

Tracie Sommers



BLAME IT ON THE MOONLIGHT



Spice **BRIEFS**

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After catching her fiancé make that ex-fiancé with another woman, Jasmine heads into the woods to be alone. But her solitude is broken when a black wolf approaches her and turns into a wildly sexy man. Though she sees danger lurking in his eyes, it doesn't scare her away. Instead, it only fans the flames of her passion.

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Lucas crouched low in the dew-dampened fall leaves carpeting the forest floor, his mouth filling with saliva. The woman sitting in the clearing looked good enough to eat and itâ€™d been a long time since heâ€™d sunk his teeth into something that juicy.

She was out here all alone, vulnerable to the many dangers lurking in the woods. He should know. He was the most dangerous of all.

The woman sat on a flat rock, her thighs drawn against her chest, honey-blond hair falling over the arms she braced across her knees. The blanket slipped to expose a creamy shoulder and bare legs crossed at the ankles.

Oh, for a taste of that skinâ€™to just nibble on the spot where her neck met her back, to dip into that honeypot.

The woman lifted her head. Tears glittered in the moonlight leaving silver trails down her pale cheeks. But even tear-stained she was the most beautiful thing in these woods. The hunger in him grew.

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Jasmine shivered and pulled the thin blanket up over her shoulders. What the hell was she doing out here in the middle of the night? In the dark. Alone.

The reason was scorched into her mind like a bad movie scene. Her fiancÃ©â€™s scrap that, *ex-fiancÃ©* was fucking another woman.

She wiped her gritty eyes and damp cheeks on the corner of the blanket. She had to pull herself together and work out what sheâ€™d do next. When Brent had suggested this weekend away, sheâ€™d talked him into coming up to the old cabin her grandfather had left her. It was supposed to be a romantic weekend for two, not one with all his pals and their skanky plastic girlfriends.

Anger snuffed out her hurt. How dare he? Sheâ€™d never felt like harming anyone before, but tonight she could have ripped Brent limb from limb with her bare hands. And that smug bitch, too. Jasmine relaxed her jaw, aching from gritting her teeth, and the pressure in her head released.

A twig snapped to her left.

She turned and glanced around the moon-dappled clearing, the hairs standing up on the back of her neck.

â€œHello?

Nothing. But the goose bumps didnâ€™t recede, either. Someone was watching her. Someone or some thing. She could feel eyes hidden within the shadows.

Another twig cracked, this time from behind.

A shiver ran down her spine and she twisted around, the blanket falling from her shoulders.

â€œBrent, if thatâ€™s youâ€™piss off and leave me alone.â€ She managed to hide all but the slightest wobble in her voice.

A rustling came from the front. The bush shook. Her breath froze, blood ran cold, and limbs turned to stone.

A large black dog stepped out from the undergrowth. The biggest, blackest dog sheâ€™d ever seen. It looked like a wolf, but it couldnâ€™t be, thereâ€™d been no wolves in this area for over a hundred years. She braced her hands against the rock. Her pulse hammered in her ears. But he looked up at her with friendly intelligent gray eyes, then looked away, avoiding eye contact.

â€œHello, boy.â€ Instinctively she knew it was male.

Fear crunched in her gut but her grandfather had taught her never to show alarm in front of wild animals. â€œThe beast is usually more afraid than you,â€ he would say.

But there was something different about this dog. Even though he kept his eyes averted and approached her indirectly, stopping every now and then to sniff the ground in a show of nonaggression, she sensed he was not like others.

Jasmine hoped his owner was nearby as she watched the huge animal take a step closer and sit at her feet. He tilted his head with his tongue lolling to one side, but the way he looked at her was far too *human*.

She reached a tentative hand out to his nose, mere inches from those massive jaws, which could tear out her throat with a single bite. But when he licked her outstretched digits, her fear recededâ€”a little.

The way his tongue curled around her fingers sent a different kind of shiver down her spine. Those eyes continued to stare. Strange eyes, old eyes, eyes that seemed to know what she felt.

The animalâ€™s shoulders shifted and he jumped up, knocking her into the soft fall leaves behind with his large front paws. A cloud passed over the full moon, plunging the clearing into darkness. She could only make out the silhouette of his head as his large body pinned her down while he licked her face.

â€œDown, boy. Down. Get off me,â€ she said with a laugh, pushing away his head.

But he was strong, too strong, pressing her down with his massive chest so she couldnâ€™t move, pinning her arms close to her body with his front legs. His tongue continued licking, moving down to her throat, his hot breath singeing her sensitive skin.

â€œWhoa, boyâ€ getting a little too friendly there,â€ she said, and tried to push him away with a little more force.

A growl vibrated through her from the animalâ€™s throat. Her fear spiked again.

This dog wanted to eat her.

Jasmine pushed harder and managed to crawl out from under him. He growled again.

She struggled to her feet, dropping the blanket.

His growl deepened. She turned.

The dog snapped and caught the hem of her short nightgown, tearing it.

Jasmine ran.

The cloud moved on and moonlight flooded the clearing. She dashed over the uneven ground through the forest, glancing over her shoulder every other minute. Her back prickled with fear, knowing the beast could take her at any moment.

Her heart hammered heavily in her throat as she ran on. Tree branches snatched at her with skeletal fingers, snagging her hair and shredding her nightdress.

And then—dead end. Rocky cliffs surrounded her on three sides. The only way out was the way she came in. She'd run blind and stumbled into an old dry creek bed, the water long disappeared under the cliffs. Her panting breath labored as she stopped beside a giant tree, listening for pursuit while ready to climb.

She gulped in the cold night air, burning her lungs with its icy touch. The forest lay silent all around except for the rustle of leaves in the wind and the crickets' serenade. The beast must've lost interest. Thank God.

A twig snapped.

Her heart froze.

With frantic hands, she clutched at the branches above, her feet scrabbling for a foothold as she tried to haul herself off the ground.

“Wait,” a deep, rumbling voice barked. “I won't hurt you.”

She looked over her shoulder as a man stepped into the moonlight.

He was tall and muscular and—half naked.

She couldn't tear her eyes away. Intelligent gray eyes returned her gaze, his head tilted to the side as if studying her.

Dark hair hung past his massive broad shoulders. The moonlight played across the rippling ridges of his stomach and a familiar scrap of multicolored fabric was wrapped around his hips.

Her blanket.

“You?” Jasmine raised trembling fingers to her face.

He closed in, a smile tugging at the corner of his full masculine mouth. Hooded eyes dropped to her lips when her tongue darted out to wet them. It only seemed to stoke the hunger in his gaze.

Like a startled rabbit trembling before an approaching wolf, Jasmine had nowhere to run and nowhere to hide.

“So ripe,” he whispered under his breath.

She straightened. “Excuse me?”

He stopped mere inches away. All of a sudden, she had too much air for her lungs. Her nipples contracted into hard little pebbles and her stomach tied itself in knots.

He didn't even try to close the gap between them, just stood there staring at her. “You smell delicious.”

“So you do want to eat me?”

He threw back his head and laughed, as deep and rich as the loamy soil of the forest. “Oh, yes, little girl. I want to eat you and suck you, taste you and fuck you.”

The sound of his voice vibrated through every erogenous nerve in her body. If she'd been wearing panties, they would've been drenched. Her eyes slid down his taut torso to his waist and beyond—she wasn't the only one affected.

The wrap around his hips bulged rather obviously, twitching under her inspection.

Jasmine stepped backward until she bumped into something rough and solid—the tree trunk. He was on her in a second. His hands braced either side of her head as he leaned in close to her ear, his hot breath washing over her cool skin.

“Where are you going, little girl?” His gaze kept dropping to her lips as if mesmerized by them.

“I don’t know who you are,” she whispered.

“Yes, you do.” He leaned forward, his breath a tender caress against her mouth. “I’m the big bad wolf.”

His voice flowed around her like a living thing, turning her blood to fire and her will to ashes. Jasmine met his untamable eyes and saw the danger lurking beneath the surface. But it only stoked the flames of her desire.

He brought his lips to hers and stole the very air from her lungs. Her knees buckled, and only the tree trunk against her back stopped her from falling. No man on earth had kissed her like that—ever. Not even Brent.

“Do you want me to eat you, little girl?” he husked in her ear. He reached beneath the tattered hem of her camisole and slid two fingers into her opening. “Oh. Yes, you do.”

“I don’t even know your name,” she groaned as his fingers continued to work magic.

He chuckled and withdrew his hand, licking her juices off his fingers, his eyes fastened to her mouth. “Lucas.”

What in hell was she doing? He was a stranger. But then again, Brent was doing someone else, why shouldn’t she?

The image of the large dog rose in her mind. No—not a dog—a wolf. A big black wolf with strangely human eyes. But it was impossible—an animal turning into a man? Like that could ever happen. Right?

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Her blue eyes stared back at him, fear etching tight lines on her forehead. And that mouth. He’d never seen or tasted such a beautiful mouth before. He leaned in and claimed her lips again. A small sigh escaped him as he pulled back. He needed more, needed to sample every inch of her. The thin fabric of her ruined night wear parted like tissue paper as he ripped it from her body.

The cool night air puckered her nipples into tight buds ripe for the picking. He took one into his mouth and it tasted sweeter than fresh summer berries on a warm June night. He moved down toward the flat plane of her belly, stopping to nip the undersides of her soft rounded breasts. Her breath came in pants and she fisted his hair, urging him lower. Lucas was more than happy to oblige. He wanted to dip his tongue into her sweet, sweet nectar.

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Jasmine gripped the branch above with both hands as Lucas went on licking and sucking, tasting and—

Oh, God!

He dropped to his knees in front of her as if worshiping at her feet. The tree bark bit into his spine when he lifted her left leg to brace it over his shoulder.

Any discomfort soon flew from her mind as he trailed molten kisses down the inside of her thigh, moving with agonizing slowness as he branded her tender flesh.

Even the barest of touches fanned the flame of her need. His lips brushed the curls on her mound, sending shivers radiating from her central pleasure point, across her stomach to the tips of her breasts and up her throat to scorch her cheeks.

His tongue lapped along her slit, parting her lips a little more each time until it flicked the tip of her clit. She cried out, her arms and legs quivering. Her whole world shrank to this moment in time, nothing outside of the clearing existed.

Lucas's fingers dug into her ass cheeks, opening her further to his intimate nether-kiss, thrusting his tongue in and out of her opening with great abandon. A strange mewling sound filled her ears and she realized it was her. Lucas teased her as he continued to explore her sex with his hot mouth, deliberately circling around the center of her pleasure.

Her shoulders ached against the strain of her weight but she didn't want him to stop. His tongue did strange and wonderful things to her—it was so dexterous—reaching places no one had ever done.

Before now, the best oral sex Jasmine had ever experienced was an adventurous afternoon with Candy-Lee in the first year of college. It had been spontaneous, forbiddingly different, and all the more exciting for it. It was a onetime thing, something to look back on with guilty pleasure. But right now it paled into insignificance against the talents of the man between her legs. He knew exactly where to target and the right touch to apply to drive her beyond wild.

The pressure increased. Sweat bathed her skin, soaking the valley between her breasts. Dampness covered her fevered skin, bringing little relief to the molten heat at the pit of her stomach.

Soon nothing but the pleasure building in her groin mattered. No sound could be heard apart from the blood roaring in her ears. Each stroke of his tongue brought her closer and closer. She tensed her toes, curling them tight, increasing the tension of her coiled body. He kept the rhythm constant and unrelenting, concentrating only on her clit, working it faster and faster until—

She thundered over the edge.

Oh, wow! Once. Ah, God! Twice. Holy fucking shit! Three times. So fast, so hard and so close together. It had only taken a few moments to bring her to brink again and again until she thought her body would implode with pleasure.

As the last shudders rippled through her muscles, he caught her around the waist when her arms gave one final complaint and let go.

Pain flooded her shoulders, and her fingers prickled with pins and needles as the blood flowed back into her limbs. But her discomfort was short lived. Her moonlight lover kissed soft, tender places on her throat, chasing away the last of her aches.

He was rock hard and ready against her stomach. She moved away, dropping her eyes to the pearly droplet suspended on the tip of his cock, glistening in the moonlight. She snagged it with the end of her finger and placed it in her mouth. It tasted salty and earthy at the same time.

His eyes darkened and closed. She wrapped her hand around his shaft but he pulled out of her reach to scoop up the blanket and spread it on the soft bed of fallen leaves under the old oak.

He stepped behind her, moving with the speed and grace of a predator. A frightened shiver tingled at the base of her spine, spreading throughout her body with warm deliciousness. One arm wrapped around her chest, brushing her nipples and covering her breast. The other hand moved lower, his cock rubbing against her lower back as deft fingers worked the sensitive nub between her legs. Her head fell back against his chest as she lost herself to the sensations he milked with exquisite expertise.

Her whole body felt charged with sexual energy as she alternated between riding his hand and rubbing her ass along his shaft.

He pulled her down to a kneeling position on the ground and he pushed her forward onto her hands and knees. Then the world began to shatter as he entered her with one hard thrust, hitting the sweet spot high inside.

Her orgasm pulsed around Lucas's cock with such intensity he nearly came then and there. He stilled, waiting for her to ride it out, biting his lip for more control.

Her skin smelled warm and sweet, like milk and honey. He drew in her scent—tasting it, memorizing it.

When she relaxed again he began to move slowly in and out, but as beautiful as the view of her on her hands and knees impaled on his cock was, he needed to feel her closer. Touch more of her.

He sat back on his calves and lifted her hands off the ground, bringing her back against his chest. Lucas reached around and cupped her breasts. And they began to move again, slow and with precise control.

His cock stretched her to the limit, while his hands squeezed her nipples. So many sensations hammered her body, none more intense than the other, but together they were blowing her mind. Her heart beat in her throat, blood rushed in her ears and a new orgasm built low in her groin.

Each thrust brought her closer to the edge, his cock pounding her again and again. She was so close now, and so was he if the increase in rhythm and his moans were anything to go by.

Faster and faster he pumped, she moved her hips in time, taking him as far inside her as she could get him. Just as she reached the peak, he gently snagged the skin of her shoulder between his teeth and she splintered into a thousand pulsing pieces.

So powerful was the orgasm, the blood rushing from her head plunged her into darkness.

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Jasmine shivered and curled into a tighter ball but the twittering of birds invaded

the last of her sleepy peace. A chilled breeze whipped over her. Brent must've stolen all the blankets again. She reached behind her. Someone had been there a moment ago. An empty warm patch dissipated with the cool air. She frowned and opened her eyes.

The early-morning sun dappled across her skin as she lay curled up on a bed of leaves under a large tree. Water lapped at the lake's edge a few feet away and the small rowboat banged against the old wooden dock.

What was she doing down by the boathouse?

Then it all came back in a rush. Brent with Brittney's legs wrapped his waist. And—

Oh, my!

Her sex pulsed in memory of Lucas nailing her under the old tree. She'd never had such mind-blowingly fan-fucking-tastic sex in her life.

Lucas—

The cooling warm spot beside her, vacated just before she woke—it was him. He'd stayed with her through the night, keeping her warm. But they had made love over half a mile away. How did she get back here to the lake house and not remember?

She'd had a strange dream sometime during the night about running through the forest—only she'd been on all fours instead of upright. Maybe she'd been sleepwalking.

For the first time, Jasmine realized she was totally naked. Her hands and feet were filthy, as if she had been digging around in the dirt.

She crawled to her feet, aching in the way only great sex could make you ache, and ran to the end of the dock. After a brief pause to brace herself, she dived in. The water smothered her in its icy embrace, driving the air from her lungs with the force of a stomach punch.

She loved an early-morning swim in the cold lake. It was refreshing, got the blood pumping. A ritual her beloved grandfather had introduced to her to—one they had shared every time she'd visited. When he was still alive.

After a few minutes, Jasmine climbed the ancient wooden ladder and wrapped herself in one of the towels from the boat. Up the hill in the morning mist, the cabin sat silent. Her special haven had been invaded by a bastard and his pack of morons.

Well, it was time to take out the trash and clean house.

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She returned midmorning from a walk to find the cabin just as she'd told Brent it was to be left. All the SUVs and cars were gone, including Brent's. Thank goodness, she was finally alone. Finally free.

However, their empty beer and liquor bottles littered the ground around the cabin. And inside was worse. The stench of their bodily odors seemed to cling to the walls and furniture. The smell so strong it almost made her throw up.

It took several hours to clean up. Jasmine tied the last bin bag of trash and

dumped it with the rest. Finishedâ€”finally. She grabbed a beer from the fridge and moved out onto the porch and sank into her grandfatherâ€™s old rocker with a sigh.

The familiar hum of an engine warned her she had company coming. The black Jeep pulled in front of the porch and Brent climbed out.

â€œWhat do you want?â€ she demanded.

â€œPlease, kitten,â€ he said, using his lâ€™m-too-good-looking-to-stay-mad-at voice. â€œI was drunkâ€”I didnâ€™t know what I was doing.â€

He reeked of Brittney.

â€œSure you didnâ€™t. And thatâ€™s why you fucked her again just before you came out here.â€ She stood up and crossed to the railing. â€œI can smell her all over you from here.â€

â€œYouâ€™re imagining things.â€ His voice sounded so rational, so comforting. â€œCome on, itâ€™s time we got home. Your mother is expecting us for dinner. You have a wedding to plan.â€

It suddenly all seemed so clear. Her life controlled first by her mother, and then by Brent. Together they made all the decisions for her and sheâ€™d let them. Sheâ€™d been so blinded by his chiseled jaw and blond all-American quarterback good looks that she failed to see how really pathetic he was.

â€œI tell you think Iâ€™m going to marry you now, youâ€™re crazy.â€

At the look of utter shock on his face, Jasmine couldnâ€™t stop the laughter spilling out. If there was one thing Brent hated more than anything elseâ€”it was being laughed at. Stormy brows creased his fake-tanned forehead.

â€œLook, Jasmine,â€ he said, inching closer, his voice taking on a hard edge. â€œYou know how disappointed your mother will beâ€”â€

â€œNo.â€ She raised her hand, determined not to be talked around this time. â€œJust get back in your car and leave.â€

â€œIâ€™m not leaving here without you.â€ He kept coming.

She reached inside the door and grabbed the shotgun her grandfather used to scare the foxes away from the chickens.

He stopped and looked up at her. His expression was well worth it even if she had no real intentions of shooting him.

He held his hands up in front of himself and smiled his most charming smile at her.

She relaxed a little and let the barrel drop slightly. â€œWe are over, Brent. Go back to your skanky fucking bitch.â€

He charged up the stairs and grabbed the barrel of the shotgun before she had a chance to react. A tight cruel smile twisted his handsome features and he snatched the weapon out of her hand and grabbed her arm at the same time.

Out of nowhere a black blur rushed in and jaws clamped on to Brentâ€™s lower right leg. The man brought the butt of the gun down on the head of the large black wolfâ€”forcing the animal to let go.

The wolf turned, hackles raised, teeth bared as he crouched before Jasmine, protecting her. Blood soaked the torn edges of Brentâ€™s pants. The fear in the

man's eyes gave him some measure of satisfaction.

Then her ex brought up the muzzle of the shotgun and aimed at the animal.

She didn't hesitate. She reached for the weapon, just as the wolf lunged. Large teeth sliced through her forearm with barely any pain at all. The animal immediately let go and she was able to wrench the weapon from the hands of her shocked ex-boyfriend.

She pointed it in the Brent's direction again. "Get in your car now and piss off, or, so help me, I'll shoot you where you stand."

There must have been something in her voice because he didn't even try to argue this time. He ran for his car, yanked the door open, climbed in and fumbled the keys into the ignition. The Jeep tore down the drive so fast the tires kicked up gravel and a massive cloud of dust.

"I hope he doesn't bleed to death before he reaches town." A deep male voice rumbled from behind.

Somehow, she wasn't surprised to find Lucas there and totally naked.

"We'd better get you cleaned up," she said, looking at the gash above his eye.

"No," he said, taking the weapon and leaning it against the rocking chair. "We'd better get that arm seen to first."

Crimson droplets of blood fell with a pitter-splat on the wooden porch, and everything faded into darkness and she felt herself falling.

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Jasmine awoke in the moonlit bedroom to the smell of bacon frying. Saliva flooded her mouth and her stomach grumbled like she hadn't been fed in days. The cracking of eggs and the sizzle of meat thrown into a skillet awoke her complaining stomach again.

Then the memory of her confrontation with Brent and the wolf came back in a rush. It was really true "Lucas and the wolf were one and the same."

She lifted her arm and looked at the fresh bandage, but it didn't hurt as much as she thought it should. Movement in the kitchen was punctuated with the clinking of china and banging of pots. She climbed from the bed, wearing only a shirt and panties, and padded toward the wafting delicious smell of hot meat frying. A spasm of hunger almost ripped a hole in her stomach. She was hungrier than she'd ever been in her life "like she hadn't eaten in weeks."

Lucas moved around the kitchen with easy assuredness, looking better in an old pair of jeans than any one man had a right to. He turned around and his face lit up. And she knew she'd put the smile there. Goose bumps rippled over her upper arms and her nipples contracted to hard little buds.

"Go back to bed. This is almost ready," he said.

"I'm fine." She jumped up to sit on the edge of the table, her legs swinging. "How long was I out for?"

He turned to her, gray eyes drinking her in. "Only a couple of hours" "the shock, I expect. Now get back to bed."

â€œUh.â€ She shook her head.

Disappointment flashed across his face but quickly fled as his gaze dropped to her naked thighs. She parted her legs a little. Hunger darkened his eyes and she leaned back, parting them farther. Her grumbling stomach somewhat dampened the seductive image she was hoping for.

Lucas laughed. â€œFirst we need to feed you.â€ He heaped steak, bacon, sausage and eggs onto a plate and crossed to the table. â€œNow hop down and eat.â€

Sheâ€™d never felt so sexually charged, so sexually alive. Mischief and desire played with her unusual mood. â€œNo.â€

He tilted his head, a strange smile tracing his lips, and cut into the piece of steak. Pink juices spilled out onto the white plate and flowed down his fingers as he picked up the morsel. She held his hand still, licking away the juice before snagging the meat between her teeth, not once taking her eyes away from his.

Juice dribbled down her chin and neck. Lucas leaned in. Her breath caught in her chest as he traced the path with his tongue. When he reached her lips, his kiss deepened, taking the remaining air from her lungs. He seemed to steal her air a lot.

Then he picked up a fork and stabbed an egg. Yellow yolk flowed and mingled with the pinkish-brown meat juice. He raised the fork to her mouth, deliberately missing the corner a little so he would have to clean it up again.

Not to be outdone, Jasmine grabbed a piece of bacon and rubbed it into his chest. His nipples crinkled into little tight points under her tongue, the grease mingled with his unique maleness. She undid the button and slid the zipper down on his jeans. He wore nothing underneath and his cock, hot and ready, peaked out from behind blue denim.

Lucas slid one arm around her waist and drew her closer to the edge of the table before pulling the shirt over her head. His hot breath burned her naked skin and melted her soul. Longing flooded her mind and body, pretty much leaving her useless to resist.

He gently pushed her back to lie on the tabletop, running his palms over her stomach and brushing her breasts. He bent forward, his tongue dipping into her navel, sending licks of desire up her spine. A moan built in her throat. God, he was good at that.

She sat up, unable to take anymoreâ€”she needed him inside her and now.

â€œFuck me,â€ she demanded, and wrapped her legs around his hips.

He pulled away and stood back, opening his jeans a little more and wrapping a massive hand around his thick shaft. â€œBeg me.â€

â€œPlease,â€ she said, licking her lips and reaching for his cock. â€œFuck me now.â€

He groaned, pushing his pelvis forward, his silky smoothness brushing her fingertips. She wanted more. She wanted it all.

His fingers tangled in her hair as he rocked his hips forward, filling her hand,

pumping against her and growing harder with each thrust.

Lucas pushed her back onto the tabletop by her shoulders. He grasped her panties and slid them quickly over her hips and pushed down his jeans the rest of the way before kicking them aside. The head of his cock nudged the springy, wet curls surrounding her sex. She arched her back and hissed at the friction.

Then he filled her. She cried out, arching her back to take him deeper. His hands gripped her hips and he pulled out and thrust in again.

Jasmine came up onto her elbows and watched him moving in and out of her. Each time he filled her it felt like the very first time and it felt so right, like they were made to fit one another. She wanted to get closer to him and sat up, wrapping her arms around his neck and her legs around his waist.

The change in position worked in more ways than one. The tip of his cock hit the front wall of her sex and the base rubbed along her clit with maximum sensation.

His parted lips descended to hers and he gripped her ass, pulling her tighter into his rhythm. Jasmine snagged his bottom lip between her teeth, gently sucking in time with his thrusts. Her nipples brushed his chest, adding to the stimulation.

The first orgasm took her by surprise, dropping her back onto to her elbows to brace herself for the next, which came with thundering force a couple of thrusts later. He gripped her hips tighter, his fingers biting into her flesh as he drove harder and harder until with one gasping shudder he collapsed forward onto her stomach.

They remained that way, panting and sweating for a few minutes until Lucas gathered her up, his cock still buried deep inside her, and carried her into the bedroom. Her hunger seemed gone, it wasn't food she'd been after. Together they collapsed, well sated, to bask in the glow as they drifted off to sleep.

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Jasmine slowly blinked her eyes open and lay wrapped in Lucas's warmth, his breathing regular with sleep.

She sighed, feeling content and fulfilled and different. Carefully she slipped from his arms and grabbed her robe, then crept from the room. The silvery night was hardly quiet; crickets serenaded each other, owls hooted from the treetops and frogs sang amphibian operas down by the lake. Yet, it'd never seemed more peaceful.

She curled up her legs in the rocking chair and wrapped her robe tighter around herself. The mist swept in off the water, adding eeriness to the predawn light. It rolled across the ground, flirting with the underbrush, caressing the base of the trees with a lover's touch.

Something moved. A pair of pale wolf eyes stared at her from within the haze. The form moved again, bending and shifting in the cloaking whiteness until a naked woman with long grayish hair stepped into full sight. She walked with the grace of someone comfortable in her own skin, no matter what shape it may be.

“Hello, Granddaughter.” The woman appeared a little older than Jasmine and much younger than her mother. How could she be her grandmother? Yet Jasmine knew it was true, she'd seen her before.

A knot formed in her throat. “How?”

“I know you remember me.” She held out her hand.

An image of her grandfather taking Jasmine into the woods to meet this woman flooded her memory. Jasmine had been around two or three at the time and she’d been given sugar cookies.

“You’re supposed to be dead,” Jasmine finally managed to croak.

“It was easier that way. Your father, my son, needed a different upbringing than the one I could give him.”

“But why?”

“He was not touched by the wolf like we are. I tried to live in the city when he started school, but I couldn’t. And he would never have been comfortable among our kind.”

Jasmine knew she was right, her father hated the cabin, the lake and the woods. Hated being away from civilization.

“So what am I supposed to call you?” Jasmine uncurred from her seat. “Grandma?”

The woman smiled gently and tilted her head. “My name is Melinda. Call me that if it makes you more comfortable.”

“Wait a minute—you said ‘touched by the wolf like we are.’”

“Yes, we. You and I.” Her grandmother moved forward and cupped Jasmine’s chin in a gentle caressing touch. “I loved your grandfather more than any other man or wolf. And even though he was human—he was my life mate. But your father had none of our people in him. When your father went off to college, Jed came back to me and our house together.” Melinda looked toward the door and a look of longing and loss passed across her beautiful features. “I haven’t set foot inside since the day he died. I have a cabin on the other side of the lake where I grew up. Most of the local community are wolf people. Jed was the only outsider we let stay year-round.”

It was strange hearing her grandfather’s name spoken.

“When each of your children were old enough, your grandfather would bring you to me. Neither your brother or sister had the wolf’s touch, but you—I could feel it in you straightaway.”

“Is that why he had only me stay during the summer breaks?” Jasmine asked.

Melinda’s eyes grew far away. “Partly. Your brother and sister were never really comfortable here and refused to come. But you, you took to the forest with such natural ease. I used to watch you and your grandfather together, wanting to come out of hiding and play with you myself—but it would have raised too many questions.”

“But I’m not like you.” Jasmine fiddled with the corner of her robe.

Things were starting to slip into place, like the way her mother tried to control her more than the others. Maybe she’d sensed the wildness in Jasmine and it confused and scared her.

“Yes you are—the wolf has already risen in you once.” Her grandmother

squatted down in front of her and rested her arm on Jasmine's knees. "The night before you ran with Lucas in the forest."

In a dream she'd chased a rabbit through the undergrowth with no real intentions of catching it, the game was the only thing that mattered. But maybe it wasn't a dream.

"I've come to warn you, my child." Melinda nodded to the cabin door. "You've made love to a wolf two nights within a single phase of the full moon. One more time and you will be mated for life. No other man will ever satisfy you, no other woman him. Tonight is the last night of the full moon and you should think carefully before you take that step." She turned toward the forest, her shoulders slumping. "Life without your mate can be very lonely."

With a heavy sigh, Melinda straightened. "I will always be here. You'll know how to call for me if you need to."

Then Melinda turned and walked back into the thickening mist, changing form as she went so that by the time she reached the forest edge a large gray wolf loped off through the trees.

Jasmine sat a little longer until the sun rose and burned off the last of the haze. Brent was gone and Lucas was here to protect her. But was she ready to trade a life with one man to an unknown life with someone she hardly knew?

She didn't know how long she sat there, but when Lucas placed a tender touch on her head she nearly jumped out of her skin.

"Are you okay?" he asked, concern edging his voice.

"Fine," she mumbled, unable to look at him lest he see the lie in her eyes.

"I have something to do," he said. "I'll be back in a little while."

"Okay."

"Are you sure you're all right?" he said, frowning.

She gave him a smile she hoped looked natural and nodded.

He didn't seem too convinced but kissed her quickly, raising her temperature in that one brief connection. There was no way she would be able to resist him if she stayed here.

After he disappeared into the trees, she raced inside to quickly dress and gather up her things. As she left the cabin, she pulled the door shut behind her and piled her bags into her grandfather's old runabout car.

She got halfway down the drive and stopped, looking back at the cabin in the rearview mirror. A large black wolf loped into the clearing and stared after her with sad gray eyes. Jasmine had a moment of regret and was nearly tempted to turn back. Instead she put the car into gear and accelerated away.

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Lucas sat on his haunches and watched the car go. His heart squeezed in his chest and he hung his head. He'd known the moment he looked into her eyes this morning she would leave. But no matter how much he wanted to keep her here, he knew he had to let her go. She had to return to him and give herself willingly; there was no other way.

Long after the engine of the car had receded, Lucas turned back to the woods.

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Jasmine pulled up outside her parents' home, but couldn't bring herself to go inside. Her mother finally ran out of the house and opened the car door.

"Oh, thank God you're okay." Her mother pulled her into a big hug and then pushed her away by the shoulders. "Where have you been? We tried your cell and you didn't answer."

Jasmine hadn't even thought of turning her cell phone on, she was too distracted with thoughts of what she'd been through over the past couple of days.

Her father stood a short way off, looking nervous as always when she became the centre of attention. "When you didn't come home, we were worried."

Her mother cut him off. "We had the ranger go out to the cabin this afternoon" but there was no one there.

"I was probably already on my way home by then. I took the long way to think." Jasmine held her at arm's length to deliver the news she was sure would send her mother into hysterics. "Mom, the wedding's off."

"Well, let's talk about that later," her mother said, not at all surprised.

Jasmine froze. Brent came out of the house with a large bunch of flowers and a contrite puppy-dog expression. But she could see right through him now and wasn't fooled one bit.

"Brent's been here waiting for you since this morning," her father mumbled.

"He says he's sorry for your little misunderstanding," her mother said, patting her arm.

"Misunderstanding?" Jasmine couldn't believe her ears. "Mom, I found him *fucking another woman* against *Grandpa's woodshed*."

"Jasmine Therese! Language!" Her mother fiddled with the hair on the back of her neck. "What matters now is that Brent's sorry and has agreed to go to counseling to help him with his little problem. I'll call Dr. Lebowitz tomorrow and make an appointment. You can work this out together."

Had her mother listened at all? She turned to her father for help, but he just looked away. They'd never been that close and the reason occurred in a sudden flash of clarity.

He knew. He'd always known.

The truth lay hidden in his nervous brown eyes, which would never settle on her, the hint of fear he'd get when she looked at him for too long and the way he avoided physical contact with her but not her siblings.

In that single moment, her world came crashing down around her, suffocating her. The whole city stank in a way she'd never really noticed before. The people in it tainted the air she breathed.

Jasmine disentangled herself from her mother's arms and kissed her perfectly made-up cheek. "Goodbye, Mother."

She glanced over to her father and nodded. "Dad."

An odd expression came over her father's face. It could have been relief, or envy; or maybe, just maybe, it was pride. She climbed back into her car and her father genuinely smiled at her for the first time since she could remember. He leaned in and pecked her cheek before closing the car door.

"Where are you going?" her mother asked, her near-hysterical voice gaining several octaves.

"To find the real me," she said, and reversed the car into the street. When Jasmine drove away from her old family home, she didn't look back. Not once.

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Dark ominous clouds hung low over the mountains, the air thick and heavy with the promise of rain as Jasmine pulled up in front of the cold empty cabin.

He was gone.

What had she expected? To find him waiting with open arms? No. Not after a week. A desperately dismal week in a seedy roadside motel where she'd spent every waking moment thinking about Lucas and every sleeping moment dreaming about him.

She climbed out of the car and looked around. There was still time to get him out of her system before the next moon. But first she had to find him again.

What if she changed into a wolf and called him? Could she make it happen, make the change come?

Only one way to find out.

Jasmine closed her eyes and concentrated. Nothing. She concentrated harder. Still nothing.

Frustrated, she kicked the car tire. Pain shot through her big toe and up her leg. She hopped around on one foot, cursing, wondering if she'd broken something and feeling foolish.

Lightning split the sky and she realized for the first time how dark it had grown. But in that flash she'd seen him. The black wolf at the tree line, watching her. He padded forward into the beam of the car's headlights and stopped a short way off, just looking.

And then the wolf started to change. The hair covering most of his body seemed to disappear, as if sucked back into his pores, and muscles twitched visibly under his skin as he swelled and shrank in different places until Lucas stood in human form.

Again lightning slashed through the darkness, followed immediately by a crackling boom of thunder. Nature's fury rose as the wind picked up and blew his hair across his face.

She thought of them making love right here against the car, of him spreading her legs and taking her again and again.

"You really should take off your clothes before you attempt a change," he said, his voice rippling pleasure through her body.

"Oh!" Jasmine couldn't think of anything else to say.

He stepped forward and stopped again. "You left."

"Yes," she said, and dropped her head. "I wasn't ready."

"Ready for what?" he asked.

She locked her gaze with his. "My Grandmother, Melinda, came to see me that night and told me of the moon bonding. I wasn't ready."

"I'm sorry. I forget you don't know our ways." His eyes darted away then back to her face "a bit of guilt, maybe. We didn't have to complete the Moon Dance if you'd told me."

"I'm sorry, I just freaked. I'd just escaped one disastrous relationship. I wasn't ready to face another."

His eyes glowed in the headlights like any other nocturnal animal. "Are you ready now?"

"I don't know." She couldn't lie to him. "But I'm ready to find out."

"And what if you decide you aren't and leave again before the next full moon? What happens to me?"

"I can't promise I won't," she said. "It's a risk we have to take."

"I'll just have to make sure you never want to leave." Lucas stepped closer and cupped both sides of her face, bringing their lips together in a bruising kiss. She almost melted under his touch, even through her clothing.

After a few minutes, she came up for air. "Keep kissing me like that and you'll never get rid of me," she said through panting breaths.

He pulled her closer and kissed her hard. At that moment the sky opened, dumping fat raindrops on them, drenching her clothes and plastering her hair to her scalp. But they didn't move. More lightning rent the sky, followed by a booming thunderous roll. Instead of scaring her, it excited her more. Mother Nature hit them with all her fury, but it couldn't compare with the fury of their passion.

Beads of rain hung from her eyelashes as the icy rain continued to fall. It pelted their skin as he pushed her back against the side of the car. With each flash of lightning, the desire in his eyes grew. He bent to kiss her throat, she threw back her head, the rain fell onto her face like an icy shower, yet it didn't dim her arousal at all. She shivered, more with delight than cold, although a chill had started to seep into her bones. Lucas scooped her up into his arms and carried her to the cabin.

He set her on her feet and fetched a pile of towels from the bathroom closet. After wrapping a large one around her, he bent to light kindling in the fireplace. She watched the muscles play along his back as he moved to add logs to the fire, shivering uncontrollably in her wet things. She should really take them off, but she didn't want to move, only watch the man in front of her. She could watch him like this forever.

Strong, warm flames licked the wood like a lover's touch as he approached her. He peeled off her wet jacket and began to remove the rest of the soaking clothes.

When she stood naked before him, he wrapped her in another towel and pulled

down to sit between his knees on the thick shag pile rug in front of the fireplace. Then he picked up yet another towel and set about drying her hair.

His hands worked magic, rubbing and kneading away any second thoughts she may have had about coming back here. Right now she would happily spend the rest of her life just like this. No man had ever treated her with such care, such reverence.

Soon his hands started kneading other areas; her neck, her shoulders, the top of her chest just above her breasts and then as they slid downward, he stopped.

She turned in his arms to face him. "What's wrong?"

"Are you sure you want to do this?"

"Shh." She placed her fingertip against his lips and then silenced them with her lips. "I'm very sure."

He pulled away, uncertainty in his eyes. He looked like a lost little boy in that moment and her heart melted. Then the man was back and the hunger in his eyes reflected her own. Jasmine pushed him back onto the rug and straddled his waist then wiggled lower until his cock nudged her buttocks.

He blinked slowly and raised his head as she lifted and guided his rock-hard erection to her opening. As she sank onto his shaft, taking every inch into herself, his eyes rolled back and his head dropped to the floor.

She started to rock slowly at first, getting a feel for him beneath her and a feel for her rhythm.

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Lucas couldn't believe what this beautiful female, so timid and shy at times, was doing to him now. He'd fallen hard for her that first night under the old oak tree and couldn't keep her out of his mind.

His love welled up in his chest, stopping his heart, but his lust went straight to his cock. Then his heart kicked into gear, double-time and he exhaled slowly, concentrating hard not to blow his load right there and then as she rode him slowly. The fire flickered patterns across her skin, making her even more stunning.

She kept her eyes locked on his as she moved with deliberate slowness, rocking back and forth, driving him to the edge of distraction. She felt so good. Lucas reached up to cup her breast but she grabbed his hands, twining her fingers in his and leaned forward to stare deep into his very soul.

He lifted his head enough to claim her lips—her soft, sweet lips for this moment in time they were his and his alone. He'd never known he'd been searching for her until that night he saw her sitting so sad and alone on the rock. The thought of her leaving again was more than he could bear. But now was not the time to dwell on her going—it was the time to live in this moment with her and the fantastic things she was doing to him.

The movement of her body against his brought a groan to his lips. Jasmine, his Jasmine, snagged it with her mouth and answered with her own.

She released his hands and he ran them down her smooth back to the soft swell of her buttocks. His pelvis rose to meet her thrust for thrust. His fingers dug into her flesh,

pushing her farther and harder onto his cock.

Jasmine sat back again, her breasts bouncing counter time with rocking hips. She was a vision in the firelight and his heart swelled. His vision.

The seed boiled in his balls, clambering for release, but he would not go before her and stilled before he exploded. Her pace quickened as she ground against him, the muscles in her pussy tightening around his shaft.

Oh, God.

He didn't know how much longer he could hold out and he gripped her hips to help steady her thrusts. Jasmine threw back her head and screamed as her core clenched and pulsed around his cock, sending him over the edge, his seed pumping into her in an endless stream. Five seconds, five minutes, five hours, time was irrelevant because it felt like forever.

She sighed and collapsed on top of him, panting. He stroked her silky, honey hair and basked in the glow of what they'd just shared. Jasmine came up onto her elbow and looked down at him. Her hair spilled over his chest.

She snatched a kiss and grinned. His cock, still buried deep in her, twitched and swelled with renewed life.

He flipped her onto her back, already rock hard again, and began to thrust, slowly at first but steadily building his tempo.

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Oh my God!

Jasmine couldn't believe how good he felt inside her, and each time he pulled back was like a little death until he thrust forward and filled her again. It only took a few seconds for the pressure in her clit to build. His cock pushed deep inside, she wrapped her leg around his hips to pull him in deeper still. The tip pushed against her cervix with delicious sensations, ones she'd never felt before.

“Oh, Lucas, fuck me hard.” Did she say that out loud? From the shocked and delighted look on his face she had.

He rose up onto his hand and drove into her. Within seconds she peaked and began a long, shuddering orgasm that shattered through her entire body. He joined her, pumping the last of his seed into her womb and collapsing beside her, panting.

“You’re shameless,” he said after a time, emotion and exertion clouding his voice.

“Blame it on the moonlight,” she said with a misty smile and kissed him again.

“Speaking of the moonlight, I think it’s time you learned to change.” He stood and pulled her up, then led her outside. The rain had stopped, everything smelled new and washed.

“Don’t try to force it. You’ll only make it harder,” he whispered from behind. “Think of the forest and of freedom.”

She closed her eyes and took a deep, calming breath and thought of the woods where they'd made love the first time. It led to other memories buried deep;

memories of running through the trees, splashing through creeks and jumping fallen logs. Her skin began to tingle and prickle. When she opened her eyes again, everything looked different, clearer, more in focus, more alive.

Her sense of hearing and smell sharpened, she could hear a small animal scampering through the undergrowth to her left and smell the earthy decay of fall leaves. She fell forward onto her hands and knees, her muscle cramping and straining. Suddenly she was afraid and fought it. The pain increased, ripping an alien-sounding scream from her throat.

“Don’t fight it,” Lucas crooned. “Let it come, baby.”

She did as he said and the pain receded. Within a few minutes the twitching muscles stopped and now she looked at things from the height of two and a half feet instead of her usual five foot eight.

She threw back her head and let the wolf song burst from her throat. She didn’t have to wait long for Lucas to answer. He had joined her in wolf form and with a yip he loped toward the woods and she didn’t hesitate to follow. Maybe it wouldn’t be so bad spending the rest of her life here. With Lucas.

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A distant howl carried on the wind to Jasmine sitting on the veranda, bringing a smile to her face. She rose carefully from the rocking chair to watch the sun sink slowly over the mountains. The baby kicked vigorously and she rubbed her hand across her swollen belly.

“Grandma’s coming,” she said.

“Yay, did you hear that, Jeddy?” Luke yelled with excitement and looked up at the two-year-old riding on his father’s shoulders.

“Put me down, Daddy. Put me down.” Their youngest son squealed and wiggled.

Lucas reached up and lifted the boy down and set him on the ground while Luke raced inside to grab the robe his grandmother wore when she came to visit. Then the eight-year-old took his little brother by the hand and they raced to the edge of the forest to wait.

Jasmine smiled at her husband as he joined her. His eyes were filled with love as he watched their sons before dropping to plant a kiss on her pregnant belly. Then he straightened and leaned in to nibble the side of her throat, sending a lick of heat straight to her groin. Even after all these years together, one look, one touch, was all it took to get her going.

“Stop that,” she whispered, trying not to smile. “We have company coming.”

“Well, then I’ll have to wait ‘til later tonight.” He winked.

The gray wolf stepped through the trees and greeted the children with excited licks. Melinda then rose to her feet, changing into her human form before slipping into the robe Luke held out. With one boy on each hand, she crossed the cabin.

“Hello, Melinda,” Jasmine said, and planted a kiss on her grandmother’s cheek. “I’m glad you’ve come. The boys have been

bugging me for some more of your sugar cookies.â€

Melinda dropped her hands on either side of Jasmineâ€™s baby bump, her face lighting up. â€œItâ€™s a girl this time,â€ she said with certainty. â€œA strong healthy girl, like her mother.â€

Inside Jasmineâ€™s heart swelled. A little girl. Melinda had been right both times before with the boys, and sheâ€™d hoped this one would be a daughter.

â€œWell, letâ€™s go inside and cook up a batch of those cookies for these starving young pups,â€ Melinda said.

The boys jumped up and down, cheering, and followed the older woman inside. She felt so filled with a sense of belonging and contentment she thought sheâ€™d burst with joy. Never once had she regretted staying.

Lucas wrapped his arm around Jasmineâ€™s shoulder, then dropped his hand to squeeze her ass with a promise of passion to come.

She glanced sideways at her husbandâ€™s lust-filled expression. â€œYouâ€™re shameless.â€

He looked at the full moon rising over the lake and leaned in close.

â€œWell,â€ His hot breath brushed her ear, his voice husky with desire. â€œBlame it on the moonlight.â€

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Blame It on the Moonlight

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