

# BARE BONES



ALINE DE CHEVIGNY



RED ROSE PUBLISHING

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By

Aline de Chevigny



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**Bare Bones by Aline de Chevigny**

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# Dedication:

This book is dedicated to Keith for getting the internet going so I could send it in on time and as always my family and friends for their support, even when they laugh at me.

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## Chapter 1

Joanna entered the clearing with a combination of relief and dread, to be out of the woods. This clearing had been Christian's last known location. It had taken her nearly a year to build up the courage to make this trip, but with the new fall semester starting in a few weeks it was now or never. Christian would have been missing for a whole year on October thirty-first, and the police told her if no new evidence appeared before then, they would have no choice but to pronounce him as presumed dead and send his file over to homicide.

The snap of a branch behind her made her jump and pulled her out of her self-induced trance. Someone was following her, she could feel it. Images of the same beast that had taken Christian kidnapping her for his own pleasures flowed through her mind, sending ripples of terror through her slight frame. "I'm not afraid of you." An empty boast at best, one she hoped her stalker, be it man or animal, took seriously. Joanna was proud of how her voice never wavered while she spoke; she just wished her body would stop shaking.

The noises stopped and she continued on her way. One thing had become quite clear in the past year. She definitely wasn't in love with Gregory and he'd taken that news quite badly. Another good reason to take this trip now, they needed some time apart for him to move his things out of her house

Taking a drink of her water bottle, she saw sunlight glinting off the grass ahead of her. Excitement had her moving in the direction of the mysterious metal object as fast as her legs could take her. She didn't care what the police report said; people did not just go missing! There had to be some clue as to what had happened to her...friend.

Leaning down she picked up a small round object and brushed the dirt off it. A small cry escaped her lips as her quick cleaning, revealed the compass she'd given Christian for his last birthday. It was all her fault! He'd been talking to her on his sat phone, when the line suddenly went dead. They'd been in the middle of a stupid fight when he told her he wouldn't be coming home for his birthday or the All Hallows Eve bash she threw every year. She'd distracted him from his surroundings, making him need to pull out his compass to get his bearings and given the animal a perfect opportunity to take him.

This year's birthday gift sat wrapped and waiting for him, she flat out refused to give up hope that he'd come home safely. That had been the last straw for Gregory and the moment of illumination for her. That's when she realized that Christian was more than just a friend as she'd always claimed, at least in her mind. She was in love with him.

Her legs gave out below her, as she sank to the ground, clutching the compass to her chest like a lifeline. "Damn you Christian, I know you knew the truth. Why didn't you say anything to me? Is this why you refused to come home the last time we spoke? You thought I was too stupid to figure out that I loved you? You should have told me..."

With tears blurring her eyes, she looked around the clearing trying to gather her composure and keep searching for signs of Christian. Her mysterious stalker hadn't made a sound since she'd found the compass. She sincerely hoped whomever or whatever was out there had gone away, because right now she didn't think she could fight anything off. "Damn it Christian, where are you? I'm not leaving here until I know for certain one way or another if you're alive."

Looking back down at the compass in her hands, she slowly turned it over and read the inscription on the back. "To the best person I know. Friends forever, love Joanna." It was definitely Christian's compass. Clicking open the clasp, her breath stopped in her throat. Inside the cover was nestled a picture of her. One she'd never seen before. There sat Christian, holding her close, as she lay fast asleep against his chest that moment. He had a look of pure bliss etched on his face as he looked down at her cuddled in his arms. "Why didn't you tell me?"

He loved her. He actually loved her and never said a word. Men could be so stupid sometimes...hell she was no better. It took his disappearance for her to realize she loved him too. Getting to her feet, she scanned the clearing determination firming in her soul. "I love you too Christian..." The whispered words filled her heart with pain. She couldn't lose him. "Damn you, whoever you are. I'll never stop searching until I either find him or make you pay!"

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Christian had been watching over Joanna since she walked into his forest. There was no way in hell he would allow the same beast that turned him, lay a single claw on her. She never knew how much he loved her, but that never mattered. It had always been enough just to have her around, yet since his change, things weren't the same. She deserved so much more than a beast like him now.

He didn't know why he kept finding himself at the forests edge...and towards her. All he knew was that, this thing pulling him was getting harder and harder to control the longer she was away from him. He knew he needed to stay away, until he could properly control the blood lust during the full moon. She wouldn't be safe until then.

Then the object of his desire walks into his woods before he was ready for her, and he'd never felt so much at peace. Joanna had always been a smart woman; no one could surprise her when she was on her guard. She knew immediately when he started following her and reacted accordingly. Her bravado made him smile, she was terrified, he could see it in her stance, but more he could smell it. Yet she never once allowed that terror to rule or stop her. He admired that about her and almost laughed aloud when she told him she wasn't afraid of him. She'd used those exact same words the first night they met.

He watched her hurry forward towards something only she could see in the clearing. How she knew where to go always amazed him, the woman had an internal

compass that couldn't be matched or duplicated by the best science could offer. "My compass...Damn."

Joanna bent down and retrieved his most prized possession from the grass at her feet. How he could forget to return for it after he regained his senses. It was the first time she'd ever told him she loved him. She'd meant it as friends and, it had been enough...at the time.

Her scent swirled around him. The sadness so thick his arms ached to hold her and make it all better. He'd always hated to see her in pain. Hated seeing her with that loser Gregory even more, but he respected her too much to say anything. Instead, he made certain to always be there when she needed to talk.

It still amazed him that in twenty years of friendship they'd never once gotten together. The timing had never been right...until now. *Where the hell did that come from? Joanna is still dating...* 'I love you too Christian...' Her whispered words drifted softly across the clearing towards him. She loved him and that changed everything.

It was time to let her know he was still alive and give in to the urges he felt before they overwhelmed him. The minute he stepped out from behind the stand of trees, Joanna fainted. The sight of the strongest woman he knew lying helpless on the ground and the scent of his enemy drawing nearer snapped him into action. He'd apologize to her later; right now, he needed to get her to safety. Cain hadn't forgiven him for not

joining his pack, and from the scents on the wind, Cain had brought the entire pack to hunt him down.

Throwing Joanna over his shoulder, he moved quickly and stealthily through the trees. It wasn't hard avoiding Cain and his men. Despite his many years as a werewolf, the man still couldn't walk through the forest when in human form without sounding like elephant in heat. Just because Cain had never added a woman to the pack, didn't mean he never would and once he set eyes on Joanna it would be a fight to the death to keep her out of his hands. It still might...

Entering his cabin, he quickly bolted the door before taking Joanna into the back room and laying her on the bed. Standing back, he looked her over, running his eyes over every inch of her body like a man dying of thirst. She was still beautiful; nothing would ever change that. But she looked tired and worn. That wasn't normal for her. Her long, raven colored tresses were tied loosely in a ponytail, strands escaping from the ribbon messily. She looked wild, free, and never more beautiful. Her skin was pale and she looked thinner than the last time he saw her. He hated seeing her this way; he liked her curves.

Joanna stirred as a shiver passed through her. Reacting instinctively, Christian fetched a blanket from the closet and gently covered her with it. "What do I do with you now, my dear Joanna? I can't let you leave, not while Cain is out there hunting me. He'd

take one look at your beauty and snatch you away for himself. Then I'd have to kill him for touching you.”

A barely legible murmur escaped her lips, pulling a smile from his lips. There were some advantages to be a Lycan. He heard every deliciously whispered word. No, he couldn't let her leave, only now his reasons weren't so unselfish. He wanted to keep her for himself, lose himself in her arms, and lips. Christian finally understood what his subconscious had been trying to tell him for the past year, that he needed her. She was his sanity, the thing that kept him holding on.

Noise in the distance brought him back to his senses. Cain and the pack were closing in on his cabin. They'd never gotten this close to his home before; they must have picked up Joanna's sweet scent. Closing and locking the bedroom door, more for her safety than to keep her prisoner, he silently stole out of the cabin to lure the pack away from his woman.

Weaving in and out of the trees, he spotted the two youngest members of the pack long before they even knew he was there. The best lesson he'd ever learnt as a forester was always to stay upwind from any animal you want to get close to or avoid. Scanning the ground around him, he grinned when he found just what he was looking for. This was one time he was grateful to poachers.

Quietly picking up the bear trap, he worked his way ahead of the two wolves and set it up under some dry leaves, then relieved himself over the trap as a calling card. His

scent would guarantee that they would come looking for him, and distract them from Joanna.

“Cain...we just picked up the deserter’s scent. You want us to keep looking for the owner of the new scent? Or would you prefer the traitor?”

Christian stopped walking; the bastards were using radios to communicate. Things were about to get a lot harder; he needed to get his hands on one of those radios. Climbing up the nearest tree, he sat hidden in the foliage and waited for them to make a move.

“I want Christian! We’ll find the intruder later. Get me that traitor...dead or alive.”

Christian started grinning. *Wow, I really pissed him off.*

“Ten-four Cain. Will do, we’ll go after the traitor.”

The two men started forward, not paying any attention to where they stepped, leaving Christian wondering how they survived this long. Sooner than he thought possible, he heard a sharp cry fill the evening air as the first man stepped into the trap. His partner stopped walking immediately and scanned the area around him with more care. Christian never bothered to learn the man’s name; he never planned to stick around. Now he wished he’d taken the time. He wanted to know the name of the wolf he was about to kill.

The crackle of the radio flared to life in time to the screaming. “Nicols, Fred...What the hell is going on out there? Answer me!”

The second man slowly took out his radio, his eyes never once stopping their scan around the clearing. “Nicols stepped into a poachers trap. We aren’t going anywhere anytime soon Cain. Who knows how many more traps are hidden around here.”

Taking advantage of his prey’s distraction, he swung down from the branch and landed without a sound, two feet behind them. They should have sensed him, but all the blood Nicols was losing, masked his scent.

“You should have listened to me that night Fred. I tried to warn you about what would happen if you didn’t leave my forest. Now I’m going to have to rid myself of you.”

His stance sloppy and off balance, Fred spun around to face him. “Cain will kill you for this, traitor.”

“Not if I kill him first, runt!”

Fred laughed nervously. “So that’s it, you want to be the alpha dog of the pack. You don’t have the killer instinct to take control and keep it.”

Taking two steps forward and one to the left, Christian smiled when Fred copied him move for move in reverse. “Let’s test that theory of yours, shall we?”

The man’s eyes lit in sudden understanding as a slow smile curved his lips. “You’re protecting the intruder! Killing me won’t save...” his smile grew, “her. Cain will have the woman and nothing you do will save her from becoming the pack bitch. He’ll cage you and make you watch as she’s passed around the pack, while they sate their lust in her.”

Rage, blinding, and blood red in its intensity colored his vision. “My mate will not be touched.”

Christian knew the minute the words were out of his mouth, he’d made a fatal mistake. Extending his claws, he slashed Fred’s throat open from ear to ear without a second thought, the minute the man went for his radio. He didn’t stop to watch the fool fall to the ground yet allowed his momentum, to move him forward. Slowing only long enough to reach down and rip the radio from his nerveless fingers as he stepped over the body and headed straight towards Nicols whimpering behind him. “You’ll need to die also, Nicols, I can’t have you telling Cain about the little conversation you overheard.”

“I won’t tell him Christian, I swear!”

Christian shook his head in mock sadness. “You’re a good little follower, Nicols; you always do what your pack leader tells you.” Nicols’ eyes darted all around them, looking for a way to escape his predicament. He was looking in vain as far as Christian was concerned.

“You could...you could challenge Cain. Take over the pack.”

A shiver of distaste ran through him at the thought of leading men like them for eternity. “I’m a lone wolf Nicols, always have been. Packs don’t interest me.” Taking another step forward, he hardened his heart to deliver the killing blow.

“Wait, I beg you. Let me serve you. I’ll be your warrior, protect you from Cain and the pack.”

Christian laughed at the absurd notion. “Some warrior you are, you walked right into my trap. Besides, I won’t share my mate. Make peace with your gods Nicols, my lady awaits my return and you’ve wasted enough of my time.” Years of dealing with wounded wild animals had taught him to make their death quick and clean.

Within second, he had two dead lycans lying at his feet and the itch to return to Joanna grew stronger. But he still had one more issue to deal with first. Raising the radio to his lips, he set off towards Cain’s last known location. “Hey Cain, just thought I’d let you know your toadies are dead. A little warning of what will happen to you if you don’t leave my forest!”

“Christian? You arrogant runt, I’ll kill you for this.”

“Old song, new verse. You haven’t been able to kill me yet, what makes you think now’s different?” One thing he’d learnt about dealing with Cain in the past year was that when the man got angry he got sloppy. Being seriously outnumbered, he’d use everything he had in his arsenal to even the odds.

“You arrogant pup, face me in honorable combat. I challenge you lycan to lycan.”

Christian laughed into the radio. “You must think I’m mad. Cain you don’t have an honorable bone in your body. You’d send your pack to kill me the moment I stepped into the combat circle. I can’t allow you to harm or turn one more innocent person. No, I think I’ll keep killing off the pack, then when you’re all alone, I’ll come for you!”



## Chapter 2

Joanna woke surrounded by blackness the likes of which she'd never seen before. This definitely wasn't her house. Sitting up she took stock of her situation and tried to remember how she could have gotten there. The last thing she remembered was going to the clearing and finding Christian's compass. Then seeing Christian's ghost... she couldn't deal with it.

Getting off the bed, she made her way by feel to the nearest wall, and started making her way around the room looking for a light switch. Three quarters of the way around, she finally found what she'd been searching for and flipped the switch. The room was bare of everything but a bed and a small side table, which explained why she didn't hit anything during her search.

Turning back towards the bed, she spotted Christian's compass sitting on the table and her backpack leaning up against the foot of the bed. Whoever had brought her here took great pains to make sure she didn't feel threatened. Unfortunately, it didn't work. She wanted nothing more than to get out of there. Grabbing her pack, she made her way to the door intent on leaving before her host could return.

The door was locked. It didn't matter how hard she pulled or jingled the handle the door wouldn't budge. Terror wrapped itself around her heart; she was trapped. The door was the only way in or out of the room. Whoever had brought her here, didn't

intend for her to leave. “Only I can get myself into this much trouble. If Christian were here, he’d laugh at me...if...”

Tears started streaming down her face as she slowly sank to the floor. Christian wouldn’t be coming to her rescue anymore, he was gone. She’d never see him again. She’d waited too long and now she’d never be able to tell him how much she loved him.

The front door slammed, followed by sharp steps towards her prison, pausing just on the threshold. Her heart started beating painfully in her chest. *What now?*

“I promise I won’t hurt you, but you have to stay in there for a little longer. The forest is dangerous right now and I couldn’t bear it if you got hurt.”

“Please, I promise not to tell anyone about any of this. I just want to go home...my boyfriend will start to worry if I don’t return soon.” Another blatant lie, she’d been doing a lot of that since Christian disappeared.

“This boyfriend, he has a name?”

The thick tone of jealousy she heard in the man’s voice surprised her. She’d never expected a reaction to her plea other than a rejection. “His name?”

“Yes, his name.”

“Christian...his name is Christian Clarke.” Silence greeted her lie. Christian had never been her boyfriend, but he was the only person she could think of plus it didn’t hurt that she wished he had been.

“Christian Clarke? Isn’t he the forester that went missing nearly a year ago from this very same forest?”

Fresh tears ran down her cheeks at the cruel reminder. Could this man be the same one that took her Christian away? “Yes...”

“Get some sleep. I’ll bring you some food in the morning.”

She heard the dismissal and panicked. “Wait, please...what happened to him? You know the truth; I can hear it in your voice.” She waited for at least an hour by the door, waiting for him to come back and answer her question but he never did. His voice though muffled sounded so familiar and soothing, leaving her feeling lost and confused about what was happening.

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“I need to know the truth, please...he...Christian was my best friend, and...I love him. If you know where he is, I need to tell him that. He needs to know the truth.”

He’d never heard her beg before, it was an unnerving feeling. One he wished to never experience again. He needed to get out of there, needed some time to think. When she found out he was the one keeping her locked up, she’d be beyond pissed. Then her words of love wouldn’t matter worth spit.

Leaving the cabin, he stopped long enough to put up the security measures he concocted the night before into place. He wouldn’t be going far, but the mere thought of Joanna all alone in a locked room with Cain on the prowl disturbed him, especially after

her confession of love. He walked a safe distance to keep Joanna none the wiser of his identity and keep Cain from hearing her pleas. Turning on the radio he'd stolen from the dead wolf, a grin split his features when he heard the angry growls.

“Damn you Christian, I know you can hear me. Answer me!”

Leaning back against a tree, his grin grew wider. Cain was in a real mood today. In the year he'd known the wolf, this was the first time he'd lost his composure. “Yes Cain, do you need directions out of the forest?”

“Bastard, when I get my hands on you, I'll rip you to shreds. No one ignores me and gets away with it.”

“You need to relax Cain; you'll give yourself a coronary if you stay that tense. On second thought, what can I do to stress you out some more? Have you left anymore of your pets roaming around without supervision? I could go fetch them for you.” The curses coming from the radio made him chuckle entertained. He hadn't felt this alive in a year.

“I'll take that as a no. Have yourself a good night Cain. I know I will.” Laughing he turned off the radio and just sat there listening to the sounds of the forest around him. Everything seemed so calm; it was nearly perfect. His perfection was sitting in his cabin, in pain, wondering what became of him. It was time to let her know he was still alive and take his punishment whatever that may be.

Entering the cabin quietly, he made his way towards the bedroom door and listened for sound. All he heard was the soft breathing of his love after she'd cried herself to sleep. He'd done that to her. A man who caused the woman he loved pain, didn't deserve her. It was time to release her and escort her out of the forest so she could go home. Opening the door, he found her asleep against the wall next to the door. She hadn't moved since their talk earlier. Feeling guilty, he picked her up in his arms and carried her to the bed. "Joanna, my sweet love, I need you to wake up now. It's time to get you out of here and back to civilization."

"Just a few more minutes Christian, I'm tired."

Quiet laughter escaped his lips. She hadn't changed, and that just made letting her go more difficult for him. "Open those amazing blue eyes, sweetheart. We need to talk, and then I need to get you out of here before Cain realizes what I'm up to and what a prize he's about to lose."

Her eyes fluttered open, then open wide in shock when she took in his face. Before he could start to explain, she threw her arms around his neck and pulled him down onto the bed holding him close. "If this is a dream, I never want to wake up."

Stunned that she wasn't angry, his arms circled her waist. He was clinging to her like a lifeline. Lord, he loved this woman. "It's no dream Joanna. Now we need to get you out of here before..."

“I am not going anywhere until you explain to me why you didn’t call to tell me you were alive. I’ve been worried sick!”

“Joanna, I...”

“I swear, Christian, you can be so damned insensitive sometimes. I...wait a second. Are you the one who locked me up in here?”

“Joanna, I can exp...”

“You son of a bitch. How dare you...”

Christian stopped her tirade with a kiss that held all the pent up emotions he felt for her. The moment their lips touched, Joanna threw her arms around his neck and pulled him down onto the bed, deepening the kiss.

Her hands roamed down his side, and pulled his shirt out of his pants, then climbed hungrily up his bare chest. “I love you Christian.”

Growling he nipped at her bottom lip. “It’s about time you realized that.”

“Don’t you ever leave me again Christian Clarke and don’t for one second think that you’re off the hook...”

“Sweetheart, you talk too much.” He loved the stunned look that spread across her face when he got forceful with her, but more he adored the slow sexy grin that spread over her lips.

“Then I guess you’ll have to distract me.”

That was one offer he wasn't waiting for her to repeat. Growling in desire, he slowly lowered her back against the bed, laying kisses along her neck and, unbuttoning her blouse as he made his way down to her belly button. He'd always wanted to know what she tasted like, and he planned to taste every inch of her delectable flesh before this night was over.

If he could just rid himself of the nagging suspicion that something was about to go so very wrong, this evening would be perfect.

## Chapter 3

Joanna felt like her body was on fire. She'd dreamed about this...him, so often that a night of passion in Christian's arms seemed almost unreal. Closing her eyes, even for a second was out of the question. If she were to wake up now and find him gone...learn that she'd dreamed the entire encounter...again, it would kill her. "I need you to make me a promise Christian."

His hands stilled on her bare flesh, as his eyes looked up into hers. How he'd managed to rid her of every stitch of clothing so fast was a mystery she didn't care to solve. That could wait until later, a little bit of mystery was good for a relationship and she always did enjoy the quiet mystery about him. Why would she ever wish to change that?

"What type of promise Joanna?"

"Well...a twofold promise, actually. First, I need to know exactly how you feel about me. Second, you need to promise me you'll never disappear on me again! I've been miserable without you and I can't go through that again once we've made love."

He slowly made his way up her body, his eyes never once leaving hers, a soft glow of desire shining in his eyes. "Are you saying you wish to be with me always?"



“I’m saying that I love you, you cruel insensitive beast!” She knew he wanted her, she could feel it in every look and touch. It just wasn’t enough; she needed more from him.

“As of this moment my sweet woman, you are mine. My heart and soul are in your hands and I’ll never let you go again. Does that put your concerns to rest sweetheart?”

“No!” Why wouldn’t he say it? Why couldn’t he tell her he loved her? She needed to hear the words before she gave herself to him so completely. If she lost him again, Joanna knew it would kill her.

“No?”

He prowled his way up the rest of her body that was the only way she could think of describing the act and drew her into a soul-searing kiss that wiped all conscious thought from her mind.

“I have been in love with you since the first time I laid eyes on you. If you’d been free, I would have claimed you as my own that very night. You are my woman, my love, and my mate for the remainder of our lives. Will that do?”

Her voice died in her throat, all she could do was nod in agreement. That was more than enough.

“Good.”

The wolfish grin he flashed her reminded her so much of their first encounter, she couldn't help but laugh. Reaching up, she gently caressed his face. "You should have told me the truth."

"It would have changed nothing and caused us both pain. You weren't available back then and you weren't ready to hear the truth."

Christian knew her better than she expected. "But I..."

He placed two fingers on her lips to stop her flow of words. "Hush, tonight I want to revel in the fact that you finally belong to me."

Something about his choice of words sent a shiver of pure pleasure and anticipation through her body. "Don't you mean that you belong to me?" Christian's eyes flashed nearly black in desire, which quickly turned to deadly anger. She'd never seen that look on his beautiful face before; it worried her. "What's wrong?"

"Danger! The person I was protecting you from last night when I locked you in this room is close. I need to go and deal with him, love. You should dress. Lock the door behind me when I leave to guarantee your safety. If you control the lock then..."

"No!"

"No?"

Damn infuriating man, he never did listen when she told him she could take care of herself. "I said no, and I mean it. You will not leave me here, locked up and alone." She

set her shoulders in a stubborn stance when she saw his lips curve into a frown. “I mean it!”

“You can’t come with me Joanna, I forbid it. I can’t risk allowing Cain to get his hands on you. I meant every word when I told you that you that you held my heart in your hands.”

Getting up, she started gathering her clothing, miraculously thrown to all four corners of the room, and got dressed. “Then you’d better learn that I can take care of myself. I’ve been doing it for years. Because, Mister Clarke, I won’t allow you to treat me like some damsel in distress that needs a man to protect her every time she leaves the house.” Christian’s lips twitched in suppressed laughter. She’d seen that expression too often to mistake it for any other. “...and I won’t let you leave me behind either. Where you go, I go! Still interested in pursuing a relationship with me?”

The laugh he’d been suppressing broke free and she quickly found herself wrapped tightly in his embrace. “More than ever, I even plan on marrying you, but you still can’t come with me.”

“Christian...”

He shook his head to stop her. “No! Cain is deadly, dangerous, and unpredictable. There are things going on here that you aren’t aware of and I promise to explain it all to you once you’re safe.”

Christian was scared, it didn't happen often but they'd been friends too long for her to miss the signs. He was hiding something from her and that she wouldn't stand for. "What are you hiding from me Christian? Remember I know you as well as you know me."

Laughing Christian tightened his hold around her and kissed her. "Then you know me too well, woman. But, we really don't have time to get into it. Please stay here and wait for me to return. I'll make it more than worth your while to give in to my wishes this once."

She hated it but he really did look worried. "If you aren't back in one hour...I'm leaving and you'll never see me again. I'll accept Gregory's proposal and let him take me away."

The deep growl that emanated from his throat at her hurt rebuttal shocked and surprised her. She'd never seen a look of such possessive anger cross his features before and she liked it. The goddess forgive her, seeing Christian so angry yet obviously still aroused excited her. Moisture pooled between her legs in excited anticipation of his next move. Maybe he'd forget about this danger only he can sense and finally make love to her.

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Joanna's desire hit him full force, leaving him feeling as if he'd slammed into a brick wall. Her threat enraged every single one of his mating instincts. Her

stubbornness was one of the things he loved most about her, but he was damned if he'd allow his mate to bed another once he'd claimed her as his own. "Woman you are sorely trying my patience."

"Good! Now you know how I feel."

That took him aback, she'd just defied him, pushed him to retaliate, and something she'd never done before in the past. Narrowing his eyes at her, he ran them over her body. Her cheeks flushed, her breathing rapid and her eyes deep pools filled with desire; she wasn't out of breath and he didn't intimidate her...the little wench was aroused. He could smell it! Maybe she wouldn't be disgusted and reject him when she learnt the truth of his change. "If Cain wasn't so close to the cabin, I'd teach you a lesson for your impish defiance."

"You're really going to leave me here? All alone?"

The hurt and surprise on her face and voice almost made him reconsider his decision. Only the not so distant crackle of Cain's radio and angry howl when he didn't receive an answer firmed his resolve that she stay in the cabin. "Only because I love you so damn much. Now be a good girl and lock the door behind me."

His answer didn't placate her. Joanna slung her backpack over her shoulder and walked out of the room. "Which room is yours? I'll stay there and wait for you to return. Nowhere else."

"Joanna..."

“I am not staying in this room! Forget it, no way. You know how I feel about being locked up and I won’t allow you to go back on your word the moment you think I’m in danger again.”

A slow smile crept over his lips. Even during life or death situations the woman could make him smile. His sweetheart had gotten more self-confident and assured in the year he’d been gone. It suited her well. “Sweetheart, this is my room. I enjoy the safety of a locked door between me and anything that might accidentally wander into my home while I sleep.”

She didn’t believe him. He didn’t blame her one bit. Before being turned, he slept in the other room. The one with big bay windows all around the room and the more comfortable bed, yet since the change he didn’t trust as easily. Mostly he didn’t trust himself not to go out hunting.

“You forget that I’ve been in your cabin once before. I can honestly say I never saw this room during my last visit.”

Cain’s scent was getting stronger, which meant he was getting much closer to the cabin than he’d ever been. The last thing he wanted was to have Joanna angry with him; he had plans for the evening once he took care of their pest issue. But it couldn’t be helped; her safety was his main concern. “Joanna, sweetheart, if you’d rather sleep in my old chambers you may, but...” he told her with a soft laugh, stopping her from answering before he was done talking. “If you do sleep in there you must keep the shotgun by your

side until I return. If anyone, man or beast enters without me at their side, you shoot them!”

“Christian I...”

He knew how much she hated guns; he also knew what a good shot she was. Hell he’d taught her, and she never missed what she was aiming for. “No compromise Joanna, this isn’t up for debate. If anyone comes in here that isn’t me, you are to shoot them and aim for the heart! Are we understood?”

He saw the defiance cross her beautiful eyes and bit back a grin. She would pick now to show a stubborn streak, and he had no one to blame for that but himself. After years of patiently trying to instill independence in her, it amused him that she would chose now to apply his teachings and back them with stubbornness. “It’s that or I lock you in this room until I get back and you know I can and will do it if you don’t give me your word right this instant!”

Joanna threw him a glare filled with vengeance and threw her bag back into a corner of the room, then promptly started stripping out of her clothing.

“Sweetheart, what are you doing?”

“If you’re going to treat me like a slave, I may as well dress the part!” She retorted angrily throwing her bra towards his head before curling up on the bed and staring at the far wall refusing to acknowledge him further.

“If you’re trying to kill me woman, you’re doing a good job.” Joanna continued to ignore him. Laying the shotgun on the table beside her, he flinched when she pulled further away so they wouldn’t accidentally touch. He needed to leave, but he couldn’t seem to pull himself away from her. Giving in to the inevitable, he sat on the edge of the bed and gently ran his fingers through her hair. “You aren’t going to speak to me until I explain why I’m acting so caveman and protective are you?”

The silence that greeted his question was answer enough. He’d only seen Joanna this upset once before and that relationship had lasted about thirty seconds once the guy she was dating walked out. Christian wasn’t that foolish. The last time he disagreed with her, he was bitten and turned into a beast.

“Cain is the person responsible for my disappearance.” Joanna sat up and turned to face him. He’d gotten her undivided attention. Now he only needed to keep it and make her understand. A low moan of unrequited desire left him as his eyes drank in the sight of her perfect body. He’d wanted this for so long, and she was so close, yet he couldn’t take her until he knew she was safe.

“How?”

Christian sighed in relief. She was talking to him that meant she’d been more angry than hurt. Angry he could handle, it just meant he’d need to find inventive ways to make it up to her later. “Do you remember that conversation we had a few years ago about the truths and falsehoods concerning vampires and werewolves?” That discussion



had started during one of her more elaborate Halloween parties and lasted long into the night. She was the firm believer that there had to be other things out there that society just ignored and he thought she'd lost her mind. Boy, had he been wrong. He owed her more than a mere apology for calling her a delusional female with warped romantic notions.

That party had been a revelation. Joanna's costume of a female lycan had been breathtaking, and damn close to perfection. Sexy didn't even come close to describing her that night.

“Christian if you're playing games...”

Kissing her lips, he turned her so that she was leaning up against his chest giving him perfect access to her ample breasts. “I'm not playing games, now do you remember that night?” Reaching around her waist, he cupped her breasts in his hands and began kneading them.

“Yes, I remember you called me a gullible fool for believing that werewolves existed,” she answered worming her body around to face him.

“I should have listened to you. Cain is a wolf and he bit me during the full moon last Halloween. I hadn't been paying attention to my surroundings and didn't think anything about it until a month later. I woke up in the woods naked and covered in blood, a dead doe lying next to me with her throat ripped out. I realized then that it

could have been a person and staged my abduction. After a few months, everyone stopped searching for me. Everyone except you and Cain.”

She pressed closer to his chest. “Joanna, sweetheart I’m a werewolf and I’ve yet to learn to control the blood lust. That’s why I stayed away; that’s why I let you believe I was dead.”

A thick ominous silence followed his confession. Silence and Joanna were never a good combination. It meant she was either plotting retaliation or she was plotting mischief. “Joanna?”

“Let me absorb this for a second.” She pulled out of his arms, grabbed the first shirt that came to hand and slipped it on.

Seeing her wearing his shirt quieted his wolf’s mating instincts. Joanna had accepted him as her mate, she just wasn’t very happy with him at the moment.

“You’re asking me to accept a lot at face value here. How do I know there really is a Cain? Maybe you’re just trying to scare me away because you suddenly have cold feet about being with me.”

“That is the most ridiculous thing I’ve ever heard. You are the sexiest woman I know and keeping my hands off you is the hardest thing I ever had to do!”

Joanna snorted and crossed her arms over her very ample chest. “You’ve had no trouble during the past ten years.”

Leaning forward he brushed her golden curls back behind her shoulders. “I give you my word, I’ve had countless sleepless nights because of your body. I’ve desired none the way I desire you.” She still didn’t believe him, of that he was certain. “I do...”

“Now I know why you’ve become so violently protective of your territory my traitorous cub.”

His hackles rose upon hearing Cain’s voice coming from behind him at the bedroom’s doorway. He should have heard the wolf long before now. The front door had been bolted shut, and the force needed to open it should have alerted him.

Joanna’s cheeks burned red as she pulled the blanket up to cover herself. Christian moved, placing himself directly in Cain’s line of sight and effectively hiding Joanna from his view. “Get out of my home Cain! You aren’t welcome here.”

He sensed Joanna moving behind him, her movements slow and sure inching towards the shotgun. It was time to distract their unwanted houseguest, so he wouldn’t notice what Joanna was up to.

“Seriously cub, I just got here. Why would I leave now? I’ve just found the perfect woman to become the pack’s bitch. She is a beauty, Christian, and will make a perfect addition to my pack. The boys have been getting a little restless of late. The last woman we found barely lasted a week. Boys can be so rough with their toys, but you my lovely, I believe I’ll turn first.”

Joanna had stopped moving the second Cain's attention turned towards her. Christian moved the second her body started to shake. Pulling her close, he held her tight whispering words of endearment and courage into her ear while keeping his body between her and Cain. She put on a brave front, but he felt the fear and panic trying to take hold of her body.

"You'll die first Cain. No one touches my mate, but me."

"Your mate! No, I don't think so. I've been around long enough to tell you've never bedded that woman, and until then, she's fair game."

This was the final proof needed that Cain was insane. "Death it is then," he growled. "Lock the door the minute we exit." Kissing her lips, he slipped off the bed hoping he could avoid the protest he could see in her eyes.

"Don't leave me Christian...please."

"Shhh, I'll be back before you know it. I have the best incentive to succeed. I have you naked in my bed." He refused to allow her to distract him this time. Both of their lives hung in the balance if he didn't succeed. "I promise sweetheart, just keep the shotgun close at hand."

"If you get yourself killed, I'll kick your ass into your next reincarnation."

"Deal, now lock the door behind me." He waited until he heard the soft snick of the bolt going home, then turned his full attention on Cain.

## Chapter 4

“She’s a feisty one, cub; she’ll do well in the pack. Too bad you’ll never get to enjoy a taste.”

“She’d eat you alive and take over the pack before you even knew what hit you Cain. That’s after she killed you and castrated the rest of the wolves.”

Cain stopped smiling and looked him over with a thoughtful expression on his scarred, weathered face. “She’s that strong?”

Christian laughed and leaned insolently against the side of the cabin. “She’s completely enslaved me and you know how hard that is to do.”

“She’s a wolf Queen? That isn’t possible; we haven’t seen a wolf queen in centuries.”

“She’s my queen, and you’ll have to kill me before I allow you anywhere near her.”

“Then it’s time we settled this matter of alpha wolf once and for all. I hope you’ve made peace with your gods and your mate!”

The wind chose that moment to pick up speed through the trees; an ominous and eerie howl through the clearing, whispering encouragements into his ear, telling him he’d survive this day and claim his heart. Funny enough, the sound calmed and centered him.

Christian made certain to keep his body between Cain and the front door of the cabin at all times. The only way Cain was getting near Joanna or the door was if the older lycan killed him.

“What are you waiting for cub? Make your move! You’ve been bragging for the past year about how you can best me, so prove it.”

Cain was doing his damndest to bait him, trying to draw him into making the first move out of anger. Unfortunately for him, a decade of dealing with Joanna’s boyfriends made Cain’s taunts child’s play to ignore.

He’d learnt one other important lesson from Joanna’s boyfriends, how to annoy, aggravate, and piss someone off in as few words as possible. He planned on implementing all of them in this fight. “I would love to oblige you Cain, but my mate forbade me to do anything that would get me hurt. She has plans for my body later.”

His refusal to initiate the battle and the bold reminder that Joanna was his did exactly as he expected. Cain let out an ear-shattering scream and ran towards him like a man possessed. “I’ll have no cowardly cubs in my pack. It’s time I fixed the error I made the night I turned you. As compensation for the trouble you put me through, I’ll take that delectable morsel you have inside for my own.”

Before Cain could get more than two feet from him, his entire body was thrown back by the force of the shotgun blast hitting him square in the chest. Christian turned

in time to catch Joanna as the gun fell from her hands and she started emptying her stomach over the side of the veranda.

“Sweetheart?”

“I killed him.”

There was so much pain in her voice, his heart hurt for her. “You did no such thing. You protected yourself from a beast. He had no humanity left in him, Joanna. Cain was nothing more than a rabid wolf.”

“Don’t lie to me. I deserve better than that. The man has a hole the size of a football field in the middle of his chest.”

“A football field is exaggerating things just a little, wouldn’t you say?”

He’d expected the attack, all fists and fury as she took out on him the pain she felt at having killed a man. She didn’t care that Cain would have killed her or worse if he’d lived. All that mattered to her now was that she’d caused his death. “I told you I didn’t want the damn gun and I told you, I could take care of myself. Now do you believe me?”

“Yes my love. I believe you now. You even took care of me. You truly are a queen among women.”

“Don’t patronize me Christian. I hate it when you do that!”

Brushing back her hair, he used his thumb to wipe off the corner of her mouth then lured her back into his arms. “I wouldn’t dream of patronizing you. I’d never get you into my bed if I tried something so foolish.”

Joanna laughed weakly and leaned up against his chest for support. “Could we go home now Christian? We need to tell everyone you’re alive and the police...we need to inform them about...him.

He was tempted, sorely so, but he still had three members of Cain’s pack on the loose that needed to be dealt with. Allowing them to continue running free would be like allowing his Joanna to wed someone else. Unthinkable and unforgivable. “I wish I could, but the rest of the pack is still out there. I can’t allow them to do to others what they did to me. Not to mention what they’d do to the next poor woman they might catch...”

“But...”

“You’re on summer break, right?”

“Yes, but...”

“Then give me until All Hallows Eve. I know how much you adore that holiday. You threatened never speak to me again if I didn’t show up. I’ll take care of things here and be back by your side in time for the party.”

Joanna narrowed her eyes at him. “I told you I’m not leaving this horrible place without you! So stop trying to get rid of me.”

He had a half naked woman standing in front of him, within touching distance, a look of complete defiance etched onto her beautiful face and all he could think of was how adorable she look. “What about your students?”



A look of complete surrender entered her face. "I'll leave at the start of the school year. But..."

Something told him he wouldn't like what was coming next.

"...I'll be back every chance I get until you come home. If something happens to you, and you don't make it home by All Hallows Eve, nothing you can say or do will ever convince me forgive you if you don't show up as promised."

He knew he wouldn't like her words, and he was right. There was a serious chance he could lose her if he didn't resolve this right now. When Cain didn't show up the rest of the pack will fight among themselves for supremacy, then they'll either move to another forest or try to get control of the forest for themselves.

The only certainty was that they'll be on guard and hunting them won't be as easy as it was the first two. Add to that, every time Joanna entered the forest she would be in danger. "Go on inside love, I'll take care of Cain and be right in."

"What will you do with him?"

Something about her gave him pause. "Dump his body on a path I know the pack uses. The infighting when they realize they no longer have a leader should keep them busy for a few days."

"Why? Why do you want them kept busy if you're going to hunt them down?"

How quickly she caught onto his plans was a little eerie, but then she knew him better than anyone including his family. Turning her towards the cabin door, he gave her

bottom a light swat to get her moving. “You ask way too many questions. Now, inside with you and get ready for my return. I plan on making love to you tonight until you can’t think straight anymore.”

“Christian?”

He never could resist that tone. “Yes sweetheart?”

“Shouldn’t you get dressed first? I mean at the very least put on some shoes?”

Laughing, he let her pull him into the cabin; she had him way too distracted.

“Joanna love, I have boots right here. You can stop trying to pull me into the bedroom.”

Blushing scarlet, she let go of his hand. “Oh right, sorry.”

Grinning, he stole a kiss then slipped on his boots and grabbed a jacket. “Lock the door behind me. I’ll see you in a few minutes.”

“If you get hurt...”

He closed the door behind him before she could finish her threat.

## Chapter 5

Glaring at the door, she threw the bolt home then dragged Christian's beat up old chair to block it. "Damn infuriating, stubborn, egotistical man! If he thinks I'm letting him anywhere near me tonight, he's sorely mistaken." Her hand stilled an inch over her backpack as she realized he had her talking to herself again. "I'm gonna kill him for making me crazy."

Grabbing her pack, she walked across the house to the main bedroom. Opening the closed door, she was shocked to see all the dust covering the furniture in the room. Christian had told the truth, he really hadn't used this room since the last time she'd visited.

Turning she looked back at the room he'd been using and shivered. No way was she sleeping in there. Knowing Christian, he'd probably go looking for the men...the ones from Cain's pack. So, she had a few hours to fill until his return and what better way to keep her mind occupied than to clean the master suite and air out the house.

Having been there before she knew exactly where to find the cleaning supplies, she also wanted to see what her man...that stopped her. Her man! Christian was hers and wanted to marry her. She'd been proposed to before, and turned the guy down. Why was she now imagining what her dress would look like, or where he would take her on their honeymoon?

Laughing at her silliness, she grabbed the bucket from the linen closet and filled it with hot, soapy water. The smell of the suds soothed her rattled nerves. She never could sit around doing nothing, so first she'd clean, then she'd cook. If Christian came back before she was done, he could help.

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Christian approached the cabin slowly, taking care to leave no evidence of his passing as he went. A snap of a branch behind him stilled his movements; the next few seconds would tell him if the noise came from a human or a beast.

"I'm telling you the scent leads this way. Who has a better sense of smell, Mickey, me or you?"

"Fine, but if we don't find him soon...Cain is gonna have us for lunch."

Christian was stunned, that they could be that stupid. *How could they walk right by Cain's body in the middle of the path and not notice?* Slipping behind the trees, he waited for the two men to pass him. He'd never get a better opportunity to rid himself of them than right now.

Easing his way behind a pine tree, he broke a few of the needles to mask his scent and waited.

"What's wrong, Norm? Why did you stop?"

"His scent...it's gone. It's as if he just disappeared. No wonder Cain could never find him. This guy has abilities none of us come even close to mastering."

Walking out from behind his tree, he leaned up against it insolently and waited for them to take notice of him.

“That means we passed him already. Your oh so superior nose missed where he turned off. Let’s go bac...”

Christian grinned. “You two must be Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dum. ‘Cause I already killed the Cheshire cat, the mouse and the Mad Hatter. That leaves Alice, where is he boys?”

“What are you talking about?”

Shrugging, he glanced down at his hand and watched his claws grow. “Fred, Nicols, and Cain are dead. You two will follow them shortly, unless...”

“Unless what?” Norm asked, his eyes narrowing suspiciously.

“Unless, you tell me where I can find the fifth member of your pack and you leave my forest immediately.” He could tell straight away that Mickey would refuse his generous offer, and that meant more blood on his hands. Better his hands than Joanna’s, ever again.

“Why would we do that? With Cain dead as you say that makes one of us the new leader and I’d lay bets that the one who kills you would be the one to inherit that prestigious title.”

“So be it, you’ve had your only warning. It’s a pity that you chose to die. Shall we?” He stepped away from the tree and started towards the men.

“You’re a dead man Christian. I’ve been dying to do this for a year.”

Standing still, he let Mickey come to him. The instant he came within range, his inner wolf’s killer instinct took over. Reaching back, he grabbed Norm’s shirt and pulled him forward, forcing him to take the blade to the heart that Mickey had meant for him. “Silver? Impressive, too bad your aim isn’t.”

Mickey growled angrily and tried to lunge, but his knife caught in his friend’s chest made him stumble, trip, and fall forward onto Norm’s dead body. Taking advantage of the opening, Christian put one hand on each side of his head and twisted snapping the man’s neck like a twig. “Five down, one to go.”

Turning on the radio, he turned towards his cabin. He was extremely late and Joanna wouldn’t be impressed if he took much longer to return. “Has anyone spotted the cub?” He’d dropped his voice to a low growl in the hopes that the last man would mistake him for Cain and reveal his location. He got nothing but static in response.

“He’s....*cough*...*cough*...Cain killed him...”

Had the man spoken the truth with his last breath? Only time would tell.

## Chapter 6

Slipping into the cabin, Christian stopped and listened for Joanna. The rooms were quiet...too quiet. Making his way systematically through the room, he found a dinner cooked and ready to serve sitting on the stove. The table was set and waiting. Wildflowers graced the center to give the room some ambiance.

Against his orders, Joanna had left the cabin. That woman would be the death of him. Making his way further into the cabin, he found his room empty of all her belongings. Panic mixed with anger started to bloom in his chest until he noticed the faint scent of soap and disinfectant.

Following his nose, he entered the master bedroom and stopped on the threshold in surprise. The room was spotless, the bed remade with his best sheets and best of all draped across the top wearing not a stitch, was his Joanna fast asleep. She always did like this room.

Her innocent beauty called to him, pulling him towards the bed and her. Each step he took, found another piece of his clothing falling to the ground, until nothing remained but his desire for his mate. Sliding his body behind hers, he ran his hand over her hip while trailing kisses along her neck.

Joanna reacted instinctively, arching back into him, her arms wrapping around his neck and pulling him closer. His lips searched for hers and drew her into a kiss that left him trembling to control his need.

“Christian, promise you won’t stop this time.”

“Never again love. I need you Joanna, but I need you to tell me you want me.”

Every time she rubbed back against him, she made his hard-on worse.

“I want you, I need you Christian.”

Grasping her hips, he kneed her legs apart. “Get on your knees, love, I’d like a taste before I possess you.”

Joanna raised her beautiful rosy ass in the air without a word of complaint.

“Good, now don’t move love.” Sliding under her, he ran his tongue across her mound, relishing in her sweet taste. Too long...he’d waited too long to claim her and now his body demanded satisfaction.

“Yes...”

Sliding a finger deep into her core, he groaned in need when her muscles tightened around his index finger. She was so damn wet. “Sweetheart, I can’t wait anymore. I promise to make love to you slowly...after we sate our lust.”

“Stop tormenting me you beast and take me.”

Kneeling behind her, he laid a soft kisses up her back to her neck, and entered her with one smooth thrust. A howl of rightness escaped his throat; he was never letting her



go again. Reaching around, he took both breasts in his hands and started to thrust. Slowly at first, then with more and more speed as he felt her start to climax.

Joanna pushed back from the bed, reached behind her to wrap her arms behind his neck, and kissed him. The woman knew just how to test his limits. "I can't last much longer love."

"Don't stop Christian, don't ever stop."

*Never stop...* He'd never known Joanna to be so forceful. He liked the feeling, it excited him and gave him a newfound energy. Grasping her waist, he whispered into her ear. "Turn around love, ride me."

Obedying his wishes, she turned and started laying kisses along his abdomen. Her breasts slowly rubbed up against his legs, her lips teasing and tormenting him until he thought he couldn't stand anymore. "Joanna..."

"Shhhh, just enjoy."

"Sweetheart, I need you." Her soft giggle flowed around him, as she inched her way up his body. Impatient, he grasped her hips and lifted her onto his shaft. Joanna's hands fisted on the hairs of his chest as she lifted herself, sliding up and down his shaft. The sight of her breasts bouncing with each deep stroke proved more than he could take.

A soft cry of release escaped Joanna's throat and that undid him. He came, hard and fast, not stopping until Joanna milked him dry of every drop he had.

“That was fantastic.”

“You are an amazing woman, love, and I’m never letting you go.”

Sliding off him to cuddle against his chest, she tangled her legs around his and ran her fingers along his chest. “Christian, did you mean what you said about wanting to marry me?”

Pulling her closer, he kissed her softly. “Every word.”

## Chapter 7

“I can’t believe she picked today of all days to get married.”

“Oh be quiet Janice, you know how Joanna feels about Halloween and considering how she almost lost and then found Christian on this day. Well it seems appropriate.”

Christian couldn’t agree more.

“But seriously Kate, it’s his birthday and...never mind I get it. It’s Joanna’s favorite holiday, Christian’s birthday and they met on Halloween fifteen years ago today. Today is the perfect day for them to get hitched.”

His attention was pulled from the women’s intriguing conversation the moment the wedding march started and Joanna started walking down the aisle. No bare bones about it. Joanna was the only woman for him.

She was a vision of beauty in white silk. Her eyes sparkled with love and desire. He couldn’t wait until the ceremony was over so he could carry her off to his cabin and make love to her repeatedly.

The ceremony passed in a blur, the only sections he heard were when the priest asked if anyone objected to the union. He turned a murderous glare on the guests, daring anyone to object which made them laugh in amusement. Everyone there knew they belonged together. Then, the priest asked if he, “Christian Angel Clarke take thee

Joanna Elizabeth Stuart to be his lawfully wedded wife.” He pulled his mate into his arms and kissed her before answering...“Yes.”

“I love you Christian, but you’re supposed to wait until he pronounces us man and wife,” she chastised softly, cuddling against his chest with a soft sigh.

The priest laughed and turned to Joanna. “Do you Joanna take Christian as your lawfully wedded husband?”

“Definitely, and I’ll even obey on occasion if he asks nice.”

Grinning, Christian looked up at the priest. “Are we married now?”

“Yes son, you’re married now. I now pronounce you man and wife. You may kiss your bride.”

Lifting her in his arms, he flashed her, an evil grin. “Kiss me Mrs. Clarke.”

“I love you too Mr. Clarke. Even if you are occasionally furry.”

The End

When I was born, my parents christened me Aline de Chevigny. Maybe they knew then, what I'm just now figuring out. I was born to be a romance author! I am Canadian and a Chemical Engineering Technologist who decided one day to try the impossible. Or so I thought, LOL, the year I turned 30, I moved far away from all my family and friends to start a new job. I was so bored and lonely that I picked up my pen and started writing the stories floating around in my head down on paper. I never dreamed they'd be published, but to my surprise and delight my publisher liked it. My family has been extremely supportive of my goal and they continue encouraging me to sub my works.

Since that day I've written and sold 12 books, from Novella to Novel length and in various romance genres. This being my latest Paranormal...

You can find blurbs and excerpts of my all my stories at [www.alinedechevigny.com](http://www.alinedechevigny.com) along with some free reads, contests and in progress works.

Thank you for being a fan and supporting me in my goal to entertain the world the only way I know how.

Yours truly,  
Aline de Chevigny

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