



# **SPIDER ISLAND**

**Cricket Sawyer**

**EROTIC ROMANCE  
SPECIAL EDITION**

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## **DEDICATION**

This book is dedicated to everyone who has an imagination and may have asked what if and found their own answers. I would also like to dedicate this book to those who have been lost in Lake Superior and/or the Bermuda Triangle where the original idea for this ill fated trip began.

# SPIDER ISLAND

CRICKET SAWYER

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## Chapter 1

“Bring comfortable shoes.” What on earth did she need comfortable shoes for? They were going to the coronation of their dear friend Zaire, or so he said.

Jasmine looked at the invitation again. *‘You are cordially invited to attend the coronation of Prince Zaire in his newly acquired Island of Maizely Ouiz.’* Written below the calligraphic invitation on the parchment in Jon’s handwriting were the words ‘bring comfortable shoes.’ I should dress in a ball gown to attend someone’s coronation and then bring comfortable shoes? What was afoot here? she wondered. She made a mental note to call Jon later and find out.

All the while she showered and dressed for work she thought about what she would wear to the coronation. Zaire will make a wonderful ruler. His jovial and caring personality made him an instant success wherever he went. Zaire’s knowledge seemed endless. No matter the topic you broached he always had something to add. He was brilliant, a genius she would guess. Zaire claimed he was an artist, a writer and a politician. Not such a stretch for the imagination if you think about it—politicians are the most imaginative people in the world, she thought. Jasmine hated to put Zaire in the category of politician since that left such an awful aftertaste in her mouth after her experiences with Clinton Dunn. He was a prime example of why the Democratic Party uses a jackass to represent them she thought. Jasmine

would not spoil her day by thinking about that pompous ass. She was through with him and glad of it.

Somehow, on her lunch hour, she would need to go shopping for a gown for the party. In her mind she visualized herself in the gorgeous mint green number in Macy's department store window. It was perfect, all filmy and feminine. It would show off the curves she worked so hard to perfect and maintain, plus showing a little cleavage never hurt anyone. Mint green would be the perfect shade for her raven hair and pale blue eyes. The compliments she received when she wore green proved that the elegant feeling she had in green was more than her imagination. Shoes, hmmm what shoes? Comfortable shoes would not do with that number. That number called for stiletto heels with spaghetti strap ties rising high on her shapely legs. She dialed Jon's number at *The Newspaper*.

What an original thought, naming the only newspaper in town, *The Newspaper*. It had been that for nearly fifty years. "Good names stick," Jon said. Jasmine didn't know if it was a good name, but it certainly told you what to expect.

\* \* \* \*

Jon's voice mail answered in his honey and silk voice that turned her into putty in his hands. "Hi Jon, Jazz here. What's with the comfortable shoes bit? I recognized it as your hand writing, but I don't understand. If we are dressing formal for the coronation, what are the jogging shoes for?"

She sat at her desk thinking about Jon and a weekend on an island offshore with him. Well, okay granted there was bound to be other people. Would they spend the whole weekend or did Zaire have a ferry planned to take home those that needed to go after the ceremony? How many other people were invited? The towering gray castle on the island of Maizely Ouiz hung with ivy and mystery in the fog that always surrounded the island. . When she had gone there with Jon and Zaire they didn't enter the castle that day. They were researching the caves of the island. That one time was enough to peak their curiosity and an invitation to revisit the island was like a miracle. They had only been able to explore one of the caves before they were asked to leave by the overbearing strong-armed guard. The island belonged to Mobley Peters at that time. The name disgusted her. His lines to all things corrupt sent a shudder through her body. Shortly after their visit

Zaire acquired the island and he never did elaborate on the circumstances surrounding the deal.

After Jasmine had arranged the new display of Zaire's work, she stepped back to get the full view of someone seeing his sculptures and paintings for the first time. There was something raw and mysterious about his work. It was like he took shadows and found their essence. She couldn't explain what she felt when viewing them. There was so much power in the work, so much of the mystique surrounding them, almost as if they had an aura all their own.

The phone distracted her, "The Studio," she answered into the small purple phone.

"Hey, Jazz," Jon said, laughing. "Do you always question party invitations?"

"No, but I thought the request rather strange."

"We are spending the weekend after all. You aren't planning on wearing a ball gown and glass slippers the whole weekend, are you?"

"I guess I wasn't really considering it. I thought after the ball gown a bikini and a towel would be all I'd need for the rest of the trip."

"One of those string jobs?"

"Way too much skin exposed to the sun. Actually I thought more like a swimmer's tank."

"Argh, right away bursting my bubble."

She knew she'd get to him by tweaking his imagination. Served him right for not telling her why the mysterious request for comfortable shoes.

"Now that Zaire owns the island he's organized a scavenger hunt through the caves that riddle the island. I was out there helping him set it up," he said.

"Sounds intriguing, but then you won't be able to participate, will you?"

"No, but you and I are going to explore one of the caves that isn't in the scavenger hunt. I can't go into detail on the phone, but it's ancient and untouched for I can't begin to imagine how many years."

"Oh wow. I'll be sure to pack more than just comfortable shoes then."

She hung up the phone feeling the pull of an exciting adventure tugging at her imagination and journalistic 'what if?' Jasmine enjoyed writing what she discovered. She thought about the paths her career had already taken, like the articles she wrote on spelunking that *National Geographic* picked

up and *Travel Log* later reprinted. She had written for art journals in the past too. Besides selling other people's artwork she wrote about it. She was a little shy about sending her written words out, but maybe once she got her art gallery producing, bringing in money regularly she could find time to market and submit some of the fiction she had been working on. She would be able to spend more time writing when the gallery took off. That thought pleased her.

\* \* \* \*

Satisfied that Zaire was well displayed she turned the hanging sign on the door to open and unlocked the door.

An extremely tall, thin woman dressed in a wrap of red cloth emblazoned with lightning strokes of yellow streaked across it. The outfit made her think of someone spatter painting when she breezed through the door. The woman was at least six-foot three-inches tall and she wore a turban head wrap pinned with a huge yellow stone surrounded by what appeared to be diamonds, which made her look that much taller. Her green eyes glinted with a healthy glow, the whites outrageously white as was her full mouth of perfect teeth that reflected the light when she smiled, though that smile was just a skitter across her face. Her skin was the blue-black of a Jamaican native. Jasmine couldn't help but stare. The woman carried herself with such aplomb. She could have been royalty. Perhaps she was. The dozen gold ring bracelets on each arm tinkled with her movements. Long gold earrings slimmed her already narrow face and accentuated her gazelle-like neck.

"I'll take this," she said in perfect English, London style not the polluted American version. She waved her hand over the Zaire display Jasmine had only just finished setting up.

"Which piece?" Jasmine said.

"You misunderstand me, my dear. The whole of it. Add the prices. I'll pay you and my man will pick them up later."

Jasmine couldn't believe her ears. The complete Zaire collection was worth thousands of dollars.

The woman looked down at Jasmine's feet. "Those shoes. Are they comfortable shoes?"



“Why, yes, as a matter of fact they are very comfortable.” She wondered where this was going; taken aback by the focus on her shoes with all the art work around.

“Good. I’ll take them too,” the woman said, walking to the cash register.

“But they’re used, I mean, I’m wearing them,” Jasmine blurted out, confused. Did this woman think anything and everything in the shop was for sale? Did she really mean to buy the shoes right off her feet? The next question quickly popped into her head—And would she stop there?

“No matter, name your price. I need them for the weekend.”

“There is a shoe store just down the block, if you—”

“Never mind. Those will do nicely, and I haven’t the time nor inclination to go traipsing around looking for a better recommendation.”

“What size do you wear?” Jasmine asked, buying time. She couldn’t go barefoot the rest of the day. She didn’t have any other shoes with her.

“That size,” the woman said and laid a five hundred dollar bill in her hand.

Jasmine slipped the shoes off. “That’s way too much money,” she stammered.

“Call it a tip. Now, if you will be so kind as to add up my purchases, I must be on my way.”

She quickly totaled the Zaire collection and the tall woman paid her in cash— no questions asked. She snatched the shoes Jasmine had put in a plastic bag and breezed back out the door. The whole transaction not taking more than five minutes left Jasmine dazed.

She stood frozen, not believing what had just happened. She tried to call Zaire to tell him about the woman and the sale of all his work, but the phone wasn’t working. The operator that came on said all phone contact with the island had been disrupted. They didn’t know why but they were working to solve the problem. Jasmine slowly replaced the receiver in the cradle, staring at the cash in her hand. She was reluctant to put that much cash in the register. Six thousand, five hundred dollars made a sizable lump in her hand. The woman hadn’t even asked for a receipt. *Well, she did take my shoes. I wouldn’t exactly be running away very far without shoes.* Darn they were her favorites to, especially kind to her feet that needed to stand on floors that were tile over concrete. She hurried to the back room and put the

large cash bundle in her wall safe, bubbling inside over her first big sale and what a whopping sale it was. She couldn't wait to tell Zaire and Jon.

Dragging the crates back out front from the storage room, she busied herself with repacking Zaire's artwork for the trip to wherever it was going. The woman didn't say how far it would travel and Jasmine didn't want any of it damaged in transit.

She was occupied hauling another display from the back room when she heard the bells on the front door jangle the arrival of another customer. The beaded curtains that divided the back office and storage area from the gallery allowed her to see a striking man in a traditional and stereotypical chauffeur's uniform entering the store. His eyes seemed to read her soul as his gaze traced a line from her toes to the top of her head, pausing at all the points of interest along the way. His smile sent electric impulses to her center. She was unsure if she dared speak. Her throat tickled with anticipation. Jasmine was mesmerized by his eyes. They had an olive green clearness. A light danced in them like mischief, or was it mystery? When he tossed his mane of black hair back like a stallion prancing in a spring field she quickly became a mare in heat. Instantly, she chided herself, *what is wrong with me?* His animal magnetism nearly rendered her a babbling idiot incapable of reason or motion. She cleared her throat, as if it would help to clear her head, unsure what she should do or say next.

"My Lady Baliese has purchased some art pieces. I am to pick them up," he said in a voice as deep as the Grand Canyon.

The resonance caused reverberations in the area below her navel she was trying not to think of, the area she had no business thinking or feeling with. She shook herself from its glowing warmth. This man, a chauffer, a total stranger, she couldn't, didn't dare entertain... Struggling to pull her attention back to something non-threatening she forced herself to look toward Zaire's crated work.

"These," Jasmine said, waving her hand over the crates that she had just finished repacking. "I've crated them to keep them from being damaged in transit. The woman—The Lady Baliese—never said how far she needed to take them." Her voice was unsteady, unreliable. Her palms grew moist.

"Excellent," he said and proceeded to pick up several to carry out to the limousine. Jasmine picked up one of the small crates with a sculpture in it to help carry the collection out to the vehicle.

“Are those comfortable shoes?” the chauffeur asked, looking down at her bare feet and smiling.

Jasmine flushed with embarrassment. She had forgotten her shoeless condition. She stumbled over her words trying to explain the absence of shoes. “Your Lady Baliese, well, she seemed quite taken with my shoes. She bought them right off my feet.” She felt small and school girlish hearing her own explanation, sounding outrageously implausible. The woman surely had hundreds of shoes at her disposal. She judged from the chauffeur’s barely audible chuckle and crooked smile though that the actions of Lady Baliese were extremely appropriate and believable for her.

Once loaded, the chauffeur doffed his hat, clicked his heels together gave her a slight bow. “I will see you on the Island, then.” His smile lit his eyes once more and Jasmine’s core at the same time. Before she could find her breath and her voice to ask how he knew she’d be at the Maizely Quiz, she realized. Lady Baliese had purchased Zaire’s collection. – Of course she would be there, but how had the chauffer have known...? Jasmine let go of the thought and returned to the studio. He drove away. Jasmine stood in the doorway for a long moment and stared after him. What an incredible morning she was having.

\* \* \* \*

Seeing as how it was nearly noon and she always closed the shop during the lunch hour, Jasmine put the closed sign up and locked the door. She walked the two blocks to the shoe store. The store was not Manner’s Shoes where she always bought her shoes, but they seemed to have a huge variety of styles. She was drawn to a gondola in the middle of the store full of casual styles. The styles were perfect for being on her feet all day at The Studio. She looked toward the top of the display trying to find a price. There on a three foot wide yellow sign in bold red letters were the words, “Be sure to bring comfortable shoes.” She nearly freaked. This was more synchronicity than she could handle in the span of a few hours.

Taking the pair of shoes she liked, she browsed the boxed shoe aisles looking for the right size. Then she sat down and pulled on the sandal type shoe she had selected from the available choices. They fit. They felt great and were reasonably priced. What more could she ask for?. She gathered her

purse, the now empty shoe box and headed for the check out counter. "I'll wear these," she said as the clerk looked in the empty box.

"Do you want me to dispose of your old ones?" Her face knitted with curiosity.

"I, um, didn't have any when I came in." she said feeling rather silly.

The clerk peered over the counter at her feet. "Those are a good choice. A comfortable shoe you'll grow to love."

Jasmine paid the clerk and left. She hurried along Canal Street to the Macy's department store. She needed that misty mint green dress for the coronation and thanks to Zaire and Lady Baliese, she would be able to pay cash instead of maxing her credit card again.

The dress in the window with the perfect shoes all in her size were the only ones left in the store. The clerk undressed the mannequin "We'll be able to discount these since they have been on display. How does twenty-five percent off sound?" she asked.

"Delicious, like this is the day I should buy a lottery ticket." Jasmine fairly bubbled in reply.

"And the shoes, a size six," the clerk said.

Jasmine slipped out of her new sandals and into the stiletto heeled string/ties wrapped perfect shoes. "Perfect fit," she said taking a few steps to be sure she could walk in the heels. She hadn't worn anything that high in a while.

"Those are high enough to give you a nose bleed," the clerk said grinning ear to ear. "But they look great with your legs. Be sure to bring comfortable shoes along for when you're ready to fall off from these," she said as Jasmine paid for her purchases.

She was beginning to wonder if the whole world was suddenly obsessed with comfortable shoes.

## Chapter 2

They arrived at the ferry nearly simultaneously. It seemed to Jasmine of the twenty or so odd people they were all strangers to each other. They all were very nearly the same age. She couldn't tell their social status from their attire. Everyone was gowned or tuxedoed to the max. The silence was interrupted by the clanking engine raising the anchors as they prepared to make the crossing to the island. About fifty feet from the shore shark fins cut through the water and began circling the ferry.

Jasmine moved to the interior more central part of the ferry, her stomach squeezing into a knot. Strains of music from the motion picture *Jaws* sang in her jangled nerves, creating sweat in the palms of her hands. She could feel the perspiration starting to trickle between her breasts and down her back.

"S'matter, 'fraid of sharks?" a very short Danny Devito type man asked.

"I never expected to see any out here," she said.

"Aw sure. Certain times of the year. Sharks, whales, heck even dolphins will play along these shores." His animated voice made her think midget, though she didn't know why because he wasn't—a midget that is.

People began to mingle and talk as though the sharks had cut through the thread separating stranger from stranger. Jasmine noticed for the first time that the Lady Baliese was one of the passengers. This time she was wrapped in purple cloth with a white turban, a giant amethyst stone glittered from the center. Her laughter rang with the music of distant bells. Jasmine was fascinated with her. So to, it seemed, were other passengers mingling around her. She didn't see her handsome chauffeur among those clustered at Lady Baliese's feet, nor Jon for that matter. Had he missed the ferry altogether?

The little Devito man drifted away from her toward the Lady Baliese crowd. She didn't see Jon anywhere. He must already be on the island. As the ferry approached the shore of the island she could see garlands of

flower-like lights on a swinging bridge rail strung out over the water. Small dinghies waited to transport the ferry passengers from the deep water anchor to the long pier/wharf type structure built out over the white sand beaches so that the high heeled ladies in the group would not need to soil their shoes or gowns in the white sand that surrounded the island.

“Please ladies, watch your step if you have not worn comfortable shoes. You’ll need to be extra cautious of the gaps between the planks on the bridge,” the captain said. His mates held the dinghies steady as passengers boarded them.

The dinghies traveled the few yards to the stairs that led up the side of the dock-like wharf and onto the island. None of this had been there when Jon and Jasmine had visited before. Zaire had the island for three months already and had made some significant changes.

A large formal garden greeted the guests being shuttled by open carts from the wharf to the castle.

Jasmine had seen pictures of Neuschwanstein Castle in Bavaria, Germany surrounded by its cloak of fog looking as though a cloud had descended and couldn’t rise above the turrets of the castle. That was exactly the picture presented by Maizely Ouiz’s castle as they approached her.

\* \* \* \*

Simple little white clouds played tag across the pale blue sky of early summer as the entourage made their way to the castle. The castle itself was still shrouded in the cloak of cloud, or was it a combination of all three, fog, mist and clouds. Moss dripped from the branches of the pines that marched up the face of the sheer cliffs beside the castle, their blackness a sharp contrast to the pale bone color of the castle turrets.

By invitation only meant bring your invitation if you expect to get into the party and it appeared everyone had. Each person in turn waited to be announced to the room much like a person being piped aboard ship. Servants in starched black and white uniforms displayed paper faces and robot precision motion from tables, to kitchen and back filling the banquet settings with golden turkeys, honey glazed pineapple adorned hams and skewers of every imaginable vegetable, and relish trays. Loaf upon loaf of delicate gold breads overflowed baskets placed in between other affairs de

courtier. The chandeliers that tinkled above the huge dining and entrance areas sent brilliant rainbows dashing everywhere from ceiling to floor and sometimes even across the face of an unsuspecting guest, prompting one to wonder if the pot of gold resided in the person being so graced. She stood transfixed by the splendor of it all.

Light baroque orchestra music sifted through the outer rooms and balconies seemingly coming from thin air. Finally Jasmine saw the source, a parlor orchestra sat in a place above the dining and entrance areas, like chandeliers suspended from the ceiling. The music they made pervaded the rooms and balconies. She felt like Cinderella must have, in total awe of her surroundings and the crowd who seemed transformed by the elegance of the place into Lords and Ladies if only for the brief space of the evening festivities.

A light tap on her shoulders startled her out of her dreamlike trance. “Enjoying yourself?” The voice she recognized. She had heard it before. Then she remembered where. The Studio, his mellow English accent crooned near her ear. She turned to look up into the chauffeur transformed in white tux and tails to the most handsome man she had seen in a very long time. His soft dark hair was long enough to reach below his collar, eyes the color of faded olives met hers and locked in like sonar on a sunken ship.

“You do get around. I didn’t see you on the ferry over,” she said when she finally found her voice and then wondered what ever possessed her to say such a stupid thing. He seemed to bring out the stumble bunny flustered high school girl in her.

“No, I brought gifts over for the guests and Zaire insisted they be here before the guests arrived. Lady Baliese gave me leave to bring them on ahead.”

Gave me leave. She marveled at the antiquity of the phrase. His manner was refined and old fashioned. She found herself admiring that quality. “I see. I would have thought since it was Zaire’s coronation the gifts should be for him.”

“When one is truly royalty, the giving of gifts is two fold more precious than receiving them,” he said, his smile riveting her to the spot where she stood. “I’m sorry, allow me to introduce myself – I am Weylyn. Would you mind being my dinner partner? It would seem we need to choose our own and you are by far the most entertaining of any I have seen this evening.”

Jasmine quickly glanced around the room looking for Jon. He was nowhere to be seen. She definitely would like to be seated next to this Adonis. There was an almost indiscernible danger about his roguish appearance mixed with his genteel manners, creating a juxtaposition of personality that intrigued her. “I think that would be delightful,” she said.

A tinkling bell stopped all conversation. *It's true. If you want to get someone's attention, whisper.* The tiny crystal clear sound of the bell overshadowed the drone of conversation. Trumpets announced a royal presence was arriving. Jasmine looked on in disbelief. The trumpeters could have been pulled from some medieval castle or *Alice in Wonderland*. The thought presented an amused picture in her mind. It could be any of the fairy tales—*Alice in Wonderland*, *Wizard of Oz*, or even “Cinderella”. The pomp and circumstance carried with it a hint of overdone theatrics. She squirmed uncomfortably with the thoughts crowding her mind.

Zaire, outfitted in red velvet robes with gold chains and ermine trim, floated down the circular stairway, his cape trailing down the stairs behind him. Heavy gold and ruby rings glistened as he raised his hand to still the applause in the room.

“Welcome, friends and all.” His baritone voice bounced around the room. Jasmine could feel it resonate deep inside her.

How odd she thought. His voice sounded broadcast from speakers around the room yet he had no visible microphone.

Weylyn touched her elbow and motioned to the aisle being created for Lady Baliese, entering from the opposite direction. Her purple wrap billowed and floated as she strode gracefully between the crowd as they were pulling backward, as though a great wand had waved the crowd back on both sides of a walkway for her like Moses parting the Red Sea. A tiny girl sprinkled white petals ahead of Lady Baliese, the sweetest smelling flowers Jasmine had ever encountered. They created a longing in the pit of her stomach. She didn't know what for. Weylyn pulled her into him and she enjoyed the feeling of warmth and security he provided, though why that should be an issue and why it crossed her mind now she didn't know or care to entertain. She wanted to enjoy what he exuded, strength and security. She was grateful again, though not sure why.

Lady Baliese walked the distance to meet Zaire unhurried, gaze locked with his. Behind her a small native carried an ornate gold and jeweled crown



on a red velvet cushion. Several other natives appeared with huge parchment fans on long handles that they gently waved them over Zaire.

When she reached Zaire, Lady Baliese stood before him and a third native appeared with another larger red velvet pillow that he placed between Zaire and Lady Baliese. Zaire knelt before her. She picked the crown from the velvet cushion and placed it on his head. The trumpets blared. She bent and kissed one cheek and then the other and then both of his eyes. Jasmine could feel the notes of the trumpets in her soul.

A small native girl handed Zaire a scepter. He stood then, and two thrones were placed at the base of the stairway he had descended. Zaire escorted Lady Baliese to them and they sat down.

Zaire raised his hand. "Welcome, friends and all."

People filed past the royal pair to lay the single flower each guest was handed during the ceremony at the couple's feet with appropriate congratulations and well wishes. The guests filled the chairs around the banquet tables. When Jasmine looked back she saw another table had been brought out for the royalty and Jon stood behind and to the right of Zaire as though he was his personal assistant or valet.

Weylyn held her chair for her as she prepared to sit. What a bizarre evening this was becoming. Throughout the meal Jasmine tried to catch Jon's eye but it appeared he was not interested in making eye contact with her. She turned her attentions to Weylyn. May as well make the best of a bad situation.

After the elegant meal, dancing half the night way, Zaire announced the ferry's departure. Those guests choosing to remain were given room numbers and instructions to come to breakfast precisely at eight a.m. and to be sure to wear comfortable shoes.

\* \* \* \*

In the morning the group was reduced by half. Everyone was given details of the scavenger hunt at breakfast. Jasmine had not yet spoken to Jon and he was nowhere to be found this morning. She was beginning to get nervous about it. That was totally unlike him.

When she tried to speak with Zaire his attendants kept her from getting near him. If it hadn't been for Weylyn she would have returned to the

mainland last night. With no signs of Jon, she accepted Weylyn's invitation to join in the scavenger hunt. The group was taken to the first cave to begin their search for clues and the first items on their lists.

Weylyn took her arm and steered her down a jungle-like path through the thick underbrush to another cave. Her insides were doing butterfly skitters at the thought that he might be thinking romantic liaison, but something was wrong with that picture. Even while his hand against the small of her back sent waves of heat to the place between her legs and her panties dampened, she sensed his tenseness. If it was amour he was after, why the rush to another cave? The jungle was thick. The other guests bent on the scavenger hunting wouldn't notice their absence.

"You must not follow them. They are in danger," he whispered as he hurried her off in the opposite direction. "Your friend Jon, he has been hypnotized and drugged. We must rescue him and get you off this evil island."

"Wait, I don't understand." Her breathless voice sounded hollow to her ears in the cavernous rock walls of the cave. She accepted the urgency in his voice as sincere. By now Jasmine was worried about what was more dangerous—staying with the group or being alone with Weylyn, "How do you know this?"

"Lady Baliese is not what she seems."

"What do you mean? Is any of this real?" she said waving her hand around the cave.

"Oh it's real. I am part of her plot. She, what word would you understand? She is a shaman, an evil sorceress."

"Zaire, he was the most congenial and wonderful friend. He can't be in on this evil."

"I'm afraid you are sadly mistaken. It is precisely what he wants you to think of him."

"Why are you telling me all of this? What's in it for you?" Now, she was burning angry. Why hadn't he told her about all this last night so she could have left with the others?

"I am tired of their games. I care for you and the man, Jon. It is time to end her evil ways. I was to have drugged your food last night so you would be docile and controllable. Lady Baliese will tolerate no female competition. Once she is with child she will dispose of your friend too."

Jasmine couldn't believe what she was hearing. She flung her hands in the air and pulled away from his embrace. "Wait, this is all happening too fast. Why should I believe any of it? Why was I invited here if it was Jon she wanted?"

"In your country you have many creatures like," he paused as though his mind searched for the right word to explain, "the black widow spider that kills her mate once she is with child. Lady Baliense is like that."

"Why are you spared?"

"I am her son. I am a pawn she uses to attract unsuspecting women who have men they can bring with them to mate with her, or who are virile enough to become her slaves, her incubators for the men she needs."

"When we were here before the island was run by the Mafia. We were escorted off by them when we tried to explore the caves."

"They were a, how you say—mirage—vision, not real."

"The advertisement of the caves, the appearance of Zaire, even his art work..." Jasmine was becoming increasingly alarmed. Her intuition had warned her, but she hadn't listened. Now it might be too late.

"I know where they are keeping your friend. I will take you there. Then you are on your own. Remember our dinner last night."

"But, what about you? What will be come of you? Come with us."

"I cannot. She would never allow me to leave. The two of you are not that important to her."

"Yes, we are. We could bring the authorities down on her."

"What are you two doing away from the group?" Zaire's voice bombarded the walls of the cave like heavy explosives.

"Run," Weylyn screamed as he dove at Zaire.

Jasmine ran for her life. She would try to reach the others before Lady Baliense snared them in her webs. Lady Baliense had the jungles strung with huge webs. Large cocoons danced, suspended from them. Jasmine knew what the cocoons contained now and she didn't plan on being one of them.

She wondered where Jon was. Suddenly, she was sure she would find him in the castle. She headed through the thick undergrowth. She wished for a machete to hack her way back in the direction of the castle. If she could find him, the two of them had a better chance of escape than she had alone. She hoped.

Cautiously she worked her way up to the back of the castle. She noticed something fluttering from a window a few feet off the ground. Jon's hat. She was sure of it. It had the Hodag plastered across the front, a keepsake from their Rhinelander Wisconsin trip last summer. What if it was a plant, a trap, to catch her? She couldn't be distracted by that thought now. She needed to reach Jon. Jasmine dug her fingers into the cracks and crevices of the short wall, her fingers scraped and bloody by the time she scaled the wall and landed with a plop outside the window. Carefully, she inched her way up to the window. Thankfully the thick fog muddied her movements. She saw Jon lying in a bed, tied to the headboard. She squeezed in through the window. The sound of keys jangling and being turned in the lock made her heart nearly stop. She scurried under the bed. She heard the heavy booted footsteps walk into the room and watched two pairs of feet pace around from her vantage point under the bed.

"She isn't here. She will never get out of that forest alive. There are too many mutated species waiting for a tasty meal. We've seen the last of her I think," a woman's guttural voice said.

They laughed their evil, harsh laughs as they closed and relocked the door. She heard them walk away.

"Jon," she whispered, shaking him.

Startled awake, terror in his eyes, he nearly cried out. She put her hand over his mouth.

"Sh, sh, it's me—Jasmine," she said.

His head flopped back down on the bed. "Thank God," he moaned. Then terror filled his eyes again. "Go. Get the hell out of here." His voice was a harsh and raspy whisper. It sounded like a death rasp. Jasmine shuddered.

"Not without you," she said, hurriedly untying his restraints.

"I'm too weak. I'll slow you down."

"I am not leaving here without you. Now come on or do I have to drag you?" She shoved him toward the window. His body, though slender, would not fit through the narrow slat of a window. "We'll have to think of another way." She wildly searched for another outlet but only the door remained and it was locked. Jasmine paced, raking her fingers through her hair. "When do they bring you food?"

He shrugged. "I have no idea. I'm not sure I've eaten. The drugs, the...her eyes...I feel like I want to stay here."

"Weylyn said she drugged and hypnotized you." Jasmine looked at the glazed look in his eyes. It was as though they had no light in them, no energy or thought. They seemed dull, as with a severely retarded child.

Jon reached for her hand and pulled her down beside him on the bed. "I'm so sorry I got you involved in this." He held her and kissed her temple. "You've got to get out of here. You can slip back out through the window. You've got to save yourself."

"I'm not going to leave you here," she said, wrapping her arms around him and snuggling into his shoulder. "We can get out of here together."

His hand under her chin he lifted her face to him. John's lips, hungry, searching, meshed with hers creating a delicious heat deep inside her. She kissed him back and his tongue pried between her lips. She let her jaw slacken so his tongue could pass between her teeth. Their tongues searched, needy. His hands first against her back, sliding up and down creating a stream of longing inside her. But, if the guards came back...

"Jon, wait, you need to be tied. What if the guards come back and find you free?" It took all her strength to resist his insistent hands and probing tongue, but she knew she must.

"I want you so bad," he groaned, cupping one breast with his hand.

Her nipple responded immediately, pebbling into a hard nub, needing him as much as he needed her. Now was not the time, she thought, prying herself loose from his grasp. She saw the growth of his want swelling in his pants. She needed to be ruthless now. There was no other way. She retrieved the rope from the floor. "Put your hands up to the headboard please, Jon." Her voice was heavy, raspy with her own unsatisfied lust.

Reluctantly Jon cooperated. She couldn't guarantee how long she could resist his advances as she tied his hands back up to the headboard. Her swollen breasts rubbed across his muscled chest. Sharp sparks of desire flew through her and she collapsed on top of him, swallowing his mouth with hers. She let her mound rub back and forth, up and down on his hardness. Dampness crept to her panties. Her heat radiated up her body. She had to stop now; she had to, before—

The jangle of keys pulled her viciously back to her senses and she rolled off Jon onto the floor and quickly slipped under the dust ruffle and under the

bed. Her breath catching in her throat, heart pounding like a jackhammer she willed it to be silent.

The guards entered. “Look the drug is working.” They roared with laughter at Jon’s erection, still bold and strong, pressing to be released from its confinement.

“Down boy,” one guard said, running her hand the length of Jon’s shaft.

He moaned, and a damp spot appeared where the engorged tip strained against the cloth.

He spit at the guard, repulsed with her even as his longing grew. The guard backhanded him. Jasmine heard him cry out in pain as the guard mounted him on the bed. “We’ll see how well you perform. We’ll see if you’re good enough for the Lady Baliese.”

Jasmine heard the sound of a zipper being unzipped and the bed bounced before Jon’s pants were flung to the floor. The guard’s legs hung over the edge of the bed. “Bring her in,” she said. “He is so ready he’s likely to waste that precious seed.”

The bitch was massaging his rod. She was deliberately trying to milk him. Jon resisted, trying to tighten his legs as the other guard returned with a woman that exuded sex. Lean, muscled, Jon could see she was in control of her body’s movements no matter how minute. Her heavy breasts loomed inches from his face as she mounted him, replacing the guard that had been rubbing herself against his hardness. She held his penis in her hands as she used her fingers to massage her clit. She held the tip of his rod, just at her entrance hole. Her tongue traced a path over lush lips. Her eyes seemed to telegraph her lust and told him she was born and bred for sex. She wallowed in the self created ecstasy as she manipulated her fingers against her tiny nub, pleasuring herself, getting her juices to flow. He could feel them begin to lubricate his rod.

“Enough, take him now,” one of the guards said as she shoved the women down, using her shoulders to cram her onto his shaft, forcing her to engulf his cock with her hot moist pussy. She moaned as she snaked her legs one down one up so she had one beside each side of him in an unnatural but tightening hold on his rod. She took his seed, but she milked him for all the pleasure she could give herself at the same time. She teased her hard nipples over his lips. He couldn’t help himself. He opened his mouth and sucked her in, suckling as a babe at his mother’s breast. He wanted to suck her inside

him like his rod was in side her. Fantasies tortured his mind, of her breast feeding, his cock, the juices she milked from him with her spasming cunt. She rode him. The muscles of her vagina knew exactly what his rod needed.

He wanted the good feeling to last. He wanted her to fuck him until he died. One side of his brain fought against her, he wouldn't be raped. The other side, drugged with some powerful aphrodisiac, lusted after this woman who sucked his rod with her skillful movements. He climaxed again and again, ejaculating bursts of his juices, filling the woman. He was powerless with his hands tied. He wanted to push her harder into him. He squirmed, needing to grab her, to fuck her within an inch of her life, but all he could do was let her move over him teasing, satisfying, urging him on. Spent finally, he went limp and the guards pulled her off and took her away. Cold air bathed his withered shaft, as it rested limp against his thigh. He was exhausted, drained, and ashamed as he remembered Jasmine under the bed.

## Chapter 3

Jasmine stayed under the bed, listening after the women left. Poor Jon, well no, he was obviously drugged with some very strong aphrodisiac. Obviously he had no resistance to what transpired. It aroused her a bit in a voyeuristic sort of way and she was ashamed of those feelings. She needed to get him out of here before Lady Baliese decided he had fulfilled his usefulness to her and her—what? What would you call a harem of women turned into baby machines?

Another surprise was the guards. How did she tolerate women who weren't child bearers, who were still young enough, whose physical abilities she trusted to be enough to protect her domain?

What was Zaire's role in all this? Was he as Weylyn suggested, another pawn in her game? No time to think this all through now. She needed to get Jon out of Lady Baliese's clutches or should she say spider web?

Jasmine pulled herself out from under the bed and stood up. Jon was snoring softly like he hadn't felt a thing. She picked his pants up from the floor and began dressing him. He groaned and struggled to free his hands.

"Jon, be quiet. It's me, Jasmine,"

His eyes opened a slit. "So tired, Jazz. Leave me. You get away."

"We've been through this already. You're dead if you stay here." She untied his hands again. "Sit up on the edge of the bed. Try to get your bearings."

Jon did as she requested. He teetered precariously, nearly falling face forward to the floor.

"Whoa. Steady." She caught him and held him up right. "Take a minute. Then, we'll see if you can stand."

"My head is swimming. What have they drugged me with?"

"I don't know, but we've got to get you to your feet. You ready?"



Jon nodded and slowly lifted his six foot frame off the bed. He put his hand on Jasmine's shoulder for balance. "Now what?" he asked his speech slurred like someone who was drunk. His voice sounded strained and breathless like someone who had run the Boston Marathon.

"They didn't lock the door. I guess they figured since you were exhausted and tired they didn't need to worry about you escaping." She helped Jon to the door, put her fingers to her lips in a motion for silence, before she cracked open the door and checked the hallway. She didn't see anyone so she nudged him out the door. They began the trek to the back stairs. If they could make it outside they had a better chance of survival.

Quietly, hurriedly they moved along, hugging the wall in the hallway. Jasmine watched and listened for any sign of someone approaching. She stopped Jon and propped him against a pillar, motioned him to stay put while she checked out the stairwell ahead.

She was worried. It seemed too easy. The guards knew she was loose. She tried not to think they might have somehow set a trap for her. The exit was ahead, no barrier, no door, and no guards. Too good to be true. A glint of something caught her eye in the archway. Of course it was a spider web. It would probably stop them in their tracks and send a signal to wherever the guards were. She had to rethink their escape. She inched her way back to Jon.

"The entrance is blocked with a nearly invisible spider's web. We'll have to be very, very careful where we go," she whispered.

Jon nodded. His eye lids so puffy, so heavy, he could barely stay awake.

"There's no way out," Jon said his voice sounded despondent, as though he had given up.

"We'll find a way. They have to enter and exit somewhere. All we need to do is follow someone out, or at least see how they do it." She led him back toward the interior stairwell. Footsteps echoed down one of the side hallways and Jasmine shoved Jon into a recessed archway. She slammed up against him, pressing in to the length of his back, hoping the person wouldn't see them. The footsteps came their way. Jasmine felt her heart in her throat. She was nearly afraid to breathe.

Jon's body rubbed against her, her nipples responded by turning to hard buttons. Oh, "not now" was all she could think. Being this close to Jon always aroused her, but this was neither the time nor the place. Jon's hand

warmed her thigh, holding her into his buttocks. It sent sparks flying through her body. She tried to concentrate on the footsteps in case they needed to fight their way out. She inhaled and the smell of Jon assaulted her nostril. She could still smell the heavy musky smell of his recent sexual encounter. It turned her nerves raw with desire. Concentrate, she chastised herself. A few steps before the foot falls reached her secluded enclave, someone called out.

“Star, Lady Baliese wants all Lieutenants at a meeting in her quarters pronto.”

The steps halted and abruptly marched in the opposite direction.

Jasmine exhaled, light headed from holding her breath so long. Jon’s hand slid up her thigh to her apple shaped bottom. “No,” she said, pushing his hand away. “Now is not the time.”

“That’s not what your breasts say,” he said turning and consuming her mouth in his.

She wanted to surrender. She wanted to let him ravage her body. The possibility of getting caught added to her adrenaline rush and desire. How stupid she thought.

“We need to run. We don’t have...” She pushed back from him realizing the drugs were still raging through his system. “We can’t, not here.” Breathless, she moved along the wall. The cold concrete felt good as she pressed against it. It helped to douse the fire in her breasts, the fire Jon had started between her legs.

The hallway one floor below was a bedlam of guards ushering a chain gang of men in a great door. As Jasmine watched she recognized men from the party the night before. What happened to the women? The thought charged across her mind. Would Lady Baliese have killed them?

Jon tapped her shoulder and pointed to a side doorway that seemed clear. They moved toward it. Warily she scanned it, trying to see if there was a web of any sort protecting it. Nothing showed. She was about to step through when Jon pointed to a tiny hole about ankle high. He motioned to another one just opposite. Laser beam flashed across her mind. Simultaneously they scanned the archway, only the lower beam protected the exit.

Jon lifted one leg over then the other being careful not to lean against the archway or let any part of him break the beam. He reached a hand back for Jasmine.

They made it through and across the narrow porch like to the archway. They leapt from the wall and landed, rolling into the brush slightly downhill from the castle. Quickly, they scurried deeper into the underbrush and sat leaning against a large tree catching their breath.

“How are we going to get off the island?” Jon asked. “It’s too far to swim to the mainland? Where is the mainland?” His eyes went blank, staring off into the jungle. His fingers twisted in his t-shirt like a nervous child. Jasmine felt sorry for him.

Jasmine’s head hurt, the relaxing weekend she needed, the fun she had expected to have was gone. The bleak realization about their chances for survival assaulted her senses. She was determined Lady Baliese was not going to get away with her sinister plot. How and why she had managed to do so to this point didn’t matter—that she was stopped did.

“We need to find out what they did with the women—and—Weylyn,” she said. “Can you remember anything about what happened since you got here? Anything that might be a clue to how we get out of here?”

Jon shrugged. “They must have slipped something in my drink—I—I can’t remember anything except the women...” His voice faded into an embarrassed silence.

“We have to keep moving. There was one cave that wasn’t supposed to be included in the scavenger hunt. Do you remember where that one is? And more importantly why it wasn’t included?” Jasmine watched Jon for any signs he would be cognizant enough to supply some answers. His eyes still had that dull hypnotized look, no light, no spark to them.

He shrugged again, “Sorry, I... The drugs maybe...” Another sentence was left suspended in the air like a guillotine that could come crashing down any minute to end their current predicament and their lives.

Jasmine tried to remember her way back to the cave that Weylyn had taken her to. He must have thought that particular cave was a safe haven, but hadn’t Zaire found them in that exact same cave? She wondered if perhaps the grounds were full of cameras to monitor all guest movements. Other questions began crowding her mind. Why the elaborate ruse of coronation, scavenger hunt and all the rest? Why not just capture homeless people off

the streets and use them for her diabolical scheme. Homeless people would never be missed, or at least not nearly as readily as the guest whose lives were strung to jobs, friends, and family, not to mention money. Surely, someone would launch a campaign to find those people within days of their absence when they never returned.

Jasmine pulled Jon to his feet. He had collapsed again as though any movement was overexertion for him. He appeared so weak. She needed to hide him somewhere while she found the life raft Weylyn had told her about earlier. She spotted a thick clump of ferns and jungle vines. “Jon, we’re going to hide you in there.” She pointed to the densely overgrown spot. “Just until I find us a way out.”

He nodded “Sorry, too tired,” he apologized in a slurred mumble.

“I know. It’s the drugs. You should be safe here. I’m going to try to find Weylyn and the women.”

“Be—be careful,” Jon squeezed out before he collapsed once again against the trunk of a towering eucalyptus tree.

Jasmine worried that perhaps high up in the trees would be a safer spot given the type of environment of the jungle-like island. Maizely Ouiz was an odd environment in this area. It was as though the environment had been pulled from a South Pacific paradise and dropped here by some great turbulence. The jungle atmosphere in the cold northern reaches of Lake Superior had to be artificially sustained. There was no other explanation. A phenomena as odd as the Bermuda Triangle.

Jasmine heard voices coming her way. Quickly she skittered under some heavy leaves that looked like they belonged to a giant split-leaf philodendron. The footsteps were hurried. “Lady Baliese will have our hide if they escape,” a gruff female voice said.

“Where is Zaire? We better tell him,” another woman said.

“Or Weylyn—he would help us,” a mouse-like third voice squeaked.

“Weylyn? It’s his fault the woman is on the loose in the first place. Lady Baliese ordered him to be confined to his room until further notice.” The gruff voice came again more loudly.

Jasmine slunk her body as close to the ground as she could get it. She didn’t want to be discovered by that woman. She watched as the sandaled feet kicked into the undergrowth at the side of the trail.

Weylyn confined to his room. That was the best news she heard in twenty four hours. Now, if she could just figure out where that room was. She could sure use his help. She started back toward the castle.

## Chapter 4

The jungle was crawling with guards. They were everywhere, jabbing at the undergrowth with long spears. Jasmine wondered if she dared leave Jon while she searched for Weylyn. Quickly, she squeezed herself into the trunk of a tree as several Amazon women approached in her direction. She began to think the only safe way to travel would be as the monkeys did, tree to tree, vine by vine, but she was no Tarzan or even Jane.

“Stab, stab, stab.” The spears beat a rhythm closer and closer to Jasmine. Two other women burst through the underbrush from another direction.

“Cigarette break,” one of them called out.

“Yeah right, Lady Baliese will have your ass if she catches you,” another said.

“Up yours,” the first woman shot back.

Jasmine sensed a rivalry between the two pairs of women.

“Enough. We have escaped guests to deal with. Did you see any signs down that way?” another asked in a take-charge voice.

“We aren’t going to find them. Why doesn’t she just let her spider webs do their work? They can’t escape.” The cigarette woman grumbled.

Good idea thought Jasmine. She was prepared to fight spider webs, more prepared than for combat with the imposing body builder Amazons that guarded Maizely Quiz.

“We don’t get paid to think, only follow orders. Now let’s get going.”

“Yeah, remember the bonus for whoever finds them,” part of the second team said.

Jasmine felt the imprint of the tree bark on her skin as she peeled herself away from it to watch the four women head off in another direction. She breathed a sigh of relief and shook herself to loosen her body from the

tension that knotted her while she listened to the women a couple feet from where she hid. Apparently, Jon had stayed hidden as the cigarette woman said they discovered nothing from her direction which would have been the area where she had left Jon.

Cautiously she slid out into the animal trail toward the castle, reminded again to watch for the spider webs, which she had completely forgotten about. She was thankful for the reminder. What a dreadful way to be captured. Lady Baliese did remind her of a spider—the black widow spider as Weylyn had so aptly described her.

As she approached the castle she could see the guard had been doubled. There had to be a hole. There always was, she thought as her hopes of getting in to find Weylyn seemed to be fading. A commotion off to her right caused Jasmine to dive for cover. She lay flattened against the ground as footsteps approached. She raised herself enough to see the woman leading Weylyn by a rope tied around his neck. His hands were tied and he was blindfolded. She was alone. Jasmine searched the area near her for something to use as a weapon. The woman was a good foot taller than her and her physique told Jasmine she would be no match for the giant of a woman. Where was she taking Weylyn? Jasmine decided to follow her. Maybe she would get the chance to free Weylyn. At the very least she would know where they took him.

Jasmine held her breath and remained motionless while they passed inches from her hiding spot.

“Hurry up,” the woman growled. “I haven’t got all day to be dragging you around. After you spend a few hours in the hole you’ll be more than ready to cooperate.” She gave the rope a yank that nearly sent Weylyn sprawling.

Warily, Jasmine slunk along behind them, deliberately avoiding the path so as not to be surprised from behind, or seen by some one approaching from that direction. The Amazon woman stopped before a cage imbedded partway into a hillside of boulders. She yanked the barred and mesh-lined entrance open and shoved Weylyn inside. He fell forward and disappeared into the blackness of the interior. Jasmine heard him call out as he hit the bottom of the cage. Judging from the sound Jasmine guessed it was a pit at least ten feet deep. The woman flipped the rope that had been around his neck several times, apparently it came undone then and she hauled it up,

wrapping it into a coil and slipping it on to her belt. She slammed the cage door and secured it with a length of wire. Jasmine figured the pit was of sufficient depth that he would not be able to get out on his own. Jasmine watched as the woman bolted back down the path, her long legs covering ground like a speeding gazelle.

Jasmine inched her way toward the cage the woman had shoved Weylyn into. "Weylyn," she whispered. "Can you hear me?" She waited the longest minute of her life for a reply. She hoped he hadn't been injured in the fall. "Weylyn," she called again.

This time he answered. "Here," he said barely more than a whisper, "I'm down here."

"It's Jasmine. Are you okay?"

"For the moment."

"We have to get you out of there," she said unfastening the wire from the cage, all the while keeping a sharp eye for movement in the undergrowth. She scrunched down and crawled into the darkness on all fours, then on her stomach, not wanting to chance tumbling down into the same pit Weylyn was in.

"Watch for the snakes," Weylyn said as something brushed against Jasmine's hand and she froze.

"Poisonous?" she asked, knowing without a doubt. Why else would they be there.

"When you open the cage, they're probably ready to head out into the jungle seeking their own natural food supply."

"That's a comforting thought. Now I know why the mesh is on the gate. Not to keep critters out, but to keep them in." She remained motionless, nearly panicking, as the reptiles slithered over her and on toward the freedom of the pen gate and the jungle. After several minutes of non-activity she felt it safe to move again.

"Can you climb the walls of the pit?" she asked.

"My hands are tied. Wait let me get this blindfold off," he said.

She heard shuffling below.

"I'm going to try to shed these ropes," he said after another brief pause.

"Nuts, no such luck. They're too snug."

"Hurry. I have no idea how long before someone comes back for you."



“It looks like I can get a foothold up the side. I should be able to reach the top but I’ll need your help once I get that high with my hands tied.”

“Here,” Jasmine said, slipping the leather belt from her jeans. “See if you can grab this so I can help. She dangled the belt over the pit and felt a tug, meaning Weylyn had caught it. She sat up, bracing her feet against the wall surrounding the pit. “Ready.” She slid her hand in the loop she had made by pushing the belt end through the buckle end.

Weylyn began his climb up. Every time he got one foothold and stepped down to get the next foothold, the soft sides of the pit collapsed and he slid back down to the bottom. “The center is another hole. I have to be careful or I’ll wind up down who knows where.” His voice quivered now. “There’s a frigid draft from some where.”

“Hurry. Try again,” Jasmine began to feel an urgent need for him to get out of the pit now, if he was ever going to. She could suddenly hear what sounded like a rush of water racing toward the pit, toward Weylyn.

Just as Weylyn crested the lip of the pit Jasmine yanked for all she was worth. Weylyn shot out of the pit and landed square on top of her. A plume of red/orange and yellow shot up from the hole a good four feet into the air. Weylyn rolled them both out of the way as molten lava spewed sparks sideways before the red roaring plume collapsed back on itself and disappeared, leaving the pit a black abyss once again.

“My God what if you had still been down there,” Jasmine said.

Weylyn’s mouth only a breath away from hers seized the opportunity and he swallowed her mouth, as a moist, searching hungry kiss engulfed her. His hardness was immediate and rigid against her pelvis. His hands still tied at the wrists were around her waist and slid down to her butt cheeks where he fondled them, squeezing, kneading, rubbing her against his rigid shaft.

“We can’t. Not here, not now,” she protested between gasps for air, pulling slightly from his lips.

He stopped moving, but he didn’t get off from the top of her. He kissed her neck, licking a line up to her ear, “I want you,” he said in a raspy sexy voice that sounded hungry, lusting and not about to stop what he had started.

Jasmine didn’t know what kind of drug Lady Baliense had given her men, but whatever it was it created a nearly buck in rut heat in their loins. No amount of danger it appeared could cool it.

“Soon,” she said, checking her own passion. The shot of explosion from that pit must surely have alerted security at the castle. They had to run now. “We need to get to safety first.” She struggled out from under Weylyn and bolted to her feet. “Come on now!” she ordered and he quickly acquiesced. She would untie his hands when they found a safe place to hide.

\* \* \* \*

A safe place to hide. One of the myriad of caves that dotted the island sounded like a good bet, but they would need to get Jon before they dared seek safety for themselves. Jasmine pulled Weylyn off the path and into the deep undergrowth nearly running into a spider web.

They both stopped and turned wide-eyed stares at each other. Jasmine bent over from the waist gasping in deep breaths of the dense air laden with the musky smell of decaying vegetation. Her allergies to plant mold squeezed at her lungs making her breathing sound like an asthmatic wheeze.

Weylyn reached out and touched her shoulder, “Are you okay?”

She bounced her head in a nod of agreement, but she didn’t feel at all okay. She felt like a giant vise squeezed her chest. Calm, serene, peaceful, unconditional love. She forced her thoughts to concentrate on relaxing the constricted muscles in her chest. She pulled up pictures of a peaceful lake at sunrise in her mind. She visualized a canoe sailing quietly in the predawn peacefulness. Her breathing eased and she began to try to untie Weylyn’s wrists.

“We’ve got to get Jon from where I hid him. Then we’ll find a cave where we can stay out of sight until we can figure what to do next,” she said. Each word interrupted with a wheezed struggle for more air. Each breath squeezed painfully from her aching lungs. She knew the only way to thwart a full blown collapse was to force herself to relax. She felt like laughing over the oxymoron she just created. If relax meant let go, how do you force that? A small tittering chuckle escaped her. Weylyn looked up from his study of her unknitting his hands with a quizzical look on his face.

She waved her hand as though wiping the answer off a black board, as she finished untying him.

He rubbed his wrists trying to get the circulation back into his hands and ease the chaffing the ropes had caused. She could see the red-raw marks left

by the roughness of the ropes that bound his wrists. "Where is Jon," he asked.

Jasmine pointed northwest. "A few hundred yards further if he stayed where I left him. I think he was too drugged and exhausted to go anywhere." Footsteps and voice advancing toward them made Jasmine skitter deeper into the thick undergrowth, careful to avoid the spider webs.

Weylyn pulled her tight into him and sunk as low as he could. His arms around her created heat where she didn't dare let it materialize. His hot breath on her neck cast shivers down her spine. The man was a lethal weapon she decided. The intoxicating muskiness of his smell drugged her senses. All she wanted to do was melt into him, let him swallow her. She shook herself free from his rousing aura. Its effect was making her lose control and she needed all her powers of concentration as the footsteps pounded by on the jungle path toward the area where Weylyn had been caged minutes earlier. When they saw the open gate they would know he had escaped and that he had help. They would launch a manhunt. She needed to get Jon and find a cave before that happened.

The minute the footfalls faded, Jasmine began a crouched rush toward Jon's hiding spot. She could hear Weylyn's breathing behind her and the rustle of leaves as they slid through the jungle-like undergrowth. No other sounds, no animals, no insects, the silence was frightening as though all the creatures that inhabited the island sensed the danger of the game of hide and seek being carried out in the underbrush.

Jasmine nearly stumbled over the cowering Jon before she saw him. It made her sick to her stomach to see what Lady Baliese had done to him. "Jon, it's Jazz. I've got Weylyn here. We're going to be okay," she said trying to unwrap the death grip he had his knees wrapped in. He hugged his knees, his eyes wild with fear. She pulled his arms loose and wrapped them around her shoulders. He clung to her like a frightened child.

"It's the drugs. They'll wear off after a few hours. Right now he's totally vulnerable," Weylyn said, picking Jon up and tossing him over his shoulder. "Come on! I think I know where we will be safe." He darted like a chased rabbit through the underbrush skirting spider webs, and pointing out pit traps. When they reached the waterfalls Jasmine's heart sank. There was no way she could swim a rapids, not even on a good day, and this certainly wasn't a good day. She was about to protest when Weylyn darted straight

into the water falls. She followed, nearly losing her footing on the mossy slime coating on the rocks.

Jasmine stopped in her tracks looking as at the huge cavern carved out behind the falls.

“Just like in the movies,” she said, breathlessly.

The cave was guarded by hanging stalactites as big around as she was reaching nearly to the floor, where stalagmites reached up to them. They worked their way between them further back into the high walled cavern. The sound of the waterfalls was nearly deafening as its echo bounced around the interior walls.

Weylyn kept moving. Jasmine followed deeper and deeper into the center of there newly discovered shelter. Finally Weylyn stopped and slipped Jon off his shoulders, propping him against the cavern wall.

“We should be safe enough here from Lady Baliese and her troops—for a while. No one knows about this place except...”

He stopped, his face clouded over. Jasmine could almost feel the pain that twisted inside him.

“Ambrose knew, but he is no more.” He stood and walked a few steps away with his memories before he spoke again. “We need to gather some wood to keep the dingoes at bay throughout the night.”

“Dingo—aren’t they Australian creatures?” Jasmine asked as the old *Quigley Down Under* movie streamed across her mind.

“You don’t know Lady Baliese. She has imported every evil creature that ever walked the earth anywhere on to the island. She has some perverse sense of life.”

Jasmine wanted to know why. And she wanted to know what was with the Amazon women, the men held captive to be milked of their sperm like so many cows. A million questions were crowding her mind, but darkness in the cave would come early and quickly. She felt Weylyn’s urgency about gathering wood to build a fire. Where had the volcanic eruption come from? What kind of island was this? Where were they really? Jasmine’s thoughts raged with questions as she followed Weylyn back farther into the caves gathering driftwood and petrified animal dung. They tossed it onto his jack shirt that he pulled along behind him like a travois. She would ask her questions when they were settled for the night. She didn’t like the size of the petrified animal droppings either they were more like buffalo platters. What

animal left them behind? Certainly not the small dog-like creatures, the dingo.

Weylyn dipped a leather bag into the stream that trickled down a step-like rock formation. "Purest water anywhere," he said. "Food will have to wait, but we will have fresh water." Jasmine was glad for that, at least.

"Are the waterfalls the only entrance?" she asked, nervous about the dingo. They must have come in from somewhere.

"The only one," he said as he pointed them back in the direction of the falls.

"The dingo?" she questioned.

"They've been trapped in here for years. I used to bring leftovers and drop them down the holes. Lady Baliese used to drop her used up specimens down to feed them, or rather have her guards do it."

"You mean, the men and women she no longer had a use for?" The revulsion Jasmine began to feel manifested itself in her queasy stomach. What kind of evil were Zaire and Lady Baliese involved in and why was Weylyn still a part of it? Why was he trying to help her now?

Weylyn didn't speak. He set about building a fire at the mouth of the cavern they had just come from. Jon sat, dazed and unemotional, staring at Weylyn busy with the fire.

Jasmine couldn't believe no one else knew of the caves behind the waterfalls. If Lady Baliese had kept dingoes all these years someone must have been curious about how they got into the caves under the holes. Why would they her rational right brain argued? They are nothing more than puppets, robots if you will, under Lady Baliese's drugs and spells.

Jasmine sat next to Jon and he turned and put his head on her shoulder. She nearly expected him to start sucking his thumb or a shiver at the thought of him wanting to suckle at her breasts like an infant crossed her mind. She may have entertained the idea a few days ago willingly, now all she felt for him was pity. After seeing how the women had used him in that bedroom, milking his sperm as though he were a toy, a piece of equipment—she no longer had a romantic notion toward him, only motherly, caregiver type concern for him. She gently rocked him back and forth until he slipped down into her lap fast asleep.

She must have slept too for when she moved she felt as stiff as the rusty old hinge on her grandfathers pasture gate. Weylyn was nowhere to be seen

and all that remained of the fire were charred ruins. Jasmine slipped out from under the sleeping Jon. Where could Weylyn have gotten to?

## Chapter 5

She shouldn't have listened to Zaire's pleadings about the woman, Jasmine. He was right. She was strong and brilliant, but— Lady Baliese threw her hands in the air and strode to the window overlooking the courtyard garden. Now, this woman had stolen Jon out from under her nose and turned Weylyn, dear sweet gentle Weylyn, against her.

Angry at losing control and losing two prime male specimens, she pushed away the big black cat that had been winding itself lovingly, snake-like around her ankles. He turned, yellow eyes a warning not to push again. Lady Baliese bared her fangs and hissed at the panther. He cowered and backed down. He sensed she was more than he was prepared to deal with – in a fight to the death she would forever be the winner. She snapped her fingers and the animal retreated to his bed in the nook beside her bed, caged with his mate. Keridwen moved to give him room to join her. It was true, the feline species doesn't tolerate her species well, but she had rescued Keridwen and Geburah when she had to kill their mother to spare her the agony of the trap that nasty farmer had set. The two echoed her personality now. Except, on those occasions when she needed a male. The Geburah thought he ruled everything female and she needed to dominate him or be overrun with his demands.

The cat proceeded to groom himself and Lady Baliese rang for her personal assistant. Rue appeared instantly bowing graciously, silent as always—but then how does one talk without a tongue? she mused. "Status report on the escaped guests," she ordered.

The silent woman handed her a tape and Lady Baliese slipped it into the player next to her chair. Portia, her main guard's, voice immediately filled the room. No sign of the guests or Weylyn. She outlined all the steps taken

so far to secure the island. The tape finished with, “and we have secured all watercraft so none are available for escape from the island.”

Lady Baliese snapped off the tape recorder. The clouds had begun to pull away from the sun allowing the passage of ribbons of golden dawn into her room. Rue immediately pulled the heavy red velvet brocade drapes to protect her Lady. Lupis disease the doctors had diagnosed her the one time she had dared presume to have them examine her. True, she couldn't stand the harsh light of day, if only she had known then about the hypnotic dark-eyed son of Dracula – Dracon—his promises of always and forever. She hadn't realized they meant eternity.

It was too late by the time she had run from his imprisonment. Lady Baliese closed her eyes and let his hands roam once again over her hot flesh, his kisses stealing her resistance, her soul. It was as though he was still there. She could feel his engorged shaft slipping ever so easily into her deepest reaches. She rode the wave as he moved in and out, sliding enough against her g spot to make her gasp even now. And then when he drew his teeth against her throat she willingly let the pain embrace the explosion in her vagina, her muscles contracting, milking him even as he sucked the life blood from her veins.

Exhausted she slumped in the lounge, waving her hand to dismiss Rue. She had no further need of the woman. Dracon's visit more than satisfied her lust. What she needed now was to quench the other thirst Dracon was responsible for. She needed the fresh male blood of her newest guests. Unfortunately it wouldn't be Jon, not yet, but soon.

She rang for Portia. “Bring me a meal,” she ordered. Portia backed away jangling the heavy key chain from the wall as she removed it in preparation to fill her Lady's request. “Does her Lady have a preference—dark or light skin today?”

Lady Baliese thought of the creamy white complexion of a former guest, how brilliant his crimson blood looked against his pale skin—she could nearly taste its delicious redness. His terrified blue eyes stark contrast to the red, became wide and horrified as he realized that as she drained his juices of manhood into her, she also sucked his blood. The Pavulon made resistance impossible and when Rue administered the lethal injection, at his precise realization, his climax fueled by terror exploded again and again into her in hot bursts until she thought she would explode with her fullness.



Quickly, she had rolled off him before his blood supply became tainted with the Pavulon and she emptied his seed into the special cup where it would be quickly sucked up to be used to artificially inseminate a surrogate mother.

“Bring me the black man. I hunger for dark meat today,” she said with a flourish. The twins, Gemini and Geminee, entered as Portia left. They prepared Lady Baliese’s bath and bed for her lover’s final performance. Her memories of the last time had sufficiently warmed her that she would need little coaxing to enjoy sex with this new male. She slipped into the tepid bubble bath, the heady aroma of lavender tugged at her senses. She sank deeper into the swirling warmth of the water while the twin servants caressed her body with tiny gentle hands, making sure no spot on her had not been gently cleaned with lavender body wash.

They simultaneously slithered fingers in to her orifices to sooth even her inner places with their coddling, evoking love touches. They helped her to her feet and she stood while the shower rinsed the suds from her body. One twin tasted the cleanliness of her breasts, sucking on the hardened beads to be sure they were ready for her new mate. The second twin’s tongue explored the clitoris and deep reaches of her body. They guided her from the shower to the massage table where they lavished her with perfumed body oil, keeping her desire peaked as they worked.

A cool draft wafted over her body as Portia entered with the black man, his muscular body glistened from the fresh oil bath he had before being brought to her. His eyes opened wide with lust at the sight of Lady Baliese’s perfect body being fondled and kissed by the twins, deliberately prolonging their enjoyment of Lady Baliese’s body to peak his arousal. His notice manifested in the bulge growing in his tight bikini thongs. Portia walked him around in a circle for the ladies to drool over, then she took him to the bed and handcuffed him there, prone on his back, his great rod straining against the confinement of the cloth that covered him.

Lady Baliese sufficiently warmed dismissed the other women with a flourish of her hand. She slid the cage door shut on the panthers since they had a tendency to become aroused at her passion and wanted to be a part of the lovemaking. She snaked her way on to the bed beside the dark skinned male.

“You’re Ramón, am I correct?” she teased, licking his ear with her tongue, fucking it with the tip while he squirmed, wanting her tongue in other places she could feel his need.

“Yes.” He nearly moaned in response.

“Are you ready for a little pleasure, Ramón?” She ran her tongue over his lips and then swallowing his mouth with hers before he could answer. He responded, sucking her tongue into his mouth. She knew the drugs he had been given. The hand oiled treatment he had received by Blaze and Trinede were enough to make even the staunchest male beg for release. He was putty, waiting for her to manipulate, but oh how she loved to tease. He squirmed, trying to rub his hardened rod into her, but she moved so only their lips could touch.

She ran her tongue down between his ribs, down, down his long muscular torso slowly to his tight abs and then into his navel. She fucked his navel with her tongue, while she fondled his balls. His penis strained at the thin cloth of his flimsy thong. She thought he would burst it soon if he became any more aroused. She nipped at the tip of his rod through the cloth and he bucked into her, trying to get into her mouth. She moved her tongue to an inner thigh, tracing circles as she teased between his legs closer to his balls. He writhed with need, moaning, “take me, take me,” in a raspy deep throated voice hoarse with want. She pulled back and rose to her knees smiling. He struggled against the hand cuffs. She put her hands under her breasts, lifting them in an ancient offering.

“You want these?” she teased in her sexiest deep throated voice.

“Yes,” he nearly shouted, his need dragging at him he writhed trying to get his head up to them. His tongue pleading to just taste the nectar of her.

She leaned over him and brushed the rigid buttons over his lips. His tongue darted out, catching a button and she allowed him to suckle it. He was hungry, oh so hungry. She felt the suck in her womb as he dragged at first one nipple and then the other with his sucking, hungry mouth, her own desire beginning to peak. She slid over top of him and lay to rub her cunt against his shaft still covered by the thong. He brought one leg up over her back and pulled her down into him harder.

Lady Baliense pulled away from him and stripped off his flimsy thong. She returned to sink his rod slowly, partially in and then pulled way out and slowly sank nearly to the hilt. He bucked into her and she slammed back

down on him. She backed off from him then and slipped her mouth over his rod, pre-cum spurting into her mouth. She slithered back up his body and gave him a long deep penetrating kiss while she slid her body back over his hot rod and gyrated her hips until he began reeling inside her explosion and a bite to her tongue told her he had peaked. She removed her mouth from his and traced her teeth over his jugular vein red, deep dark nearly black against his dark skin dribbled from the mark. She had to look at his eyes as he realized what she was about, but he only groaned “don’t stop, take me take me always.”

She fell on him, her climax igniting a chain reaction. She sucked the blood from his neck and fed off both the climax and the juices that fed her life until she thought she had lost touch, lost control of reality. She needed to keep this great ride alive. She didn’t dare suck him dry. He was the best sex she had had in many moons. He would be her personal pet until Jon could be trained properly. She ripped herself from him and rang for the girls to return and take him away.

Exhausted she slipped into another warm bath and let the tension and relief spill into the water while she slept.

## Chapter 6

Carmel Apple threw up her hands in bewilderment. Jasmine wasn't at the Gallery again. Something must be terribly wrong. Jazz never missed a day, let alone a whole weekend and then two days. This was an especially crucial time for her just opening The Studio Gallery and all; it seemed so contrary to her normal behavior. Carmel thought back over the years they had been good friends. Jazz had always been the level headed responsible one who kept her on track.

She could only hope that Jon might know what Jazz was up to. Carmel slid back into her electric blue PT Cruiser and headed in the direction of The Daily News newspaper office.

\* \* \* \*

Ajax Weber was in no mood for speculation. He was furious that Jon had missed two days of work after leaving early on Friday. He had missed deadlines on some very important stories. He stormed across the office commons area raging like a tornado over Jon Bentley's inconsiderate, juvenile behavior. He motioned to Carmel to follow him to his office. She wasn't at all sure she wanted to be in a confined space with a raging bull.

"If you see him tell him he's fired! Give someone a chance, you rely on them and this is the thanks you get," he said slamming file drawers, pacing his small cluttered office like a caged wolf.

"I'm afraid something may have happened to him and Jasmine Le Claire. They were going to a party over the weekend on an island called Maizely Ouiz. Do you know where it is?"

Ajax held up his hands. "Whoa, wait a minute. I've lived here all my life. Maizely Ouiz? Is that an invention of someone's daydreams?"

Carmel shrugged. “A mutual acquaintance, I guess he’s an artist as Jasmine opened her gallery with a huge collection of his works. His name is Zaire. She said he invited her and Jon to his official coronation as he was finally king of his own island and he told them it was named Maizely Ouiz.

“Artists,” he said throwing his pen down on his desk raising his hands behind his head, fingers locked he rocked his chair back on to the back legs, tottering precariously. “So this, this Zaire, bought a hunk of property—an island?”

Carmel nodded. “I thought Jazz said it was out in Lake Superior because they were going to be ferried there through the island chain—something like that.”

Ajax’s mood shifted. He looked deep in thought. He bounced his chair back down level and punched the intercom button, “Suzy, would you bring me the topographic maps of Lake Superior?” He stuck his pencil in his mouth, chewing on it like a cigar. “I’m almost positive there is no Maizely Ouiz—unless it was renamed. But, it won’t hurt to take a look at how many islands are in that area.”

Suzy brought him a box with several CD’s and he proceeded to read the labels and then loaded one into his computer. “Thank goodness for computers. We’d need a whole room to house everything connected to Lake Superior. She’s an interesting lady.”

The index didn’t turn up the name Maizely Ouiz. Carmel watched as he scanned the various aerial pictures of the islands in small bays bordering Lake Superior.

“Needle in a haystack comes to mind,” she said. “I wonder who might possibly have directions.” She let the thought dangle with nowhere to go as she listened to the click of the mouse and watched visions of islands small and large slide by on the computer screen.

“How about the ferry that transported them? I would suggest calling Chief Storm. I think we need to report these two as missing persons. Let the police do what they get paid to do. I’m shorthanded and can’t really spend the time. Chances are we’ll find the two of them eloped to Las Vegas or something.”

Jon had told Carmel about what a softy Ajax was though he usually came across as quite crass. The switch in his demeanor only confirmed what Jon had said. His anger was a cover-up for him, always projecting the in

control boss of a situation when he was really jelly inside. Jon was his pride and joy. Carmel sensed his pride and thus his anger. there was no way he was going to fire Jon over this. She would go talk to Chief Storm.

“I don’t think they were romantically involved. Just friends. Besides wouldn’t Jon have at least called? I mean his job and all. And certainly Jazz, with her art gallery, can’t afford to have it closed all weekend and then two week days.”

“You might be right but I have a newspaper to run. Why don’t you run over and tell Chief Storm what you know?”

Carmel left feeling as though Ajax had dismissed her and the other two as too much trouble in his already troubled day. Yet she was absolutely sure he was as concerned as she was. She was becoming more apprehensive by the minute. People don’t just all of a sudden not show up to their jobs, not responsible people anyway, which she had every reason to believe Jon and Jasmine were.

Chief Storm was busy with a mountain of paper work crowding his desk, but he pushed it aside to listen to Carmel’s story.

“You’re right though. I can’t imagine either one of them being that irresponsible. But, don’t you think it’s just possible that they opted for a weekend away from the maddening crowds? You know, a kind of rendezvous? Let’s see what Zeke has to say, he’s good friends with Jon and Jasmine.” He motioned for Zeke Trader to come in. “If anyone can find a needle in a hay stack Zeke can.”

Zeke nodded to Carmel when he came in.

Carmel, Helen, Jazz and Jon had spent many an evening together since practically ever. She felt relieved when the Chief decided to seek his help.

Chief Storm told Zeke what Carmel’s concerns were about Jon and Jasmine and then said. “Maybe you would want to nose around down at the docks on your way home tonight, see whose ferry may have taken a large group out to an island party somewhere in the mix of Apostle Islands, specifically one named...” He paused and looked down at his notes.

“Maizely Ouiz,” Carmel offered.

Zeke’s left eyebrow arched in a “say what” kind of look. “Can do, but I’ve never heard of an island by that name out there. I’ll give it a shot on my way home though. Always love a good puzzle.”

“I think that’s all we can do for now. I should—no, I will get back to you in twenty four hours if you’ll leave me your number.”

Carmel wrote her phone number on the back of her business card even though she was aware that Zeke’s wife Helen would have it. “I’m a night nurse over at the Bay Elder Hospice so if you find anything out and can’t reach me at the first number, my home, this is where I am.”

Chief Storm stood, pushed out his hand to shake hers, “Thanks for coming by. I do understand your concern. We’ll get to the bottom of this don’t you worry.”

Thank goodness for her job. That would help keep her mind off, what may have happened to Jazz and Jon. At the first opportunity Carmel began a computer search for Zaire, Lady Baliese and Maizely Ouiz. She was sure Zaire must have had another name and had just changed it like he had changed the island’s name. Like some of the basketball players, or boxers changed their names for religious reasons – maybe Zaire had done the same. He would have to report income. He’d have to have a database for doing-business-as. Some kind of alias tracking skills were needed. Who did she know besides Zeke Trader who could do that?

She dialed Zeke’s home number. She was curious what he had found out anyway. Helen answered. She said Zeke had called saying he was going to be late, but she would have him call her as soon as he came in. Zeke had told Helen about Jazz and Jon’s disappearance and she was as concerned as Carmel was. They were all good friends and never failed to be there for whoever needed help. Carmel was glad for another female’s opinion on what might have happened to Jazz and Jon.

Carol left for work no closer to finding anything out than she had been at ten a.m. that morning when she first visited The Studio.

## Chapter 7

When Weylyn finally came back with food, Jasmine had rekindled a fire to rid the cave of the dampness that had been pulled in during the early morning hours.

“We will need to use extreme caution, both in this cave and outside. The guard swarms everywhere and the dingo population has soared. They were barely subdued by the blaze last night. I’m not sure how long that will be enough to keep them at bay.”

“Why haven’t they exited out through the waterfalls if they know they can get out?”

“Dingoes, well most of them anyway, will not swim. They’ll wade in a shallow pond to cool off but they won’t chance deep water.”

“So they are effectively trapped here.”

“The other problem is human. If Lady Baliense’s guards decide to try to find another entrance and discover this cave, we are in a world of hurt.”

It was not at all what she wanted to hear. She had hoped at least a corner of this bizarre world would be safe. “Jon is in no shape to help, or to be trusted to hide out on his own,” she said.

“I know, the drugs. It could be that Lady Baliense had also decided to deliberately mess up his brain. She does that sometimes, when she is finished with a toy, I mean a specimen, whatever she chooses to call her bizarre fixation.”

“Do you have any more good news?” Jasmine asked. She was beginning to feel as if the stars had aligned against her or whatever guided the universe. At this point she wasn’t at all sure that anything did.

“I’m afraid all the watercraft are under lock and key also,” Weylyn said stoking the fire until he cleared an area so he could bury the fish he had been wrapping in some large leaves in the coals as they talked. Leaves that



Jasmine had no clue what they were. He used a stick to push them down into the coals on the edge of the fire. Then he proceeded to peel back the cattail stalks cutting the bulbous root free from the plant. He wrapped each of them in another large leaf. “Wild potatoes,” he said.

Jasmine had the question in her mind. Either her face must have registered it or he could read minds, too.

“What about the watercraft? How can we hope to escape if we can’t even get a boat, or at the very least, a life raft?”

“I’m working on that,” Weylyn said tying the potato bundles with the vines he had brought in. “I know where Portia keeps all the keys. Getting past her guards may be another thing.”

“Cute, the head of the guards, needs guards to keep her property secure.”

“Special guards, fishers, like the wolverines and badgers of your area—vicious little critters kept deliberately hungry and ornery as the day is long.”

Jasmine shuddered. She had seen fishers tear domestic dogs and cats to shreds. She had seen one go so far as to follow a cat through the pet door and drag it clawing and yowling back out with it. “Our options seem to be dwindling by the moment. Maybe our only defense is a good offense. Maybe we should kidnap Lady Baliese.”

The stunned look on Weylyn’s face nearly made Jasmine chuckle. “A simpler alternative might be to release the men and women she has sequestered and launch our own attack,” Jasmine said.

Weylyn removed the fish bundles from the coals and placed them on a rock a way from the fire. Jasmine watched as he removed the wild potatoes and placed them with the fish. She couldn’t begin to imagine how the meal would taste, but she was hungry enough that any food would probably taste good.

“Do you think Jon would eat something if we woke him?” she asked.

“Wouldn’t hurt to try. Can’t have his strength failing him if we have to run.” Weylyn went over and shook Jon gently until his eye lids fluttered open. “Are you hungry?”

The look on Jon’s face as he scurried backwards until he smacked into the cavern wall was sheer terror. Jasmine quickly moved in close to him with a piece of fish. “We have fish and wild potatoes, Jon.”

He looked from Jasmine to Weylyn and back again and cowered away from Weylyn and towards her. He opened his mouth like a baby bird in the nest begging for a worm. Jasmine broke a piece of the fish off and put it in his mouth. He chewed, swallowed and begged for more with grunts and a gaping jaw, as quickly as Jasmine could break off pieces of fish and test for bones she put them in his mouth. She looked at Weylyn. Sympathy was etched in lines around his eyes as he knitted his eyebrows in a straight line across his forehead.

“I’m sorry,” he said placing a hand on Jasmine’s shoulder. Then he let it drop off her shoulder. “Hopefully, he’ll pull out of it.” He moved away toward the rest of the food.

Jon’s hunger seemed sated as he curled up on the ground in a fetal position prepared to sleep again. Jasmine moved back to the table Weylyn had prepared on the rock slab. His face looked drawn and somber.

“It’s not your fault you know,” she said.

“I feel responsible. I should have warned you at the gallery, but I wanted you here. I wanted you all to myself, as Lady Baliese sometimes grants...” He paused and looked deep into Jasmine’s eyes. She felt as though his gaze penetrated her, warmed her to the core of her being and caused her own needs to arise. He held out a fish and potato platter-like rock to Jasmine. “Eat. You must be starved.”

Jasmine retrieved the rock platter from his as she did her fingers brushed against his hand and shock waves reverberated through her system. She was hungry all right, but for more than just food. She hurriedly tried to cancel her thoughts by concentrating on the food. “Thank you,” she said and it sounded so dull and pointless when what she wanted was to feel his hands on her body manipulating her flesh until passion boiled inside her. She wanted to feel his shaft buried deep inside where those needs were being ignited even as she tried to concentrate on the other hunger that made her weak in the knees. Quickly she broke pieces of fish and slid them into her mouth, being careful to check for bones. Gingerly she tested the wild potato, “This is quite good and very much potato-like,” she said hoping her voice sounded more even, more controlled, to him than it did to her. “Where did you learn about cooking like this?”

Weylyn slid into a position with his back against the rock wall next to her. “Family traditions. Since Lady Baliese carried me as her own child she

wanted me to know of my ancestors, the Ojibwa Indians. She brought me many teachers over the years.” He paused seemingly lost in thoughts about his teachers. “My name—Weylyn—means son of Wolf. My father’s clan was the wolf clan.”

Jasmine quietly ate listening to Weylyn’s deep baritone voice tell of various traditions of his family and how he hoped to join them some day on their tribal grounds, out from under Lady Baliese’s thumb. Though he had once loved and respected her as his mother, he now felt ashamed because he knew what she was involved in.

As they sat shoulder to shoulder Jasmine listened. The remorse in his voice was nearly palpable. She couldn’t help but reach out to comfort him. She couldn’t help but melt in his arms when he turned her face to him and kissed her so tenderly. It ignited the flame that had been smoldering since their first encounter at The Studio.

Weylyn slid his arm around her and pulled her onto his lap where he leaned against the wall of the cavern. Jasmine allowed his tongue to part her lips, her teeth and probe the depths of her mouth with his knowing tongue. His hands moved to caress her breasts, rubbing the swollen buttons between thumb and forefinger, dragging at her desire, pulling her deeper under his spell.

Jasmine slid her hands up into his full head of ebony hair. The feel of it sent electric pulses racing through her. Weylyn’s tongue satisfied he’d fully explored her mouth traced a line to the hollow in her throat and up the right side of her neck to her ear. His hot breath sent shivers down her length. Her clitoris swelled already begging for more.

Weylyn’s rod pressed against her ass cheek as his need echoed her own. She slid her hands under the loose shirt covering the skin she needed to touch. The feel of it nearly scorching her palms with lust. She tugged at the snaps of his shirt and pulled it down off his shoulders. He shuddered out of the shirt as she ran her tongue over his muscular chest, stopping to nip and nibble on the hardened nubs of his chest, his rod pressing against the confinement of his jeans, threatening to burst the zipper if it weren’t released soon. Before she could go farther he pulled her up to her knees, straddling him while he removed her blouse and then her bra with one quick movement.

Weylyn pulled his shirt from behind him where it had fallen and spread it over the ground with one hand while he picked Jasmine partially up and laid her down on the shirt. She reached up and unbuttoned and unzipped his jeans. Their pace became feverish as they tore at each others' clothes. Naked at last, Weylyn guided his engorged rod into the opening of her cunt. She spread her legs and arched into him as the long rod slid into the folds of her sex.

"You feel so good. You feel like you belong there," she moaned.

He moved his hands to her ass cheeks while his mouth swallowed and sucked on her swollen nipples. She raked her fingers down his sinewy back to his ass cheeks as he pumped into her. There was no time for leisurely exploring each other. Their hunger, their lust, their need exploded again and again. Jasmine stifled the scream of ecstasy she wanted to let loose. Weylyn groaned as he climaxed, her muscles contracting to squeeze every drop of his juice from his shaft to mix with her own. Spent, he collapsed half on top of her, half off to the side.

"Woman you're magnificent," he breathed out in a compressed sigh of relief and satisfaction.

Jasmine could only moan in reply. All the tension seemed to drain from her as her juices had mingled with his. Now sated she had no strength to even answer him.

They rested in each others arms until the sound of female voices reminded them of the dangers that still stalked them. Quickly Weylyn moved to extinguish the smoldering fire and pull on his clothes. She swiftly slipped back into hers. They grabbed evidence of their having been there, and Jon and then raced further into the cavern. Had someone discovered Weylyn's secret cave entrance? Jasmine's mind raced. What would they do now? How would they be able to fight them off, if indeed it came to a conflict with Lady Baliese's Amazon women?

## Chapter 8

Zeke and Helen were waiting for Carmel when she arrived at The Café de Paris. Zeke waved her over to their table. Carmel exchanged hugs with Zeke and Helen and asked the waitress for a glass of Chablis, something she hoped would take the edge off her agitated state.

“There are no good ways to lead into this so I’ll just tell you what I found out,” Zeke said. Helen reached over and covered Zeke’s hands with her own. Carmel knew immediately it couldn’t be good news. She braced herself for the worst.

“The ferries, other boat owners and the people I spoke with at the various docks that house ferries, said they did not transport any large group to or from any of the islands and certainly not one named Maizely Ouiz, because there isn’t one named that—not recently, not changed, not ever as far as any of them were aware.” Zeke glanced at his wife and then at Carmel. “I’m really sorry. You know Jon and Jazz are like family. They mean the world to us too, but I am at a deadend for now.”

Carmel shook her head. It would seem the ‘for now’ meant he still had hopes of locating them, but Carmel wasn’t so sure. “She was ecstatic over the great dress she found to wear to the Coronation of that artist friend of hers— Zaire his name was. She was laughing at how Jon had teased her about bringing a string bikini to wear the rest of the weekend. They were going to do some spelunking, cave exploring,” she said seeing the questioning look flash across Zeke and Helen’s faces. “Jasmine was on cloud nine at the sale of Zaire’s work and the pageantry of the party. It was supposed to be some big bash.”

“I know, I know,” said Helen. “She called me about the strange note that Jon left on the invitation about bringing comfortable shoes and then that

Lady Baliese buying the shoes right off her feet. What kind of bizarre behavior was that?"

"I know. That's why I can't imagine that they just disappeared off the face of the earth."

"Had she been out to the island beforehand?" Zeke asked.

Carmel thought for a minute. "Now that you mention it, she and Jon had been out there one other time with Zaire. They were exploring the caves then but got kicked off by some Snidely Whiplash Mafia thug before they got farther than one of the caves."

"Missing persons, I'm going to check with them. If more people have been lost here during the same time, or under similar circumstances, we may be able to pull a lead by piecing together their stories."

"If you need some help, I've been cleared to go through those files," Carmel said.

"So have I," Helen chimed in. "We could do that research for you while you dog down any other leads."

"Great."

By the time the waitress brought their meals they had a plan set in motion. "The Chief hasn't sidestepped this either. He has men out asking the right questions to businesses and dock workers up and down the shoreline. Since someone is bound to have seen something that will give us a starting point," Zeke said.

Carmel felt a little better knowing there were actually wheels in motion to try to find them. "If we turn up more cases of missing people who supposedly went on a ferry ride from here—what then?" Carmel asked.

"That would be excellent," Zeke said. "Because, then the chief could justify an aerial search."

"Then it looks like we know what we have to do," Helen said.

"There can't be that many missing persons from a town this size, can there be?" Carmel asked.

Helen and Zeke exchanged incredulous glances. "Lake Superior claims her share and more every year," Zeke said. "So, actually, you might be surprised at just how many. The key would be Friday's date and the mention of a ferry ride, island party or some other common link."

After lunch Zeke went back to the police department to begin pulling together any information the beat cops were able to glean from their

interviews. Carmel and Helen went to the missing person's arm of the police department and began their search.

By three that afternoon they had a list of four people reported missing from out of state places, the report said they left on Thursday and never returned. Friends and family suspected foul play.

"We still have plenty of time unless you need to be somewhere," Helen said. "We can look for missing persons that mention cruise, ferry, or some similar excursion from months ago and see if we can tie them all together."

"I don't go in until eleven. So, let's do it." Carmel said.

As long as Helen wouldn't give Zeke the list until they caught up with each other over dinner, they may as well continue. The longer it took them to get a real lead, the slimmer chances became that they'd actually find them... She paused her thoughts. She wanted it to stop there but her mind wouldn't allow unfinished business. *Alive* jumped from her thoughts and she jolted.

"What? Are you okay? You look like you saw a ghost," Helen said grasping both Carmel's hands.

"It's nothing—I—I was merely thinking, if we don't find them soon..."

"I know, I know. Try not to think those what ifs. We'll find them," Helen said, sliding an arm around Carmel's shoulder.

"I just have this bad feeling that they're in some awful danger," Carmel said. She fought to hold back the tears threatening to spill over her lower eyelids. She knew if they began she'd be hard pressed to quiet them until they were exhausted. Jasmine was like a sister to her. They had been through a ton of shit together. She couldn't bear the thought of anything happening to her.

"Let's blow this place and stop by Marty's for a drink. I think we could both use a little tension settler. What do you say?" Helen said, closing the files they had been pouring over. "This list is long enough to give Zeke plenty of avenues to explore."

Carmel would be glad to get in an atmosphere where people were having a good time. Maybe it could forestall the foreboding thoughts she was having about Jon and Jasmine and the danger she felt they were in.

## Chapter 9

“Lady Baliese has trained leopards as tracking animals. They are not as good as bloodhounds because once again we can be saved by water. If they don’t smell the fish and potatoes we cooked earlier we should be okay,” Weylyn whispered as they hid on a ledge in the third cavern back from the waterfalls.

It was dangerous to be that far back in the caves because of the dingoes. A lesser of two evils, one could say, Jasmine thought. She cuddled Jon in her arms to keep him from whimpering or making any noise. She rocked him, humming softly. He seemed content with the condition. Weylyn kept an eagle eye toward the cave mouth for either the women or the dingoes. He was prepared to fight either.

After an anxious half hour no one entered the cave and they slowly made their way back toward the fireplace. Weylyn gathered wood and dung on the way. “I should have thought to hide my scent and the scent my footprints would leave behind. I have an idea for some shoe covers that will foul up the leopards’ search for us. When I need to go get food, or supplies I can wear them.”

“We can’t just sit here doing nothing. There must be something we can do to get out of here and alert a rescue team. Someone must be looking for us by now,” Jasmine said. She was tired of being hunted. There had to be a way out. “Do you know where the men are being kept?”

“Yes, but I’m warning you, the drugs she has them on—well, they won’t want to be rescued, and you, being a woman, could be...”

“What do you mean?”

“They’ve been turned into sex machines. They see a woman—they’re ready to perform the service she has kept them for. You would be raped—not once, but by all of them.”



Jasmine found the thought hard to believe until she remembered how the women had used Jon while she hid underneath the bed. “How about the women, then?”

“That’s a better choice. The ones she kept are strong, healthy breeders. She would label them as such. There were no guard/warrior candidates in this batch. She prefers to grow her own anyway.”

“Grow her own?” Jasmine questioned, dumbfounded. She knew intellectually what Weylyn was saying, but morally she had no clue how a woman could be as cold and calculating as Lady Baliese.

“Oh, and there’s one other thing—Lady Baliese and her select warriors are vampires.”

Now Jasmine was really flummoxed. Vampires actually existed? Is that what Weylyn wanted her to believe? “Come again,” she said incredulous at the thought.

Weylyn threw his hands up in the surrender gesture. “I know some believe, very few believe, but Lady Baliese uses the men...” He paused as though calculating how to explain what he was thinking. “To feed on, and to provide seed for the children she needs or wants to perpetuate the perfect race. Their backgrounds are thoroughly researched. She’s building a superior race that will live forever.”

Jasmine instantly became more determined than ever to end Lady Baliese’s reign before she actually succeeded, if indeed, there was such a thing as vampires. Though she tried to deny it, she couldn’t completely discount the idea. “Why are some people allowed to leave then? Isn’t she worried they will tell the authorities about this place?”

“Eighty percent of the people on that ferry were inhabitants, trusted recruiters. Those that supposedly were allowed to leave were thrown over board to drown and become fish food on the bottom of Lake Superior. Once you set foot on the ferry for Maizely Quiz you never return. Lady Baliese is very careful about her choices.”

Jasmine realized that her shoes were more than paid for by Lady Baliese. It increased her curiosity enough to ensure she would be on the ferry. The reason was obvious. She was connected enough to Jon to want to find out why he disappeared. Also, it cancelled out all information about Zaire’s existence and any trail to where Jon had gone. She felt terror grip her insides like someone twisted her guts with a corkscrew. Then anger swept

over her. “She’s not going to get away with any of this.” Determination filled her.

“We will concentrate on getting the women freed. Problem is with the leopards loose no one will be safe outside the confines of the castle.”

“What are our chances of getting our hands on a boat or ferry?” Jasmine asked.

“I’ll have to come up with some plan to get into the boathouses to free a boat,” Weylyn said

“And how hard will that be?”

Because Weylyn grew up confined nearly exclusively to the island, Jasmine was sure he knew all the tricks of the storage bays for the boats. But, because Lady Baliense knew he was part of the escaped guests, wouldn’t she take extra precautions to keep him from stealing a watercraft? He’d most certainly need help. He’d need a diversion. Maybe she could provide that, but would he agree?

“With the atmosphere Lady Baliense has set up she never expected anyone would try to escape. By the time anyone would realize they were being drugged they would be too subdued to do anything. You were a fly in the ointment because even the spider webs never got you.”

“You mean no one’s tried to escape before?”

“Oh, a few, very few have tried, but none have succeeded. If the spider webs didn’t get them the leopards would.”

“Will you be able to secure a boat then?”

Weylyn shook his head. “I didn’t know. She could lock down the boat houses. So maybe not, but if I can’t perhaps we can gather enough material from the scattered remains to build a raft.”

Jasmine’s heart sank. A raft on Lake Superior—was he nuts? Even if they could hug the shoreline between the islands, they had that stretch of open water they needed to cross. It was tough enough motorized. There was no way a small raft could travel that. They needed a Plan B. “Weylyn, I doubt a non-motorized boat of any sort would make it.”

He looked askance, but nodded. He seemed to know she was right, but at least they would be making an attempt. “Any ideas?” he said sitting across from her braiding the vines he had brought in earlier into a rope.

“We need to try to communicate with the outside world,” Jasmine said.

“The shield may make that difficult.”

“Shield?” Jasmine questioned.

“Lady Baliese has set up an—I’m not sure how to explain it except to call it a force field. As a kid I equated it with Star Wars type technology.”

Jasmine moved so that the sleeping Jon was once again down on the mat next to the fire. He was sound asleep, oblivious to their dilemma. “You mean in effect, we’re invisible?”

“Exactly, our coordinates are nearly the same as the Bermuda Triangle, at least in some respects. That was the first Maizely Quiz.”

Jasmine couldn’t believe what she was hearing. All those years of ships and planes disappearing were more of this same interrupted life. Then vampires must exist. The thoughts crowded in in quick succession. How absolutely bizarre and hopeless their situation was. “But Zaire, you, Lady Baliese—you all came out to collect new...” Jasmine was at a loss for something to call the people they hijacked from real life to Lady Baliese’s island un-paradise. Specimens seemed too vulgar, but that’s what they were. No more than lab specimens for Lady Baliese’s diabolical scheme. Their only hope was to build some sort of radio. If only Jon were... She let her thoughts go, if wishes were horses...

“I’m really sorry I got you into this,” Weylyn said, wrapping his arms around Jasmine.

She turned and kissed him tenderly. “My own fault,” she said. Blame wouldn’t get them out of this. They needed to do something constructive, some solid thinking. She nearly broke out laughing as she had a second thought. Screw it all. She could drop everything and just enjoy the crazy, wild, abandoned sex she had with Weylyn until they were caught or fucked each other to death.

“A radio—capable of emitting a single beam that could rise straight up above the island—our only chance,” Weylyn said, deep in the more constructive thoughts of his own. “But how?”

“Jon knows how. If only we could rescue his mind from the effects of Lady Baliese’s drugs.” Jasmine looked at the peaceful child-like sleeping form. His shallow breaths barely raised his diaphragm enough to show he was alive.

“I think I can create an antidote from some plants grown in the castle gardens. I will set out as soon as I make slippers from the pungent zobeya

plant. It will disguise my trail from the leopards,” Weylyn said. He set out to retrieve the leaves he needed.

Jasmine wrapped her arms around her knotted middle, praying he would safely find the leaves, praying Jon would be rescued from whatever prison held his mind. She paced and waited, listening to the rushing waterfalls roar, not at all the tranquility she had previously associated with waterfalls. But then, nothing was as she had previously thought it was would it ever be again.

## Chapter 10

Lady Baliese paced the floor while she waited word that the escaped guests have been captured. A sharp rap on the door and Portia entered looking flushed, her eyes downcast. Lady Baliese could tell her news was not good.

“What word have you and it better be good,” she bellowed.

Portia dipped to her knees, her gaze to the floor as she stammered. “I’m sorry, Lady. We have found no trace of Weylyn, the woman Jasmine or her friend Jon.” The hem of her shift jittered nervously as she kneeled in front of Lady Baliese, subservient and waiting the punishment that would most certainly follow for the failure of her troops to nab their prey.

Though Lady Baliese thought the spider webs should have caught them without the need for her guard to go on a hunt for them, she gave no leeway to the docile woman in front of her. “Unacceptable. They cannot have just disappeared! Are the watercraft secured and the guard around them doubled as I ordered?”

“Yes. They will not have access to boat or ferry should they still be alive.”

“You mean the leopards have also failed?” Lady Baliese bolted from her chair and paced, her long gown flowing, following her moves like an obedient servant. The panthers, startled by her quick movements, growled circling Portia, their yellow eyed-gaze hungrily surveying her vulnerable position.

Portia rose, leery that the animals might charge her and she would be unable to use her weapons or her skills from her kneeling position. All of this movement was obvious to Lady Baliese and she loved the tortured expression on Portia’s face as the animals growled from low inside their

throat, threatening the woman until her face became a ghostly shade of gray. Lady Baliese waved them away.

“Weylyn has been well taught. He will not be easy to find and if he has befriended the other two your task will be doubly hard.”

Lady Baliese spun around to glare at Portia. “How far can he get on an island? I will not allow this insolence from an offspring of my womb. When you find him, and you *will* find him, I want him brought to me. I want to deal with him myself.”

“Yes, your highness,” Portia said dipping slightly in a modified bow. Her gaze darting from Lady Baliese to Keridwen and then Geburah as the cats stood poised to pounce at the slightest provocation or direction from Lady Baliese.

Lady Baliese sneered luridly at Portia’s obvious discontent with the feline’s demeanor. She snapped her fingers and the two sleek black animals flexed their muscles. Shimmering blue iridescent ripples followed the movement. Then they walked over to Lady Baliese and curled up at her feet, black silk folds against the deep crimson carpet.

Portia relaxed. “I will relay your message to the guards and the warriors,” she said as she prepared to leave.

“Send me the twins. I need some pampering,” she ordered, her voice cryptic and severe. Lady Baliese was not used to having her orders disobeyed or her flesh and blood, her son, turning rebel. Was she not always ready to give him whatever he wanted? Was she not always doing on him? How dare he do this to her now? She should have... No it’s a good thing she only turned her women warriors vampire. You never could trust the male species. They had their purposes, but you could never trust them, not totally, not even a son from your own womb. She sighed and slid back into the folds of the velvet cushions of the lounge chair.

The twins appeared and she shut the panthers in their room. She needed to be soothed. Her nerves were a jangled mess.

She watched as the twins prepared her bath. The graceful movements of their bodies, veiled only by the sheer fabric of their gowns, was as exquisite as if they danced a ballet just for her. It turned her senses to lust. How she loved their young bodies. It was impossible not to appreciate youth with their perfection before they could be spoiled by the world of lust and desire. How, she wondered, could she keep these two virginal, how could she not

allow anyone to spoil their innocence? They helped Lady Baliese out of her garments their tiny hands, sending shock waves to her vagina when they brushed against her. She slid into the swirling tepid bath, succumbing to the pleasure that rushed through her veins.

She slid down, down into the tub and let her cares be soothed away by the manipulations of the small perfect hands of youth. Perhaps she would have her dark skinned male for later, after the twins worked their magic while she was still high from their adept stimulation, or perhaps she should let them take her all the way over the precipice on which she balanced so precariously. No, that would make her vulnerable. She reached for the ornate bell pull and summoned Portia.

Portia's gaze was one of desire as her tongue flicked out and encircled her full lush mouth. Her eyes glazed with the need Lady Baliese recognized in herself when the twins' naked bodies manipulated her skin in the tub with her. "The dark skinned male, I will have him prepared for me. I will go to his quarters this time. Be sure they are well prepared."

Portia nodded and slowly backed toward the door, feasting her eyes on the bare ass cheeks of one of the twins leaning over to suckle Lady Baliese's breasts. She exited and Lady Baliese imagined that she would quickly find satisfaction with some other female or perhaps one of the males she was charged with guarding. She would not, however, get her twins. That could mean death if she tried.

The twins, one on each arm, lifted her from the bath, and placed her on the lush towel where she stood and let them brush the water from her first with their hands and then buffing her with the huge Turkish towels until her skin was electric with the stimulation. They guided her to the massage table where they applied the oil gently and thoroughly to every inch of her body. They made love to her senses with vanilla oil. Lady Baliese wallowed in their caresses, their expertly skilled manipulations. They knew exactly what to do and kept her at climaxes door for the better part of a half hour. Then they helped her slip into her filmy silk negligee to meet with her male consort. She couldn't help wonder if after they had stimulated her so thoroughly they had not also aroused themselves and went back to their quarters and acted on that arousal. One day she would sneak back to watch. It wouldn't matter if they did. They would still remain as virginal as they

were – as long as they didn't allow the male shaft inside their tight sex tunnel. They would be her girls.

Portia appeared at the suite door to take her to the man. Four servants first lowered the chair carrier for Lady Baliese to board. Then they carried her to the door where the dark man awaited her. His oiled muscles rippled as he moved. He smiled and white teeth against his black skin were enough to make even Lady Baliese gasp for want.

He took her hand and kissed the back of it, turned it over and ran his tongue gently over the palm where he began a slow progression of kisses up the inside of her wrist, elbow, upper arm and her neck. He stopped long enough to help her disembark from the chair and dismiss the servant girls and Portia.

Lady Baliese didn't like the idea that he seemed so totally in charge, in control of the pleasure he would deliver to her. He called the shots. He led her and yet, once in a while she wanted to be dominated, so she acquiesced. Allowing herself to be manipulated by this Adonis was no way a show of her weakness. It was her strength that could allow someone to dominate her. She wanted him to dominate, to use her, to make her cry for mercy, to make her beg for his engorged rod to impale her. It was such a relief, but that meant she would kill him after they made love for she could not let an Alpha male survive in her kingdom. They became too powerful.

She wished he hadn't so quickly become the Alpha. She enjoyed his unique brand of sex. He was a true lover. So she would allow herself to be transported this one last time by his rod that could fill her so fully, his hands that wandered her feverish flesh and the mouth that would suckle on her swollen breasts as he toyed with her quickly responding erogenous zones. He cupped her breasts in his large hands, lifting first one and then the other to pay the nipples homage with his tongue, twirling it around the hard beads of her nipples, manipulating the mass of breast as though he had only just seen them for the first time. He nipped at those hard buttons causing a quick gasp from her and then he ever so gently nipped his way along her cleavage to her neck, to her ear. He raised her long hair and turned her so he could kiss and nip her neck along her hair line, sending fireworks of sparks along her entire torso.

Gently he swooped her off her feet and transported her to the circular bed in the center of the room. He slid her negligee off and tossed it to the



floor. Kissing all the way down the front of her over the top of her right thigh, nipping the soft skin of her inner thigh as she spread her legs for him to enter his tongue into her vagina. He skirted the lobes suckling them as he went. She squirmed to try to make him taste her, but he continued his journey to her toes, pressing one hand on her stomach to make her stay lying flat on the bed. His tongue encircled every toe before he went to the other foot and did the same—working back up along the other thigh—allowing a nip, a bite, a sucking on the other lobe of her vulva, never allowing his tongue to touch her clit. He screwed her navel with his tongue and by the time he worked his way to her left ear she was putty in his hands. She was ready to rape him.

He was not about to let her get control as he rolled her over onto her stomach and straddled her. His balls rested against the back of her neck. She wanted to turn over and suck them into her mouth, to play with them until he couldn't hold off any longer, but his weight kept her from moving as he slid his tongue down her spine, biting sharply on her ass cheeks first one and then the other as he made his way to just barely riding his tongue over it and entering the tight hole, her sphincter contracting so he had to force his way but so briefly she called out in desire again. As he slid his tongue to her inner thighs he nibbled on them. He spread her legs and used his long tongue to trace a path around her clitoris.

She writhed beneath him moaning, needing to participate in his foreplay. He held her fast. His long hard rod fully engorged slid against her back beneath him. She longed for it to be between her legs. She wanted to suck his shaft fully into the deepest reaches of her vulva, so totally filling her that she could feel the hot juices of his sperm swimming into her every crevice. He was driving her mad with want. She peaked suddenly, bucking wildly, squirming, writhing beneath him, her pelvis rubbing into the mattress as his tongue penetrated her, licking against her g spot, his teeth then nipping her clitoris and waves of passion swept over her.

She screamed. "I want your cock in me now." It came out an anguished guttural cry, full of raw passion and lust.

The dark skinned man slid forward. She felt a trail of cum oozing down her spine. He turned, pressing her shoulders into the bed until he had positioned himself above her then he lifted her hips while holding her shoulders against the bed. Slowly, he teased her cunt with the tip of his

penis. Her juices spilled from her on the tip of it. She groaned trying to force herself back to envelop his rod with her flaming vagina. He withdrew and circled her clit with his dick. Lady Baliese felt no more the lady, but instead a lusting, sex-starved animal, a whore vampire. She wrenched herself from his grasp. While he was off balance she flung herself down on him, swallowing his shaft with her drooling cunt. She needed him now. She was crazy with need. She rammed herself onto his shaft pushing against his chest with her hands so that she sat on him. She gyrated her hips against him.

He was losing control. It was his turn to buck into her like some stud in rut. He grabbed her hips and forced her down hard all the way. She fell on him and sunk her fangs into his throat as he arched his back. His chin raised, his neck was a long open beautiful muscular trophy. The first penetration caused him to cry out but passion overtook him and she sucked him dry from both neck and penis. He jolted several hot bursts into her cunt while his blood sated her other hunger, her other need, her other lust.

Exhausted she laid herself on top of him, letting his shaft still impale her. It would shrink all too soon, but for now she moved slightly, letting it touch all the right places to make her climax last just a little longer.

“Too bad.” She collapsed beside him. The dingoes would now profit from this perfect specimen. “No one dominates Lady Baliese and lives to tell of it.” She wiped a hand across her mouth, tasting the last bits of sweet salty blood mixed with his cum.

## Chapter 11

Carmel handed Chief Storm the list she and Helen had compiled of all the missing persons somehow connected to Tahki Istas and a ferry trip through the island chains.

It was a short list, only five over a period of thirteen years, unless Jon and Jasmine were added, making the list seven. And she hoped that would not be the case.

Chief Storm scowled. "This you see as cause for alarm. A person every two years of more?"

"Considering the national average for a town the size of Tahki Istas, I'd say it's alarming," Helen said.

Carmel was happy she had decided to come along to the Chief's office. He respected Zeke, and by extension, Helen. The extra weight in her corner helped, but was it enough to logically justify a fly over, looking for who knows what?

"Remember those are the only reported ones. How many people disappear with no next of kin or significant other to worry over their not returning?"

"Okay, let's say I felt this was enough to warrant searching. What are we searching for? I'm sure there isn't a flag out in the middle of Lake Superior saying *Missing persons stop here to wait for rescue from above*. Lake Superior is a very unforgiving lake. I'm sure you realize this. There has been no report of wreckage to suggest that they were even out there. If they capsized, washed overboard, sunk, what would be our clue, our acceptable proof that they actually succumbed to any of those fates?"

"I'm suggesting we look at the named islands and find out which could possibly have been sold and renamed," Carmel said feeling a tad like her

Algebra teacher must have felt trying to explain an answer that had no meaning to a group of perplexed ninth grade students.

“First of all, no one owns the islands. The State owns any land considered Michigan.”

“You mean no one could offer the state enough money to buy an island?” Helen asked.

“Why don’t you check with Royal Oak Realty. They handle all the island property. They are the only ones with boats to transport customers out to view the various properties for sale. Perhaps they know about a Maizely Ouiz,” the chief said throwing his hands in the air his face turning an angry red.

“What about Mobley Peters? Didn’t he used to own an island? Jasmine said she and Jon had gone spelunking on his island. Clinton Dunn had something to do with it then—at least that’s what Jasmine told me.” Carmel said.

“You know, my hands are really tied here. My men have not found any ferry or anyone that has heard of the island or this Lady Baliese, or Prince Zaire, except you. The board would frown on me using my authority to take a joy ride over Lake Superior at the county’s expense. Now if you ladies will excuse me, I have work to do. You will need to have more for me to go on if you expect me to take this any further.” He opened his office door and motioned them out.

“He’s right, you know,” Helen said as they walked to their car. “We really do need to know what island or at least which ferry picked up passengers for Maizely Ouiz.”

Royal Oak Realtors wasn’t able to help them as far as an island named Maizely Ouiz, but they did give them a list of all licensed ferries around the Tahki Ista’s area. Helen was sure Zeke and his crew had already visited all the ferries to no avail, but maybe a civilian woman’s touch would yield more results. Carmel hoped so.

“Why don’t we take each of these ferries to their respective destinations. See for ourselves what they’re about?” Helen said.

“Great idea,” Carmel said. Ferry rides were cheap and she had never visited all the islands. It would be a great excursion, and who knows what they might find out.

They made plans to spend the next few days riding ferries. They'd play tourist and see just what they could find out.

Of the four ferries that actively shuttled people to any of the islands, only one owner had seen a ferry he did not recognize on the lake. He did not see it return, nor had he seen it before or since.

"What can you remember about it?" Carmel asked. She was anxious for any clue.

"The only reasons I noted it in the first place were no vehicles were aboard her, everyone dressed to the nines—I mean elegant evening clothes, men in those penguin suits, 'Scuse me tuxedos, I reckon you'd call 'em. But, there was one native woman I'd give my eye teeth to get next too. Tall, whooooo! This woman was tall 6' if she was an inch. She had on this long purple gown and a turban with a rock in it the size of Guam. I mean that diamond was as big around as a baseball."

"Maybe it was a CZ or a cheap rhinestone," Carmel said thinking about how much a diamond that size would cost if there was such a one.

"I doubt that. This woman had gold dripping off her arms and fingers, and gold earrings. Naw, that was a diamond. Darn near burnt my eyeballs lookin' at it. And her...mess o people gathered at her feet like a shepherd with his flock. Yeah, that lady was loaded."

"Can you tell us what island they were headed for?"

"That was the other thing. I noticed they didn't seem headed in the right direction for any island I know. Then I got busy with my own route and passengers, and when I turned around, they was gone. Strangest darn thing I ever..." His voice trailed off his mood turned pensive and he just walked away from Helen and Carmel. They looked at each other. Now, all they had to do was...

"What do we do now?" Helen asked.

"The coordinates. We get him to tell us where the other ferry disappeared and we come back with scuba gear, see if we can find anything."

"In Lake Superior, girl? Are you crazy?" Helen said. "We need professionals. We need a boat equipped with sonar. Let me talk to Zeke, he has some Coast Guard friends. May be they will help."

"Sounds like it might be worth a try." Carmel said.

They caught up with the ferry driver and asked if he could give them approximate coordinates.

He did. “But you want to know the weirdest thing?” He paused apparently waiting for their undivided attention. They both turned their full intent on him.

“Weird how?” Carmel asked.

“The coordinates, as I look at them now on this paper,”

“Yes?” they both said simultaneously.

“The Bermuda Triangle—you familiar with that?” He waited until they nodded. “They are directly inline. Lake Superior’s center and the coordinates for the Bermuda Triangle line up atop each other or nearly so.”

“And that’s where the ferry was when it—disappeared?” Carmel asked.

“That’s where it would have been given the speed and direction when I noticed it had plain disappeared from my view anyway.”

They thanked Mr. Umpersand and continued on to the dock. Neither spoke for some minutes as they walked in silence.

“Do you think?” Helen said.

Carmel just shrugged.

## Chapter 12

Weylyn returned. His shirt was stuffed full of herbs he had collected from the castle gardens. He slipped out of the strong smelling herb leaves he had covered his shoes with to thwart the leopards.

Jasmine was glad to see he was safe. The guards were relentless, going by the waterfalls every half hour without fail. She could hear the big cats' rumbling growls as they tried to find their prey time and again. Her nerves were strung so tight she felt they would snap at the slightest provocation.

"I'm so glad you're finally back. I was so worried," Jasmine said, taking Weylyn's shirtful of herbs and laying them on the ledge near the fire. She put her arms around Weylyn and let her tension melt away in the strength of his support.

"I'm sorry you have to go through this. I hope we will be out of danger soon." He tipped her head up and kissing her tenderly.

She clung to him, gaining strength from his strength. There was no way she would ever again take her life for granted. Survival had become too important to allow it to return to status quo.

Weylyn guided her back to the safety of the second chamber of the caverns. Jon was more alert. He sat playing with a pile of small stones like they were Lego building bricks, making little vehicle noises like an ordinary little boy would, as his stone cars traveled his imagined highways.

"At least he's back among the living," Weylyn said, watching him play.

"Yes, but now I'm worried he will make noises at the wrong time, giving away our hiding place."

"You're right. I will get to work on the antidote. We'll have the old Jon back again soon."

Jasmine was both elated and worried. Would he remember and be embarrassed that she had been like a mother to him, tending his every need?

Would he want to pick up their relationship where they had left off? How would she tell him that she and Weylyn were a matched set? How would he feel if he knew they had consummated their love for each other while he slept in his drug induced childhood?

“Are you okay?” Weylyn asked.

“Fine, I’m sorry. I was deep in thought. Did you say something to me?”

“I wanted you to help me crush these herbs into a fine powder so that we can mix them with Jon’s food. I doubt we’ll be able to get him to drink tea in his current state.”

Jasmine set immediately to work crushing the herbs with the makeshift mortar and pestle Weylyn had made them. “How long do you think it will take before Jon returns to normal?” Jasmine asked, almost afraid to hear the answer.

If Jon returned to his adult self, the romantic interlude with Weylyn would need to cease immediately and she felt her desire growing by the minute as she watched Weylyn’s sinewy body working to strip, crush, and braid strands of cattail fronds into a basket. His black eyes danced with reflected light from the small blaze he had started to boil water to cook the herbs and their evening meal. His long ebony hair, deftly braided, had blue iridescent highlights like the ravens that used to frequent her bird feeders and made him look more Indian than ever. Hollywood would define them as chiseled features. Watching him caused a warmth to begin building between her legs. She hoped Jon would return to normal to help them get a radio to transmit so they might be rescued.

A week had gone by. Soon anyone searching for them would probably give up, thinking that Lake Superior had claimed more victims. But, she did want one more night alone with Weylyn, one more chance to savor each other in ways only new lovers can.

Weylyn handed her porridge, an oatmeal-like concoction he had made before that tasted quite good and Jon seemed to enjoy. He stirred in several pinches of the herbs they had been crushing and motioned to Jon.

Jasmine went to him and sat by his feet. “Are you hungry?” She blew on the paddle-like piece of wood with the gruel/porridge on it to cool before she fed it to Jon. Jon automatically opened his mouth and she slipped the spoon in. He hungrily cleaned the spoon and released it so she could get more. He slid into her lap to be closer to the food. He clung to her like an



infant between bites. Apparently the addition of the herbs never altered the taste enough for him to notice except, perhaps, to make it better. When he had had his fill, Jasmine wiped his mouth and cleaned his hands with a damp handful of fern fronds.

Content he went back to playing while Weylyn and Jasmine moved off to eat their own meal. “How soon?” she asked.

“Hard to tell, but we should see a difference by morning.”

She slid her hand into his shirt and nestled her head into his shoulder. She wanted him Danger or not, she needed him. Suddenly they heard the sound of the dingoes back near the drop holes where they were fed from time to time. Vicious snarls and noise of scuffling and bones snapping. Lady Baliese must have finished with another specimen, Jasmine thought, and the thought chilled her to the bone marrow. Weylyn stoked the fire, quickly making the blaze shoot flames nearly to the ceiling. He lit torches and placed them at the entrance to the third cavern where the dingo feasting sounds came from.

Jasmine grabbed Jon and took him to a ledge more toward the first cave. Weylyn hurried to join them. “Lady Baliese must have finished with another human specimen. The dingoes are fighting for the best parts.” Weylyn confirmed what Jasmine had already guessed, but really preferred not to know for sure.

Jasmine cringed and pulled Jon close into her breasts. He held her like she was the only thing in his world, burying his face between her breasts and covering his ears with his hands. Jasmine had a hard time reconciling the grown man Jon and the little boy Jon between her breasts, between her legs—innocent though not really so. If it wasn’t for his fear, she would have moved him to a safer position, at least safer in terms of her body, her womanhood, his near sexual presence against her body. The man who used to be her almost lover, or nearly so. They listened, Weylyn holding Jasmine with Jon holding her in his child-like innocence, caught between her desires for Weylyn and the reality of Jon where she wished Weylyn was.

Soon the snarling, fighting dingoes retreated, hopefully full and ready to sleep the night away. They returned to the fire area of the cave. Jon released his grip on Jasmine and circled into a ball by the fire. He was asleep within minutes. How a six foot male as virile and macho as Jon could be reduced to such a child-like state so quickly was beyond her comprehension. What kind

of drug did this woman possess that her power was so absolute, so debilitating?

She turned to Weylyn. “How can she reduce a man to childhood in mere hours?”

“I never questioned it before. I never actually paid attention to the parade of men who were caged, then disappeared as mysteriously as they had come. It’s only been recently that I’ve been allowed to participate in her rituals.”

“Did you, I mean were you allowed to...?”

Weylyn looked at her with questioning eyes, shrugged his shoulders and pulled her into his arms. She wanted to ask if he was allowed to have any woman, to foster any children, then decided not to ask the question. If he had, she was certain he would have been loyal to that one family.

Jasmine wrapped her arms around Weylyn and kissed him passionately, deeply, hungry for him to reach the places only he could reach. He returned her passion as though they both knew once Jon recovered their wanton lust for each other would be under wraps, controlled. She couldn’t see herself having sex with Weylyn while Jon watched. They tore at each others’ clothes with an urgency of one last wild fling. Whatever the next half hour or tomorrow held would have to wait until their desires were satisfied.

Weylyn cupped her breast in his hand and placed his mouth over the swollen, begging nipple. His free hand found its way between her legs, manipulating her clitoris, then he slipped first one, than two fingers inside her. His own rigid urgency moist with the juices of his need. Jasmine raised herself to meet his shaft and helped guide him into her. He moaned into her breast and bit down on the nipple. The pleasure-pain caused her to slam down on his hot rod. He lifted his head to her throat and bit, his teeth bruising the skin, but not breaking it. Her nails raked across his back. It was as though they needed to prove to themselves each desperately hungered to possess the other in as many ways as possible.

Weylyn rolled Jasmine on her back as he pumped into her, his hands on her ass cheeks squeezing, kneading, manipulating, pressing her hard into him, filling her with his distended feverish rod. Bursting with the explosion of her climax she sucked his tongue into her mouth, “More, More,” she moaned breathlessly as her peak overtook her senses.

Weylyn's own peak matched hers and he pushed into her. With one hand he found her clit and manipulated it between thumb and forefinger, deepening her ecstasy, one final deep push as he pulled her butt up to reach as deeply into her as he could, his penis against the final wall he grunted, held one long thrust as his finish spurted deep into her and then he collapsed on top of her.

Jasmine let the passion of the moment engulf her, radiating from every part of her, feeling at once sated and needing, feeling his shaft with her muscles milking, draining, loving him. He pushed against her as her muscles caused a final tingle to pull more juices from him.

Weylyn moaned in her ear. "Incredible, incredible." His breathe was hot and gasping.

Jasmine sensed movement above them. She opened her eyes to see a warrior woman of Lady Baliese's guard, hands on her hips, absorbed in the sight of their two writhing bodies. A twisted smile crossed her face. Jasmine froze and panic seized her. The other woman cracked her short whip across Weylyn's bare ass. He tore himself from Jasmine and spun. Stunned he sat wide eyed, buck naked, vulnerable, staring up at the tall woman, legs spread, running the laces of the riding crop whip over the palm of one hand, her tongue darted out between her white teeth and licked full ruby red lips. She flung her blonde waist-length hair back with a toss of her head and leered at the two naked bodies as though she didn't know which she'd rather have. The long moment of silence pulled at Jasmine's insides.

Jon moaned in his sleep and turned. It must have been the first she knew he was there. Her mood changed immediately. "Get dressed," she ordered.

One woman, her only weapon a short whip. They had a chance to subdue her before anyone else knew they were there. When the woman bent over to rouse Jon, Jasmine tackled her to the floor.

Weylyn quickly rose to help her as the warrior women writhed against Jasmine's light frame. Jasmine knew she couldn't hold her. She raised a fist and slammed it into the woman's jaw with all her body behind it. The woman's head fell back and her body went limp.

Jasmine sat back, still straddling the woman's hips. "Something to tie her," she said to Weylyn as he stood staring at the two women. "Hurry."

It was as though he was powerless to act against one of his mother's warrior women even when their lives depended on it.

“Weylyn, now!”

He finally snapped out of it and grabbed the rope he had been braiding, whipping it around the woman’s ankles, then her neck and finally to her wrists. Jasmine rose to her feet. Weylyn looked up at her. The welt across his cheek was brilliant against his firm bronze ass. She bent and kissed it then slid her fingers over the welt. He winced. He reached for her hand and kissed it, then pulled himself up to stand beside her, over the warrior woman.

“You’re some remarkable woman,” he said.

She allowed him to kiss her again deep, and tender. Their bare flesh rubbing together sent chills of excitement through Jasmine again. No—they couldn’t not again, not with the warrior woman unconscious and Jon restless, nearly awake by the fire. But she melted into him anyway. If one woman had found them, was there another that she had sent to bring reinforcements? She halted Weylyn’s hand as it slid between her legs.

“No.” Her protest was only half-hearted, her voice raw with desire. “There may be others.” She clenched her teeth, trying to stop her vagina from begging to be filled once again with his massive organ. It took all her strength and determination to move away from him. “We need to move.”

## Chapter 13

Martin Payne helped Helen, Carmel and Zeke board his boat. “The *Kimi Nijlon*, translated,” Martin said, “means *Secret Mistress*, in case you want to know.” He smiled broadly he tipped his captain’s hat in a salute to the ladies boarding.

“It was so good of you to help,” Carmel said. She decided she wouldn’t call this a boat. It was a yacht, definitely a yacht.

“Hey, I’m always up for a tour of the islands and if I can get a little scuba diving in at the same time, I’m a happy camper,” Martin said.

“Thanks, we appreciate it,” she said.

“The strange coordinates of the place your charter ferry captain thinks the other ferry vanished in is a familiar spot. There are some strange magnetic pulls in that area that really messes up radar, sonar, radio and all so we—that’s collective hobby boaters—usually avoid it.”

Helen and Carmel looked at each other. “Exactly,” they said in unison.

“Slightly, Bermuda Trianglish, isn’t it?” Helen asked. Zeke scowled at her.

“Don’t discount that, Zeke. We, the Coast Guard crews, have said for years Lake Superior is a strange lady, and speculation often centers around the likeness to the Bermuda Triangle. No spoof,” Martin said.

Carmel was thankful for the validation, “So what you’re saying is, our friends could have been swept into this no man’s land that isn’t accessible or exitable?”

Zeke shook his head, a broad grin crossing his face as he turned away.

“No, other way to explain it,” Martin said, pulling the craft out of the marina and into the open water. “I hope you all wore comfortable shoes.”

Helen and Carmel looked at each to her again. Jasmine’s invitation flashed across Carmel’s mind. “Why did you say that?” Carmel asked as

chills ran across her shoulders and skittered up her neck, dancing many legged insect feet across her skull beneath her hair.

“Say what?” Martin asked.

“The comfortable shoe thing,” Carmel asked again.

“Oh, that. It’s an old navigational caveat, always wear good comfortable deck shoes. You never know when a squall might hit and you’ll need them.”

It was Zeke’s turn to look chagrined. “You think Jon was trying to warn Jasmine?” he asked.

“I don’t know. It’s just a weird comment for someone expected to be dressed to the nines for a formal dinner party. Don’t you think it odd?”

“Well, they were planning on staying the whole weekend, weren’t they?” Zeke asked.

Carmel let it go, but she couldn’t help feel there was some significance in Jon’s hand-written warning to Jasmine.

“You know Lady Baliese bought the shoes right off her feet, don’t you?” Helen asked.

“Her *comfortable shoes*,” Carmel added placing emphasis on the phrase once again.

“Women’s intuition.” Martin eyed the fog that had suddenly appeared ahead of them. “What’s this?” His scowl deepened. The fog seemed to swallow them, as though it deliberately set upon them like a ravenous animal.

The sun was abruptly cancelled by the impenetrable dense fog. Martin cut his engines and put the boat in reverse. They didn’t move. It was as though they were heavy metal and the fog a magnet. Martin banged on the instrument panel with the heel of his hand. Carmel looked at the object of his hammering. The needles on the gauges spun wildly.

“Drop anchor,” Martin called to Zeke. Zeke, unquestioning, quickly followed orders.

“If we can’t back out at least maybe we won’t be sucked any further in,” he said.

He reached for his radio. The coordinates the ferry captain had given them in his hand, they were the only place he could give whoever might hear his mayday call. “Mayday, mayday, this is Captain Martin Payne requesting immediate Coast Guard assistance.”

As he continued his plea for help, Carmel's gut tied in knots. Whatever happened to Jon and Jasmine now may be happening to them. Panic squeezed at her insides. Helen slipped her arm through Carmel's and they both stood staring overboard trying to see something—anything. Martin's voice was a drone in the background.

"Are we moving?" Carmel asked. "It feels like we're moving." Her gaze darted, looking for some landmark to mark their spot. There was none, just the incredibly thick fog which even, it seemed, their breath could not penetrate.

"It's just the waves moving us up and down. We're anchored securely," Zeke said.

Carmel wasn't so sure. Without instruments how would they know?

"How could I not have seen that fog? It was as thick as a solid wall," Martin said, joining them at the deck rail.

"Were you able to radio out?" Helen asked.

"I have no idea if the message left the fog as I got no response. We can only hope. We'll wait awhile and see if the fog lifts and then I'll try a ninety degree turn. That should shoot us right back out where we were."

Carmel somehow didn't think that would happen. "Yeah, if we haven't been spun around or moved further in." Carmel did not feel the least bit positive about their current situation.

"We're anchored. There should be no spinning, no moving," Zeke said.

"The good news is we can test out the scuba gear, see what we can tell from down under," Martin said.

Carmel instantly panicked. "Is that safe? I mean we have no idea where we are or what might be out there."

"Sitting here doing nothing won't change that either," Zeke said.

"Look, we'll tie a rope around our middles. If you get in trouble, give three tugs and we'll bounce right back on board." Martin said.

"What if you...?" Helen didn't finish her statement as Zeke gave her a quick scowl.

"Fine, go," she said, throwing up her hands and walking away.

Zeke walked after her and pulled her into his arms. "Look honey, we'll be fine, but we have to do something. No point in moving the boat with our navigation equipment all screwed up, even if we could. From down there

we'll be able to get a look at the lay of the land—so to speak.” He wiped a tear from her cheek with his thumb and kissed her tenderly.

She hugged him and then he followed Martin below to get their scuba gear on. The two women huddled together under a blanket on the deck. The sudden chill formed cartoon balloons of their breath in front of them.

\* \* \* \*

“Coasts Guard just got a mayday from the middle of Lake Superior.”

Chief Storm looked up as the dispatcher entered his office sounding out of breath.

“Reason they called us is because Zeke Trader left a message with them if anything out of the ordinary happened while they were out—”

“My god, you mean it's connected to Jon Bentley and Jasmine Le Claire's disappearance?”

“It would seem so, sir,” the man said.

“Get me through to the Coast Guard, whoever it was that relayed the original message. And get me Doug Oleander over at the airport.”

The dispatcher began dialing and connecting as fast as he could.

“I want the duty roster and the names of every man and woman out on vacation. Jump on it,” he said to his secretary. “And I want them all in here in under a half hour.”

In twenty minutes Chief Storm had a roomful of blue and a small cadre of civilian dressed detectives. He filled them in on the situation and told them he wanted choppers and air planes in the air and crew to hop aboard with the Coast Guard as they sailed toward the last coordinates for *Kimi Nijlon*.

There was a scurry of activity as the group took their assignments. The chief gave those that had to stay behind direct orders not to spill any information to the media as he sped out the door to join forces with the air sea search.



## Chapter 14

The only safe thing to do was move since they didn't know how many knew where they were, or indeed, if anyone else did. But, they didn't dare take the chance that no one else knew. Jasmine woke Jon. "We need to move." He shook his head, looking confused and disoriented.

"Jasmine?" he questioned.

Oh no, what poor timing. Jon was over his drug induced vacation from reality. "We need to find a new place to hide from Lady Baliese and her warrior women." She searched his face to see if a light of understanding went on in it.

Weylyn moved in. "We've got to hurry. We will explain it all to you later."

"Who...?" Jon said, motioning toward Weylyn. Then he noticed the woman lying on the floor bound and gagged. "What...?"

"Not here, not now," Jasmine said. "We can trust Weylyn. You have to take my word for it now." She grabbed his hand. Weylyn grabbed the herbs he'd made earlier and they slid out from behind the waterfalls.

"We will go to the beach. I think I know a safe spot there," he said, trotting along ahead of them.

They were a ways from the waterfalls when they heard voices coming their way. Weylyn quickly slipped off the trail leading them deep into the underbrush, darting to avoid several of the man-sized spider web traps Lady Baliese had set up. They hunkered down in a huddle. Jon's breath ragged, his gaze darted around wildly. Jasmine put her finger to his lips and then her own. Then she touched his cheeks below his eyes, pulling back to her own, getting him to fix his eyes on hers.

"It's okay," she mouthed, barely allowing her whisper to be audible. Jon held her hand, seeming to settle down. He watched as the warrior women

zigzagged through the brush, stabbing with pointed sticks as they went down the trail headed toward the waterfall.

As soon as they passed, Weylyn moved them forward toward the beach. They came upon a sheer cliff.

“We are going to have to work our way half-way down this to the cave. Watch your footing. Do exactly as I do.” He focused his attention directly on Jon.

Jon looked at Jasmine. “Can you do it?” he asked.

“I’m sure I can, but you be careful and do exactly as Weylyn does. We don’t want to lose you now.”

Jon smiled. “I’ll be fine.”

Jasmine thought he sounded nearly like his old self, which was a relief.

“You want me to bring up the rear?” he directed his question to Weylyn.

Weylyn looked at Jasmine and she nodded her approval. “Okay.”

He began his descent, Jasmine close on his heels. The handholds and ledges didn’t leave any room for error. As a young boy Weylyn may have had many adventuresome hours exploring the sheer cliffs, but it was barely room enough for a full grown adult to traverse. Several times Jasmine scraped her knuckles and barely kept from crying out. Her knees scraped against the scraggs of iron ore and slate outcroppings. Every inch of her ached from tension, scrapes and fears they would never see another dawn. Jon slipped above her, sending skittering rocks bouncing off her head and arms, but he managed to hang on and regain his footing as she and Weylyn froze waiting for him to regain control or go plummeting by them to the beach far below.

The climb down seemed to last forever, but Weylyn finally swung into the small mouth of a cave. He guided Jasmine’s feet in and pulled her back out of the way to help Jon get solid handholds to swing in too. They moved away from the opening to the back of the cave.

Weylyn stretched out, allowing himself deep relaxing breaths. “We should be safe here, for now.”

“Who wants to tell me what’s going on and how I came to be hiding out with you two? First of all why am I hiding?”

Weylyn and Jasmine looked at each other and laughed. It was so good to hear Jon normal even if his non-stop questions were atypical reporter reaction.

“It’s a long story,” Jasmine said.

“A really, really long story,” Weylyn added and they laughed again.

Jon looked puzzled by their laughter.

“You really don’t remember anything?” she asked.

“I remember coming to the island early with Zaire. By the way, where is Zaire?”

“Honestly, I have no clue about that. I haven’t seen him since his coronation,” Jasmine said. “Lady Baliese drugged you and held you prisoner at the castle. I got you out of there, and then Weylyn helped me keep you safe. Weylyn is, er, was, Lady Baliese’s son. He played her chauffeur when they came ashore.

Weylyn and Jasmine spent the next hour taking turns filling Jon in on the events of the week.

“A whole week? I’ve been out of it that long?” Jon shook his head in disbelief. They both nodded. He just shook his head some more. “Do you have a plan for how we’re going to get off the island?”

“We were hoping we could reverse your drug reaction and then put together a radio or something to send a beam to alert the Coast Guard, or whoever might be searching for us,” Weylyn said.

“Surely Carmel, Zeke, Helen, someone must be wondering what happened to us. They would alert the authorities,” Jasmine said. She dabbed her cuts and scrapes with the herbs Weylyn handed her as he applied some to the scrapes on her knees.

“Problem is they have no proof where we went. If Weylyn is right, no one leaves Maizely Ouiz and no one can see the island. No radar, sonar, nothing penetrates the force field defenses Lady Baliese has set up.”

“Think Bermuda Triangle,” Weylyn said.

“Why doesn’t someone just kill her?” Jon said, an accusing look directed at Weylyn.

“There’s something you don’t know Jon,” Jasmine said.

He turned to look at Jasmine. She wasn’t at all sure he was ready to hear about vampires, but she had opened Pandora’s box so she may as well finish what she started.

“Lady Baliese and a certain number of her warriors are…” She paused.

“Are what? Come on, what?” he said visibly agitated.

“Vampires,” Weylyn said.

“Say again,” Jon countered.

“They’re vampires,” Jasmine said.

Jon sat back with a plop and a blank expression crossed his face. They sat in silence for several minutes waiting for a verbal reaction, hoping they hadn’t shocked him back into his suspension of reality. “Only the women? You’re not...?” He pointed to Weylyn, “You’re her son.”

Weylyn shook his head.

“You believe in vampires?” Jon asked Jasmine.

“I have to. I’ve seen them,” she said.

Weylyn explained how she only used men to propagate and for her life blood. He also told him how they were disposed of when she finished with them.

“Then I was meant to be one of her...?” A look of disgust came over Jon’s face and Jasmine could see he was trying to swallow back the nausea to keep from retching.

“Why? How...?” He stared at Jasmine. “Why don’t I remember?” He paced the cave.

“Look, look here.” Weylyn interrupted Jon’s bewildered pacing as he pointed out at the vast expanse of water.

The three watched as a boat was being beached by an entourage of warrior women. A great spider web mesh encased the cowering passengers imprisoned on the boat.

“Carmel, Helen, oh my god, even Zeke,” Jasmine gasped.

Jon pushed in beside her. “Oh no, they must have set out to search, but how, whose boat?” They watched in stunned silence as the women overpowered the small group and hauled them away.

“Look there,” Jon said pointing down shore. A man staggered ashore looking like a creature from the deep with his flippers and air tanks. His bright yellow and black wet suit stood out like a pool of sunshine in a storm cloud shrouded day. “Someone’s escaped.”

“For now,” Weylyn said. “We need to go get to him before the warrior women do.”

## Chapter 15

Lady Baliense stood inside the shielded balcony protected from the sun's brutal rays. She watched the large boat, the *Kimi Nijlon*, being pulled ashore by the warrior women. Two women and a man in blue and black wet suit cowered under the web, trapped and unable to move. She loved Wanda's inventiveness. The spider webs launched from a grenade launcher type gun could be fired anywhere into the trees, spread across deep pits, or even, as in this case, engulfing boats the size of this one.

The question that bothered her was how these people found them and were they able to radio before they were swallowed by the force field surrounding the island.

"The best defense is a strong offense," she said as she rang the intercom down in the lab.

"Yes," a tiny voice answered.

"My quarters immediately," Lady Baliense said. Her voice had a cutting edge that told of her angst. She clicked off the intercom and strode back to the darkened balcony, peering out through the shield. The warrior women had the unexpected guests chained together with heavy rope around their necks and wrists before all being roped together at the waist. Her anger broiled inside her.

How long before they would be discovered? It usually began as a trickle. Someone found their way accidentally in to the confines of the islands then the dam would burst and the world would flood in. Why couldn't Wanda perfect that shield? Do it so it was truly impenetrable?

A sharp rap on her door drew her attention back inside. Wanda dipped in a courtesy genuflect. The big cats rumbled their disapproval at the intrusion.

“We have uninvited guests. Any idea how they got through the force field?” Lady Baliese said pouncing on the frail old woman as her faded blue eyes met the harsh green glare of Lady Baliese’s gaze.

Keridwen and Geburah rumbled again, sliding in between Lady Baliese and Wanda. They sniffed the air, nostrils flaring, yellow eyes riveting the poor woman to the spot where she stood. The hemline of her tattered monk’s habit jittered as if she shook in fear.

“Nothing is perfect,” Wanda said in her squeaky mouse voice.

“I expect nothing less than perfection,” Lady Baliese said, reaching down to stroke the glistening blue black fur of the cats at her feet. A red tongue darted out between needle sharp fanged teeth to lick her outstretched hand, a low grumble alarming the deadly quiet air.

Wanda kept her gaze on the huge cats. “I do not yet know how to make it so, Lady Baliese.” Her voice was barely a decibel over a whisper.

“I want you to crank up the voltage. We can’t have another incident like this. Do you understand?”

The brown clad figure began backing toward the door. “If I do that you realize we may burn out the system all together, It’s already near red line capacity.” Her voice quivered in anticipation of a brutal rebuttal.

“I said crank it up. Do not question my authority.” Anger lit dancing yellow flames in her green eyes and the big cats rose to their pounce-ready haunches, their fur rippling muscles ready to attack.

“Yes, ma’am, I shall immediately.” Wanda backed through the door and quickly dragging it shut behind her with one gnarled frail hand on the knob, the other grasping her tattered robe, pulling it up enough so as not to trip on it, her battered moccasins made no sound as she exited, the only sound the click of the door as it latched.

Lady Baliese rang for Portia. She appeared minutes later. “The new guests. Where are they and what have you been able to discern?”

Portia fidgeted nervously with her keys, standing first on one foot then the other. “I...we...they...”

“Spit it out, woman,” Lady Baliese said. The cats growled and stood ready once again to pounce.

Portia stiffened her spine and glared into Lady Baliese’s eyes. “I only now have them in custody. I have not interrogated them yet. They arrived only minutes ago.”

“Bring them to me at once,” Lady Baliese said.

Portia clicked her heals together; her arms stiff at her sides, jerked her head forward in one quick bow and abruptly turned and left the room.

Lady Baliese fiddled with Keridwen’s diamond studded collar. “That woman is becoming a challenge. I think it approaches time to pick a new head of the guard.”

The big cat purred its rumble, nearly palpable in the still room. A breeze tried to rustle the heavy brocade at the window and Geburah bolted to see who might be seeking entrance.

“What price safety?” Lady Baliese questioned the room. She harrumphed as though she expected one.

Shortly the rustle of feet and sharp tongued directions of Portia’s voice echoed outside in the hallway. “Halt,” she said.

The door opened and she shoved three people ahead of her. One woman tripped and fell nearly pulling the other with her. The man reached out to help her up and Portia struck his ass sharply with her riding crop, sending him sprawling beside the clumsy woman. The other stood her ground.

The two black cats, curiosity aroused, edged close to the new bodies. The women closed the gap between them as Geburah sniffed up one side and down the other of the two prone on the floor, Keridwen hung back watching.

“Pick them up,” Lady Baliese said.

Portia reached down to grab Zeke under the arm and Carmel helped Helen up. Lady Baliese motioned them forward.

“Pillows,” she ordered. The warrior women placed three large floor pillows at her feet in front of the newly arrived guests. “Sit.” she commanded.

Portia pushed Zeke to the pillow forcing him to his knees. Helen and Carmel followed with out prodding by the domineering Portia.

“What brings you to my private property?” she asked. A smile crept over her face though she felt none of the hospitality her smile suggested.

“Lost, off course,” Zeke offered.

“Where were you headed?” Lady Baliese asked, curious. She leaned forward eyeing the women. One appeared a healthy child bearing specimen, the other too old. The man had something she didn’t like about him. Cocky manner was part of it, but what it was she couldn’t put her finger on.

“Nowhere in particular. We were planning on touring around the islands. Just an afternoon ride,” Zeke said.

“Did you search them?” Lady Baliese asked Portia.

“Not yet, no time,” she answered curtly.

“Strip them then we will see who they are.”

The warrior women came at all three of them at once. Carmel struggled against the invasion and drew Lady Baliese’s attention. Her ample breasts sprang from the confines of her bra, the cold air and sudden exposure turning the rosy orb deeper brown/red raising the blunt topped nipple to a pebble as she squirmed away from the inquiring hands of one of the warrior women. Lady Baliese enjoyed the show. Her girls never failed to fondle and test the merchandise, male or female, and they seemed to enjoy it more when one struggled against their advances. This one was no exception as she deliberately ran a hand over the distended nub. She bent and sucked it into her mouth as she proceeded to slide the woman’s shorts down over her hips. The other two stood staunch, looking straight ahead allowing themselves to be undressed.

The show over, they searched the clothing for any idea who the guest were and found none.

“Names,” Lady Baliese said. “You first.” She pointed to the young woman. “Speak, or I’ll let Chloe have you for her toy. She seems rather taken with you.”

Chloe sidled up next to her and ran her hand over her ass cheeks, while she ran her tongue over her full lips. She cringed, trying to pull away from her. The woman fucked her ear with her tongue.

“Carmel, Carmel Apple,” she said quickly and folded into a ball on the pillow in front of Lady Baliese.

“Is that supposed to be a joke?” Lady Baliese said and Chloe immediately reached for Carmel’s shoulders, pulling her back into her as she sat behind her.

“It’s the truth,” the man said, trying to draw her attention away from Carmel.

“And you would know, because?” Lady Baliese toyed with him, her gaze raking over every inch of his slim frame. “Stand up.”

He obliged.



She surveyed his parts, reached out and raised his penis, fingered his balls and breathed in his essence. The man didn't flinch.

"We've been friends for years. Carmel Apple is her real name."

Lady Baliese released his balls and threw her head back and laughed. "Your parents played a real joke on you, didn't they, dear?"

"Who is the silent little lady in the middle? Stand up, dear. Tell me who you are," Lady Baliese said, drawing near to her.

She showed no sign of being intimidated. "Helen, like Helen of Troy."

Lady Baliese grabbed her cheeks and squeezed her mouth into a pucker. Then she swallowed her mouth with her own. Helen didn't pull away, didn't respond. "Not lesbian, are you?" She cupped Helen's ass cheeks with her hands and pressing her into her body, Helen's face against her breasts. Helen didn't answer. "Well, are you?"

"No," Helen answered, without flinching.

"But you don't mind a little womanly attention, do you?" Lady Baliese asked, sliding her hand around to her mound and spreading her labia. She slipped her leg between Helen's and spread them apart as she inserted a finger in her. Carmel gasped.

"Oh, would you rather it be you, dear? I'm sure Chloe would oblige. Take her with you."

Portia undid Carmel's rope to be lead away by Chloe and one other woman. She returned her mind to the fingers that were inside Helen and planted another deep searching kiss on Helen's lips. Zeke's erection bounced and caught her eye as she with drew from her pleasure of Helen.

"Take her away," she said to Portia.

Portia untied her from her tether to the man and two women led her away. Lady Baliese turned her attention to him.

"You said your name was Zeke? I think I'll call you Zeus for now." She stroked her hand from his face down his chest, down his tight abs to his groin where she took his penis in her hand, sliding it up and down, tightening her grip so only the skin slid. Zeke didn't move, his gaze straight ahead as though there were no one else in the room.

Lady Baliese turned to Portia. "Take him to Blaze and Trinede. Have them prepare him for me." She released him. "Send me the twins."

She rubbed her hands together and ran her tongue over her lips, her gaze once again raping Zeke. She flashed her hands in dismissal and Portia jerked Zeke's rope to make him follow her.

Lady Baliese returned to her lounge to await the twins.

## Chapter 16

Chief Storm was beside the Captain of the Coast Guard Ship *SS Norfolk*.

“The plane will circle over the area where these coordinates radioed to us from the *Kimi Nijlon* were sent,” the Captain said. “We have not heard any more, but no boats in the area have seen a life raft or wreckage that would indicate they were sunk.” the Captain said.

“Are you sure Martin Payne knew the size boat needed to run these waters?” Chief Storm asked and then wished he hadn’t.

“He’s Coast Guard, Dan. You know as well as I do the kind of skipper Martin is.”

“Sorry, I guess it’s losing more people from Tahki Istas that is causing me to question everything now days. I can’t take more people missing lightly. Anyone you know ever heard anything about this Maizely Quiz?” .

“No, sir, it’s got to be some kind of hoax. Unless, wait a minute. There’s the fog Martin radioed about. How could it still be here? How could it not be dissipated by sunlight warming the water or the wind?”

“Does look like a brick wall, doesn’t it?” Chief Storm said.

“Pipe all hands on deck,” the Captain ordered. There was a flurry of activity as the small crew assumed their positions.

“Radio the plane. Be sure he has a fix on us,” the Captain ordered as they approached the grey mass ahead of them.

Chief Storm thought the fog looked like a heavy thunderhead that had been anchored to the water. The black churning water beneath the cloud left just space enough for a ship to slip through, if it scraped the top on the cloud belly. It appeared like a solid mass not a billowy fog or cloud.

“They got us, sir,” the radio tech informed the Captain.

“Then let’s do it,” he said as they slid into the thick cloud. He ordered spotters to be posted on the bow to be sure they didn’t run aground or run

into something if at all possible. “You could cut this stuff with a butter knife it’s so thick.”

Chief Storm felt the fog seep into every crevice on the boat, penetrating even the clothing he wore. It was thicker, heavier, more charged than anything he had ever encountered. Silence enveloped them. He thought how he couldn’t even hear the water lapping at the boat. Even the men’s voices a few feet away seemed inaudible, like the air cancelled sound completely as they slipped silently slowly under the fog and then were swallowed by it.

“What is this crap?” Chief Storm asked the Captain.

Just as he spoke the wheel spun out of the Captain’s hands, and like the gauges, spun counter-clockwise, stopped and began to spin wildly clockwise a few seconds then backwards again. They jolted to a halt.

“Full ahead,” the Captain ordered. The boat groaned but refused to move. “Radio the airplane. Tell them we need another boat in here now.”

Having the plane in position at the eye of the fog mass seemed to help. He responded, “Boat on the way sir.”

“Maybe if we hook both boats and use the combined strength of the engines, we can pull forward,” he said.

“What could have happened to Martin and his crew? If you can’t pull through this—what could have happened to them?” Chief Storm knew the Captain wouldn’t have any more of an answer than he did.

“Strange readings, sir. It’s as though some sort of magnetic force field is holding us immobile.”

“Cut the engines once,” the Captain ordered. “See what happens then. Perhaps we will float with the current.”

Nothing, no movement. Dead heavy air almost too thick to breathe wrapped around them.

The other Coast Guard boat slipped through the fog and pulled alongside them, as silent as a thief in the night. It was close enough to reach out and touch. But no radio transmission was possible between them. The Captain went to the deck rail to talk across the fog and set their plans in motion to use both engines full ahead to try to pull through the fog.

“Sir, sir,” the plane radioed. “There is an island in the middle of all this.”

Anxious to try their collective tug of war with the force field, the men worked feverishly to secure the two boats into one. And they began the pull.

Much creaking and groaning followed lines pulled taut, neither boat making headway even at full throttle. It sounded like the boats would pull apart before they were freed to travel either forward or back.

Chief Storm began to wonder if he'd be forced to spend the rest of his days forever trapped in a fog that went nowhere, or if perhaps the boats would become splinters, tossing their cargo into the bowels of the unforgiving Lady Lake Superior.

## Chapter 17

Weylyn and Jon hurried down the sheer face of the cliff as Jasmine watched. It appeared everyone was so absorbed with their new guests they forgot about guarding anything else and Weylyn was quickly able to get Martin's attention. When Martin saw Jon, he raced over to the two men. They began the climb back up to the cave where Jasmine waited.

Martin listened intently as they explained to him what they were up against. "This is like some Sci Fi channel nightmare," he said when they were through. "We've got to get Helen, Zeke and Carmel out of there."

"We plan to," Jon said.

"But we've got to be careful. The grounds are covered with spider webs like the one that snared your boat," Weylyn said.

"Those aren't really spider webs, are they? Because, if they are, I'd hate to see the size of the spider that made them."

Jasmine shook her head. "No, Lady Baliese has a grenade launcher that shoots the webs out. They're made of some super sticky substance. I watched them capture one of the escaped guests. It was horrid. The thing acts like shrink wrap on a human. He suffocated and they fed him to the dingoes."

Now it was Martin's turn to look incredulous. "Australian dingo, leopard? What other surprises does our good Lady Baliese house on this island of hers? I'm beginning to think she is not a lady at all."

"Here's the way I think we can get your friends and get away. But, we need to move fast before they either dismantle or lock up your boat." Weylyn said. "If we can get to the women's lock-up and release them then the man, there will be enough commotion that we'll have cover to enter the castle and find out where they're holding the others."

“Wouldn’t it be better to find out where they are, and then go back and release the prisoners?” Jon questioned. “It would give us more time to escape.”

“It would be, if we had the time to retrace our footsteps. But if we want to use the boat to escape we’ll need to do it all at once and very soon,” Weylyn said.

“What about the fog, wall, whatever it is?” Jon asked again clearly worried about what faced them once, and if, they were able to get to the boat.

“It’s a magnetic force field,” Weylyn said. “It sucks you in and won’t let you leave.”

“Well, then how will we get the boat out through it?” Jasmine asked.

Jon and Martin shook their heads. Weylyn ran his hand through his thick ebony mane. “I’ll have to sabotage it,” he said.

“I can help. I know electronics. Do you know where the control panel is?” Martin asked.

Weylyn nodded. “It’s below in one of the dungeons. Lady Baliese turned it into a laboratory for Wanda, our ancient wizard.”

The three others listened mouths dropped with the sounds of wizard, witches, sorcery, and vampires. “Are we all still on the same planet?” Martin said, a sneer crossing his skeptical face.

“It’s all true, Martin. Jon was under Lady Baliese’s spell, a drug induced slide from reality. It’s too bizarre to comprehend with a rational mind, but take my word for it—it’s all true.”

“Okay, okay, I’ll take your word for how it seems to be, but there has to be, and probably is, a logical explanation for it. I’m sure we’ll find that.”

Maybe they were so used to accepting things at face value in the little community of Tahki Istars that they didn’t see things for what they really were. All Jasmine could think was she wished what he was saying could be true, but she was afraid it wasn’t.

Weylyn began drawing a map on the cave floor. He showed Jasmine where the females were held and Jon where the males were. “Once the males sense the females, all hell will break loose. Jasmine, I want you in the castle by that time.”

Jasmine didn't want to be out there when ten males under the influence of Lady Baliese's drugs were let loose. She had seen the effect. She shuddered.

"Will you be okay with this?" Weylyn asked.

"No problem, a little unnerved about what we're subjecting those poor women to."

"Once the commotion starts the guards will be rounding the males up or being attacked by them. The women have already been used by them. It's not like we are sacrificing them. They've already been drugged, and used, and it's the only way." Weylyn pulled her into his arms. He lifted her chin to gaze deeply into her eyes. "This is the only way to save your friends and our own necks." He bent his head and kissed her. She felt her center respond.

"Ahem!" Martin cleared his throat. "We've got work to do, plenty of time for that later."

Jasmine felt her face turn crimson.

"You're right," Weylyn said. "While you two free the prisoners, we'll try to find Zeke and the others. Meet us on the first floor, here." He drew an x for Jasmine. "We'll then go for the force field machine while you all make for the boat and be ready to set sail the minute we appear."

"Maybe we should forget the force field and make a run for the open water, counting on the Coast Guard to somehow have gotten my message and make it though," Martin said. "Let the guys with the big guns handle the dismantling of the island equipment."

"The longer we stay on the island, the slimmer our chances of escape," Jon said.

Weylyn sat, considering for a few long moments. He looked at Jasmine, then the two men. "What if we get the boat out to sea, no Coast Guard shows up and we still can't penetrate the force field to leave? Then what?"

"What if we get caught before we get the chance to try?" Martin said.

"Okay, okay," Weylyn said. "Jaz, you and Jon release the women, and head them toward the male holding area. Then you head toward the castle. Martin and I will meet you inside the castle as planned. We'll skip the force field machine."

"I wish we could rescue them all," Jasmine said.



“They are so drugged, and we don’t know which are vampires. No, it wouldn’t be a good plan to bring them out with us. Let the Coast Guard deal with them and their condition.”

As they carefully made their way down the rock wall, Jasmine tried to reconcile what they were doing. They were sacrificing these poor men and women to save their friends and their own lives. But, then she realized something was strange.— If pregnant women were kept to breed, where were all the children? Surely some would be—all babies weren’t born—and even if they were—where were they? So the women— Her head ached with the thoughts that raced through her mind.

Weylyn was not a cruel and thoughtless man. He must know why he could sacrifice the two groups. He must also know why there are no children. No time to ask now and she wasn’t sure she could stomach the answers anyway. As they planted their feet on the ground, Weylyn gave her a peck on the cheek and a pat on the rear.

“Go,” he said. “Be careful.”

She had every intention of being careful. She did not want to be subjected to the same thing as these women. After it was all over they could bring the Coast Guard in to rescue them. Jon grabbed her arm as she was about to step out of the undergrowth. She stopped and he pulled her down against him and for a brief moment she worried that his drugs had not worn off and he was about to rape her. The “swish, swish, swish,” of feet hurrying through the jungle caught her ears and she huddled into Jon ashamed at what she had been thinking.

“Lady Baliese is coming unglued,” the one woman said to the other. “She’s keeping the latest uninvited guests in the castle.”

“Doesn’t she remember how dangerous that is? We lost those two just a week ago because they were kept in the castle instead of with the others.”

“Yes, and she’ll blame us if these escape. I think it’s time we choose a new ruler. We’ll have to talk to Portia. She is getting tired of the way Lady Baliese is treating her too. She’ll back us.”

“Maybe she will agree to be leader. She is awesome.”

“Shh. If Portia or anyone hears you talking like that we’ll be dingo food,” another said.

The women pushed on through the jungle.

“Oh good. Mutiny,” Jon said.

Jasmine couldn't tell from his voice if he was being sarcastic or happy with that prospect. They slipped back out on the trail. It was getting close to dusk and with the myriad of animals Lady Baliese kept, Jasmine didn't want to be in the jungle after dark.

"We have to hurry," she said.

It was safer on the trail than through the undergrowth. With the light dimming they could not see the spider webs or any wild creature that might be approaching.

They made it to the women's area. It was nothing more than a large cage with a barracks off to one end. Two guards paced the perimeter. Jasmine motioned to Jon and they crept as close as they could. When the two warrior women separated, Jon grabbed one from behind and hit her over the head with a rock. She collapsed into his arms and he dragged her back to the brush where Jasmine waited. She quickly tied her hands and feet with lengths of vine while Jon snuck up behind the other woman and knocked her out in the same manner. When she was secured they cautiously exited the underbrush.

The women inside the enclosure had seen what was happening and they pushed toward the fence. Jasmine cautioned silence as she used the warrior women's key to unlock the gate. The women rushed through to freedom and at once headed into the jungle underbrush. She wanted to call after them about the wild animals and the spider webs but they certainly must know after living here any length of time. She noticed that none were bulging with child. Confusion didn't have time, as Jon motioned her in the direction of the castle. They raced to meet Weylyn and Martin.

Jasmine felt the air against her skin. It felt charged like an impending storm, or was it just her anxiety? It felt as though their running was enough to cause sparks., friction rubbed against her. The small fine hairs on her arms and legs stood on end. She remembered the static electricity storms of her youth that produced the spider walking across arm and leg hairs effect and now she felt the same reaction. When they stopped near a side rear door of the castle she grabbed Jon's arm.

"Do you feel the air," she whispered.

He looked at her like she asked a million dollar question and nodded. "It feels like the air is charged with electricity doesn't it?"

"How weird is that?"

Jon shrugged. There was no time to speculate. They rushed inside. They needed to find Weylyn and Martin.

An alarm sounded and all hell broke loose as the guards raced down hallways and stairs to the outside. Jon and Jasmine squeezed tight into a dark side alcove. The escaping men and woman must have been discovered. Their chances of recovering Carmel, Helen and Zeke just improved.

They moved quickly toward the interior guest chambers where Weylyn had indicated he felt they would be held temporarily. They rounded a corner just in time to see Martin subdue a guard. He motioned them to the door. Jasmine opened the door and Martin shoved the woman's limp body inside. They moved on down the hallway where Weylyn stood trying to find the right key for the door.

Jasmine's gaze searched the hallway for any approaching guard. Finally Weylyn pushed into the room and they all followed.

Carmel and Helen's faces lit up when they saw the entourage. Sprawled naked on the bed, handcuffed to the head and foot, they were powerless to conceal their nakedness from the group.

Weylyn set about freeing them. "Jasmine, help them dress while we find Zeke, we'll be back for you." The men slipped back out the door.

Carmel grabbed Jasmine and hugged her. "I'm so glad to see you, I'm so—"

"Sh sh, it's going to be okay. Come on. Let's get you both into some clothes. We're going to try to crash your boat through the force field."

"What if we fail?" Helen said.

"If we stay here we're subject to Lady Baliense's whims, which could include being turned into vampires or being fed to the dingoes or wild cats." Jasmine said surprised that Helen, of all people, seemed ready to give up and stay where she was.

The women dressed quickly and waited for the signs of the men's return.

Weylyn's rap on the door and they exited. Helen wrapped herself in Zeke's embrace, and he engulfed her, covering her mouth with a deep passionate kiss.

"Hey, you two. Plenty of time for reunions later, come on." Weylyn led the way towards one of the many castle exits.

“I’d love to give Lady Baliese a going away present,” Jon said, starting to move away from the group.

Martin grabbed him. “There’s no time. Do you want to jeopardize the rest of the group so you can seek your revenge?”

They stood motionless, waiting. Jon’s raised fist, his eyes glared in a threat to Martin that said *I dare you to try to stop me*.

“Think, Jon. Is it worth your life?” Jasmine pleaded.

Another long minute before Jon lowered his fist. “Sorry, I hate what she has done to so many people,” he said, more subdued.

“There will be a better time,” Weylyn said as he began to move forward again.

## Chapter 18

Lady Baliese lingered in her bath, allowing herself to be pampered by the expert hands of the twins in preparation to having the new male subject tested. It was too soon for him to succumb to the drugs he would be given, but by the time Blaze and Trinede were finished preparing him he would be primed and ready to yield to her needs. A smile worked its way across her mouth and she laughed aloud. The twins paused in their cleansing ritual, a questioning look held them motionless.

“Continue,” she said. They finished and helped her rise to be rinsed and then dried with the lushness of the thick thirsty towels.

Gently they began rubbing her pale skin with the lavender and vanilla oils she had grown to love. Soft tiny hands circled her breasts, her stomach, her genitals, rolling her onto her stomach they continued the tender circular caresses, rubbing the oil deep into her skin, spreading her legs to reach her inner most secret parts. Tiny fingers stroking, tiny hands manipulating, exploring orifices that tiny fingers could easily reach three, four, easily she accepted them allowed the deft manipulation, the kisses and sucking the knowing tongues darting, arousing, pleasing. They rolled her to her back, and while one twin re-oiled her breasts, another oiled her inner thighs.

Suddenly Portia burst through the door. The two black cats lunged at their cage door with loud roars, and the twins backed quickly away from Lady Baliese.

“Someone has unleashed the pens. They are all loose. The jungle is alive with wild orgies, raping and all manner of disorder,” she said breathlessly.

“Then what are you doing here?” Lady Baliese said, sliding to the edge of the table and drawing her robe to her. As if she needed to cover herself from Portia’s eyes. She had been one of the first to savor Lady Baliese’s desires. There was no need to cover what Portia still lusted after. She stood

and walked slowly, sensuously toward Portia, allowing the robe to trail behind her. She cupped one of her own breasts and offered it toward Portia. She ran her tongue lingeringly over teeth and lips. She pushed her bare skin against Portia as she circled her. Portia's gasp told Lady Baliese the woman, still wanted her.

"Let them have a little ribald fun. When they are exhausted herd them back into their pens and disinfect them all." Her breath hot on Portia's neck, Portia squirmed into Lady Baliese's bare skin. "Double dose the men, and all will be well once again." She screwed Portia's ear with her tongue. She grabbed Portia's crotch and the girl whimpered and spread her legs, begging for more.

Lady Baliese loved toying with her. She was so easy, but she was not a good lover. And she wanted a man now. She wanted the new man, this Zeke that had been brought ashore earlier today. She covered Portia's mouth with her own, sucking in the full lower lip. Portia yielded to her advances and returned the passion of the kiss. Lady Baliese bit Portia's lower lip hard and the girl jumped but didn't move away from Lady Baliese's embrace. Lady Baliese pushed her away.

"Bring me the new male, and you set about your duty gathering the prisoners back. See to it you punish those responsible. On second thought, bring them to me. It's been too long since I've had the pleasure of punishing. They should be made to serve as a warning to the others. Go." She dismissed her with a flourish. Portia licked the blood trickling from her lip. She put her hand to her mouth and backed away and out the door.

Lady Baliese strode to the window. She saw flashes like lightning off in the distance. It appeared a thunder storm approached. Oh, how she loved a good summer storm, waves crashing in against the breakwaters, thunder shaking the foundation, the rock ledges absorbing the intensity, the fury, the energy, the passion of the storm mimicking her own. Yes, she would ride the new white male specimen through this storm. Her body responded immediately to the vision. Her juices warmed the trail to her entrance. She contracted those muscles to feel their strength and then relaxed them. Yes, she was still in control.

Blaze and Trinede appeared in the room, heads down, Portia behind their nearly naked bodies. She slapped their thong clothed bottoms with a

sharp crack of her riding crop as she pushed them forward. A sharp cry of pain in a unison harmony squeezed from them.

Lady Baliese knew more bad news traveled in with their voluptuous half-clothed bodies. She glared, waiting for the words.

Portia snapped the crop again, bare flesh answered and Blaze squealed. "He's gone. He, his friends..." She fell to her knees, kissing the floor at Lady Baliese's feet.

Portia cracked Trinede again and she sank to her knees but didn't cower like Blaze. Portia shoved her forward so she would be in the same position as Blaze and placed a foot in the small of her back to hold her there..

Lady Baliese looked to Portia. "Someone apparently overpowered these two while they worked on Zeke to get him ready for you," Portia said. "He's gone." Portia ground her foot on the bottom of Trinede, keeping her from righting herself.

Lady Baliese reached down and raised Blaze's face to meet her own. "How?" she asked.

Tears streamed down the girl's face, blood trickling on her nearly bare bottom where the riding crop had cut into her fair skin. Lady Baliese reached a finger to draw across the blood. She brought it to her mouth and tasted it. "Exquisite."

She murmured like a lover taking in the sex of her mate. Pleasure oozed across her and she pulled the girl to her feet in front of her. She looked deep into her eyes and the girl's eyes glazed over as she swooned toward Lady Baliese. She stood paralyzed as Lady Baliese's body scraped against hers Lady Baliese's knees pushing between her legs. Lady Baliese slid a hand over her supple breasts and the girl swayed and moaned.

Lady Baliese reached behind her and pulled her ass cheeks to push Blaze into her chest. The girl groaned and sucked the breast pressed against her face. Then she raised her lips to Lady Baliese's brushing her tongue over the ample breasts, circling the tight nubbed beads. She sucked momentarily while Lady Baliese kneaded her ass, her tongue slid up the cleavage to the dip at the base of her throat. Lady Baliese watched the greed, the desire grow in the other women as they watched. Lady Baliese slid her head, down pausing at Blaze's mouth where she swallowed it with her own, deepening the kiss by sliding her tongue down into the girl's long throat. The girl pumped into Lady Baliese as her desires grew.

Lady Baliese released her mouth from the kiss and slid her tongue down the outside of the girl's neck, tickling her ear with a tongue fuck. The girl ground her hips into Lady Baliese's knee then Lady Baliese slid into the pale brown throat, her teeth puncturing the skin, blood rising quickly as she drank her fill before the girl collapsed in her lap.

Lady Baliese wiped her mouth with the back of her hand. "Out, all of you out." To Portia she said, "Find him or else."

Trinede grabbed the body of her partner and carried her toward the door. Lady Baliese watched her ass cheeks covered only by a thong, bounced slightly with each hurried step, red slices oozing blood where the riding crop had struck and sliced the tender brown meat like a knife would slice a loin pig roast. Lady Baliese's desire grew again for the tender young brown skinned Trinede. Next time, she told that cute little ass, next time I will drink of your life.

A series of explosions rocked the castle. At first she thought thunder and lightning, from the approaching storm. Portia turned, terror in her eyes.

"What's happening?" she screamed. Great chunks of stone seemed to burst from the walls and the floor trembled again.

"Go. Find the cause," she said, trying to speak over the roar and sound of more explosions.

Lady Baliese stumbled over hunks of stone to her window. The horizon was a series of arcs and flashes. Wanda's words echoed in her mind. "Red line, too much, overload."

Her world came crashing down on her. "Never more," crossed her mind. She saw the small watercraft moving toward the flashes on the horizon.



## Chapter 19

Nearly twenty four hours later Jasmine unlocked the door to her apartment. It had been nearly two weeks since she had last set foot in her home. It felt good and yet foreign to her now.

Weylyn followed her. He shut the door softly behind her and gazed around the apartment before he pulled her into his arms.

She could feel his need hard against her pelvis. Her own need surged deep inside her.

Weylyn's mouth consumed hers, a hungry wolf as he chewed on her lips, sucked her tongue into his mouth and began running his hands the length of her body.

Jasmine didn't know if it was exhaustion, the stress of their ordeal finally over, or her need that caused her dizziness. She felt simultaneously weak and yet powerful, exhausted and energized, and at a loss to explain exactly what phenomena seemed to overwhelm her. What was happening to her? Everywhere Weylyn's hand touched her ignited heat streaks to her center. She felt like a bitch in heat must feel. There was no holding back. Her need boiled inside her as she ground her hips into his hardness. His hands tore at the buttons of her blouse.

"Wait, wait," she murmured.

Weylyn dropped his hands, stopped the kiss abruptly and stood staring at her without speaking.

She felt suddenly strange and stupid. Why had she stopped him after all they'd been through together this past week.—he passionate love making, the hours of baby sitting Jon, the fight to save themselves as well as the others? But, suddenly she was unsure.

"What? What has your mind so troubled now? I have waited so long for this moment when we are free and able to enjoy each other. Why have you

stopped me?” His eyes pleaded with her. His need did not relax and stood rigid pressing against his pants front.

Jasmine pulled away from him and turned toward the kitchen. “There’s no rush now. We should take our time.”

How could she tell him of her fears? How could she say she worried that if his mother, the Lady Baliese had been a vampire, how could she be certain he wasn’t? She wanted him to convince her there was no such thing as vampires, but she was afraid to express her fears.

“You’re right. We should explore and discover each other inch by delicious inch. I want to taste your breasts fresh from a steamy shower. I want to suck them, linger over them without touching any other part of you. I want to nibble and suck on those rosy nipples until you beg me for more. And, when you no longer can bear it, I want to walk away and let you cool down. When I come back to run my tongue and hands down the length of your spine, feel you thrash with throbbing want in your cunt, I will leave you again.”

Weylyn’s breath was hot against the back of her neck as he came close enough to touch her but didn’t. It was driving her lust for him deeper. He slid his leg in between hers and pulled her back into him. She found herself squirming into the pressure of his cock against her ass slit. She moaned as desire swept over her.

Weylyn released her and went to sit in a kitchen chair as if his own needs had been satisfied, as if his desire had turned to ice, while molten lava flowed inside her.

His behavior unnerved her. Was he toying with her? Had she angered him. She couldn’t tell from his facial features or body language. She went to the cupboard and pulled out the coffee canister and prepared the coffee pot before she crossed over and sat opposite him at the table. She reached for his hands as they lay with his fingers laced together in front of him. He allowed her to grasp them, but he avoided eye contact, staring instead out the window to the world beyond. Her hear sank. She was sure she had offended him so greatly that he may never be hers again.

“I didn’t mean to anger you,” Jasmine said.

Slowly he brought his focus from the outside world to her. “Are you always going to be afraid that I am a monster? A vampire, or a werewolf in

human clothing?” The hurt and disgust hung like barbed wire on his question.

He knew exactly what her thoughts were. She felt so foolish now.

“Do you honestly believe in vampires, or any of that?”

His gaze locked onto hers and she was powerless to look away. Wasn't that exactly what Count Dracula did to his victims—hypnotized them? Fear seized her insides and a shudder radiated from her toes to her chin in a shaky sort of spasm.

“I—of course, I mean, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to imply that...that you...” She couldn't go on because she was no longer sure what she believed. Tears began slipping down her cheeks. The entire experience with Zaire, and Lady Baliese, Maizely Ouiz, all of it crowded across her mind.

Weylyn came around the table and pulled her from her chair into his arms. She exploded into all the emotions she had been holding in check since discovering what was really going on at Lady Baliese's retreat. Her body shook with the sobs that pulled the tangled mess from her mind. Weylyn held her, kissing the top of her head.

“Princess, I would never do anything to harm one hair on your head.” He pushed her back and wiped a tear from her cheek with his thumb. “I have never loved before, but I love you now. I assure you I have not been tainted by my mother's evil blood.”

The warmth of being in his arms, the safety she had felt there earlier, returned and finally convinced her she loved him too. She stood on tip toe to reach his lips, and as she moved hers over his full masculine lips, he responded devouring hers with his. Parting her teeth with his tongue and fucking her mouth with his tongue before sucking hers into his mouth. His hands caressed her back and found their way to her ass cheeks and he pulled her into his hardness. His mouth left hers to trail to her ear where he nibbled the lobe and then his tongue traced her ear, her ear canal and down to the hollow of her throat before he slid back up her cheek and chin to her mouth.

Jasmine's vagina grew hot and warm juices dampened her panties.

Weylyn slid his arms around her, picked her up and carried her toward the bedroom where he gently laid her across the bed and proceeded to undress her. Everywhere he revealed skin his hot lips and roaming tongue followed.

Jasmine reached around him trying to undo his clothes, but he pulled her hands up with one of his, clasping them both together above her head so that she couldn't impede his progress. He deftly unhooked her bra with one hand and pushed it up out of the way of his hungry, searching mouth. Jasmine writhed beneath him, moaning as the heat between her legs reached epic proportions.

"I need you," she pleaded, her voice a rasp of want.

Weylyn released her hands long enough to pull her skirt down over her hips. She arched up on her shoulders to help him with the process. He placed a hand on her stomach and pressed her back onto the bed as he slid panty hose and skirt off onto the floor. Immediately, he raised her thighs placing one leg on each of his shoulders and parted her labia with his tongue.

Jasmine squirmed, arching, reaching so his tongue could reach the places she most needed to be touched. He put his hands under her ass cheeks then massaged them as his tongue circled her clit, pushing her ever closer to the edge of her need. Slowly he inserted one finger, finding her g spot while his tongue made alphabet letters inside her, teasing her clit even as his fingers slid into her, filling her as two more followed the first one. Her heart pounded in her ears. She grabbed his head and pushed him into her as she ground her hips against his mouth, the roaring inferno blasting through her, wave after wave of climax ripping through her. But, it wasn't enough; she wanted his cock sunk as deep as it could get inside her.

"Oh, please," she groaned. "Fill me with your cock. Drill me. Fuck me now. Please."

Weylyn released her long enough to tear off his own jeans. He swallowed her mouth with his and she could taste the salty musk of her own juices on his tongue. He slid his shaft slowly in and out of her, lubricated as much with her own juices as she was with his.

Jasmine wrapped her legs around him and squeezed with all her might, trying to drive him even deeper into her cunt, deeper where she ached to be fulfilled. Weylyn lifted her ass cheeks higher and plunged into her depths. She squealed as he filled her with hot cum, shooting into her, wave after wave mimicking her own waves of climax. Her muscles contracted, sucking, milking, and extracting all of his juices, all of his shaft as far as she could

get it. As he released her mouth and bit and sucked the tender, long white neck beneath him, he groaned and thrust his final thrust.

She writhed and bucked and returned the sucking bite into the bronzed Adonis, son of Dracula's, neck above her. She could care less if he really was. Sex with him was another world altogether and she wanted to live there whatever the costs.

## Chapter 20

“If only you had heeded my warning,” Jon said, sitting across the table from Jasmine and Weylyn.

“What warning?” Jasmine asked.

Martin jumped in. “About the comfortable shoes.”

Jasmine was all confused now, as confused as she was when she first got the message.

“Actually, it wasn’t even Jon’s message. It was mine, in his handwriting.

“He’s right. At that point I still believed Zaire was an artist and friend.”

Carmel, Helen, Zeke followed Jasmines perplexed gaze from Martin, to Weylyn, to Jon. “Will somebody please tell me what about ‘bring comfortable shoes’ has to do with anything that went on at that, that island un-paradise.”

“An old navigational caveat. The guest should always bring good, comfortable,” he raised his hands palms up—hiking his shoulders up towards his ears as he emphasized the word comfortable, “deck shoes in case of a sudden squall. Fancy heels, slippery pumps or ah, flats, none of that is good on a boat if a squall should hit.”

“What’s a squall?” Helen asked.

a *\*line squall\** is a heavy downpour that may only last a few minutes, or a short duration. It often is preceded by a strong wind. It may rain heavily as much as four inches an hour, or more. On shipboard it would flood across the deck and exit through the scuppers strong enough to sweep the men off their feet. Without foul-weather gear, sailors would be drenched within minutes. Line squalls usually are fast traveling, and you can see it approaching like slanted gray lines on the horizon under a dark cloud.

In olden times if the ship was low on fresh water, they would see a squall coming and head toward it in order to catch drinking water. They would use the sails to collect the runoff into barrels.

A *\*white squall\** has no visible telltale warning, like the line squall. It has a tornado-like strength that could break masts or scatter canvas sails. There is nothing quite as fearsome on a sail boat as watching the wind tear the stitching from the seams, and it puffs overboard in fuzzy cotton ball tatters. Before you could get the sail down, it might *\*blow out\**," Martin said."

Helen flinched and Zeke reached out and took her hand, kissing it and wrapping it to the inside of his other arm. She leaned into him and put her head on his shoulder.

"I wanted you to expect trouble. I wanted you to alert those at home, let them know they may need to rescue you," Weylyn said wrapping Jasmine in his embrace.

"Well, it didn't work," Jasmine said. "It made me guess about it and I saw the phrase, or heard it everywhere the couple days before I left. So, I figured it had to be new buzz words I somehow missed." Everyone burst in to heartfelt laughter.

"Next time be sure the person you direct the subtle hint to knows what you're hinting about," Carmel said.

Helen and Zeke echoed her statement with "Yeah, good idea."

"Let's hope there isn't a next time," Jasmine said.

"So, the Coast Guard's two boats were enough to overload the force field Wanda had set up?" Jon asked.

"The system was already strained because of all the additions. Then Lady Baliese wanted the ceiling covered, the air space above the island. Wanda was working on that, but when my boat penetrated the shield, Lady Baliese panicked and had Wanda crank the system over redline. The resistance of the two Coast Guard ships on the overworked, strained system shorted everything out." Martin said.

"One thing led to another until the fires caused explosions causing more explosions," Zeke said.

"We're lucky we got off the island when we did," Jasmine said. She still felt a twinge of guilt for the poor men and women who were hostage to Lady Baliese's nightmare.

“Did the Coast Guard know what would happen if they overloaded the system?” Weylyn asked.

“I’m sure not. They were just trying to shut down the force field long enough to get ships in to check out what was really happening on the island.”

“Though Lady Baliese had cannibalistic tendencies, she wasn’t a vampire. There’s no such thing as vampires,” Martin said.

“What a mess.” Carmel quivered and wrapped her arms around her middle. “I’m glad you’re all safe and Lady Baliese’s reign of terror is done.”

Jon slid a hand around Carmel’s shoulders and rubbed her neck. “We are all safe now,” he said smiling at her.

They all agreed, but Jasmine wasn’t so sure that was true. If Lady Baliese was truly a vampire, would the explosions and fires that leveled the island be enough to kill a vampire?

**THE END**



## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Cricket Sawyer, an award winning, multi-published author, writes romantic suspense with sizzle and sass. Though she is not new to romance, her tendency to write the dark side of love, the paranormal, shape shifter type of story-worth-telling allows her to explore more of what goes bump in the night and what lights our fires by day or night. Writing fiction, non-fiction and poetry, she has published mystery, adventure, romantic suspense, and young adult novels under another name. She lives in Northern Wisconsin where her roots are deep and strong, and the winters are perfect for romantic evenings by the fireplace.

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