



FRAN
LEE

First and
TEN

Carnal Reunions

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A Carnal Reunions Tale

By Fran Lee

Resplendence Publishing, LLC

<http://www.resplendencepublishing.com>

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P.O. Box 992

Edgewater, Florida, 32132

First and Ten

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Edited by Jessica Berry

Cover art by Rika Singh

Electronic format ISBN: 978-1-60735-083-5

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Electronic release: November 2009

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Chapter One

To: franjamison@think_tank.com

From: SikorskiK@WIndiU.edu

Hello to all of Gracie's Girls, class of 1999. Once again, thanks to all of you for the flowers and phone calls after my aunt Gracie's passing last winter. You all meant so much to her, and to me.

As I'm sure you all know, our tenth college reunion is coming up this summer. Since I now have Gracie's big rambling house all to myself, I'd like to extend an invitation. If any of you are coming back for the reunion, you're more than welcome to stay here, in your old rooms. Gracie quit taking in college students several years back, so there's no one here but me, and I'd love to have some company while I'm getting the house ready to put on the market. So what do you say? One last time as roommates? It would be great to see all of you again.

Hugs,

Karen

** * * **

She hadn't planned to attend, at least not until she received Karen's guilt-inspiring e-mail. Every instinct she possessed screamed at her to hit the delete key and pretend the e-mail hadn't

arrived, but she just couldn't do that. Karen was having financial problems, and had to sell the historic but dilapidated old Victorian house they had all shared in college.

She shouldn't feel so gun-shy, but even after all these years, it would be hard for her to go back and see all her old pals with the memories of her college years slamming hard into her refurbished self-image. A self-image that had taken her seven long years of analysis and hard work to create.

Fran sighed and rubbed her temples, shoving her reading glasses up onto her sleep-tousled head. She received the formal reunion invitation last week, but she had tossed it. No use reliving the whole college scene just to see how everyone else looked...see how many of her friends had kids...how they had changed over the ten years since she'd last seen them. Listen to them telling stories about new babies and favorite pets and how they'd met their husbands.

All the things Fran had excluded from her life in favor of monetary success and being "her own woman".

Fran was a realistic woman now. She refused to kid herself. She had never found the man of her dreams and settled down to raise a family, mainly because it had taken her seven years to get past her own demented mental image of herself. And now that she finally recognized her own worth, and had learned to love herself as she was, she was way past the desire to flaunt her wares and try to trap some unwary male. Besides, most men in her age bracket were already married...or divorced and on the rebound. Or just looking for a one-night stand. So far, that had never quite appealed, no matter how damned good looking the man in question happened to be.

Men were not a necessity to life. Besides...she'd royally screwed up with the only man she'd ever really wanted any sort of relationship with, long ago.

She ran her fingers through her wild curls and pressed her thumbs against the bridge of her nose. Back then, she'd been so sure the tentative advances he'd made were simply another way for the jock community at WIU to have a laugh-fest at her expense. She'd reacted defensively, tearing his ego into tiny strips. And then he'd basically left her alone. Damn...

Only years later, after many long sessions with her uber-patient therapist, had it flashed with astonishing clarity into her mind. *Jack Gerrard...her dream man... and he'd actually tried to ask her out on a date.* And she had gone off on the man as if he'd just asked her to jump naked into an anthill.

She gave a sigh of resignation. The worst part of it was she had always had the most pathetic crush on the man—most girls had crushes on the hot, sexy hero of the WIU gridiron.

Even in high school, Gerrard was always in the company of cheerleaders and prom queens and the most popular girls. They hung all over him like bees around a honey pot. One look from those riveting blue eyes could make any girl drop her panties with a scream of delight. But Jack had ignored them most of the time, keeping up excellent grades so he could play varsity football. She supposed that was the true attraction.

Sure. There she went, lying to herself again. She had been hot for his ripped body, just like all the other girls. But it had gone deeper than that with her.

He had offered her some modicum of friendship, and good-looking guys did not want to be pals with Fran Jamison. So when that friendship was withdrawn without explanation or reason, it had torn her up inside.

Fran leaned back into her leather desk chair. Getting through high school and completing college had taken every ounce of strength she possessed...but she had managed it with top grades. She had avoided Jack Gerrard as if he no longer existed. She had made certain that she built a shell around her mind and soul, and in college, she had toughened up that outer shell to ward off any painful quips the guys made about her size or her height.

She had graduated first in her class, with a full post grad scholarship to Harvard Business School for her Master's studies. She'd left WIU behind and had never looked back.

She had spent the last ten years methodically building one of the most sought-after consulting firms in the world. She had parlayed a first class education into a multi-million-dollar corporation using government grants for seed money, and a sharp business acumen that took her to the top of her profession. Eight and a half years of working 24/7 on her business. Seven years of therapy. A totally new Fran Jamison.

And now she was actually going back to the beginning of it all? She had more guts than she'd thought. And it almost made her physically ill.

She typed a quick acceptance, and then slowly closed her laptop. She rose from the desk chair and scratched her head as she yawned capaciously. Glancing into the mirror that graced the far wall...the one with the giant slogan hung over it that said "See not the world through the eyes of others", she smiled grimly and said, "Okay, Fran...that gives you exactly four days, thirteen hours and twenty six minutes to get your shit together."

Chapter Two

The computer screen blinked as Jack shut down the accounting program with a weary sigh. One of these days, he was really going to have to break down and hire an accountant. His friend Kyle Gillespie had been bugging him to do that, and he had been considering it for the last few months. He had too much on his plate to have to see to the books for every one of the twelve restaurants in the chain he'd built from the ground up. He'd gotten in so far over his head, he'd taken the leap and had hired Kyle as his assistant, then he'd turned over the operations of each satellite restaurant to experienced managers, and first class chefs, keeping just this one for his own enjoyment. And he did so love being hands-on with this baby!

But keeping the books for all twelve sites was getting to be too much. They were all pretty much self-supporting at this point, with enough left over each year to pay himself a handsome bonus, as well as giving bonuses to all his employees. Things were going better than he'd ever dreamed.

He'd considered the idea of dumping the LLC, fully incorporating and offering stock options, but he just didn't have enough knowledge about stuff like that to make the jump.

Maybe next year.

As he reached to turn off the desktop computer, the e-mail flag popped up, and he sighed wearily. "Now what?" he muttered as he clicked on the e-mail link. As the screen came up, he swore softly beneath his breath, and wished he'd shut it off without checking.

"Ex alert! KA and FD reserved rooms at the Ambassador for Friday p.m. You still working on the plans to cater the Spot's gala dinner dance? Looks like we will be stuck with the Rec Room because every place in town is packed. Let me know. R"

He leaned back in his chair and ran both lean hands through his mussed hair, before scrubbing his palms down over his unshaven face. Of course, Kelli Anne would be there. She wouldn't miss any opportunity to show off her newest catch. Why had he even bothered to hope that his ex would stay in Kansas City and leave him the hell alone? When had she not grabbed every opportunity she could to come back into his life and wreak havoc?

He wondered what had ever possessed him to ask her to marry him in the first place. Never mind. He knew what had possessed him. Kelli Anne Darnell had been the one of the hottest women on campus, and she'd chased him with single-minded purpose. He'd convinced himself that she loved him. He'd even convinced himself that marrying Kelli Anne was better than being alone.

He had no wish to see Kelli Anne again. And she would certainly be at the dinner over at the Spot. If he catered, she would be underfoot all night, as usual. He shook his head. Hell. He would simply have Kyle do the catering for the Wet Spot. Spending the entire night in the unvarnished company of his ex teammates wasn't exactly his idea of an enjoyable evening, anyway.

He had spent four lost years living in the old frat house. He had too many memories stuck in his craw. He had no wish to go back to the place where stupidity had taken over and his good sense had deserted him.

As for socializing at the reunion, he would go to the cocktail party at the Ambassador, but that was about it. That way he would severely limit any contact with Kelli Anne and Faris Devlin.

Faris Devlin. He rubbed his temples gently. That shitty little weasel! He had wondered when his ex would finally tie up with the man who had helped her siphon off almost every penny he had to his name while he was laid up in the hospital. What had it taken? Three years?

No big surprise.

Kelli Anne had loved being the glamorous, pampered wife of a seven million dollar a year pro quarterback, but when he'd been badly injured, lying in traction and splints, with metal pins holding his wrecked shoulder together, she'd seen the end coming, and had scrambled to protect her own interests. Kelli Anne had used a power of attorney she had gotten him to sign so she could handle his affairs, and had switched all of Jack's assets into her name, including the

houses, the cars and the bank accounts. He supposed he couldn't blame her. He was no longer her "trophy male" with a brilliant future.

He had let her keep what she'd already snatched from him in the divorce, provided she never asked him for another dime in the future, and she'd agreed, never imagining that Jack Gerrard would amount to a hill of beans outside the pro football arena.

So she hadn't gotten a dime of the two million dollars in disability insurance that he'd bought long before he became the starting QB for the Kansas City Chiefs. He'd picked up that policy while playing college ball, and now he was damn glad he'd continued making the hefty payments on it through his pro years. That money had been seed money for his restaurant...and that one restaurant had grown to a chain of a dozen over the past five years. Jack Gerrard's First and Ten had become all the rage in four states.

He rubbed the bridge of his nose, then typed a response to the e-mail, and shut down his computer, leaning back into his chair.

Their ten-year reunion. He'd gone to the first five-year reunion after the divorce, hoping he would see *her* there. He leaned his head back and wondered if she would be there this time. He hadn't seen her in all those years. He'd heard that she'd made a big name for herself in the business world. But he had never been able to bring himself to ask her friends if she had married. If she had a family. It was hard to think she might have six kids by now with some lucky man. And he might have been that lucky man...if only he'd thought with his brains instead of his ego so long ago.

No use crying over spilled milk. Life went on. But that didn't mean he had to like it.

He rose irritably and stalked out the door. A five mile run down by the river's edge would feel damn good. Help him get things straight in his mind. Keep him from those recurring day dreams.

* * * *

"Gerrard here." He glanced from his menu program to the caller ID, then pressed the speaker button and continued adding menu items for the following week. "What's up, love?"

"I need you to pick up another passenger when you drive out to the airport tonight, Jack." Karen's voice came through the speaker brightly.

"What flight?" he asked absently as he typed in Chateaubriand with Pinot Noir Sauce.

“Flight 2390 from Chicago. It arrives at 9:45. No shuttles except once every two hours, and you know how bad the taxi service is at the airport.”

His inhaled slowly. Chicago? His body reacted to even the minute possibility...

“Who am I looking for?” His voice was taut.

“Fran Jamison. You’ll have room, won’t you? I know you already have to pick up Bill, Grant and Frank. Should I ask someone else?”

He sat there in stunned silence for a moment before responding. His mind wrapped itself fiercely around the name. Should she ask someone else? No fucking way!

“Um...no...I’ll take the catering van.” He managed to sound calm.

“Thanks, Jack! I owe you! I can’t get away tonight and was so worried!”

“No prob, love...” he replied, and pressed the end button as his breath whooshed out. He stared at Saturday’s lunch menu without seeing it.

She was coming.

His gut clenched and his cock decided it had a mind all its own as it doubled its size in seconds. He shook off the feeling of surreality, and closed down the program, his mind and body warring over what he needed to do next. His mind finally won. Glancing at his watch, he figured he had just enough time to unload the restaurant supplies he’d picked up earlier in the day, and catch a quick shower before he had to leave for the airport. He moved mechanically, in show motion. All he could manage to think was...*she’s coming.*

Chapter Three

“Hey, Karen! I’m at the airport. Did you arrange for a ride?” Fran sidestepped a gaggle of sniffing kids with a frazzled mother trying to herd them along to the baggage pickups, her nose wrinkling. God, how she hated airports! Hundreds of people jammed together like sheep—people who didn’t know how to cover their mouths when they coughed jostling with those begging for nickels and quarters for this charity or that. She gave a firm shake of her head and ignored the bowl a young person wearing an orange robe shoved under her nose. “Sorry...I have no change on me...” she lied.

“Bless you, sister.” The young man smiled beatifically, and she winced at her own lack of resolve as she hesitated and switched her roll-along handle to her left hand. She heaved a long-suffering sigh and used her free hand to fish a small fistful of change from the bottom of her jacket pocket, dumping it into and over the sides of the bowls.

“Thank you very much!” the youth grinned.

“Yeah...sure...” She gritted her teeth as she managed to switch her roll-along case to her right hand again.

She had missed everything that Karen was saying, and all she caught was, “...should be there by now. Probably waiting by the baggage pickup for your flight...”

She barely screeched to a halt before falling over a child who’d bent over to pick up one of the dimes she’d scattered. She almost dropped the phone and just caught it, only to find that she’d disconnected the damn call during her juggling act.

For Pete’s sake! Just get me out of here, Lord!

Unfortunately, not a single saint or deity was paying her the slightest attention.

With a groan of disgust, she craned her neck around the area, looking for the signs that would lead her out of this zoo...and collided hard with a solid body standing directly in her path.

“Oh, God! I’m so sorry!” She gasped as she found herself suspended above the floor by the grace of God, and one hell of a powerful arm wrapped firmly around her waist. Her roll-along overnight case dangled precariously from her fingertips, and she clutched her shoulder bag with her laptop in a death grip while attempting vainly to get her slippery leather-soled shoes back where they belonged—under her.

“Here...let me take that bag so you can get your balance, Franny.” The far too familiar voice came from the direction of the body holding onto hers.

Her head snapped up so fast, her forehead met his dimpled chin with a painful crack. “Ouch!” she gasped, wincing in pain, then instantly forgetting the pain as her mouth fell open and her eyes widened in horror. “Damn, Gerrard, but you have a hard head!” she snapped to cover the rush of heat that zipped from her belly to her suddenly wet core.

Oh. My. God! What the hell was Jack Gerrard doing here? He couldn’t be...*her ride?*

Without a word, he levered her back to an upright position, then rubbed his chin gingerly with his free hand. “You still try to destroy all men who try to pick you up?”

Fran realized numbly that he hadn’t relinquished his death grip on her waist, and their hips seemed to be fused from navel to knee. Dear God! How many times had she dreamed about being in this exact position with him? His minty breath warmed her forehead despite her lanky height, and for the first time in years, she felt small and weak as he easily shifted her and maintained his firm grip while she struggled to regain control of her shoulder bag, finally shifting it to his waiting hand.

“I...I didn’t mean to...I mean...” Her forehead throbbed from the contact with his rock hard chin.

Blue eyes pinned her as his lips curved into that sexy, patented Jack Gerrard smile, and memories flooded back over her from so many years ago. She blinked furiously to stop the ridiculous flow of tears, as that smile changed to a frown of worry.

“You okay, Franny? Hell, did I hurt you, honey?”

Had he just called her “honey”?

Her knees almost gave out. She should be feeling outrage at the term of affection, but she couldn’t quite muster that particular feeling. Instead, she started blubbering like a total fool. She shook her head and slapped her hand over her quivering mouth, too humiliated by this absurd rush of overwhelming emotion to say a word. Her wide eyes took in every plane and curve of his

handsome face. He hadn't changed one damn bit in ten years. In fact, he was even more gorgeous than she remembered him.

More handsome than his pictures in the magazines.

Oh, God! And he was gathering her closer, patting her back and pressing her face gently into his shoulder in the most delicious, protective way, she couldn't possibly stop the flood of tears.

How humiliating! She sobbed helplessly, wetting his leather jacket and pressing her forehead into the hollow between his strong throat and his shoulder, too embarrassed to look him in the eye. People instantly crowded around, and she felt like burrowing into his chest for protection.

"She okay, Jack?" a voice she recognized as belonging to Bill Waverly, one of the worst of her tormentors in high school, asked. She bit her lip and fought to control herself, unwilling to look the jerk in the eye.

"I think I almost knocked her out..." Jack muttered in frustration. "You guys take the van. Just drop your stuff off at the Spot and leave it parked out front with the keys in the ignition. I'll pick it up as soon as I can get her over to Karen's."

"Shit! Is that who I think...?" Bill's voice raised, and she heard a thump and a whoosh of air, then a yelp as Waverly said, "Hey! What the hell was that for?"

"One more word and you'll be walking to the Spot. Get the hell out of here." She heard a few muttered words, then the sound of many feet shuffling to give them a bit of space.

Fran felt him shift, and she gave a startled squeal as she was swept into his arms as easily as if she'd weighed ounces instead of her solid 160 pounds. She clutched his neck and refused to look up as people murmured and whispered, and someone said, "Take my car, Jack. I can catch a ride home after work with Andy. Just leave my car in front of the Spot when you pick up your van."

That sounded amazingly like Gregg Farnsworth, another of the nasty little nuisances she'd avoided like the plague in college. Oh, good heavens! She was surrounded!

Keeping her head buried in that delicious smelling, warm throat, Fran decided she didn't mind one little bit being carried by Jack Gerrard.

Jack didn't know what to do with Fran, now that he'd finally gotten ahold of her. He'd dreamed of this moment so damn many times over the long years...but the feel of her in his arms

was nothing like his imaginings. He felt her curl into his arms like a kitten as he caught Gregg's tossed keys with a nod, and he glanced back at Waverly and said, "You guys load her luggage up. It probably matches that rollaway case. Check tags to make sure. Take it on over to Karen's place before you go to the Spot." He glanced down at her half hidden face and asked softly, "How many pieces?"

"Three...an overnight case and two Pullman cases." Her voice was so muffled he barely caught her words, passing them on to the guys. The feel of her warm breath brushing his throat was about to ignite some extremely hot fires he had almost forgotten existed. He shifted her weight and got a better grip on her as she wound her arms even tighter around his neck. Holy hell! Those firm generous breasts pushed against his chest as if they belonged there, and he wanted her right where she was.

"You feel light-headed?" he asked with his warm lips pressed into the tumbled hair now escaping her tight bun. She nodded her head slightly, and he adjusted her against his chest, hefted her laptop bag over his shoulder and strode past the baggage pickups to the escalators that led to the parking ramps.

He wasn't about to put her down, not after waiting twelve long years to get her in his arms—where she belonged.

Chapter Four

Once she felt the cool air of the parking ramp, Fran lifted her head and glanced around to make sure they were alone, and she squirmed a bit. “Um...Jack...you can put me down. I can walk.”

“I know.” His deep voice murmured, but he made no move to set her on her feet. He simply readjusted her in his grip and kept walking.

“Um...Jack? I’m pretty heavy. What about your shoulder?” she chewed the corner of her lower lip as she readjusted her arms around his wide shoulders and that strong neck.

He kept his eyes forward, but she saw a wicked smile tug at the corner of that firm mouth. Her pussy contracted, her belly fluttered and she almost whimpered. “How far is Gregg’s car?” Her whispered question brought his blue gaze down to touch her flushed face, and the look in his eyes almost made her swallow her tongue.

“Not far. Relax. Enjoy the ride.”

“I really can walk...” she squeaked as she felt his cock grow larger where her hip pressed against his groin. She squirmed to get her legs down.

“Oh, baby...if you don’t stop that wiggling, you’ll be in deeper trouble than you are now.” His rasped warning made her stop; she held her breath.

“I’m truly not hurt, Jack. Please put me down.” Her voice quivered.

“No chance of you getting away this time, Franny. I let you go once, and that is NOT going to happen again.” Jack laughed softly at her gasp. He aimed the key chain alarm switch at Gregg’s car. She waited, expecting him to lower her feet to the pavement, but instead he slid her ass onto the fender of the gleaming black vehicle, and wedged himself between her thighs, wrapping his arms around her so that she couldn’t move. The feel of that hard body pressed against her throbbing center, and those heavily muscled arms fencing her in almost made her lose

her mind. He stared at her mouth. And she was about to faint dead away for the first time in her life...

God, but she felt like she was made to be in his arms. He didn't want to let go long for enough to put her onto the lush leather seat of the Mercedes. The cradle of her long, delicious thighs felt like home, and she wasn't trying to shove him away. He watched her lush chocolate eyes widen and zero in on his lips, and his body almost shifted to autopilot. Her long slim fingers burrowed into the hair at the back of his neck, and he could feel her heart pounding erratically against his chest. "I have wanted to ask you one question for the past twelve years, Franny." His throat was so damn tight he didn't think he would be able to ask.

Her lips actually quivered as she sighed, and his cock almost tore through his slacks. "What question?" Her voice was a low whisper. Her eyes moved over his face as if she was trying to memorize him.

He swallowed hard, and wet his lips automatically, wondering if she would taste as delicious as she looked. "That day in the parking lot back in high school..." his voice almost broke with the tension.

Her cheeks became bright red, and she looked away from his face, stiffening. He had no intention of letting her off the hook now. "Those things you said...about never wanting to see my face again? About hating the sight of me?"

Her eyes darted back to his face, and a look of utter agony filled them. He forced himself to continue. "Did you mean all that? Is that what you really wanted to say to me?"

"That's all water under the bridge, Jack. I had a mad crush on you. Nothing more. You chose to allow the opinions of your buddies to scare you away from being my friend. I thought you at least liked me. You didn't need to be my boyfriend...just my friend, like we were in high school."

"So I was a total asshole when I was 18. I know that. But I tried to apologize that day, and the things you said cut pretty deep. I just want to know if you meant them."

Fran wanted to melt away and hide from the memory of that awful day. But the intense look in those blue eyes held her, and his arms tightened when she tried to move away. "Why do you want to know?" she wet her lips nervously.

He ran one lean hand down the center of her back to toy with the curve of her ass on the hood of the car. “Did you mean what you said?” He asked again, his hand slipping up under the tailored Armani suit jacket, slipping up the front of her brushed satin shirt to cup the fullness of her breast. She saw the flare of heat in his eyes as she inhaled sharply and leaned into his palm.

“Yes. And no.” She could barely get the words past her quivering lips. Her body grew hot and eager.

He flicked his thumb over the puffy, aching tip of her nipple, and a rush of wetness dampened her lace panties. “Kiss me,” he whispered huskily as his lips brushed hers with electrifying effect.

She started to ask why he wanted her to kiss him, but he jerked her into his open-mouthed caress, a deep, husky groan emanating from deep in that marvelous chest as his tongue drove into her mouth, claiming what she was terrified of giving. Her nails dug into his shoulders as she melted into a puddle of heat in his arms, her insides quivering with every gentle squeeze and caress of that talented hand. He pressed his cock against the warm moisture of her weeping pussy, and a growl of satisfaction rose from his chest as she wrapped her legs around his hips and crossed her ankles to get as close to him as possible.

She wasn't sure how long she kissed him, or how her blouse buttons had come undone, and the front hook of her lace bra as well. His calloused, gently searching hand cupped her bare breast, that artful thumb stroking the aching tip as his tongue lazily toured her mouth and she whimpered and bumped her pussy against that amazingly stiff ridge in his slacks. And then she felt the cool metal of the hood pressing against her back, and his mouth moving from her lips to the pebbled nipple that begged for his attention.

Lucid thought returned as she realized that he was slowly undressing her in the very public lower level of the parking ramp...and she was letting him!

“Jack...” she gasped, closing her eyes with the wonderful sensation of his mouth on her breast. “What if someone comes...?”

“Don't worry...it'll just be me...” he rasped, as he gave her nipple one last hard tug, then slowly moved back, dragging her blouse closed, and pulling her back up into his arms, his lips pressed hotly to her damp throat.

He seemed to be calming himself with every ounce of willpower he possessed, and then he looked into her glazed eyes, that wicked smile crooking his mouth. “I’m glad you didn’t mean it.”

She stared as he drew away slightly, and then watched numbly as he gently re-hooked her bra, and re-buttoned her blouse. She wasn’t sure whether she should be thrilled that he had obeyed her unspoken request to stop what he was doing, or be dismayed that he had so willingly stopped the delicious play.

Was she totally nuts?

She slowly untangled her ankles and scooted further back onto the hood, smoothing her flyaway hair as she blushed furiously. “Um...Jack...”

His blue gaze slipped up to hers. “No need to be embarrassed, baby...that’s something I have wanted to do for twelve long years. And I was sort of hoping you wanted it, too.”

His quiet smile and the way he kissed the tip of her nose left her wondering what the hell had just happened. He had waited for twelve years to cop a feel? He was calm and cool, and not the least bit shaken up by what he had just done...or at least, he didn’t seem to be! And she was quivering like a leaf in the wind. Oh, lord! Get a damn grip, Fran! He was simply letting you know what you missed when you told him to go fly a kite! Red flushed her cheeks as she realized that if he had not stopped, she would have probably let him know exactly what HE had missed all those years.

Forcing a wry smile to her stiff lips, she smoothed her jacket and said, “Thanks, Jack! I always wondered what kissing you would feel like.”

“Were you disappointed?” his eyes seemed to be hiding something just beneath the surface.

Was she disappointed? Dear God, no! Not in the kiss. Only in the ending. But what could she expect? He didn’t seem to be backing off. Did he expect her to fall over and beg him to make love to her? That thought definitely was mulling around in her mind. Oddly, she felt daring. Not like the old Fran. Not like the frightened woman who worried about what others thought. And when she opened her mouth to speak, the oddest damn words came out.

“I think I’ll need another sample before I can make a decision...”

Her butt slid across the gleaming hood before she realized he was dragging her back against him. Her pussy slammed hard against that swollen cock. His mouth came down on hers before

she could figure out what had possessed her to say such a shocking thing. And her hands were shoving at his leather jacket as his tugged her zipper down.

The sound of footsteps echoing at the other end of the parking ramp made her gasp, but he simply lifted her off the hood and wrapped her thighs around his hips, and a moment later, he pressed her back firmly against the cool concrete of the ramp support post that obscured the view of their twined bodies. His mouth was like a narcotic, making her forget her good sense and her sanity. He tugged her jacket off and tossed it onto the trunk of the car, then tugged her blouse open so hard, buttons scattered everywhere. His hands and lips were everywhere on her throat and breasts, and she whimpered as he rocked against her pussy with his steel-hard shaft putting delicious pressure exactly where she needed it.

“You on the pill?” he rasped against her throat.

“No! Don’t you have a condom?”

She chewed her lower lip as he slowed and gazed into her glazed eyes. “No. It’s been a long time since I’ve needed one.” His wry expression startled her. He was actually stopping? He wasn’t angry?

But then his eyes gleamed wickedly, and he started rocking his hips against hers once again, his cock rolling seductively over her crotch...pushing deliciously against her clit as she arched. “Well, there’s no need for both of us to go without...” he breathed as he opened his lips over her nipple, and then sucked it deep into his mouth with a growl of enjoyment.

Fran gave a strangled gasp of shock as he moved to give her pleasure. She heard his breathing grow ragged as he paced his thrusts, and she knew he was listening to her, as well. His heart thumped hard in his chest as he shifted her and slipped one arm out from behind her, and eased the tips of his lean fingers down into the open fly of her slacks, finding the throbbing nub of nerves and gently pressing it between two fingers as he caught her lips and devoured her mouth.

Her cry of shocked pleasure was swallowed by his mouth as she exploded in a shimmering, unbelievably hot orgasm that rocked every part of her with its intensity. And then she heard him groan and he stiffened against her, his rough laughter telling her that he had not been able to prevent his own orgasm.

“Damn...just like some horny teen aged kid...” he growled as he wrapped both arms around her and they subsided together, her face buried in his throat as he calmed his breathing, his lips

buried in her damp hair. The discomfort of being held by their combined weight to a concrete support post was negligible compared to the throbbing pleasure that still coiled itself around her clit with the continued pressure.

“Um...Jack...” she managed to whisper raggedly against his corded throat.

“Yeah?” his reply was just as breathless, and it made her want to shout in triumph, but she managed to unhook her ankles again and slide her feet to the pavement slowly.

“My buttons...are gone...” she said weakly, trying to figure out how to close her satin shirt. It amazed her how trivialities took such high precedence whenever her mind froze.

His eyes slipped down over her bare breasts, and he seemed to be searching for an answer. It was amazing to realize that Jack Gerrard seemed to find her body as mesmerizing as she found his. She reached between them and tugged her bra cups back over her breasts, hooking the front clasp with trembling fingers. Jack moved slightly away to give her room to work, and then he was pushing her hands away and cupping her breasts through the lacy cups, his thumbs tweaking her nipples as his sapphire gaze slipped over her face, hair and mouth.

“Come to my place tonight, Fran...” his words were rough.

She closed her eyes reflexively, and then opened them to stare at him. “I can’t...”

Jack drew back, his eyes searching her face. “You aren’t married, are you? Shit! I didn’t even think to ask...”

His eyes seemed to darken, and his hands slid off her flesh, leaving her feeling oddly cold without their warmth. She shook her head jerkily, and tore her gaze from his, looking down as she tugged the tails of her shirt up to tie a large knot under her breasts, doing the best she could to cover her torso.

“Never?” his tone was husky.

Again, she shook her head, unable to trust her voice. She managed to lift her eyes to his face, and inhaled shakily as he slowly smiled. Shaking herself back to reality, she cleared her throat and said, “Um...no. Never met anyone I wanted to be with.”

“Never?”

Her face grew hot, and she frowned up at him. It felt so damned great to be able to look up at a man! “Not after graduation. Too busy with school and business.” How the hell could she tell him that he had been the only man she’d ever remotely wanted in her life?

He reached for her jacket without taking his eyes off her, and she shrugged into it nervously. “Not after graduation...” he repeated thoughtfully.

“Look, Jack...what you just did for me was amazing.” She blushed hotly, but she refused to act embarrassed over something she’d dreamt of for 12 years. “Thanks for that. It puts things into perspective.”

Jack gently fastened the two buttons on the suit jacket, and then ran his hands up over her breasts to the sides of her face, almost making her faint dead away at the delicious sensations he created. “Are you trying to tell me ‘thanks...now get lost’?” His eyes searched her expression.

Dear Lord! He was enough to drive her insane, and she wanted more than anything to take him up on that offer to come home with him, but she had promised Karen that she would stay at the house. She chewed her lower lip, and then said, “Yes?”

He drew a deep breath that caused his muscular chest to brush enticingly against her still aching nipples. He nodded as if digesting the fact that she didn’t want to spend the night at his place. When he spoke, his tone was calmly conversational. “Okay. Let’s get you over to the big house. Your stuff should already be there.”

Chapter Five

As he drove, Jack tried not to keep looking over at her in the black leather bucket seat. The strained silence between them seethed with unasked questions...with unspoken wants and desires. He now knew that she had wanted him as badly as he had ever wanted her. But many years had passed. The fact that she had never married was encouraging...but then, she hadn't really come right out and told him that it was because she was pining for him. The way she had responded to him still had him as hard as hell. But then, she was completely different than she'd been in school. More confident. More worldly.

He had teased her all those years back, hoping for the kind of response he'd just gotten, but back then, she had seemed uptight and afraid. That had been part of the attraction. She was so unlike the women who had chased him constantly—the women he preferred not to be around. And less than fifteen minutes ago, she had teasingly invited him to give her a second sample of what he so desperately wanted to do to her. And he had taken the bait. Hell, he'd snapped it up like a starving trout. And he'd wanted to take it even further.

She wasn't on the pill, so that meant that she either didn't have sex often enough to feel the need for it, or all her partners used condoms.

No. He didn't want to go there. He preferred the prior reason. God, what a hypocrite he was! She was what...thirty-two? Maybe thirty-three? Did he truly hope that she had saved herself for him? Or at least for the man she married? Hell, was he kidding? That old-fashioned notion had gone out with graduation from junior high school!

The woman was just too damn hot to have made it this far without having made love to at least one man. Or many men. He growled softly deep in his throat, and realized that she was staring at him. He kept his eyes on the road until she looked away again, and then he said softly, "Looks like the van is over at the Spot. Almost there." He glanced at the big old frat house as

they drove past it toward the street where Karen's big Victorian stood, surrounded by a manicured lawn that still boasted a rose trellis with a bench, and a lover's maze that Karen had spent some cash on rebuilding a few years ago. He had given a couple thousand to help out, since it had seemed so important to her. Karen was the only person he knew who seemed to take Jack Gerrard at face value, and didn't seem to expect something from her friendship with him. And if nothing else, Jack was loyal to his true friends.

The big house was lit up, almost every window aglow as he pulled into the driveway. He turned off the engine, and sat for a long moment, trying to plan how this was going to work. But she took the initiative by saying quietly, "Are you going to be at the cocktail party tomorrow night at the Ambassador? Because if you are, I would love to buy you a drink."

He glanced across the console and let his gaze slip hungrily over her, noting the hectic color that flooded her cheeks at his hot perusal. She plucked at the seatbelt that she had just released.

"I had planned on it." He reached across and slid his palm around the back of her neck, drawing her toward him, unfastening his own seatbelt as he did so. He saw the wide chocolate gaze fixed on his mouth, and he breathed softly, "You've got yourself a date, Ms. Jamison..." and his mouth took her full soft lips before she could reply. He heard her little whimper of pleasure, and if the damn console hadn't been there to block him from full contact with those lush curves...

But before he could deepen the heated kiss, the porch light came on, and Karen came bounding down the stairs, with two other women on her heels, concern written on her pretty face. He sighed and drew back, and Fran just sat there, her eyes closed as if in a dream, until her door was jerked open and Karen's voice cried, "God, Fran! Are you hurt?"

He slid out from behind the wheel and came around to help Fran, but she was already on the pebbled drive, hugging and sobbing as her old pals gathered around her. He rubbed the back of his neck as he watched her greet old friends, and then feeling a bit like a third wheel on a bike, he nodded to Karen, handed her Fran's bag, and headed back around the Mercedes to drive back to the Spot and switch vehicles. He would see her tomorrow night...

* * * *

"Bill told us what happened at the airport...your bags are up in your room." Karen's voice was filled with worry. Chloe hugged her and made a point of checking her forehead for bruises before saying, "Bill said Jack Gerrard hit you in the face!"

“No, he didn’t!” Karen shook her head. “He said they bonked heads!”

“You okay, honey? You look a bit flushed! Need an ice bag for your head?” Chloe’s cool fingers touched her feverish face.

If they only knew what had caused her hot cheeks, she would have been bombarded with shocked questions. She smiled tightly and said “I’d love an ice bag, Chloe.” But when Karen slipped her arm around her and started to haul her up the steps to the wide porch, Fran hung back and glanced around. “Did Jack leave?”

Karen lifted the laptop bag. “Yeah...what exactly did happen tonight, Fran? We expected you here an hour ago.”

She couldn’t prevent her blush, but she shoved her hair back from her face and said “Jack and I talked for a while before driving over.”

“You and Jack talked awhile...” Karen pursed her lips, then chuckled. “Sure you talked...since when did Jack Gerrard ever know anything about stocks, bonds, and securities trading?”

Fran chewed her bottom lip, and then decided to let Karen think what she wanted to think. None of her old friends would ever believe what had happened, anyway. And she wasn’t about to share.

Having her old room back was great. She unloaded her things onto the narrow four-poster bed, and sighed. She hadn’t realized how much she’d actually missed this old house until the sounds of more arrivals floated up the curved staircase, and the sound of voices that she hadn’t heard in nearly a decade filtered into her bedroom. She heard Chloe shouting up the stairs, telling Bliss not to take all night.

She smiled as she heard Bliss yell back that she would be down as soon as she got unpacked. Everything was quiet for a moment, and then a tinkle of tinny music floated through the transom over her door, and she shook her head. That song...O.M.G! THAT song?

Fran slipped out her door and padded quietly to the room where Bliss had always stayed, and she drew a deep breath, using her old “secret knock”. Bliss called out, “Come on in, Fran.”

Her throat tightened as she turned the knob and stepped inside the familiar old room. Like hers, very little had changed in this room in the last ten years. It was like stepping back though time. She tossed a crooked grin at her high-school closest friend, and sighed “When are you

going to design me something that makes *my* butt look good?” She waved her hand at the black, toga-style sheath caught at Bliss’ shoulder with a matching tie. God, Bliss looked great. It was as if she hadn’t added another ten years. She still looked to Fran like she belonged in high school. Bliss looked up with a small grin and laughed.

“I’ll make a deal with you. You take enough time off from the think tank to come to New York and get measured, and I’ll make you a dress that will win your butt an award.”

Bliss had made the offer time and again, but Fran had simply figured it was an offer made as a polite gesture. Bliss’ creations were one of a kind, and they were expensive. Bliss had said she would do it for free, but Fran was not a pauper, and she had no intention of letting her friend give her a fabulous dress for free. Besides...she had already bought one of Bliss’ creations last week.

Bliss shook her head and sighed, turning back to stare at the musical greetings card she held in her hands. The tune it played was the sound Fran had heard a moment ago. Bliss seemed to be mesmerized by the card.

Fran lifted one brow. “What the hell is the name of that song you keep playing?”

“I don’t remember,” Bliss shrugged. Fran knew where she’d heard that song. It was the song they’d been playing the night of the frat house raid. She almost rolled her eyes. Was Bliss still thinking about that night? She drew a deep breath and exhaled slowly to keep from saying something that might hurt her friend.

“Have you remembered a damn thing about that night?” she asked, mentally urging the woman to fess up. Had Bliss actually forgotten?

“Not much after Elliot broke up with me. I think there was dancing and green Jello involved,” Bliss shrugged, “after that, nothing.”

“So are you here looking for Nick Santucci as a possible Mr. Right? ‘Cause, honey, Mr. Right could be fat, bald or married—and very possibly, all three.” She recalled Nick’s dad at graduation and suppressed a shudder.

Possibly? More like, probably. But Bliss was the always the dreamer.

Bliss blinked. “It’s scary how much we think alike. And the answer is not just no, but hell no. I think. So, are you not looking for Mr. Right, either?”

“There’s no such animal.” Fran turned away to hide her own extremely incriminating thoughts. “But I wouldn’t mind a few rounds with Mr. Wrong.”

Unfortunately for her, Mr. Wrong was driving home right now in his catering van, probably having completely forgotten about the incident in the parking ramp at the airport.

He hadn't even waited to say goodbye. Just handed Karen her laptop bag, and skedaddled. That fact left her wondering if he had regretted their lapse of sanity as they'd both succumbed to an itch that had waited twelve years to be scratched.

* * * *

After leaving Bliss to moon over her musical card, she made the rounds, greeting and chatting with old friends for what seemed like hours before finally climbing the familiar curved stairs and falling into bed. But it was a wasted effort. No matter how dead tired she was, she lay there listening to laughter and squeals of delight as those still exchanging stories shared their lives with friends. She rolled over and pulled the pillow over her head, and then spent another hour tossing and turning, her thoughts filled with Jack Gerrard and the way his warm skin had smelled. The way his body had fit against hers. The way his eyes had zoomed in on her mouth, making her heart beats accelerate and her pulse explode.

Had they really made out so heedlessly right there in a public place? Her cheeks grew hot at the memory. She finally drifted off to sleep, only to have the most delicious, amazing dream that brought her awake before dawn, her heart pounding and her pussy throbbing with another amazing, mind-blowing orgasm. As she lay there panting, reconstructing the marvelous dream, she wondered if Jack Gerrard was as good in bed in the real world as he just had been in her dream.

Good thing she had every intention of finding out...

Chapter Six

Jack dragged on his dress shirt and glared at his reflection as he buttoned it and tucked it into the waistband of his tuxedo pants before zipping up and threading his belt through the loops. Had she been disappointed? Had he gone too far too fast? Had he been the jerk she had thought him that day in the school parking lot when he had made that weak attempt to apologize and ask her to go out with him? He growled at himself and reached for his black tie.

She hadn't even bothered to thank him for bringing her to Karen's last night. She'd simply walked off as if he was some cab driver instead of the man she'd just been kissing. His eyes slipped over his face and body critically. She used to blush every time he was near, and she would chew that lush lower lip just like she had last night...making him wonder what it would taste like...how soft it would feel as he nibbled her mouth and teased it open for his kiss.

He knew what it tasted like now...what it felt like, and it was damned addictive! But had she gotten the same kind of electrical charge out their kisses that he had? Was he kidding himself that she'd felt what he had while they had practically devoured each other in the parking garage?

He inserted his gold cufflinks shaped like footballs with tiny diamonds marking the stitching, and he adjusted his collar, checking the tie. He had always been lousy with ties. He seriously doubted that Fran would even notice that his damn tie was crooked. At least, he hoped she wouldn't. He hoped to hell her eyes would be on his mouth as they had been last night...seeming to anticipate how they would feel on her body.

His cock was hard and tight, stretching his zipper to the breaking point. He reached into his wooden dresser top case and pulled out his coveted 1969 Super Bowl ring, a gift from the family of another injured KC Chief, sliding it onto his hand. And then he tugged open the top drawer and pulled out the brand new freshly purchased box of lambskin condoms, pulling three out, and tucking them into his pants pocket. He wasn't going to go unprepared again. He wouldn't see disappointment in those lush brown eyes tonight.

Shrugging his Tux jacket on, he drew a deep breath. He ran both hands through his hair to smooth it back. To hell with trying to get it to lay flat and smooth. It had a mind of its own, and he knew he looked just a touch wicked with it tousled and finger combed. He figured he needed all the help he could get, because Fran Jamison wasn't going back to Karen's after the party. Tonight was going to be a full-out seduction. If he had to toss her over his shoulder and carry her off like a damn sack of potatoes...so be it.

He inhaled deeply and blew his breath out to calm his nervous gut. He was tied in bigger knots tonight than he'd ever been before a big game. Tonight was more important than any football game he'd ever played. Tonight he was going to win a far more important prize than a championship ring. No matter what the prize thought about it.

* * * *

Karen looked up as Fran leaned around her door and said, "Need an opinion here..."

"On what?"

Fran made a wry face and stepped into the room, and almost fled at the amazed look on her friend's face. Karen managed to pull her mouth shut before she said, "Oh, wow!"

"Is it too much?" Fran was almost afraid she'd overdone the seduction routine here. She chewed her lower lip and twirled for Karen to get a look.

"Oh. My. God! Who's the poor guy you are out to slap your saddle on, Franny? He hasn't got a chance!"

Warm color flooded her cheeks, and she plucked at the delicious Bliss Harper confection she'd bought on a whim last week. "She sure does a fabulous dress, doesn't she?"

"Honey, it ain't the dress that does the job...it's the woman inside it." Karen's eyes were shining with admiration, and Fran hugged her.

Her throat tight with emotion, she drew a deep breath and said softly, "You and I need to have a long talk, Karen...about this old house. If you are really planning to sell, please talk with me before you do?"

Karen's eyes widened and she clapped both hands over her mouth. Fran lifted a hand and shook her head. "Not tonight...I have a major seduction working here. But before you make any real plans to sell it...okay? I want to see you keep this wonderful house forever."

Karen blinked back tears, nodding jerkily behind her hands. And then she lowered her fingers and hiccupped, "Who's the poor lost soul who's going down in flames tonight?"

“I’m not ready to divulge any details. He may see me coming and make a flying leap out the window to escape.” Her lips twisted as Karen laughed and flapped her hands in front of her face to dry the tears.

“Honey, once he gets a good look at you in that, he’s not going anywhere...that I can practically guarantee!”

“Well, wish me luck...” She sighed. “I have three more hours to refine my strategy. And this is not something I have much hands-on experience with.”

* * * *

Jack stood by the bar, not really paying much attention to Bill and Wes as they told stories about the good old days and the women they’d enjoyed while they had been the school’s hot jocks. He’d heard the same old stories four or five times since arriving an hour ago, and he knew that most of it was just bullshit. He shook his head and once again scanned the crowded ballroom with its multitude of hastily set up portable tables that were practically groaning under the food and drinks, leaving barely a twenty-foot square for dancing. The small dance floor was a squeeze. He hadn’t seen so many familiar faces in one place since graduation.

“Yo, Jack Gerrard! Great to see you again, man!” An unfamiliar face grinned up at him, and when he blinked questioningly down at the man, the guy blushed and tried to remind him of how they knew one another, obviously trying to impress the woman who was clinging to his meaty arm. He took pity on the man after a few tense moments, and smiled.

“Sure...been a long time, hasn’t it?” He smiled and signed an autograph for the excited blonde woman, then turned his attention back to the heavy crowd, searching for the only one person he was interested in seeing tonight. He couldn’t even taste the low ball glass of ice tea he held. He opted for tea because it looked like he held a glass of bourbon on the rocks, and folks didn’t keep plying him with booze all night. He forced himself to take a sip, and swung his gaze toward the entry again. And he almost lost hold of the glass.

The vision that stood in the doorway looking nervously around seemed almost ready to bolt for safety...and he had no intention of allowing that to happen.

The place was a total crush! She almost didn’t release her fox jacket when the young woman at the coat check tried to take it from her, which resulted in a comical tug of war for a moment, until Fran realized she was making a spectacle of herself. She flushed and thanked the

bewildered looking woman, tucking the coat check into her miniscule handbag. She covered her nervousness by re-checking the bag's contents...two tissues...check. Lipstick...check. ID...check. Small roll of twenties...check. Small roll of tens for tips...check. Keys...check. Condoms...check.

She drew a shaking breath and snapped the bag closed, looping it negligently over her shoulder by its slender sparkly chain. She nervously touched the brand new platinum and champagne diamond choker she'd purchased earlier that afternoon, and her fingers moved to reassure herself that the matching earrings remained firmly attached. Her feet ached already in the four-inch strappy Manolo Blahniks she'd bought in Chicago before flying out here. But she would rather walk on daggers than wear low heels with this delicious Bliss Harper creation. And it certainly felt like that was what she was walking on. Damn! It had been years since she'd abused her feet so!

The fact that she stood a strapping 6'3" in her glittery, gemstone studded shoes didn't help her sudden rush of self-consciousness. She practically towered over most of the men who eyed her with lascivious intent. A gurgle of panicky laughter almost emerged, and she forced herself to stand erect and puff out her chest with false bravado. Doing so nearly caused two men who were walking past her to fall over their own feet, bringing another hysterical giggle to the surface.

And then she felt a hand on her elbow, and she jerked her head to stare into the leering face of Faris Devlin. "Well, well, well...if it isn't Franny Jamison." His hand on her bare arm made her want to wipe her skin off with one of her tissues, but she managed to keep from cringing away from him.

"Devlin...I heard you got married." Her voice was credibly calm. She extricated her elbow gently from his grasp, and noted where his eyes were roving.

His dark eyes lifted to her face once again, and he whistled softly. "Shit, Franny, you sure clean up nice..."

She swallowed her gag reflex carefully. Devlin had always been one of her most vocal detractors, and despite that handsome face and hot body, she couldn't stand the sight of him. She was about to excuse herself and walk away, when Kellie Anne stepped possessively up beside the man and slid her arm through his loosely crooked elbow. She breathed a sigh of relief, and smiled pleasantly at the woman.

“Hello, Kelli Anne. Congratulations on your recent marriage.” She realized with an inner laugh that the woman didn’t even recognize her.

Kellie Anne preened a bit and leaned in to plant a light kiss on Devlin’s cheek. “Yes...we were just married last month. Do I know you?”

“Not really. But everyone knows who you are. You look stunning.” The woman smiled beatifically and snuggled against Devlin’s side, forcing him to wrap an arm around her. Fran realized that the woman actually believed she was so special she didn’t have to acknowledge a compliment.

Devlin lifted one dark brow calculatingly, and asked, “Are you here alone?”

Fran opened her mouth to change the subject, and nearly jumped out of her skin when a strong arm wrapped possessively around her waist. Jack Gerrard’s deep voice replied, “No.”

Kellie Anne stared at Jack thoughtfully then her gaze slid back to Fran. After a moment, those catlike blue eyes widened in recognition, and slid from her hair to her feet and back. With a twitch of her lips, she said in a droll tone, “Well...you’ve sure come up in the world, Franny. Or should I say Fat Fanny?”

The arm at her waist tightened, and she smiled down at the diminutive blonde. “My friends just call me Fran.” She spoke without rancor, and was astonished that she didn’t feel any of the animosity she had expected to feel seeing the woman who had coined that phrase back in high school.

“Well, then...I’ll just call you...Fanny.” Kelli Anne’s smile was little more than a sneer.

Smiling down at the woman, Fran shrugged. “Whatever...”

Devlin glanced at Jack where he stood slightly behind her right shoulder, and he laughed loud enough to be heard by everyone within twenty feet. “Hell, Jack...if I’d known Fanny cleaned up that well, I’d have given her a go, myself. Tell me...is she anywhere near as good in bed as Kelli Anne?”

Kelli Anne shrieked, and Fran nearly swallowed her tongue as Jack moved so fast, he was a blur. One second she was standing beside him, and suddenly she was behind him, as a powerful right fist snapped out and caught Devlin solidly in the face, flinging him backward across a table filled with drinks and food. Shocked people scrambled to safety as the bleeding man floundered to right himself.

“I’d suggest you stay right there, Devlin, unless you want me to put you on your ass again.” Jack’s voice was low and menacing. Fran quivered with pride and shock. Another first! A man fighting for her honor! Reputation. Whatever. It just felt so damned good.

Without a backward glance, her hero turned and surrounded her in arms that made her feel dainty and protected. Even in heels, she had to look up to meet those angry blue eyes.

“You okay, Fran?” His fingertips gently brushed a flyaway strand of hair back from her cheek. She could feel every eye in the place on her as she chewed her bottom lip.

“I’m better than Devlin.” She smiled weakly, and closed her eyes as Jack’s warm mouth cut off her words and the crowd began clapping. Her senses whirled.

O.M.G. He was kissing her like he meant it...in front of the entire class of ’99! When he drew back and leaned his forehead against hers, she whispered huskily, “You know, Jack, I’ve never seen your restaurant.”

He smiled slowly. “It’s just down the block. It’s closed because everyone’s over here...”

“Much nicer than eating in a crowd.”

“Well then I’ll see if I can wrangle up a dinner for two.”

Chapter Seven

It was a beautiful night, and normally the walk would have been pleasant, but those damn shoes were nearly killing her with every painful step. Jack must have noticed her wincing and limping, because he stopped and looked down at her feet, glittering like Christmas trees in her expensive designer shoes. “Those things make your feet look almost edible, baby, but they weren’t built for long walks on city sidewalks.” His low growl barely registered before he pulled her close and swung her off her aching feet and into those corded arms once again.

Sighing with a mixture of relief and shivery anticipation, she wrapped her arms around his wide shoulders and buried her lips in the warm skin of his throat. “You smell delicious, Jack Gerrard.”

“So do you.” His voice was a rumble.

“I’m not wearing perfume.” She frowned, lifting her head to glance at his face in the light of the streetlamp they passed beneath.

“I know.” His lips curved wickedly.

“Then how...”

“I love the scent of *you*, Fran. That hot, delicious fragrance of jasmine shower gel and woman. I could pick you out of a crowd with my eyes closed.”

Too shocked to make any sort of response, she shivered as he closed his eyes and drew a deep breath through his nostrils as if inhaling her essence. He drew her tighter against his chest, and buried his lips in her hair as he walked that last few yards to the darkened façade of the restaurant.

He didn’t seem to want to set her on her feet long enough to unlock the door, as he said quietly, “My keys are in my right pants pocket. Get them out and unlock the door.”

Obedying with trembling fingers, she managed to get the key into the lock, and it flicked open. And as he stepped into the cool, dark interior of the spacious restaurant, he shoved it shut and relocked the door. He carried her into the main dining area, and gently lowered her feet to

the lush green carpet. His hands remained on her waist as she turned to stare at the area, lit by emergency lights only, giving it a soft, romantic feeling.

“My God, Jack...this is beautiful!” she whispered. She had expected to see a flashy sports-oriented fast-food place with vinyl booths and maybe even a cheesy looking set of fake goal posts, but the muted golds and greens of the lush leather booths and hardwood tables and plush carpeting reflected WIU’s colors, rather than the brash reds and whites of the Kansas City Chiefs’ logos that she had expected. The only thing that even smacked of his football career was the team photo from WIU’s championship year, and the retired jersey hanging over the entry to the darkened lounge. “It’s gorgeous!”

She felt his fingers gently squeeze her waist, and as he drew her back against his body, she could feel his growing arousal against the crease of her ass cheeks. A shiver traveled along every nerve in her body as his lean hands slid from her waist up to cup and gently squeeze her breasts. His voice was a rasp of desire. “No bra? I wonder...will there be no panties, either?”

Her wicked thoughts when dressing had left her wearing the deliciously soft dress...and nothing beneath it but a lace and satin thong. And said thong was wet with her warm cream as she leaned back into him and whimpered softly.

Her heart pounded erratically in her chest as his hands slipped to the side tie of the wrap-around dress, and as he loosened it, allowing it to fall away from her bare breasts, she let out a little gasp of need. “Sweet mother of God...” he rasped as his hands covered her full breasts, and his thumbs stroked the aching, puffy nipples. He slipped the fox jacket off her, and a moment later, she was standing in nothing but her wet thong, thigh high nylons, her brand new jewelry, and those damn sexy high heels..

His hands captured her wrists to keep her from covering her breasts with her hands, and he turned her to face him. Sapphire eyes gleamed in the low light, and his expression was shadowed.

He slid slowly to his knees on the thick carpet before her, and his lips trailed over her ribs and down over her navel as his fingers slipped under the elastic at her generous hips and it snapped under the pressure of his tug. She gave a gasp of shock as he pressed open-mouthed, licking kisses down her belly to the neatly trimmed tiny triangle of hair that didn’t extend over her nether lips. His inhaled hiss of pleasure told her he liked her bare pussy.

Her fingers threaded desperately into his golden hair to keep her from falling over and losing control of her legs as he gently spread the folds of her labia apart and ran his searching tongue along her cleft, pausing to give her throbbing little knot of nerves a delicious tug as he sucked it into his lips.

“Oh, God, *Jack!*” she cried as an orgasm exploded through her, and her fingers clutched his hair as she nearly sank to the floor. He didn’t seem to care that she’d just had an amazing orgasm, as he continued to tease her clit with his strong tongue, and to dip his tongue into her folds, his hands shifting to clamp her where she stood, as he seemed to realize she was barely able to stand on her feet. Unable to speak because her breaths came in short, gasping pants, she closed her eyes and prayed that she would simply collapse onto the carpet.

After what seemed like an eternity, but was more than likely just a few seconds, his voice vibrated her clit as he said roughly, “Sit down, honey.”

Easy enough. Her legs refused to hold her upright for even a second longer, and she sank to her knees with a little yelp of surprise to find that his legs were between her thighs, and he had somewhere along the line unzipped his own dress slacks, freeing his amazingly erect cock. It was propped against her belly, and she met his dark blue gaze with a little whimper of fear as she realized that it was far too big to fit inside her.

“Um...Jack...” she began, her voice tight, “That is way too big to fit.

“I won’t hurt you, Fran.”

“I...I’ve never...I mean...oh, God, this is so embarrassing.” She buried her face in her hands and shook her head.

Jack almost shouted with joy as he realized that his hot little seductress was nowhere near as experienced as she pretended to be. In fact, she had absolutely no experience, if she thought his cock wouldn’t fit. He calmed his rush of lust, and placed his hands on each side of her face, tipping her head up to gaze into her eyes. Her blush made him want to eat her alive. “Nothing to be embarrassed over, love. Just let me love you, and if you want to try, I promise you it will fit.”

He tipped her lips up and gently kissed her, doing his best to control the white hot shot of lust that almost made him forget she was, amazingly, still untouched. He deepened the kiss gently, soothing her fears. He slid his hands slowly down her throat to her shoulders, and then trailed his fingertips down over her deliciously swollen breasts, tweaking the nipples with his

fingers and enjoying the shudder of desire that went through her. He felt the hot cream wetting his thighs, and knew that she was as eager for him as he was for her, despite her fears, and his hands continued their gentle exploration.

Sweet Lord, but she was so beautiful...so delicious beneath his hands. He skimmed his palms over her lush ass, and back up her back to caress her shoulders. He was just thinking that her timidity was easing, when he realized with a jolt that his shirt was open, and she was tugging it off over his head. His cock stiffened against her soft belly, and she gave a little laugh as she realized that his French cuffs were holding his shirt on his wrists like manacles. Bemused by her amusement, he lifted his head and smiled at her as she worked on getting the cufflinks out of the holes.

“Hell, Jack. At least you could have worn something that was easier to get off you!” she whispered huskily, and he couldn’t suppress his laughter. He tugged the sleeves off, and allowed her to finish removing his tuxedo pants and the silk boxers he wore beneath them, and when she’d flung the pants back over her shoulder and stared down at his enticingly erect cock with wide brown eyes, he could almost feel her gaze touching him. Then she looked down at his feet...one gleaming shoe on, with the other shoe missing, probably stuck inside the pant leg of his Tux, she burst into gales of laughter.

He took instant advantage of her merriment, sitting up and pulling her hard to his chest, crushing her ample breasts against the hard muscles. The feel of her wet pussy cradling his rigid cock was almost enough to make him come without even being touched. He groaned as he took her lips hungrily, his tongue sweeping into her hot, sweet mouth as she opened to his heated exploration. When he felt her hands on his cock, he almost lost it.

He levered up onto his knees and laid her back on the lush, soft nap of the carpet, right in the middle of the dining area of Jack Gerrard’s First and Ten, and he lowered his body to press hers back gently until he stretched out over her lush curves, his cock nudging the cleft that hid her clit. Her little cry of delight was almost enough to set him afire. When he lifted his mouth from hers, she gasped, “Jack...God, I want to feel you inside me!”

He kissed her again, hot and hard, and then he rose to his knees and reached for his pants. He found the little silver packets, and turned back to find her fishing three similar packets from her little gold bag. They stared at each other for a moment before they both burst into laughter.

“How many did you think would we need?” he whispered as he grinned down into her red face.

“I have no idea. But I think six will probably do for now.”

He watched her tear open one of her packets, and his mouth went dry as he watched her eyeing the rolled up condom, and his swollen shaft. “Want some help?” he grated, as she put the condom over the wide, flat tip of his cock, and glanced up into his eyes.

“I’ve got it...” she frowned, as she slowly, excruciatingly rolled the damn thing down his trembling length, her hands driving him wild.

“I don’t think I’ll last long enough to deflower you, sweetheart, if you keep touching me like that.”

She chewed her lower lip and smiled as he caught her wrists and drew her hands up to kiss her palms. Then she whispered huskily, “Please, Jack? Make love to me?”

“You know this will hurt for a minute?” His voice was rough as he slowly lowered her to the carpet, and gently settled her thighs wide apart over his own. She wet her lips and nodded jerkily, and he swallowed hard.

He wanted to give her something special her first time. He slowly caressed her silk clad thighs and ran his fingertips over her clit, finding the wet, creamy entrance to her pussy, and sank one long finger inside. She almost came up off his lap with her hips, her eyes fluttering closed.

He slowly thrust his finger in and out for a few moments, his thumb circling her clit, his mouth closing over her nipple to tug as he added another finger, then a third, feeling the tight, slightly stretchy membrane that would have to give way if he meant to make love to her. She arched into each slow, gently stretching thrust, and he watched, mesmerized, as she cupped her delicious breasts in her palms and held them up for his mouth, her eyes still closed. Her cream filled his hand as he worked her so gently to a fever pitch, and then he adjusted his cock to fit into the entry to her body, using her own cream to lubricate the condom.

She was panting, and he said softly, “Grab my neck, and when I say, I want you to sit up...okay?”

She nodded, her body throbbing toward another scintillating climax with each slow, pleasure/pain thrust of his hand. And then he said, “Now!” and he pulled her upright, her body surging down over his rigid shaft as he buried it in her body...her own weight opening the way as he held her tight against his chest, his face covered with perspiration.

“Oh, God, Jack...” she gasped as she fought to accommodate his thick shaft filling her to bursting. The pain was gone, but in its place was the discomfort of feeling stretched beyond her capacity...until she felt his lean fingers gently pinching her throbbing clit, and he began to slowly rock his hips to move gently inside her. Her breath caught in her throat as the slight shift of pressure inside her body combined with the heady caresses that tantalized her breast and clit sent her spiraling into a splintering orgasm that made her scream with pleasure. And still he kept up the sweet, gentle things that added to her throbbing pleasure.

He felt her clamping tight around his cock, and he fought back his own orgasm with difficulty. The warm wetness of her virgin’s blood pressed against his groin as she subsided from her orgasm, and when she lifted her eyes to his face, he waited for her reaction to what they had just done.

“You were right...you do fit.” Her voice was weak and shaky.

“You want to stop now?” his voice felt thick as the feel of her tight body embracing him drove him to the brink of climax.

“You haven’t come yet, Jack.”

“I’ll live. If you’re sore, we should stop now.”

“You would go without because I’m sore?” He stared into her face as she wrapped her arms around his neck.

Unable to form a word, he nodded jerkily.

“God, Jack. That’s why I love you.” She sighed, and pressed her lips into the damp hair at his temple.

He opened his eyes and clamped his arms even tighter about her lush body. “What did you just say?”

“I said...that’s why I love you, Jack...” She met his shocked gaze. “Does that make you uncomfortable?” The look in those chocolate eyes nearly floored him. He was buried to his root in her sweet body, aching to feel said delicious body rock on his until he came hard and hot...and she was asking him if the fact that she had admitted she loved him bothered him?

“Am I hurting you?” His voice was ragged.

Her eyes looked lost as she shook her head sadly.

“That’s good, because as long as I’m not hurting you, I am going to show you exactly how I feel about what you just said.” He pressed her back onto the floor and began to thrust with long, slow movements, his lips seeking hers as she whimpered and clung to him.

“I...love...you...” he whispered against her lips with each deep thrust. “I have loved you since before you told me to go to hell back in high school. I will love you as long as I live. I want to marry you and show you how much I adore you every day of the rest of my life. Any more questions?” He gave a groan of release and emptied, his body shuddering as she milked him of everything he had.

As they lay in a tangle of arms and legs, his mouth moving over her damp skin as he lay in a daze, he heard her soft voice, “Yes, Jack. I’ll marry you. But I do have just one more question...”

He lifted his head and met that sexy chocolate gaze. “And what is that?”

She wrapped her legs tightly around his hips and pulled his nose down to touch hers.

“Would you please cook me dinner first?”

About the Author

I started writing horror and sci-fi stories at age eight (if you want to call a 25-page attempt a book!) At age fourteen, I became aware that Romance was the breath of life—lovely, subtle and delicious. So I began to write in earnest, putting each book or short story away carefully—hoping that someday I would find my books on the best-seller lists, along with Barbara Cartland and E. M. Hull. But life has a way of setting back dreams and plans, and for many years, I found myself engulfed in living life. School—marriage—three beautiful kids—and a career helping people in a job I loved.

But I never gave up on my books, and I decided that it was finally time to toss my hat over the windmill! What was there to lose? I looked through my collected works and spruced one up for the 21st Century, and I somehow found the courage to try. I swallowed my insecurity and fear. I found a great publisher, submitted my novel—and—here I go!

Just goes to show that you should never give up on your dreams! Sometimes the Magic truly works!

You can find Fran Lee on the web at: www.franleeromance.com

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Are you in the mood for another Carnal Reunion?

Find more of this delicious anthology now available at Resplendence Publishing

IOU by Paris Brandon

The morning after her final exams, Bliss Harper woke up in her own bed wearing only her underwear. She's never remembered how she got there or why she found an I.O.U. tucked into her panties for one night of "Bad Boy Sex," signed by her favorite pizza delivery guy, Nick Santucci. But she had a ten-year plan that didn't include any more bad decisions and handsome men. But all work and no play make for a dull life and she's headed to her ten-year college reunion with every intention of collecting on a debt that's long overdue.

Ten years ago, bad boy Nick hadn't usually looked twice at shy, thrift-store fashion reject Bliss Harper. He just hadn't been able to avoid it when she'd started doing a tabletop, drunken striptease at a frat party the police were raiding. These days Nick's not delivering pizza, he's delivering deals and he's headed to his ten-year college reunion determined to negotiate one night into many with the woman who holds the marker on his heart.

G-Spot by Taylor Tryst

Lily Sutherland. No, Detective Lily Sutherland, a title she worked her ass off to earn, has returned to Heartwood Indiana for her ten-year college reunion. An ex-Lady Hawk, and a star athlete on the volleyball team, Lily used her competitive edge to win on the court. She dove into the male dominated world of law enforcement where she once again rocked the foundation and shot up the ranks to homicide detective in record time. As far as Lily is concerned, she's just one of the boys until she reunites with Dakota Reese, the love of her life.

Special Agent Dakota Reese has always been too smart for his own damn good. Specializing in serial cases, Dakota attends his college reunion at Western Indiana University for what he believes will be a reprieve, only to discover that his life just became much harder...literally, when he see's Lily Sutherland at the grand old Victorian down the street. Dakota and Lily had split amicably ten years prior, each of them marrying for all of the right reasons. Unfortunately, they married someone else, and were now both divorced. There's a natural animosity between the cops and the feebs, but can Lily put their differences aside long enough for her 'G Man' to find her g spot and rock her world, forever?

Prisoner of the Heart by Anny Cook:

When Rebecca Iversen graduated from college, she headed home with nothing on her mind but wedding plans. Less than a month later her plans were in ruins when she discovered she was pregnant the same week her fiancé was arrested for selling drugs. Anxious to provide legitimacy for her child, she married Tom while he was still in jail. Years later, Becky finally divorced him, resolved to make a peaceful life for her children and herself.

When the reunion invitation from Karen arrived in her e-mail, her Aunt Mary urged her to take the time to enjoy a little adult time at the reunion.

Young Joe Harris lived across the street from the old Victorian where Becky lived during college. He spent those years secretly yearning for the “older woman”. Now that Becky is back and single, Joe plans to do everything in his power to convince her that he’s exactly the man she needs.

Nailed by Cindy Spencer Pape

When shy scientist Karen Sikorski meets up with her college crush, Warner Beckett, sparks fly, but she knows the handsome contractor would never fall for a plain nerd like her. Warner, though, has other ideas. Smart, voluptuous Karen is everything he's ever wanted in a woman, and this time around, he's enough of a grown up to appreciate it. Now all he has to do is convince the lady he really does want her--in every way possible.

Training Randi by Tessie Bradford

Miranda Ellson graduated from college with a degree in design in one hand and a ticket to London in the other. Ten years, five job changes and three boring, unfulfilling relationships later she’s back at WIU to re-connect with old friends, enjoy the campus activities and take a break from...oh who the hell is she kidding?

Jeff Briggs, former college neighbor and best bud, now successful gym owner, lives in town. He’s the only guy she has ever known who could set her panties on fire by simply walking into a room and Randi is sick and tired of only hooking up with him in her dreams. This may be her only chance to discover exactly what kind of personal training he has to offer.

Smokin’ Ace by Regina Carlisle

A college reunion and seeing her best ‘gal pals’ is just the thing widow and single mom, Chloe Wells needs to put a little oomph back into her boring, routine life. For her, those carefree years and the friendships she made with six other women in the old Victorian were unforgettable and, hey, what’s wrong with revisiting a past that was fun and full of laughter? But when she bumps

into Michael “Ace” Banner other memories surface. Memories of hot nights and rumpled bed sheets. Memories of the loss of the one man who burned her to ash.

Former college tennis star, Ace Banner, now a renowned sports photographer, has just one chance to regain the love of pretty, sweet, very sexy Chloe. Yeah, he blew it years ago by walking away but he’s a man now and not about to let her get away again. Ace is prepared to pull out all the stops in reclaiming what he lost all those years ago. It’ll take a slow hand and an easy touch but he’s up for the challenge.

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Handcuffs and Lace

Resplendence Publishing's Erotic Romance Line of Law Enforcement Themed Stories

***What the Cuff?* By Celia Kyle**

God really should have reconsidered making werewolves. That, or Lyssa needed to get better taste in men and stay away from those with wandering eyes—and other things. Drunk as a wolf, she stumbles to her best friend's house to sleep off her whiskey induced haze and wakes to...*cuffs?*

Caleb sees his chance and takes it. His buddies on the force ribbed him but good for buying silver plated cuffs. But with a werewolf in his bed, the woman he's yearned for since they were teens, he wasn't taking any chances. Lyssa was his. She just didn't know it yet.

***Ticket Me More* by Tia Fanning**

Hailed by the bridal flower world as an artistic genius, Meli works long nights making bouquets for women lucky enough to find love, while she herself lives a life of solitude. She yearns to share her heart and body with someone other than Bob, her *Battery Operated Boyfriend*, but acute shyness keeps her from engaging the "living" world.

However, Meli's quiet and predictable existence takes an unexpected turn when she is pulled over and ticketed by the most gorgeous cop she has ever encountered—Officer Michael Johnson. Though he doesn't seem to notice her as anything more than a traffic violation, Meli makes plans to overcome her timid nature and seize the police officer's attention...using any speed necessary.

***Handcuffs and Lies* by Bronwyn Green**

Sometimes promises to friends are the hardest to keep. Undercover police officer, Michael Tanner, promised his dying partner that he'd take care of the man's little sister. Trouble is, after her brother's death, Doctor Tori Spinelli wants nothing to do with Michael—or any other cop for that matter.

Tori has always fought against overprotective men and deception. Forced into protective custody

with Michael, she's now faced with both in the same package. Despite their differences, Tori falls in love with him, but how can she trust a man who lies for a living?

***Search Me Baby, One More Time* by Melinda Barron**

Wren Thornberry's life isn't going according to plan. She let her father talk her out of marrying Bryan Stockard, the man she loves, and moved halfway around the world. Now she's back home in Texas, babysitting her grandmother while grandma and her boy-toy work through their list of sexual exploits, making themselves the talk of the town.

But what Wren doesn't know is that things in her hometown are about to heat up even more, and it will have nothing to do with her grandmother. It seems that Bryan Stockard is still around, he wants to get back into Wren's life—by any means necessary, and now he has just the tools to do it: A police uniform, handcuffs, and the authority to make Wren *assume the position*.

***Cuff Me Lacy* by Demi Alex**

Three months is way too long to wait for some simple, low-down, straight forward sex. It's not like Officer Chrissie Hansen is asking for prince charming to offer her the love of a lifetime. All she wants is a good orgasm that she doesn't have to work for alone.

At least with "The Bull" she knows what to expect. But when Patrick MacKlick returns to her life and tempts her with new options, she discovers that lace can imprison a heart better than handcuffs can.

***Going Commando* by Catherine Chernow**

Bounty hunter Shyra Lawrence listens to her favorite radio station one morning where the DJ's are discussing "going commando" —*a.k.a* wearing no undies. Captivated by their conversation, she decides to shed her panties in favor of the freedom that wearing no underwear brings.

Enthusiastic, Shyra sends an email to her best friend, Donna, detailing the delights of panty-freedom, but unbeknownst to Shyra, she's hit the send key...to the wrong email addy!

When Derek Grayson opens his emails that morning, he discovers that his #1 employee and top bounty hunter has sent him an erotic, enticing message about going commando. Derek has always been polite, professional, and so damned attracted to Shyra that it's almost painful. Working day in and day out with voluptuous woman has sent Derek's hormones into overdrive on more than one occasion.

Now, Shyra's shed her panties and Derek's got all he can do to contain his lust when she announces that she's... GOING COMMANDO.

Also available from Resplendence Publishing

***Scorcher* by Celia Kyle**

Phoebe's a salamander with a problem. Fire is her element, her very best friend, and the core of her nature. But she can't control it worth a darn. One decent temper tantrum and *poof!* Fire galore. Good thing she lives in the desert with nary a tree in sight. Well, there are a few bushes and such. And her house. And a few cacti...sorta. At least until she'd gotten mad over getting stuck by one of the darned things...

Brant lives by fire and dies by fire. Literally. As Fire Chief, it's his job to stamp out fires in Winthrop, making sure residents of the small town in the back woods of Arizona don't have to worry about fire taking their businesses and homes. As a phoenix, he has the ability to sense fires the moment they start. It's a handy talent that keeps the residents safe. Except for his girlfriend, who seems to be able to blow up just about everything, including the stove.

***Red: A Seduction Tale* by Maddie James**

Garnet Boudreaux is going home. Not back to her nice little apartment in New York City, but to her childhood home in the bayou. She doesn't want to go, and isn't certain what will be waiting for her when she arrives. But standing there in the voodoo shop on Bourbon Street, in the middle of one helluva party, she's told by Madame Madeleine Dupuis that she has no choice. She presses two pouches into Garnet's hands, wraps a red cape around her, and tells her she must go—and go now—to see to her grandmother.

Max LeBlanc spies the lovely redhead across the street and knows in a heartbeat that she is the one. A rougarou always knows when he's met his mate. Some may call him a lycanthrope, a werewolf if you will, but in Cajun bayou lands, he's known simply as *The Rougarou*. He'd waited several hundred years for this moment, and for her. There is nothing left for him to do but mark her and claim her as his mate. Soon.

***Oriana and the Three Werebears* by Tia Fanning**

Oriana Ricci has taken over the family business—flying cargo and rich tourists around Alaska's barely inhabited Kodiak Archipelago. When her plane malfunctions and she's forced to make an emergency landing, she finds herself stranded in the middle of a National Wildlife Refuge. With no civilization for miles and no hope of rescue, she thinks all is lost...

Until she stumbles upon the entrance to an underground bunker.

Jack, Jordan, and Jonathan McMathan own and operate a secret intelligence firm contracted by the US Government. Hidden away in an old Cold War spy station located the middle of the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge, the brothers are not only able to do their top secret jobs safely without fear of discovery, but are better to protect their other, more personal secret: they have the ability to shift into Kodiak bears.

Like a fairy tale gone bad, the brothers return home to find their lunch tasted—or eaten, their computer chairs adjusted—or broken, and a beautiful blonde sleeping in one of their beds. This situation poses a big problem for the brothers...

Their location is now compromised. But more importantly, what are they to do with the lady?

Extinction by Carol Lynne

Professor of Environmental Science/Wildlife studies at UNLV, Jack McBain has spent his adult life trying to track a legend overheard during his youth. Born and raised in the Canadian Province of Newfoundland, Jack remembers his grandparents telling stories of a race of people eradicated by European settlers in 1829. According to the legend, the Beothuk people didn't die out as first thought, but were transformed into wolf shifters.

When Newfoundland wolves began to appear in great numbers, the European settlers began killing them under the guise of population control. In 1910, the last of the Newfoundland wolves was shot, making them one of the few extinct species of wolves in the world.

Following spotty leads, Jack begins to track what he believes are Beothuk/Newfoundland shifter wolves. His search leads him to the Lake Mead National Recreational Area outside of Las Vegas. There, on Spirit Mountain, he finally comes face to face with not only the shifter he's been looking for, but the man of his dreams he didn't know he needed.

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