

ELLORA'S CAVE EXOTIKA

CINDY  
SPENCER PAPE

EXPLORING  
*Ari*

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



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Exploring Ari

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Edited by Mary Moran

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# ***EXPLORING ARI***

**Cindy Spencer Pape**

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## **Chapter One**

Why had I let my friends talk me into this?

I looked around the crowded biker bar and sank even farther back into my shadowed corner.

This was so *not* my scene. So why had I let my two best friends drag me here tonight?

Oh yeah. To celebrate my hundredth birthday. Quite a milestone, even for a vampire, hitting that first century mark. I'd been turned just before my eighteenth birthday by a selfish man I thought I'd been in love with. He'd seduced me away from my home in New York, turned me then kept me a virtual prisoner, dependent on his every whim. He'd never even taught me to feed myself. But he had made me immortal and after fifty years, he'd dumped me, starving and helpless on the streets of Chicago.

"Is anyone using this?" A man who looked barely old enough to drink turned from the crowded table next to me and pointed at the fourth stool. Since there were only two other drinks on the table, I smiled and shook my head. He thanked me then dragged the stool over to the empty table, leaving me once again on my own and watching other people have fun.

So here I was on a cold March night in suburban Chicago at a bar called Lunatics. I sipped my white wine cautiously and watched Danette and Jessamy gyrating with two leather-clad hunks out on the dance floor. The two female vampires had found me, taught me to survive, even helped me get my first job. I owed them everything.

If it was my birthday, how come only those two were celebrating?

"Come on. Let's dance." A big, burly guy in a black leather jacket loomed above me, grabbed my hand and pulled me off my barstool.

I didn't want to dance, but I didn't want to make a scene either. Sure, with my vampire strength I could take care of myself, but it seemed like the easy way out to just dance with the bruiser. I let him drag me out onto the dance floor and pull me into an uncomfortable embrace.

He was a lot taller than me, so my nose was pressed into a T-shirt-covered chest that smelled of beer, tobacco and sweat. Ugh! It was so strong I could barely catch the underlying hint of rich, warm blood. Now that got my senses going a bit. Apparently I was hungrier than I'd thought. Maybe I should convince this guy to take me out to his car so I could have a snack.

About ninety-nine percent of the time I feed off bagged blood. It's easier, cleaner, and much more convenient for a vampire who'd rather stay home with a book than go out in public. But that didn't mean I'd forgotten my lessons on how to feed off the hoof. A little flirting, a little mind control then I have a meal and he'd think he had a great time. I smiled up at him, and said, "You want to get out of here?"

"Hell yeah." He pretty much dragged me toward the back entrance of the bar. As soon as we were outside, he pulled me close and kissed me, shoving his tongue into my mouth just as my fangs started to lengthen. "Ooh, a hot little vamp," he growled with a nasty chuckle.

*Shit.* Since very few humans know that vampires really exist, this meant trouble. If he *wasn't* human, then I couldn't be sure I could overpower him. I can't manipulate most immortals' minds and at only five foot three I'm kind of puny. I looked up at the bruiser and saw a cagey smile that revealed just a tiny bit of fang—not pointy, retractable ones like mine, but something bigger and blunter—wolf maybe? Great. This wasn't just a biker bar, it was a lycanthrope biker bar.

I pushed both hands against the man's chest. "I changed my mind. Let's go back inside."

"No way, bitch." He slammed me up against the wall, overpowering me easily. "No teasing the bears and running off." He forced his lips down on mine again, nearly

making me gag. A werebear? Oh damn, was I in trouble. I struggled but couldn't budge him, and he was up too close for me to get a knee into his groin.

Frederic, the man who'd made me a vampire, had controlled me for fifty years with a combination of intimidation, threats and flat-out abuse. Now thirty-two years later, I was at least strong enough that I wasn't ever going to take it again. I struggled for all I was worth.

Then suddenly he was gone, wrenched away from me so fast my eyes could barely follow the movement.

"Marshall, what have I told you? No means no. Now get the hell out of here and don't come back. That was your third warning."

I looked over at the man who'd just pulled the bear off me and nearly melted. He was gorgeous—just absolutely gorgeous. Almost as tall as the bear, he had to stand more than six and a half feet, and the tight white T-shirt and soft, faded jeans he wore outlined muscles I didn't even know a person had. Two other men stood just behind him—backup I supposed, in case the bear got mean.

Instead the bear just yelled, "Fuck you," and stomped off to the parking lot.

"Are you okay, miss?" Mr. Tall-dark-and-dangerous looked me up and down, his expression gentling considerably.

"Yeah." My voice was only a little shaky. "Thank you."

He held out his hand. "Come on. Let's get you back inside."

I took his hand, and the warm strength of it sent a tingle all the way from my fingers to my toes. Without a thought I followed him back into the bar.

"Are you here alone?"

"No, I have friends out on the dance floor." Even if I hadn't, at this point I wasn't sure I'd have admitted it. He was strong enough to toss around a werebear. He could make mincemeat of me if he wanted to.

"Why don't we have a seat?" We'd come back into the main part of the club and he nodded to a roped-off booth, right next to the hallway and across from the bar. I probably should have said no, but I couldn't prevent the shiver that shuddered through me at the sound of that whiskey-soft voice, deep and dangerous. So I sat, finally getting a good look at the man who slid into the seat across from me.

*Wow.* Even though I'd sworn off relationships decades ago, swearing that no man would ever have that kind of power over me again, this one was enough to make me forget my rule. His hair was dark brown and hung in shining waves to brush against his broad shoulders. Warm brown eyes smiled at me from a strong, masculine face that was more arresting than pretty. Strong dark brows, high cheekbones and a slightly crooked nose—added together with a killer smile—the package was enough to make me squirm on my seat.

"So what brings a pretty little vamp like you to a dive like this?"

Pretty? Hah. I have mouse brown, ruler-straight hair that hangs a few inches below my shoulders and very pale skin. I was pale before I was turned. Plus, I'm chubby, which isn't supposed to happen with vampires. Blame my Greek grandmother for that one. About my only claim to anything out of the ordinary are my bright blue eyes with thick lashes—which I hadn't bothered to enhance at all with makeup before coming out tonight. Sometimes I can be a real idiot. "My friends," I murmured. "They seemed to think I should come with them tonight."

"Well, I'm glad they did." With a smile, he leaned his muscular forearms on the table. Crisp, dark hair curled against tan skin, and his hands were as big and powerful as the rest of him. Don't ask me why, but big, strong hands are a huge turn-on for me. I shifted, trying to ease the growing ache in my pussy, and tried to remember why I'd sworn off men.

The corner of one full lip curled up as he searched my face. I looked down, unable to meet the intensity, the vitality of his gaze. I know I'm a pretty pathetic excuse for a vampire. My pink fuzzy sweater should have given that away. What kind of vampire



wears pink? But the sweater had been a birthday gift from my friend Jess and, honestly, I absolutely loved it.

“You look a little pale,” he murmured, moving in closer and taking my hand with an unexpectedly gentle touch. “This is primarily a wolf bar, but we can get you something to help with that...a nice red, perhaps?”

He made a gesture and a waitress practically materialized beside him. He spoke to her in a low whisper that even with my vampire-enhanced senses I couldn’t overhear above the din of the pounding rock and chattering dancers. Then he turned back to me. “So what’s your name?”

“I’m Ariana,” I told him. “Ariana Stephanopoulos.” It rolled easily off my tongue, though I’d only switched to that name recently. Like most immortals, I had to reinvent myself periodically.

“Jackson Marceski at your service.” His wide smile flashed shining white teeth, and then it hit me. He’d said this was a wolf bar, and he’d tossed aside a werebear. Werewolf. I should have figured that out from the name—Lunatics. Now it made a little more sense that he’d pegged me for a vamp right off. Werewolves, even in human form, have exceptional noses. *Drat*. That meant he could probably also detect the fact I’d been soaking my panties since the moment he touched me.

“Do you work here?” Besides being the bouncer, I meant. I assumed that since no one had challenged him for sitting in the roped-off booth, he must have some pull. Maybe it was part of his job to keep lonely looking customers happy.

Just then the waitress arrived with a longneck beer and a big goblet full of something dark red. Jackson thanked the young woman and took the drinks, sending her on her way with a flirty grin. Then he turned to me and handed me the goblet. “I guess you could say that. I own the place.”

I’m sure I stared like a blithering idiot. The man wore self-assurance like a second skin. Of course he was the owner. I looked down at the thick crimson liquid in my glass, absorbing the rich scents of blood, cinnamon and a good red wine. I felt my fangs

lengthen as the aroma filled my nostrils. Normally they retract, allowing us to blend in around humans, but blood, sex or violence tended to make them grow.

"It's a mulled wine and blood mixture. If you don't like it we can get you something else." There was no pressure in his tone, just gentle coaxing. I sipped lightly, pleased with the pleasant taste. It had been a long time since I'd thought of blood as more than just a necessity to be obtained in the most civilized manner possible and consumed with expedience, not savored.

"So what do you do for a living, Ariana?" He sipped at his beer, though with a werewolf metabolism he could have probably downed a whole keg without getting drunk. Most immortals have a less-intense reaction to drugs than humans. If I chugged a whole bottle of wine I might get a slight buzz...but probably not.

"I'm a researcher and copy editor for several scientific journals," I told him. "I've just branched out into an online 'ask the experts' website but that hasn't really taken off yet." My experience with men suggested this was more than he really wanted to know. My experience with werewolves was practically nil. I'd met a few through my friends Dani and Jess but mostly I kept to the fringes of their parties. Though the immortal community in Chicago was a fairly fluid social structure, I'd never really been much of a part of it. And there were class distinctions. Some vampires looked down on werewolves because they turn furry while some werewolves were down on vamps because we all started out as human and aren't a true immortal species. Honestly I'd never quite figured it all out.

The mulled wine was good and I had been hungry so I drank down the cocktail more rapidly than I intended. The little symbiotic organisms in my blood that made me a vampire demanded regular feeding. If I didn't keep them supplied with blood, they'd start feeding off mine.

"Which journals?" He made a motion with his hand and a fresh blood and wine drink appeared at my elbow. "I read a lot. Maybe I'm familiar with your work."

I took a swallow of the new drink then listed a couple of the journals. Even as shy as I was, I was still proud of the career I'd built for myself. I'd started out as a typist for a group of doctors then gradually began doing their literature searches for them as well, finally ending up in editing. I'd even trained my own replacement—namely myself, under my new identity. I didn't think he'd read them. He didn't look like the kind of guy who spent his time reading research articles.

"Ah yes. I pick some of those up once in a while. I remember the article last month about Alzheimer. Be interesting to see if that new treatment works out." He gave me a wicked grin that made my insides melt.

I'm sure I blushed, and with his vision, he could probably tell even in the dimly lit bar. Great. He was that hot...and an intellectual. Why the heck was he wasting his time talking to me?

"There was also a review of the new electronic readers in the technology journal," he continued. "You think those are going to continue to grow in popularity?"

"Of course," I replied. "They're convenient, you can store a whole library on one tiny memory card and the technology continues to improve. Other than reading in the bathtub, there isn't really a downside."

"I keep thinking of getting one but haven't talked myself into it yet," he admitted. "Do you have one?"

"Sure," I replied eagerly. "Right here." I pulled my e-reader out of my purse and turned it on.

"I see." His laugh was warm and sexy and came all the way from his gut. "The shy little vamp has unexpected depths."

My eyes went wide as I looked up at him in astonishment. Then I looked down at the screen and wanted to die. I'd left it at the cover of one of my favorite erotic romances. The very *explicit* cover. Dear lord!

"What?" He shrugged, a wide grin still splitting his face. "I have three sisters. I'm very familiar with a wide variety of fiction."

He spent a few minutes playing with the device then carefully turned it off and set it aside.

"Thanks." He reached across the table and took my hands, surrounding them with the warmth and strength of his own. Moisture built between my thighs just from that subtle touch, and my nipples swelled, rasping against the fabric of my plain cotton bra.

"You ever get the urge to try out any of the scenarios you read about?" It was the lamest line in the world, but not the way he said it with those dark brown eyes smoldering.

A shiver ran down my spine. I swallowed hard, trying not to notice the way his thumbs were stroking the tender skin of my inner wrists. "Ummm...not usually." The words came out as a husky whisper. Truth was, I'd never really thought about it, not seriously. Until now.

"What would it take I wonder..." he murmured. He lifted one of my hands to his mouth and ran the knuckle along his lower lip. "How wild would the sex have to be in order to shock a fan of erotic romance? That sounds like a hell of a challenge."

I shook my head and pulled my hand away—or tried to. The man had a grip like a bear trap. "Please," I said, trying to pretend I didn't want him desperately. "I may be a little down, but I don't need a mercy fuck. I'm just going to go find my friends, let them know I'm leaving." I scooted my butt sideways, trying to escape.

This time fire flashed in that dark gaze and I went still, like a terrified rabbit. It suddenly occurred to me this was a very large werewolf I had just pissed off. Without letting go of my hand, Jackson stood, coming around to my side of the booth so his body was blocking me in. The position put me at eye level with his waist.

"Look down." His voice was so low it was more vibration than sound.

Obediently I dropped my eyes. "Goodness!" The jeans, which had been snug before, were now practically bursting over a massive erection.

“Want to reconsider the phrase ‘mercy fuck’? I’ve wanted you since the moment I saw you on the dance floor. Why do you think I followed you outside? If you aren’t interested, then you’re welcome to go. But you sure as hell smell like you’re turned-on.”

“I—oh—we...” I had no idea what to say. But I couldn’t take my eyes off that enormous bulge, and my whole body clenched in response. I could feel more wetness coating my lower lips, which were swollen and tender against my soaked panties.

“There’s an apartment upstairs.” He used our joined hands to tip my chin up so he was looking me in the eye. “Nobody’s using it right now. Or we can go back to my place, which is just about a mile away. Either one is fine with me.”

Alarm bells went off but I ignored them. I was a hundred-year-old vampire. Even though he was a werewolf, I was still superhumanly strong and fast. I could take care of myself. Besides, I trusted him, though I had no idea why.

“I need to tell my friends where I’m going.”

“Of course.” He pulled me to my feet, led me over to the bar. He reached behind it and pulled out a pen and a napkin. “Which address?”

The band crashed into a loud power chord and I winced. “Your place.”

While he wrote on the napkin he rubbed his erection against the side of my hip. “Oh honey, this is going to be one hell of a night.”

\* \* \* \* \*

I don’t remember much of the drive in Jack’s big black truck. His house was tucked into a wooded, exclusive area, and I recall thinking that the bar must make more money than I’d suspected. I remembered Jess’ and Dani’s shocked but delighted faces when I handed them the napkin with Jack’s name, address and phone number. Jack. Somewhere along the way he told me that’s what he preferred to be called. It suited him—strong and simple, without a trace of pretension.

He pulled up before what was essentially a log cabin, blending into the woods around it. Except that it was the biggest log cabin I’d ever seen. Even in the dark I could

tell that the three-story house sprawled over the tree-covered hillside. The garage door opened at the push of a button and Jack pulled the truck inside.

Before I could even get the door open Jack leapt out of the cab of the oversized pickup and opened it for me. He lifted me down, making sure the front of my body skimmed along his as he slowly lowered my feet to the ground. My breath caught as I registered the fact his erection hadn't subsided at all during the drive.

"I'm not going to have the patience for politeness," he murmured, looking down into my eyes. He was so tall that my face was only level with his sculpted pecs. He'd thrown on a leather jacket but hadn't bothered to zip it, so I was pressed close to the warmth of his chest. "Not this first time. Once we go through that door, all bets are off."

"Good." I'd thought of nothing else for the last ten minutes. "I—I want that too."

"Jesus!" He grabbed my arm and pulled me toward the entrance to the house. He fumbled with the doorknob then opened it and tugged me through, kicking the door shut behind him.

I barely had time to register that we were in the kitchen area of an open great room before he was loping across the enormous room and lowering me to a couch in front of a big stone fireplace. He hadn't bothered to turn on any lights, but we both had good night vision so it didn't matter. I could still see the intense desire burning in his eyes and that was enough. I sprawled backward on the sofa, and Jack's weight came down on top of me, pushing any other thought right out of my mind. My legs splayed to cradle his hips, allowing me to feel the thick bulge of his erection through both pairs of our jeans.

"What is it about you?" he murmured as he lowered his face. Instead of kissing me as I'd expected, he lightly nipped my ear then ran his tongue around the edge of it, making me shudder as my pussy clenched. "There's something in your smile that's just so sweet and appealing—I feel like I'm fifteen, making out behind your daddy's barn."

I had no idea how to answer that, so I didn't. I grabbed his head and pulled it over so I could kiss him with all the hunger that had been building from that first touch in

the bar. It was savage rather than pretty, all lips and tongue, and more than a little fang. Jack explained later that when they're really excited, werewolves experience the first symptoms of their change—their adrenaline spikes and their teeth start to emerge, just as blood or sex make my fangs descend. Right now all I knew was I tasted blood but wasn't sure if it was mine or his, and I didn't care. The rich coppery flavor just made me hotter and I knew I had to have him.

Jack had started pumping his hips in a frustrated attempt at the relief we both needed. When I paused the kiss to gasp in a ragged breath, he jerked to his feet, his hands immediately going to the fastening of his jeans. "Naked," he rasped. "Now."

I had no problem following that command. Since Frederic had dumped me, I hadn't once had sex, and for most of those years I hadn't missed it. Now, tonight, I felt the need to make up for every lost opportunity. I lifted my hips off the sofa and peeled down my jeans, kicking them away from my ankles along with my boring cotton panties and my pink tennis shoes. My eyes never left Jack, and I became even wetter as I watched him reveal that beautiful body bit by bit. He was just as ripped as I'd expected with a thick patch of dark curls on his chest that I couldn't wait to run my fingers through.

As I pulled my sweater and bra over my head, he reached into the pocket of his discarded jeans and pulled out a little square packet. Confused, I sat on the leather sofa and watched. What was he doing?

He tore open the packet and took out a small ring of plastic. Then when he began to roll a thin tube over his rigid cock, I began to understand.

"Jack, I'm a vampire," I reminded him. "You don't need to do that." I was actually a little bit hurt that he wouldn't want to be fully naked inside me since there was no risk of pregnancy or disease.

He raised one eyebrow and cocked his head. "No danger to either of us for disease, but I think it's a little early in the relationship to risk having kids, don't you?" His voice was little more than a growl that seemed to rumble from deep in his chest.

A little pang of pain went through me. Once upon a time I'd wanted children. But everyone knew vampires were sterile.

Jack must have read my expression because he said softly, "I know vampire couples with children. From what I understand, it's rare but it can happen."

My mouth dropped open in shock. Frederic had never bothered with protection, and in fifty years as his slave I'd never conceived. Of course this was the same man who'd convinced me I couldn't eat human food either. It had taken me a good ten years after his desertion for me to be comfortable eating solids. So maybe Frederic hadn't known everything. I didn't object further as I watched Jack roll the condom over his penis then step back to me and put his hands on my shoulders. He pushed me back until I was more or less lying on the couch with my legs bent and my feet on the floor. Kneeling between my legs, he hooked his elbows under my knees and spread me wide, exposing my dripping and swollen pussy to his gaze.

"Gorgeous." With that, he lowered his face and dragged his tongue along my slit with a loud slurp.

"Jack." My high-pitched shriek filled the room as he licked a circle around my distended clit. His tongue was strong and slightly rough. The friction was perfect, and I could already feel the climax coiling in my womb. My hips began to jerk in time to his movements.

"So sweet," he whispered, blowing against my sensitive tissues as he did so. "So responsive." He shifted my knees to his shoulders, freeing up his hands. One clamped onto the curve of my ass while he used the other to massage the wet cleft of my sex. He continued to torment my clit with his tongue, which made me whimper and pant. Soon he impaled me with one thick finger.

"More," I moaned breathlessly. My vaginal walls clamped down hungrily but it wasn't enough. I'd seen the size of his cock. It was far bigger than the only one I'd ever known and I wanted it all, rock-hard and pounding inside me.



"I need you to come." His breath was warm on my wet flesh. He eased his finger in and out. On the second stroke he added another finger then on the next a third. Now I was stretched and he pumped them vigorously, fucking me hard with his hand. His tongue never slowed, flicking my swollen bud relentlessly until I couldn't see, couldn't hear, couldn't do anything but feel. I think my hands were digging into the couch, or maybe one was buried in his hair, holding his face to my cunt.

My fangs lengthened and my whole body began to quiver like the string on a violin as he worked me. With each flick of his tongue and each thrust of his hand my nerves tightened further until I thought I was going to pass out. Then with one final stroke, he held his fingers deep while I exploded. I think I screamed when it felt as if every cell in my body suddenly burst free. Light flashed behind my eyelids, and the waves of pleasure rippled back and forth from my spine to my fingers and toes. It was long moments later when I came back to my senses to realize he'd pulled his hand and mouth free and was gently caressing my mound with his palm.

Without a word he pulled me down to his lap and kissed me, deep and hard. I tasted my own juices on his face, and instead of being embarrassed I felt the stirring of a renewed arousal. This wasn't sedate or romantic, it was raw and primal, and I wanted *more*.

"Turn around." His big hands guided me as he turned me to face the sofa, my knees on the floor. Then he pressed my shoulders down until my upper body was flat on the cushions and my butt pointed straight back at Jack. "Oh yeah."

I felt his fingers at my entrance then they were replaced by something bigger, harder. As he slowly pushed his thick erection into my weeping slit, I pushed back with my hips, wanting him as deep as he could get. Finally I felt the swing of his balls beneath my pussy as the crisp hairs on his thighs rubbed against my rounded ass.

"Fucking perfect." He whispered the words in my ear. His hands slid up under me to cup my heavy breasts. Then he started to move.

Again every thought fled from my mind. The sensation of Jack's cock slamming into my pussy over and over again was all that my consciousness could process. He was so big it should have hurt, even though my body would have quickly regenerated any damage. But it didn't hurt. It felt like everything I'd ever imagined when I was reading one of my favorite books. For the first time I understood the fascination that some women have with sex. This wasn't just a physiological release. This was bone-deep pleasure, deeper and stronger than anything I'd ever known.

"Fuck me," I moaned. The position left me unable to move, and that frustration added somehow to the intensity of the pleasure.

"I am," he rasped, leaning over me and pinning me to the couch with his weight. His teeth scraped along the top of my shoulder then along the shell of my ear. "I intend to fuck you until neither of us can stand, Ari. Until neither of us want to stand." He placed his mouth at the spot where my neck and shoulder met then bit down, the tips of his elongated canines just barely piercing the flesh.

I was so close again, but I needed more. I dragged one of his hands out from under my breast and brought it to my face. After pressing a kiss to his calloused palm, I held it still and sank my fangs into his wrist then sucked. His blood was rich and hot, salty and sweet—full of life itself. The flavor of it burst on my tongue, filling my mouth just as Jack filled my pussy. I came even harder this time, convulsing around the fullness of his pounding cock. My spasms seemed to trigger his climax because he bit down harder, rammed his penis deep and held it there. He seemed to swell even further as he pressed against the mouth of my womb while he came. I continued to shudder around him, milking spurt after spurt of fluid into the condom.

## **Chapter Two**

When I came back to earth the second time he was kissing my shoulder, soothing the small bite mark with his tongue. His cock was still filling me, almost to the point of pain. I wiggled and he eased us both backward until he was sitting on his heels with me resting atop his thighs. He wrapped his arms around me, holding me close, and he kissed the top of my head.

“You’re still hard,” I managed to whisper. I leaned my head back against his chest, not really in any hurry to move.

“I will be for several minutes,” he said quietly. “It’s a wolf characteristic, one that happens sometimes. The head of my cock swells at the moment of orgasm. It keeps me lodged inside for a while. If I tried to pull out now, you’d tear, and even though you’d heal the wound, I’d rather not cause you pain.” He dropped a few more kisses on my hair and my ear. “Besides, this is nice. Why would I want to go anywhere yet?”

It was nice sitting there wrapped in his warmth and his strength, even if the position wasn’t the most comfortable. Besides, who was I to argue about werewolf physiology? “Does that mean you never have sex with humans?”

His chuckle was warm and indulgent, his breath warm on my ear. He kissed my cheekbone before replying. “No. Like I said, it only happens occasionally – only when the body and subconscious recognize a partner who’s a particularly good physical and emotional match.”

A particularly good match? What a compliment. I digested that with a giddy smile I was glad he couldn’t see, but then my curiosity got the best of me. “Has it ever happened before?”

He chuckled again and I could almost feel him roll his eyes behind my back. “You sure you want to talk about previous partners just now?”

I shrugged, not wanting to push. What *were* you supposed to talk about right after the best sex of your life?

Jack rained a line of kisses from my ear to my throat and took pity on me. "Twice."

"Twice?" I wasn't even sure he was still talking about the same thing.

"It's happened to me twice. With two different partners, I mean. Once, when I was in my twenties I met a human witch and fell in love. The swelling—we call it a mating knot—happened with her."

"But she was human..."

"That's right," he continued. "But I loved her anyway. Her name was Laura. We got married. She died from typhoid two years later. She was three months pregnant."

"I'm so sorry, Jack," I said, reaching behind me to squeeze one shoulder. "It's none of my business. I shouldn't have asked."

"It's okay," he soothed. "It was a long time ago and old wounds do heal, eventually. The other was a French werewolf named Celine. I met her during the First World War. We had one incredible night together then never saw each other again."

"Wow." I really had no idea how to respond to that, so I just leaned my head back against his chest and enjoyed the sensation of him still filling me. "This is awfully nice."

He nibbled on my ear. "I've got nowhere else I'd rather be."

We were silent for a while then a little later I remembered something I'd wanted to say. "I'm sorry I bit you."

Jack chuckled, a soft sound that vibrated around and through me. "I'm not. I'm well aware that means you were having a good time too."

Good time? What an understatement. "You seem to know a lot about vampires." I wasn't sure how I felt about that. "Have you been with many?"

"Jealous?" He chuckled again then gave me a squeeze. "I'm over two hundred years old, sweet thing. Werewolves are pretty sexual creatures. Yes, I've fucked more than a couple of vamps in my time. Men and women."

Now *that* shocked me. I tried to spin to face him but only managed to turn my head. "Men?"

His broad shoulders shifted behind me in a shrug. "Two centuries gives a guy a lot of time to experiment. I quit having hang-ups about sex a long, long time ago. As long as everyone is having a good time, I'm willing to give it a go."

"Hmmm." I should have been horrified, not intrigued, but my experience was so limited. I'd spent years as little more than a sex slave but, honestly, Frederic had never done much more than fuck me, slap me around a little and leave. He'd been dominant but never particularly creative with any of his harem. Even with him I'd wondered from time to time if it might be fun to pleasure him and one of his friends at the same time. Just as I'd offered to let him tie me up. That had earned me his disgust for months. My decades with him had done nothing but reinforce the teachings of the strict Greek grandmother who had reared me. Bad girls got punished. The one time I'd rebelled, it was to run away with Frederic. And look where that had gotten me.

"Come on, Ari. You have to admit, vanilla sex can get a little old after a while."

I shrugged. "I don't know. I haven't had a whole lot of experience." I wasn't used to anyone calling me by that nickname—no one had since my grandmother, a long, long time ago. But the way Jack said it, it sounded almost like a caress, and I couldn't bring myself to tell him not to.

"You've got to be kidding me. As hot as you are? How old are you anyway?" He chafed my arms with his hands and nibbled playfully on my ear. "I'm starting to think I'm robbing the cradle."

"Today is my hundredth birthday," I replied. "That's why I let my friends talk me into going out to celebrate."

"Hmm. I owe those two. Happy birthday, sweet thing." He punctuated that with a little nip on my upper ear, making me laugh. "Though I think I'm the one who got the present."

"Oh, I'm not complaining," I replied with a breathless little laugh. "I...um...thank you."

"Anytime, gorgeous."

"And for rescuing me from the bear."

His whole body froze and something rumbled deep in his chest. "You don't want to know how close I came to killing that drunken idiot. Seeing him with his hands on you—I damn near snapped."

"And you hadn't even met me yet." Jack was a lot more chivalrous than he let on if he got this protective of every new customer.

"The minute I saw you I knew you were something special. I was locked on you like a laser beam as soon as I laid eyes on you, and damn near everyone in the bar probably saw it. My two friends who came out after me? They weren't there to help me take care of Marshall. They were there to keep me from taking him apart."

"But aren't bears usually stronger than wolves? Couldn't you have gotten hurt?" The thought of that made me almost physically ill. The last thing I wanted was anyone getting hurt because of me.

Jack laughed. "A wolf who keeps in shape can take a lazy, drunken bear any day. Don't worry about me, sweet thing." His hands moved from my arms to cup my breasts, which were still swollen and tender. Slowly, gently he massaged the flesh and traced his thumbs around my nipples.

Without thinking I arched my back, pushing the mounds farther into his hands, even as I shook my head at his words. "I know I'm not gorgeous. You don't have to pretend."

"Pretend?" His hands froze in place. "Are you crazy? The minute I saw you sitting in my bar in that fluffy little sweater, I went hard as a rock. All I wanted to do was eat you up like an ice-cream cone."

"But..."

"But what? You can't really believe I wasn't attracted to you. I'm still inside you and still hard if you hadn't noticed."

If I could have moved, I'd have banged my head on the nearest solid surface. He totally wasn't getting it. "*Of course* I noticed. I just can't figure out why. Why *me*?" Aside from the snobbishness I mentioned earlier, vampires and werewolves got along most of the time as far as I knew, but the two groups didn't usually mingle when it came to long-term relationships. Not that I had any real hopes of this being anything more than a one-night stand, damn it.

"Somebody has really done a number on you, haven't they? What do you think is wrong with you, other than a nasty sensitivity to sunlight?"

"And the need to bite during sex?"

This was more than a little awkward, and I wriggled on his lap, relieved and disappointed at the same time to discover that he'd softened just enough to allow me to lift off him without hurting myself. His hands gently eased me to my feet then he stood up behind me. His grip on my shoulders was gentle but firm as he turned me to face him. Before I could pull away and go find a bathroom where I could clean up, he pulled me close and lowered his face to mine.

His kiss was...mind-altering. This was the one thing I'd missed during the sex since he'd taken me from behind. Forgetting all about awkward conversations for the moment, I looped my arms up around his neck and held on as his lips shaped and molded mine. When he finally pulled away, I was gasping again and had forgotten everything I'd intended to say.

"Honey, I knew you were a vampire when I asked you to come home with me. You can bite me as much as you want and it isn't going to bother me. My blood regenerates fast enough to keep up with you. And I notice you didn't complain when I bit down on you." He rubbed the spot on my neck where his tooth prints would have already healed – though a sensitive tingle remained that made my knees wobble again.

"It isn't—" I buried my face in his chest, unable to look him in the eyes. "I'm not attractive. I mean—honestly—who ever heard of a fat vampire? I'm a freak even among the undead." There. I'd said it. My size-fourteen curves were a major embarrassment. Even though I never ate more than the bare minimum, of blood or human food, I hadn't lost a pound since the day I was turned.

I expected platitudes. He was too sweet to shoot me down, I knew that. But I didn't expect him to laugh. It wasn't a polite chuckle either. His all-out belly laugh practically shook the room.

"You have got to be kidding me. Fat? I've spent the whole damn night hard as an axe handle because you're the first woman I've seen in ages who isn't built like a fucking skeleton. Whoever gave you the idea that men want nothing but a bag of bones is out of his mind." His hands gripped my ass and squeezed. "I like curves, and your ass is just perfect. Makes me want to fondle it, bite it, even fuck it. And these..." He moved his hands up to cup the sides of my full breasts then leaned down and buried his face in my cleavage before coming back up with a smile. "These were made to drive a man insane. Full, ripe, luscious...perfect." If his predatory smile hadn't convinced me, the fact he'd gone hard against my stomach again should have. Insecurities don't go away that quickly, but I did believe, at least for the moment, that this man liked what he saw. And that realization made my head spin.

"Now I'd happily lay you down on the floor right here and prove to you just how hot I think you are, but I only had one condom in my pocket and the others are up in my bedroom. So would you rather have something to eat, or just go upstairs and get back to fooling around?"

I smiled up at him. Even if I wasn't entirely sure I believed him, I wasn't stupid enough to mess this up. "Upstairs is good." Good? Who was I kidding? This was already the best birthday ever, and the night was only just beginning.

"Right answer," he said with a grin. Before I could react, he scooped me up in his arms and strode toward the big curving staircase.



After a fairly embarrassing squeal, I wrapped my arms around his neck and enjoyed the ride. He was a werewolf, after all, and plenty strong enough to handle my weight as he'd proved on the way into the house. My so-called master probably could have too, come to think of it, but he'd been too busy bitching at me for being overweight. He'd always found fault with each member of his harem. For years I'd wondered why he kept us, even fucked us, if he despised us so much. It was only recently I'd finally figured out that it was all just one big power trip for him—classic abuser mentality.

I took a brief moment to look around the room as we left it. Without the lights I couldn't see much of the color in the room, but I got the impression of oversized, comfortable furniture, wood floors tossed with a number of area rugs, and a collection of large wooden sculptures. I couldn't wait to see it with the lights on, and couldn't help a pang of sorrow that I wouldn't be able to in daylight. Sometimes being a vampire really sucked.

The staircase opened onto a wide gallery that looked out over the great room. There were bookshelves built into the far wall and two oversized stuffed chairs drawn up close to the rail, making a comfortable library nook. Jack carried me to the last of three doors that opened onto the gallery and into a bedroom designed on the same massive scale as everything else in the house.

I expected him to drop me to the bed, but Jack managed to surprise me yet again. He eased me down to my feet right at the door of a luxurious master bathroom.

"Just a sec. I've got to get rid of this." With absolutely no self-consciousness at all, he switched on the light, strode over to the toilet and peeled the condom off his penis, which was still impressively hard. He dropped the used rubber into the toilet, flushed and turned back to me. "What? You look like there's a question you're dying to ask. Go ahead."

"How do you... I mean...when you, you know, swell up. Don't they break?"

"Ah." He nodded and broke into a wide grin. "I should have known the researcher is always thinking. Ask me anything you want, anytime. They're special order, made by a werewolf company in New Jersey. Designed to expand without breaking. They're also a biodegradable polymer so they'll break down after a day or two in the sewer. My clan is very big on environmental preservation."

Of course. Such a simple, elegant solution. Special werewolf condoms. What next? Blood-flavored sex lube for vampires?

I must have said that last bit out loud because Jack laughed again. "They make it. But the flavor is a little off if you ask me. Anytime you want to try it, though, I can hook you up."

I shook my head, more than a little stunned.

Jack stepped back up to me and used one hand to tip my chin up until we were gazing into each other's eyes. "You've really had a very sheltered life, haven't you, Ari?"

I nodded, licking my lips at the scent of him, so close, so alive. I craved another taste of his blood but not nearly as much as I craved him sexually.

"Tell me what you'd like to do. I'm game for anything. Any fantasy, any scenario you'd like to play out, just say it and I'll do my best to make it happen." He winked, making me stifle a giggle. "Call it a birthday present."

Wow! I stood there, probably gaping like an idiot, eyes wide and mind whirling. What could I say? Where to even start? Just having sex with him in his living room had been beyond the scope of most of my fantasies. Well, maybe not fantasies. A century is an awful long time to build up ideas, even if you never plan to act them out. Frederic had done such a thorough job of convincing me I was unappealing that I'd never expected to see this kind of desire directed at me. To top it off, I'd never expected to see someone like Jack telling me that my wild fantasies were acceptable.

I shook my head to clear it, shooed him out of the bathroom while I took care of business and thought. Which fantasy to choose? Obviously it had to be one that didn't

require a whole lot of preparation. Something we could do here and now. I remembered the big bed in the other room. The posts were made of whole logs—nice and sturdy. I had my answer.

When I stepped back into the bedroom, he had turned down the sheets and was lounging against the pillows—still naked. He smiled at me with those wicked lips and the smile reached all the way to those gorgeous dark eyes. Yeah, I was a goner. I'd let this man do any damn thing he pleased.

"So have you decided?" he asked, patting the sheet next to him invitingly.

I sat beside him. Before I could settle into place, he'd wrapped his arm around me and pulled me up next to him. My skin was a little chilled from being in the bathroom naked, and he was like a furnace, radiating real heat as well as the sexual kind.

"I think so," I answered thoughtfully. "If we can make it work. I've always thought it could be fun to be...tied up. I know I could probably break the ropes, but I think I could manage not to."

"Oh, I'm sure it will work." Jack bent down and kissed me, his lips moving hungrily against my own and his tongue seeking every corner of my mouth. "I've got just the thing."

He let go of me and I felt the loss of his touch immediately. Damn, the man was addictive. He bent over to reach into the nightstand on the far side of the bed and withdrew four long black cords and a pile of condoms. He dumped the condoms on the nightstand then turned and handed me the cords.

The smooth cords, each about a yard in length, slid easily along my fingers, soft but strong. "Silk?"

"Yep. And they're spelled. Once the command word is triggered, they won't break or come untied until you say the release word."

My pussy clenched and creamed. How perfect was this? I was so excited by the prospect that my whole body quivered.

Jack licked his lips and smiled at me. "So is that a yes?" He reached out and gently flicked one pebbled nipple.

I nodded. "Yes."

"Okay then. Scoot over to the center of the bed. And starting now, whatever I say you have to do unless it makes you truly uncomfortable. Submitting *is* part of your fantasy, isn't it?"

I bobbed my head again.

"Say it," he said. "I need you to say, 'Yes, Jack'."

"Yes, Jack. Part of my fantasy is to be completely in your power." I shivered as I said it. I wanted it more than anything, but a part of me was still timid little Ariana and scared of the big bad wolf.

"Good girl." He rewarded me with a kiss, made sure my head and shoulders were propped up on a thick pillow, then stood beside the bed. "Let me know if this is too uncomfortable before I lock them in place."

I started to nod then corrected myself. "Yes, Jack. I will."

That earned me a kiss on the bottom of my foot as he stood at the foot of the bed and spread my legs. When my toes were pointed at each of the corner posts, he looped one of the cords around my left ankle then attached the other end to the bedpost, tugging until it was taut but not painful. When I smiled at him, he moved to the other corner and tied my right ankle in the same manner. I tested the bonds lightly as he stared at my exposed cunt, swollen and glistening with my desire for him.

"Is all that cream for me, Ari?" Jack's voice was a low husky purr.

I could feel the blush that stained my face and breasts. I'd never indulged in talking dirty, though I'd enjoyed scenes like this in books. I swallowed and forced the words from my dry lips. "All for you, Jack. Just looking at you makes me wet."

“Good.” He wrapped one hand around his own cock, fully erect again, even though we’d just had sex a few minutes earlier. Apparently werewolves had great recovery time. Or maybe it was just Jack.

I watched him intently as he stood between my splayed legs, stroking himself slowly from the root of the thick shaft to the flared purple head. My pussy remembered all too well the feeling of being stuffed with that gorgeous flesh, and it ached to have him fill it again. When he rubbed a drop of pre-cum around the tip, I moaned out loud.

“You like what you see?”

“Yes, Jack.” I licked at my lips again, wishing they would stay moist.

“Tell me what you want, Ari.”

“I...I want your cock, Jack.”

“Where do you want it?” He ran one finger of his other hand along my slit, just lightly enough to tease.

“Inside me.”

Jack let go of his shaft and I wanted to cry. Then he moved around to the side of the bed. He took my left arm and tied my wrist to the bedpost.

As he walked around to my right side, he asked, “Inside you where? In your pussy? Your hot little mouth? How about in your sweet little rosebud ass?”

My eyes flew open wide. I stared at his face as he bound my wrist, leaving me completely spread-eagle on the big bed. Was he serious? That was a whole *different* fantasy.

But what came out of my mouth was, “All of them, Jack.”

“Oh sweetheart, I can’t wait.”

I’d never known werewolves could purr, but I swear that’s what his voice sounded like—a deep bass with a quaver that was all about anticipation and approval, more enticing even than his touch.

He opened the nightstand drawer again, and this time he drew out a square silk scarf, which he folded diagonally into a blindfold. "I think this will make things even more fun," he said with a wink. "You okay with it?"

The idea was a little scary, but my body responded with a fresh rush of cream and even tighter nipples. I'd already let him tie me up, so the blindfold wasn't much more of a stretch. "Yes, Jack. I'd like that."

He knelt beside me on the bed and kissed me. The kiss was a slow, sweet seduction that left me squirming just a little against the bonds.

"Okay, Ari. I'm going to put the blindfold on then activate the spell to reinforce the restraints. The release word is 'England'. Any time you get too uncomfortable, just say that word and you'll be able to break the ties."

I giggled. "England? As in, 'Lie still and think of...'?"

"Yeah." He chuckled as he fitted the silk over my eyes with a gentle touch. "The witch who made these for me has a twisted sense of humor."

That little bit of humor relaxed me completely. "I won't forget it, but I won't need to use it. I'm all yours, Jack. I trust you."

"Ahh, sweetness. I promise not to do anything you don't like. Now...*Christmas Present.*"

I felt the bonds tighten just a little even as I giggled at the activation code. His witch friend did indeed have a twisted streak.

Jack laid one hand on my stomach and I heard him fumble in the drawer again. Vampires have very sensitive hearing but mine seemed to be even keener than usual without the use of my eyes. I couldn't hear what he withdrew from the drawer, and I caught my breath as I waited for his next move.

The touch that came was so soft and light that I gasped in surprise at the faint flicker of sensation on my pebbled nipple. At first I thought it was just his breath, but it

wasn't warm—not cold either. Finally it dawned on me that he was tickling me with a feather.

"You like that, don't you?" he asked as he switched to my other breast.

"Mmm-hmmm."

He stopped tickling and tapped me on the sternum with one finger. "Is that how you're supposed to answer?" His words were stern but there was still a teasing softness in his tone that kept me from feeling chastised. This was my fantasy—he was just playing into it.

Obediently I answered, "Yes, Jack."

"Good girl." He trailed the feather down between my breasts to dust my bellybutton, making me giggle.

I could feel him beside me, his weight denting the bed at my hip. I sensed him doing something with his other hand then there was a soft humming sound, and the feather grazing the creases of my hip was replaced with something else—a soft, maybe rubber or latex, vibrator, running up the inside of my thigh.

Oooh, was he going to use that on me? *In* me? I'd never had someone else do that to me before. Tonight was a night of firsts. I held my breath as the vibrator moved up to graze the wet, puffy lips of my pussy.

"So pretty," he murmured. "All shiny and wet. Pink and plump, and all for me."

With each word he moved the vibrator along my slit. It was a tiny one, I thought, maybe just as big as my thumb. When he began to ease it into my cunt, I felt his fingers at the base. He pushed it up inside then moved his fingers back out to play with my clit.

"Does that feel good?" It did. The stimulation was intense, but it was vibrating my whole pussy, not hitting my G-spot or my clit, so the sensation was general, revving me up but in no danger of getting me off. His fingers gently rubbing my clit were rapidly pushing me toward climax. At first the massage was slow and soft, but he added speed and pressure, and soon I was whimpering as my womb tightened. The vibrator must

have had some kind of remote because it picked up speed as well, making my whole lower body quiver.

"You didn't answer," he teased. To my immense relief, he didn't stop moving his fingers. "Nod if you like what I'm doing to you."

I bobbed my head frantically. Of course I liked it. I tried to speak, managed to gasp. "Yes. Jack. Like. Very. Much."

"Good, sweet Ari."

Suddenly, his lips grazed my nipple. I shrieked, bucking against my bonds. The movement moved the vibrator just a little deeper into my pussy, and Jack sucked my nipple into his mouth with a firm, steady pull.

This time I flat-out screamed as I fractured. Even without biting and tasting his blood. I think it was his name I called, but the orgasm went on for several seconds, fueled by the continuous motion of the vibrator, his hand and his mouth. I pulled hard against the restraints, trying to wrap my arms or legs around Jack, but the silk didn't give, forcing me to stay spread-eagle beneath him.

When I started to come down, he pressed hard on my clit and nipped the tip of my breast with his teeth. I came all over again, convulsing so hard the vibrator was pushed out into his hand and I heard the wooden bedframe creaking from the force of me tugging on the ties that held me in place. Jack eased up, stroking my wet curls softly and kissing the swollen nub he'd been sucking until I relaxed again, this time collapsing limply against my restraints.

"Beautiful," he whispered again, coming up to lie alongside me and kiss my mouth. "Watching you come is about the sexiest thing I've ever seen." His kiss was deep and I drank in the taste of him hungrily, my tongue dueling with his. He switched the vibrator off and put it aside then moved above me, all without taking his lips from mine. I expected him to take me then while I was still soft and pulsing from my climax, but Jack was just full of surprises. When the kiss finally ended, he rolled to the side and pulled something else from the drawer.



“What...” I started to ask then stopped myself, remembering I wasn’t supposed to speak unless he asked me a question.

Jack ignored my infraction, moving to sit or kneel between my legs. I had no idea what he was doing but I heard a wet squirt. Lube? I was so wet, I couldn’t imagine that he’d need it. I lay there quivering, waiting to see—or rather feel—what he was up to next.

I didn’t expect the next touch to be on my foot. His hands, warm and slick with some kind of oil, massaged the top and bottom of my immobile left foot before moving on to the right. It was such an unexpected kind of pleasure in the middle of an erotic episode that I giggled out loud.

“Ticklish?” He switched to a firmer touch, less likely to make me laugh.

“Not really. Just—surprised.”

“That’s the whole point now, isn’t it? You have very cute little feet, you know.” He moved his hands up to lift my calf an inch or so off the mattress so he could knead that too. Every time he added more oil to his hands, he warmed it before touching it to another part of my skin as he slowly worked his way up my body. After rubbing the muscles of my hips, he eased his fingertips under my cheeks to squeeze those muscles in his big, powerful hands. He skipped my mound and pussy, to my dismay, moving straight to my belly. A few hours ago I’d have been self-conscious about having him pay attention to my fluffy abdomen, but his touch had completely robbed me of any self-consciousness. I didn’t even freak out when he paused to drop a line of kisses on the soft flesh below my waist.

“Perfect,” he murmured before filling his hands with more oil and moving up to my breasts.

I think that was the moment I realized I was in love with him. Oh, not the forever kind—I was a long way from that. But he was so kind, so giving, I couldn’t help losing a little piece of my heart right then and there. The big, tough biker werewolf was such a

sweetheart in bed that tears stung my eyelids behind the blindfold. Even if I never saw Jackson again after this night, he'd have left a mark on my heart for all eternity.

He didn't linger on my breasts, which was a disappointment. He moved on to my shoulders and arms, even though he couldn't do much of a muscle rub with me lying on my back. It was nice, this soft, slow seduction as a change from the intensity and urgency of the passion so far. I swear my bones melted as he rubbed my fingers and hands, easing aches I hadn't known I had. When he finished with those, he dropped a kiss into my palm and climbed over my body to reach my other hand, giving it the same loving treatment. Finally he cupped my head in his hands—without oil this time—and massaged my scalp with the pads of his fingers. When he was done, I lay limp, barely noticing my bonds. All my attention was focused on knowing exactly where his body was in relation to mine. I could smell him, feel the heat radiating from his body. Contrary to popular belief, vampires do have body heat. But I'd never been a very warm-blooded individual, even before my turning, and being next to Jack was like curling up with a nice warm blanket—only sexier.

"Still with me?"

"God yes." As if there were anywhere else in the world I wanted to be.

"Not a god, just Jack," he teased. Then he shifted beside me and I felt him cup each of my breasts in one of his hands. I knew the pale flesh would be overflowing against his darker skin, but for once I didn't care. Jack was touching me with a reverence that said he genuinely liked my body, and that's all that mattered. If he was just being kind, I didn't want to know about it.

Arousal started to climb again as he kneaded my breasts, stroking the nipples softly with his thumbs. The oil he'd used hadn't left a greasy feel to my skin, but it did make each touch even silkier.

"You have the softest skin," he said when my hips started to buck as his touch grew firmer on my breasts. "It's so creamy and beautiful. And I love how you respond to my touch. I'll bet you could come just from this."

"I don't...know." Despite all the attention they'd received tonight, my nipples were still hard as diamonds, wanting more. I'd never thought of myself as a particularly sensual being, but Jack was rapidly proving that I was – at least with him.

"One of these times, we'll have to try." His whisper was a sultry promise, and he sealed it by licking one furled bud and blowing a warm breath across the damp skin. "But not just now. I've waited long enough to fuck you, don't you think?" One hand slid down to my pussy to test my wetness. I could hear the moisture as he slid his fingers between my lips.

"Yes!" The shriek should have been embarrassing, but I was long past caring. I felt Jack move aside, heard foil rip, and then seconds later he was back, kneeling between my splayed thighs. I struggled to wrap my arms and legs around him, but the bonds were still firm, holding me in place. The inability to move continued to amplify my arousal. I'd never been so turned-on in my life.

Instead of coming down on top of me, he slid his hands back under my ass and lifted it a couple of inches off the bed. With the restraints, the position bowed my spine but not uncomfortably. I held my breath as he slid into my depths, one slow inch at a time. My tissues were swollen enough that it felt tighter this time, and he filled me completely. It seemed as though he filled my entire body, not just my pussy, his presence seeming to infuse me from fingers to toes.

He withdrew until just the tip was still inside my core then, keeping the same leisurely pace, pushed back in until he was fully seated. I could feel his plump balls pressed against my butt. He kept up that slow, steady insertion and withdrawal motion for several minutes. The only sign of his own increasing arousal was the tight clench of his fingertips on my buttocks. The bruises would only last a few minutes, but I was thrilled to know he was so into me he'd forgotten to check his strength.

I gripped his penis with my inner walls, clutching my muscles as he withdrew to increase the sensation for him. A groan escaped his throat, so I knew he liked it. His hips started to move faster as he stroked in and out, and mine bucked to meet every

thrust. My breathing started to falter. I gasped in a breath each time he withdrew and expelled it on a whimper every time he filled me. My hands tightened into fists around the ties that held my wrists and I pulled against them, using that force to heighten the experience.

Jack grunted too as he pistoned into me. Resting my butt on his thighs, he brought one hand around and scissored my clit between two fingers even as he rubbed my lips with his thumb, silently offering me his blood.

"Jack!" Another high-pitched shriek erupted from me as my pussy twitched around his cock. I bit down on his thumb with one fang and my world just exploded at the hot, sweet taste of his blood filling my mouth while his body filled mine.

Jack rammed himself home one last time then bellowed my name too. The head of his cock swelled again and he stayed deep, buried to the hilt while my spasms milked every last spurt. I could feel the fluid filling the tip of the condom, and the sensation was so sexy I came again, a slower ripple this time but one so sweet that tears dampened the silk of my blindfold.

Still swollen inside me, Jack came down on top of my body, pressing me into the mattress. His weight felt good, warm and solid. He cupped my head in his hands and untied the blindfold as he kissed me.

"Tears?" he asked as he wiped them away with the silk. "What's wrong?"

"Not a damn thing," I said in a shaky voice, gazing up into his eyes. "Happy tears. Goofy but true."

"If you say so." Propped up on his elbows to keep from crushing me, he kissed each of my eyelids then muttered, "England." Without moving too much, he managed to untie my wrists. He kissed each one, chafing it between his hands. "Sorry I can't reach your feet. Break 'em if they're too uncomfortable."

"I'm all right." It was true. If there was even the slightest chance that I'd have the chance to play with Jack and his toys again, it was worth a few minutes of discomfort to preserve them for another day. I was feeling tingly and sore and I actually regretted

that my vampire physiology would have healed all traces of it in just a little while. I wanted the reminder of this time with Jack. Not that I could ever forget it.

Just a few minutes later I yawned. It would be so easy to just curl up and go to sleep, but of course I couldn't risk it.

Jack sighed and moved to untie my feet. "Time to get all good little vampires home before we both fall asleep. Unless you want to stay here all day? My truck windows aren't UV protected."

God, it was tempting. But his bedroom had big, broad windows covered only by very thin curtains. I'd be fried to a crisp—well, not literally. That was a popular misconception. But I would sunburn badly and the little microbes in my bloodstream release a toxin when they're exposed to too much UV. All in all, I'd be pretty damn sick. Reluctantly I stirred from his arms.

Before I could get out of bed, he pounced, waking me fully with a very thorough kiss. Just as I was really getting into it, though, he clambered out of bed and pulled me with him toward the bathroom. "Come on, sleepyhead. Let's get you cleaned up a bit."

He sat me down on the edge of the big marble tub and started the water. Then while it was filling, he rooted in a drawer, finally coming up with a brush and a ponytail holder.

"No hairpins, I'm afraid, but this should work." He sat behind me on the side of the tub and began to gently smooth out my long, straight hair. It is baby-fine so it tangles easily, and after all of our antics this evening, it was now a knotted-up mess. Jack didn't complain at all, just let me lean on him while he patiently worked out every snarl without causing me a bit of pain. When he was done, he gathered it into a ponytail on the top of my head then caught the end into the elastic as well, so it looped back on itself and wouldn't drag in the water. The thoughtfulness of this guy was just unfreaking-believable.

I let one hand trail into the water. The temperature was perfect—warm without being scalding. As soon as it was up to the top of the jets, Jack turned off the water and

on the jets then handed me down into the water. With a peck on the top of my head, he stepped back and sat down on the vanity bench, which he'd covered with a towel.

"Aren't you joining me?" The tub was plenty big enough for two. I leaned back, letting the jets soothe my overused muscles. They didn't actually hurt anymore, but they still felt well-used.

He shook his head with a wry grin. "Not if you want to be home by daylight. We'll file that fantasy away for next time."

"Is there—" I stared down at my lap under the churning water, swallowed hard, gathered up my courage and forced myself to continue. "Is there going to be a next time?"

The silence in the room was only broken by the sound of the jets in the tub. I grabbed a bar of soap and quickly washed, anxious now to get home. As I started to stand, Jack was suddenly there beside the tub, holding an oversized towel wide for me to step into. He wrapped it around me, shut off the tub and guided me over to the seat, pushing me down. Then he knelt before me, still gloriously naked, and took my chin in his hand so I was forced to look up at him.

"Ari, what did you think this was? A one-night stand?"

I shrugged. Of course I had.

Jack's black eyebrows scrunched together and his generous lips flattened into a thin line. "You did, didn't you?"

My only response this time was a miserable nod.

"Shame on you." He tapped my nose with one finger. "Didn't what happened tonight mean anything to you?"

I'm sure my eyes widened to the size of saucers. I licked at my dry lips and whispered, "Yes."

"Whew!" His shoulders slumped just a little as the tension left his body. "Honey, do you think magic like we just made comes along every day?"

"Not for me."

"Not for anyone." His hands burrowed beneath the towel I was clutching like a lifeline and found mine. He brought them to his lips and kissed my knuckles. "I don't know what we have here, but I know it's something special. Wouldn't you like to see where it goes?"

I could feel my heart pounding in my throat. I couldn't get any air past it to speak, but I nodded, feeling my eyes well up with tears—again. When had I turned into such a crybaby? I thought this was the first time I'd wept since Frederic dumped me.

"Okay. Then let's get you dressed and home, all right?"

I managed a shaky laugh. "Right."

While I dried myself, he left the bathroom and I heard footsteps on the stairs. When I came back into the bedroom, he'd returned, carrying our clothes from the living room. "Thought these might come in handy."

We both dressed and then he was there, holding my hand as he escorted me back to his truck. "So I don't usually go into the bar on Sundays," he said. He handed me up into the cab then loped around and got in the driver's side. "How about I pick you up at dusk and see if I can make any more fantasies come true?"

Tonight was Friday—Saturday morning now—so that was only two days away. My tender pussy tightened with anticipation. "How will you know what my fantasies are?" I didn't care of course. Just being with him was fantasy enough.

"Oh, don't worry, sweetheart," he growled sexily. "I'll bet I can figure some out."

## Chapter Three

Jessamy and Danette called to demand details just before dawn. I loved those two. When Frederic dumped me in Chicago, on my own for the first time in my immortal life, they'd gotten me on my feet. They'd hooked me up with a blood bank so I didn't have to hunt to feed. They'd housed me until I could afford a place of my own. But some things are too personal to tell even your best girlfriends. I told them I was safe, I told them I was seeing him again, but I didn't tell them how he made me feel. That was too new, too private. Then I told them I'd talk to them later, hung up and crawled into bed, reliving those moments over and over in my dreams.

Of course they showed up on my doorstep about a half an hour after dusk. I'd been working so I didn't hear the doorbell at first—especially since I was back in my office. The big open space behind the kitchen had been intended as the family room of my townhouse. There are lots of windows so I'd paid a fortune for the UV tinting but it was worth it. Modern technology has made life much better for us. With UV-treated windows, I could wander my house freely all day long, even without sunscreen.

My computer desk took up one corner of the room while the rest was arranged as a sitting room with a comfy floral-print sofa and two velvety-soft overstuffed armchairs. This room was my private retreat from the world. When I'm on my computer, I get so into what I'm doing that a nuclear blast could go off across the table and I might not notice. It's for exactly that reason that Jess and Dani have keys to my front door.

"So. No date tonight with the big, bad werewolf?" Danette duBois plopped down onto a couch. "Spill, *cherie*. We want to hear everything." Dani had been a courtesan at the court of Louis XIV, but she'd adapted beautifully to modern life and idioms. Her sleek curves were hugged by a pair of black jeans and a low-cut black silk sweater. Her bright red hair curled wildly, almost to her waist.



Jessamy Maitland, on the other hand, just lowered her tall, willowy form into a chair and smiled encouragingly. The proper English miss was elegant in camel-colored trousers and a hound's-tooth blazer, her shining blonde hair perfectly smooth. Between the two of them, they always make me feel like a frump. Especially since I'd been typing in baby blue sweats and my favorite bunny slippers. "Come on, sweetie," she coaxed. "You have to tell us."

I rolled my eyes, saved my work and switched my computer to standby. No way would I get any work done now. I crossed the room and dropped into the empty armchair. "What's there to tell? I went home with the werewolf. We're going out again tomorrow. I'd have thought you two would be happy about that."

"Oh, we are," Dani assured me with a twinkle in her green eyes. "We just want to know the good stuff."

"It was good, wasn't it?" Jess' voice was soft with concern, even though she'd also encouraged me to go for it when I'd left the bar last night. "You've been so shy about getting involved with anyone, we want to make sure he's treating you right."

Taking a deep breath, I nodded. They were only prying out of concern for me. "It was wonderful. Jack is a really nice guy and nothing like Frederic, believe me."

Dani waved a hand. "Of course he's nothing like that asshole. I know a couple of the Marceski wolves. They'd gut one of their own if they caught him abusing women. I told you, Jess, our girl couldn't be in better hands."

"I sure couldn't." I let a note of sexual satisfaction creep into my tone then giggled. "Oh wow, does he ever know what to do with his...hands."

Both of my friends laughed delightedly. "Oh honey, I'm so glad," Jess said. "You deserve to be treated like a princess."

"So what's up with your date tomorrow?" Dani asked. "Are you going out or staying in?"

"I don't know," I replied. "He said he'd call me tonight to let me know."

"What are you wearing?" Dani looked at my bunny slippers with a rueful grin. "The stores are open for a couple hours yet. Do we need to take you shopping?"

Shopping? I know it's against some girl code or something, but I *hated* shopping. I shuddered. "I'll wear the black dress I bought for your Christmas party," I told her. It was the nicest thing I owned—not overtly sexy, but if I wore my black boots, it wouldn't look too dowdy either.

"I think that will be fine," Jess interjected. "You should wear something you feel good in. That will give you more self-confidence." She glared at Dani, who subsided with a rueful nod.

"Oh," Dani piped up after an awkward moment. "Speaking of Frederic the asshole..."

"Were we?" Jess asked. "I can't imagine why."

"No, really." Dani sat up straight and her playful demeanor turned serious. "I talked to a friend of mine in Detroit the other night. She said some asshole was asking about a vampire named Ariana. There were other names too, but that's the one my friend remembered—I think you met Jacob a few years ago. Anyway, the guy he described sounded exactly like Frederic."

I pondered that. There was a small psychic link sometimes between a vampire and the one who'd converted them. I shuddered at the thought, but Frederic might know I hadn't died. Of course he also might have just heard my name and assumed it was the same person. The idea of him asking about me gave me the creeps, but there wasn't much I could do. According to Dani, her friend Jacob didn't know any way of contacting the man, and thought he'd already left Detroit.

I was still pondering that about three a.m. when my friends left and I was alone, curled up in an armchair with my e-reader. I'd given up trying to work. Between thinking about Frederic and Jack, I didn't have the attention span of a gnat.

My cell phone rang, startling me. It wasn't Jess or Dani's ring tone, so it had to be Jack, unless it was someone trying to sell me insurance. I fumbled the phone, almost dropping it as a big case of nerves scrambled my brain and nervous system.

"Hey there, beautiful." God, it was him, his voice still sexy and sinful, even over the phone.

"Hi." I had no idea what else to say. "How was your night?"

"Not nearly as much fun as last night," he said. "How about you?"

"The same," I admitted. "Thank you again...for everything."

"You're very welcome, sweet thing." His gravelly chuckle had my body responding. "Looking forward to tomorrow night? I know I sure am."

"Of course." I squeezed my legs together to contain the moisture that gathered just at his words. The man was like a drug! One taste and I couldn't help wanting more. "What are we doing?"

"It's a surprise," he taunted. "Wear something dressy – and it wouldn't break my heart if you left the underwear at home."

"O-okay." Great, now I was stuttering. My breasts had started to ache just from remembering his touch. I couldn't wait to have him touch them again.

"Are you at home?" he asked after a moment of silence.

"Yeah," I answered.

"Alone?"

"Yes, Jack." I automatically reverted to the response he'd demanded in bed, and I could feel my pussy clench as soon as I said it.

"Are you naked by any chance?" I could almost see him licking his lips at the idea.

"No." Though I kind of wished I was, if the idea would please him. "Are you?"

He laughed. "No, me neither. I'm sitting in my living room with a glass of scotch. You?"

"In a chair in my bedroom with a glass of diet cola."

"Reading? Watching TV?"

"Trying to read," I admitted. "Mostly just thinking."

"What were you reading?" He sounded genuinely curious and once again I marveled at meeting a man who was truly interested in his partner.

"Chemistry journal," I answered with a laugh. "How about you? Do I hear the TV on?"

"DVD," he replied. "An old favorite. *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*."

I giggled. "I love that movie. 'Your mother was a hamster and your father smelt of elderberries.' Though I like *The Princess Bride* even better."

"Another classic," Jack agreed with a chuckle. "I'm not at all surprised to find out you're the happy-ever-after type."

"Is that a bad thing?" I didn't think he'd intended it that way, but I've never been very good at reading inflections.

"Not at all. Based on what little you've told me about your past, I'm impressed that you've still got such an optimistic outlook."

"Well, I'm not sure if liking fairy tales makes me an optimist or just an idiot," I replied. "But I can't see going through life always looking for the bad in everyone. That would make me want to stake myself out in the sunlight."

"Good for you." His voice dropped down a bit. "So my happy little vampire. What are you wearing?"

Should I tell the truth, even though it wasn't sexy? In the end, I couldn't lie. "A pair of blue sweatpants with a matching jacket," I confessed. "White tank top and undies beneath it and..."

"And what?" The teasing lilt was back in his voice. "Come on. Tell me the truth. No matter what. Then you can ask me a question and I have to do the same."

"What if I have a question you don't want to answer?" I couldn't believe I had the guts to tease him back.

"Then I have to pay a forfeit," he purred. "Say, take off a piece of clothing. First one naked..."

"Loses?"

"Maybe," he replied. "Want to find out?"

I couldn't say no. I swallowed hard, and said, "Sure."

"Okay, so what else do you have on besides your sweats, tank top and panties?"

"Bunny slippers."

There was a long pause then I heard a roar of laughter. "Damn, woman, you're priceless. Okay, your turn to ask a question."

Honestly, even though we'd fucked like minks, I didn't know him very well. This was a great opportunity, but where to start? Duh. The beginning. "Where were you born?"

"Maryland," he replied. "I was the first member of my pack born in the New World. My father and uncle came over with Kosciusko during the American Revolution. They were amazed by all the unspoiled wilderness, so after the war they stayed and sent for more pack members to join them—including my mother and older siblings."

"Cool," I answered. "How many of you —"

"Uh-uh. My turn," he interrupted. "What was *your* childhood like?"

I shrugged, even though he couldn't see me. "Pretty normal, I guess. I grew up in a Greek enclave in New York. My father owned a small grocery store. My mom died when I was young, and my grandmother mostly took care of us. My older sister and I fought and squabbled all the time, but I missed her so much after she got married."

"Okay, sweetness. Your turn," Jack's voice was so gentle, as if he understood the sadness that thinking of my family always gave me. It still bothered me that I'd hurt them by running off with Frederic.

Time to lighten things up, I decided. "What's your favorite sports team?"

"Tigers, all the way," he said without missing a beat. "That was too easy. Now here's one a little more challenging for you. Favorite type of music?"

"Jazz," I admitted. "I was a teen in the '20s. I wanted so badly to go to nightclubs and hang out with jazz musicians, but I wound up with Frederic the first time I tried, and never got the chance again." Not that I'd have been any good at the club scene, I knew now. I'd been such a naïve little thing with no sense of self-preservation.

"Well, now you have a club you can hang out in all you want," Jack said in a suggestive murmur. "I'll even hire a sax player one night if you'd like."

"Oh, like your customers would appreciate that," I said with a laugh. "Rock and roll is okay too, even if it is a little loud in there." Now it was my turn to ask a question and I thought about it hard. What did I really want to know about the first man who'd ever really made my body sing? "Where did you get the enchanted restraints?"

"A witch who's a favorite customer," he said. "Did you like them?"

"Yes." My breathing had started to speed up as soon as I asked the question. I rubbed at one of my nipples absently with the hand that wasn't holding the phone. Even when he wasn't here, he made me feel needy. "Have you ever been tied up?"

"Yeah." There was a slight rasp to his voice, letting me know he was feeling the increased tension too. "Not my favorite thing, but if you want to go there, I'm willing. Do you?"

"Is that your question?"

"Sure," he said easily.

I thought about it then answered, "No—not now at any rate." The idea of having Jack at my mercy was appealing, but I'd begun to discover that I preferred to be the submissive in the bedroom.

"Your turn again," he reminded me after a few moments of silence.

"Do you—have any siblings?" I was scrambling for questions, trying to get things back on a semi-safe level.

"I told you last night I have three sisters," he said. "Also two brothers. I'm the third oldest. Lots of cousins."

"I miss that," I said. "One of the worst parts about being a vampire is you live forever, but your family doesn't. You're lucky to be a werewolf."

"Yeah, I am," he said gently. "It has its ups and downs, but it's nice to have my family around."

"It's your turn to ask a question." Again, I wanted to change the subject.

Jack seemed to understand. "So what name were you born with? Ari suits you beautifully. Was it your original name?"

"Yes. But my parents' surname was Kanavos. Stephanopoulos was my grandmother's maiden name. Until last week, I went by Ariana Contis—another family name. How about you? Were you born Jackson Marceski?"

"Marceski, sort of. We used March back when Polish names really stood out in America then changed it back in the 1950s. Jackson was one of my names. We tend to give our children two or three middle names so we can switch around but keep our family name. I was born Zachary Alexander Jackson March—after three men my father served with in the war.

"Okay, my turn," he said. "Are you cold?"

"What? No." I frowned at the phone, confused by his sudden shift.

"Then take off your sweat jacket," he murmured. "And tell me if those pretty rose-colored nipples of yours are poking out through your tank top."

"Oh." Well, if they hadn't been before they sure were now that he mentioned it. Obediently though I peeled off my jacket. "Yes."

"Wish I was there to see them," he muttered.

"Are you hard?" I couldn't believe the words popped out my mouth. Where had this new, bold Ari come from?

"Hell yeah." He gave a short sharp laugh. "Have been since I thought about calling you. Are you wet?"

"I think so." I was sure of it but too embarrassed to admit I could feel the dampness on my thighs.

"Then take off your sweatpants and find out for sure," he said, finishing with an irresistible, "please?"

"Okay." I stood and used one hand to push my sweats down around my ankles, stepping out of them and the bunny slippers. I moved over to my bed, not wanting to sit down on the chair in my wet cotton panties.

"So?" He waited until I was done moving around. "How wet are you?"

I slipped my fingers inside my undies and shuddered at the instant response generated by my own soft touch. "Dripping."

"Are you playing with yourself?"

Caught! Automatically I stopped swirling my fingers between my labia.

"You are, aren't you, gorgeous? Come on, admit it."

"I was," I confessed.

"Don't stop," he whispered. "I want to hear you make yourself come."

Oh god! Just the words had more cream forming in my slit. I pushed my fingers deeper, trying to assuage the emptiness that just his voice had aroused.

"Would it help if I told you I've unzipped my jeans and have my dick in my hand?" he asked, a harsh rasp in his breathing. "I want you so badly I can hardly see straight."

"I want you too, Jack." I shoved two fingers into my hot, wet pussy and began to rub my clit with my thumb. There was a vibrator in my nightstand but that was too far away. I needed to come *now*.

"I can't stop thinking about you, Ari," Jack rumbled. "Your pretty eyes all glazed with passion, your pink lips all swollen from my kisses. I want to suck on those perky



nipples until you scream my name, and I want to bury my cock in that sweet, tight pussy of yours until both of us explode.”

“Jack!” His name was all I could manage as I came, cream coating my entire hand and my walls clamping down hard on my fingers.

“Oh Ari,” his groan let me know he was coming too. I envisioned him sitting there on his couch, jeans open and his T-shirt all spattered with cum. The picture sent aftershocks skittering through me until I almost dropped the phone.

“Wow,” he muttered. “I haven’t gone off like that in a long time. You give good phone, sweetheart. Can’t wait to do that again in person.”

“Me either,” I said with a sigh. “Are we still on for Sunday night?”

“You’d better believe it,” he growled. “I’m nowhere near through with you, Ari. I’ll be there at sunset. Be ready.”

“I will.” My heart danced a little at the sultry promise in his voice. “Good night, Jack.”

“Good night, Ari. Sleep well.”

After I hung up, I went and cleaned up then put my sweats back on and curled up in my chair. Only one question danced through my mind.

How had Jack known that phone sex was one of my fantasies?

## **Chapter Four**

By Sunday evening I was a nervous wreck. I paced in front of my living room window, wondering what he had planned. I was wearing the dress I'd discussed with Dani and Jess—a full-skirted, sedate frock in black wool jersey with long sleeves and a modest sweetheart neckline. It was suited for an office or a funeral more than an evening on the town, but I didn't own much in the way of evening wear. My black leather boots had moderate heels and came to just below my knee, meaning the dress fell below the boots. Boldly, I decided to wear a garter belt and thigh-high stockings instead of pantyhose, and a matching black demi-cup bra. It was the only sexy underwear I owned, a gift one year from Dani, who was always trying to liven me up. Feeling even naughtier, I stuffed the matching thong back in the drawer. I wore the pearls I'd bought myself with one of my first big checks—a double strand and a pair of really nice drop earrings. My hair was caught in a messy knot at the nape of my neck and I'd bought a brand-new, bright red lipstick at the all-night drug store. I was as ready as I was ever going to be.

Jack's pickup pulled into the driveway of my townhouse almost exactly at dusk. Shamelessly, I watched through the window as he approached the house. He wore a charcoal gray suit with a pale blue shirt and a striped tie, but his shoulder-length hair and shiny black biker boots hinted at the wildness I knew lurked within the upscale packaging. He carried a bottle of wine and a bouquet of flowers in one arm as he loped up my front steps two at a time. I was at the door, pulling it open, even while his hand was reaching for the doorbell. He paused, hand extended, and smiled at me.

"Hello, beautiful." His expression was pure, bottled sex appeal. "Can I come in?"

"Of course." I couldn't believe I'd just stood there, frozen, staring at him. I stepped aside to let him in the door.

"Our reservations aren't until nine so I thought we could have a drink first." He held up the bottle of wine.

Since it was barely seven, I nodded and led him back through the living room to the kitchen. He looked around at my pale yellow walls, comfy furniture and eclectic blend of antique and modern art pieces and grinned his approval. "Nice mix. Feminine without being cloyingly girly."

"Thanks. I was lucky enough to have invested most of my early earnings so this time I could do what I wanted." The kitchen was the same sunny yellow with cherry wood cupboards that matched the floors and speckled granite countertops. I ducked around the island counter that separated the kitchen from the dining area and handed him a corkscrew while I got down a couple of glasses, checking surreptitiously for dust. I didn't use my stemware very often—maybe with my girlfriends last Christmas.

"Lucky? I don't think so." He poured out two modest glasses of the Proseco—a sparkling white wine—and handed me one. Raising his glass, he continued. "I'd say smart. As smart as the heroine in that book you had on your e-reader the other night."

I stared, horrified, with my glass half raised to his. "You—you read *Lady Lust*? But it's only available as an e-book. It's not even in print yet!" And it was a *very* explicit erotic romance—not something many men would ever admit to reading.

He chuckled. "I'm not technologically challenged even if I am an antique. I don't have an e-reader—yet—but I do have a laptop. I downloaded it Saturday morning after I brought you home. It was," he wagged his eyebrows, "very educational."

"Uhh...wow." I didn't say anything else, but my mind was whirling. He leaned over the counter and clinked my glass with his, and I had just enough presence of mind left to sip the crisp, fruity wine. I hadn't tried this variety before and the tiny bubbles—much softer than champagne—tickled the inside of my mouth.

"So what are we doing tonight?" All he'd told me so far was to wear the dress. Since I'd never had a real date—a sheltered Greek girl in New York in the '20s was

certainly not allowed to do any such thing, and I hadn't much wanted to since splitting from Frederic—I had no idea what to expect.

"Ah, now that would spoil the surprise," he told me with a wicked grin. "Let's just say it should be a night that Holly Covington would enjoy."

My breath caught at the mention of Holly, the heroine of the erotic novel he'd seen and downloaded. Holly had been into some wild and crazy stuff. What the heck did Jack have planned after reading that book? I had no idea, but if I'd been wearing panties they'd have been damp by now. Feeling the moisture between my legs with no underwear to absorb it had me clenching my thighs together under my dress.

The roses he'd brought me were bicolored, a deep red on the outside of each petal but snowy white on the inside. Innocence and sin—the symbolism wasn't lost on me. I'd been sheltered for far too long, now it was time for me to take charge of my own life, my own pleasure. I lifted them to my nose, inhaling the rich, heady perfume and sighed.

"They're perfect, Jack. Thank you."

"I thought you'd like them. That particular blend—it's unexpectedly attractive, isn't it?" He wasn't looking at the flowers. Those deep brown eyes were staring straight into my blue ones.

"I'm glad you think so," I answered simply, ducking my head. I licked my lips and pointed at a shelf above his head. "Can you get me down that vase?"

As I placed the flowers into the vase, I didn't even realize I was counting them in my head until I reached thirteen. I picked up the last one only to have Jack pluck it from my fingers. "I have another plan for this one."

"Oh?"

I watched as he carefully snapped off the thorns and leaves. Then he reached past me for my scissors and trimmed the stem to about three inches long.

"Come here." He crooked his finger, beckoning me out from around the counter. Unable to resist, I walked around to stand in front of him. When he twirled his finger, I obediently turned around to give him my back. It was strange how different this felt than the obedience Frederic had demanded. Maybe because I knew with Jack it was all voluntary, maybe just because I already trusted him enough to know he'd never make me do anything against my will. Whatever the cause, I felt a tremor of arousal as I turned my back to him, wondering what he had up his sleeve.

"Tempting," he murmured, leaning his head down to nuzzle the side of my neck, exposed by my upswept hair. "Do you know how tempted I am to forget about reservations and simply pick you up and take you here and now? But somehow I don't think being fucked on your kitchen counter is one of your fantasies."

He lifted his lips from my neck and I almost wept. I had to squeeze my knees together so they wouldn't give out, but the new Ariana was determined to be honest and ask for what she wanted. "No. But being fucked on my dining room table is."

"Ari!" His groan filled the small room. I could see him turn to look at the glossy cherry table not three feet from his hip. It was big enough to seat eight and made from very sturdy wood. "Don't say things like that if you want to leave your house tonight." With shaking fingers, he tucked the rose into the bun in my hair.

"We don't have to go anywhere, Jack." I turned to face him.

He cupped my cheeks in his hands. "But you look so beautiful. I want to take you out and show the world what a lucky man I am to have you tonight."

He was so sweet, so earnest, that I nodded. "Okay. But you said we don't have to be there until nine, right? How about a little...appetizer to take the edge off?" My hands dropped to his belt and began unfastening the buckle.

"Are you sure?" I could feel the ridge of his erection poking against the wool of his trousers. His obvious interest only fueled my desire to pleasure him.

"Oh yes." I unzipped his pants and pushed him back until he was leaning against the island. Then I hooked my ankle around the rungs of one of my Windsor chairs and

pulled it over so I could sit. The position, combined with our height differential, put me at just the perfect level. I carefully peeled his silk boxers down along with his pants, freeing that magnificent cock. It was never all going to fit in my mouth, but I was sure it was going to be fun to try.

I took hold of his shaft with both hands. Neither could quite close around his girth, and even together they didn't fill the length. Granted, I have small hands, but he was still impressive. I licked my lips as I stared at him, wondering where I was going to start. He thickened even further under my grip and a bead of pearly white fluid leaked out of the slit atop the dark, bulbous tip. *There.* I darted my tongue out and licked up that droplet, reveling in the salty, slightly bitter taste. Yes, I had done this before, but there had never been any pleasure in it for me, it was all just mechanical. This time I was enjoying myself, and I damn sure wanted Jack to as well.

"Suck me, sweetness," he murmured as my tongue swiped a circle around the underside of the head. I kept my grip on his cock with one fist while the other hand weighed and fondled his heavy testicles, rough with short, coarse fur, and taut with his arousal. My own nipples poked at the lace of my bra, and I could smell the wetness of my pussy, even over the raw male scent of Jack that I got from having my face so close to his groin. The combination turned me on even more. Greedily, I kissed a line up the thick ridge that ran from the base of his shaft to the tip then opened my mouth and slurped the whole head inside.

"Ari!" He gripped the back of my neck with his hand. "Yes, honey, suck my cock just like that." I'd started a slow suction with my mouth while my hand stroked up and down his erection. The fingers of my other hand gently stroked his balls in the same rhythm. Jack's hips jerked with each stroke, gently fucking my mouth while my own hips moved in time on the chair as well.

"So good, so hot," he muttered a few moments later. By this time his breathing was harsh, choppy, and he'd removed his hand from my neck to grip the granite countertop until his knuckles were white. "Gonna...come...soon...sweetheart. Gotta

pull...out...before...I...swell.” He fumbled for the dishtowel a few feet away from him on the counter.

I hadn’t forgotten about his cock swelling during orgasm. In fact, I was thrilled to be one of the few women to have that effect on him. As his cock twitched with his impending release, I didn’t let go. I wanted this too much for that. What I did do was move my mouth to cover just the slit while I covered the rest of him with the hand that had been on his balls. I sucked hard on the slit and tightened the grip of both my hands.

“Ari!” With one last thrust of his hips, Jack came. Hot semen exploded into my mouth, thick spurts that hit the back of my throat with every gush. I kept up the pressure of my hands and the suction, swallowing several times until I’d swallowed every drop, reveling in the salty, earthy flavor of him. Finally, when he was done, I licked the head of his penis clean then used the dishtowel to wipe off the marks from my red lipstick.

“Some of it won’t come off,” I said, dabbing at a now-pinkish streak.

“Don’t worry about it,” he growled. “I’ll wear your lipstick on my cock any time you want, darling. The only one who’s going to see it is you, anyway.” Then he put both hands under my arms and lifted me to my feet.

If I hadn’t already rubbed off all my lipstick, his kiss would have done it. His mouth was voracious, almost brutal, but I loved every bit of it. I knew he could taste his own seed on me, and that made me even wetter. All I really wanted right then was for him to impale me on that thick cock, which was still damp from my mouth, even though the head was still swollen to the size of a tangerine. I’m a vampire. I’d heal.

Instead, he whirled me around and lifted me so I was sitting on the countertop. He spread my legs with his hands then sat down on the chair I’d just vacated. “My turn. Pull your dress up, Ari. I want to see that pretty pussy of yours, all wet and puffy for me.”

Slowly, I did. He’d fluffed out the back of my skirt when he set me up here so my bare ass was on the cool granite. I spared a fleeting thought that at least the surface

would clean easily. Jack guided me to the very edge of the counter and put one of my legs over each of his shoulders as I pulled my skirt up to my waist, revealing the garter belt and lack of panties.

“Oooh, you bad girl,” he teased, blowing a puff of warm air on my wet, sensitive flesh. “Bad girls get rewarded.” Then he separated my labia with his fingers and leaned in to lick the exposed slit, all the way from my anus to my clit. After that one good slurp, he settled in to flick my clit with his tongue while he slid both thumbs into my cunt.

“Jack.” I leaned back on my elbows, unable to hold myself up. My whole body throbbed, wanting more, but the relentless assault on my clit rapidly drove me up to the edge of orgasm. When he took it between his teeth and sucked, I fell over the edge, gasping his name like a mantra.

“Now that’s what I call tasty *hors d’oeuvres*.” He waited until I’d stopped shaking then eased me to my feet. After a long, deep kiss, he stepped back and smiled. “Now I think our ride will be here in a minute. How about we both clean up and we get out of here before we forget to altogether?”

\* \* \* \* \*

I couldn’t believe he’d rented a limo. Not the big, flashy party kind with track lighting, a bar and TV, this was a simple black stretch model with a glass partition between the driver and the back. There was a second seat facing us, but we both sat facing forward. As soon as the door shut behind the driver, Jack put his arm around me and pulled me against his side. He caught my hand in his and I laid my cheek against his shoulder.

The restaurant he’d chosen was an exclusive one on the lakefront in downtown Chicago. The limo dropped us right at the entrance to the high-rise where we negotiated the revolving doors still hand in hand, cramming into one wedge and giggling like children. In the elevator, he helped me out of my simple wool jacket,



tucking it over his arm and pulling my hand through his other elbow. When the doors opened, he escorted me up to the coat check and maitre d' without ever letting go of me. If for no other reason, I'd have been falling for him because of that. No matter what, he seemed to genuinely love touching me—whether in passion or just tenderness. Until now I hadn't known how much I missed that kind of personal contact with another being in my long, lonely immortal existence.

We were shown to a curved booth in the back corner of the candlelit restaurant. The single bench wrapped around about half of the circular table, making it easy for us to sit side by side without looking silly. We both faced out into the room, but the way it was arranged with dividers, the only people we could see were the waitstaff who came into our cubbyhole.

"Do you trust me to order?" Jack asked in a low voice after the wine steward poured us each a glass of white and then disappeared.

"Of course." Somewhere during the limo ride, I'd figured it out. We were reenacting a scene from *Lady Lust*. Clever Jack to have figured out that my fantasies and my reading material ran closely together. That might have explained last night's phone call too—there was a similar scene early in the novel. Of course the appetizer in my kitchen had been off-script, but I didn't think either of us minded about that. Content with where he was going, I was more than willing to follow along.

When the waiter came by, Jack ordered without benefit of a menu. Seared scallops, followed by rare steaks and a single chocolate soufflé to share for dessert. It wasn't quite what Holly and her hero Nick had ordered. Jack's steak was much bigger, and Holly had dined on escargot instead of scallops followed by steak, but I was willing to be flexible. I didn't like snails and Jack needed plenty of red meat in his diet. Particularly since I'd probably be taking a little blood later. I'd fed off a blood bag earlier, but the extra-sexual rush of feeding off a lover was too yummy to resist, especially when my lover was an immortal with the ability to regenerate.

The scallops were perfect and the dry white wine went with them beautifully. Jack speared one plump morsel on his fork and held it to my lips then I fed one to him. We alternated until both plates were empty. Nearly invisible waiters replaced our empty plates with crisp salads, which, fortunately, we each ate ourselves. I don't think feeding each other arugula dripping with raspberry vinaigrette would have been pretty.

"So what did your friends have to say about our date tonight?"

We sipped our wine as we waited for the main course to arrive.

"What makes you think I told them?" I teased, rubbing the tip of my boot along his calf under the table.

"Because they'd have asked if you were going to see me again and you're too honest to have prevaricated."

"Fine. Jessamy, the Regency debutante, thinks I should be careful but have a good time. Danette, she's the French nun-turned-courtesan, thinks I should jump your bones."

"And your opinion?" His hand slid under the table cloth and inched the hem of my skirt up above my knee so he could lay his palm near the clip of my stocking.

I lifted my glass and smiled. "Who says I can't do both?"

Dessert was destined to be the interesting part of the meal if he followed the script from the book. All through the main course I kept my legs pressed together, waiting to see if he'd really do it—and waiting to see if I'd let him.

The chocolate soufflé arrived with a dish of strawberries and fresh whipped cream. Our wineglasses were replaced with champagne flutes, the bubbles glittering gold in the candlelight. Once again Jack fed me bites and I fed him. And yes, he followed the plot of the book, sliding his hand up under my skirt and between my thighs. Without hesitating a moment I widened my legs, sure that the long tablecloth hid me completely from the waist down.

"So creamy," he murmured as he licked a dollop of whipped cream from a strawberry. At the same time he slipped a finger between the lips of my pussy. His fingertip flicked my clit just as his tongue flicked a spoonful of warm chocolate. "Hot. Rich. Moist."

I let my eyes fall closed. His finger circled my clit and the spoon bumped against my lips. I opened my mouth and took the bite—dark, rich chocolate, fresh strawberry, sweet cream.

"Eyes open, sweetheart." He stopped rubbing. "That's part of the fun, remember? We keep talking, keep eating."

Right. I lifted my spoon and fed Jack another bite, relieved when he continued his intimate massage.

"So. How about those Tigers?" I know my voice shook, and I didn't even know if it was baseball season. It was just the only thing I could think of to say.

"Who cares?" He combed his fingers through my wet curls while he plied his dessert spoon with the hand further away from me. "How's your new website coming along?"

"Who cares?" I was fighting now not to pant as my arousal ratcheted. Jack caught the frantic look on my face because right when I was about to scream out my orgasm, he leaned over and kissed me, capturing my cry with his lips. I must have nipped unintentionally because I tasted blood along with chocolate and champagne, and that made the climax even longer and harder.

Jack finished the dessert as I squirmed damply in my seat and gasped for breath. Thank goodness neither of us had a human's sensitivity to alcohol because we both guzzled the rest of our champagne.

"But...you didn't..." I began just before we stood to leave. Apparently Jack had taken care of the check in advance because there was nothing brought to the table.

"No worries," he said with a wink. We picked up my coat and he held it for me then we walked out to the car, arm in arm. "I'll get my turn in the limo."

How had I forgotten the limo scene? As the driver closed the panel, I realized it was one-way glass. We could see him but he couldn't see us. Perfect. I slipped my coat off and tossed it onto the seat across from us while Jack did the same with his suit jacket. I loved the way his fine cotton shirt stretched over his broad chest and shoulders, and how even the conservative suit and tie didn't make him look quite civilized.

"I thought this would be better than more champagne." Jack opened a compartment beside his seat and pulled out a chilled bottle of sparkling water along with two flutes.

"You read my mind." I *was* thirsty. I held the glasses while he poured.

"To a beautiful night," he offered, toasting me. "I hope it's not over yet."

I echoed the sentiment and we both drank. Then he set the glasses and bottle back in the compartment and turned back to me, arms open. I moved onto his lap without hesitation. This time I took the lead with the kiss, knotting my hands in that luxurious thick hair and covering his mouth with mine. I straddled his thighs so my soaked pussy rubbed against the bulge of his trousers. I didn't even spare a thought to staining the wool. His response was more than enough evidence that he didn't care.

My tongue was inside the heat of his mouth, exploring every ridge and hollow, even though by now I had them memorized. He tasted of dinner, dessert and wine, and under it all I could still taste a trace of my own juices from earlier. His busy, talented hands cupped the sides of my breasts, his thumbs finding and rubbing my taut nipples through the fabric of my dress. With long sleeves, a moderate neckline and a back zipper, there was no way for him to get into the dress without taking it completely off, but he managed to shift my bra down so that my nipples were only covered by the thin wool knit. The faint scratchiness from the cloth only heightened the sensation from his fingers. I began to ride his cock, shifting back and forth along that thick ridge with rapidly growing hunger.

"Just a second." He broke his mouth away from mine and set me beside him on the seat. I watched avidly as he unfastened his belt and trousers then lifted his ass and slid

his pants down to his knees. Pulling a condom from his pocket, he sheathed himself then reached over to drag me back onto his lap. "Ready."

"I'm beginning to think you're always ready." Clenching my hands on his shoulders, I eased my pussy down to glove his upright cock. My memories hadn't been inflated. He really did fill me perfectly, as if our two bodies had been made to go together.

"Seems that way whenever I'm around you. Or talking to you on the phone. Or thinking about you."

He kept one hand on my waist, guiding my movements as I began to rock back and forth on that steely shaft. I kept it as slow as I could at first, drawing out the pleasure for both of us. It was about forty-five minutes back to my house, so we didn't have to rush.

We'd only been together once before tonight, but I'd already learned the cues of Jack's body. We climbed the peak together, me matching my speed to the heightening intensity in his eyes, in his rigid muscles. When we were both close, he reached up to tug his tie loose and fumble open the top two buttons of his shirt. That was all the invitation I needed. I lowered my mouth to the ridge of muscle connecting his neck and shoulder and bit.

"Ari." It was a growl more than a shout. His taut body quivered as he flexed his hips up, ramming his cock deep into my cunt. Just as I fell into the vortex myself, I felt him swell then felt his body shake with the force of his climax. I sucked a mouthful of his rich, hot blood and came. My pussy gripped his, prolonging Jack's orgasm, which in turn prolonged my own. We sat there for what seemed like an eternity, trembling in each other's arms. I licked the tiny wound on his neck—my saliva does have a small healing agent in it—and the dots disappeared. Sad, really. I'd have liked to be able to mark him as mine.

"We're going to kill each other, aren't we?" I laid my cheek against his warm shoulder and snuggled into his lap. The mating knot would go down in a few minutes. I really didn't mind this enforced snuggling a bit.

"Maybe. I don't care. Do you?" He found a strand of hair that had escaped my bun and tucked it behind my ear.

"Not really," I admitted. I listened as the steady thump of his heartbeat gradually slowed to its normal speed. "Will you come in when we get back to my house? Maybe even...stay the night?"

"I'd like that."

He kissed my temple and held me snugly against him until we were almost back to Glenview. Then he produced a plastic grocery bag and a pack of tissues from under the seat. We both cleaned up a little and he knotted the trash into the bag. I did love a man who thought ahead. We each had another glass of water, finishing just as the driver opened the back door.

"Thanks, Clancy." Jack shook the driver's hand. "See you soon."

"Friend of yours?" The limo drove away. I waited on my front walk while Jack walked over and grabbed a gym bag from his truck. Then I handed him my key and let him follow me into my living room.

"I know lots of people," he said with a shrug. "I own a bar, remember?"

I remembered. He was gregarious, social and fun. I was an introverted geek who rarely left her house. Even though I knew our relationship could never last, I smiled at Jack and led him up to my bedroom.

## Chapter Five

I'd never spent the whole night in bed with someone before—Frederic had made me come to him, or he'd come to me, but he'd never spent the night nor allowed me to stay in his room. That would have implied an intimacy he would never have permitted. When I woke Monday morning with Jack's warm body pressed against my back, I thought at first I was still asleep and dreaming. His arm was anchored around my waist, holding me tight to his chest, and I could feel little prickles on my back and thighs from his chest and leg hair. That, I think, was the detail that finally convinced me I wasn't dreaming. Then I heard a sound like a grumpy bear and had to stifle a giggle. My werewolf lover *snored*.

Well, it was nice to know he had some flaws. Once I got used to them, his snores were kind of endearing. I fluffed my pillow, wiggled my butt into a more comfortable position against his groin and went back to sleep.

The next time I woke, it was to find myself flat on my back with Jack above me, raining kisses on my stomach and hips.

"Good morning, sunshine." He seemed to notice the instant my eyes fluttered open.

"Good morning." I took stock of my surroundings and smiled up at him. "Or, more accurately, good afternoon."

"Picky, picky," he taunted, tickling the inside of my thigh. "Why? Do you have anywhere you have to be?"

"Just my computer. What about you?"

"Staff meeting at the bar this evening. Nothing until then." He started dropping little sucking kisses on the inside of my knee, slowly working his way up.

"In that case," I replied, leaning my head back on the pillow, "it's a very good morning indeed."

With slow deliberation he nibbled and plucked at the tender skin of my inner thighs then around the edges of my mound before finally flicking his tongue along my lips. Just as I settled back to enjoy, he surprised me.

"Roll over," he murmured. "I haven't spent nearly enough time enjoying your gorgeous backside."

Right. Like my oversized ass was anywhere near gorgeous. But if Jack wanted to think so, I certainly wasn't going to argue with him.

"Such soft, silky skin," he said as he ran a row of kisses up my spine. One hand kneaded one of my cheeks while he used the other to prop himself up. He nibbled the back of my neck then nipped down on the tendon between neck and shoulder.

"Jack!" I remembered him biting me there the first time we'd made love. It was a very...possessive...action, and that idea turned me on even more than his touch. I lifted up on my knees, silently urging him to take me from behind.

"Mmm, what an inviting target." He moved behind me to take my ass in his hands. He surprised me by kissing my plump cheeks, nibbling and sucking hard enough to bring up hickeys. Once again I was sorry that they'd fade so quickly. I'd enjoy wearing his marks while they lasted.

When his tongue swirled around my anus, I jumped.

"You don't like that?"

"No, it's not that. I just...wasn't expecting it."

"It's part of your body, Ari. One with lots of lovely nerve endings. I don't find anything dirty or unpleasant about it. But if you don't want me to play with it, I won't."

His middle finger rubbed along my labia, easing into my wet slit. I wiggled my butt at the pleasure then wiggled it more as Jack laid his thumb against my sphincter. Yeah, there really were nerve endings there. The pressure felt better than I'd ever thought it would.

"That first night," I said tentatively. "You mentioned... You said you'd like..."



"To fuck you there?" He increased the pressure of both thumb and finger just a touch then nuzzled the base of my spine. "I'd love to. I want to feel you everywhere, sweetheart, possess you in every way a male can possess a female. But it's up to you."

"I think...I think I'd like that." I couldn't believe I'd just said it, but once I did, I felt liberated. Of course I'd wondered what it was like. What woman hadn't?

"Stay right there." Jack leaned over the edge of the bed and I heard him rustling around in his duffle bag. He'd pulled a whole box of condoms out of that bag the night before, plus a brand-new pink vibrator that he'd given me as a present. I wasn't too surprised to see him toss a tube of lubricant onto the bed. My head was turned to the side he was sitting on, so of course I watched as he rolled on a condom and picked up the lube.

"Okay, now first, I want to make sure you're nice and relaxed." He knelt beside me and began to stroke my pussy with one hand. "I want you to come for me, Ari. Come all over my hand." He slid his other wrist over to my mouth, offering me his blood while his fingers went right to work on my swollen clit. Jack already knew exactly how to make me come.

"That's it, just a little more," he coaxed as the tightness coiled in my womb. "Bite me, sweetness."

I bit down on his wrist and sucked a few drops of blood. Jack groaned in pleasure and pinched my clit, sending me over. While I was still pulsing, he nudged my mouth away from his wrist and moved to kneel behind me, between my feet. I heard the squirt of the lube, and then Jack's hand was back on my pussy while the other hand rubbed the slick gel into my puckered asshole. He stretched the tender opening with one finger then two, pushing more of the lube in each time. Finally he added a third finger and held his fingers still, preparing me for an even greater stretch.

"Okay so far?" His voice had that deep vibrato it got whenever he was really aroused.

"Mmm. Perfect." I pushed out against his fingers as he pushed them in more. I'd read about that trick and was glad to know it really worked. The sensation of being penetrated in my rear was a powerful one, and it wasn't long before I began to pulse my hips, wanting him to move.

"You ready for more?"

I knew if I said no he'd stop. That knowledge was so sweet, so liberating that I couldn't wait to move forward. "Fuck me there, Jack. Fill my ass with your cock."

"Jesus!" He pulled his fingers out so quickly it almost stung then I heard the lube again and the slick sound of him slathering the gel on his sheathed cock. Moments later he was back, the blunt tip of his thick member nudging my rosebud sphincter. Very slowly he pushed inside as I pushed back against him. "God, this is tight. Feels. So. Fucking. Good."

It stung, especially at first, but once the flare of the crown passed the entrance, it wasn't so bad. Then all I felt was the slow, smooth glide as he invaded me fully, until his hips were touching mine and his heavy balls pressed against my pussy.

He held perfectly still, letting us both get accustomed to the sensation.

"Move," I whispered finally.

He did. With exquisite care he pulled back until just the head of his penis was inside then just as cautiously pushed back in. Somehow he managed to get one hand beneath me, to cup my mound. One finger rubbed against my clit with every stroke of his long, hard cock inside my ass.

It was different but intense, and incredibly intimate. It didn't take long before I was bucking my hips to meet each thrust and whimpering every time he pulled back. He seemed to know exactly how much pressure to bring into play on my clit as well, keeping me right on the edge without pushing me over before he was ready. The pleasure just kept going and going and going...

Until finally he slammed himself deep and pressed down on my clit. I felt his orgasm pulse through his cock, felt the tip of the condom filling with his seed, and I fell

over as well. White-hot sparks radiated from my spine all the way through my body until even my scalp tingled along with the soles of my feet. I slumped forward, fighting for breath as the spasms rippled through me, over and over again.

Gently, Jack eased us back onto our sides, dropping kisses on my neck and shoulder, his arm snug around my waist.

“Thank you. That was – amazing.”

“Mmm.” I tipped my head so he could keep up the assault on my neck. “Thank *you*. It was my fantasy, remember?”

“Yeah. Don’t kid yourself. That was every guy’s fantasy too. A hot woman who lets you do anything you want to her? Trust me, I’m not all that unselfish. I’m enjoying every second.”

We lay there drowsing until he was able to pull out then we walked hand in hand to the bathroom to clean up. I’d have thought I was completely wiped out, but the experience of showering with Jack proved otherwise. We didn’t get clean until the water ran cold.

“Can I see you again tomorrow?” he asked as I walked him to the door the next morning. “I’m busy at work tonight, but I can leave the assistant manager in charge tomorrow night.” He stood there, looking so sexy with his damp dark hair, his tight faded jeans and his soft gray sweatshirt.

As if I were going to say no? “If you want.”

He leaned down and kissed me. “I haven’t gotten nearly enough of you yet, Ariana. How about tomorrow we do something mundane and go to a movie?”

I giggled. “Do you think we’ll actually watch the show?” I couldn’t believe how bold I’d gotten in his company.

Jack threw his head back and laughed. “Probably not, but it will be fun to find out.” Then he kissed me hard and walked out my door, swaggering every step of the way.

\* \* \* \* \*

He was right. We didn't watch much of the movie. Honestly, I can't even remember what we saw. We sat in the back row and kissed and petted and generally acted like teenagers. Then we went back to my house and made love in earnest.

Wednesday night we went to Jack's. He picked me up and took me to his bar. Watching him at work was a real treat. I met one of his sisters, a cousin and several friends, and was stunned and delighted when Jack showed no embarrassment or hesitation about introducing me to them. Dara, his youngest sister, sat with me in Jack's roped-off booth. We were sharing a pizza and had chatted for an hour or so, mostly about books, but she shared several stories of Jack as a child. The obvious affection between Jack and his family touched something deep in my heart even while I couldn't help envying it.

"Are you going to be at Jack's for the family dinner tomorrow night?" she asked. After giggling together at the silliness of the college girls on the dance floor, I'd gotten over being intimidated by the tall, leggy brunette. I knew she worked as a computer analyst and had just ended a relationship with a human.

"No," I answered. "I don't think we're at the meet-the-family stage..."

"Yes," Jack interrupted, sliding in beside me. "If you want to, that is. I intended to ask you later." He reached out to flick his sister on the tip of her nose.

"Oh." I had no idea how to respond to that. Why did he want me to meet his family? Why did he want them to meet me? What would they think about their son dating a vampire? I hadn't spent enough time around lycanthropes to be sure whether or not they had issues with mixed-species relationships.

My panic must have shown on my face. Dara reached across the table and took my hand. "Cool. You'll like the folks. And don't worry, they're not racists. Jack hasn't brought a girl home to meet them in—forever. They'll be thrilled."

So that was that. I nodded and smiled and continued to wonder if I'd fallen down the rabbit hole.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I can't believe you had all your windows UV treated in less than a week." Jack had sprung that surprise on me when I'd argued that I couldn't stay the next day for his family dinner. So here I was in his kitchen, watching him cook and waiting anxiously for his relatives to arrive. He'd poured me a glass of wine to ease my nerves, but I sat on a barstool at his kitchen counter like a cat perched on a precarious limb.

"My cousin Kevin runs a construction firm. March is a pretty slow month so he was able to get it done right away." He finished chopping an onion and tossed it into the stockpot simmering on the stove. "You want to tear up that bag of lettuce for the salad?"

Okay, that was within my limited culinary skills. "What are you making?"

"Chicken paprikash. Good Eastern European food—kinda goes with the name Marczeski. My parents and grandparents are originally from Hungary and Poland. But other people will bring all kinds of food, so there'll be something for everyone."

He'd already made sure I'd had some blood this morning, so anything I ate would be just for the pleasure of it. "How many people did you say are coming?"

"I don't know. Twelve adults, maybe? Half a dozen kids? Depends on who's available. Not everybody can get off work on a Thursday night."

I rinsed the lettuce and shredded it with my fingers into a bright red bowl. Jack tossed a couple of chopped carrots into the pot and wiped his hands on a dish towel just as the doorbell rang. He flashed me a grin. "Be right back."

To my immense relief it was Dara, carrying a bottle of wine and a bouquet of flowers. She kissed Jack's cheek then hopped up on the stool beside me. "I figured you could use the moral support of a familiar face being the first one here."

"You have no idea." I reached for a ripe tomato and a knife and started adding that to the salad as she poured herself a glass of wine.

"Well, I didn't want the rest of them to scare you away." She grinned wickedly, her dark eyes twinkling. "I figured you'd want some support when you meet Cousin Eddie

with his Elvis fixation or Aunt Martha, who can talk for hours about her garden slug and aphid problem.”

“She’s not that bad,” Jack objected with a laugh. He minced a few cloves of garlic with knife strokes so swift my eyes could barely follow it. “Better than Dad and his Civil War stories.”

“Oh yeah. At least he was actually there.” Dara rolled her eyes. “Uncle Mike likes to discuss the Greeks and Romans and I know he isn’t *that* old.”

Jack waved his knife toward Dara. “Behave, brat, or I’ll tell Susan you’re just dying to change diapers. Besides having to actually do it, Mom will be on you for hours about how it’s time to have a bunch of kids of your own.”

“Same goes, bro. With Jen working in Canada, that leaves you as the oldest unmarried child for Mom to pick on.” Dara’s brown eyes flickered over to me.

I laughed. “You two remind me of my sister and myself. We used to argue like that all the time.” I hadn’t thought about Thalia in years, and tears stung at the corners of my eyelids. I’d read her death notice in the newspaper only twenty years after I’d left home. Frederic had allowed me that much—wherever he’d taken me, he’d let me read the New York papers.

“Hey, toss me that bell pepper, would you?” Jack’s voice pulled me out of my moment of misery. “And you, brat, go answer the door. Another car just pulled into the drive.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Somehow, I made it through that crazy noisy meal without curling up into a ball and whimpering. Jack’s relatives were all curious about me but, despite the warnings from Jack and Dara, none of them were pushy or rude about it. His mother and father were kind and welcoming, and even his aunt and uncle—the alphas of the werewolf pack—were pleasant as we ate and talked. I don’t remember much of what was said, and I certainly couldn’t have sorted out all of the various relatives, but no one did

anything to make me feel unwelcome. In fact, Jack's mother made a point of giving me a hug before she left. When they were finally all gone, Jack and I settled into the big leather couch in front of the fireplace and I shook my head.

"Wow."

"They liked you." He nuzzled my ear. "No big surprise there."

"That was—overwhelming," I admitted. "Do you all get together like that often?" I'd been particular surprised to see how accepting they were of alternative lifestyles. One of Jack's brothers spent the whole time holding hands with a handsome blond werewolf—also male. The love between the two was a beautiful sight. Jack's cousin Susan had two husbands. One was another werewolf and the other a lovely man with an Irish accent whose race I couldn't identify, though he'd had distinctly pointed ears. Both men had doted on the baby equally, to the point where I never did figure out which was the biological father. Best of all, not one other person in the Marczeski family even seemed to blink at the unorthodox relationships in their midst. And they were all perfectly accepting of Jack introducing a vampire. My head was still reeling.

"Once a month or so, unless there's a birthday or holiday. And that was just the local clan. If it's a big deal, then we get a bunch who come back from Wisconsin and Toronto and everywhere else. A wolf pack is a pretty close-knit family."

"Hard to believe that everyone here was an immortal. It looked just like a family from some TV show until I remembered that when your dad started telling his war stories, he was honestly *at* Gettysburg."

"Well, actually, so was I," Jack replied with a wry laugh. "I just don't like to talk about it. I've been in a couple wars—it isn't pretty regardless of the technology."

I knew lots of immortals had served in wars. There have always been a few humans who knew about us and were willing to make use of our special abilities. Most immortals were given special assignments rather than serving in the trenches since they couldn't afford to have humans see them regenerate if they were wounded. I was absolutely sure some of those "special assignments" had been pretty horrible. I picked

up his hand and kissed it then changed the subject. "Your niece I met—she was actually your brother's granddaughter, wasn't she?"

"Yeah, the whole overlapping generations thing takes some getting used to, I guess. Mostly we just say cousin and ignore the details."

"All these years I never knew there were immortals who lived like this," I told him. "Not always moving, changing identities, living alone. It's like I've been in a box for the last century."

"Well, we do have to move and change identities now and then. The perils of being an immortal. But we have things set up so we can mostly bounce back and forth between the pack here, the one in Wisconsin and the one in Canada. That's why we always keep our last name, just changing around the first and middle ones. So we always know we belong."

"That's so cool." I sighed, leaning my head against his shoulder.

For a little while the only sound in the room was the crackling of the logs in the fireplace. Finally I said, "You know, there's one more thing about you—after all we've done together, I've never seen you as a wolf. You said you can change at will, right? Not just at the full moon." That last was a tease. Most immortals thought the Hollywood versions of our races were pretty funny.

"Right."

"Would you change for me? Let me see that other side of you?" I didn't know why I suddenly wanted this so badly, except that it was important to me to know everything I could about Jackson Marczski. I didn't want any secrets between us. If I couldn't deal with his wolf side, I wanted to know about it now.

"Okay." He set aside the beer he'd been sipping from and stood. He kept his gaze locked on mine as he toed off his sneakers and socks then unbuttoned his oxford shirt. "You sure?"

"I'm sure." He'd seen my fangs. Seemed only fair for me to see his fur. I watched closely, enjoying the show as he stripped.



"Here goes." He stood naked in front of the fireplace, the logs cracking cheerfully behind him. The air around him seemed to blur, like steam rising from a kettle. Then in place of the man I loved stood a large gray and brown timber wolf.

I gasped. He was beautiful, strong and proud. Those eyes, still dark, still intense, watched me just as steadily as they had a moment ago. I dropped to my knees on the floor beside the sofa and held out my arms.

"Come here, Jack."

He moved slowly, gracefully into my embrace. I hugged him, feeling the thick, coarse fur, the strong muscle underneath. He swiped out his tongue and licked my face, making me giggle.

And suddenly he was human again and naked in my arms. The rest came naturally to both of us.

## **Chapter Six**

I saw Jack every night for the next week. Each time the passion flared almost immediately, but we finally got to the point where we could actually go out in public—as long as we'd had time to ourselves before and afterward. On Friday night we sat in the private booth at Lunatics, listening to a band featuring several of Jack's friends and cousins. The music was a little less pounding than before—this group had more of a classic rock sound—and I was actually enjoying it, tapping my foot along with the music. I had my laptop with me, as I did most nights now, and while Jack worked so did I. The arrangement was actually improving my productivity. Who'd have guessed that quiet little Ariana really craved company? I was thriving in the middle of this cheerful, noisy place.

Dani slid in across from us, a worried look on her face. She and Jess had met Jack a few nights earlier, and were being very supportive of our relationship. I was so lucky to have such wonderful friends.

"What's wrong?" I closed my laptop and studied the lines of concern around her eyes. I hadn't expected to see her tonight.

"Do you remember I told you Frederic might be looking for you?" Her eyes widened as she looked up at Jack.

"Ari told me about it," Jack assured her. "Go on."

"I think he's here in Chicago," she said. "One of the witches at the bookstore said someone had come in asking about you this morning." Dani worked nights at a Wiccan bookstore.

I gnawed on my lower lip. Even if it was Frederic, what could he possibly want with me after all this time?

"Thanks for letting us know," Jack said thoughtfully. "I'll do some asking around. He's not going to get anywhere near Ariana."

"Thanks," Dani said with a sigh of relief.

"Are you staying?" I asked her. It would be nice to spend some time with her, but I'd been looking forward to going upstairs with Jack in a little bit.

"No." She winked at me. "I've got a date of my own."

I grinned. "I'll call you tomorrow to get the details."

With a laugh and a peck on my cheek, Dani breezed out of the bar.

"Well," I said to Jack, "this is a little weird."

"You're not afraid, are you? You could move in with me, full-time."

That sounded wonderful, but I didn't want to be asked because he was worried about me. If Jack and I moved in together someday, I wanted it to be for the right reasons, and we weren't there—not yet at least. I leaned my head against his shoulder and laid a hand on his rock-hard thigh. "We'll see. I'm not really worried about it. I can't imagine why he wants to see me. He's ignored me for thirty years."

"I'm not going to let anyone hurt you." His growl was so deep it made me want to wrap myself around him and hold him close.

"I know."

We sat there for a while, listening to the music.

"So," Jack whispered in my ear, finally breaking the silence, "any fantasies left we haven't covered?"

I shook my head. He'd been so good for me this week, making me explore myself and my dreams, both sexual and otherwise. Talking to Jack about my past made me see myself in a whole new light. He'd given me an amazing gift. Even if one day he did move on to another woman I'd still have the self-awareness and confidence he'd helped me discover. I was a strong, independent vampire. I'd survived five decades of virtual

slavery, followed by three on my own. If he left me I'd be devastated but I wouldn't be defeated.

"Come on, there's got to be something." His voice was warm on my ear. "How about making love on the beach?"

"In Illinois, in March? Are you insane?" It was so easy to laugh and tease with Jack.

He shrugged. "So we could go somewhere. Ever been to Hawaii? Or how about Greece—see the land of your ancestors?"

"Beach vacations for a vampire. Now there's a waste of money. I'd have to hide inside all day long."

"So we rent a cabana. Spend all night out walking on the beach when no one else is around, spend all day in bed. I don't see a problem with that." Jack's straightforward take on life never failed to amaze me, but it also always made sense.

"Nothing more aggravating than a man who's always right," I warned him, flicking his hand with two of my fingers. *Seize the day, Ari.* "If you want to, we could go away for a few days. I haven't been back to the ocean in years." My brain was already thinking about how much sunscreen I'd need just for the flights—and getting to and from airports and such. But Jessamy traveled fairly often, so I knew she could help me figure it out.

"Fine, I'll set something up." He squeezed my hand. "Now about tonight. Sure there are no more fantasies we can cover here in Chicago?"

There was only one left, and I was never going to mention it to him.

"I see that look. What is it, sweetness?"

"Nothing." I was sure he'd be offended if he knew.

Jack cupped my chin in his hand and forced me to look him in the eye. "Let's see. It can't be bondage—we've done that, in several forms. Public—we've done that too, at least as much as either of us really want to. Toys—covered. Spanking—well, tried it, didn't like it."

Yeah, he'd spanked me exactly once. Then, when I'd yelped, he'd immediately stopped and kissed my pink butt cheek until the sting had gone away. Jack had no problem dominating me, but he couldn't stand to cause me the least little bit of pain, which was just fine with me.

Jack went on. "Role-playing—not your style. You have no interest in being the Domme. You don't want to play with another woman while I watch—though that might flip my switch. That leaves..."

His big brown eyes narrowed then crinkled in a smile. "You want to know what it's like to be with two men."

I gasped. "No!" Though I was sure he could tell by scent that I was creaming at the idea.

He chuckled. "You're a lousy liar, sweetheart. Don't worry, I'm not going to get pissed. Fantasies are fantasies, after all. I don't think it means you're tired of me yet."

"Hell no." I'd never be tired of Jack. But deep down, didn't every woman wonder how it would feel to have two big strong men both determined to pleasure her?

"Both men just into you or into each other a bit at the same time?" His voice had that low, teasing drawl that sent chills of excitement trickling down my spine.

My jaw dropped as I stared up at him, taking in his wicked, wicked grin. I'd never really taken the idea that far, even in my head. And I couldn't believe Jack was even willing to discuss it. My brain whirled as I pondered the possibilities.

"Me, mostly, I think." I licked my lips as I imagined two Jacks doing wonderful things to my body. Then I made one blond and pictured the two men kissing each other as I watched. My pussy clenched as fluid seeped, dampening my panties and jeans. "Each other—a little. That would be hot too."

"You really want this?" There was still no judgment in his tone, no condemnation, and best of all, no insecurity. He was honestly giving me the choice.

But—I couldn't let him think he wasn't enough for me. God knows he was more man than I'd ever dreamed of having in my life. I shook my head. "Forget it."

"Sweetheart, it's okay if you do." He kissed the side of my ear, tickling it with his tongue. "I'd rather have you explore your fantasies with me than get bored and go looking for them without me. Okay if I pick the other guy?"

"You don't have to..."

He covered my lips with a finger. "I have a friend—I trust him completely. And I know he thinks you're hot because he told me so. He and I—we had a thing for a while, years ago, so there's some chemistry there too, though both of us are way more into women than men. That sound good to you?"

A friend? Who thought I was hot? *Me*? And that meant he'd met me. Who could it be? I'd met any number of Jack's friends here in the bar during the last week.

Jack left the booth and stepped into his office. I went back to my computer, though I was only pretending to work. I couldn't honestly believe Jack was actually setting up a threesome—for me.

Maybe a half-hour passed before he joined me in the booth again. "Upstairs," he said then kissed me deeply. "I thought this would be better on neutral turf, so to speak."

We'd used the apartment above the bar once for a quick tryst, but Jack was right. It wasn't home as his house had already come to feel, so it wouldn't seem as if we were inviting another man to share our private space. Shaking and nervous but excited, I followed Jack up the steps to the apartment.

"Okay, you just sit here." He'd brought me a glass of the mulled wine and blood mixture he'd introduced me to that first night. Easing me down onto the sofa, he moved over to the small stereo system to turn on some soft jazz. The apartment was soundproofed from the bar, a fact for which I was entirely grateful.

"Colin will be here in just a few minutes," Jack said softly. "You remember Colin Fergusson? Medium height, light brown hair, hazel eyes?"

I thought back over the sea of faces I'd seen in the last week. There had been a man—one with a trace of sadness in his expression. "Colin. Isn't he the police detective?"

Jack nodded. "And a werewolf, though from a different pack. He was involved with one of my cousins for a while but it ended badly."

"And you said you and he..." I still wasn't sure how I felt about Jack having had male lovers. While it tantalized in a way, it was a little outside my comfort zone.

"We had a thing for a while too. Before he dated Selma. Actually, it was when he met her that we figured out we were really just friends with a bit of chemistry."

"But you don't think this is going to be weird."

"No. It isn't the first time we've been together since then. With or without a third. Wolves are sensual beings and we get lonely. Until we're mated, hookups happen. Safer with a friend than with a stranger." Werewolves mated for life. That much he'd told me. The thought sent a quiver all the way to my toes.

"Right."

There was a knock on the door then and Jack strode over to open it. "Colin," he said as the other man stepped in. Colin Fergusson was of average build, but I could see that his smaller frame was still nothing but lean muscle. He wore a white T-shirt, jeans and a pair of scuffed cowboy boots, adding an inch or so to his moderate height.

"Jack." The two men clapped each other on the back then Colin turned to me and smiled. "Ariana. Nice to see you again." His warm hazel eyes ran up and down my frame with blatant approval.

"Here." Jack handed Colin a beer, taking the coat from the other man's arms to toss it over a chair. "Glad you were free tonight."

"Me too."

Jack came over and pulled me to my feet, wrapping an arm around my waist. Then he held out a hand to Colin, who stepped over to us as well. I watched the two men

give each other a long, tender kiss, and wetness soaked my panties and jeans. The sight was almost unbelievably sexy as the two powerful males tangled lips and tongues. Jack kept one hand on my waist and Colin followed suit, so I was drawn close to both of them.

"Still up for this, sweetheart?" Jack's voice was low and growly.

"Oh yeah," I agreed. "Thanks, Colin."

"My pleasure, beautiful." After a quick look to Jack for approval, Colin kissed me.

It was...different. He smelled of cigarette smoke and leather as opposed to Jack's scent of soap and, well, him. His lips were thinner and he was much closer to my own height. But it was still nice. Still sexy. Though it might not have been if Jack's hand hadn't been kneading my butt. Knowing Jack was involved, feeling his erection pressed against my hip, gave me the guts to go for it. I kissed Colin back, deeply and passionately. When each man brought a hand up to cup one of my breasts, I gasped and threw my head back.

"Wow."

Jack stepped behind me and pulled my shirt off over my head while Colin watched from the front. I'd invested in some nicer underwear over the last week—thank heavens for late-night mega marts. I'd ordered some even better stuff online but those weren't here yet. Tonight I had on a set in blue lace that was almost an exact match for my eyes and a good foil for my fair skin. Colin licked his lips in approval as Jack cupped the heavy mounds from behind.

"They're sensitive too," he told the other man. "She loves having them sucked. I can't wait to see what she does when we suck both of them at once."

"Hell yeah," Colin agreed. "Why don't we move this to the bedroom?"

"Ari?" Jack raised an eyebrow at me. "You ready for that?"



"Yeah." As long as he was here, I could handle it. This was my fantasy, I reminded myself. I was in control. But Jack would be here to catch me if I fell. And honestly, I couldn't wait to know what it felt like to have two men at the same time.

The bedroom was lit by three fat candles. Now I knew what Jack had been doing while I worked. The double bed was turned down and there was a fresh bottle of champagne in an ice bucket on the dresser. My sexy wolf thought of everything.

Colin stepped up to me and lifted his hand to the button on my jeans. "May I?"

"Sure." I leaned back into Jack, who once again stood behind me. Colin gently peeled my jeans down. I stepped out of the jeans and my socks, glad I'd kicked my shoes off when we'd come into the apartment.

"Jack, you're a lucky bastard," Colin said in a low growly voice I recognized as pure aroused wolf. It wasn't quite as deep as Jack's but it had the same rough tone.

"That I am, Colin. A gorgeous woman, a sexy friend to help me pleasure her. What more could a wolf ask for?"

"I don't know," I interrupted. "But I could ask that you two take some clothes off. I don't want to be the only one in here who isn't dressed."

"As the lady commands." Every once in a while I noticed Colin's voice took on a faint Scots burr. Both men stepped back from me and started to strip. Jack started with his white button-down shirt while Colin leaned against the wall and removed his boots. My eyes darted back and forth between the two, unable to decide which one to watch first. Jack was beautiful, but Colin was hot too, and an unknown quantity.

"Hey, Colin, let me help you with that." As if guessing my dilemma, Jack strode over to Colin and took the hem of the other man's shirt in his hands. He pulled it over Colin's head, his hands caressing his friend's chest as he moved.

Now both of them stood barefooted and bare-chested in front of me, and both sported impressive bulges in the fronts of their jeans. I sat on the foot of the bed and licked my lips. "Help each other with your jeans, please."

“Whatever you want, sweetheart.” Jack reached over and unbuttoned Colin’s jeans. He tucked one hand inside and slowly lowered the zipper then pushed them down. Colin kicked them off his ankles while I just stared. Colin had gone commando, so he was now totally nude. He wasn’t quite as long as Jack but his cock was thicker, nestled in a sandy brown tuft of curls. Instead of the mushroom-shaped head, his was more of an inverted heart, and thick ropy veins circled the shaft. He wasn’t Jack but—yum.

Colin went up on his tiptoes to kiss Jack briefly then he swiftly unbuttoned the fly of Jack’s jeans. He carefully extracted Jack’s cock from his black cotton boxers then knelt to push both down to Jack’s feet and pulled them off as Jack stepped out of them. Kneeling put his face level with Jack’s rampant erection and Colin leaned forward to lick a drop of pre-cum off Jack’s tip.

“Wow.” I cleared my throat and squeezed my thighs together. “You sure you guys need me in the room?”

Both of them turned to me and—there’s no other word for it—they pounced. Both of them hit the bed at the same time, one on either side of me. Each hooked a hand under one of my arms and they dragged me up to the pillows. Jack slid a hand under my back to unhook my bra while Colin dragged my panties down off my legs.

“There. Now everybody’s naked.” Jack leaned up beside me on one elbow while Colin matched the position on the other side. Jack laid one hand on my breast then kissed me slowly and deeply. Colin’s palm cupped my other breast, his thumb just grazing my puckered nipple, and I groaned into Jack’s mouth.

Jack trailed his lips down to my ear and neck while Colin moved over to kiss me again. It was brief and sweet then he too moved lower. Anticipation filled me as both licked and kissed circles around my breasts, studiously ignoring my aching nipples. I arched my back, trying to let them know what I wanted, but neither of them was going to be hurried. Jack moved his hand down to my hip, his fingers tantalizingly close to my dripping pussy. Colin kept his a few inches higher on the pale skin of my belly.

Then as if they'd rehearsed it, both men simultaneously took my nipples in their mouths.

I think I practically levitated off the bed. "Oh. My. God." I know I nearly came right then and there. Having both nipples sucked at once was amazing. My eyes closed, so I'm not sure which man gently opened my labia and which one slipped the tip of a finger into my channel. I was so wet their hands slid easily along the sensitive tissues, making it seem as if their fingers were everywhere at once.

When one of them began stroking my clit in time to the rhythm of the suction on my breasts, I came, a light, rolling climax. Almost immediately I was climbing again, but the men took it as a sign to change things up.

"May I taste?" I wasn't sure if Colin was asking me or Jack, but Jack nodded.

He'd eased my nipple out of his mouth and shifted up on the bed to sit behind me. Holding me back against his chest, Jack covered both of my breasts, still wet and stinging from their lips and teeth. Since I was now sitting up a little, I was able to watch as Colin settled between my legs. I could also see Jack's tanned hands on my ivory skin and feel his cock pressed against my spine as Colin began to lick my pussy, dragging his tongue along my slit in slow, savoring strokes.

"Watch him, Ari," Jack whispered in my ear. "Look how hot you make him, how hungry. He couldn't wait to taste your cream, just like he can't wait to feel your mouth on his cock, or better yet, your sweet little pussy gripping him tight. And I'm going to be inside you as well, loving you, pleasing you, making you scream because you are the sexiest damn woman I've ever known."

"Hell yes." Colin paused in his ministrations just long enough to mutter that agreement. Then he slid two fingers into my cunt and went back to nibbling on my swollen clit. My fangs were extended and my womb clenched—I was so close to coming again. Then Jack lifted one arm and brought his wrist to my mouth. "Bite me, sweet thing."

I did, tasting the sweet, potent flavor of his blood, and my pussy gripped down on Colin's hand as he finger-fucked me. This time my orgasm was a starburst, instant and so powerful I almost blacked out. The two men eased me down together, Jack with soothing words, Colin with long slow licks. When we came out of it, I lay there in Jack's arms, feeling his cock pulse against my spine. Colin knelt between my knees, looking up at us, stroking his own cock in a firm grip.

"Time to suit up," Jack whispered, moving out from behind me. He grabbed a condom off the pile he'd placed on the nightstand. Colin stepped off the side of the bed and did the same, taking a moment to stroke Jack's taut butt as they passed.

"How do you want to do this?" Jack sat beside me and nibbled on my ear.

I shrugged, not sure what would work best.

"You on the bottom," Colin told Jack. He leaned over to pick up the tube of lubricant sitting next to the pile of rubbers.

Jack raised one eyebrow then nodded and stretched out on the bed. "Come here, Ari." He patted his groin, next to his cock, which was pointing straight up in the air.

Trembling with anticipation, I straddled Jack's hips, easing my drenched pussy down over his erection. I was glad I'd be facing him...it just seemed less awkward somehow. The thought of having two cocks inside me at the same time was exhilarating and I caught my breath as Colin knelt behind us, between Jack's legs. Once I'd taken all of Jack inside me, I heard Colin squirt some lube into his palm and felt him spread the cool gel around my anus.

"You have a world-class ass, Ariana." From the reverence in his tone, I knew he was serious.

I still found it hard to believe that two — *two* — sexy werewolves both thought pudgy little me was hot, but I'd come far enough in the last two weeks to accept that at least to them, I really was. I began to rock up and down on Jack's cock while Colin slid first one finger then two into my hole.

Oh. Wow. Double penetration was definitely intense, even if it was only his fingers. I bent low over Jack, holding on to his shoulders. I quit trying to move and just held myself still, letting him thrust up into me. Colin's fingers in my ass set up a counterpoint in time, pushing in as Jack pulled out. The twin sensations set my whole brain whirling.

"Harder," I managed to whisper to Jack. He obeyed immediately, pounding up into me with quick, fierce strokes. Colin kept up. He added a third finger, stretching my rectum just to the point of pain.

My breathing was nothing but a series of strangled cries and ragged inhalations. Jack insinuated his hands between our chests to pinch and rub my nipples, showing no mercy or gentleness this time. I loved it. I craned my neck downward, found his shoulder and bit.

Hot, rich blood filled my mouth. Stars flashed in front of my eyelids. Jack shouted my name as his penis knotted in my pussy. I felt the pulse of his orgasm filling the rubber as my pussy clamped down and rippled around him.

Colin shouted too—not my name or even Jack's, just a wordless exclamation as his body jerked and shuddered behind me. He held his hand steady in my ass as my convulsions eased. Now I could hear him stroking himself with his other hand. I was surprised that he hadn't actually fucked me—but I couldn't say I was sorry. What we'd shared had been intimate, but now that the sexual bliss was winding down, I was a little embarrassed about the whole thing.

"Back in a few." Colin withdrew his hand, kissed my spine then left the bed.

I heard the toilet flush and water running in the bathroom. Meanwhile Jack cupped my face in his hand, drawing me down for a long, tender kiss. "You okay?"

I know my eyes were shining as I smiled down at him. "Wonderful." Now I knew what I wanted and what my limits were. And I knew that Jack would be there for me, to let me discover those limits for myself.

A few seconds later Colin came back into the room, a wry smile on his handsome face. "Thanks for calling me, Jack. It was an honor."

Jack lifted me off him, tugging just a little since his cock was still partially swollen. We both sat up in the bed and Jack held out his hand to Colin. "Thanks—for everything." I knew he was thanking Colin for somehow knowing not to take that final step.

Colin leaned down and kissed me then bussed Jack on the lips as well. "I'd say anytime but none of us would mean it. You two take care. See you around."

He picked up his clothes and went out into the living room to dress, closing the bedroom door behind him. Jack and I sat there in silence until eventually we heard the apartment door open and close as well. Jack finally got up and went to the bathroom to get rid of the condom then rejoined me on the bed.

"So just the two of us from here on out?" he asked me. His hand toyed with a long strand of my hair, his dark eyes bored into mine. "For as long as it lasts?"

"I think so." I nodded. "I hope that doesn't bother you."

"Having you all to myself?" His chuckle was raspy and ragged. "Hell no."

I had no problem with that. He was more than enough to fulfill all of my fantasies all on his own.

## **Epilogue**

"I can't believe you've become a regular at a bar," Danette teased, sipping on her pink Cosmopolitan in the reserved booth at Lunatics. It was a Thursday evening in early April. Jack and I had been together for long enough that my friends were used to him by now.

"And a wolf bar at that," Jessamy added ruefully. Jess was a sweetie, but a little class-conscious, and yeah, hanging out with Jack, I'd finally sorted out the class struggle between vamps and wolves. So some vamps thought because they didn't get furry they were superior. Idiots. Jack Marceski was the best man I'd ever met—of any species.

"Ummm...sitting right here." That was Dara, who sat next to me on my side of the booth. We were getting to be good friends too.

"Sorry, dear." Jess did have the grace to look truly embarrassed for her gaffe. That British breeding still showed through, even after two hundred years.

"No problem." Dara smiled and gestured to the waitress to bring another round of drinks.

"Someone's coming," Danette said. My back was to the main part of the bar, so I couldn't see who was approaching. "He's kind of cute too."

"In a creepy sort of way," Jess whispered.

I felt the man stop at my elbow and the little hairs on the back of my neck immediately stood straight up.

"Ariana," he said in that snide, condescending voice I'd learned to hate. "It's about time I found you. You've been punished long enough for your disobedience. Get your purse. You're coming home."

My table companions went silent as I turned to face Frederic, the man who had turned me nearly a century ago and had then held me captive for decades. Drawing in a deep breath, I stood. I crossed my arms over my chest and raised one eyebrow.

"Frederic. Hasn't anyone staked you yet? What a shame."

Jack moved up beside me and started to pull me away. I knew my wolf would be feeling downright murderous, and I held up one hand to keep him from ripping Frederic's heart out, right there and then. While I might not know where our relationship was going yet, I did know Jack would always be protective of his friends—and lovers. I liked to think I qualified as both.

"I see you're still eating well." Frederic's nostrils flared in disgust as he looked at my low-cut peasant top and jeans. Knowing Jack adored my curves made me much happier about flaunting them. "And you still don't know how to dress."

"What do you want, Frederic?" I deliberately made my voice sound bored. "I'm kind of busy right now."

"I'm ready to take you back. Now come along." He looked stunned that I'd even asked him to repeat himself.

"You've got to be kidding. You turned me, abused me and ditched me. Why the hell would I want to come back to you?" I was just warming up now. A month ago I'd never have had the courage to stand up to Frederic, but now I was enjoying every minute of ripping him a new one—all the more so because of the approving smiles of my friends and the pride that shone in Jack's dark eyes.

"You belong to me," Frederic said. "When Alonzo came to me and told me you hadn't died—"

"Alonzo? How did he know I was alive?"

Frederic shook his head, as if brushing aside my question as unimportant. When I stared him down, he answered. "He saw you in Cleveland last Christmas. I've been searching the whole damn Midwest trying to find you."



Cleveland. I had gone there with Jess to visit a friend for a few days between Christmas and New Year's. I hadn't spotted Frederic's friend Alonzo at any of the festivities she'd dragged me to, but apparently he'd seen me. Oh well. I was damn tired of hiding, even if before it had only been from myself.

"I'm not going anywhere with you, Frederic, and I don't owe you a god-damn thing. Get out." I eyed him up and down. Slender and pale with short black hair and pale green eyes, he was handsome enough in an effeminate sort of way, I supposed. But he inspired nothing in me but disgust. Not fear anymore and certainly not passion.

"Quit stalling, Ana. It's time to go. I'm your master, remember."

He'd always called me Ana, never Ari. And I'd hated it. Then I committed the ultimate sin. I laughed. I looked at him and just burst into giggles.

"Go away, Frederic," I gasped between bouts of amusement. "Get out of here before you get your scrawny ass kicked."

"By whom?" he sneered. "This...wolf?" He curled his lip at Jack and reached out to tug on my sleeve.

Before any of us saw him move, Jack had the skinny vamp in a headlock. "Your call, sweetheart. Do I just throw him out, or do I make sure he can never come back?"

Several of Jack's friends and family had surrounded us, along with my friends. They were all immortals of one sort or another—there were no humans within earshot.

"He's not worth it." I gazed up into Jack's eyes and realized all over again how much I cared for him. Then I turned to Frederic and let my fangs show this time.

"You will leave Lunatics, and you will never return. If you're stupid enough to set foot in here again, I won't be responsible for what happens to you. Secondly, you will leave Chicago. Same goes. I have a lot of friends here." There was a murmur of approval from the crowd at that one. "Finally, if I ever hear that you're claiming to be anyone's master ever again, I will personally drive a pool cue through that shriveled raisin you call a heart. And any two people in this bar will hold you down while I do it. Is that clear, Frederic?"

The vampire male looked around at the crowd of menacing wolves, vamps and even Fae. When he finally registered the magnitude of the threat, he nodded frantically.

I jerked my thumb at the door. "Take out the trash, darling. He's stinking up the place."

The feral glow in Jack's eyes promised there'd be a little roughing up along way as he dragged Frederic's unresisting form to the bar's rear exit. I had no problem with that. Frederic deserved a little pain. He'd heal. I just didn't want his death on Jack's conscience.

Putting the past behind me, I slid back into the booth beside a beaming Dara.

All three of my friends raised their glasses.

"To Ariana," Danette said with a shaky smile. "We're all so glad you've finally found a guy worth your time."

"And even better," Jessamy added, beaming proudly. "You've found yourself. The strong, loving woman we always knew was in there."

"Cheers," Dara added. "Way to kick some ass."

They all drank, and so did I.

Jack came back in, wiping his hands. He leaned in beside me and kissed me hard, right in front of everyone, a wolf marking his territory. The whole crowd was applauding when he finished.

"I'm so proud of you, Ari."

I was proud of me too. After a century of isolation, I'd finally come into my own.

## **About the Author**

Cindy Spencer Pape has been, among other things, a banker, a teacher and an elected politician, though she swears she got better. Her degrees are in zoology and she currently works in environmental education, when she can fit it in around writing. She lives in southern Michigan with her husband, two teenage sons, a dog, a lizard and various other small creatures, all of which are easier to clean up after than the three male humans.

Cindy welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her author bio page at [www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com).

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