled and a jolt of sapphire electricity wrapped around them, causing the hair on the back of his neck to stand up and the strain of his pants to be unbearable.

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He wanted to take her right then.

The pulse of his thrust quickened. She ground her hips against the weight of his hand. The room took on a urethral blue haze. His lips delved into her sweet juice.

Darien's tongue roamed her clit in perfect rhythm to the tease of his fingers. A lightening rush ebbed from her body in an uncontrolled frenzy, dancing around them, intensifying the primitive passion as she exploded into orgasm against the urgent strokes.

The release came from deep within, seemingly springing open a well of repressed emotions. The room spun as she caught her breath. Statues collided in a kaleidoscopic whirl.

"I want to feel you inside me." Her need was overwhelming.

Darien's breath hissed out, intensifying the heat of her clit. "You will."

She grabbed fistfuls of his hair and coaxed him upward. He teased her flesh along the way, stealing searing kisses across her breasts, biting softly across her nipples, trapping the air in her lungs.

The ridge of his erection pressed through the fabric of his dress pants, begging for release. She unbuttoned the waistband, slid the zipper down, and pushed his fabric constraints away. As his mouth found her own, her hand wrapped along the length of his shaft. She smiled under the heat of their kiss, admiring the fullness and size of his cock. Her body ached to feel it inside her as she tasted traces of her wet juice on his lips.

Darien groaned as she stroked his shaft, rubbing her thumb along the rim of the tip. They drowned in the moment, until they thrashed against each other with primal need. She guided him to her and he plunged inside. Her hips met his thrusts and the motion proved to be her undoing. She felt the energy resurface, blue lightening sparked around them, but this time she channeled every ounce of focus she could manage to dance around their mating rush.

Wild without abandon, she matched his thrust and bent her will to his.

"By the Goddess, Marissa..." Darien moaned, quivering against her as he exploded deep inside her. She clenched her muscles and followed. The electrical fury of the lightening drew every ounce of pleasure, leaving their bodies to shudder with unfettered bliss, lifting them up to heights unknown.

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In that moment, a new world revealed itself to her.

Deep within her soul, she recaptured her missing spirit.

In Darien's arms, Marissa rediscovered the miracles of love.

Exhausted, sated, they collapsed into each other. She drank in the mix of gingerroot from his cologne and the sugary, lingering scent of their union.

Wrapped together, they watched the sun descend, nuzzling and sharing tender kisses. When it finally drew to darkness and the first of stars appeared, Darien propped up on his elbow and gazed down at her. She smiled up at him and a devilish notion popped into her brain. "Does this mean I get an A?"

He responded with a deep, hearty laugh.

"So is that a yes?"

His eyes twinkled as if reflecting the stars of the night. "I think we need arrange a few more study sessions first. There's so much more ground I'd love to go over with you."

"I think that's a great plan. I'm in need of more tutoring."

"Oh really?" He mounted atop her and she felt his need against the heat of her thigh.

Marissa slipped her legs around the back of his thighs. A smile tugged the corners of her lips. She may have failed the first Relationship Spells exam, but she could pretty well guarantee her future outlook and her skills were improving by the minute.

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Twilight Shadows & Just Desserts is Katrina's first published work. She is currently working on a paranormal/vampire/romance at the present.

Please look for more works from this up and coming new writer. Email this wonderful author for more information or visit her site.

Thursdae

Twilight Shadows & Just Desserts

by

Katrina Marlowe

Paralyzed at the sight of the black revolver pointed directly at her chest, Ella swallowed hard and looked into the cold gray eyes of the man behind the weapon. This was the beginning of a new life and now she was going to die, gunned down in the middle of Sinful Sundae's Ice Cream Shoppe. The double scoop cone she had been making fell from her hand with a wet plop as she struggled to find her breath.

"Let's make this quick and painless. Put the money in a bag, now." His voice cold and exact, his whole demeanor spoke of one who knew he had total control. The dangerous glint in his eyes told her that he was dead serious.

Her feet felt leaden as she walked the four short steps to the register. Once there, her mind went blank. She had no idea how to open the drawer. Nervously chewing her lip, she tried to concentrate on her task and not the gunman watching impatiently.

"It would really fuck up my night to have to kill anyone, but I will. Now open the goddamn register!"

Heart pounding in fear, she began pushing buttons. Piercing high-pitched beeps reverberated throughout the shop every time she pressed a key, but it refused to open. Her blood ran cold at the sharp click of him cocking the gun. His voice, though quiet, sent chills down her spine.

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"I am not going to warn you again."

She took a deep breath. She wasn't going to panic...yet.

"I can't get it open."

"Can't get it open? If this is some sort of game..." His fingers tightened on the trigger. Time to panic.

"NO...No, it's not a game, I swear. I've only worked here four hours. I should have paid more attention, I know. But with everything..."

"Oh, for fuck's sake! I'll do it myself." He interrupted.

His face dark, he stalked around the counter towards the register. Every angry stride brought him, and his gun, closer to her. She backed towards the wall behind her, hoping he would get what he was after and leave quickly. Mid-step, his boot landed on the forgotten cone sending it hurdling across the tile floor, and him toppling back towards the back counter.

A sickening crack echoed loudly in the silence as his head connected with the edge of the drink dispenser behind him. His face contorted in pain while blood gushed from the back of his head. Landing on the floor with a hard smack, his head bounced off the tile, spraying blood in all directions. His gun flew from his hand, discharging into the counter next to her.

Ella didn't move as her mind tried to absorb the scene in front of her. She had never seen so much blood before. His dark disheveled hair was quickly drenched; it soaked his blue t-shirt, trailing down the tile floor and pooling at the base of the cooler. Fear twisted in her stomach, this did not look good.

At his low groan, she snapped to attention. She needed towels to help stop the bleeding. Frantically searching drawer after drawer, she cursed her inattention earlier when given the grand tour of the shop. Finally finding them, she grabbed a handful and ran back to the wounded man. She fell to her knees, pressing one to the gash in his head only to have it immediately soaked with blood. She needed to get an ambulance here right away before he bled to death. He wasn't moaning anymore which scared her.

"Sir...sir... you with me!" Tapping her free hand on his cheek, she tried to rouse him.

"Dear God, please answer me! Wake up and talk to me" She slapped him harder, but still nothing.

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“Jimmy! Jimmy!”

She screamed as loud as she could, hoping her co-worker was around to hear her. Relief washed over her when the back door flew open and Jimmy hurried to her. His boyish face paled at the sight of all the blood. Though he was a shifter and could be very dangerous, he was still only eighteen yrs old. She was thirty and it took everything in her not to throw-up at the gruesome scene.

“Jimmy, I need you to call an ambulance. Now, please!” Finally, breaking through his shock, he did as she asked.

“The operator wants to know if he’s unconscious.” His usual soft Texas drawl was thick and unsteady. She couldn’t blame him; she wasn’t feeling too steady herself.

“No, he’s not. He’s not even breathing.” She choked back a sob, determined to hold it together. If not for Jimmy, then at least for the man dying in her lap. In a twisted way, she was the one responsible for the accident. She fully realized that he was a bad guy; hell, he had a gun trained on her. But the money in the register was in no way worth his life.

Her blood-covered hands shook with fatigue from trying to keep pressure on his wound. Fat lot of good it seemed to be doing too. He continued to lose massive amounts of blood. Alarmed at how pale he had become in such a short amount of time, she whispered a prayer that they would come quickly. Minutes later, as the paramedics ran into the shop, she knew that it was too late.

* * *

“Holy shit, Ella!” Jimmy’s face flushed in embarrassment, and then giving a teasing grin, he continued. “Excuse the language...but holy shit, Ella! You did awesome! I mean, I know I could have taken him, but you, I had no clue...” At his surprised laugh, Ella couldn’t stop the small smile on her lips. He acted like the ten year old who just discovered that his Mom could beat him at Mortal Combat.

It wasn’t real to him that a man had died here tonight. The police and coroner had left just minutes before. After taking her statement, the officer had congratulated her on stopping the criminal. No one seemed to understand that she didn’t intentionally do anything. Exhaustion and fright combined into a series of missteps that killed a man. A cold chill ran down her spine. Pulling her sweater tighter

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around her, she decided the best thing right now was a hot bath and a glass—or bottle—of wine.

“I’m going home, Jimmy. Can you tell Elektra that I’m going to take tomorrow off? I know she’ll understand.” Grabbing her purse from behind the counter, she headed to the front door. Jimmy’s hand stopped her before she could open it. All signs of teasing and laughter had disappeared from his deep blue eyes.

“Are you okay, Ella? You’re too pale. Let me drive you home.”

“No, no, I’m fine Jimmy. Really...Seriously!” His look told her he didn’t buy a word of it. With a small sigh, she looked up into his concerned face.

“Fine, I’m not great, but I’m not a child either. I can make my own way home. It’s not even three miles away. I’ll be there before you can even get your keys from the office. Call. Check up on me tomorrow. I am fine.” With an encouraging smile, she was out the door before he could respond.

* * * *

Her chest began to burn with the need to take a breath. She briefly wondered how hard it would be to just open her mouth and let the water fill her lungs. *Yea. I think that’s enough wine for you.* Water sloshed over the edges of the tub as she came up sputtering. Taking a deep breath, she settled her head back to relax. The lavender scented steam rose, easing her tight muscles. Looking to the empty bottle of wine on the floor beside her, she hoped that one bottle would be enough to help her sleep tonight. More than anything, she just wanted to close her eyes and lose herself in pleasant dreams. Preferably, something involving Brad Pitt or Colin Farrell, or both, after a day like today, she damn well deserved it.

Her eyes were finally beginning to feel heavy when a flash of movement whipped past the bathroom door. Jerking up out of the water, she waited, watching. There it was again! Grabbing a towel from the rack beside her, she quickly wrapped it around her stepping out of the tub. Her eyes never strayed from the doorway. Heart pounding, she walked cautiously from the bathroom to her bedroom. Seeing nothing, she began to chalk it up to exhaustion and wine when a faint smoky haze began to appear in front of her closet not three feet away.

Swirling and twisting, the mist grew and thickened. She watched for a moment lost in its spellbinding dance. Then she saw them.

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Gasping in horror, she scrambled across the bed to the other side of the room. Eyes—more importantly, the robber’s eyes—appeared from the midst of the haze, followed quickly by the distinct shape of a man’s body. The mist faded as details became clearer; from the dark stubble obscuring the sharp angles of his jaw, to the creases in his snug blue jeans. Though it felt like forever, it was only seconds before she was staring into the face of the man she had killed. And he did not look happy.

Oh, shit!

His lips twisted into a cynical smile.

“Oh shit, indeed”

Her heart dropped to her feet as his deep voice echoed in the confines of the small room. *He can hear me?*

A mocking laugh burst from his lips.

“MmHm. Funny thing that, since you killed me, I have been able to hear every thought in your pretty little head. Nice one about Brad and Colin, by the way. You don’t look like the handcuff and whip cream type, but then... I guess you just never know.”

Torn between, horror, embarrassment and anger, Ella wasn’t sure which emotion to address first. Ghosts were a norm around Spellfire; the horror was finding one in her bedroom. Embarrassment, okay... while it was mortifying to have someone get a glimpse of your inner fantasies, she’d get over it. Anger won. Pulling herself straighter, she tightened the towel around her still dripping body.

“I killed you? You came into my work...on my first day mind you... gun drawn like some damn thug, and have the balls to get angry at me!”

Stomping her foot to emphasize her point, she forgot about the tenuous hold the thin cotton towel had on her body. A cold draft and the leering look he gave her made her painfully aware of the consequences of that oversight. She grabbed it from the floor, wrapping it around her once again. Keeping one hand clasped tightly to it, she lifted her chin, forcing herself to look him in the eye. Other than the fact that her face was now a vivid scarlet, there was no way in hell she was going to let him know it bothered her. Unfortunately, she was now blatantly aware that she was standing half-naked in her bedroom with a man. Dead man for sure, but he didn’t look dead. His tall, powerful body filled the meager space of her room.

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“Wh...what...” Irritated at the sudden huskiness of her voice, she cleared her throat. “I want to know what the hell you’re doing in my house. Isn’t there some code or law saying you can’t just enter someone’s house in Spellfire? I mean, are spirits just popping in and out of people’s homes like...like...” *Ah hell.* “What the fuck are you doing in my house?” She gritted her teeth at his mocking laugh.

With slow, measured steps, he began walking around the edge of the bed. “What am I doing here? Honey, you brought me here.” His menacing tone sent chills down her spine.

“You couldn’t just give me the money like a good little girl, could you?” His eyes flashed with barely repressed anger. She opened her mouth to defend herself, but thought better of it for the moment. He didn’t look like he gave a damn what she had to say right now. He rounded the corner of the bed and stopped, turning to face her. His considerable presence was threatening enough, never mind the waves of anger that radiated from him. Her back was pressed against the wall so hard she was sure she would come out the other side if he took one more step towards her. *Ghosts can’t kill you. Ghosts can’t kill you.*

One corner of his mouth twisted upward.

“I’m not going to touch you. I don’t even want to be here. But that’s the problem isn’t it? I can’t seem to get the fuck away from you. From the moment you walked out of the shop, I have been like a goddamn shadow. One second I’m still trying to adjust to the fact that they just carried my corpse out in a body bag, the next I being pulled through the air behind your car! I can’t get more than twenty feet away from you. While watching you take a bath was enjoyable, it’s not exactly the way I had thought to spend eternity. This is not normal, so what the fuck did you do to me!”

Behind the fury of his words, she thought she detected a note of anxiety. He was scared. Who wouldn’t be? It wasn’t every day that you die. Guilt edged its way back up, pushing the anger and fear aside. He was right. This wasn’t normal. All the ghosts in Spellfire roamed where they wanted, just look at Horrible Henry. He ran all over town playing his jokes and generally being a nuisance. She had taken this man’s life; she would do what she could to help him through this...if he would let her. Her heart skipped a beat when she looked into his hard face; it wasn’t going to be an easy task that was

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for sure. It would require a truce between them. Taking a deep breath, she tried to keep her voice calm, void of the emotions that were raging through her.

“Listen, I don’t know what is going on either, but I promise to help figure it out.” Looking down at her towel clad figure she glanced hopefully up at him. “But would you mind terribly if I got dressed first?”

“No, not at all. I’ll wait.” She waited, but he stood right there, arms crossed over his chest, daring her to say something. Raising her eyebrows, she cleared her throat.

“Um, could you...you know...leave the room for a minute?” Waving her free hand towards the living room, she sincerely hoped he really didn’t plan on staying to watch her dress.

“Babe, I’ve already seen all your naughty bits. Right down to the little mole on the top of your left ass cheek. I’m thinking that you owe me about now, don’t you?”

While every modest cell in her body screamed out in protest, looking into his handsome yet severe face, she could see that he wasn’t going to budge. The best she could do was act as if it didn’t bother her. Act like getting dressed in front of a perfect stranger—a dead stranger at that—was totally normal. *Yeah right!*

Taking a step towards her dresser, she realized she would have to pass him to get her clothes. Unless he chose to move, that would mean squeezing between him and her bed, definitely closer than she felt comfortable being to anyone while naked unless they had at least bought her dinner first. Gathering her courage, she walked towards him, praying he would step aside for her. He didn’t.

The air around him was decidedly colder than the rest of the room. Chill bumps covered her body and her nipples rose to hard little peaks, easily visible through the thin towel around her. Trying to ignore her embarrassment, she continued, now sure he wasn’t going to move an inch to let her through. Turning sideways, she edged closer to the bed, squeezing between him and the soft mattress. A light musky, masculine scent tickled her nose sending warmth spiraling through her.

Keeping her eyes averted, she hoped he couldn’t feel her emotions as well as read her mind. Grabbing jeans and a t-shirt, she dropped her towel. Getting dressed in record time, she ignored the

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heat of his stare and the wetness that shamefully coated her thighs. Something was seriously wrong with her to get turned on at the thought of him watching her dress. Her mind fought the attraction. He was a dead criminal with a bad attitude, not exactly the perfect mate. But her body's only thought was sexy, dark, dangerous, and perfect to end the sexual dry spell she's endured since Mom got sick. Taking a calming breath, she finished buttoning her jeans and turned back towards the spirit.

"I need a drink, can we continue this in the living room?" Her buzz from the wine was long gone. At this point, tequila shots were looking pretty damn good. Too bad she couldn't stand the stuff.

With an abrupt nod, he led the way to the other room. Settling himself on the couch, he promptly kicked his feet up on the coffee table. Though he appeared relaxed, it only took one look into his eyes to see that he was anything but. Her offer met with silence; she grabbed her glass then sat on the chair across from him. Sipping her wine, she was painfully aware of his scrutiny. When he didn't speak, she forced herself to start.

"Considering the circumstances, we should at least know each others name. I'm Ella. Ella Welles." With an expectant look on her face, she waited. A glare was her only answer from across the room. She frowned in annoyance.

"Oh for goodness sakes, would it hurt you to tell me your name? I get it... you're a bad ass. You blame me for the fact that you're now in the spirit world...to which I will remind you that you were the one aiming the gun at *me*. But it looks to me like we might be stuck with each other until we can figure out what is going on. I'd like to be able to call you something."

For a moment, he studied her intently. She had no idea what he hoped to find, but after several long uncomfortable minutes he nodded coming to a decision.

"My name is Jace Sawyer." Beneath his devil may care attitude, she could still feel his restlessness, but he seemed calmer than before.

"Thank you, Jace." When the room fell silent once again, she found herself studying him through lowered lashes. His dark, roguish good looks and powerful body wasn't something any red-blooded woman could ignore. He certainly didn't look like a ghost, not even

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up close. Leave it to her to kill the most attractive man she had seen in ages.

She wondered what made him into the man he was today. Though intimidating, there was still something about him that intrigued her. She was going to have to keep her wits about her with him around.

Ella had no clue what was going on, but was determined to get to the bottom of it as soon as possible and let him go on his way. He was a complication she didn't need in her life right now. First step was to make sure he realized she didn't intentionally hurt him; she didn't need him killing her in her sleep.

"Jace, I just wanted to apologize for my part in your death." He shrugged dismissively.

"You're not at fault. Am I pissed that I died because of a fucking ice cream cone? Yes. Absolutely. But you can't be blamed. At this moment, I just want to get the hell out of here." She nodded closing her eyes, breathing a sigh of relief. When he spoke again, there was a different tone in his voice. Her eyes flew open again at his suggestive words.

"And while I might do many things to you while you sleep. I can promise you that murder would not be one of them. I can also guarantee you that you wouldn't stay asleep long" His words were enough to send every blood cell in her body directly to her pussy. Clinching her thighs together, she fought back a low moan. This was getting ridiculous. Clearing her throat, she chose to pretend it didn't bother her.

"So, what are we to do?" She regretted her words as soon as they came out. His somber attitude returned as if it had never left.

"You tell me. Apparently, I'm just along for the ride."

"Trust me, if I had a clue, you would be the first to know. Ghosts in Spellfire aren't bound to anything. They are free to come and go as they please as long as they obey the town laws. There are some that push the limits, but even they aren't bound. So, I can't imagine what it is that makes you so different. Of course, you did die while committing a felony. I would think if anything that would be the reason."

"Fuck!" With that curse, Ella gasped as a chilling gust of wind took her breath. Jace evaporated from the sofa, only to materialize

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once again in front of the window. The sense of frustration and sadness that hit Ella surprised her. But what surprised her even more was the way her heart hurt at his pain. This was a man who she had every right to fear, but she found herself drawn to him despite everything.

“We can find someone to help us tomorrow. I’ll talk to Jimmy. I’m sure he’ll know someone who can tell us what is happening.”

“Not good enough!” All the papers on the desk beside him flew to the floor as he jerked around, the strange wind sent them fluttering across the room to her feet. “I need to be gone tonight. Call him now.”

“Fine, I’ll call now. But in the meantime, can you reign in your energy a bit? Wrecking my house isn’t going to help us any.”

He looked like he would say something else, yet with an abrupt nod of his head, he turned back towards the darkness outside.

* * * *

“I think that she can help, Ella. She has an uncanny sense about these things.” Still eyeing Jace suspiciously, Jimmy fidgeted with his coffee cup. After Ella called, he had come right over. An hour later, they all sat around her table drinking coffee, even Jace. After he broke the first two coffee cups trying to pick them up, Ella gave up and resorted to disposable cups. A washer full of towels and several curses later, he now sat in silence drinking while Jimmy contemplated their situation.

Ella thought on his words so far. She had met Mrs. Wheeler just once at the grocery store. She looked like your typical grandma with her long silver hair pulled into a bun. But even when she seemed to be talking nonsense, her bright blue eyes never missed a thing. She impressed Ella with her keen wit and sense of humor. She hoped he was right and she could help them. It was disconcerting to have a ghost constantly on her heels. Even going to the bathroom had been a challenge.

“Well, it’s four o’clock in the morning. I would hate to wake her now. It looks like we don’t have a choice but...” The impatient look on Jace’s face stopped her. She wanted to know why this was so important to him. Despite the way they met, she felt that deep down, he wasn’t the hardened criminal she had first thought.

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“Jimmy, can you try to get a hold of her for me? Tell her that I apologize, but that we could really use her help. You can use the phone in my bedroom.”

“Why Ella, if you wanted to get me into your room alone, all you had to do was ask.” Rolling her eyes at his hopeful face, she silently pointed to her room again. With a feigned look of disappointment, he headed off to wake an eighty-year-old woman from her restful slumber.

“Spill it. What is so important that it can’t wait four hours?” Getting up from the table, she grabbed the pot, refilling everyone cups. Taking a sip of the hot coffee, he set the cup back down before answering. The rich timbre of his voice echoed in the silence of the small room.

“I have a commitment. Plain and simple.”

“And you don’t think you have a good excuse to break that commitment? You’re dead!”

“I am well aware of my present state, thank you. But this isn’t a doctor’s appointment or a cousin’s wedding I’m talking about, this is one that I can’t miss...period. I’ll ask that you leave it be.” At his intent look, Ella conceded. It wasn’t worth the energy it would take to drag the information out of him. At this point, she was just as anxious to get away from him.

“Nice room, Ella. That’s a big bed though, don’t you ever get lonely?” Jimmy stepped out of the bedroom with a teasing smile. Only Ella saw the dark look that came over Jace’s face at the remark.

“Dream on Jimmy. Now what did she say?”

Clutching his chest in mock pain, he made his way back to his seat at the table. “Fine...fine...turns out, Mrs. Wheeler is a night owl. She said to go on over and she’ll see what she can do.”

“Awesome, thanks Jimmy. Well Jace, you ready to go for a ride...inside the car this time?” With a scowl, he rose from the table and silently headed for the door.

“No sense of humor I guess.” Closing the door behind them, Ella fervently hoped that she would be coming back alone.

* * * *

Being in Mrs. Wheeler’s kitchen was like being at the kindly neighbors’ house. A plate of homemade chocolate chip cookies sat in front of them along with another pot of steaming coffee. In her bright

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pink housecoat, she sat across from Ella, a thoughtful look on her face. Ella fell silent, she had told her everything she knew so far—which wasn't much unfortunately—she could only hope that Mrs. Wheeler was as good as Jimmy seemed to think. It was said that she knew a bit about everything paranormal. She had lived here her whole life and though she claimed not to have any powers, her intuitiveness about things made that difficult for folks to believe. Powers or not, she was a treasure trove of information from what Jimmy said.

Jace had been quiet since they arrived, only speaking to politely decline Mrs. Wheeler's offer of breakfast. She got the feeling that he doubted her ability to help them, it spoke well that he was willing to give her the chance before voicing his skepticism. Feeling the weight of his stare, she turned her head to look at him. His gaze quickly shifted back to the old woman, but not before Ella saw the speculative look in his eyes. Mrs. Wheeler's gentle voice broke through her thoughts. Turning back to her, she struggled to pay attention to her words.

"It is very strange. Spellfire is a unique town in that ghosts are just like every other citizen. Free to come and go as they please, within the laws of course. Your not a witch, deary, are you?" A small laugh escaped Ella.

"No ma'am. I am as ordinary as they come."

"Well, I wouldn't say that, sweetie. You do have a handsome—if ill-behaved—spirit attached to you. I would hardly call that ordinary." Looking from her to Jace, the woman quietly studied them. Ella shifted under the close scrutiny, Jace stared right back at Mrs. Wheeler his chiseled face impassive.

A few moments later, she clapped her hands together and stood. "Well, we will figure this out, no worries. Now, while I clean up our snack, why don't you tell me a bit about yourselves, huh? Maybe we can find a clue in there somewhere."

Busying herself about the kitchen, Mrs. Wheeler listened thoughtfully as Ella briefly talked about herself, skimming over the details; she included her mother's losing battle with cancer and her move to Spellfire.

"I am very sorry to hear about you mother. It must have been very difficult for you... watching her die like that." She sat back down, sorrow evident on her lined face.

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Ella fought back the tears that instantly came to her eyes. Emotionally and physically exhausted, the tight rein she kept on her emotions began to crumble. Bowing her head, she feigned interest in her coffee until she had it under control. Clearing her throat, she took a sip before answering.

"It was. She'd had enough of the tests and medicines by that point and refused to do it anymore. I had no choice but to support her decision."

"But you weren't happy with it were you?"

"Of course not! She was my mother, the last person I had in the world. But it would have been selfish to keep her here for me when she was so miserable. She is at peace now, finally. That is what she wanted."

Mrs. Wheeler nodded then leaned over, kissed Ella's cheek. Her eyes spoke volumes in how sorry she was for upsetting her. Sitting back in her seat, Mrs. Wheeler thankfully turned her attention to Jace.

"And you, young man, what is your story...hmm?" Her eyes narrowed thoughtfully. "You're a very handsome boy. Seem well spoken, not such a bad egg in my opinion, why so much trouble for an ice cream shop?" His face darkened

"It matters? I'm here, I'm dead and I'm sure as hell not resting in peace. I have yet to see the point in all this talk. We came here for a solution, not cookies or psychological advice." His growing impatience made his voice harsh.

"Don't be dense, boy! If you want my help, then humor me." Surprised, Ella watched as her scolding look had Jace shifting uncomfortably in his seat. "Now I think that either you or Ella created this invisible chain between you. The mind is an amazing thing. You can possibly be bound to her for eternity unless we discover the reasoning behind it. You can either help me help you or you can be prepared to spend a lot of time with this girl. Ultimately the choice is yours"

Muttering under his breath, Jace knew he had no choice but to tell them. Ella could almost see his brain working, deciding how much of his story to share.

"I wasn't alone at the ice cream shop tonight." He ignored Ella's incredulous look and continued. "My partner and I were on our way to Galveston when our funds ran out. It was imperative that we get

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there, so I did what I had to do, while Mick waited in the car. Only things didn't quite work out the way we planned."

"No, I don't suppose it did. And this friend, is he the reason you are so anxious to be free?"

"If I don't find him soon, I'm afraid he might do something he will regret."

"And that would be?"

"Kill the person he believes is responsible for my death. It is what I would do in his place." His blunt statement had Ella bounding to her feet.

"Whoa...whoa, wait just a damn second. Jace you mean to say that he will be coming after me?" Her voice squeaked in alarm. He didn't have to answer his look spoke for him. A cold numbness spread through her at the thought of someone out there intent on her death.

"Now sit down, child." With a firm hand, Mrs. Wheeler eased her back into her seat.

"All will be well, maybe not in the way you think, but it will be well all the same." Turning back to Jace, she continued.

"You have caused a fine mess, son. But I am a firm believer that nothing happens without a purpose. I can see a connection between you two. You feel it as well even if you won't acknowledge it yet. For now, you go home and see how it plays out. You will do what's right when the time comes, I am sure."

"But what do we do about freeing him? Surely there is something that can be done."

"You are the key to that particular lock, Ella. It is you holding him here."

"Me? The last thing I want is a ghost shadowing my every step! What have I done?"

"You killed him, Ella. You already carry great guilt from your Mother's passing. You believe you allowed her to die a horrible death, whether you see it or not, you are associating Jace's death with hers. You've bound him to you with guilt. It's a very powerful emotion, you know. You are the only one who can free him. The question is, are you capable of coming to terms with both your mom's and Jace's death. Can you free yourself of the culpability that binds him to you?"

* * * *

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Three days after the robbery, Ella began to wonder if it was ever going to end. Sleepless nights and long days were quickly wearing her down. Jace had grown increasingly grumpy as the days passed and he remained by her side. She would have taken offense at it if she weren't so anxious for freedom herself. Every moment spent in his presence confused her that much more. She reminded herself repeatedly that he was a bad guy; she couldn't wait to be free once and for all from him. But there remained a persistent inner voice declaring her a liar.

At odd moments she would catch Jace looking at her, only to have him turn away at her questioning look. It was those moments especially that she could feel the pull between them, a chemistry that they continued to try to ignore in their quest for answers. Ella had hoped that her attraction to him had been a momentary relapse in judgment and would go away once she got to know him better. But it only seemed to grow stronger with every conversation. Even when he was in his blackest moods, she couldn't help the desire that welled up at his slightest touch.

Unfortunately, the black moods were becoming more frequent everyday. Ella felt she had made peace with her role in his death, he no longer blamed her—at least not aloud—she couldn't understand why he wasn't free to leave. If it was her guilt causing it, it sure as hell should have been resolved by now.

Yet, even now, as she soaked in the bath, Jace was pacing in her room, unable to even go to the living room to watch TV. Idly running the lavender soap filled bath sponge over her breasts; she tried to clear her mind of everything but the pleasant ticklish sensation of the water rivulets as they slide down her body into the steaming water around her. If only for thirty seconds, she wanted to completely relax and forget that she had a ghost shadowing her every step. A loud knock sounded at the door and she groaned.

“What Jace?”

“How much longer are you going to be? I swear to God, I have never had to spend so much damn time in a woman's bedroom without getting laid in my life.”

“I just got in.”

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“Just...my ass. How long does it take to get a bath? You have two minutes then I’m coming in, it will be a hell of a lot more entertaining then your stuffed bear collection.”

Ella was tempted to call his bluff. He wasn’t the only one suffering from the effects of the sexual tension around them. Rationality won and she quickly got out and dressed, finishing mere seconds before the door swung open. She stifled a laugh at his disappointed look and headed to the kitchen

The ringing of the phone interrupted their simple meal of Ramen noodles and salad. Jimmy had passed a description of Mick to his pack mates and he had been sighted earlier in the woods half a mile from the house. Knowing he was so close sent terror surging through her body, momentarily stealing her breath. She looked to Jace to see his reaction. Worry shone on his handsome face. Whether for her or his friend, she couldn’t say. But considering her role in his death, she really didn’t think she wanted to know.

“Okay, what now?”

“Didn’t Jimmy say that he had some friends watching the house?”

Ella nodded, glancing out the window at the sound of a vehicle coming down the road.

“He was also on his way here himself until they could locate him again.” Jace rose from his chair and went to the window. His image was noticeably fainter then normal as he silently watched the world outside the glass pane.

“Not much else to do then.” Turning towards her, his unreadable face told her nothing of his inner thoughts.

“We wait.” As she watched, his features became less distinct by the second, fading until he was but a shadow.

“Jace, what’s going on?” There was no answer even when the dark mist he had become disappeared, leaving no trace that he had been there. While she had wished enough for time alone, his timing really sucked.

“Jace?” She felt like her heart would pound out of her chest when he still didn’t answer. Her fear only served to make her angrier. Stepping to the middle of the room, she turned slowly, studying every corner of the room.

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“Alright Jace, dammit! Where the fuck are you?” Cringing at the panicked sound of her voice, Ella took deep breaths in an attempt to get control of herself.

“I’m here, Ella.” His voice resonated through her head rather than the room.

“What’s going on, Jace?”

“I’m tired, Ella. It takes quite a bit of energy to manifest my body, not to mention to be able to do normal things such as eat or drink. I’m still here, I am merely resting.” A whisper soft touch brushed over her cheek. “You need to rest as well. We don’t know what will happen, you need to keep up your strength. I will be here keeping an eye on things. You sleep.”

The suggestion was tempting. Her eyes were heavy and her muscles achy from fatigue. But she would never be able to sleep right now, not with so much going on. With a shake of her head, she went into the kitchen to make coffee. Damn him for scaring her like that. Damn him for coming into the ice cream shop that night. Double damn him for the unsettling emotions she had dealt with the past few days. Falling for a dead felon hadn’t been on her to-do list for life.

Sitting on the sofa with her cup, Ella prepared herself for a long night. A deep foreboding had settled itself deep in the pit of her stomach. This wasn’t going to end well.

A gentle caress on the back of her neck sent shivers down her spine. She wasn’t sure what it was until she felt the touch reach around to the front of her neck. Like butterfly wings, it tickled and felt incredibly erotic at the same time. Heat spread through her body, pooling at her core. Pressing her thighs together, she tried to ignore the surge of wetness brought on by desire.

“Jace?”

“Shhh...Just relax.” He chose that moment to brush against her left breast. Hardening the nipple to a tight peak, Jace gently flicked it as if he were using his tongue. In that moment, she made the decision to give in to her emotions. It might have been the rush of hormones brought on by lust or the feeling that Mick would succeed in his plans to kill her. It didn’t matter. All she cared about at that second was the unbelievable pleasure Jace’s touch brought.

Suddenly, it felt like four sets of hands caressed her body at once. Massaging her head and neck, kneading and pinching her breasts and

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nipples, sliding down her stomach, gently teasing her sex as if the clothes she wore no longer existed. Everywhere there were almost unbearable sensations calculated to drive her insane with desire.

Fingers poised at the edge of her pussy for a heart stopping moment before slipping lightly between her folds brushing against her hard, aching clit. Pulses of erotic pleasure surged through her. Again and again, they flicked against the hard nub until she was poised right on the brink of orgasm, only to have them stop. Over and over, they did their dance until she was screaming in ecstasy and frustration. Unsure of where one sensation started and the other ended.

So lost in her passion, Ella's mind never registered the danger until Jace's caresses stopped. Disoriented, she lay still for a brief instant and concentrated on clearing her lust-laden mind. Icy fear twisted around her heart as Jace's voice broke the silence.

"Hello Mick." He materialized again in front of her; only his attention was focused on someone behind her. Ella jerked to her feet and spun around coming face to face with the man intent on killing her. In a sense of *déjà vu*, she looked at the black revolver pointed directly at her chest. The man behind it was in his late forties at least. His graying hair was long, pulled back in a ponytail. With cold black eyes, he looked her up and down.

"Well, well, well. Been waiting for this moment since I saw you kill Jace. He was like a son to me and you took him away. It's only fitting that you suffer the same fate, don't you, girl?"

Shaking her head in denial, she took slow steps back towards Jace.

"Um...Jace?"

"Mick, look at me!" Jace stepped in front of her. Back in solid form, he blocked her view of Mick. "I'm right here...there's no need to do this. Are you hearing me?"

Eyes, wild with madness, looked at Jace.

"Jace, you can rest in peace now. I aim to kill the bitch that murdered you. I'm gonna make her pay." Dismissing Jace, Mick stepped to the right leveling the gun on her again. Terror held her in its icy grip as she watched his finger tighten on the trigger.

"No!" Chaos erupted at the deafening blast of the weapon. Time had no meaning in those final seconds of Ella's life. Like a movie playing in slow motion, she watched Jace throw himself into the path

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of the bullet. A spray of blood blurred her vision a split second before the pain hit. Looking down, Ella gasped at the large red stain blossoming on her chest. Knees buckling, she fell to the floor.

With every breath, excruciating pain tore through her chest. There was no doubt in her mind that she wasn't going to make it through; paralyzing cold was spreading through her numbing everything but the burning pain of the bullet wound. Terrified, the reality of the situation hit, her thoughts became a jumble of regrets, dreams and fears. It wasn't until Jace, his expressive face filled with concern, appeared above her that she began to feel a stirring of peace at what was to come.

"Ella, honey. Stay with me. Jimmy is..." His lips still moved, but she no longer heard his words. Darkness began to steal her vision; the only sound left was the slow, unsteady beat of her heart. Her last thought was a prayer of thanks that life would continue in Spellfire, Texas, even after death.

* * * *

Ella handed Mr. Frasier his cone then turned to the man sitting at the counter. With a smile, she noticed his gaze was on the deep cut of her top. Peeking over the counter top, she saw the telltale bulge in his jeans. Just the thought of his cock, hard, thick and ready, was enough to get her juices flowing.

Leaning provocatively over the counter, she softly whispered in his ear before giving him a wink and walking away. The tortured look on Jace's face was almost enough to make her feel sorry for him, but knowing the pleasure that waited because of her teasing, she knew she would continue tempting him the rest of her shift.

Walking into the storeroom, she was grabbing the napkins from the bottom shelf when she was suddenly seized from behind. A firm hand on her back held her in place as another slowly slid up the back of her thigh, disappearing into the short skirt of her uniform. Desire instantly welled at the familiar feel of Jace's fingers playing along the edges of her panties.

"What did I tell you about teasing...hmmm?" His whispered words against her ear sent a surge of wetness that soaked through her. Pushing back against his hand, Ella bit her lip, stifling the moans that threatened to escape. Skillful fingers found their way under the elastic and pushed against her aching clit, flicking it back and forth, bringing

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her to the brink of orgasm before slipping away. Ella opened her mouth to protest, only to moan as the thick hardness of his cock quickly replaced them, rubbing slowly up and down her soaking slit through her panties. Had it only been six hours since she last felt his hardness inside her? Her knees weakened and she had to grab the shelf to steady herself as he slowly continued the sweet torture.

His low moan from behind assured her that she wasn't the only one suffering.

"Take them off, before I rip them off Ella...now!" She was tempted to let him do just that, but going the rest of her shift feeling half-naked was not an option. Quickly divesting herself of the offending attire, she bent over, groaning at the feel of his cock continuing its caresses without the barrier. Her juices soaked the tip as he brought her closer to her peak.

Thrusting deep into her pussy, she muffled her cry of ecstasy. Grasping her hips in a firm grip, he moved in and out, faster and faster until all that mattered to her was the erotic release that awaited her. Burying her face into her arm, she tried to muffle a scream. Her pussy clenched around his cock, her orgasm milking him as he continued to thrust. Jace pounded harder, his intense release sent Ella on another wave of ecstasy, her muscles continued to squeeze his cock, taking every last drop.

As she lay in the bed later that night, happiness filled her. It had been four months since her death and she'd never been more fulfilled. Mick was now in prison, Jimmy had come along seconds after he pulled the trigger. It hurt Jace to think that his friend was behind bars, but he knew it was for the best. Mick wasn't the same after Jace's death. He was far more dangerous and everyone, including Mick, was safer.

Life would continue for them in Spellfire, even in their ghost-like forms. Jace was the new night manager for Sinful Sundaes, and she continued her job as night shift waitress. Ella had always suspected that she'd go far in her quest for love; she just hadn't expected to take a trip to the afterlife to find it.

Do you dare? Ellwood...If She Could
Leigh Ellwood – Erotic Romance Author

<http://www.leighellwood.com>

Now available by Leigh Ellwood:

Truth or Dare – excerpt at www.leighellwood.com

This book includes: scenes of graphic heterosexual and homosexual (M/M, light F/F) sex, three-way sex (MMF), and anal sex (M/F)

Dare you let the truth get in the way of love? Rock and roll legend Brady Garriston is in a slump, career wise and in his love life. He is desperate for a comeback (and a “cum” back), and finds a possible solution in masquerading in small town Dareville, where he can clear the slate and start fresh. Brady finds his muse in the lovely and uninhibited school teacher Ellie Shaw, and soon the two are making more than just beautiful music together. But will Brady's deception bring on a sour note to their relationship? And what of the secret Ellie is keeping from Brady?

“The plot moves along and satisfies in the end.” - RT BookClub Magazine

“Truth or Dare is an interesting story with a cliffhanger at the end. Definitely a different read.” - Novelspot

“For readers wanting both heat and sweet, Leigh Ellwood hits all the right notes in her erotic romance, Truth or Dare.”- 4.5 Kisses from Romance Divas

“I thoroughly enjoyed Truth or Dare for its sensuality and romance!” - 4 Ribbons from Romance Junkies

“This book will definitely keep you on your toes with all of the interesting twists and turns.” - 4 Hearts from The Romance Studio

Dare Me – excerpt at www.leighellwood.com

This book includes: scenes of graphic heterosexual sex and three-way sex (MMF)

Studio musician Cal Briscoe has it bad for his best friend's girl, and when Brady Garriston announces his engagement, Cal realizes he will never have a chance with the lovely and exciting Ellie Shaw.

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Losing interest in his work and discouraged with his love life, he decides to leave the city behind...and hopefully his feelings for Ellie. He accepts Brady's offer of use of the Garriston/Shaw home in Dareville, and is shocked to discover one amenity...Ellie's friend Sue Carmichael. Seems Ellie neglected to mention that she had allowed Sue to stay there, too!

Cal and Sue are the Odd Couple of Dareville, dancing on each other's nerves as they try to make the best of the situation. But how long will it be before Sue and Cal kill each other...or wind up in bed?

5 Angels from [Fallen Angel Reviews](#): *"Dare Me by Leigh Ellwood will meet and beat your expectations of an erotic read. From one lust-filled encounter to another, Dare Me takes you into a world of erotic pleasures. From the moment the story begins until the end, you are drawn into a world of lust, sex and cravings of the body. Is this a world where maybe love can beat all odds and win out?"*

The Stars Look Down – excerpt at www.leighellwood.com

This book includes: scenes of graphic heterosexual sex

Lace up your hiking boots and let the rest fly away in the breeze. A lonely hiker makes her way to a scenic overlook and finds a more breathtaking view in the sexy stranger waiting for her. A passionate night under the stars leads to a morning surprise in this sexy, stunning short from Leigh Ellwood.

A Recommended 5-Star Read from Fallen Angel Reviews!

"An interesting and provocative read." - Author [Bridget Midway](#)
"Leigh Ellwood writing is magically delightful and foresees wonderful things in this author's future. This reviewer highly recommends this story. Get this, ASAP!" - 4.5 Hearts, Janalee of [The Romance Studio](#)

"The premise is fresh, the characters are well developed and the plot has a nice bit of twist at the end I found thoroughly enjoyable." - [Glenda Woodrum](#)

"Leigh Ellwood has written a uniquely sensual fantasy of mystical and anonymous sex." - [Erotic Romance Reviews for Women](#)

Voyeur – excerpt at www.leighellwood.com

This book includes: scenes of graphic heterosexual sex

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Marissa thought watching over the residents of the local assisted living home meant just that, but on her first day as a volunteer she see more than she bargained for when she walks in on an early-onset Alzheimer's patient and her husband! Now the memory of Erik and Barbara Baylor's tryst is indelible in Marissa's mind, more so when the image transforms into one of herself trysting with her handsome supervisor, Glen. Marissa realizes she likes to watch, and is intrigued by a proposal from Erik Baylor. Yet, she likes to "do" as well, and wonders the same of Glen.

"Voyeur is a well-written short story that will have you hoping and wishing that your fantasies will come true. Did I enjoy the sizzling sexy short story? You bet! I would be pleased to get my sweaty palms on some more of Leigh Ellwood's work. Erotica, look out - Leigh Ellwood is here to meet and beat all expectations with her new book Voyeur!" - 5 stars from Fallen Angel Reviews

">From beginning until the end this tale held my attention with tension as I wondered what was going to happen to Marissa next."

- 5 stars from May Reviews!

Fridae

Fairies & Cherries

by

Leigh Ellwood

Sorry, babe, looks like you drew the short Popsicle stick again.

Jewlie shook the echo of phlegm-choked laughter from her mind. Always, she was stuck with this route. Always, the other drivers managed to arrange it so that only she made deliveries along what had been coined the Highway to Hell. Spellfire, while hardly reeking of the stench of brimstone, gave Jewlie the creeps. There was something peculiar, something so *Munsters* about the town that she could not quite discern, though the place looked like any other hamlet on her rout. Her stomach roiled at the mere thought of going there again and again. She couldn't believe one tiny shop sold so much ice cream that she had to come so often.

Thankfully, this week's load was lighter than usual, and if Sinful Sundaes had sufficient help in collecting their order, she could be out of town and on her way to the next stop within the hour.

She sighed with defeat as the truck rumbled past the patchwork sign welcoming her to Spellfire. Most hamlets on her delivery route had similar signs, bearing badges for the Knights of Columbus, the local Moose Lodge, and the Masons. Spellfire didn't seem fit to advertise any such civic organizations, taking care instead to inform newcomers that the town headquartered the International Elizabeth Montgomery Fan Club, the Sisters of Salem Local #420, and another club whose coat of arms depicted a sabre-toothed wolf devouring a bug-eyed weasel, or something. Jewlie never bothered to slow down

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to confirm; this time, as she always did, she focused on the road, and her job.

The sooner she got to Sinful Sundaes, the sooner she could have their standing order of fifty vats of ice cream unloaded. The sooner this light on the intersection of Bates and Transylvania changed—Jewlie snorted at the eerie appropriateness of the town's street names—the closer she would get to the store, to unload the ice cream, to hand the creepy lady owner her invoice, and get out of town.

Rather, though, than see any of that happening in the next thirty seconds, Jewlie was forced to idle the truck on the white line as a menagerie of Spellfire folk paraded across the street. They looked harmless and inconspicuous enough in jeans and T-shirts, blouses and long skirts, but something about the townsfolk bothered Jewlie. It wasn't something she could see or name outright; it seemed to her every native she encountered, every smile aimed in her direction, gave off an underlining, mischievous aura. It seemed as if the entire town was in on one grand in-joke, and she was the butt. A great big, J-Lo butt.

Jewlie felt silly enough in the uniform she had to wear—the pink blouse with Peter Pan collar, the pointed cap with the jingle bell on the end which flopped about her head like a deflated, tinkling breast. She didn't need the added anxiety this town contributed to her growing paranoia.

And she definitely didn't need this bozo in the puffy Jerry Seinfeld shirt and tight black pants planted in the middle of the road, facing the idled truck with a scowl and an exaggerated pirate's stance.

"What the...?"

The light turned green. He didn't budge. Jewlie scowled and tapped the horn. Clearly, he was a deaf bozo, too.

"Move, guy," she muttered.

She squinted past the glare cast through the windshield and got a good look at the tall blond, but the next curse died in her throat as her lips parted.

He was a *gorgeous* bozo. Jewlie took in the man's shoulder-length blond hair, lined with a few braided strands, sculpted cheeks and chin, and ocean blue eyes that seemed to pierce her soul.

They were doing something else to her, too. Jewlie squirmed in her seat as a growing want warmed her pussy and soaked her panties.

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Never before had a man prompted such a lustful reaction that quickly. Made sense, considering the sweaty, toothless drivers with whom she worked were the only men she saw on a daily basis.

Jewlie rolled down the driver's side window just as he rounded the steaming front grill, his fists still pinned to his hips. Was this how Yul Brynner used to walk, so formidable and masculine? Her fingers trembled as she gripped the door, and she immediately felt silly for her fear. What could this man possibly do to her, aside from causing her clit to explode with desire? He was well on the way to doing that, yet the serious look on his face told Jewlie that the man was not out for a pleasure stroll.

Despite the rush of desire she felt, she knew she was protected in the cab of the truck. Logically, since he was out of the way, she knew she should be pushing past the green light to make her delivery. Why did she remain idle?

Maybe she wanted another look, so he could finish the job, and she could orgasm? Then she could deliver the shipment, meet the creepy lady owner, yada-yada-yada. But, please, let the orgasm come first. It had been so long since Jewlie had experienced one that hadn't involved something made in Taiwan that required AA batteries.

She coughed as an exhaust cloud wafted upward. The stench of burning fuel nauseated her, but the pirate pedestrian appeared unaffected.

"You are to cease immediate the delivery of Fairy Belle Ice Cream," he demanded.

"What?" Who was this guy? Why did all the good-looking ones have to be nuttier than the vat of butter pecan cooling in the refrigerated truck?

He arched an eyebrow, and his lips twitched. Jewlie gunned the motor in protest. As annoyed as she was with this man, she was more annoyed with herself for imagining those same lips pursed around her clit and pulling it deep into his mouth. She was going to have to spend some quality time sitting on a vat of cherry vanilla to cool down her pussy when this confrontation ended.

"This is a Fairy Belle delivery truck, is it not?" His deep voice sent a ripple down Jewlie's back that circled her waist and shot upward, prickling her nipples. Surely now, she looked even more ridiculous in her uniform.

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Jewlie straightened in her seat and steeled herself not to produce any more lustful thoughts. *Do your job*, she told herself, and put the truck into gear. She had ice cream to deliver.

When she turned back to the road, however, she found a line of Spellfire folk—Spellfirians, Spellfirates, whatever they called themselves—blocking the crosswalk and crowded on both street corners, watching the exchange. The stoplight had cycled through a second time, yet no car horns sounded in protest. Everybody was watching the show, and Jewlie was the inadvertent star. She wouldn't be leaving Spellfire anytime soon.

Shit.

"Is this not," the man repeated slowly, as if addressing a child, "a Fairy Belle truck?"

"What's it to you?" Jewlie barked. So what if he was gorgeous, and so what if all Jewlie could think about was this puffy shirt guy pressing her against the cold truck panel and pounding his cock into her aching core, he was obviously a troublemaker...and *blind*. How could anyone with eyesight not see the gigantic Fairy Belle logo on the side of the truck? How could anyone not miss the image of the waif-like brunette pixie in gold short shorts and halter top, seductively licking a triple scoop cone of red, white, and blue creams? *Fairy Belle feeds America well* read the glittery red slogan underneath the company's soft-core mascot. Jewlie thought the image demeaning, and had to question the ethics behind using such a mascot to advertise to children, yet her opinion was in the minority. If she hated the logo so much, why not quit and drive for somebody else, she had been asked time and again.

Jewlie sighed and looked balefully at her captor. Why indeed? For all her grumbling about Fairy Belle, they were a good company, the leading brand of dairy dessert products in the region. The benefits and pay were too good to pass.

"You will cease delivery of this product immediately," the puffy shirt said.

It would appear that I already have. Jewlie rolled her eyes. He was gorgeous, but his demeanor was fast overlapping his more attractive qualities. Did he represent a competing brand? Fairy Belle had more than its share of detractors—the big player on the block usually did.

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She smirked. "Are you Ben or Jerry?" She was pleased that she was able to disguise her lust with the sarcasm.

The blond stretched his lips into a smile that could have melted Sinful Sundaes' entire standing order. "I am Kor," he said. Jewlie's own core melted as well. She could feel her pussy lips swell and throb with anticipation.

"Kor." She tested the word on her tongue. It was harsh and rough, likely as rough as the large hands now steepled at Kor's broad chest. Coupled with the devilish glint in his eyes, he struck a comical, movie villain pose.

Kor. Jewlie had not heard of such a brand name for dairy desserts. Regardless of who he was, and how prominent the bulge in his pants appeared, Jewlie could not let this charade continue. "Well, *Kor*," she tested the harsh syllable that was his name, "I'm sorry, but I answer only to the Fairy Belle Corporation. Unless you have some kind of affidavit, or cease and desist order..." Or whatever it was that was needed to stop operations...Jewlie didn't know. She didn't care. She had her fun ogling the cute, crazy guy, but she had a job to do. She'd be nuttier than a prepackaged Fairy Belle Nutty Sundae Delight cone to want to hook up with anybody from here, anyway, even for a quickie.

Forget it, no point in bothering to keep talking. She reached for the gear shift, and grunted with growing exertion as she discovered it wouldn't budge. The stick protruding from the steering column felt as if it had been plunged into quick-dry cement. Jewlie pulled with all her strength, certain she would break it off.

"Come on," she cursed, hearing the stick crack.

Then the engine died on her. Jewlie cranked the key but wasn't even greeted with the requisite hum of a wheezing engine.

A loud *click* caught her attention and her head snapped back to the door. It had unlocked on its own. The truck didn't have power locks.

Kor remained still, but his hands were raised now, poised over his head, conducting the chaos to come. Jewlie didn't like the look on his face. The actual face, yes...

Ugh. It had been way too long since she had a good deep-dicking. She was supposed to be mad at this guy for stalling her, though she felt angrier that he wasn't stalling her in a more pleasurable way.

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The door opened by itself, and as Jewlie attempted to reach for the handle she discovered she, too, couldn't budge.

"What the...?" She was frozen, able only to turn her head and witness her fate. This man, this...Kor, had put some kind of spell on her. What else could explain this? What else could explain the mild indifference of the gathering crowd of onlookers, all of whom had clearly chosen to watch instead of help?

Come on, Jewlie silently willed the bystanders. I'm the ice cream lady, I'm the good guy. She knew there was something about this town, these people. They were all indifferent to strangers, or so bored with their lives that they felt they had to be apathetic in order to be entertained. Or, maybe this was some kind of protest against big corporations edging into little towns. That explained the lack of Starbucks and Panera Bread.

She gasped as Kor eyed her with delicious mischief, the way a dieter off the wagon might eye a triple fudge parfait. Jewlie could feel her own blood sugar skyrocket into her brain; she was floating inside her skin, wanting an anchor, wanting to be boarded by this pirate.

Arrrrr!

It appeared she would soon get that wish. Kor's hands lowered and his fingers splayed in her direction, well-timed with a rumbling sensation that started in her abdomen and spread through her limbs and buttocks. The overall effect was frightening, but the vibrations caused her pussy to melt, and that feeling was too delightful to protest. She tried to scream, but her protest spilled forth instead into a pleased moan.

The seatbelt came free, and the strap disentangled itself from her body. The hat slipped from her head and tinkled sadly to the floor. Pink pearl buttons popped free from her blouse, revealing lacy white cups concealing ample, creamy breasts. Slowly her body moved, pushed by an invisible force across the bench seat to the other side of the spacious cab. Jewlie was pressed against the cold steel of the opposite door as Kor leaped forward into the cab and waved his hands once again.

The door slammed shut behind him, the locks engaged, the dome light extinguished. Jewlie's gaze panned the cab windows. All eyes were upon them, faces without emotion, watching and waiting...

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Kor produced a cell phone from an unseen pocket and dialed three numbers.

"I am Kor," he announced in that sexy, sundae-melting voice. "I've taken a hostage."

* * * *

"Say what?"

Kor smiled. "What," he said.

Jewlie shook her head. It was the only thing she could still do, as Kor's magical hold had yet to loosen. "It's an expression," she sighed. "It means say it again."

"It again." Kor leaned back against the driver door and propped a booted foot on the bench. The opposite knee wavered lazily back forth under the steering column. Every now and again Jewlie could catch a glimpse of an impressive bulge tenting the crotch of Kor's pants.

She blew away a strand of hair brushing across her nose, making it itch. As soon as she was free of this unseen bondage, she would knee this bozo in the groin. Never mind that she wouldn't have minded fondling it first. "Who were you calling just now?"

"Why, the media," Kor said innocently. "Standard procedure when taking a hostage."

The media had one central number? Jewlie wasn't buying it. "Of course, and what was that about taking me as a hostage again?" she asked through gritted teeth.

"Ah, yes." Kor chuckled and tapped idly at the wheel. "That is correct. You are to remain my hostage until the Fairy Belle Corporation agrees to my demands. I apologize it must come to this, but your employers have not been very cooperative. Yes," he stretched and gave Jewlie a marvelous view of fabric stretched over taut arm and chest muscles, "once Fairy Belle agrees to cease use of the name and logo you will be free."

Oh, please. "Look, buddy, it didn't work with Disney and it's not going to work with some small time operator like you." Jewlie knew her bravado might have had more impact were she not directing this statement at Kor's crotch, which was anything but small time. She silently cursed her raging hormones and glanced out the window. Why wasn't anybody helping? Why were people positioning lawn chairs among the now still traffic?

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Why wasn't Kor making a move?

"What's your beef with Fairy Belle, anyway?"

"Their improper and unauthorized use of my sister's name and likeness," Kor said evenly. He appeared to be sizing the interior of the cab, planning something.

"Your sister?"

"Fairy Belle. My sister, a faerie."

Jewlie's eyes widened. Nuttier than a slice of Fairy Belle Carrot Cake Surprise Ice Cream Torte, this man was. "Your sister is a fairy," she said, incredulous.

"And she's also lactose tolerant." Kor pinched the bridge of his nose. "Nor does she dress like a two-bit whore, as your company implies in its advertising. That's what makes this whole thing all the more frustrating."

"A real fairy? Wings, the tinkling bells, the fairy dust and all that?"

"No." Kor rolled his eyes. "*Faerie*. She is fay, from Faerie," he said, and spelled it out for Jewlie. "We are a race of beings more gifted and culturally enhanced than you humans."

"Excuse me?" Jewlie raised an eyebrow, but she still couldn't move her hands. "You can't just make a blanket statement like that. I mean, humans are gifted and culturally enhanced, too." Was she really having this conversation? "Look at all our technological advancements. We have the Internet, we cure diseases...look at this truck! Two hundred years ago I couldn't ferry ice cream in an ox cart and get it to people still frozen. Let the faeries top that!"

"You also have reality shows and spoiled, attention-getting heiresses." Kor rolled his eyes. "I'd say two steps back for every leap forward."

Jewlie had no response to that; Kor did have a point.

All of a sudden, however, another issue crossed her mind. "Uh," she tried to shift and was still unnerved to be frozen, "okay, you 'called the media' and all, but how does loosening my blouse fit into your plan?" She willed the blouse to refasten itself, and cursed her body for succumbing to her urges. Jewlie tried to remain defiant, but it seemed difficult to have much credibility when her nipples threatened to poke through her bra.

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Kor chuckled. "You challenge the fay folk to top your progress of refrigerated delivery trucks and spam e-mail, I say fair enough." He waved a hand in circular motion. Jewlie watched in awe as the back panel of the cab rippled, as if turned into liquid, then gasped as Kor stuck his hand through the truck. Seconds later he plucked a pint of ice cream meant for another delivery and studied the label.

"Did you just put your hand through the truck?" Jewlie cried.

Kor ignored the question. "Cherry Delight, my favorite," he said with a tinge of sarcasm, and tore off the lid. "One thing your company manages to do well."

"What the..." Jewlie looked at the back panel. It was solid again. She looked back at Kor. "How did you...? How?"

"It would appear the fay folk spent the centuries perfecting our own advances instead of developing television shows that feature people eating bugs for cash prizes. One thing we do well," he held up the pint, "is magic."

"Really? What else?" Jewlie looked around the cab. The windows were fogging.

And before she realized it, another wave of Kor's hand sent her clothes to the floor with her hat. She was naked, and still, and completely aroused. Every nerve ending stood to attention, ready to comply to this Faerie's command.

"The other thing we do well," Kor supplied with a wicked grin, "is lovemaking."

* * * *

Yes!

What, no!

Well...

By no will of her own, Jewlie's wrists came together, as if bound by invisible cuffs, and were raised above her head so that they were pinned against the roof of the cab. Her breasts bobbed slightly, her nipples tightened with anticipation. She watched Kor trace the rim of the opened ice cream carton. Was he planning to slather her nude body with Fairy Belle Cherry Delight and lick away every last, milky drop? Was he thinking instead he would turn his cock into an ice cream pop and urge her to quit her diet?

Whatever he intended, why was he taking so damn long doing it?

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The temperature in the cab had dropped, as indicated by a myriad of goose pimples covering her body. Kor, however, looked comfortable in his pseudo-pirate costume, as much as he did eyeing Jewlie's body with approval.

"Why are you doing this?" Jewlie wanted to know, her voice a whimper.

Kor plunged a finger into the cream and scooped a dollop, studying it before sucking it off his finger. "A Faerie's got to be entertained somehow while waiting for his demands to be met," he said finally. "If, as you say, Fairy Belle is inflexible in negotiations, I plan to be here a while, as should you. And I don't see a television anywhere in here to watch, not that I'd care to see who gets voted off an elevator, or whatnot."

"No, I meant why are you doing this, *making me wait*? Why aren't you fucking me?"

Jewlie wanted to shrink back into the bench seat and disappear, fade away into a puff of cold air. She couldn't believe she had said that out loud, to a stranger, while bound naked in her own delivery truck. Truth be told, however, the cold hardly affected her pussy, which felt on fire for this man. It amazed her how much she wanted this man, her captor, a man she should be cursing with every breath. She wanted to sheath this man, this Faerie, in her hungry, throbbing core, and feel him pulse into her until the truck's shocks exploded. She wanted to block out the cold air, the controversy of infringed copyright, the whirr of helicopters overhead...

Helicopters?

She squinted past the veneer of fog covering the windshield. Great, the media had arrived. Jewlie couldn't discern any call letters, but it was a sure bet WSPL Action News was hovering overhead, panning close for a glimpse of her pink-tipped breasts and shaved pussy. Kidnapped ice cream delivery driver gets a double scoop surprise, film at eleven.

Right. She hadn't been offered a tiny sample spoon yet.

A tingling sensation coursed through her veins, and Jewlie felt her body give. Save for the pinned wrists, she could move again. She writhed in place and spread her legs to get the blood circulating again. That was her excuse, anyway. She really wanted to show this gorgeous Faerie what he was missing by stalling. She wanted him to

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see her swollen labia, her glistening slit, and tempt him away from the ice cream for a taste of Jewlie Delight.

Kor flashed her another wicked smile. "Comfortable?"

Jewlie's answer was to nudge Kor's thigh with a brightly-painted, pointed toe. She stroked upward until she hit cock, then stroked some more.

"I will say this," Kor said, "you're a very cooperative hostage." He scooped another bite of ice cream and topped each toe, then cupped Jewlie's heel in hand and sucked each digit clean. "A delicious one as well."

"Always willing to take one for the team," Jewlie murmured, so long as the team wasn't comprised of her chucklehead co-workers. "So you know, some parts taste better than others."

"We'll see about that." Out came the chirping cell phone and Kor spoke in a clipped tone. "Any word yet?" he barked into the receiver, then smiled. "Good. I'll wait."

Jewlie blinked, surprised to see that the phone had suddenly turned into a can of maraschino cherries. How did that happen? "Like magic," she whispered.

"Like?" Kor tut-tutted, shaking his head. "My dear, you have a lot to learn about being a hostage. This *is* magic. As is this." A snap of the fingers popped an aerosol can of whipped cream into his other hand.

Yummy. Jewlie thanked the stars she had no dairy allergies.

Kor crawled closer to Julie, shaking the whipped cream can. The loud sucking sound absorbed the sound of their heavy breathing as Kor covered each of Jewlie's breasts with the cream, creating two spiraled pyramids. He topped each mound with a cherry, then leaned back to admire his handiwork.

Good enough to eat. Yet Jewlie wondered why Kor wasn't indulging. "Don't tell me you're lactose intolerant, too."

"No, just think I'd like to start with something sweeter." Kor set the pint between Jewlie's legs and barely brushed the carton against her parted pussy lips. The chilled sensation was delightful, but did nothing to suppress her desire. When Kor tipped the carton toward her and let a stream of melted ice cream drip down her pussy, she wanted to cry. Pure torture, this was, no way to treat a prisoner. Amnesty International would hear about this, to say nothing of the dairy board.

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Finally Kor set the pint on the dashboard and dipped his head low. One broad stroke of the tongue lapped up most of the cream, and Kor licked his lips. "Yes," he growled, "very sweet."

He bent down again and, parting Jewlie's cleft with two cold fingertips, suckled her pussy. Jewlie writhed in his oral hold, moaning with every touch of his tongue to her labia. When his lips pursed around her clit and pulled slightly she thought she would go mad. To think this morning she had been angry to draw the short Popsicle stick...if the guys in dispatch only knew. The stick she saw bulging in Kor's pants was anything but.

"Yes," Kor kissed into her pussy, "you're being very cooperative. I think negotiations are going to go very well."

"Yes," Jewlie sighed, then gasped as Kor's tongue swirled around her clit in rapid circles. A slow burn smoldered in her core, building as the pressure to her clit increased, until finally Jewlie sensed an eruption was imminent.

As the first orgasm hit Jewlie bucked her hips forward, but Kor stayed with her. He dipped lower to lap up her pussy juice and teased her slit with a few broad licks. Never before had Jewlie felt such a sugar rush.

Kor then kissed a trail up Jewlie's quivering abdomen. "You will cease delivery of Fairy Belle Ice Cream to Spellfire."

"Yes."

His mouth took possession of one breast, but not before he sucked in the cherry. The sensation tickled her, delighted her, made Jewlie wish Kor had drawn whipped cream trails over other parts of her body and created an edible road map to devour. She'd have no qualms about taking that kind of trip.

His tongue teased that cream-covered nipple, bit lightly and sucked it in deep before releasing it with a light *pop*. "Your company will cease the use of the Fairy Belle name and logo bearing any likeness to the real Fairy Belle."

"Yes," Jewlie moaned. She had no idea how she could make that happen, but if Kor kept going she'd find a way. She'd infiltrate the unions, rally the workers to a slowdown, chain herself to the CEO's desk in protest...so long as Kor. Did. Not. Stop.

He feasted on the other breast. "Your company will issue a written apology to Fairy Belle for sullyng her image."

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“Yes.” Sullying was bad. Soooo bad.

Jewlie looked down the length of Kor’s body. Somewhere in the course of Kor’s dessert his puffy shirt and pants had disappeared, granting her full view of rippled muscles taut under smooth, tanned skin. Smoother than a butterscotch malt, leaner than a low-carb fruit pop. Infinitely more delicious.

The tip of his bulging cock bobbed right at the entrance to her channel, teasing her pussy lips and raising her desire. She felt ready to melt into a puddle.

Kor cuffed his cock in one hand and tweaked her nipple with the other. He guided his cock closer to her, and traced the edge of her slippery core. “You will comply with all of my demands,” he ordered softly.

“I will.”

He braced one knee against the bench seat and eased slowly insider her. Jewlie delighted in the new sensation, the way his engorged cock filled her. She watched as he slowly disappeared inside her, and marveled at the realization of it. Let Fairy Belle hem and haw in their corporate offices, she could wait.

Kor pumped in and out of her pussy, two short thrusts followed by one longer one. “And, after your superiors have finally seen reason and surrendered what is rightfully our...”

He pivoted his hips. Jewlie felt the change in thrust clear to her toes. *Yes...*

“...you will get rid of that ridiculous, stereotypical fairy uniform...” A kiss on the breastbone, then a series of lighter brushes across her jawline. Another orgasm bubbled deep within her.

Yes...

“...and come work for me.” Kor punctuated this final order with one long, hard thrust, so deep Jewlie thought Kor might tear through her. Instead she shuddered as the next orgasm crashed over her, timed with a bellowing roar from her partner, and she thrashed back into the passenger side window, not feeling a thing.

“Yes!” she cried. *Yes! Yes! Yes...*

What?

“What?” she echoed on the trip back to Earth. The cab was spinning. Condensation streaked the windows around them, creating long, crooked fingers through which Jewlie spied many cheering

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faces and applauding hands. Good night, had they just received a standing ovation? The sound of choppers returned in full force now as Jewlie realized where she was, and what she had been doing.

She had just fucked a stranger in her truck...in the middle of town...a stranger who now ostensibly was her boss.

She felt a tingling in her hands, and discovered the invisible bond was gone. Jewlie rubbed her wrists and tried to focus on the panting, naked man now reclining against the opposite window. "You want me to what now?" she gasped, dizzy.

Kor held up a finger as a familiar chime vibrated in the air. His cell phone materialized in hand. "Yes," he answered curtly, and smiled. "Excellent," he drawled, "we'll see you in Faerie anon.

"Your former employers have acquiesced," he informed Jewlie as he righted himself on the bench. Turning the key that had given her problems, Kor easily turned over the engine and set the truck to idle. "We have regained control of my sister's name and image, and you," he winked, "have a new job."

"I do?" So much for giving Fairy Belle, or whatever they would be called now, two weeks notice. "Doing what?"

Kor put the truck in drive and eased through the parting crowd. Amazing how nobody had protested the traffic jam, and how quickly the lawn chairs and news vans and choppers had disappeared. Life in Spellfire had returned to its normal, creepy self. "Supervising the delivery of our frozen desserts, of course," he said. "Overseeing trucks to outlets all over Faerie and beyond and making sure stores receive their shipments of Fairy Belle."

"Fairy Belle? So this was all about regaining your sister's name to sell your own ice cream? I thought she was lactose intolerant."

"It's all soy-based." Kor wagged his eyebrows. "Less fat, better for you."

Jewlie noticed they had turned a corner, and she buckled up quickly. She felt weird being naked in a moving truck, but at least a Spellfire cop could cite her for a seatbelt violation. "Yeah, but you can still gain weight with non-dairy desserts."

"Not in Faerie," Kor smiled. "We have ways of burning calories."

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And Jewlie's skin prickled again, though the cab was much warmer. "I see," she said, "and will we be burning many calories together in the future."

In the distance a large, swirling portal on the intersection of Transylvania and Mockinbird opened to reveal the road to what Jewlie figured had to be Faerie. Kor aimed in the truck in that direction as his hand came off the gear shift to caress her thigh.

"But of course," he said. "One of the many fringe benefits of working for Fairy Belle."

Jewlie smiled. Unlimited sixty-nine in lieu of a 401K suited her just fine.

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Leanne Strange

Join Leanne's newsletter, Strange Seductions:
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>From the unusual pen of Leanne Strange comes tales of unique seductions, exceptional characters, and plots of passion and love.

Leanne is thrilled to have her first erotic romance story out in October. "Saturdae: Shifters & Hot Fudge" will be in the special Halloween Digest about the magical town of Spellfire, Texas, *Sinful Sundaes*, published by her wonderful publisher at <http://www.midnightshowcase.com>.

Enjoy the tale of Adam Spellfire and Tristine Havoc. Adam is a demvir, a demon shifter, and Tris is a witch. At odds for years because of the Spellfire-Havoc feud, Adam and Tris are still attracted to each other. When Adam gets the upper hand and treats Tris to his own special hot fudge delight, Tris can't help but give in to her carnal appetite.

Leanne's next short story, "Drifting Desires", will be in the Valentine's Day anthology *Spellfire Hearts* coming out in February 2006 at Midnight Showcase. This is the story of elemental sorcerer Derek Spellfire and Harpy Collins, head waitress at the Sinful Sundaes Ice Cream Shoppe.

Leanne is also participating in the project *Jaded Beasts*, with her novella, "On Midnight Wings", to be released in mid-2006, also at Midnight Showcase.

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Be sure to read all the stories in the Upcoming Spellfire Digests!

A Spellfire Season, Coming December 2005

Spellfire Hearts, Coming February 2006

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Saturdae
Shifters & Hot Fudge
by
Leanne Strange

Chapter 1

“Oh, Bobby...yes! That feels so good. Mmmm, you do that so well.” A lilting female voice carried through the woods from the direction of Babbling Brook.

Adam Spellfire stopped to listen. It couldn't be, could it? Then he caught a whiff of wild cherry scent and knew for certain that he wasn't imagining *her*.

Tristine Havoc! He'd heard she was back in town, but he hadn't even seen her in passing. When they were teens, the bratty girl had teased and taunted him to no end because he was a Spellfire...and just because he had once nearly bitten off her head.

He had come upon Tris alone in these very woods. She had been separated from the high school hayride gathering in celebration of the third full moon in a month—the Changeling Moon. At the time, his hormones had thundered out of control as he went through his first mating frenzy.

During the Changeling Moon, he had to mate or suffer sexual and transformation withdrawal. In his frenzy, he'd tried to ravish her, unable to stop himself because of the beast within raging to emerge.

Fortunately, his cousin Electra had found them while searching for Tris. Electra had used her powerful sorcery to help him keep his animalistic demvir needs in check.

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Tris had sworn he'd nearly bitten off her head, but Adam didn't recall wanting to do any such thing. Much of his memory of that night was still lost to the throes of Changeling Moonlust, but he did remember wanting something from Tristine Havoc...and it definitely wasn't her pretty head!

Her voice floated to him again. "Oh, my, Josh, you've grown bigger and longer than the last time."

She had spoken provocatively to two different men. Were they having an orgy right here in Spellfire Woods? Adam's jaw clenched. Quieter than a field mouse, he swiftly moved through the trees toward the brook. His demvir chameleon ability, to make himself one with whatever he touched, would prevent him from being detected. He crept to the edge of the semi-circular clearing and blended in with the foliage around him.

A very tall tree stood at the edge of the brook, its thick roots trailing down the embankment and into the water. Tristine Havoc sat on the largest root, her long shapely legs dangling in the bubbling liquid. Her waist-length mane of sable curls covered her nicely rounded curves. Adam scanned the area, but he didn't see anyone else. Not an orgy—unless she had been making out with the tree and brook. Who had she been talking to?

He started to leave the camouflage when an impatient male voice came out of nowhere. "Aw, Tris, you're going to have to find someone soon. We can't remain cursed forever. We need more than your rare visits."

The voice sounded vaguely familiar. Perhaps someone he knew long ago? Once again, he began to take a step from the underbrush, but movement of the tree stopped him.

Two branches dipped to encircle Tris in its leafy embrace. "I've been a live oak for too long, girl. I wish you'd hurry up and fall in love so this curse would end."

"Me, too." Another voice chimed in, this time from the brook, and it had a familiar ring to it, too. A clear male form, made entirely of water, rose from the brook's surface near Tris' feet. "Come on, Tristine. There's got to be someone you've had a hankering for. You need to quit being a coward and start dating again."

Tris shook her head, her luxuriant hair falling softly over her abundant breasts. "Bobby, how can I take that chance again? Look

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what being in lust caused. You're a babbling brook, and Josh is a live oak. And you aren't the only ones. If I bed anyone else, who knows what they'll turn in to!"

Bobby waved his fluid arms around. "The only way to end the damned curse the Spellfires put on the Havoc women is to fall in love. Dammit, Tris, I feel like a premature ejaculation of liquid lust. I want to be able to fuck again!"

Adam watched her with an intensity he felt all the way to his toes. Tristine stood to hug Bobby's aqueous form, and pat Josh's stalwart trunk. As she moved, he caught flashes of her plump breasts and their coral tips and the dark patch of sable curls between her thighs. And then the tingle in his toes was not uppermost in his mind. His cock responded as it had that fateful night of the third full moon so many years ago, throbbing with lust for Tristine Havoc.

"You still give the best foot baths, Bobby. And you, Josh, pretty soon you'll be the tallest tree in Spellfire Woods." Bobby and Josh groaned at her attempt to cheer them up, and she frowned. "Guys, I'm sorry. I'll work on it soon. I have to get back now, but I'll try to visit later this week."

Adam watched her cover her luscious body with a summer frock that had been hanging from one of Josh's branches. She slipped her feet into sandals and, with a wave, hurried down the path leading back to town.

Waiting until long after she left, Adam came out of hiding as soon as his stiff erection had eased enough for him to walk.

The tree was the first to see him. "I thought I felt another presence, but the winds aren't strong enough today to carry the full impact of your scent. Besides, it's difficult to smell anything when you're a tree."

"Why, it's Adam Spellfire!" Bobby the Babbling Brook slapped his liquid knee. "Man, don't you know me? We hung out together in school. Look at you...has it been that long since I made out with Tris?"

Adam stopped just between the tree and brook. "Bobby Bedlam? Everyone wondered where you'd disappeared to. I heard your parents moved to Houston because that's where they thought you'd gone."

Bobby shook his head and water droplets cascaded over Adam. "Naw, man, they moved because Dad asked to be transferred. They

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were embarrassed at what happened to me. They visit sometimes, hoping the curse has been reversed.”

“Yeah, my folks didn’t leave, but they kept it quiet, too.” One of Josh’s branches suddenly scratched his trunk. “Dang beetles! They itch like a bitch when they bore into my bark. But, yeah, our parents have tried everything to reverse the curse. I just wish I hadn’t got the hots for Tris in college.”

Adam finally placed his voice. “You’re Joshua Nasterian. Your werewolf father is still the head coach at Spellfire High. Did fucking Tris really curse you both?”

Josh spread his limbs in frustration. “Yeah, you remember the stories. None of us ever believed that old tale about how your ancestor placed a curse on the Havoc women.”

Adam knew about it all too well.

“Even Electra couldn’t reverse the curse,” Bobby added, spritzing Adam again. “We won’t be free and back in our own bodies until that woman truly falls in love.”

“Wish I could help you, but you know Spellfires and Havocs don’t get along.” Adam shook his head with regret. “Electra’s out of town right now, but when she gets back, I’ll check with her to see if she has learned anything new. I’ll let you know.”

They thanked him, and he waved good-bye as he started down the same path Tris had used. He could still smell her wild cherry scent lingering in the air.

Adam emerged from the woods onto a back lane called Alligator Alley, which led directly to the backside of the club district in Spellfire. His intent, when he’d begun his walk through Spellfire on this gorgeous Saturday afternoon, had been to stop in at O’Malley’s, the second seediest bar in town. The proprietor, Paxton, was the kindest pixie he had ever known...considering pixies were almost as malicious as the fairies that frequented Barnabas’s Bar.

He hadn’t walked this way in a few months, but he loved the woods and when he didn’t shift to his *demvir* state, he liked it even more. He had traipsed along Babbling Brook, which ran a block from the pub, to reach O’Malley’s. Now, he stopped and listened. From here, he could hear the Babbling Brook and knew the singing for what—or rather, who it was, Bobby Bedlam. He’d heard the brook sing before, but had never guessed why. He should have recognized

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Bobby's tenor.

He'd always thought it strange that a brook could sing. Of course, considering that most of the inhabitants of Spellfire were paranormally bent, a singing brook could be counted as a normal thing.

The town's perimeter was protected by Spellfire's centuries-old shielding spell. The town was unique in that paranormals and normals lived side-by-side under the protective ward. When tourists came to town, the spell prevented outsiders from knowing that Spellfire was a magical place. Unless the outsiders were paranormally inclined, or had the ability to detect wards, they would think Spellfire was an average country town. Despite the oddness of the small city, he could not imagine living anywhere else but within the borders of Spellfire, Texas, and within his own home, Spell House.

The only thing he considered abnormal about the town was that the Havocs still lived here. And the worst of the lot was Tristine Havoc. The Havocs had owned Havoc House nearly as long as Spellfires had owned Spell House from the time when the town was first founded. Since Havoc House's first owner, Hermione Havoc, came to Spellfire, there had been nothing but trouble brewing for the Spellfire men.

The great witch of her time, Hermione had cursed the Spellfire men by making them unable to find complete sexual satisfaction. Adam couldn't deny it had been in retaliation for his ancestor, Samuel Spellfire, cursing the Havoc women because Hermione had rejected his suit of matrimony. The Spellfires and Havocs had been feuding ever since in some form or fashion.

His eavesdropping on Tris and subsequent chat with Bobby and Josh had put him behind schedule. He decided to skip O'Malley's and go directly to Sinful Sundaes parlor instead.

Chapter 2

Even though a witchling with some hexing experience, and with some powerful relatives and friends, Tristine Havoc had no idea how to reverse the curse that was part of her family heritage. After her last lover—too many years ago to think about—she'd sworn off men. She had cared for all of her Texas exes, but the curse had struck each one, proving she wasn't really in love with any of them. There was nothing she or anyone could do to reverse the curse. True love just wasn't meant to be a part of her destiny.

She sighed, letting out a long breath of air as she made her way to Sinful Sundaes. The place was packed, as usual. Her childhood friend, Electra Spellfire, owned the shop. She and Electra had always been the best of friends despite the feud between their families. The feud was more between members of the opposite sex within the families...like her and Adam Spellfire.

Why did she have to think about *him* and ruin her day?

Electra had gone away with her new boyfriend for a week. Tris envied her friend and her ability to *have* a boyfriend without him turning into a tumbleweed after a night of lusty lovemaking.

Tris waved hello to the head waitress and assistant manager of the shop. Harpy Collins's smile fell from her face when she saw Tris, and she nodded stiffly. Harpy's usual bubbly personality went south whenever Tris was around. She had no idea what the woman had against her and had never felt comfortable about asking her why. Tris took a seat at the counter.

Even for a paranormal town, the humid Texas weather got to folks. After her walk, she was hot and thirsty. She'd stay long enough for a Hot Fudge Sundae and a cherry cola while Harpy readied the

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dessert order for Havoc House. The sugar rush might do her in, but she didn't have to worry about her weight. There was never going to be any man in her life, so why not just enjoy herself?

Normally, she picked up her weekly order on Fridays, to avoid anyone from Spell House—namely Adam Spellfire. Her parents were away for a long weekend, and the day before had gotten away from her as she took care of Havoc House business. She hadn't given picking up the dessert order a thought until late the night before. Visiting with Bobby and Josh on a whim had made her run even later today.

Harpy approached from behind the counter. "Your order will be ready shortly. With Electra out of town, we're short-handed. Want something while you wait?"

Tris nodded and told Harpy what she wanted. "That should cool me off."

Harpy started making the sundae. "Been to the woods lately?"

Harpy's dig made her want to crawl under a table. "How did you know? Is there anyone in this town that doesn't know everyone else's personal business?"

Harpy shrugged as she set Tris's sundae and cola on the counter in front of her. "I wouldn't know. While you enjoy your goodies, I'll get the order ready for Spell House, then bring out yours."

Tris nearly choked on a slurp of cherry cola. Why had she dawdled in the woods with Bobby and Josh? She knew Adam Spellfire came in every Saturday afternoon. With Electra away, he had to pick up his order, too. She'd only been back in Spellfire three months and so far had managed to avoid seeing Adam.

She had thought moving away from Spellfire would remove her from the curse, but it didn't. She hadn't wanted anyone else to be cursed, but distance didn't matter. She'd been very careful, choosing one man whom she liked a lot and dating him a long time until she felt she was in love with him. Because she so desperately wanted love, she had let her needs get in the way of common sense. She was cursed and she should have avoided physical intimacy with anyone else.

She had worked at a hotel in Galveston the past five years, but even with an oceanfront rental house, she hadn't been happy there. She'd missed the town of Spellfire and her parents and the grand old

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hotel. It was home! When her parents urged her to come back and help run Havoc House so they could semi-retire, she jumped at the chance.

She had to admit to herself, even if she could never confess to anyone else, she missed Adam Spellfire. She had never stopped thinking about him, and no other man had ever managed to get him out of her system. Yet, now that she was back home, she had kept out of his way as much as possible, afraid to come into close contact with the damned demvir. He'd gotten sexier over the years, and it was getting harder and harder for her to resist him. What if they did make love and he turned into a hollyhock bush or a grapevine? For some reason, she couldn't bear it if that happened to Adam.

She took the last bite of hot fudge sundae, and the hair on the back of her neck stood on end. A low growl sounded behind her, and she slowly turned around. Nearly six and a half feet tall, Adam Spellfire's sinfully sweet body stood mere inches away from her. His long chestnut hair with its glinting copper highlights flowed down to his shoulders. She shivered under his ominous glare and knew it was much more than just anxiety at being this close to him again that chilled and heated her body all at the same time.

Dressed in a dark green polo shirt and low riding jeans that enhanced his broad chest, tapered waist, and muscled legs, he was the sexiest thing she'd ever seen. Even when he wasn't in his demvir state, his eyes glittered a deep, hypnotic garnet red.

Spells' bells, the bastard is handsome as hell. If Electra hadn't showed up, I probably would have let him ravish me that night under the Changeling Moon. Her dangerous thoughts made her shiver again. Such feelings caused the Havoc women to get in trouble in the first place. *Damn Spellfire men!*

"Hello, Tris." His sultry voice caressed her, calling to mind long nights spent in passion.

She swallowed the moan her throat tried to make. Damn man should be jailed for being so sexy! "Long time no see, Adam. I'm just waiting for the Havoc House order. Sorry to intrude on your time."

He growled at her again, and her frustration grew at having to still her quivering desire. Why the hell did he just stand there, taking his ever-loving time and hers, leisurely reeling her in with his sinful demonic eyes? She bristled and turned away from him. If she couldn't

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see him, it would be easier to stay true to their old way of dealing with one another. This time his annoyed growl pleased her, though. Not many people could turn their backs on Adam Spellfire and live to tell about it. Demvirs were more temperamental than werewolves!

“Hey, Adam.” Thankfully, Harpy returned. “Tris, part of your order is upstairs in the refrigerator in Electra’s apartment. I’m swamped right now. Would you mind going up to get it? Electra labeled it before she left yesterday.”

Tris laid some bills down on the counter for her snack, her back still to Adam. “No problem at all, Harpy. Is her door unlocked?”

Harpy nodded. “Yeah, just go on in. I’ll put everything on your account.”

Tris slid from the stool, grateful to leave the room and Adam’s presence. She went behind the counter, through a doorway, and turned left. She’d been to Electra’s apartment many times before and knew the way blindfolded.

The apartment was large with a living room, bedroom, bath, and a really huge modern kitchen. She went directly to the oversized, brushed steel refrigerator and opened one door. Inside, sweet delicacies and mouth-watering concoctions lined the top shelves and carefully wrapped boxes covered the bottom racks, one with her name printed in Electra’s bold handwriting. She pulled it out and stepped back to close the door. She almost dropped her package when she bumped into someone and heard a low growl.

Chapter 3

Tris's enticing hips sashayed out of Adam's line of sight, and another growl sounded deep in his chest. He noticed other male patrons had also watched her curvy bottom leave the room. He put a hand on the back of the stool she had just vacated and squeezed the wrought iron. It bent under his supernatural strength.

"Adam, stop that!" Harpy snapped the back of his hand with a towel. "Go on up to Electra's apartment and get your order, too. I'm sure Tris Havoc went out the back way, so you don't have to worry about seeing a Havoc again. Now, scat and quit tearing up the place."

He growled at her, but straightened the stool before doing as she told him to. He used the same route Tris had gone by tracking her wild cherry scented trail. He hoped like hell the frustrating but sexy Texas babe wasn't there by the time he entered the apartment. He couldn't stay long in Tris's presence without wanting to morph into his demvir state and rip her clothes off.. The woman should be banned from public places for being so sinfully sexy!

He took the stairs two at a time. The door to the apartment was slightly ajar. Tris had either left it open or hadn't yet departed. He stepped inside and quietly closed the door behind him, turning the lock. He silently stole into the kitchen.

To his delight, he found Tris's delectable tush sticking out from the open door of the refrigerator. He moved nearer. When she straightened, stepping backwards to close the door, she backed into him. Spinning around, her gray eyes were wide with surprise. He almost drowned in the pools of molten silver.

"What are you doing up here, Adam?"

Her uncertainty unnerved him. He moved closer to her and reached out to open the door farther. "Make sure you take the correct

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order, Havoc. I wouldn't want the Spell House desserts to conveniently disappear."

"Oooh! You're an insufferable creep, Adam Spellfire." Quicksilver sparkled in her eyes. "Like I'd let my guests have any of that weird stuff you order for your dump of a motel."

"You're the insufferable one, Havoc." He moved in even closer until he could feel the heat radiating from her body. He was almost close enough to kiss her. "I didn't come up here to continue the argument, but I can finish it if you don't get your temptations out of my way."

The box dropped from her trembling fingers, and he quickly reached to catch it.

"You did that deliberately, Spellfire!"

He thrust the box back into her hands. "Get out now, Tris. Just being close to a Havoc is a curse in itself."

She took the box and shoved it back into the refrigerator. "You! You're the curse upon us Havocs. If it weren't for your ancestor, that Spellfire bastard, I could have a normal life."

He narrowed his eyes. "Why, of all the gall! It was a Havoc bitch who cursed the Spellfire men. It's not my fault you screwed half the high school football team and turned them into nature objects."

She doubled her fists. "There's no need to call me a slut just because you can't get your jollies off and I wouldn't let you fuck me. That's low, even for a Spellfire."

He inched closer, knowing it wouldn't take much more from this damnable woman to rile the beast within. It was past time to settle this once and for all, to get Tris Havoc out of his system for good. "And you are a selfish tease, Tris."

She swung her hand toward his face, but he stepped back in time to avoid her slap. She stumbled, and he caught her up around her waist. He reacted instinctively, pulling her wanton body against his hungry one.

He lowered his head, pressing his mouth to hers, and she gasped beneath his hard kiss. He melded his body with hers, and their fit was good, even if she was a Havoc. He deepened the kiss when she opened her lips to protest.

Oh, she tasted delicious, like wild cherry wine, and her natural wild cherry scent enveloped him, making him dizzy with need. He

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pushed his straining cock into the indentation between her hips. One arm crept around her back, and he brought her up against him, grinding into her.

Catching him off guard, she stomped his foot, and he jerked away with a harsh growl. She stood there, glaring at him in defiance, her hands on her hips and her breasts jutting out, tempting him beyond good sense. She was tantalizing and a dangerous provocation to the beast within.

She stomped again and stabbed her middle finger up toward his face. "It's no wonder you can't find a woman who'd willingly fuck you!"

"You better apologize, Tris. Now!" His growl deepened, and two spots on each side of his forehead began to throb. Shit, his demon horns were starting to break through.

"Oh, go screw yourself." She shook her fist at him. "That's the only way you'll ever get your rocks off, Spellfire."

His horns erupted, his forehead burning with a fire from hell. He grunted with the pain. Tris's eyes widened, and she took a step backwards. He'd let his temper get the best of him and he was shifting. And it hadn't taken a full Changeling Moon to make it happen, either—just a spitfire Havoc. When the pain stopped, he had a full set of demon horns out of each side of his forehead, just over his temples.

"Oh, spells' bells, Adam. Not now!" Tris ran for the door.

Adam went after her and caught her up, slinging her over his shoulder. His temper unraveled and his lengthening fangs itched. He'd had enough of her barbs and taunts over the years. It was time to teach the brat a lesson.

He cupped a hand over her mouth and carried her kicking over to the butcher-block island in the center of the enormous kitchen. He uncovered her mouth to tie her hands behind her back with a nearby towel. She screamed as loud as she could.

When she stopped to draw a breath, he laughed. "Yell all you want, Tris. The walls are sound proof. With your hands tied behind you, you can't gesture and hex me into oblivion."

Childishly, she stuck out her tongue at him. "I hope you turn into a—pumpkin, so I can smash your head in!"

Adam laughed again, the guttural sound echoing off the walls.

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“Oh, I’m turning into something harder than a pumpkin because of you and your incredibly sexy body.”

She went still, startling him. “You think I’m sexy? I always thought you wanted to screw me just to try to have an orgasm.”

“I can orgasm, Tris.” His laughter turned to a growl. “It’s just never satisfying—all because of your damned ancestor.”

“Well, it was your crazy ancestor that made Havoc women’s lovers turn into nature objects first!” She reared up, trying to escape his hold, and went over the edge of the table.

“Won’t happen unless I cum inside you.” He hauled her back up on the table. “I’m going to do more than fuck you, Tris. You’ve been teasing me since high school. Now, you are the one that’s going to squirm with need for a change.”

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Tris tried to escape again by rolling towards the edge of the island top. Her sudden move broke his hold, but he recovered and grabbed her up once more. He pressed her backside against the table, and even with her wild struggling; he was able to tie down her ankles with more towels. Then he grabbed her wrists and none too gently raised her hands over her head, securing them there. Damn Electra for designing a worktable with holes in each end to set various bottles and containers for convenience.

Her summer frock was now hiked up over her hips. She looked up to see Adam in his full demvir state, skin blushed red, and grinning down at her with a full set of fangs for teeth. Oh, hell, she was in trouble. Demvir's were hornier than normal human males could ever hope to be. His wide chest heaved fast and hard, and his huge cock grew stiffer by the second.

She groaned and shook her head, but he growled with glee at her helplessness. Unlike many kinds of shifters, Adam still retained his faculties. He thought and acted just as well as when human except he was more prone to using savage methods to get what he wanted. She knew exactly what he wanted now! He drew nearer, and she hoped he really did turn into a pumpkin...right after he fucked her good and hard.

"You still have a delicious looking pussy, Tris." He raised her dress farther and raked his fingers through the patch of hair between her thighs. "Your dark curls are one of your best assets. I'm going to enjoy teasing you until you're begging me to fuck you."

"You're nuts, Adam...and, damn, you have some big ones." She squirmed against his fingers. "Harpy could walk in on us. Or someone else she sends up for their order. Stop this insanity now!"

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He bared his fangs. "Not on your life, Tris."

She didn't like his devilish growl. "Fine. Let's fuck and get it over with."

"Oh, now, Tris, that's too easy." One of his fingers slipped between her lips and fondled her clit. "I'll have you pleading with me, and meaning it, to take you before I'm done."

He removed his finger, and her hips rose, trying to follow. She was at his mercy and loved it. It scared the hell out of her, how being his captive was an incredible turn on. She could feel the wetness between her thighs. Looking into his blazing garnet eyes, she knew he would keep his word and make her beg for him. She frowned in puzzlement when he turned and opened the refrigerator door.

* * * *

Adam found the box with his name on it and pulled it off the shelf, closing the refrigerator door. He carried it to the microwave and nuked the maple pecan ice cream until it was soft. Then he did the same to the fudge sauce until it was comfortably warm. When he returned to the table where Tris lay, he watched with intense pleasure as she wriggled, trying to loosen her bonds.

He set down the containers beside her, and she went rigid, watching him. Then her eyes went wide as she guessed what he planned to do. Oh, he was going to enjoy punishing her and making sure she enjoyed it, too.

"You are stark, raving mad! I swear I'll—"

He dismissed her threat with a throaty laugh. "There isn't anything you can do except kick back and take pleasure in your sweet punishment. I told you these walls are sound proof. And I locked the door when I came in. We won't be disturbed."

She yanked one last time on the towels then laid her head down. "Just hurry up and get your rocks off. I have better things to do than pretend to like your body."

"You didn't at one time, Tris." He leaned over her, his face only inches from hers. "That night beneath the Changeling Moon, you had no complaints until Electra came along and you accused me of almost biting off your head. It wasn't your head I was nibbling."

Her breathing deepened, and the blush of embarrassment tinted her skin a rosy hue down to her breasts. He placed his mouth over hers and growled as he kissed her, the tang of wild cherry nearly

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driving him over the edge. He ran the tip of his tongue over her lips, her gasping breath mingling with his own. She opened her mouth, and he captured her bottom lip, sucking it gently. He kissed her again, deepening it, thrusting his tongue against hers. She responded, and it thrilled him that she wasn't as immune to him as she pretended to be. His demvir blood pounded in his cock.

Reluctantly, he pulled back and took his time opening the tub of ice cream while admiring her sexy curves. She gasped and then shivered when he placed a small mound of melting maple pecan on the tip of each large breast.

"Oh, Adam!" she cried out. "Oh, my!"

He followed with a spoonful in her navel and another on her mons.

"You. Are. Nuts!" she shouted between gasps.

"Pecan, to be exact." He then took the warm fudge sauce and drizzled it over the little dollops covering her nipples and in ever-widening circles around her breasts. "This is a special hot fudge sauce. Electra finally found a spell that would diminish the curse so I could find sexual satisfaction. She charmed the fudge sauce with it. You are the first to be my own special Hot Fudge Sundae."

She snorted. "Well, no wonder you had to tie me up! The others will either have to be paid or too damn desperate to care!"

His demonic laughter vibrated throughout her body. "But you are the only one who's going to get a full course, my sweet."

He trailed the warm sauce to swirl around her belly button then her mons. Adam set down the spoon and stepped back to admire his revenge special. "Ah, Tris, I'm going to make you enjoy this."

She cursed him, and her foul epithets and feisty squirms made him ache from the tip of his horns to the tip of his cock. He captured her mouth with his, silencing her. He raked his fangs over her lips, reveling in the shivers of pleasure that undulated through her. She cried out in surprise and delight as he traced a path to one breast and began to lick the spiral of fudge sauce. By the time he reached the mound of ice cream covering her nipple, she had arched her back, thrusting her breast toward him. He licked and devoured the sauce and ice cream from her other breast, then hungrily followed the trail of sauce to her navel.

As his tongue reamed the tiny hole, he could smell her arousal.

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She wanted him as badly as he wanted her. He growled with satisfaction, knowing that more of her sweet-hot delights awaited him. He moved farther down and carefully lapped every drop from each sable curl. By the time he finished, she was writhing and moaning, her hips wiggling up to him, trying to guide him lower than her curls.

He straightened and, running his hands over her abdomen, positioned himself at the end of the table between her legs. She spread for him. He leaned over and parted her lips with his thumbs. He explored her soft folds, licking away the last traces of melted ice cream and fudge sauce that had trickled down. Beneath the sugary confection, he could taste her, a sweeter flavor than any he'd ever had before. Then he licked her deeply.

She cried out, and her hips went up as far as she could go. "Adam, you devilish demvir. Oh, damn you!"

He chuckled and suckled her, teasing her clit with his fangs and driving into her with his long tongue. She writhed and bucked beneath him. As his tongue lashed her with rapid strokes, he thrust two fingers in and out of her. She moaned and pumped her hips, and all the while, he continued licking and sucking the creamy mixture off and out of her sweet wild pussy. Adam pushed his fingers in deeper.

Her hips ground her pussy against his face. "Take them out and put that magnificent, huge cock inside me now!"

He shoved another finger into her and swiped his tongue around her clit. "How badly do you want me, Tris?"

"Fuck me, damn you!" she screamed at him. "Fuck me!"

That was all he needed to hear. In one motion, he leapt upon the table and landed between her wide-open legs. Quickly, he ripped the towels from her wrists and ankles. She grabbed hold of him, and he drove into her eager pussy. She screamed and arched against him, and he thrust into her again and again.

He felt their heat mingling and rising to a fever pitch. His need for her spiraled within him. Their joining had been a long time in coming, and he knew it would never be like this for him with any other woman.

He howled as intense pleasure hit him, jerking madly into her. Her movements came more quickly, and they exploded together, a whirlwind of sexual frenzy. When they were finished, their bodies slumped at the same time, too.

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He leaned on his elbows, looking down at her glowing face. “Something besides need drove me to take you, Tris. I’ve wanted you for a long time, my sweet. I won’t ever regret this.”

She smiled up at him, wrapping her arms around him. “I hope you don’t, Adam, but we’ll find out at dawn. I may have resented you in the beginning, but I’m not sorry we fucked...no, made love. Why the hell didn’t we do this sooner?”

With a regretful smile, he peeled his body from hers, the sticky ice cream and fudge sauce acting like glue. He got down from the table. “I think because we were both too stubborn. Let’s shower this mess off. We have a lot to talk about before the possibility of me turning into a pumpkin becomes a reality.”

He helped her from the table and led her to his cousin’s large bathroom. They ran hot water, washing and exploring each other. The demon in him retreated, and he wanted to fuck her as a man, not a shifter. He picked her up, carried her to the bedroom, and dropped her in the center of the big bed. Their passions arose and they began a whole new cycle of discovery.

Afterwards, he held her close, watching her sleep. Something wonderful had happened between them—something Tris hadn’t realized yet. He yawned, unable to keep his eyes open. They needed to talk before dawn and, if he was wrong, he turned into a pumpkin or some nature object. But Tris beside him, in his arms, felt natural enough and he drifted off to sleep.

Chapter 5

When Tris awakened, she looked at the bedside clock in a panic. Less than an hour till dawn. She brushed a soft kiss on Adam's arm and eased from his embrace. She stepped out onto the bedroom balcony and put her hands on the railing, looking out over the dark skyline.

From here, she could see most of downtown Spellfire. The town was quiet this early on a Sunday morning. She tilted her head back, looking up at the full moon. It was only the second one this month, and she was glad. Adam wouldn't be out of sexual control this time...but she did look forward to experiencing when it happened. Especially, if he didn't turn into a pumpkin or some other nature object.

She had to admit that being tied down and treated like a special dessert wasn't as kinky as she had first thought. She'd always loved Hot Fudge Sundaes and knew from their childhood that it was Adam's favorite, too. She sighed with contentment. She'd never had such incredible sex in all her life. No, such incredible lovemaking! She could have sworn he was completely and utterly satisfied each time, too.

Could she really possibly be in love with Adam Spellfire?

A soft growl behind her and then a hand on her shoulder made her smile.

He leaned in closer and wrapped his big arms around her, pulling her backside up against him front. "Are you sorry?"

She shook her head and leaned back to look up into his handsome face. His eyes still glowed a soft garnet red. Deep inside, her need and the wanting of him burned faintly like the banked embers of a recent

fire. She didn't protest when he kissed her so gently and so heatedly, she thought she'd melt. He pulled back and his eyes were questioning.

She ran her hand over his cheek. "I've never had such an incredible experience before, Adam. I'm sorry I was so mean to you over the years."

His arms tightened around her. "Same here."

She squeezed his hand. "But I have a confession to make—I've always had a crush on you, ever since high school. I was afraid to let you know because of the feud between our families. I was afraid to find out it wasn't true love and watch you turn into a pumpkin or something else."

"Me, too, Tris. Why do you think I went demon that night beneath the Changeling Moon. It wasn't so much that I couldn't control myself at all, I just couldn't control myself around *you*." He shook his head. "And I never said or did anything about it for the same reason as you. I'd had it pounded into me from birth—Spellfire men and Havoc women don't mix. It's going to take some adjustment for both of us. I'd like to see more of you, so we can get to know each other as we are now, instead of the brats we used to be."

"Other things, too, I hope." She narrowed her eyes at him. "So I think you need to shelve those plans to try your special hot fudge sauce on anyone else!"

"Oh, I have," he promised.

She grinned, pleased that he wanted only her. Then it changed to a frown. "I really do hope you don't turn into a nature object, Adam."

"So do I. Shifting into a demon is enough." He nibbled her ear. "I'm glad I satisfied you in both states."

She nodded. "In the shower and bed was fun, but being a Hot Fudge Sundae was just as wonderful."

He growled and let out a long breath. "Then come sunrise we can continue to have wonderful times. I think we've shared something special, Tris? Don't you?"

She turned around in his arms and blinked back the tears in her eyes. "My heart is breaking with worry even now, Adam."

He kissed the top of her head. "We'll watch the sun come up together."

Adam held her close, and they watched dawn's glorious arms spread around the town of Spellfire. She trembled as the sun peeked

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above the horizon. When Adam's arms remained around her and didn't turn into some kind of trailing vine, her fears began to ease.

Suddenly, the town around them shook. Pops of sparkling magic shot up over a half-dozen places around town. Laughter and screams echoed all around them. A dripping Bobby and a stiff Josh, along with several other naked men, raced through the streets, shouting with glee.

Adam looked down at her, brow arched. "How many lovers did you have?"

"Hey, it was only six. Uh, seven. There's a hydrangea bush in Galveston who's very happy this morning, too." She tilted her head at him. "And how many women did you have trying to find complete satisfaction?"

"Okay, fair enough." He nuzzled her ear. "You know what this means, don't you?"

"What?" His breath tickled her, distracting her.

"I love you, Tris," he whispered against her ear. "I always have."

Her mouth dropped open. "Why the hell didn't you say so sooner?"

"Because if you didn't love me, the spell would have turned me into a nature object." He took a deep breath. "And I couldn't have stood it if you didn't love me, too."

She turned in his arms and kissed him. "I really do love you, Adam. Oh, spell's bells, our ancestors will roll over in their graves."

Adam grinned and let out a low growl of amusement. "And with the union of a Spellfire man and a Havoc woman, this town will never be the same again."

Be sure and get the next Spellfire Treat!

A Spellfire Christmas Digest: Spellfire Seasons

In Spellfire, Texas, many seasons abound and are believed in at this very special time of the year. Some of them are specific, some are only once a year, and then some seasons can last for what seems like an eternity in Spellfire. Yet, paranormal beings and creatures with passionate natures will make every season in this remarkable town very unique and memorable. Enjoy the loving and sensual surprises within the mysterious realms of a unique place, written by these imaginative writers.

Elves, Bells, & Mistletoe, by Jennifer Metz

What if Santa was real and he had a very attractive, very single son named Nikolas? Seductive Secrets Boutique owner Mandy Stockholm is about to find out as Spellfire is overrun with disgruntled elves on strike. Now the two must work together to get the elves back to the North Pole and save Christmas.

Mistletoe & Mayhem, by Emery LaRue

Garland Mayhem is not quite sure what to expect returning home to Spellfire, Texas. Visions of a beautiful woman call to him, and he feels her inside his heart. Once he lays eyes on her, he sees the true meaning of love, and learns just what he truly is.

Eid al-Fitr, by Ann Regentin

A Muslim couple Feisal and Salwa started out in love but became dishonest in an effort to protect each other from their “baser” impulses. Now they are haunted during the festival nights of Ramadan by two djinn, who fulfill the couple’s every unspoken and forbidden fantasy.

Spirit's Bells, by Tamara James

Running from an unsavory pack leader, werewolf and artist Spirit Tredmane seeks sanctuary in her cousin Electra's hometown of Spellfire. Gavin thought his dreams of finding his true-mate would never happen, until he bumps into Spirit, and his mind begins to dream of a home and pups of his own.

A Statue For All Seasons, by Mae Powers

For over a hundred years Georgiano McMillan’s spirit was cursed into a statue that stood in the middle of Spellfire Park, season after season. He hated Christmas and never thought his curse would ever be lifted, until the town librarian shed her inhibitions late one wintry night.