

The longhaired man fished a key out of his jacket and pushed it into the lock. He turned the key and the mechanism inside the tumbler made a loud click, then he pushed the door open. He stepped aside and held out his hand for Alexasia to enter.

"My name is Ricardo," he said. "What is yours?"

"Alexasia," she said looking around. "What is this place?"

Ricardo laughed. "I am an artist. This is my studio slash home. Would you like another beer?"

She shook her head. She walked around the room studying the paintings scattered everywhere. They were extremely detailed. Only someone with a fine hand could do such a fantastic job. Alexasia could feel the need rise up inside of her.

He was closing the heavy drapes and dimming the lights. He heard the zipper of her dress and turned around. The soft light reflected off her bare skin in a way he had never seen before. She could be his masterpiece.

"Paint me," she demanded.

He hurried to a shelf and pulled down a canvas, sitting it on top of an easel he turned around. She was holding a tube of red acrylic paint in her hand and shaking her head. She grabbed his hand and squeezed the contents of the tube into his palm. Alexasia took his hand and slowly spread the paint across her breast and down onto the flat of her stomach.

How could she know his fantasies? This very thing lay hidden in his inner most being. He had never shared it with anyone and yet she knew. He took a tube of Burnt Sienna from the tray and smashed the tube against the table. He lifted her onto the table and spread the tawny colored paint onto her thighs and hips.

Time faded away. He had never had a woman like this before. She knew every desire and answered it tenfold. How could that be possible? His head was beginning to hurt. Was that a drop of blood on her cheek? He tried to pull away but she wouldn't let him. Was she laughing?

"Please, stop the pain," he moaned.

"I need it all artist," she whispered, pulling him deeper and deeper into the abyss.

Pain and pleasure wracked his body until there was nothing left. The essence of who he was, no longer existed. His last breath softly pushed at the hair on her temple. Alexasia shoved his body off her and onto the floor. His head sounded like a ripe melon when it hit the floor. She leaned over the table and looked down.

There was blood everywhere. She slid off the table and squatted down, watching the blood pool around his head. She stuck her finger into the blood, tasted it, and was surprised. It tasted the same in both worlds. She stood up and stretched. He must have a bath here somewhere. She should clean up before she went back to the loft but instinct told her to go soon. She slipped back into the gown and made her way back to Saint Peter and the crowded plaza of the French Quarter.

She was a mess and no one seemed to notice or care. She looked around her and realized she did not look that much out of place. She had been so keen on feeding that she had paid very little attention to the humans around her. Now at a closer look she realized many were dressed in very odd ways. Some were dressed like the old legends of

her home; wolves that walked like men, witches and spirits that roamed the night and some were dressed like nothing she had ever seen before.

This was Carnival, Billy had told her. People in this world celebrated this tradition dating back hundreds of years in the belief that one could give way to wantonness in any form and then repent to their God for forgiveness.

She looked up to the heavens. Not all are forgiven. She grabbed the man next to her and kissed him long and hard. Not all want to be.