

## A Little Too Charming

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Well, this wasn't much fun.

Janna tried to look upbeat rather than tired. After all, Lori had probably gone to a lot of trouble for this party. Everyone else seemed to be having a good time. In fact, they were having such a good time that Janna had no one to talk to. Erica was dancing—or something—with some luscious guy in a Dracula costume. They looked more like they were trying to have sex on the dance floor.

That was one lucky man. Janna knew Erica was crazy about vampires. How many times had she dragged Janna and Nancy to see the local Dracula film festival? Janna's brain had checked out about the second time she saw Bella Lugosi. On the other hand she had to admit Frank Langella had his moments...

Stifling a yawn at the thought of those hours at the movies—or maybe because she'd had about five hours' sleep last night followed by a flight home—Janna searched the room for other people she knew.

Nancy had been around a little while ago, but now she'd disappeared. Janna was dying to know how she'd managed to transform her mousy image to that of warrior-goddess while she'd been in the little witch's room, but probably some goblin of the masculine persuasion had scooped her up and carried her off.

Erica waved happily at Janna as she headed for the door with her caped dance partner. It looked like Erica's birthday was going to end with a bang. Definitely.

Fine. Good for both her friends. She'd come to this party to be with them and they were gone. Right now Janna would give anything to go to bed—alone—and have some catch-up sleep. Unfortunately, that just wasn't going to happen.

She thought she saw Paul dressed as a pirate and debated heading for the food table and out of sight. Paul had been less than understanding when she told him she had

work that would take her out of the country for several weeks. Things hadn't been going so well before that—she'd been much too busy to try to work on their potential relationship. Anyhow. She wasn't sure who had dumped who, but they were definitely not even remotely a couple anymore.

Janna glanced at her watch and sighed. She could stay about another half hour, but what was the point? She might just as well get her work over with and then go back home. You couldn't connect with people in thirty minutes when your mind was mulling over how to talk to a potential new recruit. A potential new witch recruit, at that.

All Fred had told her was that they had to sign on the guy. And that he was a witch. Could guys even be witches? It didn't matter. You didn't argue with the vice-president of your ad agency.

"So now I have to pretend to be interested in all this stupid black magic mumbo jumbo," Janna muttered.

When you lived in Salem you heard more than enough about witches. Janna was sick of hearing about them. If only Salem really had gotten rid of them when the town had the chance!

Well, might as well get work over with. It was close enough to their appointment. Janna went to the kitchen, called a cab, and headed for the door. The place was so crowded by now that she couldn't even find Lori to thank her before she left.

She almost fell over an old woman as she went down the stairs. The woman mumbled something about love. Love was hers? Janna couldn't see too well in the sudden darkness, but the woman was probably some poor crazy street person who made no sense at all.

Janna walked a little faster toward the cab. Poor crazy woman or not, there had been something just a little creepy about that encounter. You just never knew what might happen.

"Look for the truth inside!" The woman suddenly yelled after her, quite clearly.

"Inside what, for heaven's sake?" Janna scowled and turned her attention to the

cabdriver. "Oh no, I didn't mean you. I need to get to—" She looked at the address she'd scribbled down— "Derby Street."

Wonderful. She'd hang out with the witch-hunting tourists for Halloween. It figured that Treadwell Grimes would have his shop there. Just why he would want to see her there at this ungodly hour was beyond her.

For a moment she thought about whether he planned to hit her on the head and have his evil way with her. Oh yeah. She should be so lucky. No one had bothered to have their evil way with her in far too long. Besides, more practically, nearly everyone in her agency knew where she was heading for tonight. She was perfectly safe.

Janna massaged her forehead. If she'd just had a little more time, she'd have done some proper research on this guy. Fred had shoved this assignment at her the second she'd been stupid enough to walk in the office door. She should've just waited until tomorrow to show up at work.

At least she knew something about the business that wanted to use this Grimes person. She could talk up what a great company they'd be to work for and how very, very solvent this corporation was. Even witches must care about money.

She felt her eyes shutting. No. She couldn't go to sleep. It wasn't that far...

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He slicked his hair back with one hand, hating the betraying gesture. He wanted to impress her. She had no idea who he was or what she'd come to mean to him, but he was going to change all that. Had to change all that. He'd never wanted to impress any woman in his life. He'd never needed to.

He pushed his creation into the oven and turned the dial. Usually he enjoyed cooking, but not tonight.

This was a fine time to get nervous.

"C'mon. You're fucking charming. Every woman you've ever met has told you that. Charm her, you idiot."

Wonderful. Now he was talking to himself.

Suddenly his skin prickled. That must mean she was near.

Hastily he flicked off most of the lights. They needed to start in the dark.

\* \* \* \* \*

*What evil spirit have you familiarity with?*

*None.*

*Have you made no contract with the devil?*

*No.*

"You sure this is where you want to go, ma'am?"

She woke up with a start, feeling panicky. Oh, no. Now she was nodding off in strange places, having nightmares and still not getting any rest. She'd been having some awful dreams lately.

Janna resolved to finish up this business and get home fast while a few brain cells still functioned. When she was home, in her own bed, the nightmares would stop. Probably.

Then the driver's question registered. She stared out of the cab and looked up. Janna could see why the driver sounded hesitant. The tiny shop was dark except for what looked like a candle in the upper floor's dormer window.

"This is the address." Janna glanced at the paper again to make sure. "Would you do me a favor and wait until someone lets me in before you leave?"

Would it be just too perfect if the guy had gone home and forgotten all about her? Janna smothered a nervous giggle. Maybe he'd gone trick-or-treating. It was almost

disappointing when she knocked on the door and heard a muffled voice call "Coming!"

She waved the cab driver on. As the taxi drove away she waited, listening to the sounds of footsteps clattering down the stairs. At last the door opened. A large presence loomed at the entrance. Janna opened her mouth to say hello and found herself pushed against the door.

A very warm mouth covered hers and took advantage of her opened mouth to press a very agile tongue inside. Oh my God! Janna pushed against some very broad shoulders in a sudden panic. They were in public, for heavens' sake, right on the front steps of his store. Anyone could walk by and see them. This was a bad idea. Probably. On the other hand, that tongue was very persuasive. She knew she shouldn't, but she felt herself relaxing into that unknown body and mouth. The mouth and tongue seemed to have no intention of ever stopping.

Before long she found herself returning that kiss. She didn't even know what her partner looked like, but she could tell he was strong and tall and, oh yes, an excellent kisser. Stunned, Janna realized she'd gone from pushing at his shoulders to clutching them. She felt warm. Really warm. Maybe she'd been without a guy a little too long, maybe that mouth was a little too good, but she didn't care. This mystery shadow-man's kiss was lethal.

His leg expertly nudged her own legs wider and then she could feel just how glad he was to see her. Janna knew she had to stop. This could be dangerous. This was way too much.

Hmmm. He felt like way too much. She was insane. She was in lust. It was long and strong and—

She rubbed herself against that fascinating cock. Janna heard herself making an appreciative noise deep in her throat. She didn't want to stop. She wasn't sure she could stop.

A light switched on by the door.

"Oh." He leaned against the door.

Oh? That's all he could say? Then Janna's eyes adjusted to the light.

Oh.

Oh wow. Oh blessed Jesus wow.

Fred hadn't bothered to mention this guy was gorgeous. Tall, long black hair to his shoulders with blue eyes for a contrast to his otherwise dark good looks. He might be a little young. She hoped he wasn't under twenty-five, though he might be. Oh well. She had no prejudices against younger men. Not in the least. She bet this one had lots of stamina.

He had a killer smile too.

Fred had proven he was an advertising genius once again. This guy would make a camera sit up and sing to all those potential customers out there.

Or maybe she was dreaming a very good dream this time.

"Well, uh, hello," Janna managed. "You know, I didn't quite realize until you grabbed me what you meant when you said you were coming."

That ought to get his attention. Oh yeah. After trying to gobble up the man's mouth, what could be a more sophisticated line than that?

His smile broadened from welcoming to what looked like genuinely amused. He had a dimple. Just one. On his left cheek. Yum, yum, yum.

"I'm sorry. I thought you were someone else. No matter. Greetings." He stepped back as if to get a good look at her. "I'm very happy to meet you at last, Janis."

All those warm, tingly feelings dissipated. Poof! Janna scowled. "I'm not Janis." She hadn't been Janis since she was about five and announced that Janna was what she wanted to be called instead. Janis was so ordinary.

Even worse, this clod couldn't know that had been her name. He'd just forgotten her real one. First he'd thought she was someone else and then he mixed up her name!

"Whatever you prefer." She could almost see his mental shrug.

"I prefer my name, thank you, Treadwell."

"Ted."

"Oh? Well, I suppose I have to go with whatever *you* prefer—" Janna bit her lip. She had to get a grip. No matter how much she loved to win an argument, she was supposed to be charming. She was supposed to talk him into signing onto the team.

Janna tried smiling back instead. That was a start. People had told her she had a cute smile. Right now she would have preferred a come-hither smile or a sex-bomb smile but she had to make do with what she had.

She thought about her outfit and mentally groaned. When she had first grabbed the long black T-shirt and tights and decided to dress as a witch, she figured she could get away with it for a night that combined a costume party and a business appointment with a witch. Now she wondered if maybe it was a little too short or that it looked too baggy or...

"I didn't expect you to look so good." The guy's voice was wonderful. He had this lovely deep rumble of a voice. "If you don't mind me mentioning how good your legs look in that attire."

Should she mind? Probably. This was business after all. Instead Janna smiled again and decided not to say anything.

Right. Business. "This is short notice for me, Ted, but I do have some reasons I've put together on why you might want to become a spokesman for Charms Unlimited." Janna launched into her pitch.

Ted shook his head. "No."

"No?" She almost squeaked out the words. She'd come all the way out here on Halloween for heaven's sake and she didn't even have a chance to try to sell this guy?

"I mean I don't want to talk business this minute." He beckoned her further inside. "You need to sit down and relax a minute. Have something to drink. You look tired enough to fall down."

"Oh." Janna realized they were still standing in the entrance to his shop. Perhaps she had been a little abrupt. Janna knew she needed to get herself together. She needed to

impress this guy. Why did she feel all off balance tonight? Other than being kissed senseless, of course.

“I don’t really need anything more to drink. I just left a party. Between the drinks there and jetlag I’m already in bad shape.”

“I see. In that case, come here and hold my hand.”

He held out his hand and, a little stunned, Janna put her hand in his. Then he began to lead her through the dark hall and up the stairs.

“I think I’ve blown a fuse or something worse,” the man told her. “Only half the place seems to want to let me use electricity. I fiddled with the fuse box but nothing responded. I need to guide you upstairs. The steps are old and steep and I don’t want you to fall.”

His hand was strong and big and very touchable. Why should she care why she got to hold it? No. No, she should care. This guy showed every indication of being a sex maniac.

But it was such a nice hand. And there were so many other, um, nice things about him. Besides, he was right. The stairs were steep. Once or twice she had to hang on to that hand for balance.

“Here we are,” he said, cheerfully. He lit another red candle and placed it on the kitchen counter. It added a bit more light to the candle in the window.

Janna blinked. He lived up over his shop. The small living room had candlelight to see by. She couldn’t decide if the flickering shadows looked romantic or eerie. Or both.

She looked around at the room. There were bookcases stuffed with books. There was a large poster that showed a chart of the constellations. There was a map of early Salem. There were pots of plants at the windows. This all seemed pretty normal. Sex maniacs probably didn’t have places that looked this normal.

She sniffed. Sex maniacs probably didn’t have houses that smelled like something delicious was baking. Somehow soothed, Janna sat down on a very old couch. Suddenly, a small black kitten leaped into her lap. It batted at her hair with one paw. Unwillingly



charmed, Janna laughed.

“That’s Hecate,” Ted told her. “Someone left her on my doorstep last month. After some food and a few visits to the vet, she’s feeling much happier nowadays.”

He rescued cats. He must be a nice guy, right? He might have saved a black cat named Hecate, of course, and he might call himself a witch, but he had done a nice thing.

“Let me fix you some tea.” He moved to the small kitchenette in the corner. “I guarantee you’ll feel better after some.”

She watched, dreamily, as he put a kettle on the small, old-fashioned stove. He took a tin down from an open cupboard. The man was a neat freak. He had no doors on those kitchen cupboards and everything looked incredibly tidy on the shelves.

She watched him mix something in the teacup as he poured the hot water. When he brought it to her, she sniffed it. “This isn’t tea.” What was he doing to her drink? The man might be gorgeous but she wasn’t a complete idiot.

“Chamomile,” he answered.

“What’s that?” Janna had a dim memory of her grandmother talking about chamomile. If Grandma took it, how bad could it be? Still—

His dimple came and went.

“It’ll calm you down. I can tell you’re tense.” He could tell she wasn’t reassured.

“It’s just a plant. You can use it for medicinal purposes,” he told her. “I’ll drink some first if you want, Janna.”

He wasn’t going to make her feel stupid. She held out the cup and he held her hand as he sipped.

She took both the cup and her hand back, suddenly realizing how intimate it felt to sip from the same cup. Everything he did felt a little too intimate right now. Or not intimate enough. Janna sipped anyhow.

She had to remember he'd expected someone else when he kissed her senseless. Someone he must know pretty well. She had to remember this was business.

Ted smiled at her as she sipped and Janna could feel her body go on instant alert. That smile was so charming. She wasn't feeling like this was business at all.

"How long have you lived in Salem?" he asked her.

"Forever. I went to college and all but then I came back. I have no reason to be so attached to the place but I must be. I'm even willing to commute to work as long as I can live here." She could small talk with the best of them. "How about you?"

"Oh, I moved here recently."

"Why? Oh, yeah. You're a witch. Witches probably love Salem." Janna put her teacup down and shrugged. "Though that makes no sense at all. People were killed here for being witches. Even worse, they weren't witches at all. That's Salem's big claim to fame and it's just stupid."

Ted frowned but his voice remained calm. "When you sell books on mysticism and Magick, then being located in Salem makes sense. It's good publicity. And I'm afraid I need to argue with you about a few things. Intolerance isn't stupid and that was what the Witch Trials are known for. I'm not strictly speaking, a witch, though I do practice Wicca when it seems right. And some of the people involved in the trial may well have been witches." Ted held up fingers of his hand and ticked off the points, one for each finger, as he spoke.

Janna could feel her adrenaline kick in as she sat up. "If you read the transcripts of those trials and, believe me, if you've lived in Salem all your life you have to read them at least once, you'd know not one accused person there was a witch. Even the ones who confessed were obviously crazy." She kind of liked arguing with this guy, even if she had no interest in the subject.

"I didn't say they were the witches." A timer dinged suddenly and Ted got up. "I have some just-baked cinnamon buns. Care for any?"

Well, she'd like a certain kind of buns but that didn't look like anything she'd get

tonight. Janna nodded, just to get a good look at those other buns that walked over to get the food out of the oven.

"It's hot." He broke off a small piece and, juggling it, brought it to her. "Try some first."

She blew on the piece.

"What do you mean? Who were the witches?" She took a bite of a delicious sticky bun.

"Their judges."

Janna swallowed the bun down a little too quickly and began to choke. "Where did you get that idea from, Ted?"

"My family history. I have a respected ancestor who was part of the trial and who passed his witchcraft down through the generations. He went along with everyone else in town for fear he might be found out himself." Ted handed her a napkin. "We never talked about it much in our family. But when I moved here I felt like I ought to make amends. I'm just not sure how."

Such a nice body and such a weak mind. Janna could cry over the waste. She wanted to open her mouth and blast him. Or be businesslike. Instead she said, in a dreamy voice that was unlike her own, "You are so gorgeous."

Janna blushed. She hadn't done that in a long time. Why in heaven's name had she suddenly decided to blurt that out, even if it was the truth? And what was the man going to say after that? This was going to be embarrassing.

Ted held himself completely still, his eyes not moving from hers. Janna could feel her heart suddenly start beating faster, then faster yet. Now she wasn't embarrassed. She was horny and expectant. How had the mood between changed so quickly from an almost argument to breathless waiting?

Then Janna realized maybe the mood had never changed at all. She'd been waiting to say those words to him ever since she'd been kissed. His smile suddenly flashed at her, charming, warming, seducing. He moved next to her on the couch and very

deliberately put his arm around her shoulders.

“Cinnamon is an aphrodisiac. Did you know that? And is it working as claimed?” His lips were very close to hers.

“I didn’t know. But I see you did. I appreciate the effort, but I don’t think you needed to do anything extra for me.” Janna knew she shouldn’t be saying those things but, once again, she couldn’t stop herself. “I’ve been hot for your body ever since I got to have it all over me at the door. Have we talked enough now? I’m easy. Can I have your body all over me again?”

He didn’t answer in words. Then again, they really had talked enough. He moved right into action. Ted didn’t bother to take her dress off. He bent and sucked on her breast through the fabric. Her nipple immediately came to attention and she could feel the sexual tug along with the physical one as he went to work with his tongue and teeth.

She bit back a cry. One of his hands quickly went under her dress and slid immediately past her panties to begin fondling some very wet parts of her body. Janna almost leapt off the couch at his touch.

If it had been Paul, she would have slapped him for jumping the gun at their first meeting. But this was Ted. She felt like she’d already waited far too long for him to bite her just there, to press his finger on her clit just so. Instead of slapping, Janna spread her legs wider, hoping for still more.

Ted wasn’t slow to respond to the invitation. He pulled her dress up. Then he leaned back, moved to kneel between her legs and she watched his lips blow out in a slow, almost soundless, whistle of admiration. She liked seeing the heat in those blue eyes, but she wanted more.

“Put your hands back on me, you tease.” Janna knew the words came out sexy and suggestive, but the two of them both knew it was also an order.

“Maybe. I need to do a few other things first.” He winked at her and then quickly pulled that long black T-shirt of a dress over her head. He paused again to study her.

His eyes looked everywhere, a small smile still on his face. Janna hoped he wasn’t

noticing the extra pounds she'd put on from working late nights instead of working out, or the small scar she had on her knee from a long-ago bicycle accident, or...

"Oh yes. I like this," he whispered. "I like every last inch of your body, Miss O' Neill. And I'm going to like exploring that body of yours tonight, too."

"Don't I get to explore too?" she asked.

She was clenching her teeth to keep from sitting up and grabbing at whatever she could find to suck at or fondle. Janna knew she'd never felt like this before. Maybe it was because she'd been so long without anyone; maybe it was because he was so good-looking; maybe...

Naw. Charms and aphrodisiacs didn't work. Did they?

*But it's a special time. Samhain. Time for the Wheel to begin again. Time to celebrate the dead.*

"Ted, you aren't... you haven't..." Janna didn't even know what to ask. She didn't know where she was getting these thoughts. What was Samhain anyhow? Probably she was so tired she had no ability to think clearly tonight.

Besides she couldn't think clearly while Ted was taking off his clothes. He looked good in his black T-shirt and jeans, but he looked even better as he got rid of them. Once they were off, Janna couldn't help it. She reached out to touch the hair on his chest, flexing her fingernails into that chest almost like Hecate might.

She paused when she saw the chain he had around his neck and the amulet on it. A five-pointed star with a circle around it. A pentacle. A pentagram.

"I'm a Wiccan, Janna." Ted bent over so the cold metal rested between her breasts. Then he deliberately trailed his hot tongue to the same spot. "Wiccans use the pentacle to show Earth, Air, Fire, Water, and Spirit. The Magick elements. Don't fear that, Janna."

"But..."

"I don't worship the devil. Is that what you are afraid of, sweetheart?" His mouth fastened on one nipple again. She could feel that lovely, long cock close, very close to entering her.

“No. I don’t fear anything.” Janna could barely say the words.

“I think you’re fibbing, sweetheart. But it’s not Satan-worship you dislike. Or not entirely. You don’t want to know anything about the Old Ways.” He was so maddeningly close! Why did he have to keep talking?

“That’s not fear or dislike. That’s...sensible. Damn it, Ted, are you going to go ahead and fuck me or not?” She could see them locked together in her mind’s eye. She could feel that cock moving inside her. But that was all her imagination. He was still poised, almost but not quite where she needed him to be.

Where he had to be. *This minute.*

Just as she realized she would fall apart without more, he thrust—hard and urgent and deep—inside her. She heard the near-scream she gave before she lifted her legs up and over his shoulders. Even this wasn't enough. She wanted more of him.

Locked together, the two of them stared into each other’s eyes. The sound of their breathing filled the room. She could only imagine how wild her eyes looked by seeing the ferocity in his. He wasn’t charming right now. Ted was powerful and frightening and quite overwhelming. But she wasn't afraid. She wanted to be overwhelmed.

“You’re being very difficult, love.” He spoke as if he could barely piece the words into a sentence. Maybe he was the one overwhelmed.

“You too.” Her voice sounded as breathless and hoarse as his. She didn't know if she wanted words now. She wanted—

He gave a quick laugh that died away into a groan deep in his throat. Then he buried his face between her breasts once again and began to move. That was what she wanted. Hot. So hot. And hard and slick and wet. Exactly what she wanted. Janna shut her eyes to concentrate on just how good he felt inside her.

What she was experiencing was almost too much. She could almost feel sparks of electricity jolting through her. She felt weightless, dizzy, floating.

Having Ted hard and eager between her thighs was erotic, yes, damned erotic, but also more. She didn’t know, couldn’t figure out what that more was though, when she was so close to a familiar shattering. She felt like the sea was swirling inside her, like the

tide pulling away and then smashing back. Soon it would sweep over her completely. Oh God, she wanted it to wash her away. She wanted...

His skilled hand reached out to stroke her clit, gently at first, then more demandingly as he surged inside her again and again. He stiffened as she arched upward. The wail started off thin and desperate and gained in intensity. Finally, finally, finally. Almost. Oh, please. Almost.

*Now!*

She wasn't sure if the cry was her voice or his, or resonating inside of her head. He groaned as he shuddered within her, one last desperate thrust... It rose as he too shattered, then fell exhausted at her side.

They held each other for a long time afterwards. Janna wasn't sure what to say even if she had the desire or energy to say it. It felt so comfortable to be there with Ted. Comfortable and exciting both.

Had she thought her climax was going to be a familiar sensation? She'd been wrong. This orgasm had been the most amazing one she could remember. Her body was still going through aftershocks. Besides, Ted was still deep inside her, though he must be completely depleted. He still felt right, resting inside her.

Finally she felt the very last of his erection slipping away and out of her. Janna sighed. Ted made a quiet sound, almost in protest, and then propped her body up against his chest as he made to rise.

"Well then, my Janna-Janis O'Neill, are you feeling a little less feisty?" He kissed her under her ear.

"I don't like the name Janis." Janna found it hard to work herself into an argumentative mood, but she gave the effort a good try. Could she help it if she was secretly thrilled when he picked her up and carried her into his bedroom? Maybe the room wasn't all that romantic but when he tossed her into the bed she realized it was large and comfortable and just right for any activities two people might want to try out. Ted climbed in after her and propped himself up to look at her.

"That was the name your mother gave you." Ted hadn't lost track of the conversation either, while he stretched out one long strand of red hair. "So pretty. The hair and the name."

"How did you know?"

"Some call red the devil's color, you know." Ted twirled a strand around his wrist.

"Some say a lot of ignorant, stupid things," Janna snapped. "Probably the same people who also say redheads have bad tempers. I'd watch out if I were you."

"I see I'll have to work really hard to get all the attitude out of you." Ted suddenly shifted and put her on top of him. "Then again, I'm getting really turned on by your attitude."

No other man had ever been turned on by her attitude, but Ted couldn't be lying. He was getting hard again. Janna shifted against him, trying not to feel him up too obviously. Then again, why not? She could already feel the lightening starting to threaten between them. She needed to have him again.

"How did you know my childhood name?" Janna managed to get out before the thought slipped away entirely.

"I know everything about you, sweetheart."

Just as he said that, real thunder rolled up and a crack of lightening hit. Janna jumped. Suddenly it began to rain as if every bit of moisture in the clouds was determined to drop all at once. Rain began to pelt hard against the windows. The wind blew hard through the half-opened window.

The lights went out entirely. Even the candles blew out after the last gust of wind.

"Are you all right, sweetheart?" Ted asked, his voice reassuringly near her. Then his hands were on her, which was both reassuring and thrilling.

"Yes, I'm fine. For God's sake, don't stop whatever you had planned on doing!"

Once Janna said that, she heard another condom wrapper open. Then she felt him



slide into her again, this time his cock easily finding its way home.

She began tightening around him again even while she fought to remember what they'd been saying. Her brain didn't work at its analytical best though, when a man was reaching up to play with her breasts and beginning to thrust up harder against her. She squeezed as she found her own rhythm.

In the dark everything seemed more intense, more intimate. She felt freer to do just exactly what she wanted to this lovely, unfamiliar male body. Ted was her own personal sex toy for the night. A remarkably responsive, strong sex toy.

But... how could he know her name? Know everything about her? She'd only heard of him a few hours ago.

Janna didn't know anything about him really. What she did know shouldn't be reassuring. He was a Wiccan and proud of it, he had some nutty theory about the Salem witch trials and... oh, yes... he had the biggest, strongest cock she had felt since forever.

Once again her thoughts scattered as she slid herself against him. She couldn't think right now. Later. Once she got this terrible craving for him satisfied.

"Such a sweet, welcoming pussy," he murmured in her ear. "I've been waiting for that welcome for far too long. Much too long."

"I want it hard and fast, Ted." Janna knew her voice had come out desperate and needy, but she couldn't help it. He was resisting her efforts to pick up the pace. "Hurry."

"We'll see. You haven't really experienced me slow and hard yet."

She hadn't? Janna licked her lips at the thought. What a delightful sex toy. As if he knew what she was thinking and didn't like it, Ted abruptly moved away from her. She let out a cry of protest.

Then he pushed her over onto her stomach. Janna tensed. Wait a minute. Just how kinky was this guy?

When he slid into her wet pussy from behind, she gasped. Not too kinky. Just right. Even though she couldn't control what was happening this way, once again Ted seemed

to know what she wanted. Then again, he felt so big and she felt so stretched almost any movement he made was almost too much – and just right.

“You like being fucked this way by me?” he whispered in her ear. “Because I love it. I love feeling that tight pussy of yours. I love feeling your round ass.”

“Yes. But I love any way you fuck me,” Janna gulped.

“That’s because my cock was made for your pussy. I knew it the minute I saw you. Before I saw you –” Then, as if he couldn’t bear to wait anymore, he shoved hard inside of her.

Slow and hard would have to wait until later. Ted did just what she’d asked for. Hard, fast, harder, faster. Janna bit her lip to try to stop moaning, vaguely embarrassed at how much noise she was making.

Ted made sure she couldn’t stay quiet for long. He bent over her and began to nibble on her earlobe. "Your pussy is wet for me, isn't it?"

She didn't want to respond. She grasped at the sheets, trying to maintain control.

"Getting tighter and wetter while I fuck you."

"Yes!" she cried, the word torn from her lips. She felt as if she was on fire. Maybe she was. Everything he did light a flame inside her.

"Come for me, Janna. Come for me. I want to see you come like you've never come for anyone else. Just me." He panted obscene words in her ear, all the while pumping into her. She hadn't known how erotic that could be.

"You want my cock. Tell me how much."

She shut her eyes, fighting the lure of his words.

"Tell me how much you want me," he commanded. He dragged her to the side of the bed so he could stand up and thrust harder. She’d given up any hope of silence.

"I want you..." She gave in. "I want you!"

Janna wasn’t sure how often she’d come, but she knew her arms were shaking by the time she felt him shove his cock into her for the last time. His groan was as loud as hers

had ever been. It took him forever to finish. God, it was as if he'd never come before.

She sank, head first, onto the bed. Vaguely she heard and felt Ted slide to the floor. Then Janna could feel herself falling into sleep or blacking out, she wasn't sure which.

\* \* \* \* \*

He toyed with her hair again, his eyes drooping. He should sleep. But he wanted to look at her. Fiery hair, fiery temper, fiery sex. Everything he'd wanted from her.

She sighed a little. Ted half-smiled. She was sweet, too, though she'd probably slap him if he told her that. But he knew. All the things he thought he'd sensed in her were there.

Sweet, sexy, passionate.

And innocent. She still didn't know about the two of them. She'd been willing to join with him even without knowing. Why? He hoped he knew why but he couldn't be sure. Not yet.

He hoped she had sweet dreams. His gut told him she didn't have them often. Tonight he wanted her to think of him and be happy. He wanted everything she thought and breathed and saw to bind her to him. He had counted on that. What he hadn't counted on was how everything that happened was binding him closer to her. Dangerous. She was more dangerous than she looked.

Ted kept watch over his prize until he, too, finally succumbed to sleep. His arm stretched out, even as his eyes finally shut, and he held onto her tightly.

\* \* \* \* \*

*I am innocent! I am innocent! Innocent!*

Janna woke up feeling totally disoriented and panicked again. She opened her eyes and stared blankly up at the ceiling. Where was she?

An arm draped over her chest gave her the first clue. That arm was attached to a hand that cupped her breast when she stirred and then dropped back down again limply.

That felt pleasant but who...Treadwell. She was sleeping with Treadwell. Janna blinked. She was awake now, despite her latest bad dream, and her brain was functioning more sanely.

Why had she decided to sleep with Ted Grimes? Janna took a quick peek at the muscled body next to hers. The face was hidden by his dark hair, but she had the feeling it was going to look just as good or better than it had last night by candlelight. All right, maybe she knew why she'd decided to sleep with him.

Janna scowled. That was still reckless, irresponsible behavior. She didn't do things like that.

Then she grinned. Until now, anyhow. So far things had worked out beautifully. She hadn't felt this good in a long time. Not even since she'd last had sex. Janna decided what she needed was a good stretch and a little quiet gloating. Carefully she slid herself out from under Ted's hand and stood up.

Ouch. She had some bruises and twinges. Janna thought about how she'd gotten those bruises and twinges and grinned again.

She peered outside. There was nothing left to show from last night's storm. The streets of Salem looked as cold and autumnal as ever. Janna wondered if that meant the electricity was back on in Ted's upstairs rooms. She moved to a small floor lamp and turned the switch on. Light flowed out.

Janna debated trying to fix herself breakfast. Cooking was not her strong point and she didn't like eating anything she concocted unless she was starving. She decided she wasn't that hungry and that Ted was such a neat freak that he might not want her in his tiny kitchen area. Neatness while cooking was another thing she didn't do well.

Restless, she went to one of his many bookshelves to stare at what he kept for reading material. Most of it seemed to be on herbs or astronomy. Janna yawned. She

wasn't interested.

Part of her wanted to go back and pounce on her host again. She knew she was interested in doing that. But part of her warned that she had been pouncing on a stranger too often already.

A book title caught her eye and she snorted. *The Book of Spells* indeed. Did Ted really believe in all this gobbledygook? Rolling her eyes, Janna pulled the book out. If she wasn't going to pounce she might as well read something. As she turned the pages she began to frown again.

*--Adder's Mouth, when spread on the offender's doorway, can be used to quiet a gossip.*

*--Anise is said to increase psychic abilities when taken as a tea.*

Janna flipped through the pages impatiently. Then she paused and reread a passage.

*To make your man more passionate in bed, write his name on a red phallus-shaped candle.*

Candle...Janna looked up and stared at the red candle that still sat on the kitchen counter.

No. Ted hadn't. He couldn't have meant that. Then she thought back.

*"Cinnamon is an aphrodisiac. Did you know that?"*

Red candles for passion. Cinnamon as an aphrodisiac. Janna swallowed hard. Ted had planned a seduction out? A seduction for her? Things were looking that way. After all, she didn't believe in all this, but Ted obviously did.

But that made no sense. He hadn't been waiting for her. Janna was lucky that whoever it was he had expected when he gave her that first amazing hello hadn't shown up in the middle of their evening. Ted had meant all this for that woman. He didn't even know what she looked like before she'd arrived.

*"I know everything about you, sweetheart."*

Oh God. That made no sense, either. Had she gotten involved with some kind of Wiccan stalker? Maybe they needed female sacrifices. Janna smothered a nervous giggle.

If they needed virgin female sacrifices then Ted had obviously messed up.

Another thought hit her. When did they have a rainstorm in late October or early November? Snow, yes. But rain? It was cold out there. Janna ran to the window and looked out again just to be sure. No trace of rain, ice, or snow.

Oh no. And those weird thoughts she'd been getting – no, please let them be from jetlag or overwork. Ted couldn't do that to her, could he?

"I don't like this," Janna whispered to herself.

She turned and began to look for her clothing. The bra was draped over the couch. Her dress was in a tiny ball on the floor. One shoe was near the door and Hecate was curled up near the other. Some shredded black pantyhose lay nearby.

Janna couldn't find her panties. As she struggled into her dress, she decided she didn't need them. Let Ted keep them for a memento. God knows what he'd do with them. Weirdo.

She glanced his way. All right. He was a well-hung, well-built weirdo. But she didn't need to get anymore involved than she already was. Halloween was over. She'd had her trick *and* treat.

Now what she needed to do was get out. Janna eyed her shoes thoughtfully. It was cold and those heels weren't made for walking. She shoved them on her feet.

How would she get home? Her friends wouldn't be around. Erica didn't even live nearby. Anyhow, Nancy and Erica were probably out with their normal new guys having a normal morning-after experience. Fine. She wouldn't call them. There had to be a diner or coffee shop somewhere nearby. Her purse was tipped over behind the kitchen counter. Janna grabbed it. She could call a cab from the next pay phone she saw.

She hoped Ted didn't have a modern security system with alarms that would go off when she opened the door. Because she planned to open that door right now –

No sound. No alarm. Janna breathed out and began to ease down the stairs. She was halfway down when she heard a sleepy, "Janna?"

She began to take the steps two at a time.

“Janna!” His voice was definitely no longer sleepy.

The door was deadbolt locked but the key hung on a hook next to the door. After all, Ted was a tidy kind of guy. Janna pushed the key in, turned it and heard loud noises upstairs.

“Where the hell are you, Janna?”

She pulled the door open and ran out into the early November morning.

\* \* \* \* \*

Where the hell was a place to get in from the cold and make a phone call when you needed one? Janna cursed the small purse that had made her decide not to take her cell phone with her. She cursed the high-heeled shoes she had decided made her look sexy. She cursed the cold climate of Salem. She was going to get around to cursing witches who seduced her as soon as she had the energy to think up something really nasty.

When she finally saw the tiny all-night diner she could have cried with relief. She'd get a cab and she'd get home. Janna thought of her tiny little apartment. She hadn't been home in weeks. Right now she craved being there. She'd get to take a hot bath and root around for some comfortable pajamas. Too bad it was too early to call for a pizza. She could eat a whole pizza deluxe special herself right now. Since there was practically no food in her place she'd know she'd have to make do with some dry Fruit Loops cereal instead. She thought about cursing that later, too.

As she put her hand on the door to the restaurant, another hand covered hers. She stared at the large, strong fingers and didn't even have to look up to know who was there.

“What happened, Janna? Why did you run away?”

He sounded angry. Angry and worried. But mostly angry.

"I'm going inside, I'm calling a taxi, and if you try to stop me I'm going to scream until someone calls the police." Janna made her voice sound firm.

"I wouldn't dream of stopping you." Ted opened the door with a flourish.

Janna stepped inside. Oh, yes. The diner was warm and she could smell coffee. That was as close to heaven as she needed this morning.

There was also a payphone by the entrance. She could call that taxi. Ted's hand on the small of her back steered her into a back booth instead. Janna thought about telling him no and then sniffed the coffee aroma again. She could stay for a cup of coffee.

The waitress who came to their booth looked tired.

"What's your pleasure?" she asked.

"Coffee. Black." Janna said.

"Do you have any herbal teas?" Ted asked.

The waitress looked confused. "Decaf?"

"Close enough. And get the lady and myself some scrambled eggs with toast." Ted relaxed back into the booth, his eyes still on Janna.

"Why do you assume I'll eat scrambled eggs and toast?" Janna loved scrambled eggs and toast and was starving, but that wasn't the point.

"We depleted a lot of energy last night. I'm sure you're hungry." Ted tapped his finger on the table. "And I certainly don't want you to get sick."

"Listen, Treadwell." Janna tried to sound as snide as she could. She knew she could usually do a fine job without trying. "I don't know what sort of mind game you're playing here, but I'm opting out."

"You can't, Janna. You're too perfect."

She loved how his blue eyes glinted when he smiled. God, he was an attractive man.

No. No, she wasn't going to let her mind wander again. The last time she did that,



they'd ended up hot and sweaty and all over each other. She had to remember that was a bad thing.

"Perfect for what?" She had to remember he was also doing something strange, something she couldn't quite figure out yet.

"Well, for me." He didn't even look sheepish when he said that.

Janna just stared at him. Ted took both her hands. "Sweetheart, I've been looking for you for years. Ever since I realized my family history."

"Why?" Janna wasn't even sure she wanted to know. "And—and you didn't expect me to be there last night when you pounced on me."

"I lied about that. Well, sort of." He spoke faster when he saw her reaction to his words. "I did expect Janis-Janna O'Neill. I knew you had lived in Salem forever, you were going to make a sales pitch to me, and a million and one other things. But I'd never met you. When you showed up, I just gave in to an impulse that got a little out of hand. But you were so responsive. So perfect."

"I was sex-starved, you mean?"

"No! I mean, I knew I'd been right. You were the one I needed."

"For what, damn it?"

"To make amends."

Janna wondered if anyone would be upset if she dumped some coffee in the lap of the exasperating creature in front of her. Once she explained, surely people would sympathize with her.

"For *what*?" Janna kept her voice down, but just barely. She saw the waitress glance her way.

"I told you last night."

"Oh, remind me." Janna managed the words through her gritted teeth. She wanted to scream but reminded herself he might have explained something in his own convoluted Wiccan fashion. He probably even thought she understood. She'd wait to scream until

after he explained. "Perhaps it slipped my mind."

"My ancestors hung one of yours, knowing full well that she wasn't a witch and he was." Ted looked at her as if what he said should make complete sense.

"My last name is O'Neill. My great-great grandparents came over from the Old Country long after the witch trials." Janna resisted patting Ted on the shoulder.

"That was only one branch of your family, sweetheart. Tell the truth. Haven't you felt... uneasy, sometimes? I can tell things about people, you know. Not always clearly, but I know you've been troubled by something that took place in the past." Ted looked up as the waitress came over with their food. He smiled at her as he thanked her and she beamed.

The man was a charmer, no doubt about it. Out of his mind, but a charmer.

"No. I haven't. The past has never troubled me much. I live in the present." Janna forked a mouthful of scrambled eggs.

"You haven't had anything bother you? Dreams perhaps?"

Janna paused in chewing. She forced herself to swallow the eggs rather than choke. The old woman. The voices in her dreams. How did he know? Oh Lord, he didn't really know everything about her, did he?

"Dreams can bother me sometimes. They can bother anyone." Janna tried to make it casual.

"But—"

"Listen, you set me up. From the time you talked to my agency to when you first kissed me like you were going to ravish me—"

"I did ravish you, Janna."

"—to setting up those damned superstitious candles and cinnamon buns. And all to atone for something your ancestors did? That's weird!" Janna pushed her plate away. "I'm calling a cab."

"I'll take you home, Janna. Soon. Let me finish. It's not just to atone. Or, rather, it's

not just because I feel guilty. My family has had problems ever since my ancestor the judge helped condemn yours to death." Ted pinched the bridge of his nose with his fingers. "Sort of – well, a curse."

Janna dropped her head in her hands and moaned. She did *not* need this. First Paul the loser and now Ted the lunatic. Was there something wrong with her? How did she attract these guys?

"What kind of curse?" Janna said, bracing herself. "You die at age thirty. You howl at the moon at midnight. You all grow up to be raving insane sex maniacs?"

"Shhhh." Ted replied. The other diners had looked up again. "Nothing like that. We... we just have a hard time falling in love."

"Huh?"

"Your ancestor, Dorcas, told the judge that since he had no pity, his family would find no love. She wasn't a witch, but she had right on her side. What she said came true for my family."

"I don't remember that in any of the Salem records," Janna objected.

"So you remember what you read of the trial transcripts!" Ted had an annoying grin on his face. "You must have had some interest in the trials."

"It's drilled into you in school," Janna scoffed.

She shut her eyes. She did remember the words, or some of them. She ought to be able to remember. She'd finally made the connection, although it had taken her long enough. Those words had been echoing in her dreams for weeks. *Innocent. I am innocent.*

"She didn't say it where others could record the words. Janna, I know how this sounds to you. I feel stupid enough telling you and I'm more used to all this than you. But try to understand. All our lives my family has been... cold. Unable to connect to people. You wouldn't believe the number of unhappy marriages and divorces we've had over the generations. I decided to study why and I told myself I was never going to try to get close to anyone if I couldn't change things." Ted put his hand on her knee.

Janna glared, but that hand felt sort of nice there. Fine. She was weak. She let the hand stay.

“I studied the family history. I began to look up your ancestor’s family tree. I know your cousins, your sisters, your brother.”

“Several of my cousins are single. Why not try charming them?”

“I wanted you. Something about... well, when I saw your name I just knew you were the right one. At least I hoped so.” Why did he have to look so sincere? “Something about just your name appealed to me.”

“Janis?”

“Yeah. Janis. Janna is fine, too. But I met you on paper as Janis Katherine Dorcas O’Neill.”

Janna tried not to squirm. “You really do know everything about me. Even the Dorcas.”

“I know a lot. I’d love to know more.”

“Ted, you don’t really. You used me. You set me up and used me to get rid of some imaginary family curse of yours.” Janna tried not to let the idea depress her as much as it seemed to be doing. “Let’s finish all this. I don’t have a lot of cash with me. We can stop at an ATM on the way to my house and I’ll pay you my share of breakfast. Then we can just say good-bye.”

Ted didn’t say anything, though he didn’t look happy. They both stood up and, while Ted paid the bill at the counter, Janna contemplated how stupid she’d been last night.

She had to get in touch with Nancy or Erica. They’d help sort out all the messy emotions she was feeling. Everything hurt. Janna gritted her teeth. She just needed to endure a few more minutes with Ted and then she would never have to endure him again.

Damn it, that idea hurt too.

Ted didn't stop at an ATM on the way back. Janna was suddenly feeling too depressed to even try to fight about why he didn't. She stared out the window, looking at the bleak grayness of the morning. It was going to be one of those dark, chilling days. Perfect. That was just the way she felt.

When they got to her place, Ted parked the car. Janna let out a sigh.

"Well, thanks," she managed.

Ted opened the door for her and said, "I'm seeing you to the door, like it or not."

Janna didn't look at him as they went past the lobby. Still, it seemed to take forever before she got to her door. Janna put her key in, opened the door, flicked on the hall light and then turned to him.

"Well, good-bye then."

"I don't think so."

Ted didn't sound charming at all. Janna wondered how many other people had seen the real Ted, the intense, almost spooky one. That side of Ted was hidden under the charm and the good looks but just as much a part of him.

"Listen, you need to understand that this is my place, Mr. Grimes..." Janna began.

He walked into her place behind her and then shut the door with a push of his shoulder. "No. You need to understand something, Ms. O'Neill. Several somethings."

"What?"

"First, those spells and charms were because I was scared, not because I wanted to trick you. I already knew you were important to me and I didn't want you to leave before we'd had the chance to really talk."

"You think we talked last night?" Janna tried to laugh scornfully.

"No. But I'd like to now."

Janna glanced down at Ted's pants and suddenly the confused hurt rolled away.

“You need to explain how much you’d like to talk to your cock down there. I don’t think he’s listening.”

Ted’s smile was blinding again.

“Well, I wouldn’t mind talking and fucking, Janna. They are two of my favorite things to do...especially with you.” Then, suddenly, he was holding her again. His hungry mouth moved softly, persuasively, against her lips until she let him inside.

He was persuasive, but definitely not soft. His tongue glided against hers. His hands held her arms as he moved against her, showing just how hard he was.

It was just like the first time. And, once again, this was a bad idea. Probably. On the other hand, that tongue was still very persuasive. Janna knew she shouldn’t, but she felt herself relaxing into that body and mouth.

“No charms, no tricks this time, Janna. It’s just me, wanting you desperately,” Ted’s voice rasped in her ear. “Your choice, sweetheart.”

Choice? She had no choice. Janna’s head swam as she moved her mouth to let her tongue explore his chin and jaw. He had a morning stubble. That should annoy her but didn’t. Ted made it exciting to be scratched by his whiskers.

*Love is yours. Just look for the truth inside.*

For a second she remembered that crazy witch-woman. She wasn’t sure love was hers, but she was willing to finally look at the truth—her truth—inside. Was love was hers? She hoped love could be hers. Lord, she hoped so.

“I want you too. No. More than that. You’re becoming important to me, Ted,” Janna admitted. “This is nuts and we’re probably going to kill each other before the week is out, though. You and I are so different.”

“I like where we’re different.” Ted’s hand explored some of the difference under her dress. “And if we kill each other before the week is over, it’ll be from too much sex. I’ve always thought that was a great way to go. Especially with someone you’re starting to love. I don’t really know how love works, Janna, but I have a feeling I may find out with

you. Why else did something tell me you were the person I needed to search for?"

He was always going to think in ways that defied logic. Janna already knew that. But how could she argue when they were both coming to the same conclusion? Besides, she really did want to stop talking and make use of that cock. Immediately.

"All right then," Janna said, thickly, unsnapping his jeans. "Don't say I didn't warn you."

At that, without warning, the lights went out.

Ted laughed and ripped her dress off. Janna didn't know which action to be more stunned by. At least things weren't as dark as last night. She could see Ted in the murky morning light, his mouth now fastened on one of her nipples.

"You told me no tricks!" Janna almost wailed, but she wasn't sure she was wailing over his deceit or the way his teeth felt on her nipple. "You turned the damn lights off again!"

Ted looked up. "That wasn't me, Janna. That's you. Or perhaps it's you and me together. We're a powerful combination, darling." Then he went back to what he'd been doing.

"I can't—Damn it, Ted, don't do that—ooh, that does feel good. Touch me there again. No, wait. Ted, I have nothing to do with electricity—yes, there—I mean, I didn't make the lights go out."

Janna knew she wasn't exactly making sense, but how could she think when his hands were stroking her clit so knowingly and his mouth was nipping and licking her second nipple into a long, hard point?

"Oh yes, you do." Ted sounded as if he was struggling to concentrate. "That's when I was sure we were meant for each other. You blow my house's fuses as well as mine. Oh, God, Janna! Do that again."

Janna had finally discovered the pleasure of trying to talk and fuck at the same time. And torturing your partner with sex while you listened to what he was saying. Janna bit

the tip of her tongue hard as she used her hands to grasp Ted's delightful penis.

"You're saying this is my fault?" Janna asked.

"Right now everything is your fault, sweetheart," Ted groaned. "Including the light failure."

He picked her up and almost threw her on the floor.

"Damn, Ted, I'm going to get carpet burns!" Janna yelped.

"Serves you right." Ted nipped her thigh and she yelped again.

And then it was much too late to laugh or joke or do anything but let the increasing passion and tension build. Janna whimpered as her legs clung to Ted's waist. She'd been the crazy one to think she wanted to be rid of him or of this forever.

"Did you really think you could give up the feel of my cock inside you? Or that I'd leave that warm pussy of yours?" Ted grinned at her as he slid his cock deeper into her aching sheath, grinding his hips against her. "Tell me what you want."

"You!" Janna didn't care how desperate she sounded anymore. She didn't care about anything but the feel of his cock sliding inside her.

She drummed at his back with her heels, demanding more. She knew she scratched and cried and squeezed trying to get more. Ted understood her perfectly and gave her what she demanded, sinking his hard, hot cock into her over and over again. The sound of their bodies slamming together became a music of its own, like the roar of the waves at the sea. She thought she might go through the floor with some of his thrusts.

Janna knew she couldn't stand more. "Now!" she screamed. Lightning seemed to crack in the air. Suddenly the tension released into one overwhelming surge of bliss. As she cried out her climax, the light went back on above her. Ted groaned a half-second later, shuddering over her. Janna shut her eyes again, just enjoying the feel of his body quaking against hers.

"Now whose fault is it?" Ted demanded at last in a faint voice. "It wasn't my climax that made the lights go back on, Ms. O'Neill!"

Ted was getting much too good at arguing.



“Never mind that,” Janna sidestepped. “What kind of amends did you have in mind, Ted?”

“What?”

“You said you needed to make amends to my family or me.” Janna pushed her hair back and got up on her elbows to survey her somewhat worse-for-wear lover. “What did you have in mind?”

Ted smiled. “If you think I haven’t done enough, I guess I’ll just have to atone some more.” He reached for her again.

Janna laughed and squirmed. “I don’t think I meant that, exactly,” she protested.

“I did... I really do want to try for some slow and hard – and tender – sex with you. Shall we try again now? You’re much too charming to keep my hands off you for long.”

Damn. Wait until she told Erica and Nancy that someone had actually called her charming. Janna’s fingers curled themselves into Ted’s long hair. Then again, she could wait to tell them. She had more important things to do. Like charm the man again.

# Naughty Nancy – Book 4 ½: Trek Mi Q'an

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## Part II

To Dot's margaritas & Lori's scenarios

To Crissy & knowledge-seeking

To Kris & love grottos <g>

To Maryam & patience [ahem]

To Mary & cheap husbands \*sigh\*

To Marty & cheap husbands \*another sigh\*

To Gis & Lamby \*very big sigh\*

To NN's harem & kadin \*wiggles eyebrows\*

To the women on the Jaid Black bulletin board...

...for grinning knowingly when you read this.

I'll see you in Scotland, Nancy ;)

## Chapter 1

### Hunting Grounds of the F'al Vader Pack

*Planet Khan-Gor ("Planet of the Predators")*

*Seventh Dimension, 6067 Y.Y. (Yessat Years)*

*"Ahhh...CHOO!"*

Nancy's eyes squinted shut as her entire body shuddered from the violence of a sneeze. She sneezed three times more in rapid succession, then waved her hands madly about to clear the puff of whitish smoke that was swirling around her like a cranky cloud.

*Damn it!* she mentally wailed. What weird concoction had that old witch blown at her? It was translucent white and very sticky, much like a resin.

Nancy harrumphed as she absently studied her hands. She never should have decided to take a break from Lori's party. She never should have exited outside to the back alley in order to regain her composure. So what if a man had engaged her in conversation, she thought acidly. Any *normal* woman would have been able to sustain a casual conversation with a man without finding it necessary to take a break and air herself out before resuming said conversation.

*Damn it!*

Nancy's lips pinched together in a glower. Perhaps she really should have taken that job in Alaska. She doubted she would have gotten so fidgety around a mountain man. She doubted she would have cared whether or not such a male found her impressive enough to seduce. Her biggest concern with impressing a mountain man would have been whether or not she looked inbred enough to suit his sexual taste.

Nancy's back went ramrod straight. *Damn it!*

This was enough mental babbling, she babbled to herself. She'd gotten her air – as well as some weird sticky white junk blown at her by the feisty old witch! – so it was time to go back inside and continue the conversation she'd been having but minutes prior with Justin. Justin seemed like a good enough sort, she assured herself with a harrumph. He wasn't an athletic hunk by any stretch of the imagination, but then again she doubted Playboy would be contacting her anytime soon begging her to pose for a centerfold spread.

Her lips pinched together in a frown. *Damn it!*

Nancy supposed that if she possessed a body worthy of Playboy, she probably wouldn't be so damned unsure of herself where the opposite gender was concerned. But she didn't and she was. She'd just have to figure out a way to get over it.

One thing was for certain, she thought as she finished clearing the air of the whitish smoke with her hands, her goal of getting laid tonight would be a hell of a lot easier to accomplish if Justin were a more forceful type. As is she felt as if she was the one doing all the seducing – hardly an easy feat for a woman who'd been known as a reclusive social mouse not even a full day ago.

Nancy took a deep breath as she squared her shoulders.

It was time to go back inside. It was time to rejoin the party. It was time to seduce the hell out of nerdy, geeky Justin. She was a warrior woman now, she reminded herself with a sniff. Xena. Phoenix from the –

Bah! She was going to fuck that little dweeb tonight if it was the last thing she ever did. Enough said.

Her chin went up a notch. Her nostrils flared. She was determined, damn it. Horny and determined. She hadn't purchased those condoms tucked away in her scabbard for nothing.

Gritting her teeth, she took a resolute step toward the backdoor entrance to Lori's party. Warrior woman, she silently reiterated as her nostrils flared impossibly further. Alpha female, she silently grunted, her muscles flexing.

It was time to go back inside. It was time to rejoin the party. It was time to...

It was time to figure out where in the hell she was.

"Oh shit." Nancy's jaw dropped open as the air finally cleared of the whitish smoke and she got her first unimpeded look at her surroundings. Her eyes widened and her teeth clicked shut as it dawned on her that she was standing in some sort of a... nest?

"What the hell," she muttered.

Nancy gaped down at her feet, noting that the structure she was standing in was silver and glittery, the fabric of it similar to that of twined tree bark – silver, glittery, twined tree bark. Worse yet, there were animal pelts scattered all about the nest, as if it

had been recently occupied.

She gulped. If the nest had been recently occupied, it didn't take an Einstein to figure out that whatever had occupied it would probably come back. And it might not like to share...

"Shit." Her heart pounding, Nancy swore under her breath as she quickly made her way to the other side of the glittery silver nest. The nest swayed a bit, so she immediately came to a standstill, then crept slowly to the side, careful not to rock it.

She was in shock, she knew. She had no idea where she was or how she had gotten here but—

"Oh. My. God." Nancy's entire body froze in place when she reached one wall of the nest and glanced to the terrain that surrounded it. Or more to the point, when she glanced to the terrain that *didn't* surround it. "I am in a damn tree," she said in a monotone. "The witch actually put me in a tree."

In so much as she could tell, there was no land on any side of the nest to step off onto. It appeared to be high up—very, very high up, she uneasily noted—perched up in a tree and surrounded on all sides by a towering view of a silverish, icy-looking mountainscape hundreds of feet below it.

Her heart rate soared. Silver-ice mountains? Hundreds of feet *below* her?

She gulped. She'd always been afraid of heights. The nest she was currently standing in was up higher than she'd ever been before. If she couldn't see any land directly below the nest, then that could only mean that—

She gasped, noting for the first time that a pointed piece of silver ice jutted up from the middle of the nest. That could only mean that...

She swallowed roughly. That could only mean that...

That could only mean that the nest was impaled upon a narrow, pointed piece of icecap. One singular piece of ice was all that held the nest up, she thought hysterically, was all that stood between keeping the nest perched upright on the mountain apex and allowing the nest to plummet only God knows how far to the ground.

*Damn it! I'm going to kill that witch!*

Blood rushed to Nancy's head, pounded through her veins. Her heart rate accelerated impossibly higher as a near-maddening hysteria bubbled up inside of her. Her eyes wide with fright, she opened her mouth and did the only thing she could think to do in such a situation.

She screamed. Loudly.

*"Help Meeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!"*

She screamed out her platitude three times more, her voice hoarse when at last she stopped. Panting for air, she braved another glance over the ledge, immediately noting

that the plummet from up in the nest didn't look anymore welcoming than it had before she'd started wailing like a baby.

"Damn it!" she screeched.

Mountains. For as far as the eye could see there was nothing but mountains. And silver ice. The ice was everywhere, coated everything, and formed slick shields on mountains that were so tall she couldn't see their bottoms.

"What. Is. Going. On," she bit out.

A gust of icy wind hit her in the face, inducing her to realize for the first time just how cold it was up here... wherever up here was. Shivering, she raised her hands and began to briskly rub them up and down her arms, absently working the chill bumps out of her flesh while simultaneously wracking her brain for a way out of her predicament.

She bit her lip. She was up in a nest. The nest was perched on top of one of those pointed mountain apexes she'd just seen below. How would she ever get out of here? And when – and if – she did get out, where to then?

Her nostrils flared to wicked proportions. Alaska. Why the hell hadn't she taken that job in Alaska? "Damn old witch," she mumbled under her breath. "I should never have given her my last stick of gum. I should have..."

She didn't know why, couldn't say what premonition it was that instructed her to shut up and look down, but slowly – ever so slowly – Nancy's eyes trailed down her body until she ascertained that...

Yep, she was butt naked.

*Damn it!*

Ooooh, she thought angrily, her lips coming together to form a snarl, the witch had gone too far this time. Not only was she stuck in a silvery glitter nest made of twined bark, not only was the nest thousands of feet off the nearest ground, not only was her body covered in a sticky white residue, not only was it colder than she didn't know what up here, but she was also naked. Butt naked.

Her hands fisted into tight balls and fell to her sides. When she got out of this place – and she *would* get out of it – she was going to strangle that old witch and enjoy the depraved activity with every cell of her being. So this is the thanks she was to receive for being kind to that woman, she thought melodramatically. She couldn't believe *this* was her reward for being nice enough to give the old woman the last stick of gum she'd had on her, the very one she'd tucked away in her...

"Scabbard." Nancy let out a breath of relief when she realized she might be naked, but she still had her sword and scabbard with her. She didn't know why that knowledge gave her such comfort, but it did. Perhaps it was because the sword was, at present, the only connection she had to the world she'd been transported from. Perhaps it was because the sword – useless as it no doubt was since she didn't know how to use it – would still offer her minimal protection from any predator that might think to reclaim its

nest while she was occupying it. Whatever the reason, it did the trick and helped her to calm down a bit.

“I have to get out of here,” she murmured, her brown eyes darting warily back and forth.

Just then another gust of chillingly cold wind slammed into her face, inducing her flesh to goosebump. Her teeth chattering, she sank slowly to her knees and ran her hands over one of the animal pelts lining the nest. It was warm and fuzzy, and very inviting at the moment.

As she looked around she noted that the sun was rapidly fading and that darkness would soon overtake this mountain she was stranded atop. The darkness, she thought nervously, would cause the temperature to plummet even lower.

She spent a threadbare moment considering her options, but realized rather quickly that she didn't have any to consider. There was no getting off this mountaintop without aid. She would have to bide her time and pray that the old witch decided to poof her back to Salem in the morning.

Climbing under the intoxicatingly warm animal pelts, Nancy expelled a deep breath as she fell asleep with her sword laid against her backside. It was there, the still-warm metal reassuringly within reaching distance if she needed it.

Drowsy, confused, angry, but mostly frightened, she allowed herself to succumb to slumber, hoping against hope that she was already asleep and would wake up to find that all of this had been no more than a bad dream.

When her gaze flicked up and she took notice of four crimson full moons tinting the nighttime sky atop the mountain a haunting blood red, she closed her eyes and told herself it simply had to be a dream.

A very horrific, intensely frightening, could-drive-a-woman-to-drink, bad dream.

*Damn it!*

## Chapter 2

Vorik F'al Vader, the eldest of seven sons and heir to his sire Yorin's dominion, landed silently on the ground, careful to make not a sound. He shape-shifted immediately from his winged *kor-tar* form and landed on humanoid feet, his heavily muscled body nigh unto naked, save the kilt wrapped about his waist and the pair of

knee-high silver *muu* hide boots he wore.

Slowly, his dark-haired head came up, his acute silver eyes scanning the mountainside for any sign of *yenni* movement. He felt the excitement of the hunt coursing through his veins knowing 'twas at long last time to round up his own pen of pets. Some would be bartered at market, aye, but most he would keep for himself.

What made a *yenni* so valuable was not only the she-beast's insatiable hunger for humanoid male seed, but 'twas also the sheer beauty of her fertile form – the fleshiness of her hips, the milkiness of her pale skin, the way she'd daintily flick her tail about whilst she suckled seed from a Khan-Gori male's cock...

Vorik sighed a bit dreamily, and with much anticipation. He had seen eighteen Yessat years as of this moon-rising so now 'twas his rite of passage into manhood to take as many *yenni* as he desired into his keeping... and into his bedfurs. For years he had fantasized about what it might feel like to have a hoard of females suckle from him, drink from him, feed from him. He would care for them well, he knew, making himself and his cock ever available to see to their appetites.

He was a selfless Barbarian, he told himself with a sniff. No matter how much seed his pets would wish to suckle from him, he'd see to it he provided them with it. Aye, he was forever putting the needs of others before his own. He was forever thinking of the happiness of other creatures before he saw fit to care for himself. He was forever –

Bah! He wished to have his cock suckled til 'twas possible it fell off. Enough said.

Vorik took a deep breath and closed his eyes, drinking crisp cold air into his lungs. He needed to calm himself, he knew, for his man sac was already tight and nigh unto bursting just thinking about the hunting booty that would soon be his. 'Twas cruel indeed the ancient custom that forbade a Khan-Gori male to lose his virginity until he saw eighteen Yessat Years, for it seemed that his cock and man sac had been in desperate need of satiation ever since the moon-rising he'd turned twelve.

Every waking moment for the past six years had been hellish, every hour had passed as an eternity, for the need to thrust into the warm, suctioning flesh of his destined mate had come upon him at hourly intervals, nigh unto driving him insane. Because the males of his species realized they weren't likely to find their Bloodmates until much later in life, 'twas the way of it on Khan-Gor to expend one's seed within the bodies of the dimwitted *yenni* until at which time a Bloodmate was claimed. Even then a Khan-Gori male was expected to keep up the feeding of his pets until they were bartered at market, for 'twould be cruel indeed to allow the beautiful creatures to slowly starve to death.

Vorik harrumphed. He could never be so cruel.

As is ever the way of nature, the system worked out just fine, for female *yenni* could not survive without feeding on seed. And so it came to pass through the perfection of trillions of Yessat years of evolution that the *yenni* provided sticky flesh to thrust into and voracious mouths to be suckled with whilst the Khan-Gori male provided his dimwitted pet with food. 'Twas a perfect system. Or, Vorik mentally qualified as his lips



turned down grimly, mayhap it would have been a perfect system had he been allowed to indulge of *yenni* from his twelfth year onward.

By the tit of the she-god, he needed a suckling.

A soft purring sound a mile away snagged Vorik's attention, inducing him to smile slowly. He had heard that very sound many a time emitting from the pen his sire's *yenni* were caged in. The sound always meant one of two things – the *yenni* had either fallen asleep after feeding well, or she was cleaning herself.

His nostrils flared as he breathed in the scent of her. It mattered not that she was a mile off in distance, for the males of his species had the most acute sensory systems of any known creature in the seventh dimension of time and space. He could smell her skin, could smell her pussy, could smell the scent of her arousal...

Fangs exploded into Vorik's mouth as he shape-shifted back into his *kor-tar* form. Faster than an eye can blink, his skin dimmed from its usual golden bronze color to a translucent shade of silver ice. Talons that tore prey apart so easily spiked out from where his toes had been, and wings that spanned twelve feet across protruded from his back as he leapt skyward and took flight.

*At last*, he thought as his manhood hardened, *oh aye at last*.

He tracked her easily, a skill any Khan-Gori male perfected by childhood. Part and parcel of growing into manhood on his planet was learning to provide food for one's family, and one could not provide food for their pack without a hunter's skill at taking down living, moving prey. This *yenni* would provide him with no food, 'twas true, for 'twould be Vorik who provided her with much nourishment.

Oh aye.

He found the *yenni* cleaning herself near unto an ice-coated stream, her face lowered betwixt her thighs and her tongue darting out to lap at her own pussy. Vorik's nostrils flared as he watched her, her pink tongue meticulously rimming the folds of her flesh, then darting up on a purr to lick at the bud nestled between the lips of flesh. She purred and cooed as she lapped at herself, and Vorik found himself simply staring at the beauty of the scene.

This *yenni* female was nigh unto perfect in her beauty. Her creamy breasts were large, the pink nipples that capped them round and full. Her hair was long and dark, and looked soft to the touch. The only aspect of the she-beast he found to be a turn-off was the thinness of her form. 'Twas obvious she was no alpha female for a dominant she-beast would better know how to feed on male seed.

Well, Vorik grunted, verily it mattered not, for he would teach the she-beast whatever lessons she needed to learn in the art of feeding. 'Twould be ideal if she already knew what she was about, but such was apparently not the way of it. So no matter how many sucklings it took to teach her how to get great spurts of seed in one feeding, he would be patient and understanding in waiting for her to catch on.

By the tit of the she-god, he grumbled as he licked his fangs, he prayed she was as

dimwitted as she looked.

Vorik's cock stiffened whilst he landed on his feet and shape-shifted into his humanoid form. His fangs retreated, his wings and talons seemingly disappeared, as he softly made his way through the thick of the trees to stalk and capture the *yenni* by the stream. He was careful to make not a sound as he prowled toward the open savannah from the forest, no cracking of ice under his feet, no rustling of branches overhead.

*"Help Meeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!"*

Vorik's entire body stilled as the feeding call of an alpha female *yenni* reached his ears. The shrill cry of the dominant female caused the *yenni* he'd been tracking but moments prior to whimper and scamper away, and he found himself uncaring of the fact that he'd just been thwarted of his hunting booty for he was intrigued indeed by this unexpected happening.

Verily, 'twas hard to stalk an alpha female. 'Twas even harder to track one who sounded to be desperately hungry for they tended to stay well-fed. Mayhap, he thought to himself, she had followed a Khan-Gori predator to a hunting perch in the hopes of getting a meal and had managed to snare herself into a nest from which she could not escape in the doing.

*"Help Meeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee! Help Meeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee! Help Meeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!"*

"Oh aye," Vorik murmured, his man sac tightening. His acute silver gaze honed in on a mountain apex that looked to be a lengthy flight away. She was trapped alright—trapped and desperate to suckle a male nigh blind.

Vorik swallowed a bit roughly as he considered just how good of a suckling the dominant female was likely to give in her crazed, nigh unto starving state. Feeding her would like as naught kill him for she would demand great spurts to sate her.

His nostrils flared as he breathed in the crisp nighttime air. By the tit of the she-god, he was ready to die.

Fangs exploded into Vorik's mouth once again as he shot up from the ground, his body transforming into his *kor-tar* form as he leapt upwards.

He would find her in all haste.

He would feed her as any good master should.

He could not allow an alpha female to suffer from hunger pangs needlessly.

Ever thoughtful of others he was, he sniffed. Ever considerate of dimwitted creatures was he. Ever—

Bah! He wanted the she-beast to suck him dry. Enough said.

## Chapter 3

Groggy with sleep, her eyelids firmly closed, Nancy's brow furrowed in incomprehension as she tried to figure out where the smooching sound she heard was coming from. It was a vaguely familiar noise, the type of kissy-fish lips, smooching, "here girl" kind of sound a person would make if they were calling a dog over to them that they might toss it a bone.

Her eyebrows shot up as she continued to sleep. Weird.

The sound was so bizarre to her in fact, so misplaced, that she rolled over onto her side with a grumble, and fell back into a deep, snoring sleep within seconds, her long skinny sword pressed against her backside.

Moments later she felt a large palm settle on her belly, then reverently run over the excess flesh there. Even in her sleep, her lips pinched together in a frown as she groggily considered the fact that even two months of dieting and exercise hadn't been enough to get rid of her belly. Or her thighs. Or her butt.

*Damn it!*

The feel of a solid piece of warm flesh tapping against her lips induced Nancy's forehead to crinkle bewilderedly. The tapping, accompanied by the kissy-fish lips "here girl" sound, was finally enough to rouse her from slumber and cause her eyelids to slowly flutter open.

Shit.

Nancy's eyes rounded in shock as she gaped up at the huge man kneeling down beside her. She had never – *never* – seen a man so gargantuan as this one. His body, which looked ominously long even kneeling down, was so thick with muscle that she wouldn't have been surprised if he weighed in the vicinity of five hundred pounds. He wasn't burly or stocky in the slightest, for his musculature looked right on him, but he was incredibly big in every way.

*Tap. Tap. Tap.*

*Tap – tap.*

*Tap – tap – tap – tap.*

*Tap.*

"Whadddyaddnd." Unable to part her lips to speak without a surprise visitor sneaking entrance inside, her nostrils flared incredulously as the big oaf continually tapped the head of his – extremely well endowed! – penis against the swell of her lips.

The gargantuan's own lips were still pursed in kissy-fish form as he slapped his manhood against her, while the "here girl" sound he was emitting grew louder and more demanding.

The giant was treating her as if she were a dog and his penis a big bone to salivate over. Her nostrils flared even further. This was just too much.

*Damn it!*

What in the hell was going on? she mentally wailed. Who was this man? Where, she grumbled under her breath, had that witch whisked her off to? One thing was for certain, she hesitantly conceded, she had never – not even once – seen a man so large as this one in all of her life. She wasn't sure it was even genetically *possible* for a human male to be so gargantuan in size.

Frightened, Nancy's eyes flew up to meet the giant's, the expression on her face indignant regardless to the scare he was giving her. Never show fear, she staunchly told herself, remembering what she'd once heard on an Oprah show about deterring a possible assailant. Never show fear.

*Tap – tap – tap.*

*Tap – tap.*

*Tap – tap – tap.*

Unfortunately, she grimly conceded as the head of his cock kept up its tempo against her lips, her lack of exhibited fear didn't seem to be impressing him all that much. And – eek! – she really wished he'd quit making that kissy-fish lips sound.

*Damn it!*

\* \* \* \* \*

Vorik landed softly upon two feet in the Khan-Gori perch, shape-shifting into his humanoid form whilst he entered the nest. His fangs retreated, his eyes shifted back from red to silver, and the wings seemingly dissolved from his back as the beast submerged in favor of the man.

His breath caught when he saw her lying stretched out under animal hides in the middle of the nest, her saucy silver sword-like tail erect even whilst slumbering. There she was in all her suckling glory. The plump alpha female he'd tracked – and caught.

"Oh aye you like to feed," he murmured, his muscles clenching in anticipation as his eyes drank in her fertile form. He bent down beside her, kneeling close to her slumbering body as he brushed away the animal pelts, and ran a large hand over the soft skin of her full underbelly. She was fleshy, the dominant female was, and her love of eating was proof positive that she was to become a pet he would cherish and pamper for

all time.

Vorik closed his eyes briefly and took a steadying breath, for he was embarrassingly close to spurting before the *yenni* was even roused enough to suckle of him. His cock was as long and hard as 'twas possible for it to be and his man sac was so tight that the excruciatingly exquisite feeling bordered on pain.

By the tit of the she-god, her chubby form was nigh unto driving him daft with arousal.

Pursing his lips together, his cock in hand, Vorik announced the arrival of a hearty meal to the dimwitted *yenni* with the traditional sound a male of his species makes in such a situation as he tapped the head of his staff against her lips, beckoning to her to eat. When her eyes fluttered open – by the ice of Mount Shalor they were beautiful! – he was certain 'twas the need of a meal he saw in her rounded gaze.

He tapped his cock harder against her mouth, nigh unto desperate for her suctioning lips to part. Sweat dotted his brow as he willed her mouth to open, as he prayed to the mating gods for surcease.

Oh aye, he thought headily as his man sac tightened impossibly more, her nostrils were flaring, inhaling the scent of food no doubt. More aroused than he'd thought it possible for himself to become, his teeth gritted and his muscles clenched anticipatorily as he tapped his cock harder still against her lips.

She would part them eventually, he knew, for the lure of a hot meal would be too tempting to resist o'er long.

Vorik's eyes flicked o'er her fleshy underbelly, grazed o'er her full hips and breasts.

Oh aye, he told himself as his eyes glazed o'er in need, eventually the alpha female would part her suctioning lips.

And when she did, she would feed.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Whaddydndg?" Nancy asked furiously, her lips firmly clamped shut. She ignored the heated stare his silver eyes gave back to her and, huffing, pushed his manhood away from her face as she came up on her knees. "What," she bit out, her teeth set, "are you doing?"

Oh no, she thought, her forcefulness wavering a bit. His eyes – his damn eyes. They were... silver. Not grey, not light blue, not some murky could-be-human color, but sharp, piercing, acute... silver.

She gulped, scooting back a bit out of reflex.

The giant's breathing hitched just a little as his gaze meandered up and down her body. Naked on her knees before him, his piercing silver eyes seemed to meld as they

flicked over her face, then down lower to her breasts, lower still to her tummy, and even lower yet to her...

"Shit," Nancy muttered, biting down on her lip. She backed up a bit more, scurrying away as quickly as one could while on their knees. She had forgotten she was naked. How could she have forgotten that she was —

*Ggggggrrrrrr*

She gasped when the giant began to growl low in his throat, the sound he was emitting telling her without words that if she knew what was good for her, then she had best not move another inch away from him. Her jaw agape, her mind frenziedly trying to figure out a method of escape, she unthinkingly scooted further away from him until she had all but trapped herself against the far wall of the nest.

"Oh my — eek!" Nancy's hands shot up to cover her ears as his low growl evolved into a blood-curdling roar of anger. Her gaze widened and she gasped again when his eyes shifted from silver to dull-glowing crimson, fangs simultaneously exploding from his gums to expose incisors long enough to make a woman swoon.

Her hands fell down to her sides, numb. She really should have taken that job in Anchorage.

Silver eyes that turn red, she thought in dawning horror, growls that become roars, fangs that... well he had fangs!

Hysterically deciding she at last knew how Fay Wray had felt when King Kong had plucked her from the sacrificial altar on Skull Island, she backed up on her knees all the way against the far wall of the nest while her hands instinctively flew up to shield her ears once again. "Heeeelp mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm!"

Oddly, those shrieked out words seem to calm him, even satisfy him. "Huh?" Nancy's eyebrows shot up uncomprehendingly, wondering as she did why he'd had such a positive reaction to the shrill sound of her wailing.

The giant's eyes shifted back from crimson to silver, and his fangs retreated below the gumline as though they'd never been. The muscles in his huge — and naked! — body seemed to clench as he stood up... up... way up... and slowly inched his way towards her.

She harrumphed. He was grasping his penis by the base again and making those damned kissy-fish noises as he arrogantly strode to stand before her kneeling form. He was beckoning to her again, calling out to her as though she was a dog and he was offering her a supreme cut of beef.

*Damn it!*

She swept a hand about grandly, purposely ignoring the horrific manner in which the nest was beginning to teeter back and forth. "Forget it," she sniffed. "It won't happen. Not now. Not — eek!"

Nancy screamed loud enough to wake the dead as the giant's added weight caused the nest to teeter too far to the side – far enough that she got a bone-chilling look at how far she'd be plummeting to her death if he came any closer. Her heart rate soared. Sweat broke out all over her body. "Okay!" she shrieked, her breasts heaving up and down. "You win! For the love of God you win, but please quit moving!"

Either he was purposely ignoring her words or he couldn't understand what she was saying, but either way the giant kept prowling toward her, cock in hand. Nancy panicked when she felt the nest sway down lower, and with a scream, she lunged up at the gargantuan male and jumped into his heavily muscled embrace, her only objective to keep him in the middle of the nest that the structure would remain perched upright.

The giant laughed as he effortlessly caught her, dimples popping out on either cheek as he plucked her out of mid-air like a trite leaf and grinned down into her face.

Their eyes clashed. Nancy's breath caught.

Damn he was handsome, she thought rather warily, not at all liking the fact that her skin felt tingly and alive when it brushed up against the giant ogre's. In fact, she felt more than alive and tingly – she felt downright turned on. Huh?

*Damn it!*

Nancy chewed on her lower lip as she studied him, an odd and completely out of place premonition that everything would be okay swamping her senses. He wouldn't hurt her – not like that, not sexually. Her forehead crinkled as she idly wondered how she could remain so calm and sure given the situation. But there it was. She *was* sure.

And there was another feeling there as well, a gut instinct that shot through her and permeated her consciousness as her brown eyes shot up once more to meet his molten silver ones.

She gulped roughly. She wasn't certain how she knew, didn't know what instinct or intuition was guiding her thoughts, but she was sure of one thing: the witch didn't plan to let her leave this place or this giant.

Ever.

## Chapter 4

Nancy swallowed nervously as the giant laid her down upon her back and settled

his huge form next to hers. He curled his muscled body around her in such a way that her face was kept close to his swollen penis. Her breath came out in a rush, and she was surprised to find that her body was reacting fiercely to his.

But it wasn't the need to suckle him that was making her feel breathless and passionate, though she could ascertain that was precisely what the giant wanted from her! It was the need to mate with the huge predator that was arousing her so fiercely. She didn't just want to have sex with him, she thought uneasily, she wanted to actually mate with him, to have him implant his child in her womb...

"Oh lord," she whimpered, her nipples hardening, her breath coming out in pants. She knew something wasn't right, wasn't as it should be. Human women do not react to human males like... like... good grief like dogs in heat. But that's exactly what she felt like, and what's worse, she could swear she felt every egg that lined her ovaries tingling, waiting to be fertilized.

*Damn it!*

Nancy groaned, clamping a hand to her forehead as she did so. What in the name of God was happening to her? she thought morosely, her lips forming a dramatic martyr's slash. What manner of... species... was this fanged predator that he could make her body react so damned primitively?

Her stomach rumbled, reminding her she hadn't eaten in an age. She'd been too keyed up at Lori's party to consume a morsel, and too worried about her waistline expanding to take a bite. But now...

Nancy's eyes flicked up to the giant's face as her breathing grew increasingly sporadic. Now, she thought worriedly as her eyes locked with his and she saw his breathing hitch, now she was hungry.

\* \* \* \* \*

Vorik heard the *yenni* groan, the sound followed immediately by the noise of her empty belly rumbling.

Oh aye, he thought shakily, his man sac tightening til 'twas nigh unto blue, at long last the alpha female was hungered enough to dine upon him. Every muscle in his body clenched in anticipation, and his breath came out in a rush when her dimwitted eyes flew up to meet with his. That an intelligence seemed to lurk behind the dominant female's gaze was of no interest to him at this juncture, for all he could think on was the fact that after having been forced to wait so many agonizing years for bodily surcease, his cock was about to be suckled of seed.

He reached out and brushed a lock of hair away from her face. Verily, he had never seen hair the color of hers, a soft amber hue that made his heart ache.

The color of her bedamned hair made his heart ache? Arrg! By the tit of the she-god, he would not fall in love with a dimwitted *yenni*. Verily, he frowned, 'twould make him



the laughingstock of his entire pack!

Vorik saw the hesitation in her eyes and wondered at it. Mayhap a former master had treated her badly, he thought sadly, his heart constricting yet further. His teeth gritted as he steeled himself against his emotions, yet he found that all the steeling in the galaxies could not keep his heart from thumping madly in tune with hers.

Ah well no matter, he assured himself, 'twas probably a normal reaction any male of his species had to the first pet he captured. Mayhap a Barbarian always holds a special place in his heart for the she-beast who's the first to suckle of him. 'Twas a passing fancy, that.

The heaving of her breasts caught his attention, inducing Vorik's hand to instinctively reach out and palm one. 'Twas large and full, he thought wonderingly, his breath hitching once more. He ran his thumb o'er the elongated rouge nipple, then closed his eyes briefly whilst he dragged in a calming breath at the sound of her gasp of pleasure.

Her nipples were like *maji* fruits, he thought as his nostrils flared. Puffy at the base, long and ripe at the peak.

Vorik's silver eyes bore into the *yenni's*, the troubled look within her dark gaze still causing his heart to ache. He continued to stroke her silken mane of hair, his eyes gentling at her worried expression. His other hand reached further down her body until his thumb found her clit. He massaged it gently to soothe her. "Sha nala faron, zya." ' *Twill be alright, little one.* He smiled softly. "Khan-Gori m'alana fey." *I will not harm you.*

She looked as though she understood not what his words meant, which Vorik had expected since all *yenni* were dim of the mind, yet he could tell that the gentle way he'd spoken the words had calmed her fears a bit. Her eyes flicked down to his shaft, no doubt remembering the need of a meal, and he felt his man sac go entirely blue as it tightened further, ready to explode for her.

And then, oh aye and then, the alpha female gave herself up to the lure of a hot meal as her lips slowly clamped around the sensitive head of his manhood. Vorik groaned at the first touch, his muscles cording when he saw and felt her suctioning lips envelop the head in its entirety.

"Oh aye," he moaned hoarsely, perspiration dotting his brow, wetting his shoulder-length black hair. His breathing grew labored as he watched her eyes close, as he heard her softly moan whilst she began attending to his cock. A rush of air came out from his lungs in a hiss as he gently guided her head up and down his shaft, his fingers twined through her hair as he pressed her closer to him.

She suckled him ferociously, getting more and more into the feeding as her eyes closed and she worked her suctioning lips vigorously up and down his staff. Her nipples hardened as she toyed with him, as she did what the females of her species had done since the advent of time to males of his species.

Vorik groaned when her small hands began massaging his man sac, gasping when

he knew he was nigh close unto bursting already. Her ravenous tongue knew how to flick about his sensitive head, her nimble fingers knew just how much pressure to apply to his scrotum. He gasped again as he watched his cock disappear into the depths of her mouth, her eyes closed in bliss as she suckled up and down the length of him.

She took him in a frenzy, her suctioning mouth working faster and faster, the sound of lips meeting cock smacking throughout the nest. Vorik growled low in his throat, unable to stop his fangs from emerging from his gums. He cradled her head reverently at his groin, his silver eyes opening then narrowing in crimson desire as he watched her feast on him.

She suckled faster, then faster still, her silken amber head bobbing up and down upon his manhood. When her tiny hands began massaging his man sac in earnest in time with her sucks, his head fell back upon the animal hides and his muscles corded. She seemed to know 'twas time to make him spurt, for her suctioning mouth honed in on the sensitive head and she sucked upon it greedily whilst massaging his tight balls.

Oh aye, Vorik thought, his mind nigh unto delirious. 'Twas bliss, this.

His entire body shuddered, then clenched hotly in anticipation of release. The *yenni* continued to work the magic of her kind upon him harder and harder still, her fingers massaging his scrotum whilst her lips pulled, sucked, and suctioned at the sensitive head.

"Zya," he roared. Vorik exploded between her lips, his fangs jutting fully into his mouth whilst his entire body shuddered and convulsed. She groaned as his seed spurted into her mouth, then closed her eyes as she fed from him, lapping up every last glowing drop of his silvery dew.

It was long minutes before he could catch his breath and even longer minutes before he could see again, for stars had exploded behind his eyes when he'd spurted and he had felt nigh close unto swooning from the intensity of his release. But at last, when finally he was able to steady himself and breathe normally again, he gazed down upon her lush form and his man sac instantly tightened for her.

Oh aye, he thought headily, a smile of contentment pervading his lips as he nudged her face with gentle reverence back down toward his groin, this *yenni* was a hungry alpha without a doubt.

She studied him with an astonished expression for a few moments, her eyes clashing with his as she apparently decided what to do. But eventually, just as Vorik had thought she would – as he'd hoped she would – the beautiful, hungry she-beast latched her lips around the head of his manhood again and began the process of feeding from him all o'er again.

Vorik laid back upon the *muu* animal hides with a dreamy sigh, his heavily muscled arms flung o'er his head in surrender to her appetite. He closed his eyes and smiled blissfully as her lips worked o'er him once more, praying that 'twould take many sucklings before her belly felt full.

Verily, he thought on a gasp as his man sac tightened with seed, who needed a Bloodmate when a pet so fine as this one needed food.

Still, he was no saint, he knew. Aye he enjoyed feeding her, but 'twould be bliss when she'd had her fill and he could stuff his cock into her wet, puffed up pussy.

Oh aye. 'Twould be bliss.

\* \* \* \* \*

Nancy wasn't sure if she'd gone insane or not, but four blowjobs later she decided that she had. Her jaw was so sore it was throbbing, yet every time the huge predator gazed down at her with stars in his eyes she'd find her lips latching around his penis of seemingly their own accord and she'd begin the process of making him come all over again.

She sighed resignedly, realizing as she did that it was heady indeed to have a male gaze down at you as though you were a goddess. That the male doing the gazing was the most handsome and powerful man she'd ever laid eyes on only added to the giddiness. She knew he was young—he had to be young regardless of his gigantic size, for his reaction to her touching was completely unschooled and... naively touching.

As he spurted the sweetest liquid she'd ever tasted into her mouth for a body-shattering fifth time, she told herself that she had to be dreaming. He was eight feet tall, he had to weigh five hundred pounds or more, his eyes were silver when he was sated and crimson when he was angry or passionate, he had fangs, and he growled.

Definitely not what one would call a lucid reality.

And yet, weird as it was, she knew deep down inside that she wasn't dreaming. She knew that she was awake, and that this gargantuan male would do all in his power to keep her from escaping him.

She felt a pang of fear course through her as she wondered what she could do to get away from him. He was handsome for sure, but handsome wasn't enough to keep her from wanting to go home.

But if she did find a way to escape while he was sleeping or otherwise unaware, what then? Nancy sighed as she laid down beside him, her head coming down to rest upon his chest, her mind too tired to reason out any escape attempts just now.

She had no idea where she was and no idea how to leave it behind. Where the witch had thrown her to she could only guess.

## Chapter 5

Vorik awoke in the silvery twilight with a tight man sac, the need to mate weighing down upon him mightily. He smiled as he cuddled his pet closer, the sound of her contented snoring causing him to chuckle.

Aye, she had fed well on him last moon-rising. Verily, she had suckled him nigh blind just as he'd hoped she would.

He sighed dreamily, his eyes still closed, as his large hand ran down her lush backside to play with her tail whilst she slumbered. She was perfection, his pet. She was an exuberant suckler who would bring him many lifetimes of bliss. She was –

His brow furrowed as his hand fumbled about her backside. Where was her tail? he grumbled to himself. He felt no appendage at all there. Surely his pet had to have a tail! Where was...

"Ahh gods."

Vorik's eyes flew open and darted downward, his silver gaze clashing with an intelligent brown one. His eyes narrowed as he looked at her, really looked at her for the first time, and apparently his intense study of her features frightened her for she swallowed nervously and looked away.

By the Ices of Shalor, he thought with surprise, the female was no *yenni* at all. She was humanoid – a humanoid wench. Ahh gods what a dunce he was! He grimaced. Now that he viewed her in the harsh light of day she had naught in common with a *yenni* other than creamy, pearly skin. She was too beautiful to be a *yenni*, and her eyes were too knowing.

But nay, Vorik silently qualified, he was not one known for being a lackwit. He could have sworn she'd had a tail when first he'd ensnared her – aye she'd had a tail. Hadn't she?

Well no matter, he grunted, his palm kneading the backside he refused to relinquish – humanoid or no. Whether she'd had a tail or his eyes had been playing tricks on him was irrelevant just now, for he knew with all certainty she had let loose the cry of an alpha female *yenni* desirous of a feeding. That much of last moon-rising's events was a certainty.

He grunted again, satisfied in his reasoning, contented in realizing he was no dunce. Feeling amorous as his species was want to do, he plucked the humanoid wench from her lying position and set her upon his lap that her legs straddled him. She yelped a bit at first, her large breasts heaving up and down, and he figured correctly that she was frightened of his size.

Well no matter. He would gentle her to his touch, then would he do the very deed

he'd been nigh dying to do since he'd been a twelve-year-old pup.

Slowly, Vorik's dark head came up and his sharp silver eyes clashed with her rich dark ones. She swallowed nervously, looking away from him again, which was just as well for his mouth had dropped open in shock.

By the tit of the she-god, his sins were worse than he'd thought!

Vorik groaned, sorely vexed with himself. His cheeks pinkened in embarrassment and shame as he considered the reality of what he'd done. Not only was she no *yenni*, not only was she a humanoid, but she was something far more important and coveted than either of those things. She was the very elusive dream most males of his species spent lifetimes searching for and, sadly, many never found. She was his – all his – and no other's. And he'd found her on the very moon-rising he'd become a Barbarian full grown.

"Oh aye," he murmured as he felt his body respond to hers, as the need to mount her and impregnate her womb instinctually kicked in. Every cell in his body tingled as he drank in the scent of her. His manhood hardened with thoughts of gorging upon her blood... and, oh aye, with tantalizing thoughts of her gorging upon his blood.

Vorik released a shaky breath as his hands clutched her hips and his fingers dug into the flesh there. He needed to mate her now, to sink himself deep inside of her and get a litter of pups on her the soonest.

By the gods, she was his Bloodmate.

\* \* \* \* \*

Nancy gasped when, in the blink of an eye, he reversed their positions and lowered his massive body between her comparatively small legs. She sighed, thinking it had taken being thrown into another world – most likely another planet entirely! – for her to feel small and delicate next to a man. A fanged man. A fanged man with a penis large enough to rend her into halves.

"EEEEK!" Nancy pushed at the unmoving wall that was his chest, her legs flailing madly at either side of his hips. She hadn't been able to get even half of his shaft into her mouth last night – there was no way in the hell it was going between her legs.

"Forget it!" she fumed, her voice indignant. "The buck stops here, buddy." For a woman who had been a spinster all of a day ago, this was just too much. Sucking on him was one thing – and she still wasn't certain what had possessed her to do that much! – but having him put it inside of her was another thing altogether. She bet he'd never once suffered from a case of penis envy. No locker room ribbings for this guy. Her hand slashed definitively through the air. "There is no way you will ever – eek!"

A growl of outrage erupted from his throat as fangs exploded through his gums. His once silver eyes turned crimson in anger, in lust, in possessiveness. He was anxious to get inside of her – very anxious she knew when he bent his head and nipped at her

shoulder disapprovingly. She wondered if all the fighting in the world would keep him from sinking into her, which she feared could possibly kill her!

And yet, as anxious as she could tell he was to dominate her will and her body, he stilled himself atop her, waiting for... something. Waiting for her to calm herself, perhaps?

Nancy's lips pinched together in a frown as she considered the fact that his method was working. She *was* becoming calmer. And the moonstruck way that he was gazing down at her, the same worshipping, hopeful expression that King Kong had harbored as he'd watched Fay Wray's every movement, was doing its damndest to work a number on her senses.

She sighed, her eyes closing and her hands coming up to rub at her temples. This was weirdness incarnate. The ultimate getting-kidnapped-by-a-mountain-man scenario. And what's worse, she had a perverse feeling that by the time all was said and done, she'd have become a willing captive.

*Damn it!*

Her nostrils flaring, Nancy's eyes flew open to meet her captor's and their gazes locked. He looked ferocious. Determined. His jaw was set, his fangs slightly bared, and his eyes were now pure crimson.

Oh damn, she thought as she began panting, she could feel him telepathically speaking into her mind. She had no idea what he was saying because she couldn't speak his tongue, but whatever the words were they were doing a number on her hormonally. She groaned as horniness the likes of which she'd never before felt shuddered through her, then gasped when her womb began to contract.

She needed his flesh joined to hers, needed to feel him rocking in and out of her, needed him to impregnate her. She would obey him in all things, she thought unblinkingly, for she could do no other. She belonged to him forever. Verily, her body was but his vessel, ever ready to provide pleasure—

"Damn it!" she sniffed. Her eyes narrowed when she realized he'd been hypnotizing her. "Quit making me think things I don't want to think!"

He smiled slowly as an answer, then sent out a sensual mental wave that left her gaping like the village idiot.

Nancy closed her eyes and moaned, her body involuntarily writhing beneath the giant's. Good grief, she silently wailed, she was back to feeling like a dog in heat only this time the effect was a thousand times worse—and likely to drive her mad if he didn't enter her body soon.

"Please," she groaned, her breaths coming out in a series of short gasps. To hell with worries about dying, she sniffed. She needed him inside of her like she needed to breathe. She decided this was no time to contemplate how troublesome of a fact that was. She wrapped her legs around his waist without thinking about it, then reared up her hips and ground her soaking wet flesh against his groin.

He hissed.

*"Please."*

He settled himself comfortably between her legs, then bent his dark head to nip at her neck with his teeth. Not enough to drink of her, but enough to puncture the skin and to cause a few droplets of her blood to trickle out onto his tongue. He lapped the beads of blood up, groaning as if she tasted like an elixir from the gods.

"Oh lord," she groaned, her belly knotting with impending climax, "oh yes." She felt delirious – good grief what was he doing to her?

She didn't know what instinct made her bite him, couldn't say what drove her to it, but in a frenzy of lust and intuition, Nancy's head shot up and she clamped down onto his jugular vein as hard as she could with her comparatively dull teeth. He began to writhe and moan, his low growl evolving into a fierce roar.

Incisors sliced cleanly into her jugular, causing her to whimper from the human fear of death mingled with an evolving predator's ecstasy. She never let go of his jugular, though, and soon she would be glad she hadn't.

An orgasm exploded inside of her as he drank her blood, the violence of it intense enough to make her body involuntarily convulse. Amidst the throes of a full mating frenzy, it didn't matter that Nancy's incisors were dull in comparison to the teeth of the male who was preparing to mount her. Her human teeth sank into his jugular as far as they could go, and although they couldn't go far enough to drink of him they were able to go in far enough to nick him, which caused him to bleed a single droplet of blood.

It was enough. The moment the sweet taste of his blood hit her tongue, Nancy groaned as her body convulsed with yet another orgasm. She enjoyed the intensity so much that even when he made her release his neck so he could mount her the way he wanted to, she bit down onto his chest and drew blood, refusing to let go, moaning and groaning when orgasm after orgasm rocked through her.

"Oh aye, little one," he said hoarsely.

Her body stilled. Her teeth fell away from his chest as reality set in. She was drinking a man's blood.

"Oh God," she dramatically wailed.

"I need to mount you, *vorah*," the giant said thickly, seemingly unaware of her tumultuous thoughts. His silver eyes glazed over as he nudged her down to lie fully upon her back. He then settled himself on his knees between her legs, clutching her hips with his hands and spreading her thighs wide.

"Wh-what are y-you doing?"

*What a dumb question!*

"Mounting you," he said in a hoarse voice.

*Eeek!*

Against her volition, Nancy's nipples hardened and elongated as she watched the gargantuan-sized predator prepare to thrust inside of her for the first time. Eyes closed and nostrils flaring, she could tell by the look of impending nirvana smothering his features that the eight-foot giant getting ready to mate her had never been with another woman. Never.

A five-hundred pound virgin. A five-hundred pound virgin who drinks blood and possesses a penis the size of a small whale.

*Eeek!*

"Oh dear," she whimpered, her logical mind at war with her eyes – eyes that were busy drinking in the intoxicating sight of his heavily muscled body. Why did her body react to him as if it had been preprogrammed to? "P-Perhaps we should start slower," she hedged, glancing uneasily up at his fangs. "Maybe holding hands would be nice –"

She said no more when he looked at her as though she'd gone mad. Good lord she probably had gone mad! That certainly explained this new world she was inhabiting. Perhaps she and the other mental wards at the local asylum were visiting here at the same time. Right after they'd had tea with Napoleon. Nervously, her hand darted up to push the spectacles she always wore up the bridge of her nose. Oh that's right. She wasn't wearing any spectacles.

*Damn it!*

Nancy closed her eyes and groaned, a melodramatic feeling of martyrdom overtaking her. What was so wrong with being a spinster? she mentally wailed. Why had she ever thought to get a new life?

"'Twill be alright, little one," he murmured. "Verily, I could never hurt you."

Her eyes flew open. For the first time it dawned on her she could understand what he was saying. And, she thought bewilderedly, he wasn't speaking English by any stretch of the imagination. "H-How..."

"Thy blood is in me." He bent his head and sipped at her neck again, causing her to gasp. "And mine in you," he murmured.

Her breath caught when, with no more preliminaries, he raised her hips up a bit, then impaled himself within her flesh in one long, arousing stroke. It hadn't killed her after all. "Oh my," she gasped, her back arching.

"*Vorah*," he ground out, sweat dotting his brow, "I've the need to rut in you, little one."

*Vorah* – Bloodmate... the human equivalent to wife.

Oh lord.

Nancy gazed up at the gigantic male whose flesh was fully embedded in hers and



was surprised by the array of emotions she felt just looking at him. It worried her really, for it meant that not only had her body been preprogrammed to need him, but her heart had been as well. But preprogrammed by whom? By what? She sighed, very confused.

Vorik stroked into her flesh slowly once more, the look of rapture on his face heady enough to tug at Nancy's heartstrings. She closed her eyes briefly, opening them on a sigh, the poignant feeling of being his first lover doing a tap dance on her emotions... and her libido. She actually found herself wishing that she knew what to call him by.

*Vorik*, he answered in her mind. *Thy Bloodmate*.

Their eyes met. Nancy nibbled at her lower lip as her reticence dissolved.

"I'm Nancy," she whispered.

Vorik entered her slowly again, groaning as he seated himself fully within her. "Nawncy," he ground out. He held her thighs apart with his large hands, his hips rotating in between them as he thrust into her flesh.

She gasped, her nipples hardening.

Vorik bent his head to her chest, his tongue darting out to curl around one jutting nipple. Nancy moaned loudly, for his tongue was rough like a cat's and the gentle sandpaper sensation sent tremors shooting through her. He sucked on the nipple for a long time while he slowly thrust into her, and pretty soon she was so wet that she could hear her pussy making sucking sounds with every slow upstroke.

He flicked at her nipple with his tongue, then raised his dark head. "Are you ready for more, beautiful one?" he murmured.

"Yes," she gasped, her hips arching up to meet his next downstroke.

He closed his eyes and picked up the pace, thrusting into her flesh in deep, wild strokes, moaning and groaning the entire time. Sweat broke out onto his forehead. The muscles in his arms clenched and corded. His teeth gritted as he rode her into oblivion, never wanting the sensations to end.

Nancy watched his face the entire time, moaning as he took her. It was a heady feeling, owning the first pussy a man ever fucked. The expression on his face was indescribable in its intensity. He looked delirious with pleasure, yet she could tell from the way his jaw was clenched as he rocked in and out of her that he was doing his damndest to keep from orgasming. He wanted the euphoria to last. He never wanted to stop fucking her.

She moaned when he rode her harder, his hips pistoning faster and faster between her thighs. She could hear her flesh sucking him in, trying to hold onto his cock every time he rocked back and forth.

"Aye," she heard him growl. His eyes were closed, as if concentrating intently on the feel of her cunt. He mounted her primally, holding back nothing.

Harder. Deeper. Faster. *"Aye."*

Nancy gasped as incisors sliced cleanly into her neck. She came instantaneously, screaming as she threw her hips back at him.

With a growl he gorged on her, feeding on her blood as he stuffed his stiff cock inside of her over and over, again and again. He moaned and groaned throughout every last orgasm, allowing her as much pleasure as he could, taking from her as much pleasure as he could, before the deed was fully done and he wouldn't be able to touch her whilst she incubated.

When she came again – writhing and moaning, throwing her hips at him like a wanton – he could take no more torture. Raising one finger to his neck, he allowed the nail to spike up, then slashed open his jugular and lowered it to her.

She drank of him, became one with him, never thought to deny him. He roared at the euphoric sensation of her feasting on him, the feeling akin to never-ending orgasmic release.

Only when Vorik knew the deed was done, when he was certain she'd drunk enough of him to evolve, did he allow himself the final, harsh release. Realizing as he did that he would not get to make love to her for a sennight, he glutted on her blood and cunt as long as 'twas possible, hedonistically enjoying every sip, every thrust.

*"Vorah."*

He came on a loud roar, his eyes crimson with passion, with possession. The orgasm went on and on and on, 'til finally his man sac had been emptied of all seed.

When it was over, when both of their breathing returned to normal, Vorik smiled down at her, his expression worshipful. "Many thanks, little one," he murmured. "'Twas more bliss than I can say."

Nancy grinned. "You weren't too bad your..." She gasped, as she felt her breath slowly leave her body. "Vorik," she panted, "what the..."

He smiled. "You are evolving, my love." He disentangled his body from hers so as to not impede the process. "'Twill be but one sennight in the cocoon –"

"C-Cocoon?" she cried out. Gasping for air, she rolled onto her side, noticing for the first time that a web was forming around her hands – a thick web of sticky material. *"Oh my God."*

She screamed, trying to bat the web away with her hands, but it was growing and thickening, and climbing up her arms. "Help me!" she screamed, jumping up to her feet. She gasped as more air left her lungs, then fell to her knees.

Nancy watched in dawning horror as the web made it's way up her arms and began encasing her fully, all the way down to her toes. Unable to scream from a lack of oxygen in her lungs, she mentally screamed, rolling and rolling, and rolling her body to the far side of the nest.

Vorik came after her, not wanting her to harm her cocoon lest she die. "*Vorah!*" he commanded her. "Calm thyself and quit moving anon!"

But Nancy was delirious, wild, frantic. She rolled further, and Vorik stepped closer. The nest teetered and swayed.

"*Vorah!*"

Cold terror knifed through her as the nest collapsed and she began plummeting toward the ground at a bone chilling speed. She bypassed winged animals, mountain peaks, and – oh God – a mountain base, as she plummeted down, down, down, down...

She was almost completely encased, nothing but her eyes showing as the cocoon turned over so Nancy could see up instead of down.

*Vorik.*

He was coming after her, swooping down from the heavens. But he was no longer a man.

Silver body. Silver wings. Fangs. Crimson eyes...

Nancy silently screamed as the cocoon encased her fully, her last conscious thought before her breath left her entirely that the man she'd just made love to was a gargoyle.

And worse... he had turned her into one too.

\* \* \* \* \*

Vorik swooped down and caught the *vorah*-sac in his arms, careful not to snag it with his teeth as was the automatic instinct possessed by his kind when in *kor-tar* form. But then usually when one was descending upon a body 'twas as a predator seizing prey so he cared not whether his fangs ripped through the animal's flesh. Since this was the cocoon of his evolving Bloodmate, however, he cared mightily.

He cradled the *vorah*-sac in his arms, cautious of her delicate state at all times. She was defenseless just now, unable to protect herself whilst she incubated, and so 'twas her Bloodmate she depended upon at this time for safety more so than she ever would again.

When Nancy awoke, he knew the metabolic changes within would cause her to be as deadly as was he – mayhap even more so – for he'd never heard tell of a species of predators in any dimension where the female wasn't deadlier than the male. Mayhap 'twas to compensate for the fact that she would be much smaller than a lot of the species of prey they would stalk together throughout their seven lifetimes together.

There were many characteristics that the Barbarians of Khan-Gor shared in common with other predators, the most fundamental one being the difference between the genders. Although Nancy would be gifted with the ability to kill attackers and seize prey in many deadly ways that Vorik could not, she would never be able to best her

own Bloodmate – never.

Vorik smiled at that thought, thinking the gods showed much in the way of smarts. Verily, if the deadly female was able to bring the male she had mated with down, then males would be killed off left and right, mayhap every time their *vorahs* got into a temper. Since Bloodmates mated for life, 'twould be foolhardy of nature to allow for such, for the predator populace would die out and those lower on the foodchain would become too great in numbers.

And so it had come to pass through the long process of evolution that the Khan-Gori male was possessed of two gifts the female was not: whilst in animal form his silver skin was impenetrable from puncture wounds dealt by a Bloodmate, and whilst in either form he could mesmerize his Bloodmate should he so desire it. Those two attributes, working in conjunction with his larger, fiercer size, gave the Khan-Gori male eternal dominion o'er his deadly *vorah*.

Vorik dismissed his stray thoughts as he scanned the grounds and mountain passes for a safe place to make camp til the sennight of incubation had passed and his Bloodmate emerged from her cocoon. He couldn't chance flying all the way back to F'al Vader lands this way with her in his arms, for if a rival predator made battle with him, he would be forced to choose between dropping the *vorah*-sac to fight – which would kill Nancy in the process, or allowing himself to be killed by a male from another pack. Since Vorik would choose to die with his Bloodmate rather than drop her, he knew 'twould mean death to them both.

His crimson eyes located an empty cavern below which his visual acuity told him was not currently being inhabited. He swooped down to make haste toward it, realizing as he did from years worth of hunting that the cavern was nestled within neutral lands unclaimed by any pack. 'Twould do.

Vorik sent out a mental warning to weaker lifeforms below that did they wish to see the next morn, they would clear out the cavern immediately until he and his Bloodmate left it behind. His acute hearing picked up the vibrations of scampering feet and, verily, by the time he arrived with his *vorah*-sac and had shape-shifted to humanoid form, all signs of life were long gone.

He carried Nancy into the ice-coated cavern, his Bloodmate securely cradled in his arms.

## Chapter 6

*One week later*

Nancy's breath came back in a rush, her lungs heaving and expelling a huge gush of air. Crimson eyes flew open and fangs exploded from her gums as she instinctively sought out her Bloodmate. In a behavior pattern that had genetically been programmed into her during the incubation period, she exploded from the cocoon with a fierce roar, able to do so by a lining of deadly spikes that jutted out of the skin cells on her forearms.

Unable to think of anything save the need for Vorik's nearness, and voraciously aroused after having not mated during the entire week she'd been cocooned, Nancy flew at top speed out of the cavern, her heightened sense of smell detecting that Vorik was a mile off, somewhere in the vicinity of the mouth of the icy riverbed below.

The scent of him aroused her further, inducing her nipples to harden and her belly to knot in anticipation of being mounted. The moment her Bloodmate saw her descending upon him, his lips formed a snarl as he shape-shifted into *kor-tar* form and took flight towards her.

Their silver bodies came together in a mid-air clash, and Vorik immediately sank his teeth into her neck. Nancy gasped at the arousal, her need to be impregnated by the large male too instinctual to resist him. That he now looked like a gargoyle, that he was fanged and winged and his eyes were crimson – all of these things her earthly memory cells were wary of, but the need to couple was too pressing to pay them much heed.

As her Bloodmate lowered them to the ground with a fierce growl, then forced her bodily onto her hands and knees, she could think of nothing – *nothing* – but being mounted. It was as if she'd never been human, as if her body harbored no memories of an existence before she'd emerged from the cocoon.

On a dangerous growl Vorik entered her from behind, his thick swollen penis impaling her warm flesh in one thrust. She hissed at his roughness, glancing over her shoulder to snarl at him. He growled in response, then nipped at her shoulder with his teeth to show her who was in control as he pounded into her cunt from behind. She yipped in response, whimpering like a puppy who'd had her tail stepped on at the chastisement.

Vorik immediately soothed her, his tongue darting out to lap at her shoulder while he kept up his steady tempo of thrusts. Nancy gasped in pleasure, then began to couple with him, throwing her hips back at him to increase the friction and the deepness.

*Aye little one,* she heard a hoarse voice in her mind say. *I've missed thy presence sorely. Fuck me with that sweet cunt.*

She did as he bade her, throwing her flesh back at him, moaning and groaning as he pounded into her body, hissing with ecstasy as his sharp fingernails dug into the flesh of her hips. She didn't understand why the sensation of his fingernails piercing her skin felt so good, only knew that it did. It was like a sensual massage, akin to the way it would

feel if her clitoris was being rubbed.

On a growl she burst, her wet flesh contracting as she came. The orgasm was a thousand times stronger than anything she'd ever before experienced, causing her to moan and groan and writhe and twist as Vorik continued to impale her over and over again, his tight balls slapping against her buttocks while he frenziedly rutted inside of her.

*Vorik*, she mentally moaned.

*I wish it to last*, he answered, his teeth gritting, *I wish it to – ahh gods*.

On a loud roar he prepared to explode, the intense feeling of her pussy contracting around his cock forcing him into it. He had heard tell that a Bloodmate's cunt would suck a Khan-Gori male's staff dry, but not until now did he know that the gossip was true.

Verily, her flesh squeezed him in a series of intense contractions until he could withstand no more, until he was moaning and groaning and growling from the pleasure of it. Vorik pounded into her wet flesh twice more, then clawed her hips to force her into peaking with him as he emptied his seed deep inside of her.

For three more hours they mated thusly, over and over, again and again. With each mating Vorik became more animalistic, drinking her blood to heighten the delirious ecstasy for both of them, scratching at her hips to make her tremor and convulse around his cock.

He took her with the violence of his species, primal in a way he could never be while she was in her humanoid form. Only one time during the entire mating did she snarl at him to get off of her, and that was only after she'd been effectually impregnated with a pup and wanted some rest. Vorik, a virgin just a week ago, wanted more and more and more of her pussy, refusing to stop until he burst again and again inside of her.

When Nancy protested with a growl, his answering roar of denial followed by a sharp nick to the shoulder silenced her. Obediently, she pressed one side of her face to the ground and hoisted her hips up further that he might root in her as deeply and as much as he desired.

Vorik grunted in satisfaction, a snort of male arrogance puncturing the night as he impaled her flesh over and over again with his. Amidst a mating frenzy, he pummeled her roughly, mounting her for another solid hour, spurting seed into her flesh more times than either of them could count.

When finally he was sated, when his balls were drained of all seed, Vorik curled his gargantuan-sized body around hers, and they prepared to sleep together that way, still in *kor-tar* form so that the icy elements around them had no negative effect.

Nancy grunted, wanting closer contact.

Vorik slid his penis into her from behind, that both of them had the constant contact

they craved.

They fell asleep, two Bloodmates bound together in every way possible.

## Chapter 7

Nancy awoke the next morning in humanoid form. Vorik's body, still in *kor-tar* form, was curled around her, thwarting the iciness of the landscape from adversely affecting her. Without his skin emitting constant, toasty-warm heat, she guessed she'd be dead in the matter of an hour. She shivered at the thought, then snuggled up closer to him as a matter of self-preservation.

Nancy worried her bottom lip as she realized for the first time that Vorik was still in his gargoyle form. She'd seen him that way last night, but last night she had looked at him through the eyes of a similar predator. This morning, right now, she found herself afraid to get her first good look at him through a human's eyes for when she did she would know precisely what it was she had evolved into.

Her memories of the metabolic changes she'd undergone while cocooning weren't numerous. And those that did exist weren't so much memories as they were impressions. A feeling of rebirth, of rejuvenation, of acquiring heightened senses, and of gaining more acute... everything. Eyes that had once required spectacles or contact lenses to see could now scan terrain a mile or more off in the distance. Ears that she'd once considered to be superiorly adept at hearing would now feel deaf in comparison if she was to listen through them again.

Nancy closed her eyes briefly, drawing in a calming breath of air. She needed to see him, she told herself. She needed to know what it was human eyes would see when they looked at him – and when they looked at her. How could she ever hope to go back to earth if...

Dear God, she thought on a pang of emotion, why was the thought of leaving Vorik, a man she'd known all of a week, so horrible? So empty?

She sighed, for the first time sincerely doubting she'd be able to feel sane without him in her life. Not just in her life, but in her constant presence. The reassuring, steady beat of his heart thumping gently against her back did more to quell her restlessness than she wished it did. Because that quelling, that calming, could only mean one thing: she well and truly would go insane without having him near her.

Nancy's head came up slowly, her round brown eyes finding Vorik's alert crimson red ones. He was awake. Awake and in gargoyle form. Her breath caught. They stared into each other's eyes.

In that instant, as she witnessed the sadness in his gaze, as she heard a low, pained sound rumble gently up from his throat, she knew what Vorik was thinking without needing him to mentally or verbally send the words out to her. He was hurting on the inside, wondering to himself if she'd ever be able to truly love a man who was also a beast.

In a rush of impressions she saw Khan-Gor's past swim before her mind's eye, a past that included the closing off of the silver-ice planet called Khan-Gor to outsiders. A fear of their people, namely what their people were able to do genetically, had caused males from other planets to seek them out in an effort to destroy their race.

In a way, it had worked.

For several millenniums the planet had remained shielded in an invisible cloak of ice until all outsiders had forgotten of their existence and the pack leaders felt it was safe to lower their guard a bit. Even then no Khan-Goris had ventured off planet until the situation had become so grim that the males of their species were left with little choice but to look elsewhere for their Bloodmates, for they weren't likely to find them on Khan-Gor.

Indeed, Nancy saw as she closed her eyes, female-born Khan-Goris were all but non-existent, their numbers sparse. Nature, it seemed, had never intended for Khan-Gori males to mate within their own race, a phenomenon that no doubt kept the gene pools aired out and healthy, and kept females who were transformed into predators breeding dominant, robust sons. To breed within the race could cause madness amongst the offspring, and in one fatal case it had created a monster...

She opened her mind further to Vorik and saw a scene replaying in his memories. The memory was of Vorik's father imparting unto his son the telling of a legend, of how he had been the first Khan-Gori male in three thousand years to venture off planet in search of his Bloodmate, how he had found Jana, Vorik's mother, and how he had brought her home.

But nothing, of course, had been quite that simple.

Nancy's heart clenched when she saw Vorik's first memory, a memory that had occurred just moments after his birth. His mother Jana, who had been on the run from Vorik's father at the time, had been frightened of her *kor-tar* son upon seeing him flutter out from between her legs. So frightened, in fact, that she had refused to hold him in her arms, or to feed him at her breast, after she had birthed him.

Nancy's bottom lip trembled as the scene continued to play out.

Jana, who had refused to shape-shift into her *kor-tari* form beyond her first emergence from the cocoon, had spent the next few days staring off into space unblinking, a blank expression on her face. Vorik had cried often from within their



hiding place, the cries of a newborn baby needing fed. But she had ignored him, hearing nothing, seeing nothing, never acknowledging his existence.

And then one day, thankfully before Vorik had starved to death, his mother had regained her broken mind. Jana had been out of the cave they were hiding in, wandering about aimlessly, when a deadly intruder had snuck in with the intent of killing her tiny son.

His mother, who had been weakened at the time from days of not eating, had sensed the intrusion into the cavern and in a burst of power and speed, had shape-shifted into her gargoyle form and killed the intruder with one swift backhanded slap. Because of the spikes that jut out from a female's arms when in animal form, the kill had been quick and efficient, impaling the enemy and killing him instantaneously.

When it was finally over, and Jana knew that the threat to her son had passed, she had broke down crying, regaining her sanity in the process. *Forgive me, Vorik*, she had sobbed, at last placing the helpless newborn at her breast. *For the love of the goddess, please forgive me, my son...*

Nancy's eyes opened slowly, unspilled tears causing her lashes to glisten as her gaze clashed with her Bloodmate's. Vorik had, of course, forgiven his mother for he loved her fiercely, but his heart had never forgotten the rejection.

Vorik made no movement to force Nancy to stay close to him. He simply laid there and waited for her judgment, his sad crimson eyes flicking over her face. *Can you love me?* she thought she heard him say softly in her mind. *Can you accept me for what I am?*

Nancy's breath caught as she looked at him through the eyes of a humanoid, as she studied his features and found her hand coming up to gently memorize his face with her palm and fingers. His eyes closed briefly at the soothing contact, opening again to watch her expression, to see for himself how she felt.

In that poignant moment, all thoughts of earth, all memories of her former life and friends, dimmed in importance until they had all but faded away. Nancy smiled gently at her Bloodmate, finding nothing lacking, realizing as she did that he was the most powerful and glorious life-form she'd ever been granted the privilege of seeing.

He was carved of sleek silver, his muscles plentiful and fierce. His face, even in *kor-tar* form, was harshly handsome. Though he was bald like any gargoyle would be while in this form, she found the effect made him appear all the more formidable and virile... not to mention terribly sexy.

"Yes," she murmured, her eyes meeting his. She smiled, searching his face. "I can love you."

His breathing hitched as he stared at her, but he spoke not a word. And then, in the blink of an eye, he picked her up in his arms and flew off at top speed, neither descending nor slowing until they reached the cavern she'd incubated in while evolving in the cocoon.

He laid her down gently on a bed of animal hides, then came down on his knees

before her, still in *kor-tar* form. Nancy experienced a moment's panic when he splayed her thighs wide before him, then bent his head and licked from her anus to her clit in one wet, rough swipe. She remembered how violently they'd mated as gargoyles the evening prior, so she felt a slight hesitation as it became apparent that he wanted to mount her while she was still in human form.

Their gazes locked. "I shall never hurt you, little one," he said softly. He took a calming breath. "Please do this thing for me, that I might know in my heart you accept me as both man and beast."

Nancy smiled gently, unafraid. She knew he'd never hurt her. She'd only needed the reassurance. "Okay," she whispered back in his language.

His breath rushed out as he lowered his face between her legs and lapped at her pussy with his rough tongue. She gasped immediately, for his tongue in *kor-tar* form was even more abrasive than it was in humanoid form, which sent tremors immediately jolting through her. When she considered the sinfully provocative sight they made, a human woman who was willingly spreading her legs for a gargoyle's wicked sexual ministrations, her nipples hardened into painfully tight peaks.

Nancy glanced down to where his mouth was lapping at her flesh and shivered with arousal. His silver gargoyle face was pressed against her pussy, his crimson eyes watching her as he suckled her clit. He built her to a peak in a matter of moments, the sucks he made to her clit so fast that it looked as though he was munching on her flesh. She groaned, her head falling back against the animal hides, her eyes closing as her nipples jutted up in arousal.

*"Vorik."*

He suckled on her clit harder, his rough tongue simultaneously flicking the sensitive head in a show of sensual accomplishment no human male could ever master. She bucked up on a groan, then wrapped her legs around his neck and pressed his face in closer to her pussy.

Vorik growled against her clit, vibrating it even as he sucked and flicked at it. Nancy screamed in pleasure, gasping out his name as her entire body convulsed on a loud moan of completion. Blood rushed to her face, heating it. Blood rushed to her nipples, elongating them. Vorik raised his head from her soaked flesh, then curled his rough tongue around one jutting nipple, soothing it while simultaneously further arousing it. She sighed contentedly, her eyes still closed as she stroked his gargoyle head.

And then, oh lord and then, Vorik raised his silver head from her breast, licked her nipple one more time, then settled his huge silver body so he sat on his knees between her legs. He lifted her hips, his fingernails scoring them.

*"Oh yes."* Nancy's breathing grew choppy, her nipples harder, as she watched the sinful display of a gargoyle—a male many humans would call a demon—mount her pale white body, the body of a human woman.

His crimson eyes met her wide brown ones. His lips parted in a slight snarl, baring

his fangs. She licked her lips, recognizing it as a gesture of arousal on his part. She moaned when his fingernails raked her hips again before his large hands reached her thighs and spread them apart.

On a growl he entered her, seating himself fully, his crimson eyes narrowed into slits of desire. Nancy groaned as she watched his silver cock invade her human body, the sight of her wet pussy sucking him into her flesh an erotic one. "Vorik," she breathed out, reaching up and running one finger along his left incisor. He shivered in reaction. "Feed from me," she murmured.

His scarlet eyes widened, not having expected her to accept that part of their mating so soon, so fully.

He growled as his fangs pierced the tender flesh of her neck, his hips rocking back and forth to pound inside of her as he drank of her blood. Nancy came violently, instantly, her moans and groans echoing throughout the cavern as he feasted at her neck, as her body quivered and convulsed from the fierce contractions.

*"Vorik."*

His gargoyle head raised from her neck, their gazes clashing as he concentrated on mounting her. She saw his teeth grit as he staved off his orgasm, knowing as she did that he wanted a longer mating before he came.

From somewhere deep inside of himself he must have found his control, for Nancy's breath caught as she watched through human eyes while her Bloodmate took her in his beast form. He went wild, primal, his fangs baring fully as he sank his cock into her over and over, again and again.

She screamed from the pleasure, knowing every orgasm erupting from within was as much from watching a gargoyle fuck her as from the fucking itself.

Vorik rotated his hips and slammed into her, his fingernails grazing gently at her hips. His low growl lasted the entire time, throughout every of her orgasms, throughout the entire mating ritual.

When he could stand no more, when he thought he'd go insane if he didn't come, he pounded into her one last time, then on a dominant roar, spurt his hot cum deep inside of her.

Minutes later when the urgency had passed, Nancy found herself once again snuggling up against her Bloodmate to sleep. Only this time it wasn't the body of a female predator seeking the warmth and security of the beast. It was the body of a humanoid woman.

## Chapter 8

*One week later*

Nancy awoke first, standing up after slowly disentangling their bodies. Last night she had played Fay Wray to his King Kong again, wanting him to take her in his *kor-tar* form rather than in his humanoid form, and had thoroughly enjoyed every wicked moment of it. She wasn't certain why really, couldn't explain why it was that she had felt – and still felt – so aroused by something so simple as her Bloodmate mating her while he was shape-shifted, but making love with a gargoyle had a lot to recommend it...

She blew out a resigned breath, smiling to herself. She more than loved Vorik. She was *in* love with him as well.

Hadn't the tiniest part of her, as unrealistic as she'd always known it was, secretly wished Fay Wray would fall as in love with King Kong as the giant ape had with his tiny human captive every time the old black and white movie had been shown on TV? But the real Fay Wray never had, for every time the movie played, she was as desperate to escape King Kong as she'd been the last time. And an hour later, the beloved beast would be dead, having fallen from atop the Empire State Building in his desperation to recapture the tiny woman he loved.

Nancy's eyes closed sadly as the truth hit her. If she ever ran from Vorik, the same fate would befall him. He'd do anything, including give up his life, just to be able to hold her in his arms. The thought of another male anywhere near her would kill him in a fundamental way no human mind could truly grasp. But because of their blood bond, because of the fact her genetics had been altered, she was able to understand.

She *did* understand. And because she did, she knew she would never leave him. Not that she had planned to any way. As frightening as this new world was, Khan-Gor was now her home and Vorik was her mate. As terrified as she was to face what the future held, she realized with gut instinct that the future most definitely did not hold earth.

Besides, she thought with a harrumph, she had fangs now. Fangs and wings. She could turn into a gargoyle. And she had orgasms every time she drank blood. Good grief! As if she could go back home! She'd either be locked up in a mental ward, or studied in some weirdo's lab for the remainder of her days.

Nancy's eyes flicked over to where Vorik slept, his humanoid body relaxed in deep slumber. She smiled. Her gentle giant. He looked so innocent while sleeping, even though she knew that awake he was as fierce as a raptor.

She studied him a moment longer, then glanced away from her mate, her mind fast-forwarding to later on in the day when they would arrive on F'al Vader lands. They had taken their time getting here, wanting to further explore each other's minds and

bodies before Vorik took her back to his lair.

Maybe, just maybe, Nancy told herself, joining his pack wouldn't be as frightening as she'd been telling herself it would be. She knew, after all, that Vorik would never hurt her. Nor would he allow another to do so.

He loved her – he was in love with her, and the last week they'd spent together, making love and hunting together, talking about nothing and everything, laughing together – all of it had only further solidified their special bond. And the lovemaking. Oooh the lovemaking...

As her hourly need came upon her, Nancy allowed her form to shimmer and transform into her other, *kor-tari* self. She grinned, her fangs exploding from her gumline as she did so.

She heard her mate awaken from behind her, roused by the scent of her arousal. His lips formed a snarl as he bared his fangs and shape-shifted, growling as he exploded in the air toward her, their bodies clashing.

Nancy hadn't mated Vorik while in *kor-tari* form since the evening she'd emerged from her cocoon. She hissed when his sharp nails dug into her flesh, deciding to immediately remedy that oversight.

To hell with going back to earth. Her eyebrows wriggled.

Naughty Nancy was home at last.

## Epilogue

*Ten Yessat years later*

Nancy F'al Vader, nee Nancy Lombardo, grinned down at the tiny newborn pup feeding at her breast. She'd delivered five litters in ten years time, though her first and last birthings had produced only one son apiece. Thank God.

Nancy still grimaced when she remembered the long, painful ordeal of the fourth birthing two years past. She had delivered five sons in that litter. Five! By the time the runt had made his way into the world, his tiny gargoyle body emerging from between her legs and taking flight, Nancy had begun to feel like a vending machine.

She smiled at the memory, recalling the way her tiny son had flown into her arms the minute he saw her, snuggling against her body and sighing contentedly. The same as

another son, her youngest son, was doing now.

“He is perfect,” Vorik murmured, his silver eyes finding his Bloodmate’s dark ones. He glanced back down at tiny Xorak and gently ran a finger over the small *kor-tar* head. “Just like thy mother.”

Nancy snorted at that. “You’re just trying to get in my good graces,” she teased. “So I don’t throw you out of bed again.”

He grunted at the recent memory, not having a care for it. “Can I help it if I go off into snoring fits after you’ve sated me in the bedfurs?” His eyes narrowed, flicking from silver to crimson. “Verily, ‘tis a crime and a travesty to deny me thy body, *vorah*.” His hand slashed definitively through the air. “I will never allow thus again, whether or not it causes me to snore.”

She harrumphed, reveling in the debate. She couldn’t help it. The lawyer in her, she supposed. “You gargoyles are all alike,” she goaded him. “If ya can’t take the lovin, stay out of the oven.”

Vorik bent his dark head and nipped her on the shoulder, eliciting a yip. And a shiver. When his face reemerged into her line of vision, his expression was solemn. “Jesting aside, little one, I thank you for yet another beautiful son.” He kissed the tip of her nose, then smiled. “I love you, Nancy,” he murmured.

He pronounced her name *Nawncy* – always made her smile. She ran her hand gently over his jaw. “I love you too, Vorik.”

Later that eve, when all the pups were abed, Vorik joined her in their bedfurs with a wolf-eating grin on his face, a dimple popping out on either cheek. “Shall we play the *yenni* game anon, little one?”

Nancy ran her tongue seductively across her lower lip. She knew how much Vorik loved the *yenni* game. She would pretend to be a starving, voracious alpha *yenni* at market, while her Bloodmate played the role of the horny virgin trader desperate to feed her. Not too far off base from how they’d originally found each other, she thought bemusedly.

She wiggled her eyebrows at him. “I think that old sword is around here somewhere.” She snorted. “You remember my sword? The one you mistook for a *yenni* tail ten Yessat years ago?”

Vorik chuckled at the memory. “Aye.”

Nancy smiled at her Bloodmate, vastly contented. With him. With their sons. With herself. With life.

She was glad she hadn’t taken that job in Alaska. Very glad indeed. Life was beautiful.

Enough said.