



PHAZE  
HEAT SHEET

RAVEN

Brenna Lyons

NEVERMORE

Nevermore  
By Brenna Lyons

*Published by Phaze Books*  
*Also by Brenna Lyons*

*Black Sail*  
*Conquest*  
*Mama's Tales*  
*The Last of Fion's Daughters*  
*The Color of Love*  
*We Shall Live Again*  
*Phaze in Verse*

“The Fire God’s Woman”  
from *Coming Together: Under Fire*

*Last Chance for Love*  
*Fates Magic*  
*Rites of Mating*  
*In Her Ladyship's Service*  
*Matchmaker's Misery*  
*Animal Instincts*  
*Night Warriors*  
*Will of the Stone*  
*Bearing Armen*



This is an explicit and erotic novel  
intended for the enjoyment  
of adult readers. Please keep  
out of the hands of children.

[www.Phaze.com](http://www.Phaze.com)

# *Nevermore*

*A Phaze Raven HeatSheet*

BRENNA LYONS

**Nevermore** copyright 2009 by Brenna Lyons

All rights reserved under the International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

This is a work of fiction. Names, places, characters and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to any actual persons, living or dead, organizations, events or locales is entirely coincidental.



A Phaze Production  
Phaze Books  
6470A Glenway Avenue, #109  
Cincinnati, OH 45211-5222  
Phaze is an imprint of Mundania Press, LLC.

To order additional copies of this book, contact:  
[books@phaze.com](mailto:books@phaze.com)  
[www.Phaze.com](http://www.Phaze.com)

Cover art © 2009 Skyla Dawn Cameron  
Edited by Kathryn Lively

eBook ISBN-13: 978-1-60659-512-1  
First Edition – September, 2009  
Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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

Dedicated to...

Tamer, who hasn't quite tamed me yet.

Traia sat before the fire, fuming that she'd been reduced to this. She was a witch. A witch! She was supposed to be smart. At the very least, she was supposed to be more powerful than her adversaries were, than the pathetic creatures that skulked in the darkness.

How a pointed-eared, shape-shifting mutt had tricked her in the first place was a mystery. His getting a hook in her soul was unbelievable. Traia was hardly a dabbler or even a journeywoman. Far from it.

She was *Mistress* Traia, strong in the natural magicks and learned in spells of protection and healing. People traveled days to barter for her aid. Those who were in great need paid modestly for what they sought. Those who asked for the frivolous or foolish paid more than they could afford as a lesson.

If she failed tonight, those days were over. All she had to do was keep the stinking werewolf away from her...or kill him.

For some reason she couldn't name, the thought of killing him sent a completely unwarranted pain through her. It wasn't right to feel this way. If he reached her again, her wards were useless.

"He'll rip my throat out." Traia pressed a hand to it, abruptly nauseated. Losing her livelihood would be bad enough. Losing her life was decidedly worse.

*And what werewolf wouldn't kill a witch who knew what he was?* None that she'd heard of.

\* \* \* \*

Galen watched the cottage from the tree line, his palms sweating at what he was about to attempt. Of all the women to set off his mating instincts, the *usually* fair and kind Goddess had cursed him with a witch.

*What did I do to deserve this one?* He tried to live a good life, despite his cursed birth. Galen wasn't a nomad like most of

## NEVERMORE

his kind. He didn't kill farmers' stock and deprive the innocent of their livelihood. But he'd obviously gone wrong somehow.

"Badly wrong," he muttered.

His shoulder ached in a stark reminder that Traia would doubtless try to kill him again, given the chance to. It had taken several weeks to heal the wound that would have killed any human man.

Had he been any slower, or Traia's aim been true, Galen wouldn't have needed the reminder. Instead, he would be the occupant of a shallow grave, laden with monkshood and witches' potions to guarantee his descent into hell. Still, he couldn't help wondering if Traia's aim was so bad or if her heart hadn't been in the attack.

There was only one way to solve this. He would have to go to her. Either the night would end with Traia as his mate, or Galen would be dead by her hand. With his instincts raging, Galen couldn't walk away. Nor could he harm her.

He could, however, seduce her again, if she gave him the chance to do so. Just the thought of it had him hard in anticipation. It was a certain wager that Traia wouldn't submit without a fight, and a buck in the mating cycle loved nothing more than a challenge.

The tickle of the near-full moon on his neck reminded Galen that it was time to claim his mate. "Or die trying," he reminded himself. That was a disheartening thought, but it was accurate. There was a good reason bucks avoided the chance of scenting a mate.

Galen ambled to the border of her circle of power, shivering at the tingle of her wards and shields against his skin. They were stronger now, but by the decree of the Goddess Herself, they could not keep him from what was his own.

Traia's scent had drawn him in, but the invitation of her protective spells had confirmed what she was to him. Only someone who meant Traia no harm would be welcomed in, and his mate was the only person in the world Galen wasn't in danger of harming.

Smiling at the irony of the situation, he stepped across the line of power. He couldn't harm Traia—didn't want to harm

her—but she was about to do her best to kill him. Though her magick was useless against him, her blade wasn't.

“Yet.” A smile twisted his lips at the thought of the truth she would have to face, then disappeared at his mind's rebuke. She would only have to face it *if* he succeeded.

Caution firmly in mind, Galen took the final steps and knocked smartly on her door. He bit back a laugh at her muttered curses.

\* \* \* \*

Traia didn't question who knocked at her door. With vampires, weres, and zombies hunting the night, no human came to her door after sundown, late enough that he couldn't complete his business with her and return to the safety of his own shields before the sky darkened. She rarely saw visitors after mid-afternoon.

He knocked again, a jaunty little children's song backbeat. Traia crossed one leg over the other, making a conscious effort at ignoring him. Though it probably wouldn't discourage him, Traia was hardly about to invite him in.

*He's not a vampire*, she reminded herself. Refusing to invite him in would make little difference.

*Vampire or not, I am not welcoming a foul creature into my home.*

He knocked a third time, a more impatient cadence, heavier than the previous inquiries. “Traia.” His voice was soft, taunting, and all too familiar.

Traia bristled. “I've been nice so far, mutt. Push me much farther and I'll make cuffs of your hide.”

He laughed at the warning. “Now, Traia. The fact that I'm knocking on your door should tell you something.”

“That you're persistent and stupid?” she ventured rudely. *He deserves no better.*

“That your shields and traps won't work against me,” he countered.

“They are simple magick. I have stronger.” As if to reassure herself, Traia picked up the items she would use to drive him off.

## NEVERMORE

Her gaze strayed to the final weapon in her arsenal, and she shuddered at the thought of using it.

“Perhaps.” The truth didn’t seem to concern him. “Probably so.”

“If you enter my home, you will be carried out.” Memories of his tall, strong body prompted a silent addition to that statement. *By a very strong man or two of lesser strength.*

“Would you care to open the door and be proven wrong? I would hate to have to break it down to do so.”

*The presumption! He really is a dog.*

“Traiaaaa...”

She shivered in arousal. Her thighs dampened, and her nipples tightened. It didn’t make sense. She knew what he was. Why was he still able to affect her this way?

Traia forced her mouth to unglue. “The door is not bolted.”

He hesitated. “You’re inviting me in?”

“You wish.”

His dark chuckle set off another round of shivers and several warning bells. Traia wished she could claim a sense of dread caused them, but nothing about his approach made her feel it. It was only her mind screaming warnings. It made no sense. Her senses had never failed her so completely before. Then again, neither had her magick.

The door opened, and Traia’s mind rioted. She’d invited him in the first time—had she nullified her defenses in the process?

*No. He’s not a vampire.* Vampires were the only ones who nullified the magick with an invitation. Not to mention, the vampire had to be invited in at each visit, and she certainly hadn’t done so. Not at the shield line and not at her door.

He stepped into her line of sight, and for a moment, Traia forgot how to breathe. *Galen!* Goddess, but the man was beautiful. And he knew how to use that cock to keep her in bliss.

*Too bad he means to rip my throat out.*

As if in agreement, he licked his lips. Traia raised the silver amulet in warning, belatedly musing that she should have simply tied it around her throat.

Galen arched an eyebrow at the move. The door swung shut behind his hand, and he added the bolt for good measure.

Traia stared at him in disbelief. He was cutting off his means of escape. In her moment of indecision, Galen stripped off his shirt and started toward her.

\* \* \* \*

Galen inhaled her scent, an intoxicating mix of adrenaline and ready woman. His cock and fangs lengthened in response to the challenge. There was no question Traia wanted him, but she would fight herself and him to deny them both what they needed. It was a witch's way.

Traia scrambled to her feet, gathering up her trinkets of power in a vain attempt to kill him. If she were any other witch, he'd be a mile away and still running. But she was his mate.

Luckily for him, Traia had never studied the wolf tomes. She was the typical superior witch; there was nothing a lowly mutt book could teach her. His lip curled in wry amusement and disgust mixed.

*No, there is nothing the wolf tomes can teach you. Nothing except that you are powerless as a human against me...and I am as safe as a puppy with you.*

Traia thrust the monkshood stake at his heart.

Galen snatched it from her hand, smiled, and pitched it over his shoulder. Ordinarily he would be in agony, but not with his mate handling the weapon. "I do prefer the flowers," he teased. It was a lie, of course. While they would have no effect on him—if Traia carried them—the smell of the flowers was abhorrent to him, in general.

Her eyes went wide, and she held up a woven twig doll decorated with the usual strings, candle wax, and other effects, anointed in oils and rubbed with potent herbs.

He snapped it in two and let his half fall to the floor. "We have better things to play with, Traia." Her attempts excited him past reason. He'd known she would fight him. He'd dreamed of it for weeks.

She dropped her half of the doll and pressed the silver amulet to his bare chest, to the lupine mark she'd tried to spear their first morning together. Galen hummed in pleasure at her

## NEVERMORE

touch, and his cock jerked in anticipation of the bedding to come.

“I don’t...don’t understand,” she stuttered. Her deep blue eyes pleaded with him. Her eyes were a gift, the color of the eastern sky late in a sunset.

Galen turned his head, nipping her wrist playfully.

“No,” she gasped.

Traia released the amulet, and it landed in his hand. Galen settled it carefully around her neck. It might hold no power against him, but it would protect him from other weres. She dragged it off and threw it. He watched it fly, noting its path. Traia *would* wear the amulet.

She turned to run, and Galen wrapped his arms around her. No doubt she meant to make it to the dagger on her worktable or some other weapon she could still strike him down with. As long as Traia didn’t do that, there was a chance for them.

She fought him, twisting in Galen’s arms. His cock thickened fully at the challenge...at the struggle with his mate. A strong woman was every buck’s dream come true.

Traia’s teeth pressed to his forearm.

Galen smiled at the move. *You should have read the wolf tomes.* She didn’t know what biting him would do, and that would work in his favor.

He groaned at her breaking skin, at the trickle of blood escaping his body and coursing into her mouth. Traia didn’t know it, but she’d played right into his hands. He would have had to find a way to make her drink from him; the bite was a dream come true. Perhaps the Goddess wasn’t quite as put out with him as he’d thought. His arms tightened, a silent urging for her to continue, to bite down harder and speed the process.

The change came over her at a painful pace not unlike the moments when the last of the moon’s glow surrounded the far hilltops and taunted him with the return to humanity. Traia’s struggles weakened, then ceased. Her teeth eased away, but her mouth remained. His cock bucked at the first weak suckling motions.

“That’s right,” he crooned.

Traia collapsed in his arms, her breathing harsh. She turned to him, opened his trousers with shaking fingers, and stroked a hand up and down his cock.

It was what he'd been waiting for: the mindless need. Galen captured her lips, growling at his blood in her mouth and staining her face. Traia tangled her tongue with his, her hand working him more eagerly.

Just when Galen would have broken off the kiss to proceed to something more involved, Traia went to her knees. Her mouth engulfed his cock, and she worked him in and out.

He tangled his hand in her hair, every muscle strung tight. Galen didn't worry that she'd bite down and attempt to emasculate him. In the fervor, she wouldn't consider hurting him. Even if she did, his blood would still the urge and make her more fevered for his loving, and his accelerated healing would take care of the damage.

She sucked hard, moaning around his length, causing an alien tremor in his hand. Traia had started the process of bonding by biting him. Before the night was over, she'd finish it.

She became more avid. One hand worked his sac while she sucked. The other opened fasteners on her clothing.

The combination of sights and scents, coupled with her ardent sucking, was too much for him. Galen climaxed into her mouth with a roar of possession.

Traia rocked back on her heels, cum dotting her deep red lips as his blood had moments earlier. He pulled her to her feet, stripping her clothing away. She shook her head slowly, speaking bits of words that made no sense. Galen took his time, pushing his trousers to his ankles and stepping out of them.

He lifted Traia over his shoulder and carried her to the bed they'd shared, grabbing bright-colored scarves from her worktable as he walked past. Halfway there, she started struggling again. Her fists pounded against him ineffectually, and her nails dug furrows in his back.

Galen stopped, gasping for breath. "If you keep challenging me, I will be hard all night."

Traia went still. At first, he thought he'd shocked her into the response. Then her mouth pressed to one of the cuts. Galen

## NEVERMORE

groaned, then again as she sucked at him. Now that she'd had a taste, the smell of his blood drew her.

At the limits of endurance, Galen deposited Traia on the mattress. The sight of her hair fanned over the pillows, as dark and glossy as raven wings, stole his breath.

Her tensing muscles spurred him to motion. His blood wouldn't keep her enraptured for long. Galen had to have Traia tied down before she recovered her senses enough to attack him...and before he was the one incapacitated by the bonding.

\* \* \* \*

Traia's head cleared minutely, enough to curse the mixed flavors in her mouth. What was his blood doing to her?

She reassured herself that it wasn't turning her into a werewolf. Blood exchanges were for vampires. Bites were for zombies.

Despite the old human myths, werewolves didn't turn others. They mauled, maimed. Murdered. But they couldn't curse another with their bites.

"You're going to rip my throat out," she murmured. It should have concerned her more than it did, but her mind was still muddled. Galen had overpowered her senses with some magick that was foreign to her.

His dark laughter sent curls of awareness through her body. It was all she could do to swallow down pleas for his cock.

Galen paused in the process of binding her left ankle, his golden gaze panning up her body from between her wide-spread legs. "There are parts of you I'd much rather eat than your delicate throat."

It took a moment for his meaning to sink in. When it did, she moaned at the mindless response of her body.

He sank a long finger into her, baring his fangs in a wide smile. Traia gasped, pushing her hips up as far as the scarves allowed.

"That's right," he crooned. "Invite me in."

Traia shook her head in a negative response. The old magick claimed you should never invite an enemy in, vampire or not.

*Was that where I went wrong?* When she'd first seen Galen standing on her stoop, she'd been fooled by his fine clothing and grooming. The foul were reported to always show signs of what they were. Why didn't Galen?

She'd been charmed by his height, his red-brown hair and golden eyes, and by his persistence and attention to her pleasure. Overall, she'd been lulled into a false security by his ability to pass through her shields.

"No. I won't invite you in." It was one line she wouldn't cross.

The hair on his chest and arms bristled in warning, and his eyes narrowed. Slowly, deliberately, Galen started pumping his finger in and out of her.

"You do invite me," he reminded her, no doubt referring to her traitor body's ready state. "And still you challenge me." He added a second finger, wringing a gasp from her.

His earlier words echoed in her mind. "If I was no challenge, you'd lose interest?"

Galen added a third finger, teasing her with the length and girth they both knew she wanted. "You're inviting me in then?"

Traia cursed silently at the position he'd maneuvered her into. If she didn't invite him in, she was a challenge the wolf lived for, the hunt he thrived on. If she did, she was surrendering to him.

She shook her head. "Nevermore," she forced out.

"Then you will always be a challenge," he concluded.

Her heart stuttered at that. *Always?* Whether he killed her or screwed her, she'd thought the challenge was for the night.

Werewolves were nomads. They constantly moved on to further kills, new hunting grounds...fresh meat to sate the palate.

*Except with a mate.* The nomad beast established a range around a mate's home, enchanting her with his own brand of magick, protecting her, moving if she moved. *Planting his were sons and human daughters.*

*Is that what this is? Is that the spell he's woven over me?*

But how could he?

Humans had only the magick they purchased from witches to fight with. Those spells could have been set by the

## NEVERMORE

inexperienced. Those who bought them might have skimped on the price. Maybe they couldn't afford spells at all.

None of that was true of Traia.

Galen's fingers moved more insistently, reminding her of the challenge he'd set.

"I do not intend to bear your puppies," she ground out from between teeth clenched in pleasure instead of fury.

A crooked smile pulled up one side of his mouth. "They will be babies, Traia." He twisted inside her, seeking out the deep pleasure spot he'd found countless times their first night together. "And you will beg me to plant each one."

The denial stuck in her throat. He had her at the edges of climax. If he'd just touch her clit, she would shatter. *And he knows it.*

Confirming that, he passed his thumb close enough to fire her nerves with radiant heat. "Shall it be my thumb that finishes you off?" he offered.

Traia forced herself into a shake of her head. Her legs tensed and trembled with need. Her breathing went harsh. It was sweet agony. With her legs and arms tied down, she couldn't finish herself. Galen could keep her at the edges all night.

"My mouth?" he suggested.

She whimpered. Her turncoat hips cycled up and down in a parody of a nod.

Galen was ruthless. His sucking mouth was bruising in its intensity, just the added stimulus she needed to climax hard.

His fingers retreated, and his tongue thrust inside her spasming body. Traia grasped at the scarves, her cries echoing off the stone walls.

He growled, the vibrations sending her into a stronger climax. His fangs scratched at the tender folds of her sex, mixing sweet pleasure with pain.

Traia wondered vaguely if he'd drawn blood. As if in answer, Galen withdrew and started sucking at her body, greedily drinking down her mixed flavors much like she'd done with him. At the thought, aftershocks wracked her, and Galen groaned.

He didn't hesitate. In the next moment, Galen was feasting on her, inside and out. Climaxes overlapped, soaking her already muddled mind in rapture.

Words exploded from her throat. Traia didn't care what they were. Most likely, she was begging for his talented cock. She might even be begging to carry young weres, for all she knew.

She must have offered something Galen wanted to hear. The cock thrusting deep into her attested that she'd said something right.

*Right?*

Oh yes, this felt right. Nothing—not even her first night with Galen—compared with how right this felt.

The guilt she'd expect to accompany such a shocking thought didn't emerge. Who could feel guilt while experiencing such pleasure?

Memories of the delightful pleasure-pain he'd gifted her with had Traia biting her lower lip, trying to recreate it. Galen went still, half-sheathed in her, urging her mouth open for a searing kiss. Then he was sucking at her lower lip, her chin...her throat.

Just when she would have tensed, he laid a gentle kiss at her pulse point. It was a completely disconcerting thing for a marauding werewolf to do.

He started thrusting again, hard and fast, staking a claim she was at a loss to fully comprehend. And she didn't care. Goddess, but she wanted this!

"Bind yourself to me." Galen didn't order her. It was a request, nearly a plea.

Traia stared up at him, waiting for some instruction in how to accomplish such a thing.

"Surrender to me."

His cock working her as it was, Traia couldn't imagine anything she'd want more than that. Visions of Galen binding her in countless positions made her dizzy.

That simply, climax loomed over her. "Yes!" No man had made her come like Galen did.

He pushed to the hilt in her and halted, stretching Traia to the limits of endurance and beyond. A litany of pleas for more left her lips.

## NEVERMORE

Galen extended one wicked-looking claw and slashed the lupine birthmark that lay off-center on his broad chest. Traia watched the blood bead up, shoving away memories of her attempts to pierce the mark the morning she'd woken with him and realized what manner of creature he was.

"Surrender to me."

She knew what Galen wanted. Her mouth watered at the chance to taste him again, loathsome as she would have found the thought an hour ago.

"Traia."

She extended her tongue, swiping off the beads of powerful lifeblood.

Galen's cock bucked against the walls of her sheath, and he moaned. "Don't tease," he admonished.

Traia raised her head, suckling hard at the cut, heat radiating through her body until she felt faint in it. Galen roared, his cock erupting with wave after wave of cum.

He moved, nestling his mouth to the base of her throat. Traia sobbed, tensing in preparation for the expecting tearing.

It didn't come. Galen laid a line of gentle kisses from her throat to her collarbone. He nipped with his fangs just enough to fire her nerves and draw blood. He sucked, leaving a love bite that encompassed the marks left by his teeth.

In the aftermath, they lay together, Galen drawing scent from her hair, his cock softening within her.

"You haven't surrendered to me," he whispered. "Not fully. You won't just invite me inside again." The thought didn't seem to bother him.

Traia darkened in impotent fury at the truth that it was just another challenge to him. "Nevermore," she vowed.

His eyes glittered, and his renewed cock eased out of her. Galen took his time, raking a gaze up and down her body that heated her blood and made her heart race. "We shall see."

\* \* \* \*

Traia opened her eyes to the gray of predawn, staring at Galen in the semidarkness of her home. Her entire body ached pleasantly from the excesses of the night before.

She had no memory of Galen untying her arms. On some level, she was glad she didn't remember; Traia hoped he'd unbound them after she'd slid into sleep. The memories of him unbinding her legs were embarrassing enough. She hadn't kicked at him or pushed him away with them. Instead, she'd wrapped them tight around Galen while she'd begged for more of his cock.

Why Galen had chosen to leave her unrestrained was a mystery. He'd said it often enough: Traia hadn't surrendered herself to him. She had no intention of being his mate, despite the quality of the sex.

That in mind, she started to rise. Something indefinable stopped her.

Traia worked at it, at a loss. True, Galen was as physically stunning as he'd always been. True, he played at her body as a master musician would his instrument.

*But that doesn't mean I'll bind myself to a murdering mutt.*

She slid from the mattress, careful not to wake him, and padded across the stone floor to her worktable.

The spell lay in readiness, only awaiting the final incantation. It had taken her thirteen days to prepare it. The other four she'd cast had only added to its potency. Though she'd believed the lesser magick would repel Galen and hurt him, in some cases, she'd prepared this last to kill him.

She'd planned to touch the bowl and speak the words when she'd bolted from him the night before. His restraining arms had prevented her from doing it then. And his blood on her tongue had caused some change she didn't fully comprehend.

Again, that alien pain sliced in the vicinity of her heart at the thought of doing him harm. Traia swallowed down a growl of frustration. Whatever this magick was, it would die with him. All magick did. A witch would never suffer being bound without seeking retribution.

Resolved, Traia settled her left hand on the edge of the bowl and picked up the dagger in her right. The words tripped off her tongue in a rush.

She looked up at Galen, steeling herself for his anguished cries, his inhuman howls. There was nothing. No response to the magick she'd unleashed at him. He sighed in his sleep, rubbing

## NEVERMORE

his whiskered cheek on the pillow as if intent on leaving his scent behind.

*I must have misspoken the words.* It was the only possible answer.

Traia opened the ancient text to the spell and then placed her hand back on the bowl. She forced herself to slow, to annunciate each phoneme of the incantation.

The silence in the wake of her efforts was mind numbing. The answer brought her rage to a full boil. He'd stolen her magick; somehow, Galen had done the impossible. He'd rendered her powerless. *He's made me human.*

Her hand tightened around the hilt of the dagger, and she sprung at him. Her left hand had clenched as well, and her movement sent the bowl crashing to the floor. She ignored the discordant sound and added a bellow of fury.

The sound woke him, and Galen turned her way, his eyes widening as they had the last time she'd come at him with a blade. This time, he didn't swing to intercept or deflect the weapon.

Instead, he rolled to his back and spread his arms. It was an irreverent challenge, she guessed, based on his mocking smile.

\* \* \* \*

Though he knew her limitations, Galen's heart pounded in fear at the sight of Traia hurtling toward him with a blade in hand. Her arm arced down toward his lupine mark, just to the left of his heart. Of the two, it was the one guaranteed to kill him.

And it stopped a whisper from his skin. Galen sighed in relief, then swallowed down a laugh. Traia would certainly mistake it for a taunt if it escaped him.

She growled, trying to force the dagger down with two shaking hands. Galen watched her with mounting pride. Every buck dreamed of having a woman this strong beside him.

The blade tip pricked his chest, and Galen shivered in delight. Traia was the strongest woman he'd ever known. Even now, the terror that she was more powerful than the mating magick persisted, giving him a healthy fear of the woman he loved.

Then the blade was gone, pitched across the room to clatter in the cold hearth. Traia dropped to the floor, burying her face in her hands. Sobs wracked her body.

The sound ripped at him. Traia was his mate. Galen rolled off the mattress and landed in a crouch behind her. He hesitated and then wrapped his arms around her. She fought him, and Galen found himself praying to the Goddess that she wouldn't bite him again.

It wasn't that he feared injury. Her bites and scratches of the previous night had already healed to broken pink lines and would be gone entirely in another few hours.

Rather, Galen didn't want Traia to launch them both into another mating frenzy. Nothing would be resolved that way. She would simply emerge more confused and upset at the end of their romp.

The only way to solve this was to forge on. "Why are you crying?" he asked. He had his suspicions, of course, but it was best not to make assumptions.

"Why? Why!" she screeched. Traia turned on him, trying to lay punches that Galen blocked.

"Tell me why, Traia."

She growled at him. "You've stolen my magick, and you dare ask—"

"No!" he denied.

Traia made another attempt to strike him. When she failed, she glared at him.

"Your magick isn't gone," he soothed her. "And the changes are the work of the Goddess, not me."

"I've tried," she snapped. "I cannot—"

"You cannot harm *me*," Galen corrected. "You can cast no spell or craft no amulet or ward that will keep me away or harm *me*."

Her brow furrowed, and Traia worked at words that didn't come readily to her tongue.

"Try it," he invited.

Her face darkened to crimson, and she averted her eyes. It was a sure sign that she'd attempted to harm him with magick before attacking him with the dagger.

## NEVERMORE

“Try to light the fire, Traia. Use your magick to draw something to you. But not your dagger,” he hastened to add. “If you intend to harm me with it, your magick may fail.” He wasn’t certain it was true, but it couldn’t hurt to discourage her.

Traia swallowed hard. She extended a trembling hand toward the hearth. With a gesture and a series of whispered words, it roared to life. She pressed her hands to her chest, paused, then nodded.

“And...the dagger?” she gasped out.

Galen tipped her chin up. “We are mated, Traia. By the Goddess’s decree, you cannot harm me. Nor can I harm you.”

\* \* \* \*

Traia worked at that, her head spinning. They couldn’t harm each other? Her heart sank with the realization that it wasn’t so.

“What is it?” There was something tender and completely at odds with what she knew Galen to be in that question.

“Your presence here harms me,” she blurted out. Another part of her screamed that his leaving would harm her as much or more.

“How?”

“How?” Her voice went shrill again. How blind was he?

“How?” he repeated patiently. Galen dipped his head and inhaled her scent. His cock rose between them in response.

“Stop that!” Sex did not erase the very real problems they faced.

He offered a wicked smile. “How do I harm you by being here?”

Traia rolled her eyes. “A werewolf in the village I personally protect?” she hinted. “Stock going missing? My wards and shields failing, because it is *you* testing them?”

He chuckled. Then he laughed...great whooping laughs.

She slapped him, wincing that she was still able to do it. Traia had fully expected her hand to rebound, but perhaps—with his werewolf healing—a slap wasn’t seen as more than an annoyance.

Galen seemed unfazed by her reaction. “I have a farm, Traia. I raise my own meals.”

Traia considered his clothing and appearance. If he was careful to hide his birthmark... If he was careful in his dealings, it would be possible to hide his curse from neighboring farmers. Her mouth went dry at the implications. "You're not a nomad," she guessed. She'd heard wild tales of tame weres, but she hadn't believed them.

He shook his head. "My farm is one village over. I could construct a shop like this one on the outskirts of my lands. It wouldn't be a far move for you." His fingers tunneled in her feminine curls, as if his decree was enough to solve their difficulties.

She smacked at his hand. "You're taking an awful lot for granted. Aren't you?"

Galen leaned toward her, his cock bobbing in excitement, most likely at her challenge of his decision. "The choice is yours, Traia. Here, where a werewolf is ruining your reputation, or at my farm, where I'm not." One brow went up to punctuate the choice.

"Are you going to make every interaction a loaded choice?" she countered, already resigned that he'd prevailed again.

"It seems to be working so far," he taunted.

Traia crossed her arms under her breasts. She knew full well that her next move would incite him, but that held a power and magick all its own. By challenging him, she would get what she wanted, when she wanted. "Nevermore."

## *About the Author*

Brenna Lyons wears many hats, sometimes all on the same day: president of EPIC, author of more than 75 published works, columnist, special needs teacher, wife, mother... In addition, she's a member in good standing of ERWA, TELL, MWW, RWU, WPM, IWOFA, and Broad Universe.

In her first six years published in novel-length, Brenna has finaled for seven EPIES (in six separate categories), three PEARLS (taking Honorable Mention second to NY Times Bestseller Angela Knight), two CAPAS, a Dream Realm Award, and has taken Spintetinger's Book of the Year for 2007.

Brenna has been termed "one of the most deviant erotic minds in the publishing world...not for the weak." (Rachelle for Fallen Angels Reviews) She writes milieu-heavy dark fiction—mainly science fiction, fantasy and horror (in 20 established worlds plus stand-alones), poetry, articles, and essays. She teaches classes in everything from POV studies to advanced editing, networking to marketing.

Brenna loves talking to readers and can be reached via her site at <http://www.brennalyons.com> .