



A Shifter, A Vampire and A Demon walk into a bar...

*Shifting Reality, Book 1*

Thomas Lyons is your average cat shifter. Cool, seductive...and bored out of his mind. He doesn't like hiding, and with the new popularity of all things paranormal, he doesn't see why he should. When his roommate Saint, a half demon technofile, gets him hooked up with his own computer, he has an idea. He starts a weblog called *Shifting Reality*, announcing to the world who and what he is. Oddly enough, the more he shares, the less he is believed. In fact, people begin thinking it is a new online series with fantastic effects.

Margo Anderson prefers not to be noticed, she is no longer the wild young thing she used to be. No more dancing on tables for her. Not after her reckless behavior cost her so much. Her only guilty pleasures are dark chocolate and shoes—and a certain website with a man whose purring voice sends shivers down her spine. She never thought she'd win a trip to spend a week in a haunted Scottish castle with the men of *Shifting Reality*. Or that her boss at the production office would want her to mix business with pleasure...or else.

When Margo and Thomas meet, it's love at first sight for the usually fickle Casanova. It's hard to host the show when his attention is taken up by the luscious handful. And it's hard for a girl to think about contracts when she's surrounded by newlywed ghosthunters, a matchmaking demon and a man whose addictive touch makes her head spin.

Warning: Tons of explicit sex. A cat shifter with an oral fixation, voyeurism, anal sex, sex in pantries, with ghosts...you get the idea.

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# My Shifter Showmance

*R.G. Alexander*

## Dedication

*For Cookie—Love is the Reason. And to my Smutketeers and Romance Divas, for your friendship and inspiration. Above all, Beth—the best editor and friend a neurotic writer could have. Thank you.*

# Chapter One

“Cue the music. Welcome to *Shifting Reality*, blah, blah, blah, etcetera, etcetera. Tonight, instead of regaling you with my latest sexual conquest—don’t be disappointed—or my roommates unusual, um, eating habits, I thought we’d go back to the beginning. Just you and I, alone, having an intimate one on one. But first, let’s address those naysaying emails.

“This video journal has been online for nearly a year. If, after all you’ve seen and heard, you don’t yet believe—then you are no doubt one of those people who still thinks the earth is flat and there isn’t an alien colony on the moon. That’s okay. I love a little healthy skepticism. It turns me on. I’m beginning to think the government is on to something. The more I put the truth out there, the less you believe it.

“But if you have a shadow of a doubt, or if you’re interested in getting to know me a little better, what I’ve planned to celebrate our one year anniversary should be right up your alley—and mine. Saint, Mac and a few of my more interesting friends are having a contest—think *Survivor* meets *Fear Factor*, only a lot more relaxed, far more comfortable, and I promise you won’t have to put anything in your mouth...that you don’t thoroughly enjoy.

“We will choose nine humans to come and play at an obnoxiously large castle in Scotland owned by your favorite vampire and mine, my roommate Mac. If picked, you’ll be the starring attraction for a week of *Shifting Reality*. Those who stay at home will be able to play as well, asking our guests questions, and suggesting the trouble they’d like to see us get into together. Those who can last all seven days will receive fifty thousand dollars each, a vacation in Scotland and some up close and personal time with yours truly. Which, let’s be honest, is the best prize of all. Here kitty, kitty. You know you wanna play.”

Margo paused the video on his cocky smile, complete with sharpened incisors. God, he was sexy. She licked her lips, then blushed, though no one could see her. No one knew she was watching him.

Thomas “Tomcat” Lyons, the star of *Shifting Reality* and her most sizzling fantasies. Had it only been six months since her friend forwarded her that email? The one that contained one of his juicier journals, where he described what he felt when he took a woman. How intensely he could scent her need, how each woman had her own special aroma that changed with her arousal?

At first she thought it was just a random link. An R-rated one to be sure, but still. She’d seen the web address at the bottom and curiosity compelled her to search the unusual site. She’d clicked on each and every journal entry, sitting in front of her computer for hours. She’d watched it evolve from one man’s

private rant at having to hide what he truly was, to cameras capturing unusual but captivating conversations between the three stars of the series.

There was Mac, the rather moody vampire, clearly uncomfortable at being in the spotlight, despite his beauty. Saint, the distracted techno-genius, a morally ambiguous demon half-breed who enjoyed computers more than Margo enjoyed chocolate. And then there was Thomas Lyons. Smart as a whip, kinky enough to own one, and so openly and unapologetically sexual that you could almost believe he was what he claimed to be. Namely, a genuine non-human cat shifter.

Realistically, Margo knew that the trio had to be actors. They were certainly gorgeous enough. Or hungry scriptwriters looking for backing. Several people had taken their stories online during the writer's strike, opening up an opportunity for new talent.

Perhaps it was a unique pitch meant for her boss, and they thought they could get to her through her friend. Being an assistant for the head of a production company ensured she had a lot of people finding creative ways to meet her. As though she had any control over what the company chose to develop. Sidling up to her at parties, in grocery stores, even singing telegrams explaining why their story was the next big thing. *Star Wars* set as a musical in the fifties or something equally world-altering. But this was different.

There were no behind the scenes bloopers, no bios to indicate they were actors, or information on how to contact them. Nothing on their site took away from the illusion that these men were not men, but creatures, straight out of fantasy and myth. And the men themselves so perfectly played their roles that even Margo, cynic that she was, found herself drawn into their world.

Like dark chocolate, steamy romance novels and shoes, *Shifting Reality* had become her closet addiction, her secret guilty pleasure. She'd logged onto the site under a screen name to discuss the show with likeminded others. She took her laptop to bed each night to watch the latest installment or bemoan the lack of one. She'd even chatted with *him* several times. Or someone pretending to be him. Online you could never be sure. Thomas Lyons. She flirted with him under her screen name in a way she'd never have the courage to in person. Despite knowing he was a made up character, an illusion, she lusted after him.

She couldn't understand why she was so drawn to him. Hadn't she sworn off bad boys long ago? And he *was* a bad boy in every sense of the word. If he was real, he was one of those men Margo would never allow herself to date, even casually. He went through women and men like a drunk went through wine, loving every sip, but always moving on to the next shiny new bottle. No apologies, no remorse. He was a tomcat after all. It was his nature.

Still, she couldn't get him out of her mind. She felt like a teenager, a groupie. She was way too old for this, but she couldn't deny it. She had a crush on a guy who liked to play dress up and have his teeth sharpened.

The link to enter the contest flashed beneath the frozen video, taunting her. There was no time in her life for wishful thinking. She was surrounded by eccentric and visionary directors and writers. She had to be the calm, realistic center.

Anyone who'd known her when she was younger would laugh until they cried hearing that. Margo Sheffield, responsible and realistic? She had changed a lot in the last few years. For the better, in her opinion. The wild child who'd come to Hollywood on a dare, who'd had dreams of fame as a singer only to end up getting into one bad situation after another, was a part of the past. Dead and buried, though Margo knew she would spend the rest of her life paying for her youthful mistakes.

She studied Thomas Lyon's knowing grin again and sighed. She needed to get out more. Find a normal man to daydream about. In L.A., that would be a challenge, but surely there was one guy out there. Just one who hadn't been a semi-star on a reality show, a moody rocker who wouldn't appreciate her or an agent who promised anything to anyone, as long as he got what he wanted. She mentally added "man who believed he could grow a tail and whiskers on command" to her list. So why was she hesitating? Why was her finger still restless, itching to click her mouse, to enter the contest?

She looked down at Hailey, sliding her hand through the blue-black fur of the sleeping cat. "At least I'm a cat person." She sighed. "It's not like I'd be chosen anyway." But she knew it would drive her crazy if she didn't try. The part of her that melted every time she heard Thomas's seductive purr knew she had to take this chance. A chance in a billion to see him face to face.

Margo opened the link and filled out the small entry form. Maybe the wild child inside her wasn't buried quite deep enough.

"No more."

Thomas hopped over the back of the couch, his agile body moving in a way no human's could. He landed to sit comfortably, legs crossed on the coffee table as he popped a potato chip into his mouth. "Don't get your kilt in a twist, Mac, you agreed to this, remember?"

The tall Scotsman snarled as he paced the living room. "I believe you mentioned something about freedom in the anonymity of the Internet. That we'd be lost in the masses, and there would be no true repercussions for baring our proverbial souls." He stopped to glare at Thomas. "People are following me whenever I show myself, Lyons. Other vampires are split into two camps. They either want to be on the show, or they are planning my demise for allowing you to continue to out us. That sounds like repercussions to me."

"They're called fans, Mac Attack. It isn't like they're carrying torches and pitchforks." Thomas chuckled. "Not yet anyway. As for the vampire threats, you can take them. You're the toughest bloodsucker I know."



Saint spoke up from his position on the leather recliner without lifting his gaze from his laptop. “The forums are already lighting up like Christmas trees, and the contest post is going viral.”

“Viral?”

Thomas snorted. “That’s a good thing in this case, Mac. Now you just need to let the current residents at Castle Continuously Depressing know we’re having guests.”

Mac crossed his arms. “Only if you remember our deal. After I allow you to turn my home into your own private testing ground, this ends. No more waking to find a camera attached to my headboard. No more deep in depth interviews about the taste of Type A versus Type O positive. I have lived a dozen lifetimes with no more than a family painting to prove my existence. And now I’ve been recorded sleeping merely to answer a random question on your damn site about whether or not a vampire snores. So no more invasions of my privacy, or Saint’s, or you’ll be looking for a new roommate...and we all know who keeps this place in cream and caviar.”

Thomas watched Mac storm out to the balcony and disappear into the night, becoming the mist. He was always envious of that ability. Arrogant bastard. Problem was, Mac was right. He stared at the ceiling morosely. It *had* gotten out of hand. He’d never imagined people would actually pay attention to one small website among so many. Or that he’d enjoy it this much.

He wasn’t sure when it began to bother him, hiding what he was. Maybe it always had. His was a proud species. Cats weren’t known for their humility, after all. He didn’t want to dominate humans, but pretending to be one of them, pretending he wasn’t stronger, faster, more agile and a hell of a lot longer lived...well that sucked.

Clark Kent he wasn’t. The alter ego, play-acting routine had long grown stale. But he’d lived with it for so long. Swallowed the bitter taste in his mouth and suffered in silence. Until that one night. He recalled it with great clarity. He’d been penned up for too long, and he felt the desire to unleash his lion for a late night run. He’d shifted back to his human form in an alley behind his favorite nightclub. He was feeling wild, longing for the sexual release the beast within him craved. Before he could enter the club he heard the scream. A young woman had seen him, watched his body morph, watched his fur disappear and clothing come from out of the ether to cover him.

He’d reacted instinctively. Done what he’d done a thousand times before. He’d pulled her into his arms, swamped her with his pheromones, then found her friends and convinced them she was drunk. When she’d rambled on and on about seeing a lion in the alley, about her sudden need to have sex, they’d all chuckled, joking with her about her inability to hold her liquor before they decided to take her home. It was a scenario Thomas had played out before, but this time...it had gotten to him.

He started thinking about the injustice of it all. Why *couldn’t* he shift when he wanted to? Why did Mac have to change locations, “die” and leave his inheritance to himself over and over again? And Saint. Well, Saint was different. He had no desire to leave the house or his computer to explore the world outside.

He said the demon half of him didn't play well with others. At least, not in person. But what about all the other shifters and vampires out there? What about the ghosts? They accepted humans and *their* right to exist, why couldn't they live out in the open as well?

He'd gotten home that night railing at the Fates, going on and on until Saint had walked out of the room and brought him one of his extra computers. He'd shown him how to use the webcam and how to start a blog. Mainly, Thomas now believed, to get him to shut up.

It was like catnip. He'd begun to talk into the camera and, like a sinner at confession, it had all poured out. All his frustrations, what he was, everything. It had been cathartic. Freeing. Addictive. When people began to comment on his blog, discussing his video posts in the chat room, going with what they considered his fantasy...well, he enjoyed that too. Here he could talk to them, answer questions, get into arguments about myth versus reality. Here he could be himself.

And he'd loved the loyal posters and chat room groupies. He found himself prowling less, staying home just to talk to them. Doing things he wouldn't normally do, like risking the wrath of his roommates just to please them. Fanglvr353 had been the one to request a camera placed on the sleeping Mac's headboard. She'd been so grateful she'd sent him virtual flowers. And a picture of herself that made even Thomas blush. It was for Mac, but somehow Thomas didn't think he'd be appreciative.

"She's signed in."

Thomas glanced over at Saint, suddenly alert. "She?"

Saint raised one dark eyebrow. "Kittysnapdragon. Isn't she your favorite?"

He tried not to let his excitement show. What had she thought of his last video? Had she gotten his not so subtle message to her? Had she entered the contest? He rolled his eyes at Saint. "She's just a fan of the website, man. Besides, you told me yourself how these things work. She could be a sixty-five-year-old, three hundred pound man for all I know."

Saint shook his head. "Nope. More like thirty-one, female, long, dark brown hair and an ass you could bounce quarters off for fun."

Thomas made an effort to stop growling, pulling his lips down over his extending incisors. "It isn't nice to pry, Saint." He kept forgetting Saint's talent. A technophile, Saint traveled through the ether with his mind alone. In a heartbeat he could know everything about anyone linked in. A power Thomas wouldn't mind borrowing from time to time. "Quarters, you say?"

Saint just smirked and lifted himself off the recliner. "I'm going back to my game. And don't worry about Mac. He needs to be shaken up from time to time. The man has stick-up-his-ass-itis. A painful ailment that only a shock to the system can cure. I think this contest might be just the thing. He does too, otherwise he wouldn't let us anywhere near his ancestral home."

Thomas jumped from the couch and headed for his bedroom as soon as Saint rounded the corner. He'd be playing that game all night. The same way he had since he created the online role-playing game,

*Demon Saint.* It was Saint's way of putting himself out there. He'd made his story, the world he knew, into a game. Reviewers raved about the graphics, and the reclusive visionary who'd created it. It was worth millions, but Saint only kept enough to live on, giving the rest of the money away to charity. Not a very demon-like action, but he was half human after all. And Thomas knew money wasn't why he did it. He understood that now. It was for the connection. Saint was responsible, in a way, for *Shifting Reality* as well. Maybe he'd known what Thomas had needed, even before Thomas had himself.

He closed his bedroom door, popping open a bottle of beer as he powered up his laptop. She was on, and he found himself impatiently drumming on the brown glass bottle as he waited for a chance to talk to her. To see if she'd entered.

Thomas opened the site, heading immediately to the chat room. He kept himself invisible so he could see what they were saying without distraction. It was full, everyone excited about the contest, about the chance to see Mac's castle. Mac had no idea how much these women loved vampires. Every movie, every book, even the ones meant for younger adults—they ate it up. Vampires were in. His friend could be the Elvis of the blood sucking world if he'd just relax and enjoy it.

Ah. There she was. He double clicked on her name and opened up a private window.

Tomcat: *Knock Knock*

There was a pause, and he held his breath until she responded.

Kittysnapdragon: *Sneaking in again? The others will be disappointed. They all want to pepper you with questions about the contest.*

Tomcat: *I'm a cat. I excel at sneaking. And other things.*

Kittysnapdragon: *So you keep telling me. I'll just have to take your word for it.*

He smiled when he saw her response. "Maybe I can prove it." Tom typed swiftly, feeling like a nervous kid. It was foolish, how much he cared what she thought.

Tomcat: *Did you enter the contest? Tell me your real name, I might be able to pull some strings.*

He hit enter and held his breath.

There was another long pause, then a small yellow smiley face popped on screen, shaking its head along with a few words that had him snorting in disbelief. She logged off quickly, and he knew she wouldn't be back on tonight.

"No cheating?" Her last words stayed with him as he turned off his computer and headed for Saint's room. "You don't know me very well, darlin'. But you will."

## Chapter Two

Margo Sheffield was the unluckiest human on the planet. That was all there was to it. A moment of weakness, just one small step from her straight and narrow path had led to this—trapped on a plane, not with snakes or psycho pilots, but with a group of eight others. All fans of *Shifting Reality*, all winning contestants on their way to Scotland.

When she'd arrived in New York, she'd discovered that the show had rented the entire plane, just for them. So there was nothing to distract Margo from getting to know her fellow winners. Or think about how she'd gotten into this mess in the first place.

After her five second chat with Tomcat almost a month ago, she'd made a resolution. She would stay away from the site for a while, focus on what was real, what she needed to do. He was a fantasy, and that was where he needed to stay. She'd thrown herself even further into her work, helping development weed through scripts, ensuring she was the first one to arrive and the last to leave. Everyone had taken notice. Including her boss, Darcy Finch.

So when she'd come in from picking up lunch for an office meeting to find everyone staring at her as though she'd grown an extra head, she was hopeful. Maybe she was getting that raise Darcy always dangled like a carrot. Or a promotion.

She wasn't surprised when Darcy pulled her into the office before the meeting. She *was* surprised at the reason.

"Excuse me?"

"*Shifting Reality*? The Internet sensation? You know, if Whedon's people hadn't assured me he had nothing to do with it, I never would have believed anyone else could pull it off. It's the most popular thing going, and no one has been able to touch them, to talk to them about developing it for cable or film. Until now. Until you, Margo, you genius."

She swallowed. Hard. "Me?"

Darcy had leaned against her desk, a blonde bombshell with the instincts of a shark, and smiled. "You've always been an asset, Margo. Never letting your life get in the way of what I needed you to do. I always thought, forgive me for saying so, that you just didn't have one. That you were one of those sheep outside that punch their time cards and go home alone to a cat until they retire to Florida." She shrugged unapologetically. "But this, this is the kind of innovative thinking that got me where I am today. And it's going to let us write our own ticket."

Margo sat down, setting the bags of hot gyros gently on the table beside her and took a breath, silently hoping she didn't have any of Hailey's black cat hairs on her blouse. "Darcy, I'm sorry but I'm not sure—"

Darcy reached behind her and spun her computer screen around, giving Margo a chance to see the graphics. "You won, Margo. There's your name. You are going to be one of the contestants going to Scotland. You'll be up close and personal with the creators of the show for one week. Seven whole days." She clasped her hands together excitedly. "In that time I expect nothing less than a signed contract for exclusive filming rights, promotional merchandising—the works. I can see it now. You think that teeny bopper vamp campaign was big? That's nothing compared to what I have in mind for those three. We'll have their faces on everything from cereal boxes to pantyhose, on billboards and marquee signs. And you will be the one to make it happen."

Margo knew that light. That special, greedy light in Darcy's eye that told her she would not let this go. She stared at her name on the screen and panic began to set in. On camera? She couldn't do it. It would be too humiliating. "Couldn't we send one of the interns instead? I know several who would love to be in front of the camera. I think I should be here, at the main office, there's so much work..." Darcy's expression froze, and Margo knew she had no choice. If she said no, she would lose her job. Or be forced to resign. That was Darcy's style. "No. You're right. *I* should go. I'll get their agreement, even if it kills me."

Darcy had pulled her up from her chair, all smiles again. "That's my girl. It won't be that bad. Just one week on camera with some of the hottest men either one of us has ever seen, which is saying something, considering the business we're in. I'll have the contracts drawn, all you have to do is play along, and get their signatures. You do that, and you will never have to worry about job security again. You don't? Well, that will be another story, won't it?"

She thought about that last meeting again as she sat in her window seat, watching the wings of the plane tear through the clouds, and took another shot of tequila. She gasped, reaching for a napkin.

"Careful. I've been drunk on a plane before. It is impossible to maintain any dignity with your face buried in an airsick bag. Trust me."

Margo glanced up in surprise at the pleasant male voice. Salt and pepper hair, expensive suit, handsome face. He looked nothing like a *Shifting Reality* fan. "Did you get on the wrong flight?"

He chuckled, sitting down beside her with a smile. "I could ask the same of you. You're the only one who hasn't joined the celebration a few aisles down. And the only one who doesn't look happy to be here." He held out his hand. "My name's Stan. Stanley Lawrence Ayer. But you might be more familiar with my screen moniker—"

"Slayer! *You're* Slayer? I can't believe Mr. Cynical actually entered the contest." She blushed. "I'm so sorry, Mr. Ayer. I haven't had tequila in a long time. I'm not exactly at my best."

He shook his head, leaning closer. "It's Stan. And don't worry—it's no worse than I've heard so far. I don't think too many people are happy with my being chosen. Personally, I'm impressed. Those boys are

either supremely confident, or masochistic.” She joined his soft laughter and watched him tilt his head. “Forgive me for being forward, but since I’ve already been introduced to the rest of the winners, I assume you are Ms. Margo Sheffield?”

She nodded. “I am. Before you ask...Kittysnapdragon.”

He leaned back against the cushioned seat and slapped his hands on his knees. “Now *I’m* surprised. You are not at all as I pictured you. And I’d been doing so well.”

“Thought I’d be a crazy fan girl drooling over Thomas Lyons’s picture?”

Stan nodded. “Pretty much. Erin Johnston and Karen Stevens already have that stereotype covered. I’m sure you’ll meet them shortly.” He studied her expression. “Why do you look so unhappy, then? I would have thought you would be thrilled to get the chance to meet our feline host. Afraid to fly?”

Margo took another sip of her drink and mumbled. “No, I’m afraid to crash and burn.”

Stan seemed to understand she wasn’t talking about the plane. “Just stick close to me, my beauty. I’ll protect you.” He stood and grasped her hand. “Come, Margo. We signed the paper, and we know what it says. We have to allow ourselves to be filmed, and we need to at least make an effort to mingle with our contestant brethren.”

“But we aren’t there yet.” She knew she was being petulant. She just had a sinking feeling that her streak of bad luck was only going to get worse. That nothing would ever be the same.

“*Au contraire*, my dear. As soon as we stepped on this plane it began. There are cameras everywhere.” Stan pointed toward the front, where the screen that was usually reserved for in flight movies was projecting split screen images of the contestants as they laughed, drank and cavorted in the aisles. In the lower corner one camera had zoomed in on her, watching as she isolated herself.

“Great.”

Stan laughed. “Smile, love. You’re a star.”

She wasn’t sure how many hours they were on that plane, but as she watched the other passengers drag themselves down the tarmac, she knew they were all in the same boat. Hung over and jet lagged, and looking like something the cat dragged in. Even Slayer looked mussed, and she would be willing to bet that wasn’t a state the fastidious gentleman usually allowed himself to get in.

Kasey Lynn and Bryan Hollister were the only ones who looked alert and raring to go. A married couple from Houston, the two were inseparable, and both avid ghost hunters. They’d admitted most of their luggage held equipment brought to investigate the Scottish castle, and they’d spent the evening regaling the others with its macabre and bloody history.

Now Margo could add ghosts to the list of things she had to be nervous about. She slipped on her sunglasses and pulled her thin coat closer around her, looking from her rolling carryon to see a giant piece

of male beefcake and a stunning young woman, both standing beside a large tour bus, handheld cameras aimed their way.

“This day keeps getting better and better,” she mumbled. “And I haven’t even had my coffee yet.”

“Coffee is on the bus, ma’am, as well as a hardy breakfast guaranteed to cure your ills.” The woman behind the camera smiled after shouting across the distance. How had she heard her from that far away? The wind must have carried her voice. She nodded, reaching up to hold her heavy head at the motion. Oh Lord, she promised she’d never drink again. Just make the pain stop.

“That is one beautiful camerawoman. Consider my ills cured,” Joseph Lopez, one of the other contestants, whispered in Margo’s ear. He was a good guy. An architect from Arizona, with a love of all things paranormal. Very earnest and charming.

Camera Girl blushed, and Margo nearly stumbled. She knew the woman had heard his whispered words. She wasn’t sure how. Maybe they’d been secretly wired while they slept on the flight.

*Or maybe she has a keen sense of hearing because she’s one of them.*

She couldn’t start down that road. She didn’t believe in things that went bump in the night. Never had. All her monsters had been very real and very human. She just had to play along until she convinced them to sign on the dotted line. That was the only reason she’d come.

It had nothing to do with Thomas Lyons. Nothing at all.

“Smell the Scottish air. This place is so full of history, I can’t wait to start exploring.”

“It is, sugar. Do you have the infrared camera? The EMF detector?”

“We have everything, honey. We already went down the checklist, remember?”

Margo bit her lip to stop from chuckling. Kasey Lynn and Bryan were going to be entertainment unto themselves. Maybe they could do a spin-off. *Newlywed Ghost Hunters: The Mad and the Beautiful*.

She looked around. The sky was amazing. And the air—it *was* sweet. Maybe this wouldn’t be so bad. Chilly, but nice. After living beneath the dome of California smog for so long, she’d forgotten what fresh air smelled like.

They were guided onto the tour bus, a giant rock star mobile with all the amenities. Where did their funding come from? To say Darcy would be disappointed if this was a studio promotion of a film already underway was an extreme understatement. They had gone to greater lengths in the past, but surely something this big couldn’t have been kept under wraps for a whole year. There was no marketing team that leak proof.

She sat down at a table with Joseph, Stan and a lovely Asian woman named Julie Wu. Julie was Keepsake\_Hrt, one of Margo’s partner’s in crime online. She was happy to finally meet her in person, and Julie seemed relieved to have someone she knew along for the ride as well.

The woman with the camera and the bionic ears stood at the front of the bus with her male counterpart. She was truly lovely. Exotic dark brown eyes, lush lips, sharp cheekbones and the body of a



lingerie model. Margo wondered if she and Thomas were together. That thought was singularly depressing. “Welcome to Scotland. I’m Chi, and this is Liam. We’ll be your camera crew for the next week, and this old guy behind us at the wheel—Dugan—he’ll be in charge of your transportation needs.”

The bus started moving, and Margo looked down at her breakfast. On any other day it would have been welcome. Pancakes and sausage, Eggs Benedict and a fresh bowl of fruit. Today it made her stomach knot in rejection. And now she remembered why she’d stopped drinking the hard stuff.

“Where are they? Thomas, Mac and Saint?”

Chi smiled at the question that came from Karen Stevens, a petite, seemingly shy woman who’d admitted on the flight that she had gotten a tattoo of the three stars on her chest for the occasion. *That* was fan dedication.

“Thomas and Saint are in transit. They wanted to give you an opportunity to get settled in before you meet. Mac, as you know, is not exactly fond of sunlight.” Chi winked at the group’s titters. “Tonight, at dinner, you will meet everyone for the first time. Anyone else have any questions?”

“Will everything be recorded? What if one of us wanted to have sex with our hosts? Would that be put online for everyone to see?”

Joseph met Margo’s gaze and made a face. Naomi Blaze. Of course it would be her that asked that question. She sounded like she *wanted* to be filmed. It didn’t surprise Margo. Naomi had made no secret of the reason she was here. She had her own porn website, and it was a fantastic opportunity for self-promotion. If she could show some skin, well, the more the better. It wouldn’t bother her if Naomi weren’t so smug, so vain or so very...obvious.

Chi grimaced, but answered politely. “Most of your time here will be filmed, as specified in your contract. Some, like what we’ve captured this morning, will be prerecorded, but predominantly the show will be live.” She glanced at the rest of them. “Bathrooms are off limits, so you’ll be able to shower, get dressed etcetera, without having your privacy completely invaded. Luckily, there’s been substantial renovation done to the castle in the last five years. Each of your rooms in the castle have *en suites*, so you won’t have to share.” She turned back to Naomi. “I suppose the answer to your question, Ms. Blaze, is yes, if you are determined to have sex in front of the camera, we or one of the cameras set up around the castle will no doubt catch the show.”

The awkward silence grew until the giant Liam suddenly shifted his hips, drawing everyone’s gaze. But his attention was focused on Julie Wu. “Do *you* have a question?”

Margo smiled into her coffee as Julie blushed, looking flustered. “No. But, um, thank you.”

The air crackled between them. Margo knew Julie had suffered through a difficult break-up about six months ago, finally gathering the courage to leave her abusive, good for nothing boyfriend—and since then she’d had no interest in dating. But this...this looked promising. She’d have to find out more about Liam the cameraman. Make sure he was good enough for Julie.

"I can see the wheels turning in your pretty head. Are we matchmaking?"

Margo smiled at Stan. "Maybe."

"Oh goody. As long as you don't turn that spotlight on me. Dugan the driver is *not* my type."

"Dude, could you relax please? They've landed. They're on the bus. It's all good."

Thomas glared at the lounging Saint who hadn't looked up from his Blackberry since breakfast. The demon really needed a lesson or two in the fine art of socializing.

He couldn't fault him. Saint was the only thing keeping him from clawing at the walls. His little device was connecting him to the cameras; first the plane's, now Chi's. He was also adding new code to his online game, keeping up with the commentary on the *Shifting Reality* site, and playing Solitaire. Talk about multi-tasking.

"How close are they?" He was dying to meet her. Saint had shown him the images, pointing her out. Kittysnapdragon. *Margo*. She was all he'd imagined and more. Saint had been right about her ass. He'd never seen one he'd been so tempted to touch. To bite. But an image told him nothing. He needed her here.

"About fifteen minutes. Chi said what you told her to, that we wouldn't arrive until dinnertime. It should allow them a few hours to settle in, and us a little more surveillance."

The door to their impromptu control center, opened, and Thomas turned to face the newcomer. "Are you ready for phase one, Esther?"

"Master Mac informed me of my duties quite thoroughly, Master Lyons. I will not fail. I am having what you might call, reservations, however."

Thomas tilted his head. "Oh?"

The pale figure floated into the room, her hands folded against the apron at her waist. "I was of the understanding that we were not to be photographed or seen. That isolation was a requirement for our security. For the Master's security and privacy."

He grinned in a way that had always charmed her in the past. "Esther, my love. You have been the housekeeper of this castle for more years than Saint or I have been alive. You've taken care of Mac, taken care of everyone who dwells within the walls of this Keep. I think it's about time you had some fun. There are no actual rules about showing yourself are there?"

She shook her head doubtfully. "None set in stone, sir. But it's an unwritten kind of thing. It just isn't done, you ken. Even if we wish it."

"Well for the next week, it is. Pass it on to your friends still wandering the village. For the next few days, ghosts rule the roost." He paused for a moment, before adding, "However, I would appreciate it if you spread the word that Margo Sheffield is not to be bothered." He didn't want her leaving the castle before he was ready.

Esther's lips curved, obviously pleased. "I'll be letting them know, Master Lyons. Now. The guests are arriving. I suppose I should be there to welcome them. Make a good first impression." With a rush of cool air and a slamming of the door, she was gone.

"I hope we're not making a mistake."

Thomas groaned as he turned to face his roommate. "Not you too. I already have to deal with Mac. I thought you were on *my* side."

"I was. I am." Saint sighed. "I just didn't take into account people like Esther, Liam, Chi and all the others who came out to help. You do understand we're outing everyone close to us for an online show, Thomas. I guess I'm just wondering about the fallout."

"The conscience of a demon." Saint flinched, and Thomas felt like an ass. "I'm sorry, man. That wasn't called for. You're right. But it's only nine humans. After this is over they could shout it from the mountaintops, and the majority of the world would label them nutcases."

"Which begs the question... If you already know that, then why are we really doing this? I'm all for experiments. But I don't know if you're ready for the results."

Thomas rubbed his jaw, having a sinking feeling that he knew exactly what, or rather who, Saint was talking about. "You're fairly astute for a computer-bound hermit, you know that?"

"We demons usually are." Saint shrugged. "It's part of our charm."

He heard the bus turning down the narrow, winding road that led to the castle. She was here. They. *They* were here. It was getting harder and harder to pretend he had gone to all this trouble for the show, or to get under Mac's skin. To pretend it wasn't all about Margo, and his new and swiftly growing obsession with her sweet ass.

Here, kitty, kitty.

## Chapter Three

Joseph took her hand as she stepped off the bus, and Margo stilled, pushing her hair behind her ear. “Did you hear that?”

He looked around. “I don’t think so. What did it sound like?”

A menacing growl. “Nothing. Nothing but my pounding heart. This castle is right out of a Bela Lugosi double feature.” It was also the size of a luxury hotel. And the mist that seemed to hover around it like a cloak was *not* helping with the creep factor.

The things she did for her job. A little voice inside her head cackled at that. *Are you sure it’s not for him?*

*Shut up, little voice. La la la. I can’t hear you.*

“It’s the most beautiful thing I’ve ever seen.” Chi walked toward the door ahead of them, and Joseph took a deep breath. “I stand corrected. The second most beautiful thing I’ve ever seen.”

“There is no end to attractive and interesting characters here is there? I may get a complex.”

Stan came up behind her, his large black satchel on his shoulder. “No worries on that score, my dear. You fit right in with the beautiful people. In fact, you surpass them.”

Chi returned, camera in hand, her exotically tilted eyes on Stan and Joseph. “Why don’t you both head inside? I need to speak with Ms. Sheffield. Alone.”

Stan raised his perfectly groomed eyebrows, but nodded, leaving Margo with a friendly smile. Joseph continued to stand there without a word. Long moments passed. Chi began to blush. Finally, Margo did the only thing she could think to do.

He inhaled sharply as she dug her elbow into his ribs. “Hey!”

“What part of *alone* don’t you understand?” She sent him a meaningful glance and the bronze skin of his cheeks darkened. He backed away, nearly stumbling over his duffel bag and giving them a wide berth as he headed inside. She caught Chi staring at the fit of his jeans and winked. “Men, huh?”

Chi shook her head, biting her lip. “No. I mean he’s not...he’s not my type.”

Margo caught the glint of a sharp tooth and whistled. So the camerawoman was another player. “You too? I suppose everyone in that house is going to be like Mr. Lyons and the others, for the sake of continuity.”

Chi chuckled. “That is the general idea. Everyone but you folks.” She came closer, lowering her voice. “I’ve been instructed to take you around the back way.”

“The back way? What back way? Why—”

Margo heard the screams, looking up in time to see Karen Stevens and that Erin woman, whose last name she couldn't recall, run out of the castle's large front doors like the devil himself was at their heels. “It's haunted. The cas-castle, it's...” That's all she heard before Dugan opened the bus doors, and they leapt inside to safety.

The old man snorted, shaking his head. “That was quick. Humans. I'll be back for the next batch later tonight. Tell Liam.” He hopped onto the tour bus and drove away, taking the two ashen women with him.

“They must have insulted Esther. She's the sweetest woman, and the world's best housekeeper, but very particular about formalities. Between you, me and the goblins? I wish she'd decided to scare that Ms. Blaze instead. But I'm not that lucky. Now follow me, Ms. Sheffield.” Chi turned before Margo could argue.

“Please, call me Margo. I didn't realize we'd started the games already.” She picked her way through the taller grass as Chi led her along the side of the castle, and up an outer staircase. “I'm a little surprised. Karen was a huge fan. She had tattoos and everything. I'm sure she's going to be kicking herself all the way home. She didn't even get to see her idols.”

“Being a fan from a distance is one thing. Dealing with the reality of what we are is entirely different.”

Chi reached behind her and lifted Margo's carryon along with her own camera, not even breathing heavily as she continued to climb up the circling stairs. Margo was panting behind her, wishing she hadn't worn her heels. “Is that what this contest—this show is about? Reality? And not to complain or anything, but why am I coming into the castle this way, when everyone else went through the front door? Is this some sort of tower or turret?”

Chi disappeared through the door with her luggage. Margo was relieved that they were finally there and she could catch her breath. She lost it again when she saw where she'd been taken.

The room took up the entire top floor of the tower. Not at all what she was expecting a bedroom in an old, drafty Scottish castle to look like. It was sinful. The bed was decadent, something out of *Arabian Nights*, with a silken coverlet in varying shades of rust and gold. The carved headboard was exquisitely detailed. Margo would guess Moroccan or African, matching the bureau and dressing table. “I think there's been some mistake.”

“No mistake, Margo.” Chi smiled kindly. “I had very specific instructions. Take a shower. Relax. I have to go make sure Liam isn't getting into any trouble—the dog.” She chuckled. Margo tried to protest, but Chi held up her hand. “If you have any more questions you can ask Esther, or Thomas when he finally shows himself. My best advice to you? I know Thomas Lyons well. Unless you want to be caught...wear comfortable running shoes.”

She opened what looked like a bookcase and disappeared down the hallway. A hidden door. Now that was more of what Margo had been expecting. She plopped on the bed and looked in the mirror on the dressing table across the room. What the hell was going on?

Did they know? It wouldn't be that hard to find out what she did for a living. Maybe this was all it was after all. Actors with a unique idea, and fantastic marketing skills. She slipped off her heels and headed to the bathroom. Why was she disappointed?

Thomas. Margo barely acknowledged the luxurious, modern bathroom, going directly to the shower faucets and turning them on. Slipping off her clothes in an absentminded way, she finally admitted the truth. A part of her had wanted it to be real. Had wanted Thomas Lyons to be real. Wanted his growled promise and private flirtations to be on the level.

Had he always known who she worked for? Saint created games for a living, he must know about tracking IP addresses and discovering things about people they didn't want known. It would have been easy enough for him to find out and fill Thomas in.

She stepped beneath the hot spray and dipped her chin, letting the water beat down on her aching neck muscles. Maybe this was better. It would make it easier to do her job if she wasn't really a part of the show. If they already wanted the same thing her boss did.

Fame.

Still, she wasn't quite ready to let go of her fantasy. She almost dreaded meeting the *Shifting Reality* star, dreaded having the last of her illusions shattered. She closed her eyes and saw him so clearly she almost gasped. He stood before her in the shower, that dangerous smile, those brilliant green eyes studying her body.

"So beautiful, my Kittysnapdragon. Sweet Margo. I wish that I could touch you."

Her eyes opened. That voice didn't sound like a fantasy. "Thomas? Thomas Lyons?" She looked through the steam, along the walls for speakers. She opened the shower curtain, but no one was there. It had echoed off the tile, sounded so real. "I have a good imagination. But not that good."

No response. "Seriously, I was told the bathrooms were private." Nothing.

Margo shook her head. She supposed tequila mixed with jet lag could have her mind playing tricks on her. That, along with her natural paranoia of hidden cameras. But she could have sworn she really heard that familiar, growling drawl.

God, she loved his voice. The first time she'd heard it, her thighs had actually trembled. One of the regulars in the chat room, an amateur deejay, created a club mix with Thomas describing how much the male of his species enjoyed oral sex. Margo had listened to that song with her vibrator in hand more times than she wanted to count, imagining him acting out his words on her. She'd always been a sucker for dirty talk.

Thankful for the loofa she'd unwrapped before she came into the shower, she poured lavender body wash on the hard sponge and scrubbed her body briskly. *I'm gonna wash that shifter right outta my head.*

*Little voice, if you don't stop singing I won't be responsible for my actions.*

*Touchy*, the little voice inside her huffed, still humming.

The friction against her skin hardened her nipples, made her think of calloused fingers and rough tongues. She shivered despite the scalding water. Everything made her think of him. Her eyes drifted shut again, and the motions of her hand guiding the loofa slowed, lightly scraping and caressing her belly and breasts.

There he was. Waiting for her to fall under his spell. He licked his lips, lowering his head to trace his tongue along her collarbone, his hand slipping between her thighs. "Yes."

She leaned against the tiled walls as his fingers slid through her slick arousal. He knew exactly how she liked to be touched. How sensitive her clit was. How to curve his thick fingers inside her just so.

His other hand fondled one of her breasts, pinching her nipple in a way that had her neck arching, a moan slipping from between her open lips.

"So hot. You are stunning, Margo. I can't wait to taste you. All of you."

"God, yes." She didn't open her eyes, didn't question where the voice was coming from. She was already too close. Too ready for him. Primed for his touch. "Taste me. Fuck me, Thomas. *Please.*"

He'd never been so hard. Thomas Lyons had always been known for his sexual prowess, his libidinous leanings, but he couldn't remember the last time he'd wanted anyone this much.

Maybe it hadn't been right to install the cameras and sound system in her bathroom and bedroom. He'd made sure they were separate from the main website feed, separate from the rest of the house. Even he had a limit to his perversions. He'd only meant to ensure she had made it safely to her room, that she hadn't left with those other two. He'd seen her stripping off her clothes, and he'd been trapped. Ensnared.

He'd studied her body, her face. She had the look of a graceful doe. Big, deep set eyes and silky dark hair, her long graceful neck arching as the water sluiced over her skin. She was Audrey Hepburn with curves and muscle tone. Elegant, classy. And she inspired in him an irresistible desire to muss her up. He couldn't leave his room, couldn't tear his eyes from the screen of his personal laptop. Not now. Not until he saw her come.

He unbuttoned his jeans, the hardening erection painful against the denim, and growled into the microphone at her request. "You want to be fucked, baby? You want to come?" She nodded, her eyes still closed, and he bit his lip. It took every bit of willpower he owned not to race to her room and give her exactly what they wanted. Show be damned. Only a few more hours. But in the meantime... "Take the showerhead in your hand and get on your knees."

His fist wrapped around his aching cock, fangs piercing his lower lip, causing a sweet sting as she complied without hesitation. “Good girl. That spray is hard, isn’t it, Margo? Spread your legs a little more, that’s right. Oh, kitten. That is the sweetest ass I’ve ever seen. Aim the spray between those creamy thighs for me. Let me fuck you like I’m dying to.”

Her broken groan as the water hit her just right made Thomas’s jaw clench. She was amazing. Totally open, free and sensual in a way that made him want to shout to the rooftops. He hadn’t been able to catch her scent yet, not amidst all the new aromas bustling around the castle, but he was reacting like a cat who’d found his match. Already she was driving him insane. The head of his penis pearled with evidence of his own arousal, and he wet his palm with it, stroking himself to the rhythm of her hips as she thrust against the shower’s jets.

“Your pussy is tight around my cock, Margo. Can you feel me? Feel me fucking you?” She nodded, and he purred. “That’s good. Show me how badly you want it, kitten.”

His body heated, balls tightening and erection thickening as he continued to watch her. He couldn’t take his gaze off her perfect curves. He wanted to bury his face between her thighs, wanted to fill his hands with her flesh. He was close to coming in his hand like a boy with his first porn video, merely from watching her image on his screen.

She cried out, and he knew she was climaxing. He watched her body arch, her head thrown back in pleasure, and his body demanded he join her. Powerful jolts of energy pumped up his thighs and spine, down his cock. He growled long and loud at his release, knowing it wasn’t enough, would never be enough until he was truly inside her.

He watched the vision on his monitor pull herself up on shaky limbs, pushing back her hair, replacing the shower nozzle and tilting her face into the water. She shook her head, muttering, “No more tequila.” He couldn’t help but smile.

He pulled off his shirt and wiped his hand, his cock, still erect, despite his orgasm. Severing the connection, he felt a pang of loss as her image disappeared from view. He chuckled morosely as he headed to his own bathroom. It made no sense. Until today he hadn’t seen her. Had only spoken with her in a damn chat room. And yet he wanted her.

His kind were tactile, they lived in the present and reacted to what they could see and touch. The ghosts of bed partners past had more than enough proof that for Thomas, out of sight was indeed out of mind.

He had family who reveled in their monogamy, were possessive and passionate and sure they would die without the other by their side. Life mates. But all those stories began the same way. “I caught her scent, and I knew...”

Thomas had been restless, which was how this whole thing started in the first place, but those kinds of shackles weren’t what he was looking for. No. This was just an aberration. He wasn’t used to verbal



foreplay. Wasn't used to waiting for gratification. Once he'd had her he would feel better. More himself. He had to be. It was what the fans of *Shifting Reality* were expecting, what they deserved since, whether they knew it or not, the website would close when the contest was over.

One week. One week with Margo. That would barely be enough time for all he wanted to do with her. To her. He quickened his pace.

Thomas was hungry, and dinner couldn't come soon enough.

## Chapter Four

Margo sat quietly at the large, formal dining table, listening to her fellow contestants chatter. She was still distracted by her earlier experience in the shower. When the water had cooled she'd stepped out of the enclosure and wrapped herself in a plush green towel. She'd looked in drawers and behind the medicine cabinet, but she hadn't seen any camera equipment or mics anywhere.

Still, she was suspicious. Nothing like that had ever happened to her before. She'd never been able to hear his voice in her fantasies, yet today she had. As though he'd been speaking directly to her. And her body had responded. She'd lost control, had one of the strongest orgasms of her life, with or without a partner.

She'd carefully dressed in her best battle armor; charcoal slacks with a high waist and an ivory blouse of silk and lace with pearl buttons along the wrists. It made her feel professional, cool, a little untouchable. Unfortunately, she couldn't take Chi's advice and wear sneakers, so she'd slipped into some black kitten flats and called it a compromise.

Looking around the room, she knew she could have worn jeans and a T-shirt and no one would notice. Not with Naomi Blaze in the room. She wasn't the sharpest pencil in the box, but she knew how to draw attention to herself.

Stan the Slayer was certainly smitten. The two were huddled close together, as thick as thieves. Maybe he couldn't help himself. She was in the tightest red leather mini dress Margo had ever seen outside of a music video. Men were the same no matter how nicely they cleaned up, she supposed. And for all his gentlemanly behavior, Stan was just a man.

Margo glanced over at Julie who was speaking animatedly to the Hollister couple sitting directly across from them. Julie, Margo knew, was trying to pretend she didn't notice Liam standing in the far corner, watching her every move. Joseph and Chi were nowhere to be found, something Margo found incredibly interesting, though no one else seemed to notice. Everyone was paired or pairing up, except for her. Flying to Scotland hadn't changed a thing. She took a sip of wine, attempting to focus on the conversation.

"The housekeeper? We haven't seen a housekeeper. Of course Bryan has been too busy playing with his equipment to notice if, say, his new wife was walking around their romantic bedroom suite in nothing but a lacey white thong. Isn't that right, honey?"

Bryan ducked his head, his expression embarrassed as everyone caught his wife's not so subtle comments. "Kasey Lynn, please. We can talk about that later." He glanced over at Julie. "Did you say the housekeeper was a ghost? You actually saw her without infrared?"

Margo choked on her wine as, before Julie could answer, a handsome shirtless man in a kilt appeared on his knees beside Kasey Lynn's chair. He was pale, so pale she could see through him to the wall. "Ach, he doesna appreciate ye, lass. I ken it. If ye wore such a thong for me, I wouldna leave you so unsatisfied."

Kasey Lynn's eyes were wide. "A full manifestation." A manifestation that was licking his lips and caressing her arm suggestively. "He's communicating. Did you hear that? Bryan, honey, get the camera."

Margo heard it. And so did Bryan. Only he wasn't reaching for his camera. "Hey! Get away from my wife."

The roguish ghost winked. "Sure, lad? I can pose with this beauty for as long as ya like. T'would be no hardship."

Kasey blushed, and Margo didn't blame her. The way the handsome man was looking at her, well, she could feel the heat from across the table.

"Enough."

The specter disappeared at the low command. Bryan pulled Kasey's chair closer to his as a new figure appeared in the doorway of the dining room. Another illusion? Margo wasn't sure how they'd managed these kinds of special effects in the first place. Mirrors? A projector hidden in the chandelier? That couldn't have been real.

The figure stepped closer, and she sighed with relief, taking another fortifying sip of her wine. This one was solid, and she recognized him from the webisodes. Taller than the others, dark auburn hair to his shoulders, neatly trimmed red beard and piercing ice blue eyes. All that, combined with an expression eternally set in grumpy stone, told her who he was. Mac. Supposedly the owner of this castle...and a vampire.

He came to stand at the head of the table, looking over the group with resignation. Margo almost laughed. Even his disapproval was sexy. He didn't look like the average movie idol vampire, yet somehow, his was a perfect casting. There was just something about him. He had an alluring stillness, magnetically aloof and unconsciously sexual.

His long, dark coat, the high collared, perfectly tailored suit, though obviously expensive and modern made, gave Margo the sense that he'd walked in from another time. Or off a film set.

"Welcome to my home. I trust you've found your accommodations acceptable."

The murmurs of enthusiastic approval had him dipping his head in acknowledgment.

"Not very authentic, what with all the remodeling. But I am fond of the modern conveniences myself, so I suppose you can be forgiven."

Margo raised her eyebrows at Stan's condescending tone. Mac's expression didn't change, but his eyes darkened. "Mr. Ayer. I appreciate your leniency. I do have a few rooms below that I've left untouched. If you find yourself craving a more...immersing experience."

"Threatening to throw people in the dungeon already? And I thought this party wasn't going to get kinky." Saint walked in, and the four women at the table, Margo included, all released a sigh of appreciation. The supposed demon-human hybrid with a talent for machinery and an eternally distracted air looked like a Lost Boy. She understood his charm. Women wanted to be his Wendy. Torn between the need to mother him, and the desire to steal his seeming innocence.

His dark hair flopping carelessly over one eye as his thumbs flew across the small keyboard of his Blackberry. He wore a hooded sweatshirt and jeans, as though he couldn't be bothered with formality, but it didn't conceal his broad shoulders, the thick muscles straining against the fabric. He was fascinating. And Margo knew she wasn't the only one who felt that way.

"Did I miss anything?" Joseph Lopez skidded into the room, bumping into Saint, who looked up with an expression that made Margo shiver. Had his eyes just flashed red for a moment? It must have been a trick of the light. Joseph backed up. "Sorry about that, sir."

Saint shrugged and went back to gazing at his device, pulling out a nearby chair with his leg and dropping into it with a relaxed air. "Never apologize for being bad. You'll set a precedent no one here wants to live up to."

Joseph took the chair between Stan and Bryan, evading Margo's questioning glance as he settled in. He looked like he'd been in a fight. His shirt was half undone, brown hair mussed, lips swollen. And was that a hickey on his neck? So a fight...or the mother of all make out sessions.

Margo knew Chi came in without looking behind her, just from watching Joseph's expression. It turned passionate, carnal. She looked down at her glass. She needed a refill.

No. What she needed was Thomas. All the players had arrived, the cameras were on. Everyone was in place except him. One empty seat, right beside her. She looked around. Where was that bottle of wine?

"Thomas, about time you showed. I'm so hungry your guests were starting to look edible." Saint barely lifted his head, but the table reacted to his words as if they were gunshots.

The star they had come to see had arrived, not with fanfare, but stealth. Margo whipped around in her chair, sloshing a few drops of red wine onto her fingers.

The men at the table stood, and the women preened, but Margo just stared in dumbfounded silence. She'd watched him so often she could sculpt him blindfolded, but in person...there was just no comparison.

He was leaning against the doorway as though he'd been there for a few minutes before Saint had said anything. Dirty blond hair curled at the collar of his white, long-sleeved shirt, emphasizing his golden skin. His green eyes were surrounded by long dark lashes, his dimpled smile just as wicked as she remembered. And he was looking directly at her.

Margo's heart began to race, her chest tightening until it was hard to catch her breath. Thomas inhaled sharply, his eyes narrowing as he studied her reaction. "Sorry I'm late. I hope you're all as hungry as I am."

He sat and, as if on cue, servants who looked as though they shopped at Goths-R-Us came out with platters piled high with some of her favorite dishes. It smelled heavenly. Thomas leaned closer to reach across her for a roll. He smelled even better.

"This may be an unusual question, but I'm still not quite sure what we're supposed to be doing here. I didn't see any rules." Julie took a breath as if she'd just climbed a mountain, and Margo smiled supportively.

Thomas slid his arm around Margo's shoulder, leaning back in his chair to meet Julie's gaze. "There aren't too many. Anyone who can last all seven days is a winner."

His head tilted as he turned toward Joseph, Bryan and Kasey Lynn. "I was going to add a rule or two about fraternizing with the crew." He ignored Chi's gasp and Liam's growl, and his other hand reached for Margo's wine-dampened fingers, lifting them to his lips. He sucked the wine from her fingers as everyone watched before speaking again, leaving Margo blushing and breathless. "But I can already see how pointless that would be. Not to mention hypocritical."

Joseph's brow furrowed. "What happens if we all stay?"

"Then you all win, much to the dismay of my pocketbook. However, I don't foresee that being a problem." Mac ran his finger along the rim of his crystal wineglass. "Thomas is trying to prove something by inviting you here. That our kind can cohabitate openly with yours. More to the point, that you won't run screaming when you finally believe that all of this, that we, are real."

"Something like that." Thomas's fingers began to play with Margo's hair, and she shifted in her seat, her body reacting to his so strongly she had the urge to get up and leave the room. Or drape herself across his chest and beg him to touch her.

Thomas stiffened beside her, as though he'd heard her thoughts. His arm left her shoulder and he focused on his plate of food with renewed interest. Oookay. Margo put food on her plate, knowing it was just for show. There was no way she'd be able to swallow past the giant lump in her throat.

"We believe. Right before you came in we were talking to a ghost, weren't we, hon?"

"Don't remind me, Kasey Lynn," Bryan grumbled, obviously still smarting from the spirit's flirtation with his wife. "I've been waiting years to see a full manifestation and the first thing he does is flirt with my wife. And I didn't even get a picture." He looked over at Thomas. "Just to clarify. We won't have to eat any bull or moose penis, right? Because I'm all for challenges and scares, and I have no problem believing in ghosts or vampires, but I won't eat another creature's Mr. Bill. That's just not right."

Beside her, Julie choked on a scallop at Bryan's comment, but before Margo could pat her on the back, Liam was there. She hid a smile, turning her head as the big man cooed over her friend. Her gaze

clashed with forest green eyes filled with laughter and desire. She lowered her voice. “Quite an interesting group you’ve put together, Mr. Lyons. So perfect you’d think it was scripted.”

“If I’d been able to script it, Ms. Sheffield,” he whispered in her ear, his hot breath making her shiver. “There wouldn’t be this many people in the room with us. Damn, you smell good.”

She leaned away from him before he could bury his nose in her neck and reached for a buttery sliver of crab, slipping it between her lips with a sigh. Maybe she could eat after all, this was delicious. Anything to keep from embarrassing herself in front of the others.

Through the rest of the meal Margo couldn’t help but notice that Naomi Blaze didn’t have the same modesty problem. The way she leaned forward when she spoke to Thomas, her dress so revealing Margo wouldn’t be surprised if a stray nipple popped out by accident. And Thomas, the scoundrel, was flirting back. If he had such a good sense of smell, surely he could sniff out the silicone in those too-perfect-to-be-real beauties.

She would have been jealous if she hadn’t been sure that it was his hand she was engaged in a slap fight with beneath the table. Between fending off the tantalizing slide of his palm along her thigh, and watching all the sexuality laden interactions between Joseph and Chi, sweet Julie and Liam, and Naomi and well, *everyone*, Margo was strung tight as a wire.

“We have a request for formal introductions from Blutlust200.” Saint, who hadn’t spoken through the entire meal, looked toward Thomas with a questioning glance.

Thomas nodded toward the diners. “Sorry. I’ve been remiss in my duties. We have your names and short bios about each of you on the site, but no specifics. Please, everyone, introduce yourselves.”

Kasey Lynn lifted her hand and smiled at the camera. “I’m Kasey Lynn Hollister and this is my husband Bryan. We met at a science fiction convention six months ago, and we were married two months later. Both of us work as IT support and in our spare time—” she shrugged adorably, “—we search for irrefutable proof of paranormal phenomena.”

Bryan leaned over to kiss Kasey Lynn, and Chi pointed at Joseph, who shrugged. “Joseph Lopez. I’m an architect, the only brother to seven older sisters, and a fan of the show.” He licked his lips. “I also have a thing for women who bite.”

Margo noticed Thomas glaring at Joseph, and had to wonder again if he and Chi had a history together. “Moving on,” their host growled.

Stan wiped his mouth carefully with his napkin, pushing back his chair to stand before them, bowing formally. “Stanley Lawrence Ayer. I deal in antiques, and it is no secret I am a skeptic of the paranormal world. Spectral illusions notwithstanding, I have yet to see anything to change my mind on that score. However, I look forward to your efforts.”

Margo shook her head. He’d seemed like a good guy on the plane. Since they’d arrived, his demeanor had sharpened in a way that made her uncomfortable. With half her attention, she listened to Naomi use her

introduction to give out her personal website address and offer up the information that she wasn't wearing any underwear. Her friend Julie softly introduced herself, offering nothing more than her age and occupation—ebook author.

“What kind of books?”

Mac chuckled, the rich sound startling in that it was so out of character. “Liam, I thought you volunteered to be the cameraman. They don't usually speak while filming.”

Saint leaned back in his chair, tilting it at an impossibly angle, though he didn't fall. “This isn't a usual show. *Bludlust200* is one of us, and he's saying he didn't mean that kind of introduction. He wants *our* kind. I'll do the honors.” He looked over the group. “Demons have certain gifts. I can see things you don't want me to. Dark fantasies, doubts and fears. Whatever I would need to tempt you into sin.” He smirked. “Thanks, Dad. For example, I know that Kasey Lynn and Bryan have more in common than a desire to see spirits and a love of science fiction. Kasey has fantasies of kissing other women, and being a part of a ménage with two bisexual men.” Saint grinned evilly. “Bryan has that same desire. And I don't mean watching two girls kiss.”

Bryan blustered, but Saint wasn't finished. “Joseph has a thing for Thomas's cousin Chi, and he wasn't lying, a fetish about biting...though he also isn't averse to a little bondage as well. Good man.” He pointed his Blackberry at Naomi. “By the way, I want the name of your plastic surgeon, Naomi. Or should I call you Nathan? That kind of work takes talent. And Liam, Julie is too shy to tell us that she writes paranormal erotica, and she has a particular fondness for werewolves, so you're a shoe in.”

The table went wild. Naomi threw her glass on the floor and stomped out of the room with a shockingly deep voiced, “Fuck you, all!” Kasey Lynn looked at her husband oddly as he babbled incoherent denials beside her, and Joseph was definitely blushing.

Stan sent a challenging look down the table. “You haven't said a word about either myself, or Ms. Sheffield.”

Margo held her breath as the two men stared silently at each other for long, tense minutes. Finally, Saint broke the silence. “Well, Slayer. You're right, I haven't. And I don't think I'm going to just yet. Your secrets are different, but equally fascinating. I'm not ready to spill the beans. Not tonight.”

Stan nodded and excused himself, as did the Hollisters. Julie looked like she was about to cry, but shook her head when first Margo, then Liam, tried to follow her out of the room.

“Your social skills are really improving, Saint, old boy. You should be proud.” Mac patted the dark-haired demon on the shoulder and stood to leave himself.

“What?” Saint followed him out. “What did I do?”

“And then there were four,” Margo muttered as she quickly finished her glass of wine. She'd be an alcoholic before this trip was over. What had Saint meant? He didn't want to tell the others she was only here because they wanted to work with her production office?

“I could have told you about Bryan, but Naomi Blaze a man? Totally didn’t see that one coming.” Joseph stood, looking at Thomas warily. “I also had no idea that Chi was your cousin, Mr. Lyons. If I’d known—”

“You’d what?” Thomas smiled, appearing fascinated. “Ask my permission?” He chuckled. “I’m a bit overprotective, I admit, but females of the feline shifter persuasion can more than take care of themselves, as I’m sure you’re already discovering. I’m not worried about my cousin. I only hope *you* survive the visit.”

“Funny, cousin.” Chi grabbed Joseph’s hand and pulled him out of the room. Margo saw the enraptured smile on his face and knew he would be fine.

“And then there were two.” Thomas’s voice had dropped to that purr that drove her crazy. She was in so much trouble.



## Chapter Five

She was alone with Thomas Lyons. Her feminine instincts told her danger wasn't far behind. Margo stood and put on her most professional smile. Without the others nearby, perhaps she could discuss the contract, maybe pack her things in time to share a bus ride with Naomi/Nathan. Even that was preferable to humiliating herself by losing her composure in front of this man. Especially in front of the cameras.

"None of that, now, Margo. Not between you and I."

That was all the warning she got before she was spun around and lifted in the air to settle, breathless, straddling his lap. "Mr. Lyons, I think we should talk about—"

"Hush." Thomas curled his fingers into her hair, pulling her down to meet his searching lips before she could get another word out. Margo's last thought was, *Oh hell*, before the kiss scrambled her brain.

He growled, the pressure of his lips opening hers as he sought entrance. God, his taste. And the way he was kissing her, exactly the way she'd always imagined he would. Greedily, hungrily...perfectly.

Her sex pressed against his thickening erection, and through their clothes she could feel the heat of him. He was blazing. She slid her tongue across his fangs. His body jerked in reaction, and she did it again, loving the fact that she could make him respond to her. Make him as crazy as he was making her from one simple kiss. Who was she trying to fool? She'd been crazy for him since the moment she'd seen the first video. Her fingers dug into the muscles of his arms, wishing she could touch his bare skin, desperate for more contact. *Closer. Harder. More.*

"Margo, baby..." He'd pulled away. Why had he pulled away? She looked at the agonized need tightening his expression, her brows lowering in confusion when he shook his head. "I never in all my years imagined saying this, but we should stop. We shouldn't do this here. And if you keep grinding against me, I won't be able to stop myself from tossing you on this table and taking you right now, in full view of our online audience."

Audience. The cameras. Hell. Chi and Liam were gone, but Margo knew each room had its own grouping of stationary cameras. She'd been *grinding*? Mortification stung her cheeks. She imagined the people online watching her behavior, maybe even her coworkers, and she tried to pull away, but he wouldn't let her.

He stood, holding her struggling body easily in his arms and strode swiftly to the kitchen, nodding at the Goth servants before heading into the large pantry room and closing the door.

The lock turned with a click of finality, and Margo bit her lip. Would Darcy fire her for her inappropriate behavior? She huffed out a dark laugh. Her boss would no doubt wholeheartedly approve. As long as it got her those *Shifting Reality* rights.

He swept his hand out, drawing her gaze to the deep pantry filled with dry goods and empty jars. It was nearly the size of her bedroom in the insanely expensive cubbyhole she called an apartment. And the ceiling was so high, stocked to the rafters, that they actually had a sliding ladder leaning against one of the shelves.

Thomas caressed her jaw with his thumb, bringing her attention back to him. “There’s no sound equipment, no cameras here. Just you and I. Talk to me, Margo, please.” He ran his fingers through his hair, looking frustrated. “If I were Saint or Mac, I’d have a way to know what you’re thinking. Know why you look like you regret what just happened.”

“If you were Saint or Mac, I wouldn’t be in this pantry.” She spoke without thinking, flinched as she saw his pleased expression. Shit. Why didn’t she just tell him she only regretted he’d stopped? That she’d wanted to smother herself in chocolate and whipped cream and be his dessert? She sighed. “What I mean is— Hell, I don’t know what I mean. I think we should go to bed. Separately. To separate beds. Alone. We can talk about the reason we both know I’m here in the morning.”

*Work, keep saying it, this is for work. Contract not coitus. Contract not coitus.*

“I smell you.”

She crossed her arms defensively and looked at him askance. “I’m sorry?”

Thomas shook his head, his eyes going dark as he took a deep, lung filling breath. “Just, now that there’s no distraction, I can really *smell* you. It’s rich. Spicy and sweet. Like pumpkin mousse or, well, I’ve never smelled anyone quite like you.”

*Pumpkin?* “You smell nice too. I’m assuming we both shower. What’s your point?” She was being belligerent, but she couldn’t seem to help it. She was having a hard time accepting how easily she’d lost control. The old Margo would no doubt have thrown caution to the wind, damned the cameras and danced for him on the table, perhaps torn off his buttons with her teeth. Which was one of the reasons she’d been buried beneath mountains of to do lists and restrained hairdos for the better part of a decade. The old Margo was nothing but trouble.

So was Thomas Lyons. His pupils had dilated, his strong features had sharpened and his cheeks looked flushed. He looked...feral. Wild. Like he was ready to pick up where they’d just left off, whether she liked it or not. Her slender thread of control began to fray once more. She should leave now. The pantry. The castle. The country.

Thomas blocked her way to the door. Did his fangs look longer? More intimidating? He towered over her, backing her up until her shoulders hit the ladder. He took her wrists in his hands and lifted her arms

over her head. She gripped the rungs of the ladder, clinging instinctively, fascinated by the predatory look in his eyes.

“My point,” his voice was rough, needy, “is that you aren’t going anywhere, kitten. Regardless of what your mind is telling you to regret or run from, your body is speaking loud and clear. And it wants what I want.”

“What?”

Thomas leaned into her, his lips lightly caressing her neck as he whispered, “More.”

Margo gasped into his mouth and as soon as she felt his tongue glide across hers, she was lost again. She should have been disappointed in herself. Instead she reveled in the passion that welled inside her, reveled in the tingling of her skin where he touched her, knowing he was right. Her body was ready for him, ready for more.

In his hands her silk blouse unbuttoned with ease, the front clasp of her bra opening with one twist of his talented fingers. She lifted her mouth to take a panting breath. “You’re pretty good at that.”

“You haven’t seen good yet. But you will.”

Margo cried out at the feel of his teeth scraping the sensitive curve of her breast. He sucked her nipple hard against the roof of his mouth, his tongue swirling across her flesh. The rough texture of it made her sex clench.

*Tomcat.* That was who this was. This man who already had her pants around her ankles, her underwear pushed to the side as his fingers slipped through the wetness of her sex. “Thomas.”

He growled, two thick fingers stretching her, thrusting inside. He lifted his mouth. “Wet. Smell so good. Feel so good. I need to...”

A surprised whimper escaped her lips as Thomas dropped to his knees in front of her, spreading her thighs with his calloused palms and burying his face between her legs. His tongue scraped across the lips of her sex, and his muffled shout sent a thrilling vibration through her body.

Margo hung to the ladder for dear life as he pulled her closer, his nose pressing hard against her clit as he replaced his fingers with his tongue. “Oh God.”

The animal inside him roared in approval, claiming her with the first swallow of her arousal. *Mate. My mate.* Had he even believed in it, truly, until now? But hadn’t he known there was something about her? Wasn’t that why he’d gone to all this trouble? This elaborate farce of a contest? He’d needed to meet her. *Margo. His.*

Fuck, she tasted amazing. He felt like a teenager, shaken, like the first time he’d shifted into his beast. Wild and out of control. He knew she was moaning, her body moving in restless surprise as he flattened his tongue inside her, determined to drink down every drop of her juices, to absorb her taste. He was an instant addict, and he knew as surely as he knew he needed to breathe that he would never get enough.

His hands dropped from her thighs to slide off her flats, her pants, lifting her legs with his hands beneath her knees. Higher, wider, opening her more fully for his feasting mouth. He couldn't get close enough. He wanted to crawl inside, cover himself in her scent, fill himself to bursting with her taste. Wanted it so much it scared him. Even that couldn't make him pull back. Lust was an emotion he was familiar with, but this was more. This was primal, instinctive. Overwhelming.

He growled his approval at her first climax, the gush of liquid sliding down his throat like brandy. His fingers curled into her flesh, holding her shaking body still for his mouth.

His erection was thick, flushed with need, and the pulse beating against his pants was almost painful. But the cat in him would have his fill of cream. Wouldn't give Margo a moment to catch her breath before he thrust his tongue inside her again, curling to press against a spot that made her buck against his mouth, already heading toward another, more powerful orgasm.

The muscles along the wall of her sex flexed, tightening around his tongue and he shuddered, imagining how tightly she would grip his cock. He saw an image in his head as she came apart against him again. An image of her on hands and knees, his cock buried inside her, his teeth piercing her neck.

The picture was so vivid he almost came.

The idea of biting her was inebriating. She would be his, body and soul. Thomas would be bound to her, in a connection more powerful than any human joining. *Not yet*. He had to hold himself back. Had to restrain himself from doing what came naturally. She was human. And she still didn't believe in him, hadn't accepted him. If she rejected him after his bite...he would be lost.

Her boneless body offered no resistance when he pulled her down to the cool floor. He rolled her onto her stomach, lifting her hips up to his mouth, those few moments of separation making his lion snarl in denial.

"Thomas, *fuck*. Please. I can't take anymore." Margo was clawing the floor, her sex rocking against his mouth helplessly, and he could see tears of pleasure dampening her lashes as she turned her head. But he couldn't stop. He had to taste her climax again. Once more and then he could fuck her the way he needed to.

He spread the cheeks of her ass wide, his thumbs caressing the tender, hidden flesh. He wanted to be there as well. Deep inside her tightly curved, bitable ass. The cat perked up his ears in interest, licking his chops as another desire began to emerge above the others.

Her ass.

She was going to die and the coroner would have to tell her next of kin the reason. Death by oral sex.

In her, admittedly wild past, she'd embraced her sexuality. Maybe a little too much. But though her memories had dimmed a bit with time, she knew without a doubt that she'd never been with a man this good with his mouth. Or this dedicated.

And his tongue. It felt coarse, unusually long. *Like a cat's*. By her third orgasm she didn't care what he was—animal, vegetable or mineral—she just wondered if he would ever stop. And that's when she felt it. The flat of his tongue pressing firmly against her ass.

"Wh-what are you doing?" She lifted up onto her hands, turning to look over her shoulder. His eyes were dark, sparkling...primitive. He bared his teeth, a soft warning rumbling in his chest before he did it again. Licked her. *There*. Even the old Margo had never been that kinky.

What surprised her more than his action was her reaction. An erotic shock rocked her from the tip of his tongue to the top of her skull. Her arms began to tremble. Her heart raced with forbidden excitement, and she held her breath, waiting to see what he did next.

Thomas bit one cheek of her ass sharply, chuckling when she squealed in surprise. Then she was gasping, struggling for breath as he soothed the bite with his tongue, tracing her curves until he was licking the seam of her ass and pushing inside.

*This has to be wrong.*

*It feels too good to be wrong*, her little voice crooned. For once she had to agree. Her forehead ground into the floor when his fingers slipped inside her sex once more, matching the rhythm of his debauched and dangerous tongue.

Oh God, she was going to come again. She could feel it, feel her muscles tightening, the blood in her veins pulsing with it. So close. So close.

He reared up and gripped her hips in his hands. "Not yet. Not without me, kitten."

Margo cried out at the feel of his thick cock entering her sex. He was big. Too big. Even with all his foreplay the stretch still bordered on painful.

He seemed to sense her hesitation. "You can take me, Margo. You were made for this. Made for me. Let me in."

She arched her neck as he rocked himself against her, filling her inch by thick, unyielding inch.

"Fuck, Margo. Do you know what you do to me? You make me greedy. I want *everything*. Your soaking pussy around me, your sexy ass, your mouth. I want all of you."

He bowed his body over her back, pulling her long hair to the side to take her ear between his teeth. The position pushed him further inside her, their breaths both labored as they struggled to register the sensations. The heat of him burned her skin, so hot she was surprised she didn't hear the sizzle, see the steam.

She shifted her hips experimentally, and he stopped her with an inhaled hiss. "I'm trying to hold back, baby. My species, when they lose control... I don't want to scare you."

The gruff vulnerability made her melt. Suddenly, being in control sounded overrated. She didn't want control. She wanted him. "You can't scare me, Tomcat. I want it. Want everything."

He opened his mouth over her shoulder and growled. A deep, warning growl that sounded ominous. Sexy. She could feel his teeth pinching her skin, but he didn't bite her, didn't pierce the skin.

She lowered herself onto her elbows, the action tilting her hips higher against him. Completely vulnerable, completely open, offering herself. His growling became a groan of desire, and he lifted himself off her back, one hand still gripping her hair. "Damn, kitten, you're playing with fire."

She opened her mouth to respond, but her thoughts dissolved with his first deep thrust. All she could do was feel. Raw need. Pure, carnal pleasure. He demanded her submission, and she gave it willingly, eagerly.

She could feel the hard ground scraping her knees as his unrelenting rhythm pushed her forward, the powerful slap of his hips against hers, but even that increased her arousal. *Yes, harder. Yes, faster.*

"Thomas."

His name from her lips only drove him wilder. He lifted her hips high, until her knees were off the ground, pulling her back hard against his body. Again and again he filled her, the angle sending waves of ecstasy through her limbs. It crashed against her with more and more force, until she couldn't hold back, until she had to give in to the power of it.

"Mine!" His shout blasted through the air, so loud she could hear it through the blood pounding a mad drumbeat in her ears.

She felt her eyes go wide, startled out of her own pleasure when his erection grew bigger inside her. "What's happening?"

"Tell me you're mine." His voice was an unrecognizable growl behind her. His cock pulsed, the head so thick she wasn't sure he would be able to pull out. "Tell me now, Margo."

She couldn't stop shivering, every move he made sending sparks of pleasure up her spine. "Yes, yes. Anything."

"*Mine.*"

Another, smaller explosion rocked her as he came inside her. She collapsed on the ground, her body feeling like quivering Jell-O as he continued to pump inside her for long, delicious minutes. He was caressing the sides of her breasts, her back, the curves of her ass, as though he couldn't stop touching her. She could feel the fine tremor in his hands, and she smiled, loving that he'd been as affected as she was. Loving that he'd lost control.

Lost control. She stiffened. Responsible Margo immediately began making lists of everything she'd just done wrong. Precautions not taken. Indiscretions not thought out. Contracts. Oh, God. This wasn't her. What had she done?

Thomas sighed behind her, rolling away from her body, but not without leaving a tender kiss on her hip. "I don't need to be telepathic to catch *those* thoughts. That's okay, sweet Margo. You know how I love a challenge."

## Chapter Six

Had it only been five days? She looked at herself in the bathroom mirror, studying the sexy woman that challenged her in the reflection. She did feel sexy. Sexier than the old Margo, despite all her bravado, had ever felt. She knew it was because of him. Thomas.

He'd barely left her side since that night in the pantry. He'd carried her to her room in his arms, moving with a speed that should have shocked her to avoid the cameras, and proceeded to make love to her with a reserve of energy that astounded her. His constant state of arousal wasn't human. At least, it was like no non-medicated human man she'd ever known.

She'd woken the next afternoon with a cry on her lips and his head between her thighs. Finally convincing him she needed food, he went to his room to change, and she went in search of the others.

It broke her heart to see her friend, Julie, standing at the open front door with her luggage beside her. "No. What happened?"

Julie had smiled sadly, shrugging. "It's what might happen. I have to leave, Kitty—I mean, Margo. I'm not sure why I entered in the first place. I prefer my paranormal heroes on paper. The real thing is, well it's too much for me."

Margo had shaken her head, reaching for Julie's hand. "You're braver than anyone I know, Julie. After all you've been through... Yeah, these guys put on an amazing show, but you and I both know the difference between fact and fiction. They aren't real. They can't be. Is it Liam? Did he hurt you?"

Julie's eyes had welled up with tears, but she'd chuckled, shaking her head. "Liam hasn't touched me. I think he's afraid if he shook my hand I'd shatter." She'd lifted her chin. "I know you'll think I'm crazy, Margo. But you're wrong. These guys really are what they say they are. Vampires, cat shifters, even werewolves. They really exist. You'll find out. I'll talk to you when you get home. I can't wait to hear about you and Thomas."

Margo's shocked expression had amused her. "I'm a writer, Margo. And I have eyes. Just be careful. Cats are notoriously finicky creatures. I don't want you getting your heart broken."

Wasn't that the truth? Margo had watched Dugan help her into the bus before she turned to head toward the parlor. She gasped when she nearly bumped into Liam. "I'm sorry."

"She's been hurt." It hadn't been a question.

Margo nodded. "Badly. And I will personally geld the next man who makes her cry."

Liam didn't flinch. "Then we're agreed." He turned and hefted his camera on his shoulder, leading her back toward the others. Margo hadn't been sure what they'd agreed to. But she had a feeling that though Julie was gone, she would be seeing Liam again.

The next day Joseph and Chi had joined Julie, Naomi and the others in leaving the castle before the week was up. Thomas had told her Chi left him a note apologizing for being derelict in her camera duties, but she needed to follow her heart. Thomas hadn't seemed too upset. In fact, as soon as he'd told her, he'd led her into the dense wooded area beside the castle and taken her against a tree.

She heard a knock on her bathroom door, drawing her out of her musings. "Ma'am? I'm sorry to bother you, but Master Saint requested I personally invite the remaining guests to the game room for the online request party."

"Esther, is that you? Hang on, I'll be right out." She'd been here for days, and she'd yet to see the housekeeper in person. She'd heard about her. Kasey Lynn and Bryan, even Stan had tales to tell, but for some reason, Margo hadn't been able to catch a glimpse.

She took one last look. The dress had appeared on the edge of her bed this morning. Beside it was a wildflower, and she knew then it was a gift from Thomas. The dress was the color of rich chocolate, the style flirty and young and sensual. It was not something the responsible Margo would wear. But then, the responsible Margo wouldn't be having a torrid affair with a man she was supposed to be convincing to sign a contract, in full view of an interested public, no less. A showmance, she rolled her eyes. How many times had she dropped her head into her hands while watching contestants on reality shows fall madly in love, or fall in love with being a couple on camera, only to separate once the credits began to roll?

Oh, they'd been creative. Thomas had ensured that they found places to go to escape the cameras scattered throughout the large Keep. But if her fellow contestant's reactions were anything to go by, they weren't fooling anyone. And she certainly hadn't been doing her job. She couldn't think about that right now, though. Not when Thomas was waiting for her.

Margo opened the door, her smile faltering at the vision that awaited her. Esther was garbed in a long gray dress, a white apron scalloped with lace tied around her waist. She was humming beneath her breath, waving her translucent hand and watching as Margo's jeans and velvet sweater folded themselves.

"Sweet Lord." That first night, Margo had explained away the ghost in the dining room. Or several days with Thomas had blocked it out. But here in her bedroom, there were no wires, no lights or special effects that Margo could see. The housekeeper was a ghost? She was really a ghost? "Esther?"

The smiling woman nodded. "Good evening, ma'am. I don't mean to overstep, but I have been so looking forward to meeting the woman who has Master Thomas's tail in a twist." She chuckled. "Now if only we can find someone for Master Mac."

"Mas-master... This can't really be happening."



Esther *tsked*, shaking her head. “I told Master Thomas it wasn’t fair leaving you in the dark for so long. You know we’ve been floating around on pins and needles, worried you’d turn a corner or enter a room while we were entertaining the others.”

Margo swallowed. “*You’ve* been hiding from *me*? Wait, you said *we*. There are more of you?”

The housekeeper nodded happily. “Master Thomas allowed me to invite some friends from town. Most have never been to the castle before, and I can imagine it will be a chore to get them out again once the show is done, but it is nice to have so much company.” She giggled. “Other than those two high strung ladies on the first day, we haven’t scared anyone away yet. That young couple are having a time of it, though. No one likes all their strange equipment. I’m afraid Master Mac will have to reimburse them before they go home.”

Margo was having a hard time taking it in. She was talking to a ghost. A ghost who was telling her that while she’d been romping around with the castle tomcat, the others had been having an entirely different experience. *Tomcat*.

She got to the bed before her knees buckled. “Esther? They’re real aren’t they? Thomas, Mac and Saint are really...real?”

Esther’s smile was filled with compassion and a little pity. “Why, of course they are, Ma’am. As real as you are. Just different.”

“I thought they were actors. That it was a show.”

“Didn’t you ever ask him, then? Master Thomas?”

She hadn’t. Maybe she hadn’t wanted to know. Maybe she thought if she talked about *Shifting Reality*, or thought about what he’d claimed to be, she’d have to talk to him about the contract. And that conversation would stop what was happening between them. Would make this what it was always supposed to have been. Just business.

The contract that was no longer an issue. He wasn’t an actor or a screenwriter. He was a different species. His website, his video journals had been exactly what they appeared to be. A paranormal being using the Internet to bare his soul, and reveal what he truly was. The fame was immaterial.

Julie had been right. They were the real deal. And because she hadn’t been careful, she’d lost her heart to a cat shifter. *Good job, Margo. You’ve done it again*. Gotten herself into an impossible situation, one that was destined to break her heart.

“Shall I tell them you’re coming, ma’am?”

Esther’s expression was worried, and Margo tried to smile. “In a minute. And Esther? Tell your friends no one has to hide from me anymore. Not after tonight.”

They were there when she arrived. Kasey Lynn and Bryan, looking flushed and profoundly tousled. Mac, his expression politely pained as he listened to the two speaking over each other about the day’s

spectral sightings. Stanley Ayer sat sullen and angry in a chair by the fire, ignoring the others. His behavior had gotten worse with each passing day, his contempt for his hosts barely veiled. Honestly, Margo wasn't sure why they hadn't kicked him out.

Secrets. Saint had mentioned something about Stan's secrets being interesting. And hers. No more. She knew that, job or no job, she wouldn't be mentioning the contract to these men. She was honestly relieved to have it taken off the table. But her mind was reeling from the reason why.

"Margo Sheffield, glad you decided to join us. Who are we kidding? We're just glad you can still walk after the busy week you've been having."

Thomas came from nowhere to tower over Stan's chair. "Careful, Slayer." He turned to Margo and smiled slowly, his gaze heating as he studied her outfit. "You look beautiful."

He came to take her hand, and she couldn't help it. She flinched. She was in shock. Who wouldn't be?

Thomas narrowed his gaze, taking a deliberate step closer to slide his arm around her waist. "What's wrong?"

"It may have something to do with me telling Esther to hurry her along."

Margo turned at the sound of Saint's voice. He was sitting with his legs crossed beneath him on a large antique billiard table in the corner, his palm-sized device, as ever, in his hand.

She heard Thomas swear under his breath beside her. "Thanks, Saint."

Margo pulled away from him and glared pointedly. "Yes. Thank you, Saint. Esther and I had an enlightening conversation."

Saint caught her gaze with his own and smiled. "Thought you might. Now that everyone's here, we should begin. The viewers are jamming the site with their questions and requests."

Margo came further into the room, nodding at the filming Liam, and smiling her thanks when Mac stood gallantly, offering her his seat. *Mac is a vampire*. She was having a hard time believing it. Her job was filled with fantastic stories easily explained by CGI and makeup. This couldn't be explained away.

It didn't make much sense. Mac wasn't a leering, neck chasing monster. He was moody, sure, but a gentleman. Saint couldn't be less like her idea of a demon. He didn't frighten her. He didn't look old enough to vote. And Thomas? He certainly fit his stereotype. Confident, cocky and oversexed. And she distinctly recalled him purring once or twice after making love.

She really needed a drink.

"First question comes from Fanglvr353. We all know *her*, don't we? Part of this is a private message for Mac, he can look at that later," Saint chuckled. "But she also has an important question for Slayer. She asks what you've been doing sneaking around the lower floors in the morning. She has a feeling you're up to no good."

Everyone looked toward Stan, whose expression was reminiscent of someone who'd sucked the pulp out of a lemon. "I have no earthly idea what you mean. She must be mistaken. The only time any of us are up and about is late afternoon and evening, in deference to our hosts."

Margo wasn't buying it. Neither was anyone else from their expressions, especially Mac's. He didn't look surprised. Just alert. She had a feeling he knew more about Stan than he was revealing.

"This one is for Bryan and Kasey Lynn. They want to know what it was like to have a ménage with a ghost."

"*Oh no.*"

"Damn it, Bryan. I told you they might have cameras in that hallway."

Mac covered his grin with one elegant hand, stepping closer. "I don't remember you sharing this story with me. Let me guess. Rory?"

Kasey Lynn blushed and nodded. "Ever since that first night he's been, well, very persistent. We just thought... I mean Bryan wanted to so—"

"Kasey Lynn Hollister."

"What? You did."

Margo was fascinated. The handsome Scot from their first dinner? "I'm curious too. How was it?"

Kasey Lynn glanced over at the red-faced Bryan before sending Margo a wink and stage-whispering her answer. "*Really* good."

Saint chuckled and shook his head. "Why didn't we let any of *my* fans win? When a ghost gets more action than a demon, something is not right with the world."

"It's disgusting." Stan's voice dripped with disdain.

Bryan jerked to a standing position and clenched his fists. "Excuse me?"

"Necrophilia. It's disgusting."

Saint piped up. "Technically it's not necrophilia. No one made out with a decomposing body. Rory's spirit is very much alive. Although I can see how you would be confu—"

"Just as disgusting as bestiality. I really thought you were different, Margo Sheffield. Thought you were a savvy businesswoman, not a whorish groupie. Sadly, I was mistaken." Stan looked pointedly at Margo, all the kindness she'd seen on the flight in replaced by bitterness and repulsion. It made her stomach knot, all the hate she could see in his eyes.

Thomas snarled beside her, but it was Mac himself who stepped between them. "You are a guest in my home, but I warn you now the line you are walking gets thinner by the moment."

Stan sat back down warily, his fingers gripping the arms of the chair like talons. Mac went to stand by the fire, his attention focused on Stan. "Saint, you may continue."

"Someone here thinks they recognize Margo. She says she used to go to a certain biker bar in Los Angeles about eight years ago. And she distinctly remembers a singer by the name of Margo with a voice

that would make an angel sin. You never mentioned that, Ms. Sheffield. Your contest form said office assistant, not vocalist.”

Mac sent her an encouraging smile. “I love music. You should have told us. I could have shown you the castle’s music room.”

She felt Thomas’s gaze on her as well, and he raised a questioning brow. “Biker bar? Margo?”

“That was another life. I don’t sing anymore. And I didn’t lie. I *do* work in an office.” Her hands were shaking. She’d been afraid of something like this. The bar was the least of her worries. It was the video she’d always been concerned would surface. The video that had destroyed her dreams and broken her father’s heart.

“What video?” Saint tilted his head, looking at her without malice. Merely curiosity. She shook her head.

“The better question is what *office*? Tell them where you work, Margo Sheffield. Tell them what the paperwork hidden in your carryon is for. Share with all the viewers why you’ve been bending over backwards to please Thomas.” Stan leered in her direction, jumping when Mac took a step toward him.

“You looked through my bag on the plane.” That was why he’d made her join the others. He’d somehow managed to rifle through her things without being caught on camera. “You looked through everyone’s things, didn’t you?”

Stan looked proud. “I had to know my enemies from my allies. And secrets are the surest way to earn loyalty. Unfortunately after the first night it was clear you had another agenda. One I simply couldn’t countenance.” His sneer in Thomas’s direction was gleeful. “I take comfort in the fact that you fooled them all. They were taking care of you, not knowing they were protecting a circling shark.”

Mac turned his searing blue gaze in her direction. She felt strange. She couldn’t look away. She was mesmerized. “What is he referring to?”

Margo didn’t want to tell him, but she felt compelled. She listened in horror as the words came pouring out of her mouth. “The contract. Rights to develop and produce *Shifting Reality* as a feature film. When I was named as one of the contestants, my boss told me to come and get you to sign or my job would be in jeopardy.”

“You were forced to come here? For a job?” Oh God she could hear the disappointment in Thomas’s voice. The anger.

“Cool.” Bryan glared at Kasey Lynn, but she glared back. “What? A movie would be sweet.”

“Unfortunately *Shifting Reality* is finished when you leave. Which I believe is going to happen sooner than we’d originally thought.” Mac shook his head. “I also think it is time to end this online request debacle. We have satisfied our part in this, let it be done.”

Saint held up his hand. “We have one last question from Keepsake\_Hrt.”

“Julie?” Liam strode over to the desk, camera and all, angling his head to see Saint’s Blackberry.

Mac sighed. “Go ahead.”

“It’s more of a request. She wants Margo to tell Thomas why she hasn’t mentioned the contract once all week.”

Margo looked down at her interlaced hands. She knew what Julie wanted her to say. She wanted her to tell him she had feelings for him. That she’d been so addicted to his touch, his lovemaking—that everything else, including her career, had ceased to matter.

Thomas knelt in front of her so she couldn’t avoid him. She bit her lip so hard she tasted blood, but she couldn’t make herself tell him. She was scared. Not of him. But of what she felt for him. And she knew he could see her fear. Smell it.

“Okay, we’re done.” Thomas growled out the words, and before Margo could mistake his meaning, he’d flipped her over his shoulder and was striding from the room.

Margo heard Saint chuckle, and then they were headed up the stairs. She saw Esther and Rory, along with several other spirits hovering outside the game room, obviously eavesdropping, and she closed her eyes. There was only so much a sane woman could take, after all.

But she hadn’t felt sane since she’d arrived. Since she’d met Thomas. And now it was over. She had no delusions. He was mad as hell. He would confront her, thankfully in private, and send her on her way. She could only hope Dugan was waiting outside with the bus.

They got to her bedroom through the bookshelf-cum-doorway, and he set her on her feet. She started to speak but he held up his hand, walking across the room to lock the door that led to the tower stairs.

She felt a shiver of true fear when he pushed the bureau in front of the bookshelf. “What are you doing?”

He turned to face her. “I know the movie business. Did your boss tell you to do whatever was necessary to get my signature? To fuck me if you had to? Was all your time on the site a part of the plan too?”

She stepped back, feeling as though he’d physically hit her. “You think I slept with you to keep my job?” She whirled toward the bookshelf, determined to kick him out of her room, pack and leave before he could see how much he’d hurt her.

He grabbed her and threw her onto the bed. “Oh no, you don’t. You’re not going anywhere, *kitten*. I’m not convinced yet. You haven’t given me everything I want.”

## Chapter Seven

“Fuck you, Lyons. And don’t call me kitten, you jackass.” She rolled off her back, scrambling to get off the bed.

“Where do you think you’re going, *kitten*? Don’t you want me to sign the contract? I bet there’s a promotion in it for you.” He grabbed the skirt of her dress, holding her fast.

The fight suddenly sapped out of her, and she sat on the bed, tears streaming down her cheeks. Thomas was there in an instant, pulling her into his arms. “Baby, Margo please. Please don’t cry.”

“I would *never*—”

“I know. I know you wouldn’t. I’m an ass. I’m sorry, baby.”

She pulled back, wiping her cheeks. “No you don’t. I would never use sex to try and advance my career. It’s the reason I stopped singing in the first place.”

She’d been so sure of herself, so certain she could conquer the world with her voice and her guitar...drunk on her first taste of freedom in the city where stars were born. She’d played anywhere, for anyone who would listen. She’d been good too. And then she’d met him. He managed bands that got top billings. He had an eye for talent. And he wanted to make her a star.

Only it was all a lie. He’d romanced her, taking her to the best places to meet the best people. And he’d told her he loved her. She’d made one mistake. She’d trusted him. He’d taken that trust, and her innocence, when he’d secretly taped them having sex. And then passed the tape around to his friends in the business. She’d been devastated. He’d even made her sing for him wearing nothing but her guitar before he’d taken her. It was the first and only time she’d sung on camera.

She pulled herself together as she finished sharing her story with Thomas. “I thought I could overcome it. But I couldn’t take the chance that it would come out. My father had always dreamed I’d be a star. He’d wanted me to follow my dreams, said it was what he worked so hard to give me. When I quit I don’t think he ever forgave me for not telling him why. I didn’t even sing at his funeral. I couldn’t.”

Thomas held her tighter, rocking her as she finished speaking. He kissed her forehead, her eyes, her damp cheeks. “Is he alive? The man who did this?”

“I-I don’t know where Jimmy is. And I don’t care.”

“I do.”

She sent him a watery smile. “He doesn’t matter. I just wanted you to know.”

“Margo Sheffield, you’re an amazing human. I don’t think I’ve known anyone braver. You came here, on camera, despite your past. You trusted me with your body, though you didn’t believe I was what I said I was.”

“That’s not brave. That’s masochistic and crazy.” Her chuckle was watery. “I couldn’t help myself. It must be your pheromones.”

Thomas smiled a strange half smile and shook his head. “I haven’t even used them on you. Yet.”

He pulled her close once more and continued to hold her, just hold her, until her sniffles stopped and her tears dried. Until her skin began to warm beneath his hands, and she felt his breathing change.

She wanted him. Just one last time she wanted to feel what he made her feel. Wash away her ugly past with a beautiful memory. She kissed his neck, and he stilled beside her. Her teeth closed over the taut tendon of his neck, and he shivered.

“Don’t tease, Margo.”

She lifted herself up and straddled his lap. “Who’s teasing?” She bit at his upper lip. “I need you, Thomas.”

He closed his eyes on a moan, dragging her body against his and tilting his head for a deep, soulful kiss. Yes. This was what she needed. *He* was what she needed. His taste. His smell. Everything.

His mind was in turmoil. Thomas was walking a ragged edge. In less than an hour he’d gone from betrayal, to remorse, to homicidal rage. And now? Desire, so strong he wanted to shout with it.

His rage was for Jimmy the band manager, a man he silently vowed he would find and pay back for every tear his woman had shed over the bastard. The rest was for her. Margo. How had one human woman wound so tightly around his heart in so short a time?

He had no doubt she was his mate. His only worry was that he might not be hers. It was a worry that kept him up nights. Tormented him every minute he wasn’t with her, touching her, making her cry out with pleasure.

She was kissing him now and he could scent her need. His mind knew she was vulnerable, that he should just hold her until she slept, keep her safe. But his instincts were demanding he claim her. It was the only way the beast inside knew to protect her.

*Mate.*

He continued to kiss her as he stripped off their clothes, rolling until he was on top, his mouth never lifting from hers. Her taste was as familiar as his own now, as necessary as his heartbeat. It unnerved him, the fact that he’d already bonded with her so deeply without the mark. How much stronger could these emotions get?

She wrapped her legs around his waist, and his hard cock pressed against her wet core. Need tightened around him like a vice. *Mine. Make her mine. Mate.*

He lifted her legs higher, until her knees were pressed against her shoulders. She didn't hesitate, her passion as wild as his. He snared her gaze as his cock slid between the cheeks of her ass. "Let me."

She bit her lip, her beautiful doe eyes widening, but she nodded.

"That's my girl."

He took his time, kissing and caressing her body, her breasts, the curve of her belly. She was arching and rocking against him, begging by the time he'd lifted his mouth from between her legs.

His fingers slid through her arousal, dragging it down to coat her ass with her natural lubrication. He was on edge, his fangs, his cock, ached for her. To be in her. Joined with her. He wasn't sure how much longer he could last.

He stretched her with his fingers, growling at how tightly she clenched around him. How much tighter would she be around his cock? He slid his fingers out of her, positioning himself until the head of his cock was aligned with the tight ring of muscles that beckoned him. He needed this. Needed his mate.

"You've never done this before." He wasn't asking. "Remember those pheromones I was talking about?" With a thought his unique scent emitted through his pores, and he watched her inhale in surprise.

Her pupils dilated, the scent of her own arousal increased so quickly he grew dizzy with it. Wild. He wanted to make this good for her. So good she would never forget the day he made her his.

He looked into her shimmering eyes and pushed forward, loving the way her spine arched off the bed, the look of amazed pleasure on her face. *Yes. Mate. Mine.*

His jaw ground together as he forced himself to go slow, to let her get used to the new invasion. She was so damn beautiful it stole his control. Took his breath away. When she moaned, pushed more fully against him, he lost the last drop of patience he had left.

The lion roared as he claimed her, took her sweet ass the way he'd dreamt of. His head bent, fangs stinging as they extended for the marking bite. She saw him, arching her neck, a willing supplicant.

She was irresistible.

He pierced her flesh and heard her cry out. The first drop of her blood on his tongue swamped him with adrenaline. He groaned against her skin, soaking in the essence that was his mate. Margo.

He swelled inside her, pressing her into the mattress with the power of his thrusts. He was his animal. Primal. Hungry. Her blood was a drug in his veins. He could feel it changing him, linking him to her.

When she climaxed it whipped through him with the force of a hurricane. Setting off a chain reaction inside him. Arcs of lightning shot up his body, through him and into her. They cried out together.

*Mate. Mine.*

Margo took one last look at her lover's sleeping form sprawled across the bed. It was just after dawn, but she knew Dugan would be there. Waiting. She opened the bookshelf door and headed down the



hallway, unwilling to brave the tower stairs in the rain. Luckily, he'd moved the bureau in the night when they'd snuck into the kitchen for a two a.m. snack.

He was wrong. She wasn't brave. She was a coward. Unsure of everything she felt, everything she was. She compartmentalized herself into so many pieces she wasn't sure who the real Margo was. Reliable and diligent? Wild and foolish? Whatever she was, she knew it was time to go home and face her dragons.

*What about him?*

Thomas was a cat. He'd land on his feet. Soon enough he'd forget about her and move on to his next conquest. His next challenge. She would always remember what he gave her.

She got to the base of the stairs with her carryon and heard it. A faint echo of sound, like hammering, and then a male voice swearing. She set her bag down and went to investigate.

Beneath the staircase there was a door that had been hidden by a suit of armor. It was open, and she could see a stairway leading further down. She followed the noise to the bottom, wondering if they were doing any more remodeling. She doubted it. Suspicion sped up her heart as she tread carefully over the black earthen floor toward the dim light.

She heard swearing again and recognized the voice. Stan Ayer? She suddenly remembered the question from last night. Why was he lurking here? What was he looking for?

A hand covered her mouth before she could scream. "For a Slayer he really is rather clumsy. And his pseudonym. Ha. Maybe he was following our lead. Obvious is the new stealth, you know."

Saint turned her around, and she could see his black eyes were sparking with a red, unnatural light. "Stanley is more like us than he is you, Margo. His line slay vampires, and are given some of the vampy powers like charisma, when he focuses, and longevity. In a few minutes he'll be wishing they'd added some extra intelligence in for good measure."

She pulled his hand off her mouth. "He's trying to find out where Mac sleeps isn't he? What are we going to do?"

Saint smiled. "You are going to go back upstairs and get on the bus before my roommate wakes up. And I am going to make the slayer wish he'd never been born." He glanced down at her neck and his smile grew. "Nice love bite. Don't worry, Margo. I'm sure I'll see you again. And I won't kill Slayer. I'm just gonna hurt him a little, and scare him a lot. It's a demon thing." His eyes burned red. "You should go now."

She couldn't help it. She ran up the stairs as though she'd seen a demon. And she had. Esther was waiting beside her bag, her smile sad but understanding. "Be safe, dear. You're welcome back anytime. With or without Master Thomas."

Margo tried not to cry as a silent Dugan helped her onto the large, lonely bus. She rubbed the mark on her neck, reliving every moment, burning her lover's face and touch into her memories.

They were all she had left.

## Chapter Eight

The light outside of her apartment building had gone out. Great. She set down her small bag of groceries and fumbled for her keys in the dark, desperate for a long soak in the bath and some sleep.

It had been a month since she'd returned from Scotland. The longest month of her life. She'd returned to work with a letter of resignation in her hand, but Darcy demanded she give her three months to find and train her replacement. "It's the least you could do after that *Shifting* debacle."

She'd agreed, but everyone could tell her heart was no longer in her job. It was no longer anywhere. *It was with him.*

He hadn't called. Hadn't tried to find her. A small part of her had dreamt that he would, prayed that he would. She woke up from dreams filled with him only to find her bed empty and cold.

It was probably for the best. Dreams didn't always come true. She'd learned that lesson enough for two lifetimes. She wouldn't forget again.

"I was wondering when you'd get home."

Margo jumped a few inches off the ground, a scream trapped in her throat. "Mac?"

The redheaded vampire emerged from the shadows, his hands in his pockets. "Good to see you again, Ms. Sheffield."

"What are you doing here?" *And why aren't you Thomas?*

"I wanted you to know that I appreciated your desire to help Saint with our little problem." He grimaced. "No harm came to Mr. Ayer, I assure you. Apart from a few bruises, and the belief that his family legacy is now slaying fish, not vampires."

She chuckled, and his lips quirked. "I also wanted to let you know that we have signed the contracts with Ms. Darcy. With a few, special caveats, of course. And that you have been given full credit for our decision, as well as a percentage of the profits."

They'd agreed to the movie? Mac of all people? "But you said *Shifting Reality* was done. The site shut down and everything. I mean, thank you, but I don't understand... why the sudden change in heart?"

Mac smiled. "Heart. That's the word. The heart is such an inexplicable little organ. They can dissect and study it for millennia and still miss the magic it holds. The magic that makes us follow it, no matter where it leads." He lifted one shoulder in a half shrug. "It has been brought to my attention that I need to loosen up. Take advantage of the recent vampire craze to get out more, meet new people. I'm willing to

take a chance.” He stepped back, his expression trying to convey something important to her before he faded into the darkness once more. As though he’d never been there.

She opened the door to her apartment, shaking her head. They’d signed. Did that mean she’d see Thomas again? Would he even want her to? She could only imagine how angry he’d been when he woke to find her gone from the castle.

“Yoohoo. Margo Sheffield. You have a demon calling on line one.”

She dropped her groceries on the carpet. “Shit.”

“Oops. Hope there wasn’t anything breakable in there.”

She followed the voice to her dining room table, her jaw dropping at the sight of her open laptop, and the live feed image of Saint’s face smiling directly at her. “What is this?”

“Ms. Sheffield. This is your life. But first, a lesson in the mating habits of shifters.” He lifted his nose haughtily in the air, assuming the posture of pompous professor. “Despite the romantic propaganda, cat shifters cannot change their human mates on a genetic level. When they mark a mate, it bonds *them* to her for life, but not vice versa, which makes for one very possessive and vulnerable cat. As you can imagine.”

Margo touched the mark on her neck, the mark that had remained visible even after weeks of separation. Was he saying what she thought he was?

“Sometimes this possession manifests itself in strange ways. The shifter may wish to prove himself to his mate. Bring home a prized elk from the hunt or—” he waved a VHS tape in front of the camera, “—find a nasty little scumbag of a band manager and have his demon and vampire friends ferret out every last copy of an incriminating video tape.” The tape began to burn in his hands, and Margo’s vision blurred as tears welled up in her eyes.

Saint nodded his head. “That was the last copy. On a final note. Shifters who have chosen their mates experience separation anxiety when said mate disappears for long stretches of time. So one shouldn’t be surprised to find them waiting in their bedroom. Now, I believe I’ve done my good deed for the next hundred years, and I feel the need to slaughter some random gamers. You kids have fun. This concludes your demon therapy session. Good luck.”

The computer shut off, and Margo wasted no time. She ran to the bedroom, threw open the door...and froze in shock. A lion was curled up on her bed. He was huge. Beautiful. But huge.

He stood on his large paws and shifted before her eyes, the familiar visage of Thomas Lyons taking his place, clad in jeans and a T-shirt. He looked hesitant as he stood on her bed. Nervous. “Your cat is underneath the sofa. I may have traumatized her. I’m sorry.”

Margo smiled through her tears. “She’ll live. She’s probably just jealous. She’s always thought *she* was the biggest, baddest cat in my life.”

He ran a hand through his tousled hair. “I’ve missed you, Margo. More than I thought I could miss anyone.”

She shook her head, unable to believe he was really there. “I can’t believe you did that. I mean the tape, the contract, all of it. You didn’t have to.”

He leapt off the bed to land a few feet away from her, holding himself back with obvious restraint. “Yes, I did.”

“Why?” She needed to hear him say it.

He smiled. “Because I love you, Kittysnapdragon. I have from the moment I met you. I always will. And a cat in love will do anything to make his mate happy.”

“I love you too.”

His expression was shocked, as though he hadn’t expected such a quick response. But they’d already wasted too much time as far as she was concerned. She raced toward him, leaping into his arms, wrapping her legs around his waist. She peppered his face with kisses, laughing and crying and so full of gratitude and joy she could hardly breathe. He’d come for her. He loved her.

He groaned at the feel of her against him. “I can’t believe I stayed away from you so long. Do you know how hard it was?”

Margo felt the hard ridge of his erection press against her and shivered. “I’m getting a general idea.”

He growled. “General, huh? Well, let’s get down to specifics. I need to taste you. Need to feel my woman come around my cock. Now.”

She placed open mouth kisses on his neck as he carried her to what she hoped was the bed. She needed him too. It was desperate, this desire to get closer, to touch every part of him, taste every part of him. She wondered if it would always be like this.

The sound of water running pushed through the haze of her passion. Before she could lift her head he’d stepped into the shower, holding her, the hot water blasting over her fully clothed body. “What—”

His voice was harsh, guttural. “Couldn’t wait. Didn’t want to let you go.”

She heard the rending sound of her tailored pants as he ripped off the center panel, baring her white lace underwear to his touch. That too shredded beneath his hands, until there was nothing between them but his sodden jeans.

“Have I mentioned that you’re good at this?”

“Not good. Not smooth. Around you, Margo, I have no control.”

Her blouse clung to her skin, resistant to his frustrated fingers. Margo leaned back in his arms, pulling everything, bra and all, off over her head. It landed on the floor of the shower with a wet thud and she smiled. “Your turn.”

He took her mouth, his sharp teeth snagging her lower lip in his haste, but she loved it. Loved his wildness. Without releasing her he somehow undid the buttons of his jeans, and she felt the rock solid heat of him against her sex.

She plucked at the cloth on his shoulders, humming into his mouth as she dragged her sensitive breasts across the wet, heavy cotton. The water beat down on them and she remembered her fantasy in the shower. She tore her mouth away with a laugh. “It was you, wasn’t it? Your voice I heard that first day? You were watching me.”

He narrowed his brilliant green eyes, studying her face for a tense moment. “You aren’t angry?”

She should be, she knew. “No,” she whispered, surprised at her own answer. “It’s only fair. I was watching you for months. Dreaming of us, like this, since I first found your site.”

His jaw clenched, the emotion glistening in his eyes making hers water. “I think I created it so you’d find me.” And then he was kissing her again, his tongue filling her mouth as his cock stretched and filled her sex.

Yes. God, she’d missed this. Craved it. No fantasy, no battery operated boyfriend, *nothing* had satisfied her since she’d left Scotland. Nothing could compare to Thomas, and the way he made her feel.

His head reared back, looking into her eyes as the strong arms around her hips pumped her against his body. “Say it, kitten.”

She knew exactly what he wanted. “I love you, Thomas Lyons.”

“You’re mine now. Don’t ever run away from me again.”

She shook her head and his mouth opened over the mark on her shoulder. “Oh, that feels so...” He sank his fangs into her flesh, and she cried out, tightening her arms and legs around him, needing to be closer, needing everything.

For long, delicious minutes he drank from her, claiming her as she took him, feeling as though he were inside her mind and heart as well as her body. *Love you...love you so much*, her inner voice whimpered.

*You can say that again, little voice.*

She sensed it building inside her. The spark became a conflagration that had her hips bucking, desperate for a faster rhythm. More. Harder. *More*.

His rumbled sound of warning vibrated on her flesh, but she paid it no heed.

“Thomas. Tomcat, please.”

He roared against her skin, his grip tightening as he set a punishing rhythm. Hard and fast as a cat, no holding back.

“Yes!” Her back arched as though she’d been touched by a live wire. Shocks of ecstasy shuddered through her body as the cooling water sluiced down her cheeks.

Her sex clenched around his erection, gripping him so tightly he gasped, lifting his mouth from her mark. “Fuck, Margo. I’m coming, baby.”

Another orgasm followed the first, her body reacting to his thickening cock inside her. He came with a shout that echoed off her bathroom walls, hips still pumping, as though he couldn't stop. As though he never wanted to.

The water was ice cold before either of them came to their senses. Margo shivered in his arms as he covered her shoulders with a nearby towel, carrying her into the bedroom without allowing their bodies to separate.

"Your clothes are soaked, Thomas."

He chuckled. "A problem easy to remedy." He finally set her down on wobbly feet, one shoe missing, so she could remove the tatters of her pants and dry herself off.

She watched him strip, tossing his wet clothes into her bathroom. He was so beautiful. She knew she was going to be spending a lot of time defending her territory. Thomas Lyons was hers, and no matter what he did in the past, she wasn't planning on sharing him with anyone.

*Not even another man?*

*Little voice, you're a perv.*

*Well, you're thinking it.*

She brought him a fresh towel and rubbed his lean, perfect body. His cock jerked, growing again before her interested gaze. She bit her lip. "I suppose you're going to be one of those arrogant Brat Pack kind of stars, aren't you? The kind that drive directors crazy and have women throwing panties at you in restaurants."

Thomas slid his hands into her wet hair. "What about you? I'll be fending off every man with a pulse. Everyone will want to get close to the woman who plays my love interest, the woman who writes the music for the film."

"What? No way. I'm not going to be in the movie. I can't act. And I haven't written mus—"

Thomas lifted her up and tossed her on the bed, his smile wide and sensual. "Who said anything about acting?"

"So you want us to have another showmance?"

He straddled her hips, holding her arms above her head. "This was never a showmance, Margo. This was always forever."

His expression was so earnest, so adoring, she forgot why she'd started to argue with him in the first place. They could sort it all out later. For now, the fact that he was here, that he loved her, was all she wanted to know. She couldn't resist. She bit his chin and growled, startling him. "You're playing with fire again, baby."

She smiled against his skin. "Here kitty, kitty. Come and play with me."

## About the Author

Stolen away by a free-spirited Gypsy as a child (though she still swears she's my mother), I spent my childhood roaming the countryside, meeting fascinating characters and having amazing adventures. As the perpetual "new kid", my friends more often than not were found between the pages of a book...and in my own imagination. I read everything I could get my hands on. At the age of 11, I read my first romance and I've been hooked ever since.

I've been a nurse, a lead vocalist in several bands, a published lyricist and even a returning university student majoring in Anthropology and Mythology. Throughout all of my varied careers, I would sigh as I read one fantasy-filled story after another saying, "Someday I want to write one of those," until one day my husband said, "So do it." And I did. Now I can't imagine doing anything else.

To learn more about R. G. Alexander please visit [www.rgalexander.com](http://www.rgalexander.com). Send an email to R. G. Alexander at [r.g.alexander@hotmail.com](mailto:r.g.alexander@hotmail.com).

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*Wicked<sup>3</sup> Series*

Wicked Sexy



*There's only one place left to run-into forbidden arms.*

## Regina in the Sun

© 2008 R.G. Alexander

### *A Children of the Goddess Story*

When she arrives at Ye Olde Haven Pub, the sanctuary for Trueblood Vampires, Regina is wounded and desperate. Her only thought is to save the Deva Clan, her family, from the dangerous Loups De L'Ombre, the Shadow Wolves. She knows she will not exactly be welcomed with open arms. She is, after all, an Unborn, the lowest caste of Vampire.

As a natural born from the purest line, Zander Sariel knows the rules are sacrosanct-a Trueblood mates with his own kind. But one taste of the young Unborn is all Zander needs to know that rules were made to be broken.

With enemies at every turn, Zander risks everything to save Regina from the monster that hunts her, his own kind's ignorance and-if he must-her lack of faith in her own unique abilities.

Only together do they have a chance to defeat the shadow that haunts their future, and save their entire race from extinction.

### *Enjoy the following excerpt for Regina in the Sun:*

Reggie had a hangover. At least, that's what it felt like. Either that or two irate and frustrated little gnomes were taking turns using her head as a ping-pong ball. She lay as still as possible, trying to get her bearings while praying for the gnomes to get bored with her and decide to pester someone else.

The last thing she remembered was...*Haven*. She'd made it. She'd actually gotten there and, if she was remembering correctly, she'd spoken to Lux.

Her shoulders relaxed and the banging began to fade as relief rushed in. Elizabeth and the others would be safe now. She just knew it. And she could continue with her plans without regret or guilt at knowing she'd almost been responsible for a catastrophe.

"I think a slight change in plans might be in order."

She froze at the sound of the voice. It was close. A little *too* close. Almost as if it was coming from—she groaned in silent mortification as a large, masculine arm slid around her bare waist. What did she do last night?

A male chuckle washed over her. The arm, already causing a tingling heat to spread across her skin, squeezed her gently. "You didn't do anything, Regina. You were hurt and we took you upstairs to tend to your wounds."

The gnomes were renewing their efforts with gusto. He knew her name. *And* what she'd been thinking. He shouldn't be able to read her thoughts so clearly. He shouldn't be able to read her at all.

She tried to block him, a gift she'd always taken for granted and rarely had to use, but she could sense his amused patience at her attempt. She didn't stop to think that she might be able to read him in return, her fear turning to anger as she raised up on her elbow, whipping around to confront him.

Her brain registered several facts at once. The first being the pain in her side that, while it still stung, was dramatically less than it had been only yesterday. Secondly, she was lying naked beside quite possibly the sexiest man she'd ever seen. Her eyes glazed and her mouth watered with desire as she slowly looked him over.

Once.

*Pause.*

Twice.

Okay, perhaps sexy was too weak of a word. But he wasn't beautiful. She wouldn't even say he was exceptionally handsome. He looked too hard for that. Too raw and elemental and male.

He lay above the covers in unbuttoned black dress pants and nothing else. His thighs bulged as if trying to escape their cloth prison, and she knew instinctively that this man had to have clothes created just to fit him.

A fine line of hair disappeared beneath the lowered zipper, where another growing and rather impressive bulge looked as if it might be planning its escape. Her gaze flew upward swiftly, past the enviable six-pack, up to the smooth, hairless pecs and along the tightly corded neck before working up her courage to face her mysterious bed partner.

Short, sandy hair looking a bit tousled from sleep framed a strong jaw, sharp cheekbones and a regal nose. It was a face that was saved from being too harsh by the hint of dimples, which appeared when his firm lips tilted slightly at her scrutiny.

Eyes the color of blazing sapphires narrowed with desire and obvious intent. She suddenly recalled that this man had been able to read her thoughts. That was why she'd turned in the first place. She tilted her chin, ignoring the blush heating her cheeks, determined to retain her righteous indignation even in the face of such edible eye candy.

His blue eyes widened in shock before he rolled onto his back with a surprised shout of laughter. "*Edible eye candy?*"

His rude guffawing was cut short with an "Oomph!" as she whacked him with the nearest pillow. She started to get up, determined to escape the gorgeous mind-reading lunatic, only to find herself trapped beneath him while he grinned in amusement, utterly ignoring her warning glare.

"Regina," he murmured as he focused his attention on her full lower lip. "If you're saying you find me attractive, then let me just tell you that the feeling is entirely mutual."

His head lowered slowly, giving her ample time to reject his advance. On any other day, she would have been stunned by her own inaction. She couldn't seem to move. Not even when she felt the first touch of his lips on hers.

Their fingers laced together above her head, the gentle restraint adding to her arousal. He took his time, torturing her with featherlight kisses and gentle nips.

The strange, sweet intimacy of the moment stretched out until she found herself straining her neck to get closer, her mouth opening in invitation. Greedy for more of the delicious stranger's kiss.

He sucked her lower lip between his teeth, biting gently before soothing the sting away with his tongue. She gasped with arousal and he pulled back to look into her eyes for a heartbeat. Angling his head, he took her mouth in a soul-consuming kiss that had her moaning wantonly into his mouth. The sound encouraged him to taste her more fully, their tongues sparring for control in her mouth as he shifted his hardening erection into the apex of her thighs.

She wrapped her lips around his tongue, sucking him deeper into her mouth. He jerked against her, and then he was reciprocating in a way that made her entire body tremble. On and on, lips and fangs and tongues warred for supremacy in a sensual battle that neither wanted to end.

Never had she experienced anything like the need that flooded through her from the first touch of his lips. He was like a narcotic, drugging her limbs and causing her heart to beat a panicked tattoo against her breast. His taste was both darkly mysterious and achingly familiar. His lips burned against hers with a blaze like the noonday sun, so hot she was sure she'd melt beneath him.

He thrust his hips gently against her sex and even through the sheet that separated them she felt an answering rush of arousal dampen her thighs. She'd never imagined she could be so close to coming from a kiss. A hot, unbearably sexy kiss, but a kiss nonetheless.

He groaned as she arched against him in return and she reveled in the knowledge that his desire was just as strong as hers. That he wanted her, his *grathita*, more than he'd ever wanted another. She was *his* and he would—

She must be sensing his thoughts. Picking up on them as if they were her own. At the same moment the realization struck her, he pressed his body fully against hers, causing her to cry out in pain at the forgotten injury.

He leapt off her as if he were on fire, the lust in his eyes turning quickly to worry. Kneeling on the bed, he bent to check her mending wound, ignoring the hand that tried to slap him away.

"I'm really going to have to work on my timing."

The wry voice caused the two to jump apart, startled. Reggie felt her cheeks heat as the man she'd just been groping leaned his back against the bed frame with a sigh, subtly trying to cover Regina's naked frame with the blanket, hiding her from the other man's view.

Without a word she jerked the fabric from his hands, pulling the cover up to her neck defensively. She looked towards the glorious creature standing at the edge of the bed, the memory of being carried from the dance floor surfacing in her mind. This was Lux.

He held up the overflowing bag in his hand, which showed the name of a well-known clothing store. “I brought you something to wear. Your other clothing was, well, unsalvageable.”

He waited for her to accept his offering, but she merely nodded her thanks and looked at him pointedly until he turned his head and shut his eyes.

She reached out with her mind and gasped at the amusement hiding in Lux’s thoughts, as well as the memory of undressing her after she’d collapsed. At her sound of outrage, Lux spun his head back around, looking towards her in shock before glancing at the other man—*his brother*, Reggie suddenly realized—for an explanation.

“I don’t know why you’re looking at him. Just ask me.” She crossed her arms over the blanket that she had wrapped around her, realizing her breasts were plumping over the edge when Lux couldn’t seem to tear his gaze away from the view. Her golden eyes rolled and she shook her head. “After all the stories Liz told me, I thought you’d be a bit more, well, genteel.”

The charming smile Lux had been wearing since he’d arrived turned sinful, causing her to shiver at the change. “Genteel? Ahhh. Well, yes, I like men if that’s what you’re inferring. But that doesn’t mean I don’t enjoy women just as thoroughly. Especially when they have such undeniably charming...assets.”

Reggie turned away with a blush to see the object of her recent lust sprawled casually on the rumpled bed, a sensual smile on his face.

“Of the two, Lux is far more notorious than I, Regina mine. Ask anyone. No one’s safe when he’s on the prowl.”

*There's only one man she needs to believe in. Him.*

## **If You Believe**

© 2009 Crystal Jordan

### *Unbelievable, Book One*

When it comes to her love life, the name of Aubrey Mathison's coffee shop says it all: "Bean There, Done That". There's only one harmless man in her life right now—the homeless one parked outside the shop. Except the crazy things he says keep coming true.

She has to laugh at "You'll meet your soul mate today", though. Divorce taught her that men as gorgeous as sexy police chief Price Delacroix are not to be trusted. She's totally up for a one-night stand, but more than that? No, thanks.

Price bears his own scars from the past, but he knows instantly that Aubrey is his. How to convince her he wants more than to be her personal jungle gym? Cut her off. That means no more mattress gymnastics—until she starts seeing things his way.

Aubrey is just as determined Price's campaign to wear down her resistance is going to fail, no matter how wickedly determined he is. Until her resident prophet spouts a new prediction: her soul mate's life is in danger...

*Enjoy the following excerpt for If You Believe:*

Mr. Crazy Man was back. He hummed a little before speaking again. "Dogs are bad luck for you today."

Shit. She hunched her shoulder and spun away. "Thanks."

If she went her normal route home, she'd have to pass by the dog park that made up a corner of the town square. Maybe she would try a different way. Just for the change of scenery. Change was good for the soul, wasn't it? If she went by the dog park, it just seemed like too much self-fulfilling prophecy.

Taking a left off the main path where she usually took a right, she wandered into the older district of town that had great Victorian houses. She'd always loved that style of architecture, but Scott had wanted modern. Now that she lived alone, it just seemed like too much upkeep. And maybe it was because she was afraid it would put her one step away from crazy cat lady to rattle around in a big old house like that. She turned the corner on to her street. She had four blocks left to go.

"Woof." Her blood ran cold at the deep bark that came from behind her. A lot of people walked these streets in the evening. And took their dogs with them.

A kid of about twelve had lost the leash on his Great Dane. The air went whistling out of her in what might have been a high-pitched squeak.

It wasn't that she believed Jericho or anything, but the fire thing had kind of creeped her out. Watching that pony-sized excuse for a dog running at her made her blood run cold. Anyone would freak out. It had nothing to do with Jericho's warning. Nope. Not a thing.

She backpedaled as fast as her legs could carry her just the same. The back of her ankles hit something that yelped and the next thing she knew she was going down hard on the pavement. Her back arched when her tailbone made sharp contact with the ground and all the breath rushed out of her lungs. Curling into a fetal position on her side, she wrapped her arms around her knees and tried remember why she didn't want to die right then.

When she opened her eyes, a pointy little muzzle snapped in her face as a dachshund yapped. Dog breath, *blech*. She groaned and pushed into a sitting position. A strong arm wrapped around her back to cradle her against a wide chest. *Price Delacroix*.

"Don't move, Aubrey." His deep voice rumbled, and that was all it took to get her hot and bothered. Her sex dampened at the sound of his rich, deep tones. The way he smelled. The hardness of his muscles against her body. *Thank you, Jesus*.

"I'm fine." She tried to pretend the breathiness of her voice was just from having the wind knocked out of her. The way her nipples tightened and her muscles softened told her it was a lie.

"You took a hard fall. Stay there." His words were almost harsh, but his touch was gentle when he brushed her hair away from her face. She fought the urge to lean her cheek into his palm. Everything about this man made her react.

Her original assessment that the two of them were destined to burn up the sheets was dead on. She really wanted to try him on for size. She'd bet he fit just fine. "I'm really all right, Chief."

"Price. You'll call me Price." His other arm slid under her bent knees and lifted her as he stood.

She squeaked and clutched his shoulders. His soft T-shirt bunched in her fingers as she held on tight. "Don't drop me."

A wicked grin flashed over his face before he focused on her eyes. Some of her panic must have shown because he cuddled her closer. "Not a chance, sugar."

"Is she all right, Chief Delacroix?" Mrs. Chambers, the biggest gossip in town, reined in her wiener dog and stared at the two of them.

"Oh, she's fine. Ma'am." He dipped his head in a nod, dismissing the older woman while he turned to walk up the driveway in front the big Victorian on the corner. She sighed in envy when she saw it.

She glanced over his shoulder at Mrs. Chambers. An avid gleam entered the older woman's eyes as he mounted the porch. Pitching her voice low, Aubrey had to warn him. "Look, I know you're new in town, but Mrs. Chambers—"

He nudged the front door of his house open, and then kicked it shut behind them. “Will spread it all over town that I carried you into my house? And will probably embellish it by saying that I practically stripped you on the sidewalk and fucked you against the street lamp.”

*One hot man is good. Two's double the fun...until your heart gets involved.*

## The Seeking Kiss

© 2009 Eden Bradley

Jessie has been in love with her bisexual best friend, Paul, since their college days. He's never made a move on her, though, and at this point she values his friendship too much to risk revealing her feelings. Especially since now he has a new male lover and seems so happy.

Paul and Noah have only Jessie's rest and relaxation in mind when they invite her along on a camping trip to Lake Tahoe. She's been pretty stressed out preparing to show her art at a major New York gallery. A weekend getaway will do her a world of good—and they won't take no for an answer.

Jesse thought she'd be nothing more than a third wheel on this trip. But Noah is as sweet and hot as Paul, and their first night turns into a heated tangle of bodies in the dark tent by the lake.

It's an erotic, intense experience that must come to an end. And when it does, will she still have her best friend?

*Enjoy the following excerpt for The Seeking Kiss:*

Her mind was emptying out. Too much sensation going on to think. Too much of her most treasured fantasies come to life. Was this really happening?

But the tall one pulled out, stepped away from his partner, reached out and took her hand. His skin was hard and cool on the surface, with a strange sort of warmth lurking beneath. He drew her in, and the dark one came to stand behind her, his arms coming around her body. They began to undress her, and it was as though it was all happening in a dream. Except that it was real and she was wide awake, and she knew it. Fantastic.

The tall one stroked her exposed flesh—her collarbone, the top of her breast, and her nipples hardened until they hurt. And all the time she was aware of the dark one's hands on her waist, holding her up, holding her tight to them both. His flesh was a bit softer than the other's, in a way that was difficult to explain, even to herself. So, so beautiful, both of them, and she thought she'd die if they didn't kiss her soon.

"Soon enough," the blond whispered to her, his voice tinged with a French accent.

She heard his name in her head, like some distant sort of echo. *Aleron*. And then the other, the tone gentler, full of smoke, and she'd known his voice would sound just like that. *Hex*.

Their hands were everywhere at once then, stroking her thighs, her stomach, her breasts, the small of her back. Their mouths followed, their lips surprisingly warm as Aleron lifted her arm and trailed kisses down that sensitive skin on the inside of her forearm, Hex kissing her back. Small, fleeting kisses, too



fleeting. Pleasure like fire skittering over her skin, making her tremble. Her pussy was soaked, throbbing. Needing.

“We hear you,” Aleron told her quietly.

Hex took her then, turning her in his arms so that she faced him. The masculine beauty of his face was staggering, his eyes so dark they were nearly as black as his hair, with shots of whiskey and amber lighting them, and unbelievably long lashes. His mouth was ripe, the tips of his eyeteeth resting on that lush flesh. She swallowed, unable to speak, to think. He smiled at her, and his smile was like pleasure itself, working its way deep inside her body.

“We know you, Nissa,” he said, his voice that low, husky whisper she’d known it would be. “We know you, and we are here to give you what you need. What you desire. You want *us*, yes?”

She nodded her head, her throat dry, and it was several moments before she was able to speak. “Yes. Yes...”

“And we want you. Beautiful Nissa. Beautiful girl.”

She shivered once more, his words, his voice, almost as lovely as his touch. Then he did touch her, his hands gathering her bare breasts, kneading them gently, then a bit harder. And she leaned into him, sighing with pleasure as he took her nipples between his fingers, pinching, twisting. Oh yes, pleasure and pain and the exquisite knowledge of what they were. Vampires. Immortal. And she had some sense of the eternity of their existence, as though they fed her a bit of it, along with the ghostly sensations of what each of them was feeling.

She blinked, found them both staring at her face—blazing blue eyes and hot liquid brown. Aleron gave the slightest nod of his chin before slipping back behind her, his hard body pressed against her spine, like sun-warmed stone. Hex smiled before lowering his face to hers and kissing her.

God, his lips, like nothing she’d ever felt before in her life. Hard and soft, yielding yet unyielding. Then his tongue, as hot and silky as any human’s, yet sweeter, more pure, somehow, pushing its way between her lips, twining with her tongue.

*Love him already...*

And the pleasure pushing its way into her body in long, undulating shivers of desire. She was lost in the kiss, in him.

*Hex.*

Aleron put his hands on her once more, stroking her hips, her thighs, impossible feather-light strokes. She’d never imagined one of *them* could be so gentle. And her sex was lighting up with need, wet and hurting.

When Hex pulled away to look into her eyes once more with that riveting gaze, she whispered, “Please touch me.”

Hex's hands came down to cover Aleron's, and together they slipped their palms between her thighs, four sets of fingers brushing the curls there, the swollen lips.

"Ohhh..."

She could hardly believe this was happening.

*Don't think. Just feel.*

"Ah, so wet for us," Aleron whispered into her hair.

"Yes..."

She arched her hips into their touch, but they pulled away.

"Not yet, not like this," Aleron said. "I want her on the bed. I want her open to us completely."

They guided her, helped her climb onto the high, velvet-covered bed, laid her out on her back. They stood, one on each side of the bed, and she was trembling all over.

*Need you. Please.*

Aleron's voice was so low she had to strain to hear him. "Yes, Nissa. You shall have us both. And we shall have you. With our hands. With our mouths. With our cocks. And with our teeth. We will drink from you. You will have the Seeking Kiss tonight."

She was shaking so hard she could barely hold still. This was what she'd wanted for so long. And it was happening. Her mind was a tangle of need, sharpened by an edge of fear. What would it really be like, to have them drink from her?

"You are about to find out, beautiful Nissa," Hex told her. His eyes were glowing amber in the dim light, and she felt some of his power in his gaze. Not as strong as Aleron's, but it was there, palpable.

"Yes," Aleron said, "I am older than he is, by centuries. And the Kiss will be different with each of us. But you will love it. You will drown in it a little. But we will care for you. You have nothing to fear."

Their hands were on her then once more, long strokes down the length of her body: her shoulders, her breasts, her stomach and the sensitive skin on the inside of her wrists, until she thought she might die simply from needing them to really *touch* her.

"Please..." she begged.

A small laugh from Aleron. "Ah, she grows impatient."

And before she had a chance to think, his hand was between her thighs, his fingers pushing into her needy pussy.

"Oh!"

Pleasure like a knife, that keen, that sharp, stabbing into her body. Her back arched, she came up off the bed, but Hex was there, holding her down, his hands warm and solid on her hip and shoulder, grounding her somehow.

"Hex... I need you... I need you to kiss me."

He smiled, his teeth a stunning flash of white, the long canines glinting. Then he lowered his head, his mouth pressing to hers. And his tongue sliding into her mouth, all soft and hot, was like Aleron's fingers working inside her, pushing, pushing, into her pussy, into her mouth. She was writhing on the bed, her body on that lovely edge already. Her mind was spinning.

Hands held her down, pressing onto her belly, her breasts, her thighs, as the first wave hit her. And Hex's tongue in her mouth, Aleron's fingers deep in her sex, pumping, thrusting, until she couldn't take it any longer.

She cried out as she came, pure ecstasy shimmering through her in glass-sharp waves. Pleasure rose, higher and higher, her body, her mind, filling with nothing but sensation, coursing through her, taking her over. She was yelling, out of control. Lost.

When she opened her eyes she was in Hex's arms, half lying in his lap as he sat behind her on the bed. She could feel the flawless surface of his chest and stomach against her back, his bare skin an absolute epiphany against hers. Lovely.

Aleron still stood, smiling down at her.

“That was beautiful, Nissa. *You* are beautiful. But the night just begins.”



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