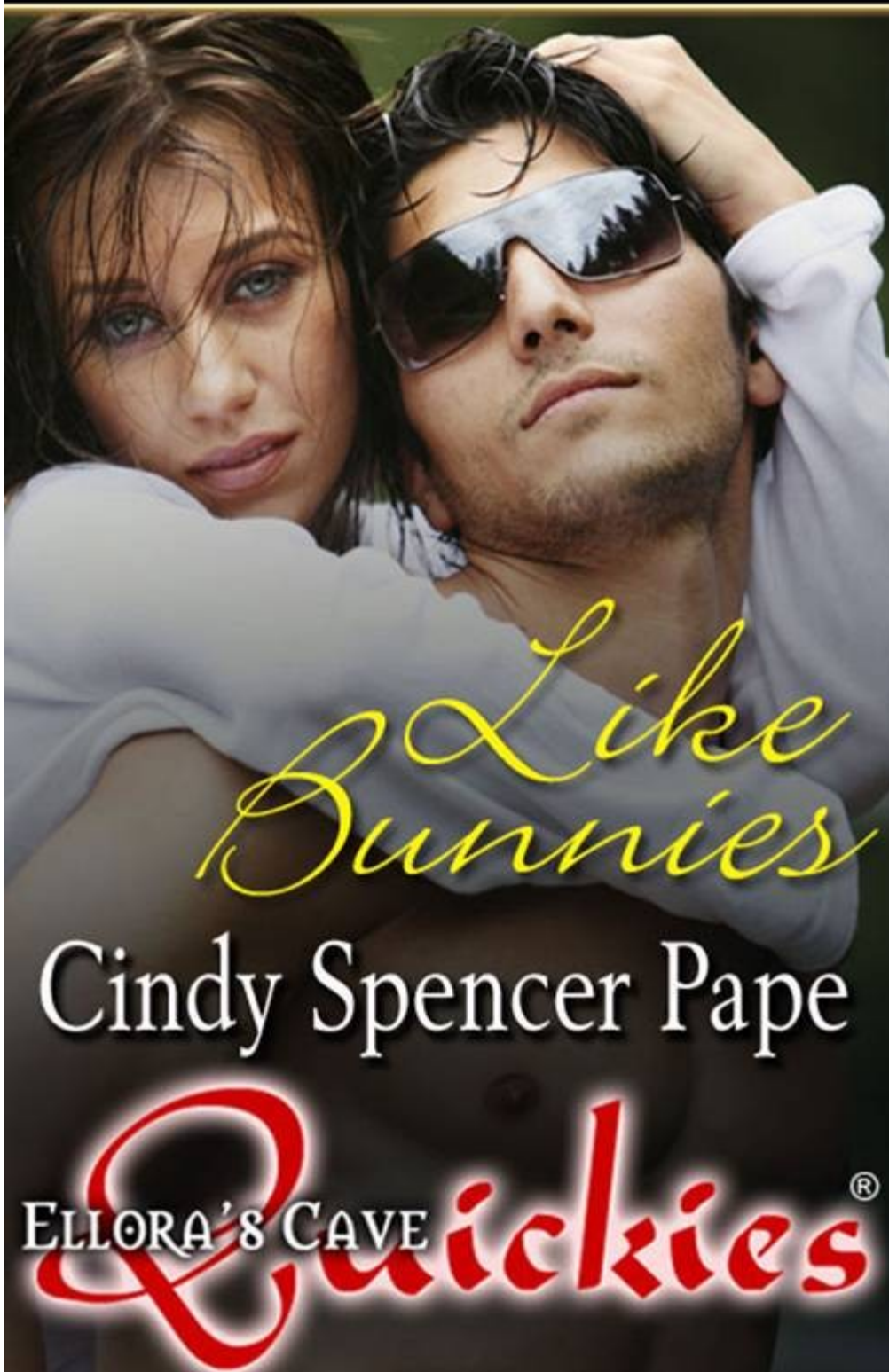


ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS



*Like
Bunnies*

Cindy Spencer Pape

ELLORA'S CAVE *Quickies*®

Like Bunnies
Cindy Spencer Pape

Standalone sequel to Yuletide Enchantment.

Star Holiday never paid much attention to her father's claims that their family was descended from the Celtic spirits of the seasons—and she *certainly* never expected to turn into a rabbit every time she stepped foot outside her family's cabin on the weekend of the spring equinox. Now all she can do is stay holed up with her sexy-as-sin ex-boyfriend, Theo Morgan, until the magic goes away.

Or maybe the magic is just beginning as the former lovers have time alone to rekindle old passions and even ignite some new ones.

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



www.ellorascave.com

Like Bunnies

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LIKE BUNNIES

Cindy Spencer Pape

Dedication

To all my friends who know I'm crazy enough to write about a were-bunny and like me anyway. Happy Spring!

Trademarks Acknowledgement

The author acknowledges the trademarked status and trademark owners of the following wordmarks mentioned in this work of fiction:

Boy Scouts: Boy Scouts of America Corporation

Girl Scouts: Girl Scouts of the United States of America

Chapter One

"Are you sure you don't want company up at the cabin?"

Ostara Holiday looked up from her desk at her sister Summer's concerned expression.

"No," Star said, shaking her head with a fond smile for her older sister's mother-hen tendencies. "I really, really just need some time to myself."

"But Saturday is your birthday. You shouldn't be alone on your birthday. A girl only turns thirty once."

Star shuddered. "Don't remind me, please." She didn't know why she dreaded the big three-oh quite so much, but she did.

"Infant," Summer scoffed from her own point of view at the advanced age of not-quite thirty-two. Her sky-blue eyes studied Star carefully. "If you're sure you'll be okay, honey, I'll back off. But if you need anything, promise us you'll call."

Star gave her sister a three-fingered salute. "Scouts' honor. Now let me double-check those Halloween card proofs then get the hell out of here for my long weekend."

"All right." Summer was the director of marketing and sales for the Holiday Greeting Card Company while Star was the head writer for the actual card line. Star could practically see the wheels turning in Summer's dark head as she considered and discarded various strategies for dealing with Star's recent restless unhappiness. "As long as you call when you get there, I promise, none of us will bother you unless there's an absolute emergency."

"Thanks." Star lifted her cheek as her sister leaned down to kiss it. "Love you too. Now beat it."

* * * * *

The next afternoon was Friday, and Star was rethinking her plan to head up to her grandparents' old cabin for a long weekend of blessed isolation.

The storm that had been a light rain back in Charleston had turned into a deluge just a few hours inland, near the Sumpter National Forest.

Lightning flashed, striking the gravel road right in front of her car just as she hit a patch of slick mud. Her little compact skidded out of control, sliding inexorably into the ditch.

It hit the bottom with a jolt that took Star's breath away, followed a fraction of a second later by the added shock of an airbag deploying in her face. *Ouch!*

She gasped for breath and took a quick stock of all her extremities. Despite a sore nose—yeah, that was a tiny tickle of blood on the back of her hand after she wiped her upper lip—she seemed to be all in one piece. Fingers and toes worked, her vision was fine, and she was rapidly getting pissed. She should have been at the cabin by now, damn it. One stupid delay after another this morning had kept her from leaving on time, and now look what had happened.

She pressed against the airbag, deflating it enough to clear the area in front of her face, then scrabbled in the passenger seat for her purse. Pulling out her cell phone, she swore again. No signal. Of course. Didn't it just fucking figure?

Oh well. The cabin was just a mile or so up the road. She'd be soaked, but she was young and healthy—a walk in the rain wouldn't kill her. If she were still out on the main highway, she'd have been confident of someone coming by, but she'd veered off onto little-used country roads, so there was no guarantee of other vehicles anytime soon. Friday afternoon wasn't high traffic time around here.

Star snagged her nylon anorak off the seat beside her and slung her purse over her shoulder. At least she had clothes and canned food stashed at the cabin, so she could wait a while for her luggage. She could send a tow truck for her car once she got warm and dry.

Slipping and sliding with every step, she made it up out of the ditch and onto the gravel shoulder of the road. Water squished between her toes inside her canvas sneakers as she trudged toward the cabin, swearing under her breath. Finally, after what seemed like forever, she rounded the last curve and saw the cabin in the distance. *Almost there, girl. You can do it.*

Another bolt of lightning flashed to the ground so close she was blinded. Star felt herself falling back into the ditch, her ankle turning beneath her. As the crack of thunder boomed in her ears, echoing through her head, she lost consciousness.

* * * * *

"You're kidding me, Sam." Theo Morgan growled into his cell phone as he screwed the gas cap back onto his SUV and rehooked the nozzle onto the gas pump. "Star's a big girl. She's going to be pissed as hell at you sending me to check up on her." *Especially me*, he added silently. One thing Sam Holiday didn't know was his best friend and his youngest sister had had a hot and heavy thing going for about two months last summer. Just when they might have gotten to the point of bringing their relationship out in the open, they'd ended it—and not nicely. No, Star was not going to be pleased to see Theo showing up at her cabin door—especially since that cabin had been the site of a good number of secretive trysts.

"Come on, dude. It's only a few miles out of your way."

Shit, why had Theo mentioned to Sam he was driving up to Greenville to see his parents this weekend? But Sam was right—the Holiday family's cabin was just about ten miles off the highway, and if Star had left Charleston this morning, she really should have reached the place long before now, considering Theo hadn't left until he'd closed his clinic at five.

"Fine. I'll stop by and remind her to call you," he agreed. "Though I'm guessing this storm has the phone lines down—that's probably why she hasn't called."

“Appreciate it, pal.” Some of the tension in Sam’s voice eased. “Say hi to your parents for me.”

The two men had been roommates in college and friends ever since, despite Sam’s artistic bent and Theo’s scientific one. Theo’s parents practically considered Sam one of their own, just as Nick and Josie Holiday had taken Theo under their wing when he’d opened his vet practice in Charleston. As Theo headed up the road, he felt another pang of guilt for having slept with their youngest daughter. Not that she wasn’t a grown-up and everything—he just hadn’t felt right about sneaking around.

The nagging guilt turned into terror as he rounded a bend in the back road leading to the cabin. There was Star’s lime green hybrid, nose down in the deep ditch alongside the road.

“Son of a bitch.” His stomach clenching, he parked his SUV on the shoulder and got out to check Star’s vehicle, breathing a deep sigh of relief when he saw that everything was switched off and there was no sign of Star, or her purse, which she never went anywhere without. She’d been well enough to get out and walk. Thank god.

He climbed back into his SUV and started toward the cabin, going slowly enough to watch for any movement along the side of the road.

There. He stopped and peered through the rain at the movement.

It wasn’t Star, just a bunny.

But what was a walnut brown, lop-eared rabbit doing out here in the woods? Native cottontails were light, mottled brown with perky ears—this had to be a lost pet. Worse yet, it was clearly dragging itself along without the use of one of its back feet.

Hell. Worried as he was about Star, Theo had been a vet for nearly eight years. He simply couldn’t ignore an animal in pain. He climbed out into the rain, again, and grabbed the emergency blanket from behind the driver’s seat as he did. Carefully, he wrapped the blanket around the shivering animal, somewhat surprised that it didn’t even try to fight. Since it was only another few hundred yards to the cabin, he just held the bundle in his lap as he drove the rest of the way.

The sick feeling in his stomach didn't go away when he saw there were no lights burning in the windows, even though dusk was already starting to fall. He parked then, still carrying the bunny in his arms, he strode up to the covered wooden porch and pounded on the door.

No answer. "Damn it!" The door was locked, so he felt above the lintel for the key he knew had always been kept there. Holding the rabbit in the crook of one elbow, he opened the door and looked inside.

Nothing. No sign that anyone had been here in weeks—maybe months. His heart pounded in his chest as he stepped into the empty great room.

The blanket in his arm suddenly seemed to expand, adding more weight than he could easily hold in one arm, and Theo stumbled, catching the bundle with his other arm so he wouldn't drop it. Sure enough, he'd swear it now weighed a hundred pounds.

A shriek—a very human shriek—filled his ears. "Theo?"

Theo looked down. "What the fuck?"

It wasn't a shivering rabbit wrapped in his red fleece blanket. Instead, it was a wet, muddy and very naked woman, with tangled walnut-brown hair, milky skin and bluish-green eyes.

"Star?"

"Theo!" Lithe arms wrapped around his neck as she pressed her face into his chest. "Theo, thank the gods you found me."

Even soaking wet, his big body radiated heat and Star snuggled close. She'd been confused when he hadn't seemed to recognize her on the road, but she'd still been too woozy to wonder how he managed to drive his SUV with her in his lap.

After a moment, he eased her to the floor—or started to anyway, until she cried out at the pain in her left ankle.

"What's hurt?" Instantly, Theo lifted her back into his arms and carried her over to the couch.

"A-ankle."

He laid her down onto the wide leather couch and peeled back the blanket from her foot. "Anything else?"

"I bumped my nose on the airbag, but it seems fine now."

Theo touched her face gently with his fingertips. After a few seconds, he let out a long breath. "Nothing broken. Shouldn't even have much of a bruise. Now let's see the foot."

Gentle hands trailed down her leg, and Star let her eyes follow his movements. He had a good bedside manner, even if she wasn't a puppy. Then she noticed something and the bottom dropped out of her stomach.

"Theo, where the hell are my clothes?"

"I was wondering the same thing," he said, his long fingers carefully probing her ankle. His short, light brown hair was matted to his head, and his usually warm brown eyes remained fixed on her foot, though she could see the tension in the tight lines of his muscular physique. "Though not as much as I wondered why I picked up a rabbit from the side of the road and walked into the house with a woman in my arms."

"Cute. Could you wait until I'm warm to be an asshole?" She gathered the blanket closer around her, yelping when he probed the tender spot on the side of her ankle.

"I'm not making anything up, Star. I swear to god, I found a hurt domestic bunny limping along the road. One step into the cabin and suddenly it was you, naked. Any idea what the fuck is going on, or did somebody slip something funny into my coffee back at the gas station?" His voice, normally so calm and steady, trembled.

"I'm going with the coffee idea."

"Yeah, me too. Either that or I'm the one who crashed my car and all of this is an anesthesia-induced nightmare."

Great. Now her ex-boyfriend thought she was a nightmare. Could this get any better?

"Well, it looks like the ankle is just a sprain," he reported. "Probably a pretty mild one at that. If it was broken, there'd be a lot more swelling by now. As soon as we get you clean and warm, I'll wrap it up, but you should be fine in a day or two."

"Th-thanks." She couldn't help reaching out her hand to him—he'd always been the most honest man she'd ever known. "Swear to me you weren't making that bunny bullshit up, Theo."

He held up three fingers and looked into her eyes. She'd never seen him so shaken, not even when they'd broken up last August. "Scout's honor."

She slumped back against the cushions. "Fuck. Fuck, fuck, fuck."

His lip twitched just a touch in his square, masculine face. "Well, we could, but we should probably shower first." Then he shook his head and rubbed his hand through his hair. "Sorry—that was inappropriate. I've got to admit to being more than a little freaked out right now."

"I understand, believe me." She had a horrible feeling that something very strange was going on, and she had no idea what to make of it. "Do me a favor and help me over to the doorway."

"Why?"

"I want to test a theory." She swung her legs over the side of the couch and held out a hand. Theo immediately helped her to her feet and supported most of her weight as she limped across to the door, the blanket wrapped around her torso and trailing behind them. "Now open the door."

"Honey, it's wet and cold out there."

"Just humor me, okay?"

Theo shrugged but did as she asked. Moving out of his arms but holding one of his big, strong hands in hers, she took one tiny step over the threshold.

Instantly Theo's hand fell away from hers and she found herself staring at his ankles. Her nose and whiskers twitched at the blanket pooled all around her face.

Fuck!

Now that she was fully conscious, she could feel the difference in her size and her senses. Scents were so much clearer. And sounds—she could detect one lone frog chirping, and the nearest water was half a mile away. Experimentally, she twitched her whiskers again.

Yep. No way around it. *She* was the damn bunny.

She used her front paws to dig her way out of the blanket, and her good back foot to push herself forward. As soon as she dragged her butt over the threshold, she found herself back in her own body on her hands and knees, staring up at the horrified expression on Theo's handsome face.

"You—you..." He started to take a step back, but at the last minute, he gritted his teeth, leaned down and lifted her back to her feet instead, scooping up the blanket as he went. "*You're* the rabbit?"

"So it seems." She pushed her long, dark brown hair out of her face and managed a shaky smile. "Damn it, it wasn't my turn yet. Sam and Summer are both older than me. It was supposed to hit them first."

"What? Your whole damn family is a bunch of were-bunnies?" His rich voice was hoarse with disbelief, even as he pulled the door shut and helped her toward the bathroom. "Yeah, right. I sure never picked up on that in the dorms."

"Not exactly," she said. She plopped down on the toilet lid while he turned on the shower and adjusted the taps. "It's the whole bloody Holiday magic thing kicking in. How much did you hear about how Noel and Shelby got together?" Her oldest brother Noel had gotten engaged at Christmas—also his birthday—after being trapped with one of the company's accountants in an enchanted holiday ornament.

Theo paused. "Not much. I know it all happened pretty quickly." He stepped back, clearly intent on ignoring her assertions. "Don't move—I'm just going to run out to my car for some clothes."

He returned with his duffel in less than two minutes then bent to untie his hiking boots and set them aside before stripping off his drenched denim jacket and rust-colored cotton shirt.

Star gulped, her train of thought lost as she stared at his broad, muscular chest, with just a few whorls of light brown hair surrounding his dark tan nipples. God, she'd always loved looking at this man.

"Star, honey? You were saying..." His hands moved down to the fly of his jeans. "Something about Holiday magic?" There was a decided hint of laughter underlying his words—one she wished she could share.

"Umm, yeah." She forced herself to look down at her toes and ignore the rasp of his zipper. "You know how my dad always claimed the family was descended from the Celtic spirits of the seasons? Turns out there's more to that than us all being born on or around the traditional holidays."

"Yeah, sure," he said. He took her hand and lifted her to her feet. "I hate to break this to you, Cinderella, but there's no such thing as magic. It has to be some kind of weird hallucination, but while it lasts, I want to be comfortable. Let's just get clean and warm, okay?"

The water felt wonderful as she let him help her into the tub. Theo was careful to support some of her weight as he ran his hands through her hair to rinse out the mud and leaves. She rested her face against his chest, loving the familiar feel of him, and at the same time trying to remind herself they weren't a couple anymore.

"Is the idea of magic any crazier than you watching me turning into a rabbit the day before Ostara?"

"Easter isn't until next month." He squirted some shampoo into his hand and began to lather her hair. "And I still don't believe I really saw anything."

"The date for Easter jumps around now, but Ostara is the pagan holiday that predates the Christian one by probably thousands of years. The traditional date was the vernal equinox," she pointed out. "Which is tomorrow." The feel of him massaging her scalp had her pussy quivering, even though she should be too cold and sore to even think about sex. Unthinkingly, she rubbed her aching breasts against his rib cage. "Also my birthday."

"So what does this have to do with me hallucinating?"

"Like I said, it's the whole Holiday family deal," she repeated. "At Christmas, the magic kicked in for Noel and he spent three days trapped in an enchanted Christmas decoration with Shelby. Afterward, my dad sat down and explained some pertinent facts. Apparently, the magic wants to be passed on. If one of us hasn't found a mate by some random point in our lives, the stars align, or something, and Fate, for lack of a better word, takes a hand, trying to fix us up—apparently with the nearest available member of the opposite sex."

"But Noel is the oldest," Theo pointed out. "And there are two others between you. Has anything like this happened to them?" She could envision his eyes rolling skeptically, even though her gaze was fixed on the muscles of his shoulder.

Star shrugged. "I don't know what to say. I wasn't exactly expecting this. All I know is Dad says it's different for each of us, and will usually be related to the holiday associated with our birth. Noel got stuck in a Christmas village. I guess getting turned into a rabbit fits with Ostara."

"So the Easter bunny is really a pagan thing?"

She nodded. "Ostara is the celebration of spring, and the rabbit is a classic symbol of that season." And fertility. She didn't want to bring up that part.

"So, if this is all connected to the equinox, do you think you'll go back to normal after tomorrow?" Though his tone still dripped with disbelief, his voice had dropped, and Star felt the thick ridge of his erection against her hip.

Damn, it had always been this hot between them. “Maybe,” she croaked. “Probably.” *If the gods are remotely kind.* “That’s what happened for Noel. Sorry you had to get mixed up in it though. I guess I’ll just have to stay in the cabin until it goes away.”

“I’ll be staying with you,” he murmured.

Her spine stiffened and she stared down at the floor of the tub. Damn, even his big feet were sexy. “I don’t think so.”

Theo sighed. “I know things might—no, will—get awkward, but, Star, I can’t leave you alone. If by some sick twist of fate this is real, and if you did change inside the house, you’d be so vulnerable—I couldn’t have that on my conscience. Not as your former lover, not even as a family friend.” Tenderly he rinsed the suds from her hair then picked up a bar of soap and began to wash her skin. Everywhere he touched, she felt as if she were on fire, and the wetness between her legs had nothing to do with the water.

She wanted to argue, but he was right. Besides, nothing had ever felt quite so good as standing here with him. She even forgot all about the dull throb of her ankle. “Okay. Thank you.”

Then she made the mistake of looking up. He was staring down at her, his lids heavy, his lip caught between his teeth. Her hands moved up to wrap around his neck, and without a second thought, she lifted her face to his.

Chapter Two

Kissing Star, with the warm water sluicing over his skin, had Theo thinking he'd died and gone to heaven. It had always been like this between them—one touch then combustion occurred. His scientific mind tried to rationalize it, but he'd never figured out just what it was between them that pushed every button he had—even ones he hadn't known about before her.

Their lips tangled as his tongue sought out all the warm, familiar contours of her mouth and he soaked in the taste of her. How had he survived the last six months without this? His hands came up to cup her breasts. They were on the smaller side, a B-cup maybe, but Theo had always thought they were perfect—sweetly rounded and just right for his hands.

Star moaned into his mouth as he rubbed his thumb across her beaded nipples. She tilted her hips into his thigh while her soft belly cradled his aching cock. Shifting her footing, she yelped, bringing Theo back to earth, though he'd forgotten for a moment all about the magical nonsense she'd been spouting. Theo was a scientist. Magic was bullshit, but passion—that had a real, physical explanation, and however else their relationship had gone wrong, the sex between them had always been phenomenal.

"Easy, sugar." He steadied her with his hands on her upper arms though he wished they were still on her breasts. Forgetting whatever else he'd been going to say, he dove back in for another kiss. She looked up at him with those pretty, robin's-egg blue eyes framed by thick, dark lashes, and he was sunk. He had just enough presence of mind to lift up her sore leg and guide it around his thigh then he clamped one hand on her ass to support part of her weight.

"Mmm." She groaned into his mouth and rubbed her mound across his thigh, which meant her belly shifted to caress his erection.

Carefully, glad of the rubber mat beneath their feet for stability, he backed her up against the wall as they kissed. When her back touched the wall, he lifted her off her other foot, pressing her against the tile to hold her in place. Without prompting, she wrapped both legs around his waist, tilting her pelvis so her soft pussy cradled his shaft.

"You still on the Pill, sugar?" He let his lips trail across her cheek so he could murmur in her ear.

"Uh-huh," she gasped as his cock twitched against her cleft.

"Good," he returned. Sliding one hand down between their wet bodies, he positioned himself at her slick, swollen entrance. When she moaned and pulsed against him, he surged inside, letting out his own groan at the tight heat of her channel, gripping him like a fist.

"Theo," she sighed as he began to rock in and out, keeping the movement shallow so he could keep her pinned against the wall.

One hand still supported her butt and he gripped the towel bar set into the wall for support with the other. It wasn't optimal—he wanted to touch her, to cup those pretty breasts and play with her silky skin, but that would have to wait for later—if there was a later. Right now, all that mattered was he was finally where he belonged—back inside Star's snug little pussy. He fastened his mouth on the tender spot at the base of her throat and sucked. Her nails dug into his shoulders and her whimpers escalated. It had always been like this between them—hot, fast, explosive.

"Come for me, sugar," he whispered, licking her earlobe. "Can't...hold...out...much...longer."

"Don't wait." Her voice rose into a wail and she cried out his name as she shattered around him. Her convulsing muscles gripped his cock, pulling his own orgasm up and out of him with devastating force. He slammed himself deep and nipped at her throat again, which kept her climax going while he erupted into her heat.

Long moments later, her legs slid down his, and she slumped against the wall, her arms still twined around his waist, and her head buried against his chest.

“You okay?” His voice was so husky it was practically a growl.

She nodded mutely.

He turned them both so she was under the spray of the shower then he picked up the soap and tenderly cleaned her off—again. “Time to get clean and get out of here, hmmm?” The water had started to turn cold.

“Y-yeah,” she stammered, averting her gaze. “Right.” She sat on the edge of the tub to finish washing herself off while Theo took care of his own ablutions. “How’d you end up finding me, anyway?”

“Sam said you hadn’t called to say you got here okay. Since he knew I was on my way to Greenville, he asked me to stop by and check in.”

Star snorted. “Sounds like Sam. I’d be pissed, but as it turns out, I’m damn glad you showed up.”

Theo finished rinsing the soap from his skin and help Star stand to do the same. Then he turned off the water and helped her out of the tub. Wrapping her in a big towel, he sat her back down on the toilet lid while he grabbed a smaller one from the rack and started to dry himself.

“You don’t have to stay,” Star said as she reached out and snagged another smaller towel to wrap around her hair. “Just call one of my sibs to come up.”

“Probably a good idea,” he agreed. He wished—but no, nothing had changed between them. Even though the chemistry was still as strong as ever, their fundamental differences were just too big to overcome.

Neither of them spoke as they finished drying off. After wrapping a towel around his waist, he turned to see Star tucking in the end of the one she’d tied sarong-style above her breasts, covering her to her hips. “Ready.”

She nodded and let him lift her into his arms. He carried her into the room he knew she shared with her sister and set her down on the big lower bunk. This was the bed they'd used when he'd spent stolen weekends here with Star. She hadn't been able to handle using her parents' bed for a lovers' tryst, so they'd used hers, even though it was really too small for someone Theo's size. His cock hardened again at the memory – not that it hadn't stayed quasi-erect even right after he'd come. He forced himself to turn away. "Bottom two drawers, right?"

"Yep, bottom bunk, bottom drawers. That's me, a true bottom, all the way."

Theo groaned. "Don't. Once barely took the edge off. Don't push your luck." He opened the third drawer of the dresser and drew out a pair of cotton bikini panties and a matching sports bra – thank god she didn't keep any of her sexy stuff here – along with a pair of fluffy, stretchy slipper socks. In the bottom drawer he found a pair of gray yoga pants and a pink sweatshirt.

She caught the items as he tossed them to her one by one. A sarcastic smirk curled her pretty, lush lips. "What's the matter, big guy? Guess you had a bit of a dry spell?"

"Yeah." He turned toward the door, intent on escape. "About six and a half months." He could almost hear her doing the math in her head. Star was a writer – numbers weren't her strong suit.

"No fucking way. You haven't been with anyone since we broke up?"

Her incredulous tone was more insulting than her sarcasm a few moments earlier. He grabbed hold of the doorframe to keep from turning. "You know, for a sweet Southern belle, you have a real potty mouth. I've been busy." Yeah, working eighteen-hour days just to try to keep her out of his head. Not that it had worked.

"Umm..." Her voice came out as a squeak. "I don't know if this means anything to you, but I haven't been with anyone either."

Yeah. It meant a lot – more than it had any business meaning, if it was true. Theo managed – just – to shake his head. "Not even Ben Casey?" That was the guy she'd

gone out to the bar with just a few hours after breaking up with Theo—another uninhibited artsy type like herself, not a stuffed shirt like she'd called Theo.

She shook her head. "No. Honestly? All I did that night was mope about you. Ben dumped me for another girl not an hour into the evening and I went home alone."

Theo pondered that as he stepped out the door. Did it mean she had cared? Perhaps more than she'd wanted to admit? For the first time in months, he felt a stirring of something almost like hope. "I'm going to go get dressed. Then I'll call Sam and heat us up some soup or something."

"Thanks."

He hated that her voice sounded so small and lost.

The cabin had three bedrooms, and since Theo had been coming here with Sam for fishing weekends since college, he knew his way around. The three brothers shared another room, this one with a set of triple bunks. He tossed his bag onto the dresser and pulled out a pair of jeans and a warm flannel shirt. Once he was dressed, he made his way back out to the great room, where he started a pot of coffee and put a couple of cans of soup on the burner. Then he picked up the phone.

"Damn it." Just as he'd feared, the phone line was down. There was no cell service here either—that had been part of the appeal of the cabin back when they were dating. After they'd eaten, he'd have to go out in the rain and take care of Star's car then stop in town to make some phone calls.

But now, while the soup cooked, he tidied up the bathroom and rummaged through the cabinets until he found an elastic bandage. Knocking on Star's bedroom door, he forced down an image of her naked against the sheets.

"I'm decent," she called, popping the bubble his imagination had created. He entered to find her fully clothed, still sitting on the bed with her injured leg stretched out in front of her.

"How's the ankle feel?" He sat down on the end of the bed and gently lifted it into his lap.

"Sore, but not unusable," she murmured. "I had way worse back in my dancing days."

Theo remembered the pictures he'd seen, back when he was in college with Sam, and Star was involved in jazz and ballet. Damn, she'd been cute in those costumes, even though he'd tried not to think about it at the time. Four years difference in age wasn't a lot now, but back when she was only sixteen, it had been. He probed her ankle again, noting only mild swelling and began to carefully wrap it with the elastic.

"So why'd you ever stop dancing?" he asked, mostly to keep the conversation flowing and stop the train of his thoughts. He'd never heard mention of it once she'd left high school.

Star shrugged. "I was never quite good enough to go professional, or even do much at the college level. I still dance some, just to stay in shape, but it's just for myself now. Besides, five-four is way too short to be taken seriously in the dance world, not unless you're a real superstar talent, which I wasn't."

"That sounds reasonable," he replied, securing the end of the bandage. "Sort of like me and track. Good enough to get a scholarship, not good enough to do anything with it in real life."

"Yeah, like you ever wanted to be anything but a vet," she teased. "I'm sure sports were always just a means to that end for you."

"Uh-huh." He picked up her stretchy sock and pulled it on over the bandage. "And a way to blow off steam. Running still works for me after a long day in the clinic."

"Same reason I do aerobics," she agreed. When he moved to pick her up, she shook her head and held out her hands instead. "And sometimes why I want to go out dancing at night."

While he wanted to relax at home after a long day at the clinic—another of their irreconcilable differences. He supposed he hadn't considered that her needing to unwind might have meant something other than not wanting to be alone with him. Maybe he hadn't always taken her needs into consideration.

Theo helped her to her feet and wrapped an arm around her waist to take some of her weight as they walked out to the great room. "Funny, how we've known each other half our lives and yet—"

"Never really talked much," she finished for him. Her voice was a little wistful as she continued. "Maybe we'd have been better off last summer if we'd talked more and spent less time—"

He couldn't resist the pun—it was one of his greatest weaknesses. "Going at it like bunnies?"

That earned him a shout of laughter and a punch in the arm. "Bad Theo. No lame rabbit jokes before dinner."

"Well, I wasn't going to call you lame. Just a bit gimpy."

She slugged him again then sat down across at the big oak table while Theo brought over bowls of soup and a box of saltines then poured coffee and sat down across from her. Watching her nose twitch as she inhaled the aroma of the canned chicken soup reminded him again of her weird transformation.

"So, somehow or another, your whole family is actually magic?" He was still having trouble coming to grips with that idea, though his stomach had stopped churning whenever he thought about it. "But you never knew?"

Star blew on a spoonful of soup and grimaced. "Well, my dad has made comments our entire lives but we never really believed him. Honestly, I'm not convinced I truly believed Noel and Shelby either, not until today."

"Hell, I'm still not sure I believe my own eyes," he admitted. "Watching my ex-girlfriend turn into a rabbit is the freakiest damn thing I've ever seen." Part of him still didn't quite believe it.

"Pretty freaky from my point of view too," she agreed. "I had *whiskers* for goodness' sake. Thanks for not taking off screaming though. Awkward as this is, it would be scary as hell alone."

Theo drummed his fingers on the table for a moment then decided to go ahead and verbalize the thoughts that had been running around in his mind. “Maybe it doesn’t have to be awkward,” he offered softly, giving voice to the tendril of hope that had begun to sprout. “Maybe what this presents is a chance for us to talk—discuss some of the things we should have covered when we first started...dating.”

Her eyes rolled. “If you want to be honest then drop the euphemisms. We never dated. We fucked. If we’d been actually going out together, we wouldn’t have kept it a huge secret.”

Theo winced. “Yeah, and that was part of the problem—a big part, on my end at least. I’m too old to play games like that.” His refusal to continue as they were had been one of the major contributing factors to their breakup.

Star nibbled on her lower lip, her spoon sitting idle in her soup bowl. “I know. It wasn’t fair of me to ask you to keep secrets from your best friend. It’s just...if my family knew we were together, they’d have immediately assumed it was serious. And I wasn’t ready for them to jump to that conclusion. I just wanted to have fun.”

“I know.” He’d heard her argument before, but the only sense he could make of it was that he’d been ready for a commitment and she hadn’t been. Star had a volatile temper for such a normally sweet woman, and when he’d flat-out insisted on some kind of formalized relationship between them, she’d ripped him to shreds then gone out with another guy. But—he hadn’t been completely blameless either. He had pushed, even though he’d known she wasn’t ready to take things to the next level. He took a deep breath and said, “You just weren’t emotionally invested in our relationship. It took a while, but I guess I’ve come to grips with that.”

Star sighed deeply before shaking her head. “It wasn’t that—at least not entirely. I was afraid of being emotionally invested. And I knew if things got serious, then it would be forever weird with my family since you’re practically an honorary Holiday. I just couldn’t handle it.”

"I think I understand," he admitted, though it still hurt. He'd been three-quarters in love with her — had even started thinking about rings before she'd blown him off. "You live in your parents' old carriage house. You work with your entire family. You spend every day surrounded by them. I can understand, I guess, why you want to keep your sex life separate from that. I just couldn't be part of it. It made me feel like your dirty little secret."

"I'm sorry. But don't forget that as the youngest girl, I'm the one they're all hyper-protective of," she added grimly. "They all prefer to believe I don't *have* a sex life. Even though Val's the baby, I'm the one they think is pure and chaste."

This time it was Theo who rolled his eyes. "Yeah, and you're such a slut. How many guys have there been, sugar? Two? Three, tops? Face it, for a woman who's about to turn thirty, you're still pretty damn innocent."

"Three," she admitted, staring down at her soup. "One in college — that lasted three whole weeks. One guy I dated on and off for about a year right after school. Then you."

"See?" He reached across the table and tipped her chin up so he could meet her gaze. "You don't take it lightly, no matter what you were trying to tell yourself. That's why keeping things secret was such a strain on you."

"No. It wasn't that. It was the feeling that I didn't want to get tied down before I'd ever had a chance to really live."

Her words felt like a slam in his gut. All he could say was, "Oh."

They drifted into a long, tense silence until he got up the courage to look at her again instead of his food. She licked a drop of soup off her lips, and Theo's cock hardened painfully — again. God, he remembered all too well what it felt like to have those lips wrapped around his shaft, sucking...

"Theo?"

"What?" He shook his head. "Sorry. I wandered for a minute."

"Did you call your parents when you called Sam? They're bound to be worried if you don't show up."

He'd forgotten to tell her the phone lines were down. After filling her in, he added, "I'm going to run into town as soon as we're done eating and arrange to have your car towed out of the ditch. I'll also grab your suitcase and make some calls. I'm staying, Star, if that's okay with you. I think I was right earlier when I said this could be an opportunity for us."

"For more rabbit-like sex?" She raised her eyebrow, but he saw the flush on her skin. She wanted more, all right, just as he did.

Still, he managed to shake his head. "To do what we should have done before. Talk."

She grinned ruefully and shook her head. "Sure. Talk. That's what's going to happen."

Theo rubbed his temple. Who was he trying to kid? If he stayed here for the weekend with Star, there was no way he'd be able to keep his hands off her. "Do you want me to ask Sam or Summer to come up instead?"

"No." She flushed bright pink and looked down at her hands again. "I'd rather it was you."

Chapter Three

Theo became soaked again on his trip to town, mainly when he got out to search the ditch for Star's purse, and the clothes she'd been wearing when the transformation hit. He found them about halfway between the car and the cabin and scooped them all into a plastic grocery bag. Then, after making a grocery run and the necessary calls, he retrieved her suitcase from her car while he waited for the tow truck operator. Once her car was hauled to the garage, he returned to the cabin to find Star had cleaned up after dinner and done a load of laundry. Apparently her ankle wasn't bothering her much at all, though he chewed her out for abusing it anyway.

"I told my parents I wasn't coming up," he informed her as they sat in front of the fire he'd built. Star lounged on the sofa with her ankle up while he sat on the floor with his back against the front of the couch. "I also told Sam you were fine, but that I would stay here overnight to keep an eye on you, just in case. He wanted to rush up here as soon as he heard about the accident."

"But you convinced him otherwise, right?" She took a sip of the white wine he'd picked up on his grocery run.

"Yeah. I don't want him crashing through that door any more than you do." Probably less. *She* wouldn't be the one Sam beat the shit out of before his common sense kicked in and he remembered Star was an adult.

He heard her set her glass on the table beside her then felt her fingers rifle through his hair. "You're a good man, Theodore Morgan. I never did deserve you."

"You make me sound like a golden retriever," he complained. "Good is something you say about a neighbor. Not very exciting and not good for my masculine ego." He twisted so he could tickle her ribs.

She squealed with laughter, and moments later she'd rolled off the couch into his lap. Gazing up at him with her aqua eyes, she still chuckled. "Your masculine ego is just fine. I'd think the shower assured you I find you plenty exciting."

"Maybe I'm more insecure than you thought," he said, only half teasing, nipping playfully at her ear. "You did call me a boring old fart just before you stomped out my door last summer."

Her laughter stopped. "I'm sorry for that. It isn't true, you know. It's just that we enjoy different things."

"I know." And he wondered if they'd ever be able to compromise. Plenty of couples did, didn't they?

"I don't think we ever did it out here on the rug, did we?" Her small, soft hands slid up under his shirt, and he went from half-mast to fully erect in half a second. To hell with thinking—he wasn't stupid enough to let his regrets mess up this chance to remind her how good it had been between them.

"No—it was summer so we never built a fire." He smiled and lowered his face for a kiss, this one long, luxurious and sweet. He ran his hands up under her sweatshirt, humming happily into her mouth when he discovered she wasn't wearing a bra beneath it.

"We created enough heat on our own," she agreed when they pulled their lips apart to gasp for breath. "Told you we weren't going to spend our time talking." She pulled the sweatshirt over her head, revealing her creamy, pale breasts.

"Yeah, you did." He pushed her back onto the nylon fur rug, and bent over her to take one ripe raspberry nipple into his mouth.

"This is better," she sighed. Her spine arched as he sucked on that hard, rosy peak and she clasped his head to her breast. Her other hand lay above her head, clutching the rug. "Damn, I missed this. Not something you can simulate with a vibrator."

He paused, blowing lightly on the swollen bud, damp from his mouth. "You bring your little battery-operated boyfriend with you?"

Her skin flushed all the way down to the upper swells of her pretty breasts. "Of course. I expected to be here all alone."

"I want to watch you use it," he said huskily. "Will you do that for me?" It had been a fantasy he'd played in his head over and over while he'd gotten himself off over the last six months—the idea that somewhere, Star was bringing herself to completion and thinking about him.

There was a pause then she nodded. "Okay. Bring me my purse."

He dropped one sucking kiss on her other nipple then pushed himself to his feet. Her large, lime-green purse was on the dining table, and he grabbed it, turning to see her shimmy out of her sweatpants and socks. She lay there, her fair skin tinted luminously golden in the light of the fire, smiling up at him with her dark hair fanned around her delicate face. He dropped her purse beside her and unbuttoned his jeans before they amputated his swollen cock.

He stripped at lightning speed while she dug through her bag and snagged a throw pillow off the couch to tuck beneath her head. Once he was naked, Theo knelt between her splayed legs and watched as she pulled a turquoise blue vibrator out of a zippered case. It was maybe as long as his middle finger and twice as big around. He cocked one eyebrow. "Kinda small, isn't it?"

She chuckled. "It does the job." Just to torture him, he was sure, she raised it to her mouth and licked the tip.

Two could play at torture. Her waxed pussy gleamed in the flickering firelight, wet and puffy. He leaned forward and licked the seam of her labia, tasting her deeply before sitting back on his haunches. Damn, she tasted good. As soon as he'd had his fill of watching, he'd take his time devouring her creamy little cunt. He licked his lips before pointing to her bag. "You have a pair of nipple clamps in there too?"

She nodded. "Just little ones, but they work for me when I'm alone."

"Put them on. And anything else you use to make yourself come." One thing he knew about Star—sexually, she liked to be told what to do. As she'd said, she was a

bottom all the way. She wasn't into pain or serious bondage, but she liked to submit, and that suited Theo just fine.

"Okay." She wet her lips then sat up and dug through her bag, drawing out another small, cloth pouch. She shook it open and three objects fell out—two small disks of some kind of wire lace with holes in the center, and a tiny tin that looked like lip balm, with a flower on the lid. While he watched, Star picked up the tin and rubbed white ointment on her finger tip. "This is a warming balm."

He stared, mesmerized as she rubbed the balm onto her nipples. The deep pink buds grew even harder than they'd already been and darkened another shade. She took her time, twisting and pulling each one, until they were fully erect, and both Star and Theo were breathing heavily. With fingers that weren't quite steady, she laid the filigree disks over her nipples, so the turgid pink buds poked out the holes, then she squeezed them, turning the disks into little wire cones that trapped her nipples and gently pinched.

"Beautiful," he breathed. He took his dick in his hand and rubbed it absently as he watched. "Now play with your pussy for me, sugar."

"Fine." She rotated the base of the vibrator and set it humming then held it in one hand while she trailed her other down her stomach to her mound. "I usually use my fingers first, just to make sure I'm wet and slick."

"Doesn't look like a problem from here." Her labia glistened with thick moisture.

"That happens a lot when you're around," she admitted with a laugh that vibrated down his spine and made his cock twitch in his hand. "All I have to do is think of you and my panties get soaked."

"Only fair, sugar," he returned, eyes fixed on her fingers as they sifted through her satiny folds, rubbing moisture around her beaded clit. "One look at you and I'm hard as a rock."

"Mmm. Like now?"

He felt her gaze on his erection and he swelled even farther. "Hell yeah." Mindful of her watching, he used his thumb to spread a drop of pre-cum around his crown. "Time to put that little toy to work now, Star."

"All right." She picked up the whirring vibrator and brought it down between her thighs. Hitching herself up, she leaned on her other elbow so she could see what she was doing. As soon as the turquoise tip parted her rosy flesh though, her eyes squeezed shut.

"When you're doing this," he asked, "do you ever picture me? My hands, my tongue, my cock, instead of wire and plastic?"

She moved the tip of the vibrator in circles around her clit, and he watched her entire body start to quiver as the soft latex end rubbed against her sweet spot.

"All...the time," she moaned. "Even...before."

"Oh damn, sugar." His cock bucked and another trickle of fluid escaped as he thought about her, alone, in her bed, getting herself off to thoughts of him.

When she started to tighten, he let go of his cock and instead slid one finger into her tight, wet sheath. She jumped at the contact, which bumped her clit harder against the vibrator and sent her over the edge. Her strong inner walls clamped down on his finger as she came, her legs squeezing down on his hand.

He petted her channel until she came down, turning off the vibrator with his other hand. Then, as soon as she opened her eyes, he moved over her, positioning his cock at her entrance.

"Tell me what you want, Star."

"Fuck me, Theo," she moaned. "Now. I need you."

"I'm right here," he assured her, sinking into her inviting warmth. Aftershocks from her orgasm fluttered around his sensitized shaft and he buried himself balls-deep before kissing her delectable mouth. "Open your eyes, sugar. I want you to know that it's really me."

"Theo!" She jerked her hips up, taking him impossibly deep. "Oh wow, you feel so good."

"So do you." He kissed her again as he started to move. "Do you know you're the only woman I've ever gone bare in? You have no idea how incredible it feels to be skin to skin."

"Me too," she said. "Only you." Her nails dug into his shoulder as he slipped almost out then shoved back in until his swollen balls slapped her ass. He wasn't going to last long this time either. Bracing his weight on one arm, he slid the other hand between them and scissored two fingers around her clit.

When her pussy clamped down on him and spasmed, he came in a heated rush, filling her channel with a thick stream of fluid. His gaze never left hers though he could tell she had to fight to keep her eyes open.

Finally, when they both stopped shuddering through the aftershocks, he rolled to the side, pulling her with him. "Thank you." He smoothed a damp strand of hair away from her smiling face.

"Mmm. Thank you." She snuggled her face into his chest and yawned.

He lay there for a moment, replaying the last few hours in his mind. They'd already talked more tonight than they had the entire two months they'd been dating. He was even starting to come to grips with the idea of magic—though it still made his head hurt to think about it. Then a thought hit him and his stomach clenched.

"Shit," he grumbled. "One thing you mentioned was the magic was intended to... umm...make for more little Holidays. There isn't any chance it's going to negate your pills, is it? Much as I'm enjoying this, I don't think we're ready for that step."

She jerked in his arms then shook her head. "No. I think the idea is just to push us in the direction of finding a partner. After my dad sat us down and talked about it, Summer asked the same thing. Shelby assured her that everything was still...on schedule, so to speak."

“Okay,” Theo said, letting himself breathe again. “So, we *can* go at it like bunnies for the rest of the weekend.”

“Absolutely,” she said with a yawn at the end.

“Think maybe it’s time to put this tired little bunny to bed?” He made no move to get up though. Right now it just felt too good to lie here with her in his arms in the warm glow of the fire.

“Only if you’re coming with me,” she murmured. “You’re not going to make me sleep alone tonight, are you?”

How could she even think that? Damn, the communication between the two of them really did have some giant gaps in it. “I’m not a hypocrite, sugar. Whatever’s going on here this weekend, I’m not going to deny it’s happening. I’ll be right there beside you, all the way.”

“Now you’re making *yourself* like a golden retriever,” she teased, playing idly with his sparse chest hair.

“Well, I prefer to think of myself as an invincible sex god, but if you like to think about fucking a dog...” He couldn’t believe how nice it felt just to be able to laugh and joke with her again—especially when they were both naked and he was still semihard and cuddled close beside her.

“Hey, I’m not into bestiality,” she returned with a laugh, and pinched his nipple. “You’re the one who’s been making rabbit jokes all night—which is pretty creepy, considering you’re alone with pets all day.”

“Ewwww. That’s taking it just too far.” He rolled onto his back, pulling her on top of him. “Trust me, sweetcheeks, the only creature I want to have sex with is you.”

“I can live with that,” she said, her breath catching as she rubbed her pussy along his reviving erection. “It’s a little scary—I think that was a big part of my problem last summer—things got so serious so quickly that I didn’t trust my own instincts.”

“Well, we’ve got a whole weekend to work it out,” he assured her, craning his neck up to kiss the tip of her nose. “Let’s just take our time and see how it goes.”

“Hmmm, he’s sexy and smart.” She shifted to take him in, sliding her slick cunt down over his mostly hard cock. “And he has impressive stamina.” She bent down and kissed him sweetly. “And for the weekend, anyway, you’re mine, all mine. This could be the best birthday weekend ever.”

Chapter Four

Sunlight streamed through the slats of the miniblinds, and Star woke, feeling so warm and cozy she didn't want to move. The dreams of Theo had been so real, she swore she could still smell him on her pillowcase, feel the crisp hairs of his thighs pressing into her butt...

Yikes! She rolled over and fought for breath. Theo lay there, grinning lazily up at her. "Morning, sugar."

All the memories of the night before came flooding back into her caffeine-deprived brain. The laughter, the incredible sex—even the accident and turning into a bunny every time she stepped outside the cabin door. She'd even let him talk her into using the king-sized bed in her parents' room, adding a naughty feel to their unexpected tryst.

"You okay?" His big hand came up to cup her cheek. "Don't start the morning with a panic attack, honey. From where I'm at, it's looking like one hell of a nice Saturday morning." He tugged her down into his arms for a kiss.

"Yum." She lay against his chest, hooking one leg over his hips. A very solid morning erection nudged her inner thigh. A girl could get used to waking up like this every day.

She'd thought the same thing last summer, and it had scared the life out of her. Today it sounded utterly perfect. Had she really grown up so much in just six months? Was it that today she turned thirty? Or was it just that she'd discovered being without him sucked really big rocks? Whatever the reason, she knew that this birthday magic had given her a second chance with Theo, and she wasn't going to squander it.

Kissing him back, she shifted her weight so her legs rested between his, her body sprawled completely above him. She ran her hands down his shoulders to his muscular

upper arms and trailed her lips down from his mouth to his throat then to the dip between his pecs.

She took some time to lave his sensitive tan nipples, licking and sucking them until they beaded into tight little buds. Then she followed the fine line of light brown hair down to his bellybutton, which she tickled with her tongue. Settling back on her knees between his splayed thighs, she let her lips and tongue work their way down to the base of his cock then farther to lick and nibble on his full, tight balls.

"I love the way your skin tastes," she murmured at the junction of his thighs. "Salty and warm. And even I can't find words for how the scent of you makes me feel." She was a professional poet—she could find words for anything. Except Theo. None of her words ever quite measured up.

"Less talking, sugar," he ordered softly. "You've got better things to do with that pretty little mouth."

Star's pussy quivered. She wasn't submissive in any other way, but she loved letting her partner be in charge in bed, as long as he was someone she could trust, like Theo. Obediently, she grasped the base of his shaft in her hand and licked her way up the thick ridge to his full, heart-shaped crown, flushed a dark purple with his arousal. A drop of pre-cum beaded at the slit, and she lapped it up, savoring the bittersweet taste.

"Suck me, Star. I want to see your lips wrapped around my dick, sugar." His voice trembled even as he shoved a couple of pillows behind his head. She knew he liked to watch what she did to him, and his blatant desire sent a thrill of feminine power surging through her, even while she did as she was told and slurped the fat crest of his cock between her lips and sucked lightly, tickling the slit with the tip of her tongue.

Both of her hands wrapped around his shaft, her fingers not quite meeting around his girth, and she stroked them up and down his rigid length while she set up a steady rhythm of suction with her mouth. Theo fisted one hand in her hair and the other in the sheets while his eyes remained fixed on her face. The passion and approval blazing in

his coffee-brown eyes had her squeezing her legs together to ease the ache in her cunt. How had she ever walked away from this man?

“Yes, just like that, sugar.” His hand in her hair guided her speed, and Star relaxed her throat to take him a little deeper. With a hoarse shout, he bowed his spine up off the mattress and poured himself into her mouth.

She swallowed every drop of the hot, thick liquid that coated her mouth and throat, maintaining the suction until he was done, and had dropped limply back to the sheets. Then she licked off his tip gently before moving back up the bed to snuggle into his arms. “Good morning.”

“A *very* good morning,” he replied, kissing her hard, not seeming to mind the taste of his own cum in her mouth. “Now it’s my turn to play. Can’t have me getting the only present on your birthday, can we?” He rolled her onto her back.

Star wasn’t going to complain a bit. He kissed her chin, her neck and the valley between her breasts before settling down to pay serious attention to her nipples, which were still sensitive from the night before. He rolled the tender nubs between his fingers, sucking and licking first one and then the other until Star was writhing against the crisp cotton sheets. Finally, when she’d begged him, he moved between her legs and slid his hands under her ass to lift her pussy to his mouth.

“Put your legs over my shoulders,” he instructed then lowered his mouth to lick the seam of her labia and draw circles around her clit with his tongue. “And play with your own nipples.”

She caught one of her breasts in each hand and pinched her nipples lightly as he licked and sucked her distended clit. She’d been close to coming just from going down on Theo—it wasn’t going to take her long. Especially not after he slid two fingers into her slick channel, curving them upward to hit just the right spot. He thrust them slowly in and out as he suckled her clit and she rolled her nipples between her fingers. Just a few moments later, she felt her climax coil in her belly before she shattered, crying out

his name as stars exploded behind her eyelids, and her body tingled from scalp to toes in waves of pleasure.

"Happy birthday, Ostara," he murmured when he'd moved back up to brace himself on his elbow above her.

She gazed up into his eyes and her heart melted with love. Oh hell, how was she ever going to walk away from him now?

Then he slid inside her still-twitching pussy and she forgot how to think. All she could do was feel as his thick cock stretched her and filled her so deeply she could swear he touched her heart.

His movements were slow and steady this time, now that they'd each had one orgasm to take the edge off. He kissed her deeply, his tongue stroking and caressing her lips and the inside of her mouth. Then he kissed her ear and the side of her throat.

"I marked you last night," he murmured, kissing the hickey she'd noticed on a late-night trip to the bathroom.

"I don't mind," she said on a sigh. "Do it again if you want."

"I *want* to mark you where a sweater won't hide it," he muttered. "Where everyone will see it and know that you're mine."

His words sent a rush of joy through her. He wanted to keep her after this weekend? After all she'd said and done to hurt him? "Go ahead," she said, meaning it with all her heart. "Wherever you want."

He pulled out of her pussy and she almost wept at the loss. Just for a second though, because he knelt and ordered her to sit on his thighs, her back to his chest.

"Ooh, this is nice." The position, one she'd never done before, drove his cock deep in her cunt and left his hands free to take possession of her breasts.

Then Theo fastened his lips just an inch or so below her ear. Unless she wore a really high turtleneck or a scarf, a mark there was bound to show, especially since she

was so pale. Star's pussy clenched at his possessiveness and she canted her head to give him better access.

His hips bucked, thrusting his cock up into her as he sucked on her throat and played with her breasts. The overload of stimulation had her whimpering with every breath, his name emerging in fractured gasps from her lips. She wrapped one hand over her head to clasp his neck, and the other held on to the heavy pine headboard for support.

Finally Theo pulled away from her neck to suck in a deep breath. His spine arched as he drove up inside her one last time and held himself still while he erupted inside her. The warm, wet flood was enough to send her over again, and her head fell back against his shoulder while tremors racked her body, leaving her limp and gasping for breath.

"I've never seen anything more beautiful," Theo murmured as he eased her back down to the pillows and pulled the blankets back up over them both. "A man would be very lucky to wake up beside you every morning of his life."

Oh gods! Had he really said that? Was it remotely possible he'd fallen in love with her, as she had with him? She hugged him tightly as she searched her brain for something to say. She was the bloody writer, for the gods' sake. Where were her words when she needed them?

Before she found them, the phone beside the bed shrilled in her ear.

"Hello." Theo had picked up the phone. "Thanks, Jake. Can you have someone drop it off out here? Her ankle's bothering her and I don't want her to drive."

There was a pause then Theo said, "Great, see you in half an hour."

He hung up the phone, rolled over and gave Star a rueful smile. "So, on that note, I guess we'd better get showered and dressed, huh?"

She nodded. The moment had passed anyway. Accepting his hand, she climbed out of bed, carefully testing her ankle as she stood. "I could probably drive just fine, you know. Anyway, it's my left foot and my car's not even a stick shift."

"Yeah, but there's the whole long-ears-and-whiskers problem. The ankle was just an easy excuse to have them bring the car to us."

"Smart. But today's my birthday – it might be over."

"We'll test that theory after our company leaves," he promised. "Meanwhile, how's the foot?"

She felt him watching her walk on the way to the bathroom. "It's tender – I won't be dancing for a few days, but I can manage a shower on my own." She needed a few minutes alone, to collect her thoughts and catalog her emotions.

Theo seemed to understand. He leaned down and kissed her forehead. "Fine. I'll go start some coffee and scrounge up some breakfast." Whistling a tune, he left her and headed out to the great room.

* * * * *

"You know you're a better cook than I am," Star said later as she finished off the last of the omelet Theo had made for brunch. Neither of them had realized it was almost noon when the mechanic called to tell them Star's car was fine except for a small ding in the front fender and some scratches in the paint. After the car had been dropped off, they'd decided to finish eating before testing her ability to leave the cabin.

Theo had to admit, part of him hoped the spell, or whatever it was, wasn't over yet. He and Star had been growing closer in the last eighteen or so hours, but they hadn't had enough chance to talk yet, to sort out the issues that had driven them apart last summer.

"Theo?" Star set her fork down and reached across the table to take his hand. "Is something wrong?"

"No." He shook his head and smiled. "Just thinking a little too hard, I guess."

Her lips twisted into a wry grin. "I doubt it. Me not thinking enough was probably most of our problem. You seemed so grown up and stable, and I was trying in vain to retain my youth – have the fling I didn't get around to when I was twenty-two."

“Hard to call it a fling when I’d been trying so hard not to hit on you since you were sixteen,” he responded. “Star, honey, you were jailbait when I met you, and your brother is my best friend. When we finally hooked up, I’d been thinking about it for half your damn life. I should have been arrested for the things I thought about when you were still in high school.”

“But you never acted on them,” she pointed out. “And I was such a horrible flirt. You know I had a crush on you from the first time Sam brought you home, right? If I’d had any idea you were interested, I’d have jumped your bones the day I turned eighteen.”

“I’m kind of glad you didn’t,” he said. “Fun though that would have been, neither of us was ready. Even last summer, we weren’t quite there, were we?”

“No,” she admitted. “But now — are we a couple, Theo? Are we going to give what’s between us a real chance this time? Two adults, no games?”

“Yeah,” he said, joy and hope suffusing his heart. “As long as this time we get to tell our families that we’re together.”

“You know Sam’s going to be pissy.”

“I can take it,” he assured her. Sam would be grumpy more for form’s sake than because he was really upset, as long as Theo was treating her well. “You’re worth it.”

“That may be the sweetest thing you’ve ever said to me. What about when I want to go out and you want to stay in?”

Theo smiled and tapped her nose. “We’ll work it out. I’ll make an effort to be social every other weekend or so, and you’ll understand when I’m just too physically beat to go dancing. But no other guys this time, even if we fight. Does that sound fair?”

“More than.” With a brilliant grin, she stood and took her empty plate over to the sink, limping just slightly as she did. He’d rewrapped her ankle, though the swelling was almost gone. She’d be fine in a couple of days, thank goodness. “Now are you ready to see if we can leave this place today?”

"You want to go somewhere?" He took his own dishes to the sink and followed her to the side door, the one not visible to the road or any other houses.

"No. I just want to know if we can." She gave him a quick one-armed hug before opening the door. "Here goes nothing."

She stepped outside and stood in a shaft of sunlight. Somewhere during the night, the rain had stopped and the clouds had rolled away.

"Looks like we're in the clear. No more were-bunny."

"Aww, I'm going to kind of miss your floppy ears," he teased, stepping out to join her. The decking was cold on his bare feet.

Then he twitched his nose as he stared into Star's ankles, his jeans and T-shirt billowing around his face.

Oh hell! He could hear a bird flapping overhead and feel his whiskers twitch. This could not—absolutely could not be happening! His heart pounded in his chest—his fur-covered chest.

Star's laugh rang out, pure and musical. "Oh Theo, we are in sooo much trouble." She picked him up out of his clothing, and scooted him toward the door.

Theo took two hops on his big rabbit feet then crossed the threshold. Instantly, he was back in his own body, naked as a jaybird. Star picked up his clothes and stepped in behind him.

"I'm so, so sorry, Theo." Her apology was undermined by the laughter that still danced in her eyes. "If we're lucky, this just means one more day here."

His stomach still roiling as he tried to process what had just happened, he pulled her into his arms. He waited a minute or two while he caught his breath and stopped shaking. "Actually, I think I know what the magic wants," he told her finally. He put all teasing aside as he looked down into her beautiful, beloved face.

"I love you, Star. I probably have for years, but I've definitely loved you since last summer. I should have told you that then, but..."

"But I was being a chicken," she said. "I love you too, Theo. But I didn't want to admit it. I was afraid of growing up and afraid of letting myself make too much out of a teenage crush that finally came true."

"But it isn't a crush. Not anymore anyway," he said. "Marry me, Star."

"I'm not going to say yes just to placate some crazy family magic," she said, tears welling in her aqua eyes. "I don't want you because you think you have to propose to make the transformations stop. According to Noel and Shelby, that isn't the way it worked for them. Noel didn't even tell her he loved her until after they got home. All we have to do is wait it out."

"And I would never do that," he assured her. "If the magic is on a timeline, that's okay too—I won't regret telling you how I feel. I mean this with all my heart. I love you. I don't want to be your boyfriend, though I'll take that if it's all I can get. I want to wake up beside you every day of my life. I want to sit next to you on a porch swing someday and watch our grandchildren play."

"As long as none of them have fluffy white tails," she said, gazing up at him with an expression that warmed his heart. "Yes, Theo. I'd love to be your wife."

Their kiss was hot and deep, a sealing of their promise, an expression of the love they'd just confessed. While their lips tangled, Theo's fingers were busy unfastening her jeans and shoving them down to her ankles along with her yellow lace panties. Then he picked her up and set her down on the edge of the butcher-block counter, bringing her up to just the right height. As soon as she was seated, Star pulled her shirt and bra off over her head and leaned back on her hands.

"Hurry," she urged. "I want you now, Theo."

"I'm right here, sugar." Neither of them needed preliminaries. When he tested her wetness with two fingers, he wasn't surprised to find her already drenched. He positioned himself at her entrance and slid home then leaned in to take her lips as well.

His tongue-fucked her mouth while his cock pounded in and out of her tight sheath. Her legs wrapped around his waist, squeezing him tight.

She loved him! Theo had never been happier in his life. He was going to get to keep her this time—keep her with him for the rest of his life. That knowledge was the biggest turn-on of his life, and he felt his balls tighten impossibly fast, impossibly full. When she squealed into his mouth and her pussy shuddered around him, he let go, pouring himself into her over and over again.

When they were both done, he gathered her close to his chest, dropping tender kisses onto her silky hair. He'd never have admitted it, but there was a suspicious bit of moisture pricking at his eyelids.

"I love you," he repeated. "Always and forever."

"Mm, love you too," she murmured against his chest. "So, assuming we get free sometime today, do we head back to town and tell everyone, or do we stay here all weekend and go at it—like bunnies?"

Theo laughed and hugged her close. "How about this? We drive up to Greenville and have dinner with my folks. You've only met them once or twice, but I know you'll get along great and they'll be thrilled about our engagement. Plus, there's this great little jewelry shop in downtown Greenville—we can stop on the way and pick up a ring. Then we come back here for the night and make like rabbits. Tomorrow, we go home to Charleston and break the news to your family."

"I like the way you think, Dr. Morgan. Think the magic will let us leave?" She glanced up at the clock, glad she'd memorized the time for today's celestial event. She'd meant to do a short ritual outside right about now to welcome spring, but what they'd just done, she decided, was celebration enough. "I'm pretty sure that the actual equinox passed a few minutes ago."

He grinned. "If not, I guess we'd better send for a preacher and settle in for a long honeymoon."

Star couldn't help smiling back. "Sounds like a good plan to me."

At that, Theo picked her up in his arms and strode over to the door. After a quick check through the window to make sure no one was outside, he set her down, and hand in hand, they stepped through the door.

“Nothing,” she said as they ducked back inside. “I guess the magic is gone.”

“No,” Theo assured her, gathering both her hands in his and bringing them up for a kiss on her knuckles. “The magic, my shining Star, is just beginning.”

About the Author

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

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

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