



GINGERSNAPS
Changeling Press

Gingersnaps: Christmas Knight

Alecia Monaco

All rights reserved.
Copyright ©2008 Alecia Monaco

Warning: The unauthorized reproduction or distribution of this copyrighted work is illegal. Criminal copyright infringement, including infringement without monetary gain, is investigated by the FBI and is punishable by up to 5 years in federal prison and a fine of \$250,000.

ISBN: 978-1-59596-614-8
Formats Available:
HTML, Adobe PDF,
MobiPocket, Microsoft Reader

Publisher:
Changeling Press LLC
PO Box 1046
Martinsburg, WV 25402-1046
www.ChangelingPress.com

Editor: Crystal Esau
Cover Artist: Reneé George

This e-book file contains sexually explicit scenes and adult language which some may find offensive and which is not appropriate for a young audience. Changeling Press E-Books are for sale to adults, only, as defined by the laws of the country in which you made your purchase. Please store your files wisely, where they cannot be accessed by under-aged readers.

Gingersnaps: Christmas Knight

Alecia Monaco

It's Christmas Eve, and a blizzard has struck the war-torn land of Amberlyn. Nox Blackthorne, a noble knight, wounded in battle against the repressive forces of the new regime, seeks refuge at the only light in the storm: a solitary cottage set on a snow-covered hill.

Marisol St. Claire is a witch, an expert in the ways of sexual healing now outlawed by the new regime. While she's willing to shelter the wounded knight and share her Christmas Eve with him, she's reluctant to heal him for fear of being reported and imprisoned. But soon, more than a need to heal overcomes them both...

Dedication

For Amy,

Who encouraged me to continue.

You were one of my first readers, and one of the best.

Thank you for everything!

Chapter One

"Come on, Rudolphus," Nox Blackthorne urged his horse. "Another mile or so, and we'll be in safer territory."

The horse wouldn't budge. Proof, Nox mused, that the steed had better sense than the rider.

It was no small wonder that Rudolphus refused to move another inch. They'd endured a close skirmish with King Edouard's forces earlier -- Nox almost spat at even thinking of that scurvy illegitimate cur as the king -- leaving both horse and rider with injuries. A lance had grazed the black steed's flank, only to make a detour and pierce the knight's war-torn armor. Nox had his own suspicions about how a lance managed to pierce chainmail, none of which flattered the king.

With a groan of pain, he clutched his side, wincing. When he pulled his hand away, it was covered with a sticky reddish-black liquid.

He was losing blood, rapidly.

Not that he regretted his service to King Reginald, the true king. Ever since Reginald's half-brother Edouard had overthrown the old monarchy, the land of Amberlyn had been caught in the throes of a civil war so violent and bloody, it dwarfed every conflict of the past ten centuries. Edouard had instituted a new regime with laws banning magic and wizardry, draining the life's blood of Amberlyn with one stroke of his quill. Now there were no healers, save a few clumsy apothecaries. Midwifery had become a crime, and it had become illegal to practice alchemy or any of the old arts.

Humans were dying like the proverbial flies.

And things were worse for non-humans. The elves, dwarves, and pixie folk who'd coexisted peacefully with their human neighbors were now all but outlaws. Such restrictions had been placed on them that they could hardly leave their homes.

It was a travesty, Nox thought for the thousandth time. Ending Edouard's reign of terror was worth enduring an injury, a dozen injuries.

It was worth his life.

But it was Christmas Eve, and even the most loyal servant of the true king couldn't help but long for the comforts of home -- a warm hearth with a crackling fire, the scent of evergreen boughs decking the room, the cozy glow of candles in the window, and a hot meal to share with a beautiful woman.

A dream, Nox thought with a rueful sigh, which had about as much to do with his present circumstances as all of the king's stolen gold. He'd be lucky to find any sort of shelter for himself and his horse on such a night. The December wind bit at his exposed face, and the beginnings of what promised to be an avalanche of a snowstorm had begun to drift to the ground.

"Merry Christmas, Rudolphus." The knight shook his head. "May we be so lucky as to find a cave before the storm strikes."

The horse, seeming to understand, began to trot wearily up the hill.

* * *

"And one mince pie," Marisol St. Claire said, taking the steaming dish from her small brick oven. She set the pie on top of a kitchen towel she'd laid on her wooden table for that purpose. "I think that will conclude this year's holiday baking."

"I should think so," the black cat answered, arching his back and showing his fangs in an extravagant yawn. "You've only made two meat pies, four loaves of bread, a quince tart..."

"Don't forget the fruitcake." Marisol gestured toward the gateau currently soaking up rum in a large bowl.

"How could I?" Allistair yawned again. "Do you suppose all of this will be enough to feed a family of pixies and a few stray dwarves?"

Marisol turned her back to the cat and stirred the cauldron of venison stew bubbling merrily in her fireplace. "It isn't as if they have anywhere else to go." She reached for her salt cellar on the mantle. "Nor would you, if your true nature became

known." She tossed a pinch of salt into the stew and gave it another stir, for good measure.

"True enough." Allistair sat up on the table, watching her every move. "Witches' familiars haven't fared very well under the new regime."

"Watch your words," Marisol snapped. "We've gone undetected thus far by being overly cautious, and I don't intend to get caught out by some eavesdropper now."

"What a way to spend Christmas *that* would be." Allistair shook his head, a comical gesture for a cat to perform, and no matter how many times she'd seen it, Marisol still had to smother a laugh. "Locked in a cold cell, with you stripped down to rags..." the cat continued, "I'd be lucky to feed on an occasional rat." The cat shuddered.

"All the more reason to watch what we say, even among our so-called allies." Marisol sat down at the old wooden table and surveyed her preparations. Evergreen boughs and sprigs of holly decked the mantles, doorways, and windowsills. A bundle of mistletoe hung from a red ribbon above the hearth rug, and candles flickered in every window.

"It does look festive, don't you think?" She turned to Allistair.

"Very festive," he agreed with a swish of his tail. "It's a wonder His Majesty hasn't outlawed Christmas, in addition to everything else."

"It wouldn't surprise me if he did," Marisol said. "How long has it been since I could wear my pentacle outside my dress?" She patted the emerald green bodice of her dress where her mother's silver pentacle was tucked away, hanging from a whisper thin chain around her neck.

"Too long." Allistair nudged her hand with his chin. "When will the knights of the old regime finally reclaim this land for the one true king?"

"I have no faith in knights or soldiers." Marisol stood up and wandered to the window, her green velvet skirts sweeping the wooden floor. "Trust no one, my feline friend, until these dark times have passed."

They both fell silent for a moment, watching as the snowfall picked up its pace outside the window. "But let's not think of sad things now." She turned back to the cat with a smile. "After all, it's Christmas!"

"Indeed, it is." Allistair gave her a catty grin. "So, how about a bit of nog in my bowl?"

* * *

"A little further, Rudolphus." Nox shouted to be heard above the scream of the rising wind. "We must find shelter before..."

Before they froze to death? Before the snow became too deep for either horse or rider to walk any further?

Damned if he knew the answer, and something told him the horse wouldn't have any useful advice, either.

Snow hit his face in a shower of frozen pellets, and the white whirl of the blizzard was nearing blinding proportions. Through the last remaining vestige of visibility, Nox could almost make out... something... glowing in the distance, something...

A light.

"Hurry, Rudolphus!" He nudged the horse in the ribs. "Whether they be friend or foe, surely no one would refuse us shelter on a night like this."

The horse balked, shaking his head against the sudden shift in the wind. A rush of snow seemed to unfurl itself upon them, blanketing both man and beast with a coating of frost.

Nox dismounted, shivering violently. He'd get them to shelter if he had to lead the horse every step of the way.

He could still make out the light ahead, shining like a beacon. Ignoring the unbearable cold and the pain of his wound, he trudged forward to the only sign of hope on a dark Christmas night.

* * *

Allistair pricked up his ears. "Did you hear that?"

Marisol stifled a grin as the cat shook eggnog from his whiskers. "I think it's just the wind."

Allistair shrugged and returned his attentions to the eggnog in his bowl. Marisol rose to put another log on the fire when a sudden thumping on the door startled them both.

"Are you going to tell me that was the wind?" Allistair smirked at his owner.

"You best be glad you have nine lives, cat." Marisol walked to the window. She squinted, trying to make out the source of the thumping, but couldn't see anything through the whirlwind of snow racing past the cottage.

"You could always try opening the door," the cat suggested, his tone acidic.

"And risk letting in trouble?" Marisol shook her head, her hand unconsciously going to the pentacle hidden in her bodice. "No, I can't take the chance."

"I thought that was the essence of Christmas." Allistair's voice dropped. "Sharing one's roof and bread with those in need."

Silence filled the cabin. Marisol turned to look at the cat. "Sometimes I wish you hadn't learned to speak." She could hear him chuckle behind her as she opened the door.

A blast of snow blew in, momentarily blinding her. She stepped back from the open doorway, blinking furiously.

She opened her eyes to find a crumpled figure in armor clutching her doorframe with both hands... a figure with the bluest eyes she'd ever seen peering out from his helmet.

Chapter Two

He'd died.

There was simply no other explanation. He'd died and gone to some blessed afterlife. Only Heaven could've produced the vision before him.

Nox shook his head, fighting cold and pain to find his voice. "Good lady..." He paused, clearing his throat. It was a bad time to be knocked speechless, but the fire-haired angel of temptation before him had stunned him into sheer silence.

"You're hurt." A look of concern mixed with something else crossed her face as she reached out to support him. "Come inside, quickly."

The hand on his arm was warm, and his body responded to her touch despite being nearly frozen solid. Good to know his blood flow hadn't been impeded, Nox mused.

She led him into a room as comfortable as any he could've imagined.

A fire crackled in the hearth, candles glowed on nearly every surface, and the heady aroma of roasted meat mingled with the tang of evergreen to create the perfect holiday atmosphere.

"Come with me." The vision had a voice that could get her arrested, equal parts smoke and velvet. "I have a feather bed in the back room -- you can rest there until the storm passes."

"My horse." Nox recovered himself enough to remember his trusty companion. "He's wounded as well -- I must see to him."

"Don't worry." She directed him through a doorway into a dimly lit room. A plush feather bed beckoned, decked out with cozy pillows and a cheerful quilt. "I will tend to your horse, and then see to your wounds as well." She helped him ease down onto the bed, a moment that would've been awkward if pain hadn't temporarily shut

down his capacity to think straight. "We've got to get you out of this armor." She bit her lip in concentration.

Nox tried not to stare at her lips, deliciously full though they were. But then, everything about this woman of mystery claimed his attention in turn, from her beautifully rounded face and flame-colored tresses to her lushly curved body, abundant as any holiday feast.

In fact, if he weren't half dead from pain, cold, and exhaustion, he'd make a holiday feast of her right there on the feather bed.

He winced, resigning himself to reality and all its banal limitations. "I can manage the armor." He gave her a smile that he hoped masked his physical agony. "Thank you for your kindness, good lady. I can hardly hope to repay it, servant of the exiled king that I am, but --"

"Repayment isn't necessary." She cut him off. "I'll be back as quickly as possible." With a curt nod, she vanished through the bedroom door.

* * *

Making sure the bedroom door was shut securely behind her, Marisol hastily put a kettle of water on to heat and spoke to the cat perched on the table behind her.

"He claims to be in service of the true king," she told Allistair, taking a wooden box from beneath a curtained cabinet. "Nevertheless, we must take care. He could be a spy." She lowered her voice to a whisper. "We cannot risk detection."

She turned briefly and opened a trapdoor in the floor. "Hide yourself in the cellar, lest you forget and speak."

Allistair nodded and fled through the trapdoor like a black streak, vanishing into the cellar. Marisol shut the trapdoor and made her way to the front of the cottage with her wooden box of medicinal herbs. She took her hooded cloak from the peg where it hung and slipped it on.

She'd hidden her healing abilities, herbal and otherwise, ever since the new regime had taken power. But she couldn't stand by and let an innocent creature die.

Bracing herself for the bitter cold on the other side of the door, her mind raced back to the knight in her bedroom.

She had a feeling he was far from innocent. Certainly he'd given her thoughts that were decidedly unchaste. But she couldn't use her natural magic to heal him. Herbs and poultices, bandages and salves would have to soothe him.

As for soothing herself... well, she'd been alone for a very long time.

She sighed and stepped out into the storm.

* * *

Marisol let herself back into the cottage, shivering and shaking the snow from her cloak. The horse had suffered a nasty wound, but she was confident he'd be fine. He'd responded to her treatments and seemed interested in the dried apple she'd given him for a snack.

Now, she told herself sternly, to see to the blue-eyed knight in the other room.

"I believe your steed will be back to full health soon," she called out, stepping into the bedroom. "Once you're out of your armor, we'll see if I can do the same for you." She quickly lit the candle on the small table beside the bedroom door and blinked, her eyes adjusting to the evening darkness. The first thing, she reminded herself, was to get him out of that clunky armor so she could examine his injuries more closely.

The huddled figure on the floor in front of her brought her up short. It was the knight, looking as if he'd fallen trying to get out of bed.

His armor lay in the corner opposite the bed, where he must've placed it before collapsing.

Marisol's heart banged painfully against her ribs. He'd fallen trying to get out of that heavy armor because she hadn't been there to help him. A stream of crimson crept slowly from beneath his crumpled form, spreading steadily toward the toes of her slippers.

"Bloody hell," she murmured, dropping to the floor. She put a hand to his stubble-covered cheek. He was cold, too cold for someone who'd been in a warm house

for the better part of an hour. His dark hair stood out in sharp contrast to his pale skin. When she lifted his wrist, she could barely detect a thready pulse.

He was dying.

Marisol sat back on her heels. This gorgeous man, a soldier for the one true king, was going to die on Christmas Eve because she, a skilled healer, had to conceal her magic or face imprisonment.

She swallowed hard, looking from the hard line of his jaw down the length of his entire body. It wouldn't be a repulsive task to heal him with her magic.

In fact, she figured she'd rather enjoy it.

She raised a hand to her bodice and once again touched the pentacle hidden there. Hadn't she always vowed to use her powers for good? How could she just let the knight die when she knew he could be saved?

The answer was easy. She couldn't let him die. She'd bring him back to life and take the chance that he might be a spy.

Rising to her feet, she stepped out of her slippers and began to unlace her bodice.

* * *

Once again, Nox could've sworn he'd died and gone to heaven.

A female body, warm and incredibly soft, pressed against his aching flesh. He could smell the unmistakable scent of womanly skin and feel the spun silk of long hair brushing his chest as she eased down the length of his body.

"Knight." That smoke and velvet voice again. His angel of temptation who'd welcomed him in from the storm earlier. How had he ended up with her naked against him?

Why question how it happened, he answered himself. Just be thankful it had.

"Tell me your name." Her voice was thick with desire, and he felt his cock swell in response. Proof that he wasn't dead, after all.

"Nox," he groaned out, trying to pry his eyelids open. If he missed the chance to see his full-figured rescuer unclothed, he'd expire from sheer frustration.

"Nox," she repeated, dragging what he was sure were a pair of hardened nipples down his chest. "Just try to rest."

He let out a laugh. "Resting is usually the last thing on my mind when I have a naked woman on top of me."

She shushed him, pressing a finger to his lips. "I can make you well again." His balls tightened when she flicked her tongue over his earlobe. "I will make your pain go away."

Pain? What pain? Other than having an erection bigger than the Tower of Amberlyn, he had no pain left, only a sense of drowning euphoria.

"I'm going to put you inside me now." Her voice was further away, as if she'd risen onto her knees above him. "Let the pleasure take your injuries away."

With those words, his eyes opened at last. Through the golden light of the candle flames dancing in different points around the room, he could make out the ripe and rounded form of his angel above him, a knee on either side of his pelvis. Her red hair tumbled down past her shoulders, framing a set of breasts he couldn't wait to touch. Her waist curved out to full hips, and the triangle of soft curls at the apex of her thighs made his cock jump.

"Are you ready?" She gazed down at him, grasping his shaft with one hand. She shifted slightly, the wetness of her pussy grazing the tip of his cock like honey running from a hive.

Ready? It was turning out to be his best Christmas ever.

Chapter Three

Marisol knew her magic was working. She could feel the healing energy generated from their mutual pleasure flowing from her body straight to Nox, infusing him like light filling a dark room.

Oh, and what pleasure it was.

He'd opened his eyes at last. When he looked up at her, she felt as if she could fall into their blue depths and never want to return to mortal life again.

A dangerous thing, she reminded herself before the next wave of bliss claimed her.

She stroked the velvety firmness of his erection, running her thumb over the tip to spread the pearl of fluid collected there over the head. She wanted him inside her so much that it hurt. Moving forward until her pussy hovered over him, she dragged her clit over the head of his shaft, groaning with a shiver of sheer pleasure.

"All this torture is enjoyable," Nox ground out, "but if you'd like to go ahead and fuck me, I wouldn't object."

She allowed herself a smile. He really must've been feeling better if he'd gone from unconscious to lusty so quickly.

"Since you feel that way..." She lowered herself slowly, letting the end of his cock breach the tightness of her core. She gasped, feeling his pulsing heat entering her.

He reached around, kneading her backside with his hands, urging her lower. "You're providing an honorable service to one of the king's men, noble lady."

She slid down another inch, relishing the throbbing sensation of him filling her. "It's the least I can do, as a loyal patriot."

He closed his eyes, his perfect features contorting with what she knew to be pleasure instead of pain. When he moved his hands from her rear end to her inner

thighs, she let out a hissing breath and sank lower, letting his cock stretch her inner walls until she couldn't feel anything but him inside her.

One of his hands glided further inward, slipping into the small space where their bodies joined. Using two fingers, he began to stroke her clit.

She couldn't wait any longer. Letting his ministrations guide her, she began a slow rise and fall on his cock, tightening around the hardness of him with every outward stroke. He continued the delicious friction of his fingers against her clit, and she rode him harder, willing her healing magic to flood him.

Finally, she could hold back no longer. The coil of need inside her suddenly burst, and she came, grinding against him while her pussy contracted in a series of heavenly sensations.

Slowly, she sank down on his cock a final time. "It's been so long," she heard herself saying.

"So long since you've had a man inside you?" Nox reached up to stroke her breasts with his hands.

She nodded, unable to meet his gaze. She'd gotten carried away by her own desires when his healing should've been the focus of the entire act.

"If you'll notice," he said as he skimmed his hands from her breasts over her belly. "You still have a man inside you."

She finally forced herself to look at him. He was smiling up at her, a glint in his eyes that made the heat of need flicker through her again.

"My beautiful angel," he continued, hands wandering lower, "I am still very much hard." His eyes darkened with lust. "And very much ready to repay your kindness a thousand times over."

"How do you intend to do that?" Her breath caught in her throat and she could feel her pulse beginning to race.

He narrowed his eyes and grinned. "Roll over onto your back and I'll show you."

* * *

More than anything, Nox wanted to taste her.

He let his gaze wander over the luscious form of the woman on the floor in front of him, all curves and softness. Where to begin, with such a feast of delights before him?

One look at her face solved the dilemma. He positioned himself over her and claimed her lips in a kiss.

She responded, parting her lips so he could dart his tongue inside the warm sweetness of her mouth. He sucked her bottom lip, nipping it with his teeth before sliding his tongue against hers, letting it mate with her mouth even as his body had joined with hers just moments before.

He broke the kiss, feeling his blood grow hotter when she let out a soft sound of protest. There was one thing he had to know before they went any further. "Tell me your name, beautiful angel."

"Marisol." Her lips, red and swollen from his kisses, curved into a smile. "And I'm no angel."

He wanted to ask her so many things about herself, to tell her how she'd filled him with a desire like none he'd ever known, but he couldn't pry his lips from hers long enough to speak.

Each kiss was a revelation, taking him further under her spell. She wrapped him in the snug warmth of her cushy thighs, enveloping him with her body and transporting him to a state of pure pleasure.

Finally tearing himself away from kissing her, he let his lips traverse the smooth terrain of her pale skin, working his way down the line of her neck, over her shoulders, until his mouth met the slopes of her breasts.

He explored them with his lips, kissing his way over each, finally flicking his tongue over one hard pink nipple.

She groaned, threading her fingers through his hair as if she'd never let go.

"I told you I meant to repay you." He stroked the stiff peak of her nipple with his tongue in lazy circles.

She laughed, stirring things low in his body. "I think you might kill me with kindness." Her eyes were pinned shut, and she arched her back, offering him her other breast.

He complied, seeking out her nipple, letting his tongue dance over the tip before closing his lips around it. He sucked, long and slow, rolling the swollen tip with his tongue. Balancing himself above her with one hand, he roamed the length of her body with the other, sliding it between her legs.

Her outer folds were slick. Carefully, he parted them, finding warm wetness at the center of her. With two fingers he spread her hot juices over her clit, feeling his cock swell when she let out a hissing breath in response.

Inch by inch, he worked his way down her body, his tongue roaming the softness of her belly, and lower still until he reached her parted legs. Placing one knee over each shoulder, he lowered his head and prepared to feast.

Even if the taste of her heated pussy hadn't been like nectar from heaven, the sounds she made as he ran his tongue over her clit would've been reward enough. He stroked the swollen bud, coaxing it from beneath its hood with the tip of his tongue before drawing it between his lips.

He sucked her clit, drawing slowly on it before circling it with his tongue. As her moans grew louder, he slid a finger into the tight chamber at her core, rubbing that sweet spot on the upper wall of her pussy.

"Nox," she groaned. "I'm going to explode if you don't..."

She wasn't the only one. He wanted to be inside her, needed to bury his cock in the very heart of her until they were both mindless with bliss.

"I would never deny a lady her pleasure, especially on this of all nights." He rose up, resting his weight on one arm, and grasped his cock with his free hand.

She parted her legs further, arching her hips toward him in a gesture of invitation that went straight to the most masculine part of him.

He couldn't hesitate any longer. The need to take her, to claim her, overtook all rational thought. He thrust into her with one hard stroke, until he was seated balls deep in the silken heat of her pussy.

He held himself above her, trying to be still, watching her face as he filled her with his cock. The look of pleading in her eyes undid him, and he began to move, easing his shaft out of her.

She reached down, grasping his backside with her hands, urging him deeper. He thrust back into her, the tightness of her pussy drawing a dazed moan from deep inside him.

Shifting his weight forward, he rode her higher, making sure the base of his cock grazed her swollen clit with every stroke. Each thrust into the heat of her body carried him further into ecstasy, threatening to shatter his control. He wanted this to last, to pleasure her for as long as possible, but when she breathed his name, rolling her hips beneath him, the reins of his will snapped and he felt himself coming in one long, jagged spiral.

Even as he filled her with the hot jet of his come, he could feel her orgasm, the inner walls of her pussy tightening and releasing around his spurting cock. He continued to thrust into her, riding out the final waves of pleasure until he finally collapsed, exhausted, onto his side.

His side. Nox felt his eyes fly open.

His side, where he'd been injured almost unto death that very night.

Feeling suddenly disoriented, his attention turned from the flushed, sated beauty beside him to the location of his injury.

The injury was no more. It had closed over, the skin unmarred, as if he'd never run afoul of an enemy's lance.

Marisol snuggled her naked body against his, but even such a rich source of temptation couldn't distract him.

Something had happened, something other than passionate, mind-blowing sex.

Something, he suspected, that could land them both in a great deal of trouble.

"Nox?" She rose up on one elbow to look at him. "Is something wrong?" Her brow furrowed with concern.

"No," he replied, searching for the right words. "Nothing is wrong. In fact, I'd say that I've had quite a miracle here tonight." He pointed to the former site of his wound. "Maybe you can explain how I went from a gaping wound to being completely healed in the course of one evening?"

She sat up and returned his gaze. "Yes, I can." She paused, squaring her shoulders. "I healed you."

Nox felt the pit of his stomach clench. "By what means? Did you give me medicinal herbs while I was unconscious?"

Silence stretched between them, tensed like a snake about to strike. Finally, she spoke again.

"No, I used magic." She met his gaze squarely, her jaw set with defiance. "Sex magic." She tossed her long red hair behind her shoulders. "I'm a witch."

* * *

Marisol stood, grabbing the quilt from the bed and wrapping it around herself. "Are you going to report me to the tribunal and have me imprisoned?"

Nox stood up, looking so tempting in his nakedness that she had half a mind to magic her way into his arms for another romp. "How could you suggest such a thing?" He threw up his hands. "I was injured fighting the very forces you speak of. I would never turn you in, even if we hadn't just shared..." His voice trailed off.

The most unbelievable night of passion ever, she said to herself, finishing his sentence in her mind. "I know magic is illegal." She gathered the quilt closer. "Believe me when I say that I haven't used my... arts... in quite some time." She dropped her gaze, feeling the heat of a blush creeping into her face. "But I couldn't stand by and let you die. Not on Christmas."

"My angel." He made his way across the room to her, taking her in his arms. She let him fold her into his embrace, feeling some of the tension leak away from her. "How

could I turn you in to the tribunal? You saved my life." He planted a kiss on the top of her head. "And in a most enjoyable way, I might add."

She laughed, relief flooding her. "You can't travel now, you know. Your horse needs to recover, and you need to get a little stronger before you return to battle."

He tipped her chin up, forcing her to face him. "I assure you that I have no intention of leaving you and your... arts... any time soon."

She giggled. "You know, you're looking a bit pale."

He gave her a look of such intense lust that she felt her core melting. "Perhaps another healing session is in order."

"I couldn't agree more." She gasped as his hands tore the quilt away from her body, grasping her breasts to knead them with firm strokes.

"Shall we start now?" He lowered his head to flick his tongue over her nipple. "I'm feeling more in need of healing by the minute."

As he eased her back onto the bed, Marisol couldn't help but smile. What a Christmas it had turned out to be, filled with unexpected gifts.

Yes, she thought, feeling his tongue on her clit, the best gifts she could've ever imagined.

Alecia Monaco

Alecia Monaco lives in a Gothic castle on the top of a remote mountain, where she's served by her retinue of vampire love slaves and...

Oh, whatever. Alecia actually resides rather happily in Houston with her family and her three fur daughters (one feline, two canine). She manages to live out her wildest fantasies of sexy night creatures in her fiction, and hopes her stories have fulfilled a few of your fantasies as well.

When she's not churning out her latest heartbreaking work of staggering genius, she enjoys eating too much, napping, and playing Mah Jongg. She's also obsessed with the color pink and is a rather hopeless girlie girl.

Alecia loves to hear from readers. You can write to her at AleciaMonaco@aol.com or visit her site at www.aleciamonaco.com. She looks forward to hearing from you soon!