

# Christmas Cookies



*Christmas of the  
Damned*  
MARIE TREANOR

Changeling Press

# **Christmas Cookies: Christmas of the Damned**

## **Marie Treanor**

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## **Christmas Cookies: Christmas of the Damned**

### **Marie Treanor**

No one remembers why, but every year on the same cold December night, the survivors of the ruined City of the Damned gather to celebrate a miracle that never happens...

When a wounded wolf appears outside the city's most popular nightclub, Sol, the tough doorman, rescues her from the violence of his patrons. He recognizes that the wolf is more than she seems. But then, so is Sol. A man of few words who hides his gift and his generosity, only he can unlock the wolf's lost humanity.

And as it turns out, the meeting of these two remarkable creatures is just one of the miracles of this Christmas night.

## Chapter One

The wolf absorbed their laughter like an echo of the past. Padding through the snow at a safe distance behind them, she clung to the shadows of ruined buildings, slunk past the few newly rebuilt ones, carefully sniffing the air for hidden humans. Snowflakes clung to her fur.

The wolf didn't normally come this far into the city. Exhausted and injured, she had been scavenging in the suburbs when she was drawn by the good humor of many voices, by the numbers of people out in the cold, not hunting for prey or for food, just walking to the inner city.

And then she saw their destination, and stopped dead in her tracks.

An old warehouse, tall, dingy, without any sign to explain its purpose -- unless you counted the harsh, relentless beat of the music that escaped whenever the door opened. From her place in the shadows, the wolf pushed her quivering body into the wall and watched the people she'd trailed make their way up the rickety iron stairs to the door.

There was a pale electric light above it that had never been there before. The wolf became fascinated by the way the snow glistened as it fell through the weak beam.

And then the door opened once more in a blare of music and a big man wearing only jeans and a black vest stepped into the light and held out his hand. He was totally bald. Instead of hair there was some sort of tattoo.

The wolf turned her head from side to side, struggling with another memory. The waiting people deposited a couple of knives in the bouncer's hand. Implacably, he continued to block their way until, reluctantly, one of the women took a large stone from her pocket and handed that over too.

The bouncer moved quickly. With his free hand, he delved inside the first man's jacket and came out with a jagged knife. The man looked sheepish. Impassively, the bouncer stood aside and let them in.

As they passed through the door in front of him, the bouncer glanced across the road. Even over that distance, his eyes were sharp, piercing. The wolf cowered closer into the wall, prepared to bolt. Then the door shut with a bang and the night was blessedly silent.

The wolf moved, trembling so much she could hardly walk. She sniffed the wall against which she had hidden. As if searching for clues. But the clues were in her mind, in a past long locked away. She didn't want to remember. She was hungry. That was all that mattered.

Limping badly, she made her way across the road. She hadn't got far before the nightclub door opened again, and a girl came out -- a beautiful redhead in a slinky dress, pulling the bouncer after her by his shirt.

"Shit, it's cold out here!" she gasped. "You'll have to warm me up! Quick!"

The bouncer pushed her back into the wall beside the door. His hands, big, strong-looking hands, roved across her hips and down her thighs, tugging at her skirt. With a gasp, the girl pulled down the neck of the dress herself, and he covered one naked breast with his hand, bending his head to the other.

The wolf stood frozen in the middle of the road. Human copulation. It wasn't the first time she'd seen it. It wasn't the first time she'd seen that particular male engaged in it. It wasn't even the first time she'd imagined those big, strong hands on her flesh instead, stroking her, caressing her while he fucked her.

Memory thundered in her head, making her whimper. Pain consumed her, fear and lust held her frozen in the middle of the road while the snow fell thickly on her coat and sprinkled around the man and the woman at the top of the stairs. The girl moaned as he ground his hips into her. His hands roamed under her dress, over her thighs and buttocks, lifting her leg over his hip. As he pushed his hand between their bodies,

reaching for the fastening of his jeans, the girl was already crying out with impending climax, just from the rubbing of his crotch between her legs...

"Jesus Christ, what's that?"

The words stabbed into her and she spun around to confront a group of men.

"Dog," said one of them uncertainly.

"It's not a bloody dog! Look at it, it's a wolf. Weapons!"

The speaker held a sling in his hands, already threaded with a stone large enough to cause her injury. The pain receded. She was wolf.

One of the men objected. "This far into the city? It must be a lupi!"

"There are no other lupi out tonight. It's not the right time for the bloody werewolves. And even if she is..."

The man moved fast. He aimed for the wolf's head, but she ran at him and the sling-stone missed its intended target, instead hitting her on her already weak leg. Her jump for his throat failed. Instead, she head-butted him in the stomach with enough force to knock him backwards. She fell on top of him, snarling, but before she could reach his throat, the other men were on her from behind, trying to haul her off, to strangle and stab her, and she could only bite and snarl and twist her body, using every part of it as a weapon.

She didn't want to die like this, yet it would be a relief to give up at last, be at peace... If she could just kill one of them first.

The hands clutching at her throat disappeared abruptly, as though snatched away. An exclamation, a warning shout, some loud thuds and groans, and suddenly there was no one left for her to fight.

Her attackers were picking themselves up off the ground, muttering but not retaliating, and the wolf stared into the eyes of her savior. The bouncer.

Behind him, the wolf saw one of the men stagger to his feet. Retrieving his knife, he lunged toward the bouncer. The bald man whipped round and his would-be attacker stopped dead. One of the other men tugged his friend's arm urgently, and they all took off down the nearest alley.

The bouncer turned back to the wolf. She growled, wondering how fast she could run, how well she could fight with her injured leg and her new wounds. Blood dripped from her neck, clogging her fur, puddling on the dirty ground at her feet. He stared at her. Dark eyes, hard, veiled, dangerous. She stared back, desperately.

*Show no fear, show no fear.*

Slowly, the bouncer walked toward her, the same lithe danger in his step. She growled again, warningly. Her whole body quivered. The bouncer stopped and crouched down in front of her.

She could rip his throat out. She could try.

But somehow, his eyes held hers, and she didn't. As her breathing adjusted to her stillness, she sensed no threat from him. He hadn't saved her to kill her himself. And yet if those terrible, piercing eyes weren't killing her, they still stabbed deep into her heart.

When they left hers, she knew relief, and loss. But he only scanned her body, taking in her wounds, her skinniness, her exhausted, fearful trembling.

A shout of laughter distracted him, causing him to glance over his shoulder at the new group of people approaching the club. One of them waved, and he lifted one hand in response before he turned back to her. His mouth twisted, curving slightly upward in a fleeting smile. His lips were full, the only softness in his face, betraying his sensuality and, perhaps, unexpected sensitivity.

He rose to his feet, fluidly, and the wolf panicked, backing up a step. His eyes didn't leave her. Slowly he held down his hand, but she had his scent already -- the sweat and excitement of the club and beneath it, clean skin, a unique, sensual male smell she had no name for. Still holding out his hand, he took a step away from her, then another, and she realized he was inviting her to go with him.

She glanced beyond him to the club. Warmth. Shelter from the icy wind. A roof.

A building full of humans. Violence. Danger.



And yet she doubted she had the strength to find her own shelter tonight. It was so long since she had trusted a human, she had forgotten how. It didn't seem to matter. As she took a first tentative step after him, his lips curved again.

\* \* \*

The heat inside the club was like a furnace after the snow and ice outside. Generated as much by bodies as by the braziers hung randomly from the high ceiling, it brought the wolf to a standstill in the doorway.

Sol pushed open the inner door to his "office." It creaked, resisting stiffly because he hardly ever used it, preferring to vault across the low window between office and entrance hall. But he didn't think the skinny wolf had the strength left to jump through it.

The smell of massed humanity must have freaked her, because she shook uncontrollably. Tenser than a coiled spring, she was ready to bolt at the first movement, the first sound she heard over the crashing music.

Sol willed her to look at him. She had beautiful, amber eyes full of pain that almost brought him to his knees. Only the long years of practice kept his face and body unmoving, the groan silent in his throat. Slowly, the wolf walked across the floor, brushed past him into the office. It was almost a shock to feel heat still in her scrawny body.

Because he felt she would be more comfortable that way, Sol left the room dark. It was still easy to find the bottle of clean water, to fill the big tankard-sized mug. He laid it on the floor under the boarded window. Then he lifted the blanket from the slashed-up chair it was covering and spread it on the floor. All the time, the wolf watched him with her glowing, pain-filled eyes.

It was unbearable. But she wouldn't let him touch her yet. Forcing himself to walk slowly, he left the office and closed the door behind him -- less to keep the wolf in than to keep curious staff out.

Resuming his place by the club entrance, he leaned against the wall, resting his head on the cold, vibrating stone. Away from the wolf, his pain was less. Manageable. He gazed into the mass of writhing, swaying bodies, and gradually relaxed.

They came every year on this night. They no longer remembered why, but they never missed it, drawn by some race-memory of the need to celebrate. And there was rarely any trouble. Even before law began to return to the city, there was a unique atmosphere of goodwill in the club on this night. It had nothing to do with the lupi guard who now patrolled the area.

Meagan, the girl he had almost screwed outside, caught his eye and grinned at him. He winked back. He liked her, and now that he saw her again, he became only too aware that he hadn't reached the satisfaction he'd been hoping for when the wolf's pain distracted him. Unfortunately, she wouldn't fuck him in the club. She had a man with her. Her security, her long-term lover. Sol was her stolen excitement. Her "bit of rough." Which was fine with him. Sol didn't have relationships. He had transitory passions, quick fucks on the dance floor or up against the wall. And only on this night did it ever seem unsatisfactory to him. On the one night the rest of the population seemed to reach out in hope, he realized the hopelessness of his life, of theirs.

Restlessly, he took his head off the wall. The vibrating rhythm of the band's raucous music made his brain hurt. He began to move around the club. Most who were going to come were here by now. Drunk and sober, human and mutant, they mingled as they always did in dance and various stages of intimacy, but united only for this one night in a good-fellowship they didn't understand or analyze.

And Sol discovered he didn't really want to fuck Meagan. Or anyone else. What he really wanted was for the wounded wolf to trust him. He wanted to take away her pain.

## Chapter Two

When he opened the office door again, the wolf lifted her head, amber eyes open and staring. She no longer trembled, and the water mug was empty. Sol closed the door and walked to the far corner. A sharp knock in the right place with the side of his fist, and the hidden door in the wall swung open.

He glanced back at the wolf. "Come."

She didn't start at the sound of his voice. She simply stood, with difficulty, and limped across the room, passing him without pause to the staircase behind the door.

Sol felt her agony as she climbed. Her body as well as her soul was broken. Even without touching her, it made him dizzy. And yet when they entered the attic room beside and above the club, she didn't immediately collapse. Instead, while he lit candles, she looked around, much as a human visitor might, if there ever were any.

She seemed to take in his unmade bed -- a covered mattress on the floor under a pile of bright, clean blankets; the clothes and books scattered about the floor where he'd dropped them, the soft, comfy old sofa in faded print fabric; the drawings pinned to the wall, and lying half-finished in piles all over the room.

Below, the eternal beat of the music went on.

Sol went to the cupboard and brought out a loaf of bread, some cold meat and fruit. It wasn't a wolf's diet, but beggars couldn't be choosers. She began to lick her lips as soon as she smelled it.

Sol sat down on the sofa with the plate on his knees. Picking up a bit of meat, he held it out to the wolf. She came slowly. He found himself holding his breath. Then, with curious wonder, he felt her delicate lips take the meat from his hand. One bite and it was gone and she stared at him for more. He could have put the plate on the floor for her, but he didn't. Her trust was too -- warming.

And when she'd finished, when her need was battering at him, he laid the plate down beside him and reached for her.

The fur of her head was silky soft. She stiffened under his touch but didn't move away. He began to caress her, stroking her ears and neck, feeling the matted fur and dried blood. She didn't wince when he touched her wounds. He closed his eyes and let it crash over him, the pain of her broken rib and bruised leg, the knife cuts in her neck and back. He could bear that easily. What overwhelmed him was her internal agony, the memories of violations and terror and grief; the impossibly conflicting fears of human compassion and animal violence locked inside her.

Deeper and deeper he fell into her pain until he couldn't quite muffle a groan of anguish, but still he held on, feeling now the wild confusion of unsatisfied lusts within her.

The wolf had never mated. She had half-killed a male wolf who had approached her too forcefully in her last season. A loner like him, but seeking, and fearing solitude at the same time.

Sol's head fell forward. He held on grimly, taking it all, until gradually, he felt her wonder, and slowly, carefully, he could begin to disperse the pain, deal with it. Eyes still closed, he held his hands over her wounded neck and back, reached down between her forelegs, seeking and finding the broken rib.

When he opened his eyes, the wolf still stared at him, wonder and gratitude and new, desperate fear fighting for dominance in her amber eyes.

"Come back," he whispered. "It's time." And pressed his lips to her soft, furry head.

A whimper escaped her. There was more pain, unbelievable, unbearable, but he took that too, head thrown back against the sofa for support while the wolf's body twisted and changed, limbs lengthening, bones altering shape and position. The fur began to vanish from her shoulders and back, her face shortened and re-formed, hairless and white as her long, slender limbs.

A lovely woman knelt between his knees, trembling. Long, dark hair tumbled around her shapely shoulders, framed a heart-shaped face of delicate beauty. Large amber eyes beneath thick but perfectly arched brows regarded him with awe and astonishment.

She tried to speak and couldn't. It had been too long since she'd used her voice. She tried again, hoarse, husky and unexpectedly sexy. "You -- you took my pain."

He nodded.

"Why?"

"Because I can."

"How?" She reached out to his face, touching his cheeks, his head, his lips with long, slender fingers, as if to see that he was real. As if she herself were not the real miracle. A minute ago a wolf and now a naked woman whose sensitive touch devastated him. "You are a healer?"

"Yes."

"You brought me back. I haven't..." She broke off.

"You haven't been back in a while," he finished for her. "How long since you last changed?"

"I don't know," she whispered. "I've been the wolf for many years. More than ten. I didn't want to come back."

"I know."

She took his big hands, turning them in her delicate fingers. "I never knew you -- anyone -- had a power like that." Still with the same wonder, she lifted his hands, laying them reverently on her shoulders. Her flesh was warm under his palms, waking the sleeping tiger in his jeans.

Her naked breasts were small but perfect, their areolas dark and puckered around long, prominent nipples. Sol caught his breath. Slowly, as if savoring every tiny moment of the first human touch she had known in more than ten years, she slid his hands downward and over her breasts, where she held them, eyes closed.

"I'm dreaming," she whispered. "I'll wake up in an hour, freezing cold with the scent of another wolf in my nostrils, and only the sweetness of this dream to keep me sane."

She was the most beautiful woman Sol had ever seen, never mind touched. In the club, he was used to slaking his need on whoever caught his eye. He never thought beyond her willingness. But this was different. This creature was wounded, helpless, vulnerable as you rarely saw in this city of tough survivors.

But her nipples grew taut and hungry under his palms, and she called his touch sweet. He couldn't argue. Because he couldn't help it, he moved his hands, very slightly, lightly caressing her nipples. She gasped. Releasing his hands, she lifted her own to his neck, running them over the tattooed wings on his head.

Without permission, his hands squeezed her breasts and her mouth opened, reaching for his. He had to give it, had to take her mouth in his and kiss her. She tasted sweet and new, yet rich with promises of spice. Her lips were hot, eagerly following his lead. She accepted his tongue, caressed it with hers in the same wonder she'd regarded everything else.

And now his hands moved strongly over her breasts, tenderly kneading them, stroking his thumbs across her nipples, softly pinching the peaks between finger and thumb.

"Give me the dream," she whispered into his mouth. "Please, give it to me..."

He had to release one breast to unfasten his jeans. So, leaving her lips, he covered her free, entrancing nipple with his mouth, softly licking, tweaking with his tongue. Then, closing his mouth on it, he sucked, strongly, and she moaned. He wondered if he could stop now, and didn't care.

He wanted to help her, make her whole, assuage the hunger of her lonely season, give her the dream she asked for. Yet he needed to find his own pleasure in *this* girl. Not just the quick screw he could get in the club -- where if his number one choice wasn't free or willing, then number two would do just as well...

As his aching cock sprang free, upright and swollen with his suddenly raging lust, she saw it and moaned again. She brought down both hands to it, wrapping them around it, making him gasp. He was too used to quickies, he couldn't make this last, not even to give her the first time she deserved.

He lifted her from the floor, settling her astride his lap. Her amber eyes glowed into his with desire and just enough fear to remind him to be gentle. Slowly, he lowered her until the head of his cock touched her pussy. She was so lusciously wet his cock slid along her folds. She whimpered at the sensation, so he did it again, making sure he brushed against her clitoris, and she cried out. She reached down, taking hold of his cock, guiding it to her entrance, pushing the blunt head inside.

She was a small woman. He was a large man and well-endowed, yet she fit him like a glove. Slowly, he pushed further inside her, watched her eyes widen in shock and pleasure. He drew back his hips and thrust and her mouth opened, emitting a small, inarticulate noise. She rose on his cock, following his rhythm with blind instinct, moaning and writhing, and he realized that she too would not last.

Sol gave in. Taking her buttocks in both hands, he drove repeatedly into her tight, wildly contracting pussy. Clamped around him, hot, wet and velvety, she welcomed him, caressed him, cried out her long, astonished joy. To keep her there, he continued to fuck her through his own release -- hard, ecstatic thrusts, shooting his seed deep inside her.

He never wanted to stop.

## Chapter Three

"What's your name?"

They lay slumped together on the sofa, his cock still inside her. She smiled into his shoulder. "Jez."

He slid his mouth along the fine line of her clavicle and she shivered. "Jez. It suits you."

"I don't know your name either. I always just thought of you as The Bouncer."

"That's what I am."

She lifted her head to see him better. "That's not quite true though, is it?"

"It's not untrue. But you can call me Sol. What do you mean, you *always thought of me?*"

She licked her lips, suddenly uncomfortable again. "I -- I used to live here. In the building across the road. With my mother and brothers." She hesitated. *What the hell.* "I was only a kid, but I used to watch you sometimes, letting people into the club. I saw you throwing trouble-makers out, stopping fights, and you seemed so strong, I didn't see how you would ever lose. Do you?"

"No."

She kissed his mouth, following her lips with her finger. "You made me feel safe, somehow. But the city was never safe. Even a few yards away from you." She didn't want to think about that, not now, and yet she felt he had to know something of it. She said abruptly, "They killed my mother and my brothers, would have killed me eventually, after their fun, but they kept me alive too long. I turned into the wolf -- only the second time I ever changed -- and I killed them. I'd never killed before but you'd never have known it. I tore out their throats, absorbed their fear like nourishment, and ran."



She closed her mouth on the story. She didn't want to spoil this. She wanted to make love, to see the naked lust in his eyes when he looked at her. *Her*, not some loose girl from the club...

"You've been living wild all this time? Away from the city?" He stroked her head, running his fingers through her hair.

She nodded. "Sometimes I scavenged in the suburbs. But I never came this far in before tonight. I just followed people and they led me here." She frowned. "Why are so many people out tonight? Normally they don't come in here much from the suburbs. It's safer there."

"They come every year at this time. I don't know how they remember, because I doubt many people keep a calendar. But somehow, they all know."

"Know what? What's so special about this night?"

"I've often asked myself the same question. If we still recognized dates, this would be 24th December. In a few minutes, when it reaches midnight it will be Christmas Day."

"Christmas Day?"

"People celebrated it once. Because long ago, before the war -- two thousand years before the war -- a child was born who was meant to save the world. He was born in a stable, under a star sent by God to guide witnesses to his birth. Do you know what a star is, Jez? There used to be lots of them in the night sky, before the war darkened even the daylight. Twinkling lights that are other planets and suns. Now we can't even see our own sun."

His lips twisted. He gave a quick shrug. "People believed this child was the son of God. His name was Jesus, and he was called Christ. *Who?* you ask. And yet we still say *oh God!* when we want something, and exclaim *Christ!* as if just saying the name can help. No one remembers why."

"But you remember." Recovering from the amazing changes to herself, Jez had space to dwell on the wonder that was *him*. Theories flew wildly round her brain as she tried to connect past and future. But only one stood up and that broke her frail heart.

She whispered, "You look just as you used to. Are you... are you a vampire?"

It would explain his great strength too. Only it made him more dangerous than she was, a threat rather than the safety she'd always seen in him.

*Does it matter?*

*God help me, no it doesn't...*

He shook his head. "No."

She closed her eyes, burying her face in his neck. "But you remember... the war."

He hesitated, then nodded.

"What else?" she whispered.

"I fought in the war. I came home to the city when there was no more hope. Everyone I knew was dead or dying of radiation sickness. Since then, I don't seem to have aged. But one day, I discovered I could -- sense people's pain, and I could take it away. I could heal. It would have been a better discovery during the war. Jez..."

"Yes?"

"I -- I don't tell people these things."

A warmth began to spread through her, a delicious tingle that had nothing to do with the astounding discovery of sex, and yet everything to do with the man who had just given her it. +She smiled. "You were right. It was time for me to come back."

"Works for me," he said, running his hand over her hips and bottom, and thrusting between her thighs.

She wriggled pleurably on his cock. "Do you know, I almost changed tonight by myself? Because I saw you with that girl, and I was jealous."

"Why?" he asked curiously and she punched him lightly in the arm for stupidity. His frown cleared. "You were jealous because I was going to fuck her?"

Jez began to feel foolish, on any number of counts. After all, what was happening to her had no reason behind it; he took pleasure where it was offered.

He stared at her. A breath of something like laughter escaped his lips. "No one's ever said that to me before." And he didn't sound displeased.

"They may not have *said* it," Jez observed shrewdly. "Doesn't mean they didn't feel it. Tell me more about this -- Christmas."

"Well..." He slid out of her, rolling and rising to his feet. His jeans still clung around his ankles, so he kicked them off. Totally naked, he walked across the room. Jez's mouth watered. Her stomach tightened at the sight of his rippling muscles and long, lean limbs, his taut buttocks as he bent and opened the cupboard once more. "They used to drink a toast and say 'Merry Christmas.' My family toasted it in champagne. I happen to have a couple of bottles left."

"All these years? And you want to drink it with me?"

"Drink it? Well, maybe, eventually..." He sat down on the bed, the bottle between his knees, and beckoned to her.

Jez leapt up with alacrity. But when he popped the cork, she jumped visibly, halting in her tracks and looking wildly around her. She tried to smile, but Sol reached for her, drawing her down onto the bed beside him.

"It will take time," he said quietly, and kissed her. Odd how instantly soothing his touch was. He had been doing this for years, she realized with awe, since before she was born. The lonely and despairing, the angry, the physically and mentally wounded who made their way to the club and submitted to being searched -- they thought it was the music, the atmosphere of the club that made them feel better and kept them coming back. But it wasn't. It was Sol, tough, brutal Sol who took away their pain.

She whispered against his lips, "You are an amazing man."

He lifted his head. Something leapt in his eyes -- it might have been pleasure, but his heavy lids closed down, veiling them before she could be sure. And when he glanced up again, it was straightforward lust. He gave her the bottle. "Merry Christmas."

She raised it to him in return and took a tentative sip from the neck. The wine was sharp and clear and unfamiliar; the tiny bubbles fizzed on her lips and tongue, making her smile.

"You like it?" Accepting the bottle back, he took a more sizeable swig of his own. "I can make it even better."

Pulling another mouthful, he drew her back until she lay down on the bed, then lowered his mouth to her breast.

The fizzy wine trickled over her nipple, shockingly cold at first, but tingling, adding deliciously to the sucking sensation of his mouth and wickedly flickering tongue. She arched up into him, and he reached down with his free hand to cup her pussy, firmly. A tiny inarticulate sound of pleasure escaped her. Her hips began to move of their own accord, circling in his hand, while he sucked more strongly on her breast and swirled the bubbling wine all around her areola. The orgasm seemed to start in her toes, rushing through her body with the force of an avalanche.

He released her breast to watch her, his eyes so dark with lust they looked black, drinking in her helpless joy. He muttered something unintelligible, stirring still with his hand, his finger gliding across her clitoris to keep her at climax. His erection pressed hard into her thigh. Only when her convulsions began to die did he lower his head and take her mouth in a deep, sensual kiss.

"I like your champagne," she whispered when he released her.

"I know you do."

Languidly, she followed his arm with her fingers, reaching for the bottle. He gave it to her, kneeling to watch her. The bubbles fizzed all the way down her throat, firing her longing to return his Christmas gift. She just wished she had the experience to know how best to please him.

Experimenting, she didn't swallow the next mouthful. Instead, she knelt facing him, spread her hands across his broad, scarred chest, and began to kiss his nipple. Against her palm, his heart galloped. He closed his eyes as she let the wine trickle out, grazed his nipple with her teeth.

In the swing of it now, she took some more wine and reached for his other nipple. But he caught her head, guiding it lower down, and with a fresh spurt of excitement she understood what he wanted. She dragged her closed mouth down his

hard, flat stomach, tracing the fine, sexy line of hair to his rigid cock. It quivered, as if stretching toward her. Slowly, she touched the silken, weeping head with her lips, inhaling him. Strong, earthy, arousing. Eagerly, she sucked it into her mouth and he groaned.

The champagne washed around him. He seemed to surge into her mouth and she sucked harder. His hands fisted in her hair, guiding her head up and down, as he thrust his hips with the same rhythm. Jez abandoned the bottle, laying it precariously on the floor so that she could stroke his thighs and hips with both hands. As his rhythm increased, she caressed his balls, gently kneading one, feeling it tighten in her hold. Wriggling with triumph and lust, she knew he was coming.

But at the last moment, he dragged himself free of her mouth. He pushed her back onto the mattress, flipped her over and pulled her hips back up into him. Again she felt the intoxicating nudge of his cock against her wet, pulsing entrance and cried out with need.

He pushed into her hard. The pleasure was astounding, filling her. He came on his second thrust, and with the third, she followed. They collapsed on the bed in a writhing heap, the intensity of the joy so overwhelming that Jez wept.

Lying quietly at last, he discovered the wetness on her face. He kissed her, stricken. "What is it?" he whispered. "Was I rough? Did I hurt you?"

She clutched him, shaking her head. "No, no. It's just -- everything! Only a few hours ago I was a hungry wolf and half dead, and..."

...*And lupi mate for life*. She wondered if he knew, if he understood the magnitude, at least for her, of what they had done. She ached with pain and love.

"Jez," he said slowly. He was gazing across the room to the little window.

"What?"

"Look." He got up, taking her hand and drawing her with him to the window. It looked murkily down onto the street at the club's entrance. Below them, the music still pounded on, but people were spilling out of the door, down the stairs and into the snow-covered street, curiously silent, staring upward, away from the building.

Sol lifted her hand with his, pointing into the sky. It was intensely dark, as it always was at night. Only... only was that not a lighter patch? Surrounding a tiny pinprick of light.

“Sol? Is it...?”

“A star. A star at Christmas.”

Jez stared at it. It twinkled palely. “What does it mean?” she whispered.

He laid his arm around her naked shoulder, drawing her closer into his side. “It means there is hope after all. For all of us.”

## **Marie Treanor**

Marie Treanor was born and brought up in Scotland, but for some years moved around the UK working and studying. Now she is back home and happily married with three young children. Having grown bored with city life, she lives these days in a picturesque village by the sea where she is lucky enough to enjoy herself avoiding housework and writing stories of romance and fantasy. You can find out more about Marie and her books on her website: [www.marietreanor.com](http://www.marietreanor.com), and by subscribing to her Newsletter: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/marietreanornewsletter>. She also shares the Sexy Delights loop with fellow Scottish author Kyla Logan. Find out more at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sexydelights>. Marie loves to hear from readers, who can contact her at [marie@marietreanor.com](mailto:marie@marietreanor.com).