All Hallow's Eve

Carolyn Faulkner © 2010 by Blushing Books® and Carolyn Faulkner

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Chapter One

Someone was suckling avidly at her nipples, making her body writhe in rhythm with those demanding lips. But she found she couldn't move very well. Something was restricting her that didn't feel bed-like – or restraint like, if she was honest enough with herself to admit that she knew what restraints felt like, and that was only sometimes.

Why couldn't she move like she wanted to? Her eyes were still closed; she was pleasantly drowsy and didn't feel in the mood to open them, but she was lying sideways, so her bottom arm was completely useless, and her upper arm was pressed rather tightly against something hard and unyielding that was nowhere near as interesting as a hard, male body. It felt like some sort of plush material with something firm backing it.

She thought she heard a faint chuckle against her breast, but couldn't quite be sure, and she found it didn't much matter to her right now. All that mattered was that he didn't stop what he was doing.

"So eager, my pet. We have lifetimes together."

Lifetimes? She was given to exaggeration herself, but lifetimes?

"Yes, Eve, lifetimes."

Suddenly, she felt the constraints disappear, and it felt like they were in a comfortable bed. She sat up, just to test her theory, and had no problems doing so. But when she opened her eyes, she couldn't see anything; the room was literally pitch-black. For some reason, that, above all else, made her nervous. And that nervousness compounded as she tried to remember who she was with and how she'd gotten there.

Firm, full lips touched hers as he breathed slowly into her mouth, saying, but not with his mouth, "Relax. You have nothing to fear."

Literally against her will – and her better judgment – she found herself letting go of her fears, knowing that she shouldn't. Every alarm bell she owned was trying to go off, but he wasn't letting them concern her.

Of course, he'd said she didn't have to worry. But then he'd ruined it by adding very deliberately, in a deep, rumbling tone, "Yet."

Somehow, all that almost threatening tone managed to do was make her nipples harder, and her nether lips wetter.

"Excellent. Your body knows to trust me, even if your stubborn mind doesn't."

Was he reading her mind? Was that how had he managed to kiss her so deeply, claiming her mouth in a ruthless yet somehow still gentle manner, and yet telling her not to be concerned at the same time? It was weird and kind of creepy.

She heard a sigh. "You modern women think entirely too much."

Modern women?

Before she could get any further with that thought, though, she found her wrists guided carefully over her head. The bed came up to meet her back as he bathed those sweet, slightly rasped nipples, then left them to the tender care of his strong fingers.

But then how were her wrists being held captive if his hands were on her breasts?

"Because I'm a blood sucker, Eve, as you so quaintly put it at one point last night. I'm a very old vampire, and you and I will be together for eternity."

She wanted to sit up, but couldn't. She wanted to be terrified, but couldn't.

Eve felt him move up, away from where he'd been trailing tiny bite-kisses down her tummy. "Look at me."

The room was so dark; she wasn't exactly sure where to look, until she saw two red eyes glowing down at her. Eve swallowed hard, but couldn't seem to take her eyes away. "I can't remember anything. Who – who are you?"

"I'm your neighbor, Marcus."

Her neighbor. Her neighbor! That sexy man she rarely saw, except, when she thought about it, at night.

"Thank you," he teased.

"For what?"

"You said I was sexy."

"I did not. I thought it."

She felt those massive shoulders shrug. "Same thing between us now."

Eve swallowed. "You know what I'm thinking?"

"Pretty much, and I'll teach you to do the same with me, eventually." For now, though, she would only read those of his thoughts that he allowed her to.

"Can I sit up?" It grated on her to have to ask, but something, generated somehow by him, she was sure, still held her wrists captive above her head.

His eyes glowed that much redder, just for a moment. "Am I hurting you?"

She wanted to squirm, but it just came out as a sexy, slow wiggle. She wanted to lie, but then he'd know she'd thought that... "No."

She knew without seeing it that his smile wasn't pleasant. "A wise choice, love. Lying to me would be hazardous to the health of some very delicate portions of your anatomy, not that you're going to be able to get away with it very often, since I will know most everything you feel and think. And I'm not going to let you go just yet. I'm nowhere near finished with you."

Eve wanted to cry. She wanted to scream. But more so than anything else, she wanted to leave.

"I'll help you remember, but there'll be a price."

Eve knew, somehow, that she didn't want to know what that price would be.

As he spoke, memories played like a movie in her mind. "Last night was Halloween, and I came home and saw you giving out candy to the neighborhood kids."

"You were dressed like a vampire."

"Can I help it if I enjoy the irony?" He lit a bedside candle without getting up, and she saw that he had the grace to look sheepish. She also saw that his eyes had become an intense, bottomless black. He was the most classically handsome man she'd ever seen, but not very vampirish. He wasn't even particularly pale. Weren't vampires supposed to be strikingly pale, especially if they hadn't fed?

Eve's hand went immediately to her neck, and she felt the two small puncture wounds there. As soon as she remembered them, they began a painful throb in time with her increasingly rapid pulse. Marcus leaned down to kiss them better, knowing that they were burning and itching and hurting, as Eve struggled to get away from him, with literally no success. It seemed her struggle was entirely within her mind, because her body wasn't obeying its commands in the least.

Although he felt her inner turmoil, Marcus didn't explain what he was doing. He simply did as he had intended, placing an excruciatingly tender kiss on those two aching spots, laving

her with his tongue, knowing that it would both help them heal and alleviate any lingering pain she felt.

She was going to feel pain, all right, but not there.

He continued with the story of how she had ended up in his arms. "I decided to come over to talk to you after I'd divested myself of my... costume. I've had a hard time avoiding you, and last night I was particularly vulnerable to you."

"Because it was Halloween?" she asked.

Marcus chuckled. "No, love, Halloween is a human holiday. I'd just been a while without sustenance, which is my own fault. I forget how much power you have over me."

Eve snorted. "You're not the one lying here unable to move, unable to feel the fear that would be natural in this situation, with no memory of someone turning you into a vampire!"

He wasn't going to correct her about being a vampire. There was no turning back from where they were, but he wasn't going to muddy the waters of her mind with the technicalities right now. "You invited me into your house —"

"Which I will revoke as soon as possible," she ground out. Apparently, his alleviation of her fear didn't extend to anger. It felt good to be angry at him.

Another technicality he'd deal with later. Hollywood hadn't been any help to his kind. At least, in the old days, everyone knew and agreed upon the basic myth for his culture: no reflection in a mirror, couldn't appear in the daylight without burning, and craved human blood. Nice, neat, easy to remember rules. But now, no one seemed to agree about any of those rules, and anything went. Vampires were everywhere doing everything; they were private investigators and cops and doctors, going out in the daylight if they stayed in the shadows or owned a particular ring or some other such nonsense.

Not that he paid much attention to that kind of thing, but it was sometimes hard to avoid – especially when they seemed to be in every movie or TV program, and usually portrayed as in love with a human. Considering the youth of most of the protagonists, that would have been an impossibility. Younger vampires viewed humans as food. That was it. There was no resisting it, and there were no niceties. Humans were prey.

But the older one became, the more that overwhelming predatory need eased, and he was just about as old as vampires got. He was an extreme rarity, to have lived so long, and it had taken more than a thousand years for the blood lust to even begin to ease. There were many vampires around, but only a handful was as old as he.

"You showed me your house, and you were so genuinely sorry that you hadn't been a very good neighbor to me." Strong emotions and desires were extremely attractive to him, since he had very few of them left, and this lovely woman simply reeked of them. She truly was appalled at herself for not having brought him something as a housewarming gift.

But what had intrigued him about her from the first time he'd seen her in passing, even before they'd introduced themselves, was her desire. She lusted in more than her heart, this one. It was as plain as the nose on her face. She was the most blatantly sexual being he'd ever encountered – vampire or human – and he known then that she was the one.

He had to have her.

But, having lived so long, delayed gratification had become almost an art. They'd lived next door to each other, exchanging the usual pleasantrie (but no more than that) for three years now. A blink of the eye for him, but a third of one of maybe eight decades for her. He teased himself with her; made sure they crossed paths frequently, allowing himself to be tantalized by her at every possible turn.

It was interesting for him to note that he was not as strong as he'd thought he was. He would have sworn there wasn't an impulsive bone left in his body. He couldn't afford one. He was careful with what he called his life, planning each inevitable move carefully, having learned well from previous disastrous situations where he'd barely managed to survive.

But she was it. He had no doubt. He hadn't felt connected to any one or any thing in more centuries than he'd like to admit. But this tiny blonde woman called to him innocently, making the blood surge almost painfully through his body, settling in the most obvious of areas.

In some ways, in all the important ways, he was still a man, even after all this time. Merely gazing at her had him fully, achingly erect. Being in her presence made him want to ravage her as he would have when he was still human, and he was delighted to find himself struggling not to do exactly that.

She was a challenge, one that he intended to win.

Suddenly aware that he'd drifted into his own thoughts for an abnormal amount of time, judging by the way she was looking up at him, he continued, "You offered me candy, which I declined, but we had a glass of what I believe you referred to as 'rotgut' wine. It came out of a box?" The very idea was repellant to him, as was the wine itself, although he hadn't let her see that.

Despite herself, Eve had to smile. Her sisters teased her unmercifully about the box of wine she usually kept in her fridge. It wasn't as if she didn't like good wines, she did. But she was okay with the cheap stuff, too, especially since it was just her most of the time.

She was feeling a bit better about the situation, which she wasn't at all sure wasn't something he was imposing on her, but it helped that her memories were unfolding as he spoke.

She remembered giving him the wine, and that their fingers touched. Shouldn't she have noticed that his fingers were ice cold? Instead, she remembered, that she'd felt like she'd received an electric shock that settled the most in her nether regions and her bottom. Her entire body convulsed almost orgasmically, and she almost dropped her wine. He'd been very gentlemanly and stood up to surround her and steady her somehow without touching her again. His mere presence seemed to shore her up.

He'd taken the wine away from her and guided her to the pretty floral sofa in the adjoining small living room. "You look faint."

She'd wanted to ask him if he'd felt the same thing, but decided against it, not wanting to appear crazy so soon in their relationship. He'd find out that she was neurotic enough without letting on that she'd felt something extraordinary when they touched.

Men were not Eve's forte, and that was a fact she'd resigned herself to. She'd never married, and, at thirty-five, had pretty much given up on the idea, not that she'd been anywhere near as concerned about whether or not she had a husband as her mother had been. She lived alone, but was almost never lonely. She had a handful of friends, all of them female, and almost all of them unmarried, most without kids. And, as far as she knew, none of them gay, including herself.

She'd long since given up looking for the right man. A couple of messy broken engagements in her twenties had cured her of that. She was alone, and that was fine with her.

"I'm fine," she replied, more embarrassed than anything else.

He sat down next to her, but not touching her, and reached out to touch a strand of her hair. Even that seemed to conduct some sort of current that settled with a rising warmth between her legs that was just short of uncomfortable. "Are you a natural blonde?" he asked, wondering if she'd tell him the truth.

It was a crude question, coming from a man who had seemed to have such a courtly manner. Frowning, Eve leaned away from him immediately, tugging her hair out of his fingers.

Before she could reprimand him for being so forward, he apologized sincerely. "I'm sorry. I grew up in Europe, did I say something wrong?" Being the poor, ignorant foreigner usually worked well, probably because there was such a grain of truth to it. He didn't follow current culture much, but had realized as soon as the words were out of his mouth that they would make her think he was asking if the carpet matched the drapes.

When he put it that way, it would have been petty of her to have taken offense. "That question is a bit of a double entendre. But the simple answer is that yes, this is my natural hair color."

She earned points right there for her honesty, but also by not making the situation worse and backing off from her anger. He really hadn't been trying to ask anything inappropriate; he just preferred women in as natural a state as possible. Dyed hair was an abomination as far as he was concerned.

She looked up at him, and the moment their eyes met, the throbbing in her already swollen clit doubled. Eve was trying, with varying degrees of success, not to squirm, but she desperately wanted to clutch her nether regions with her hand, like a little girl that needed a restroom.

But that was definitely not what she needed.

His eyes crinkled with amusement for the most fleeting of seconds, then settled onto – and it seemed, into – hers. "What do you want, Eve?" He placed the emphasis very carefully on the want.

Had his lips moved with that question, or was she just so flustered, lusting after a man she barely knew, that she hadn't paid attention. Who paid attention to that kind of thing, anyway? Of course his lips had moved. She heard the question, so he must've spoken it.

The question seemed to melt into her brain and, more insidiously, her body, and she felt compelled to answer it more honestly than she might, under the circumstances. "I want to be taken."