

ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS

Myla Jackson

Witch's Curse

ELLORA'S CAVE

Quickies

Wild Winter

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



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Witch's Curse

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WITCH'S CURSE

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Chapter One

"Don't forget to check on her every day. She needs people, even if she says she doesn't. Trust me on this." Catherine moved through the eighteenth-floor studio apartment in the Hell's Kitchen district of New York City, straightening paintings, fluffing the bright pillows she'd added to the couch and watering the plants she'd grown from clippings off Dolly's huge collection of houseplants and herbs. Basically, she was delaying her descent to the building lobby for the annual tenants' New Year's Eve party.

I don't need a babysitter. Kindra's thought made her jump. So often lately, Kindra remained silent, preferring Catherine to handle everything in their shared existence.

"I'll check on her." Dolly stood by the door, a determined smile on her freckled face, although tears welled in her bright green eyes. "I can't believe you won't be here after tonight. I mean you will, but you won't. Ah hell. I'll miss you."

"You promised me you wouldn't get all mushy, so don't go there." Catherine spun away, refusing to give in to tears. Instead, she marched into the kitchen and yanked the refrigerator door open, snatching the bottle of Merlot from the sparkling clean shelves lined with healthy foods. All the groceries and cheerful decorations throughout the apartment would be her only legacy to Kindra to encourage her to maintain the healthy body Catherine had worked so hard to establish over the past year.

"I can't believe it's been a year since I met you." Dolly took the bottle from Catherine and tucked it under her arm. "I still have a vivid memory of Kindra standing on the ledge outside that window as the clock struck midnight." She nodded toward the tall window overlooking the bright lights of New York City. "If you hadn't landed in her body at that exact minute, she'd be dead."

You should have let me go. I only wanted peace.

"Peace my Aunt Fanny. You were sacrificing a perfectly good life and a boatload of talent. Think of all you've accomplished this year."

I didn't do it. You did. You're the strong one.

"And you're the one with all the talent. I can't paint my way out of a shoebox."

It's not enough.

Dolly's brows rose into the burnished copper curls brushing across her forehead. "You're doing it again."

Catherine's gaze moved to Dolly and she took a moment to remember Dolly was physically the only other person in the room. "Sorry. Kindra and I were having a little discussion about talent and wasting it."

Dolly stared at the paintings covering every free space on the walls of the apartment and some standing against the walls. "These are so beautiful. Why doesn't she put them in a gallery and sell them?"

No! They're not good enough!

"Kindra thinks they aren't good enough." Catherine shook her head. "Tell her, Dolly."

"I'm glad I know about your little secret, otherwise I'd think you had that multiple personality disorder." Dolly stared straight at Catherine and plunked her fist on one hip. "Kindra, get over it. These paintings are so stunning and full of emotion, they bring me to tears. The galleries will go wild over them. I have a buddy who works at a gallery down the street. I bet I can get them in there."

Catherine shook with the force of Kindra's fear. "Okay, okay. So you won't take the paintings to the gallery. It's okay. Dolly won't make you do it." She shrugged at Dolly. "You can't force her."

Dolly fingered the silver pentacle amulet around her neck, the sign of Wicca. "How do you do that? How can you stand to have two people in one mind?"

"I'm the guest. Kindra owns the body and soul. At midnight, I move on and Kindra is on her own again." Though her words were flat and matter-of-fact, the closer she'd gotten to the midnight deadline, the more worried she'd been about Kindra. Could the young artist manage on her own? Would she try to commit suicide again?

"I think I would go nuts moving from body to body every year. How disconcerting to wake up in someone else's life. You must have really pissed off the powers that be."

Catherine's jaw tightened. "Just heed my warning. Don't use your powers for selfish reasons. Follow the Threefold Law to the letter."

Dolly snorted. "Like I have powers."

"We each have powers within us, we only have to learn to tap into them."

"I'm only a play witch, you're the real deal."

"Was." Ninety-nine years ago, she'd broken the Threefold Law of Wicca and used her magical powers to come between a man she *thought* she loved and the woman he *truly* loved. The cost for breaking the law was losing her powers and being cursed. And the curse couldn't have been a simple wart on her nose. No. The Witches Council had to come up with something more elaborate and fitting the crime.

They cursed her to an endless existence of living each year in a different woman's life. New Year's Eve a hundred years ago, when the clock struck twelve, her body died and her soul drifted into the body of another woman. For an entire year, she lived in that woman's life, in that woman's body, sharing all her hopes, fears, trials and desires. At midnight on New Year's Eve, she moved to another and so it had been for ninety-nine years.

As midnight approached, Catherine knew her time in this body had reached an end. Kindra Marshall, her current host, wouldn't remember her when she'd gone, but she'd remember everything else from the past year and hopefully continue on where Catherine had left off.

From the moment she'd leaped into Kindra's body, Catherine knew she could help the woman. First thing was to get her down off the ledge and back on track in her life.

She'd done all she could to bolster Kindra's spirit and boost her self-confidence. Her work showed it. Her talent for magnificent painting had grown in beauty and skill over the past year and she was ready to stand on her own.

Then why did Catherine have the feeling she was abandoning her?

"Any chance of you jumping into my head?" Dolly hooked her arm through Catherine's and walked with her to the door. "I'd sure like to know all the spells you know."

"I don't get to choose. I get what they give me." Catherine turned to her. "Do you remember the healing spell I taught you yesterday?"

"Yeah. I've never had such a quick recovery from a migraine. Thanks."

"See? You have powers. All you have to do is believe in yourself."

"I could say the same for you."

Catherine shook her head. "I screwed up. I'm locked into this deal until the council sees fit to free me."

"Well then, tell Kindra to take a break and let you have one night out."

"She doesn't mind and she's so quiet, I barely know she's there."

"Good." Dolly's lips turned up in a wicked grin. "'Cause tonight, we're going to get you laid."

"Remember, this isn't my body."

"Like you said, Kindra won't mind. She might even enjoy it." Dolly punched the down button on the elevator. "Call it your last night in town. We're going to party!"

* * * * *

"BJ, I don't feel much like celebrating. I think I'll just hang out here and watch a game on television." Sam Cade dropped his keys on the counter in the kitchen and pulled a six-pack of beer out of the fridge. He yanked a can out of the plastic rings and tossed it to his friend, BJ Drake.

"Oh no you don't." He popped the top and downed a long swig of the stuff before continuing. "You're going out with me even if I have to drag you. What are friends for if they can't be there when you get dumped?"

Sam glared at BJ. "Thanks for rubbing it in."

"Hey, you were the one who'd told me you saw it coming."

"Yeah, but somehow I didn't think it would be on New Year's Eve."

"I think Ashley was looking forward to the diamond earrings you gave her for Christmas." BJ grinned. "Didn't give them back, did she?"

"Not a chance." He should have broken it off earlier instead of waiting for Ashley to do the dumping. Six hundred dollars was a lot of money on a cop's salary. "I'll count it as an expensive lesson."

"To hell with the lesson, I'd ask her to give them back."

"Let's not talk about it anymore. I just want to move on." Sam headed for the couch, scooping the television remote up in one hand. "Who's playing tonight?"

BJ swiped the remote and stuffed it between the leather couch cushions. "I told you I wasn't letting you off light. I'm without a date, and you're without a date. It's New Year's Eve and we're going out."

Sam chuckled. "Sorry, I don't date guys."

BJ heaved a huge sigh. "A million starving comedians and I get stuck with you. Come on, at least let's see if there's any action at the party downstairs. I hear your building has one of the best New Year's Eve parties in the area."

"No, I'm not in the mood."

"Forget it, you're coming. I'll pick a woman for you, and you can pick one for me. Maybe we'll have more luck if we don't pick our own."

"There's a thought." Despite his desire to stay in and forgo the partying, he owed his friend for standing by him. "Okay, but only for an hour. If it's lame, I'm opting for the game on TV."

"Deal."

"And I get to pick the woman for you?" He rubbed his chin. "Let's see, should we be able to weigh her in pounds or tons?"

"Watch it, buddy, I can always return the favor."

Downstairs, the lobby was decorated in shiny gold streamers, silver balloons and enough sparkling lights to light all of Hell's Kitchen. Sam checked his watch. He owed BJ fifty-five more minutes.

The disc jockey played a soft, sultry tune. Sam was a practical guy who rarely hit the dance floor, but something about this song called out to him. The song was ripe for couples to do some serious belly-rubbin' and a dozen or more couples headed for the dance floor and to the music.

Damn. New Year's Eve and alone.

"Hey, I got one for you." BJ handed him a glass of champagne and pointed across the floor at a woman with long, golden blonde hair and a shimmering silver dress that hugged every curve of her body. He glanced around. "Where's mine?"

Sam missed BJ's question, his gaze captivated by the woman standing with a glass of champagne, a sad smile playing around her lips. Something about her pale blue eyes and the way she stared with longing at the couples dancing amid soft blinking lights called out to him. Despite his words to the contrary, Sam wanted to meet the woman. His feet shifted and he stepped out.

BJ's hand smacked him in the arm. "Did I do right by you, buddy?"

Boy, did he. No use letting him in on the news. BJ would just get a big head, besides, Sam wasn't sure he should move on his instincts to go meet the woman. "I guess she's all right."

"Now, where's mine? I'm anxious to meet the future Mrs. Drake."

Sam gave his friend an exasperated look. "Aren't you getting ahead of yourself?"

"I never date a woman I'm not willing to marry." BJ stared around the room. "So where is she?"

A woman with a shock of bright red curls joined the blonde. Sam squelched the chuckle rising in his chest. Perfect. "She's next to the blonde. Say hello to the future Mrs. Drake."

"Hey, I gave you a sex goddess and you give me Little Orphan Annie?"

"BJ Drake, I've never known you to pass on a challenge. Are you telling me you aren't going to give my choice for you a chance?"

BJ scowled. "Some friend you are." He grabbed another glass of champagne from a passing caterer. "Come on, let's go meet our futures."

Now that he was headed across the floor to meet the blonde, Sam wasn't so sure it was a good idea. What would he say? He'd been out of the dating scene for the most part, having been in a steady relationship for the past year and a half. His gut clenched and butterflies invaded. Storming a crack house wasn't nearly as nerve-racking as chatting up a strange woman who looked like a supermodel.

Since this was BJ's idea, Sam couldn't back out now. Not with BJ headed the same way. Tamping down his nerves, he attacked the task as if he were about to face a crime boss head-on.

When Sam and BJ were only halfway across the floor, two other men approached the women. They shook hands and then the men led them out onto the dance floor.

"Damn." BJ shook his head. "Guess if you snooze you lose. I was getting used to the idea of a redhead. I've never been with a redhead before."

"Songs only run for three minutes," Sam pointed out. Not that he cared. Or so he told himself, although the sense of relief he felt came out of nowhere when he realized the music had changed to a lively rock beat. The thought of the silvery blonde in another man's arms did bad things to his insides. Was it possible to be jealous even when you hadn't met the woman?

BJ glanced around the lobby. "I could use a beer."

"What, had enough champagne?" Sam's gaze followed the woman around the floor.

"Not particularly. Wanna hit the bar?"

"You go ahead. I'm fine for now." BJ could have stayed or gone, Sam wouldn't have known. He only had eyes for her. Was she a tenant in the apartment complex? Had he ridden the elevator with her a hundred times and never seen her? Was he becoming obsessed in only a few short minutes?

Impossible.

By the time the song ended, his hands were clenched in his pockets. A sultry rhythm took the place of the rock song and the man the blonde had been dancing with grabbed her hand when she would have walked away.

No way. All his cop instincts kicked in and Sam charged onto the dance floor like a bull moose in full rut.

The woman was shaking her head and tugging against the man's grip.

"Hi, sweetheart. I see you found a dance partner while I was away." Sam turned to the man whose hand was gripping the blonde's wrist. "Thank you for entertaining my wife while I ran up to check on the babysitter."

"Huh?" The man's grip loosened, and he dropped the woman's arm. "Excuse me." Then he ran like a scalded cat.

"You'd think I had the plague the way that guy took off." She rubbed at the red mark on her wrist from the guy's bruising fingers. "Thanks." Then she turned the full force of her smile on him.

The music swirled around them, weaving a tantalizing spell on Sam. Now that he'd done the cop thing, he should turn around and leave. He'd just been dumped by one woman—he didn't need the complications of another woman in his life so soon. He'd only be on the rebound. Wouldn't he? "Would you like to dance?"

"I suppose it's only right, after all we're married and have children together." She moved into his arms and laid her fingertips against his chest, her body straight, despite the music's intimate rhythm. "One problem..."

"If it's a bad guy, I'll shoot him." He tried to pull her closer, but she pushed against him. "Really, I'm a cop, no thug is too tough." Where was he getting this corny talk? Sam resisted the urge to slap his own forehead.

"Slow down, Lone Ranger. I don't need rescuing." She laughed, the sound better than the music and twice as intoxicating as the best champagne. Make that rum and coke. "I just want to know the name of my husband."

Her scent wrapped around him, the soft aroma of honeysuckle and moonlight. He should leave, now. "Sam. My name's Sam Cade." He leaned back. "And your name?"

"Cath—Kindra."

Why had she stumbled over her name? Was she afraid he was a tom cat on the prowl? "Kindra, huh?" He stared hard into her pale blue eyes. "You don't look like a Kindra."

Her smile faded and she looked away. "Well, that's who I am." *Take it or leave it* were the unspoken words on the end of her sentence.

The sad look had returned and Sam found himself wanting to erase it. Must be the cop in him always trying to rescue the damsel in distress. "Now that we know each other's name, maybe we can dance." Just one dance and he'd leave her and go back to his room to drink beer and watch a game on television.

She melted into his arms and together they moved around the dance floor, or rather swayed in place, all the right body parts rubbing. The rubbing turned into an intoxicating friction that had his cock hardening against her soft belly. He shifted to ease a little distance between them. She'd run screaming if she knew what he wanted to do to her here on the dance floor.

When they turned, she moved closer, her head falling back, exposing the length of her slender white neck. Had he been a vampire, he'd have drunk her in. As a mere

mortal, he pressed his lips to the pulse beating erratically beneath pale, silky skin. The moment his lips touched her, he knew he was a goner. He wanted to bury himself deep in this woman's body and claim her for his own. His knee pushed between her legs and he pulled her hips close. To hell with keeping his distance. He wanted to feel her sliding against him, skin to skin, cock to pussy.

Her arms tightened around his neck and she trailed kisses along his jaw line until her lips met his.

As his mouth plundered hers, he forgot where they were, all his earlier troubles, everything but the taste of this woman who'd bewitched him from the moment he saw her across the room.

His tongue dueled with hers, his hands slipping lower to rest on the curve of her buttocks. When he came up for air, the room slowly materialized until he realized they'd been going at it in the middle of an empty dance floor. The DJ had taken a break and he and Kindra were the only people left standing.

Heat rose up his neck and into his cheeks.

Kindra blinked and looked around at the people staring at them. Her pale skin turned a delicate pink and she pushed away from him. "I'd say everyone would be convinced we're married now. If you'll excuse me..." She turned and slipped away, disappearing into the mass of people lining the makeshift dance floor.

Sam took two steps after her and stopped. Did he really want to follow a woman who made him completely forget where he was? A woman who made him forget he'd had a steady girlfriend until just a few hours ago?

His body throbbed, *Hell yes!*

All the more reason to go back to his room and take a cold shower.

"Sam. I didn't know you had it in you." BJ handed him a beer, his gaze following Kindra's movement toward the elevator.

"Had what in me?" Sam couldn't take his eyes off her, despite his determination to give her up.

"That dirty dancing thing you were doing out there. I didn't even know you could dance." He nudged Sam in the side. "By the way, thanks."

"For what?"

"Dolly."

"Dolly?" Sam's brain wasn't engaged in his friend's conversation.

The redhead had caught up with Kindra and stopped her before she could push the elevator button.

"The woman you picked for me. The redhead? Hellooo." BJ smiled and waved at her. "She invited me up to her place. I'm bringing the drinks." He held up a bottle of Chardonnay and two wineglasses.

Dolly was saying something to Kindra. The blonde shook her head and then glanced back toward him, that sad look shadowing her pale face. Dolly left her and crossed the room toward Sam and BJ, her frown turning upward the closer she got to BJ.

Kindra stood for a moment, her shoulders slumped, staring at the elevator. Then, as if she'd made a decision, she threw her shoulders back and punched the button.

Knowing that elevator door would open and Kindra would get inside and disappear galvanized Sam's feet into action. Why was he holding himself back from exploring the possibilities with this woman? Something told him that if he let her get away tonight, he might never have a chance to talk to her again.

As foolish as the thought was, the air couldn't move freely through his lungs until he caught up with her.

When Sam reached the elevator, Kindra had stepped inside and the doors had closed. Damn! He watched the digital readout of the floor numbers as she ascended into the building. Seventeen...eighteen...nineteen...

With only twenty-five floors, she had to stop soon. Unless...

Twenty-five.

The elevator stopped on the top floor. The floor leading to the rooftop.

Sam poked the up button and tapped his foot impatiently as the second elevator made its descent from the twelfth floor. *Hurry up!*

She had to be on the roof. If not, he'd pound on every door on the twenty-fifth floor until he found her. He had to see her again.

Once inside the elevator, he leaned against the railing and stared at his reflection in the shiny stainless steel wall in front of him. Was that man with the crazed look in his eyes really Sam Cade, the cool, professional cop? His short dark hair stood straight up as if even his hair was tense. He ran a hand across his head, hoping to smooth his hair and his nerves.

He'd never been this anxious to see anyone, much less a woman who was practically a stranger. For a moment he considered stopping on another floor and getting off. This was crazy. He was crazy.

Then the door opened on the twenty-fifth floor. Across the hallway were the steps leading up to the roof and her.

Chapter Two

Catherine stood at the railing near the edge of the building fingering the small silver pentacle Dolly had given her as a gift on her last birthday. She wished she'd brought a wrap. Though the air was warmer than usual, it was still in the fifties, too cold to stay out for long.

After leaving the lobby, she couldn't go back to Kindra's empty apartment. With the full moon rising over the city, she had to get out for some air. This was her last night sharing Kindra's body. At the stroke of midnight, she'd start her new life in another woman's world.

Who would it be? A housewife, a businesswoman? A college student? A grandmother? For the past year, she'd inhabited the body of a young artist. An artist with serious emotional problems. Had Catherine not come to help her, she'd have been dead at the age of twenty-seven. Her fear for the girl was real. She didn't know how Kindra would hold up on her own.

"Hello, Catherine." A male voice drifted toward her as if on a breeze.

When she turned to see who'd called out her name, a violent shiver shook her from the back of her neck to the base of her spine. The night air was cool, but the trembling had nothing to do with the air temperature.

A man with shocking white hair and eyes such a pale blue they could be mistaken for ice stood three feet away from her. He wore a black trench coat and black trousers and had the hollow-eyed look of one who lived without the benefit of the sun for too long.

"Michael," she gasped, backing up a step until her bare back hit the cool metal of the rail.

"I've come to collect Kindra."

She frowned, her body stiffening. "No!" She held her hand out as if that would stop the Angel of Death from taking what he wanted. "I won't let you."

Michael shook his head, his lips twisting into a sad smile. "You can't protect her this time. When you're gone, she's mine."

It's okay, Catherine. Really.

"I won't let you die, Kindra. I won't let him take you." What she wouldn't give to have her magic back to toss a fireball at the Angel of Death. So what if it got her another ninety-nine years cursed. She'd do it for Kindra.

I want to go. I'm tired. I don't want to fight my demons.

"You're talented, beautiful and a gentle person. You deserve to live and share your talents with the world."

It's too hard.

The door leading to the stairs rattled. Someone was coming up to the roof.

Michael gave Catherine one last steady stare. "I'll be waiting." Then he was gone, as if he'd never even been there.

Kindra retreated to her silent place, leaving Catherine alone on the rooftop, the cold seeping into her skin.

Her knees buckled and she sank to the floor, her eyes dry, her heart aching for the young woman inside her. How could she stop the inevitable? She'd cheated death from claiming his prize a year ago, but she had no choice this time. A sob rose in her throat and she swallowed it down, burying her face in her hands.

"Kindra?" A deep male voice called out to her.

Gentle hands gripped her shoulders and lifted her to her feet. Then she was pulled against a solid wall of muscles and engulfed in a warm embrace. "What's wrong?" Sam Cade tipped her chin up and stared down in her eyes.

What could she say? By morning Kindra would be dead and Catherine would be somewhere else? A mirthless laugh escaped her lips, followed by a trickle of tears trailing down her cheeks.

Sam's thumb brushed a tear away, a frown creasing his forehead. "How can I help if you don't let me know what's bothering you?"

"You couldn't fix the problem if you tried. Even I can't."

"At least let me try."

She shook her head and pressed her cheek to his chest, listening to the sound of his heart beating against her ear. "Just hold me." She needed to feel him, touch him. He was so alive. Catherine wanted to feel alive again.

"You're freezing. Why don't you let me take you back to your apartment?"

"No!" Not yet. Not until midnight. Then she could let Kindra go back to her apartment and go to bed. Maybe she'd wake up just fine. Maybe Michael would give the girl a reprieve from death.

Maybe pigs flew in Manhattan.

"Then come back to my apartment. I have coffee and hot cocoa." He hooked his arm around her shoulder and led her away from the rails and through the doorway into the stairwell.

Numb and shivering now, Catherine's teeth rattled against each other. She let Sam take over. For so long, she'd had to be the strong one in every life she'd inhabited. Tonight she faced the knowledge her host would die. Suddenly the will to live welled up inside, filling her with a sense of urgency.

She turned to Sam. "Make love to me, Sam."

His eyes widened and he paused on the head of the steps leading down to the elevator. "Here? Now?"

"Yes. Here and now." She had to show Kindra how wonderful it was to live, how beautiful making love could be. Catherine wanted all those things herself. A chance to

live with one man for the rest of her life. Kindra had to see how precious was her gift of a healthy body with nerves, sensations and emotions to feed the soul. Catherine slipped the straps off her shoulders and shivered. "Make this a night we'll both remember."

* * * * *

Sam's nostrils flared and his cock shot to attention. "I can't say I don't want this because, dammit, I do. But this isn't the place. I barely know you. You're cold and will catch your death."

"Excuses. Don't give them to me. I don't have time." She shook her hair back, her eyes flashing. All the sadness had disappeared, replaced by quiet determination. "Do you know what it's like to live like every day might be your last?" She unzipped the back of her dress. And let it slide to the floor. In nothing but her lacy white string bikini panties and high heels, she reached for the buttons on his shirt. "Make love to me, Sam Cade. Please. I need to feel alive."

He reached out to push her away, only his hands didn't cooperate. Instead of pushing her away, they slid over the smooth white skin of her shoulders and down to the gentle rise of her breasts. His thumb rubbed the peaked tips, enjoying the way she quivered beneath his touch.

She worked the buttons loose one at a time until she reached his waistband. With a surprising amount of strength, she yanked the shirt from his pants and whipped the top button open on his trousers. Before she unzipped, she cupped his cock and balls, her fingers curling over them, squeezing gently through the fabric. A moan rose from her throat and she pushed his shirt open, pressing her breasts against his chest. Her calf slid up the back of his leg and brought him closer until her crotch rubbed the top of his thigh. "I'm on fire. Fuck me, Sam. Here in the stairwell."

"What if someone comes up here?"

"Let them watch. I'm alive and I want it all."

Ashley hadn't responded to his caresses with this much passion since their first date. No. She'd never responded to him with a free flow of passion, the dirty words or the roving hands. Hands that were now digging between his skin and the fabric of his boxers to fondle his cock.

Then she was tugging the zipper down and pushing his trousers to the floor, her hands skimming over his buttocks, cupping them in her palms and pulling him against her.

Sam was taken aback by her aggressiveness but too turned on to back down now. He leaned forward, captured the rosy tip of her breast between his teeth and sucked it into his mouth, laving it until it pebbled into a firm knot. Skimming the valley of her cleavage, he rose to the other breast and nibbled and licked it until it matched the previous one.

Kindra's fingers dug into his scalp and pressed him to her, a moan rumbling in her chest. "More."

Sam dropped to one knee on the cold tiled landing and trailed a line of kisses over her torso and down her flat belly to the indentation of her bellybutton. His fingers dipped further south to cup the mound of light-colored fur covering her pussy. The curly hairs were soft as spun silk and parted easily. With the tips of his fingers, he delved between her folds and found the hard little nub of her clit. Gently at first, he stroked her, dipping into her pussy for cream to lubricate his efforts. She was warm and wet there. He wanted to taste her nectar, swallow her juices and fuck her with his tongue.

As if she read his mind, the hands in his hair pushed his face lower.

His fingers smoothed a line between her cunt and her clit and he looked up at her as he lowered his lips to take her in his mouth, sucking her pussy. Her sweet cream wet his lips and tempted his taste buds and he dug his tongue inside, flicking and thrusting in the motion his cock longed to replicate.

His dick filled and straightened, taut with need. If he followed his cock, he'd slam into her and fuck her against the wall. But he wanted her to find pleasure first and her

moans and the way her pelvis rocked to the rhythm of his tongue thrusts provided more stimuli to prolong his desire and build his craving to be inside her.

With his thumb strumming her clit, he moved it to the opening of her pussy and poked it in. He licked his way up to her clit and flicked and teased her until her fingers pulled on his hair so hard, surely it would come out. Then she cried out and her hips jerked with her release. Sam didn't let up. He persisted until she dragged him up by the hair.

When he stood to his full height, he cupped her butt cheeks in his palms and raised her up his body to wrap her thighs around his waist. Then he pushed her against the wall, both of her hands trapped in one of his over her head.

"Fuck me, Sam." She leaned close and flicked her tongue over his lips still coated with her essence. "Fuck me like there's no tomorrow."

He needed no more encouragement. With her pinned to the wall, he slid his rock-hard cock into her until he filled her completely. Her warmth and wetness ignited him and he slammed into her, thrusting in and out. The force of his strokes made slapping, slurping noises that echoed off the bare walls of the stairwell.

Kindra's head moved side to side as she gasped and grunted with the effort to match his pace. "Oh God, that feels so good. I've never felt so alive, so full. Harder!"

He thrust again and again until he burst over the edge, a cataclysm of sensations exploding in his body. As he returned to earth, he let go of her wrists and gathered her against him, his knees shaking.

The sound of the elevator bell rang in the hallway below, followed by shouts and giggling.

"Someone's coming." Sam lifted her off his cock and stood her on the landing. As she stood in dazed silence, he slipped her dress over her shoulders, feeling like a heel. He had his pants up and almost zipped when a crowd of party-goers filled the stairwell below.

"Whoa!" A young man shouted, grabbed for the railing and missed. "Looks like someone beat us to it."

The men shouted with laughter and the women giggled.

Anger shot through Sam. Not at the people below, but at himself for making love with a beautiful woman in such a public place. She deserved better.

"Did you save some for me?" another man shouted.

The dazed look disappeared from Kindra's face and she smiled. "Sorry, all fucked out. Guess you'll have to find your own." With that, she pranced down the steps and through the mob, her dress hanging open in the back, the crack of her ass showing. When she got to the bottom, she looked back at him and quirked an eyebrow. "Are you coming? The night's not over until midnight."

Sam grabbed his shirt and took the stairs downward, two at a time, surrounded by wolf calls and slaps on the back.

When Sam joined Kindra, he zipped her dress up to shut off the view to the others.

A man shouted from the top. "Hey, you forgot something." In his hand, he twirled the lacy white panties Kindra had worn.

Sam would have run up the stairs and punched the man, taken the panties and come back down.

Kindra stopped him.

"You keep them for good luck." Then she hooked her arm through Sam's and led him to the elevator.

The thought that she wasn't wearing underwear made his cock throb anew. Was the incident in the stairwell a once-only event? Would she want to go at it again? Was he crazy to think he could do it again so soon after the last mind-blowing fuck?

Once the elevator doors closed, Sam punched the button for his floor.

When Kindra didn't reach for her own floor, Sam almost whooped aloud. He assumed she was going to come with him to his place where they could finish what they'd started.

When he tried to slip into the shirt he held, a slim white hand yanked it from his fingers and tossed it in the corner.

"Uh-uh." She shook her head and ran her fingers over his chest and downward. When she got to his pants, she made quick work of unzipping his fly and letting his cock spring free.

She stepped away from him, gathered the hem of her dress and lifted it above her waist. "I've always wanted to do it in an elevator." Then she propped one high-heeled shoe on the railing, exposing her glistening pussy to him.

Sam's mouth watered. "Aren't you afraid the doors will open?"

"That's the fun of it. The danger, the uncertainty. Isn't that what life is all about? Living each moment, in the moment?" She ran her hand over her soft blonde curls and dipped a finger into her pussy. "Hurry, before we get to your floor."

Sam didn't need any more of an invitation. He wrapped her legs around him and slid deep inside her warm, wet cunt, his cock filling and swelling the deeper he went.

She braced her palms on his face and made him look her in the eye. "I want you to know, I don't do this with perfect strangers. It's just tonight being New Year's Eve and well...you. You're just what this body needs." Then she pressed her lips to his, her tongue sweeping along the seam until he opened his mouth enough to let her inside.

What did she mean by *just what this body needs*? Though the thought puzzled him, it didn't worry him as much as the elevator opening and revealing them to the public. How would that look if the cop got arrested for indecent exposure?

The fear of getting caught spiked his adrenaline and he pumped all the faster. When the elevator bell dinged he jumped.

Kindra laughed out loud, a breathless sound, her eyes alight with mischief. "You should see your face."

The door slid open and he glanced over his shoulder, fully expecting to see Old Lady Benton with her little white Malti-poo mutt on a leash to go outside. Anticipating her outraged expression, Sam released the breath he'd held. The hallway was blessedly empty.

Grabbing her beneath the legs, without breaking their intimate connection, he half-ran, half limped down the hallway to his apartment. There he fumbled in his pants pocket for the key.

"Damn!" If he could only get inside before someone saw them so that he could finish what they'd started in the elevator.

Kindra's laughter filled the hallway, the sound contagious.

By the time he unlocked his door and fell inside, he was laughing right along with her and almost dropped her on the hardwood floor.

By the time they made it to the bedroom, his cock had slipped from inside her and gone soft. He set her on her feet and cupped her face in his hands. "I love your laughter and your smile."

The sad look returned, darkening Kindra's pale blue eyes to a rain-cloud gray. She tossed his shirt across a chair, her hands burning a path from his shoulders, down his arms and to his hips. "I've never had as much fun making love and probably never will again."

"Never say never." He wanted to make her laugh again, to bring out the smile he was quickly learning to love. "We always have tomorrow."

Her forehead wrinkled into a frown and she stared up into his eyes. "Sam, promise me something?"

"Anything." He slid the straps of her gown from her shoulders, following their descent with his lips. A kiss across her collarbone, one on the tip of her shoulder, another in the crook of her elbow. Her gown slipped down to her hips.

"If I'm not the same tomorrow, be gentle. Be patient."

He looked up, confused by her statement. "Are you telling me you had too much to drink tonight?"

She shrugged, the act making the gown slither to the floor. Naked except for her high heels, she was glorious. "Something like that."

"I promise I'll be patient." He pulled her against him, his cock swelling and nudging against her belly. "But for now, I'm anything but patient. I want to be inside you, filling you, fucking you." Then he kissed her, his hands sliding over her ass, his knees nudging her legs apart. If he didn't take her in the next few minutes, he'd explode. Then when he was a little more in control, he'd ask her what the hell she meant by not being the same tomorrow.

* * * * *

Catherine bounced from desolation and despair to joy and laughter and back to desolation. How the hell did she expect Kindra to react to all the stimuli she was subjecting her to?

As she backed toward the bed, her pulse pounding against her ears, her body on fire with desire, she sent a silent entreaty to her borrowed soul. *Kindra, this is the kind of thing you'd be missing if you give it all up.*

Kindra shivered, not in fear but in anticipation. *I could never do this on my own. You are my strength.*

When the backs of her legs bumped against the mattress, Catherine caught her breath. The hallway was exhilarating, the elevator exciting, but this...in a bed, like real lovers, was dangerous. Yet she couldn't slow the momentum, didn't want to. *Come along for the ride, Kindra.*

Gladly. I live through you, Catherine.

Her body an inferno of need, Catherine couldn't stop now, but she wanted Kindra to know this could be hers. *Let me show you what making love with a real lover feels like.*

I'm with you. Kindra's spirit lifted as if giving Catherine permission to show her the magic of making love.

Catherine scooted her ass up onto the bed, her legs still dangling over the side. She pushed aside the inner voice and let herself be in the moment with Sam.

He shucked his shoes and dropped his pants to the floor, his gaze locked with hers. "You're beautiful, Kindra."

Catherine couldn't help sharing one more comment with Kindra. *See? He thinks you're beautiful.* She pushed aside her own stab of envy for this woman whose perfect body wasn't hers. At one time she'd had her own vessel. She'd been blonde and blue-eyed, considered a beauty in her own right. But she'd squandered her looks and powers. Surely she could convince Kindra not to squander hers.

As Sam approached her, Kindra remained silent, a touch of fear edging its way past Catherine's desire.

Then Catherine was alone in her head, appreciating the jutting evidence of Sam's lust. His cock thrust out straight and thick.

With her pussy creaming, Catherine licked her lips, anxious to taste him.

Before he could reach the bed, she slid off and dropped to her knees, gathering his length in her hands. "You are magnificent."

Sam's chuckle cut off in a strangled sound when her lips wrapped around the tip of his cock.

Catherine glanced up.

His head was tipped back, his eyes closed. "Can't say anyone's ever called me magnificent. Sexy or handsome, maybe, but not magnificent." His words, an attempt at humor, were forced through clenched teeth.

Catherine ran the tip of her tongue across the velvety tip of his cock, dipping into the hole at the top. "How can you be so hard when your skin is so soft?" She didn't give him a chance to answer. Didn't want an answer, just wanted to experience every sensation. Her fingers feathered downward. Cupping his balls, she squeezed gently while she took him into her mouth.

Strong hands laced through her hair, pulling her closer until his penis touched the back of her throat. When she pulled back, he hissed, his hands clenching.

She settled into a steady rhythm, drawing him in and out of her mouth. Her hands grasped his hips, rocking him in and out to her strokes.

The tension built in the muscles of his ass, the thrusts growing faster and more uncontrolled. Suddenly, he stopped, his body going rigid, then he tried to push her away.

Despite the grip he had on her hair, Catherine held his hips in place and sucked his cock, coaxing him to come inside her mouth.

Warm liquid squirted into her throat and filled her mouth. She swallowed and teased the base of his cock with her tongue. He tasted of salt and musk, a heady combination that made her body burn for him.

When his cock quit throbbing, Sam pulled Catherine to her feet and lay her down over the edge of the bed.

Before she could protest, not that she would, he dropped to his knees, spreading her legs wide. One at a time, he draped her thighs over his shoulders, pressing kisses to the sensitive skin. He plunged his index finger into her pussy and twirled it around, scraping the inner lining of her cunt, teasing and flicking. When he removed the finger, he traced a slick path up to her clit and rubbed the nub, soaking it in her own juices. His tongue followed his finger, dipping into her cunt then licking a line up to her clit where he settled in to wreak havoc on her.

Lapping, nibbling and flicking raised her to a heightened sense of desire so great she felt as if she'd spontaneously combust. Was he a wizard capable of magic?

Catherine couldn't believe a mere mortal could elicit wave upon wave of lust from her body.

As she crested and rode the waves, his fingers dug into her cunt, filling and stretching the walls, pumping in and out in the same rhythm as his thrusting tongue. His thumb probed the tight ring around her ass, pressing against the entrance without going in.

Catherine's fingers clenched in his hair, her moans growing louder and more frequent. When she hit the top, she screamed out his name.

Sam's thumb pushed through her anus and his fingers shoved into her cunt as hard and deep as he could. All the while he flicked at her clit in a frantic pace meant to blow her mind.

And it did.

A kaleidoscope of sensations tumbled through Kindra's body, the force so great it rocked Catherine's world too. Never in nearly one hundred years had she felt such intensity, nor would she in another hundred years.

As she fell back to the earth, another ache built within. She wanted Sam inside her, filling the emptiness, warming her in places no one had touched in so long. So what if this wasn't her body, so what if after tonight she'd never see him again. Tonight was her chance at a little happiness. To hell with tomorrow.

Sam rose from the floor and flipped her over to where her tummy lay across the bed, her ass bumping against his hard cock. He pressed the tip of his penis to the lips of her cunt hovering on the edge. His large, calloused hands gripped her hips and he eased into her.

This is different. Kindra's voice popped into Catherine's lust-muddled brain.

"Do you like that?" Catherine spoke aloud, for a moment forgetting Kindra's voice was inside.

"You have to ask?" Sam thrust again, his hard cock speaking of his satisfaction.

Harder. It feels so good.

"Harder, Sam. Fuck me harder." She pushed up on her hands, rocking back against him, meeting each of his thrusts. The sound of his thighs slapping against her ass grew louder each time he plunged inside her.

Sam reached forward and palmed her breasts, massaging and pinching the tips as he fucked her like a dog.

The position was animalistic, it was an incredible turn-on and Catherine climbed that ragged peak to orgasm. Then she caught a glimpse of them in the mirror over the dresser. His muscular body riding her pale, sleek one. Catherine rocketed to the top, her body jerking with the force of her release.

She collapsed on the bed, her arms shaking so much she couldn't hold herself up. Sam collapsed over her, still inside her, still throbbing his own release. When his cock stopped spasming, he rolled to the side and pulled them both up to the pillows.

Once Catherine rested in the crook of his arm, her face pressed to his chest, he let out a shaky breath. "You're incredible."

"Same to you." She ran her fingers over the coarse hairs sprinkled across his chest and moved a thigh over one of his legs until her cunt pressed against his skin. She could go at it again and again all night long. If only she had all night.

Her head shot up. "What time is it?" Holy crap. She'd forgotten about the time. She couldn't leave Kindra in Sam's arms. She'd be completely freaked out when Catherine left her body.

Sam twisted his head around and fumbled with the alarm on the nightstand. "It's eleven-fifty-three. Why? Did you want to ring the New Year in?" He pressed a kiss to her hair and sucked the lobe of her ear between his teeth. "I can think of better ways to welcome in the New Year."

Panic rose up inside her, threatening to choke off her air. "I can't. I have to go."

"Why?" The arm around her tightened.

She leaned into him and pressed a kiss to his chest then moved up until her lips hovered over his. "I have to."

"When can I see you again?"

As if a knife cut into her, Catherine sucked in her breath, reminding herself that in five minutes she'd be God knew where in someone else's body, starting all over. Swallowing hard on the lump in her throat, she sent the silent question to Kindra, *Do you want to see him again?*

Fear racked her, making her entire body shake. *I can't.*

Catherine dropped a kiss to his lips, delving deep, knowing this would be their last. "I can't see you anymore." A tear slipped from her eye dropping to his cheek. Before he could form a response, she leaped off the bed. "I have to go."

She scooped her dress from the floor and stepped into it, zipping it the best she could as she scrambled for her heels.

"What the hell?"

"I can't explain. I can't see you again." She couldn't face him, couldn't witness the look of betrayal in his eyes.

"Are you married?"

"No." When she spotted her shoes, she grabbed them and ran for the door. With only minutes to spare, she had to get out. But she couldn't resist one last look.

Sam had climbed from the bed and was reaching for his trousers. His muscular, naked body was beautiful in the lamplight. She'd really miss him.

He was stepping into one trouser leg when Catherine jerked the door open. She had to get to the elevator before he did. If she left Kindra's body before she got away, Kindra would go nuts. Catherine punched the button on the elevator, holding her heels looped over one finger in her other hand. "Hurry! Hurry!"

As the doors slid open, Sam emerged from his apartment. "Kindra, wait!"

Catherine dove into the elevator and hit the button that closed the doors. Her fingers punched the lobby button. She didn't want to get off on her floor in case Sam followed her to Kindra's apartment. As the elevator descended, she counted the seconds. It must be midnight by now. When would her soul float free and Kindra be on her own?

When she reached the lobby level, she could hear the happy shouts of the party-goers ringing in the New Year. This was it.

"Take care, Kindra. I love you and please give your life a chance."

I love you too, Catherine. Don't worry about me. I'll be all right.

As she stepped into the crowded lobby, Dolly descended on her. "Catherine or Kindra?"

"Both." Catherine grabbed Dolly's hand and held on, not wanting to go but knowing she had to.

"The clock is striking midnight as we speak." Dolly hugged her. "I'll always be here for you. You know that."

"I know." Catherine kissed her cheek. "Be happy, Dolly. And watch out for Kindra."

"I will." Dolly's eyes glistened with unshed tears.

A tingling sensation started in her toes and worked its way up her legs into her torso. "Goodbye, Dolly. Blessed be."

Though Dolly's tears fell in earnest now, Catherine couldn't reach out and comfort her friend. She'd risen above the gathering, weightless and disembodied from Kindra's mortal being.

There in the middle of the dance floor stood Michael, dressed in black, his shock of white-blond hair a striking contrast to the somberness of his clothing. Invisible to all those around him, his gaze was locked with Kindra's.

"No!" Catherine could see all that was going on, but she was powerless to do anything about it.

Kindra moved toward Michael, her steps slow yet steady.

"Kindra? Are you all right?" Dolly held onto Kindra's arm and walked alongside her.

"I'm fine," she answered in a monotone voice, her gaze fixed in front of her.

"Shouldn't we go back to your room, sweetheart?" Dolly tugged the woman's arm to no avail.

"No, I think I'd like some fresh air." By this time, they'd reached the lobby doors exiting out onto the busy streets of Hell's Kitchen.

Dolly held tight to Kindra's arm. "No, you can't go out there."

Kindra turned to Dolly, her face set and strangely at peace. "Let me go, Dolly. It's what I want."

"No. Catherine made me promise."

"Go back to the party, Dolly." She peeled Dolly's hands off her arm and pushed through the door.

Catherine moved to follow, knowing she could breeze through the entrance as if glass, brick and mortar meant nothing.

Behind her, she heard a male voice call out, "Kindra!"

Sam pushed his way through the crowd, a frantic frown creasing his forehead.

Kindra didn't stop. She followed Michael out onto the street.

Catherine burst through the walls of the building just as Kindra reached the curb to the busy street. "Michael, don't do this."

"It's her time, Catherine. I've come to collect a soul, and I won't leave without it." Michael held out his hand to Kindra. "Come."

If she had a body, she'd throw it in front of Kindra to stop her, but Catherine was nothing more than a lifeless soul. "Please, Michael. If you want a soul, take mine. Kindra's young and has so much talent. She deserves to live. Spare her and take me."

Michael's brows rose on his forehead. "Take you? You stole her from me a year ago today. Why should I take you?"

"I don't know. Just do it. Kindra is a gentle soul who wouldn't hurt a fly. She deserves to live more than I do. I'm mean and nasty. That's why the council cursed me. I deserve to die. Please, Michael. Don't take Kindra."

Michael rubbed his chin for a moment and then looked up to where Catherine's soul hovered. "No." Then he stuck out his hand.

Powerless, Catherine watched in horror as Kindra stepped off the curb in front of a speeding car. The car hit her in the side, flinging her back to the curb like a rag doll.

At that exact moment, Sam spilled from the doorway onto the sidewalk. "Fuck!" He grabbed the closest person to him. "Call 911. Now!" Then he flung the man to the side and dove to the pavement where Kindra lay as still as death.

Sam felt for a pulse. "Kindra! Talk to me. Please talk to me. Oh God. No pulse." He breathed into her mouth and leaned his palms into the middle of her chest in the rhythm of one trained in CPR. "Someone please call 911." Sam breathed into her mouth again.

Catherine watched, her heart breaking at Sam's desperation. Then she felt a presence beside her, a warmth like a hand being placed on her shoulder. "Kindra?"

"Yes, Catherine. It's me." Kindra's voice sounded in her mind.

"Why did you do it?"

"I wasn't meant for this life. I wish you'd understand."

"But what about Sam? Now he has no one." And neither did she. The thought of going into another woman's body weighed on her like a pall of incredible sadness.

"He loves you, not me." Her voice faded as if swallowed in the depths of a cave.

"You don't know that for sure!" Catherine shouted, angry at the senseless death of a beautiful, talented woman. "It's selfish to take your own life. Don't you know what a gift it is to live in your own body?"

"Then accept my gift." The warmth of Kindra's spirit drifted away, her words resonating in Catherine's soul.

Her anger ran off like rain in a gutter until her thoughts grew numb. "Will you be happy, Kindra?" Catherine called out.

"I'm at peace."

What about Sam? Would he blame himself for Kindra's death? The tingling began again, a harbinger of her transition into another person's body and borrowed soul. Would she ever know what happened to Sam?

Her view blurred and distilled into blackness.

Chapter Three

The body she landed in hurt all over, like being born again, only worse. And there was a heavy pressure pushing against her chest in a steady rhythm. Then someone's lips descended onto hers and breathed into her lungs.

The touch of those lips felt so familiar, so beautiful. The scent of mint and leather filled her nostrils. He smelled like...Sam.

Catherine lifted her arms and wrapped them around the person's neck and kissed him like there was no tomorrow and he kissed her back.

His hands ran through her hair and across her body. "Kindra! Please tell me you're all right."

"Sam?" she whispered. When she opened her eyes, she was no longer a disembodied spirit watching the scene of Kindra's suicide from above, she was in Kindra's body lying on the pavement with Sam leaning over her.

His brows were drawn together, his eyes suspiciously bright. "Can you hear me?"

"Of course," she replied, her voice sounding more normal. She tried to sit up, but his hand on her chest held her down. "What happened?" Why had she ended up back in Kindra's body?

"You were in an accident. Can you move? Are you hurting anywhere?"

She experimented with each body part, moving her arms, then her toes and when she got to her legs, pain shot through her left hip. "My hip. It hurts."

"Lie still. The ambulance will be here in just a minute." He leaped to his feet, his gaze panning the busy street to the left and the right. "Damn, where's that ambulance?"

"Kindra?" Dolly knelt down beside her and lifted her hand. "Are you okay, honey? Are you feeling yourself?" She stared down into Catherine's eyes as if searching.

"I'm here, Dolly."

The redhead leaned close and kissed her cheek, whispering into her ear, "Is it you, Catherine?" She leaned back to study her.

Catherine nodded.

Dolly's eyes welled with moisture and she mouthed the word, *Kindra*?

"Gone," Catherine said quietly.

"How? Why?" Dolly asked in a quiet tone.

"I don't know why." Catherine's body tingled, a wave of heat radiating throughout as if her spirit revived as well as the body she inhabited. It began at her center and spread throughout her being until she felt as if heat and light radiated from her fingertips.

"What the hell?" Dolly stood back, her eyes widening.

"What?" Catherine asked. Of all the others gathered around, gawking, no one was staring at her like Dolly as if she'd grown a horn in the middle of her forehead.

Dolly pressed a hand to her mouth and scanned the faces of people to her left and her right before she dropped to her knees and said in a hushed, reverent tone, "You're glowing."

Catherine lifted a hand. Just as Dolly said, her skin glowed an eerie yellow light. The same light she'd witnessed when she'd come of age as a witch.

She flexed her fingers and little bolts of electricity arced through the air.

"They're back!"

"Who's back?" Dolly's forehead creased in confusion.

"Not who, my powers are back!" Catherine grabbed her friend's hand and squeezed so tightly the woman grimaced. Joy filled every corner of her heart and for a moment she felt like shouting out loud.

Then she reminded herself of the cost of her regained life and powers. Kindra had given her the gift of her body. Catherine wouldn't be here without the young woman's determination to move on. Catherine attempted to sit up.

Sam immediately dropped to his haunches. "Sweetheart, you need to lie still until you can see a doctor. We don't know what kind of damage you received until they do X-rays."

"I'm okay, Sam. Really." She shifted to sit up and pain knifed through her hip. Despite her determination to hide her pain, she couldn't help grimacing.

The sound of sirens echoed off the buildings, moved closer.

Catherine cast a desperate glance at her friend. "Dolly, do you remember that poem I taught you last night?"

Sam stared from Catherine to Dolly and back. "Poem? You've been hit by a car and you want to recite poetry?"

Dolly nudged Sam aside. "What poem?" Her eyes widened and a smile lifted the corners of her lips. "Oh that poem!"

"Please hold my hand." Catherine reached out to her friend and in quiet voices they recited the words.

 "Invoke the goddess of the moon

 Invoke the god of the sun

 Collect thy body and spirit

 Combine their powers as one

 Thy flesh, thy bone,

 Thy heart and thy soul

 Melded together

 Shall heal as a whole.

 So mote it be."

Catherine nodded and, together, she and Dolly closed their eyes, drawing from within and without on the strength of the earth.

"Kindra?" Sam's voice called to her, his hand cupping her face. "The ambulance is here."

She opened her eyes and smiled up at him, loving the way his brows dipped downward when he was concerned. "I don't need an ambulance." To prove it, she pushed to her feet and stretched. Her body was whole again. No pain, no bruises.

Her body.

How strange to think this vessel of flesh and bone would now be hers. After ninety-nine years of the curse, she'd resigned herself to sharing. Hollowness existed where Kindra's soul had been. Catherine mourned her loss, yet somehow she knew Kindra was where she wanted to be and her tortured soul was at peace.

"I still think you should let a doctor see you," Sam insisted.

"I'm perfectly fine. I don't need a doctor." She threw her arms around Sam and hugged him, the joy of the New Year filling her to full. She winked over her shoulder at Dolly. Dropping her voice to a low, seductive level, she whispered into Sam's ear. "I'll let you count all my ribs and search for bruises if it'll make you feel better. I know it'll make me feel better. What do you say?"

He pushed her to arm's length, scowling at her. "You need to see a doctor. You were out, your heart stopped, the works. I insist."

"And waste the rest of the night? Please, Sam. Let me show you how well I am."

Emergency medical personnel piled out of the ambulance and rushed forward.

Sam glanced from the medical crew to her and back. "At least let the EMTs look you over."

"Deal." She turned to the first man dressed in the navy blue uniform of the New York City Emergency Medical Services and grinned. "I'm feeling better."

After the man ran through her vital signs and shone lights in her eyes, he shrugged. "You appear to be fine. I recommend you go to the hospital for observation in case you have a concussion. But it's your call."

"Thanks." She hooked her arm through Dolly's and Sam's. "I think I'll stay here with my friends. We have some celebrating to do."

After the ambulance left without an additional passenger, Dolly pulled her arm free of Catherine's. "I have some serious dancing to do with a cop inside. If you'll excuse me."

"By all means, dance." When Dolly had disappeared inside, Catherine felt shy standing alone with Sam, which was foolish after the intimacies they'd shared a few minutes before. "So, Sam, what do you want to do with the rest of the evening?" She didn't look up at him, afraid he'd tell her to get her whacky self out of his life. What must he think after she'd run from his apartment and out into the street like a maniac?

"I don't know." He pushed a hand through his hair, making it stand on end. He stood in his untucked, wrinkled shirt and shoes without socks, looking sexier than any man had a right to. "It's been a crazy night."

She laughed. "You're telling me. I can't begin to explain it all, but I bet I can make it up to you." With a smile, she held out her hand. *Please, take it.* With all her heart she wished he'd take her back to bed and make love to her and only her.

For a moment, he stared down at her hand. "I've been a cop for eight years and this whole situation just doesn't seem right. My instincts have never been wrong." His gaze met hers.

"Do your instincts tell you that I'm bad news?" She held her breath, waiting for his answer. He might decide she was a flake and not worth the trouble. Catherine wanted him so badly her body ached, a delicious sensuous ache.

After a moment's hesitation, his lips curled upward in a smile and he shrugged. "No." A twinkle glinted in his eyes when he gave her a mock frown. "But I'm watching you." He took her hand and pulled her into his arms.

Her heart bursting with happiness, Catherine leaned up on her toes. "I'm counting on it." She kissed him on the lips and pressed her body close to his. "I'd much rather you were watching me in the nude though."

"Despite my better judgment, I have to agree." He returned her kiss and pressed one to the tip of her nose. "I've only known you for less than a day, but I think you've bewitched me."

Catherine straightened, her face going serious. "No, sir. I swear. I wouldn't bewitch you or anyone else. Promise." She held her hand up as if taking an oath.

He laughed and nibbled her ear. "I believe there's an elevator with our name on it."

"You're on."

They ran through the crowded lobby and into an empty elevator. Once the door closed behind them, Sam lifted her skirt, Catherine unzipped his trousers and they were making love before they hit the fourth floor.

As Sam drove his hard, thick cock into her pussy, Catherine wrapped her legs around his waist, threw her head back and shouted, "Blessed be."

About the Author

I've written for Ellora's Cave since September of 2006 when my first release *Trouble with Harry* came out. Since then, I've expanded from reluctant genies to werewolves, chameleons, vampires and witches. For me, reading and writing gives me the freedom to explore strange new worlds and write the characters and creatures clamoring to escape my mind. I like writing everything from romantic comedy to dark and sexy suspense. Mostly I like to escape into other worlds whether grounded in reality or complete fantasy. Come...escape with me!

Myla welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her author bio page at www.ellorascave.com.

Also by Myla Jackson

Ellora's Cavemen: Dreams of the Oasis I *anthology*

Jacq's Warlord *with Delilah Devlin*

Shewolf

Trouble With Harry

Trouble With Will



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