

Sisters of the Moon Series

(Short Story)

Bound to Fear

by

Nina Croft

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By Nina Croft

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Bound to Fear

“I’m fine,” Maria muttered. She was tired of saying the words. No one believed her anyway.

“No, you’re not,” Sebastian replied. “And we can’t help you if you won’t open up to us.”

Maria ground her teeth. “I don’t need help.”

“You wake every night screaming.”

Heat flushed her face. Trust Sebastian to know everything that went on in his pack. She wandered over to the edge of the rooftop and peered over the low wall at the city far below. Up here, far above the bustle of people, was the only place she felt safe. She missed the forest.

A few weeks ago, the same group who had captured and tortured Maria, had destroyed the pack’s house. Jack, the leader of the local vampires, had offered them sanctuary in London, and until Sebastian was sure they were safe, here they would stay.

“You need to face your fears—banish them,” Sebastian said, dragging her from her thoughts.

The ever present despair rose up inside her, and she swung around to face him. “How can I, when the thing I fear most is myself?” She took a deep breath. “Every night, I dream I’m back in that cell. But it’s not the pain of torture I fear. In my dreams, I’m broken. I tell them anything they want to know.” She blinked away her tears. “In my dreams, I’m weak.”

“But you weren’t weak. You told them nothing.”

“Only because Anya got me out of there.” She bit her lip until she tasted blood. “If they’d kept me any longer...”

“You would have died first.”

“I want to believe that, but I just don’t know.” She looked away, not wanting to see his pity.

“I’ve decided to split the pack,” Sebastian said.

Maria frowned at the change of subject. “Why?”

“We’re getting too big. I’ve already sent Connor up north to look for new hunting grounds. I’d like you to go south to Cornwall.”

“Sure—no problem.”

She tried to sound enthusiastic, but knew she’d failed when he shook his head. But it wasn’t only fear that plagued her right now. Lately, she’d found enthusiasm beyond her. She’d seen it happen to others of their kind, as they grew older.

She knew Sebastian had as well.

“You’re one of the bravest people I know,” he said. “Find some way to prove it to yourself, and move on.”

His words lingered in her mind through the long day, and an idea slowly took form. Could she do it, and if she could—would it work?

Sebastian had known her for over fifty years. He knew what she feared. Her “little vampire phobia” as he called it.

Hardly little.

But perhaps Sebastian was right. Maybe, if she faced her oldest fear, then she could put this new one behind her. She would have to wait until nightfall, and if she was going to do this then she needed to do it properly. So, who was the biggest, baddest vampire of them all? Maybe not the strongest—that would be Jack—but definitely the meanest.

A shudder ran down her spine. She'd rather be tortured.

Seth awoke, instantly alert, as he always did when the sun went down. Tonight though, something was different. He breathed in and caught the musky aroma of werewolf.

That was nothing odd. Since Jack had offered a home to the pack, the building was saturated with their scent; it was driving Seth crazy.

He had nothing against werewolves. In fact, he liked them a lot, and what he liked best about them was the taste of their blood. It put him on edge to have so many, so near, and for them to be off limits.

“Don't eat the guests.” Jack had warned him. He'd smiled as he said the words, but Seth knew he was deadly serious.

That Jack trusted him enough to think the warning would work pleased Seth more than he would ever admit. Ten years ago, he wouldn't have been able to control his hunger. By now, he would have sated himself on were blood and not considered the consequences.

But he'd made a conscious decision to change, and Jack had enough faith in him to give him a chance. Sometimes living up to that trust was hard.

There was one sexy little werewolf in particular. She was ravishingly pretty, and appeared young, which maybe explained why she feared his kind so much, and why she scurried away whenever he came close. But never fast enough so he couldn't smell the hot, sweetness of her blood, laced with the intoxicating scent of her fear.

And now, if he wasn't mistaken, she was hovering outside his door. He ran a hand through his hair and pushed down his hunger. Rolling onto his feet, he pulled on his pants, strode across the room, and flung open the door.

And stopped.

She'd swapped her normal T-shirt for a black slinky top that left her shoulders bare and piled her long dark hair into a loose knot on top of her head, exposing the graceful line of her throat.

His gaze fixed on the pulse beneath the fragile layer of skin, and his gums ached.

Life wasn't fair.

I am not weak. I can do this.

Maria tried to force herself to take a step forward. When her feet refused to move, she closed her eyes, leaned her body towards him, and raised her chin, baring her throat.

Could she be any more obvious?

When nothing happened, she opened her eyes. He was watching her, his brows furrowed.

“Why?” he asked.

The question took her by surprise. “Does it matter?”

“Yes.”

Irritation flared—why couldn't he just co-operate? “I need to prove I'm not afraid.”

He leaned close, breathing deeply. “Sweetheart, I can smell your fear.”

A shudder ran through her. “Okay. I need to prove that I can conquer my fear. That my fear doesn't rule me.”

A look of disbelief flashed across his face. “What am I? Some sort of therapist?”

She shrugged suddenly uncomfortable. “Maybe.”

He considered her, head tilted to one side. “So why are you afraid of vampires?”

Was he crazy?

“Jesus. You’re a goddamned blood-sucking monster. Why the hell wouldn’t I be afraid?”

A brief smile curved his lips. Then he stood back and gestured for her to enter the room. Maria became aware that he wasn’t wearing much, just a pair of black pants that hung low on his lean hips. At any other time, and had he been anything else, she might have admired the sleek lines of his body, the ridged muscles of his flat belly. As it was, they hardly registered. It wasn’t what was in his *pants* that made her pulse race.

She took three steps forward. Her breathing short and sharp, as she stood, frozen in place. She didn’t think she could run now even if her life depended on it. Which might very well be the case.

“A sacrificial lamb,” he murmured. “How...delicious.”

Circling her slowly, he came to a halt behind her. As he touched her lightly on the shoulder, she jumped.

“You’re trembling,” he whispered close to her ear, his cool breath feathering across her skin. “Calm down—this won’t hurt.”

Maria didn’t believe him. It was nearly seventy years now, but she could still see her mother’s dead staring eyes, filled with the agony of her last moments.

His lips touched her throat in the softest of kisses as his hands settled on her shoulders and he drew her back against the coolness of his naked chest. His mouth opened against her skin. Maria swallowed and braced herself for the pain. For an instant, his body tensed, his fingers tightened. Then his fangs sank into her.

No pain.

Just a rhythmic tugging that pulled at places deep within her body. Relief held her motionless for a moment, then she tilted her head to the side to give him better access. He growled low in his throat, his hands sliding down her arms to enfold her, pull her closer against his hard body.

What was he doing to her?

Her breasts ached, and a pulse throbbed between her thighs. She arched back against him, and his palm swept up over her stomach to cup her breast. He squeezed, and lightning shot down through her belly. The strength drained from her limbs, and she would have fallen but for his strong arms wrapped tight around her.

Finally, he withdrew and she felt the slow swipe of his tongue against her skin. She stood for a moment, before pulling free. His arms released her, and she turned slowly to face him.

His eyes glowed crimson. Her blood stained his lips. And despite that, Maria wanted him with a fierceness she had never experienced in her whole long life.

How could she?

She whirled around and ran. She didn’t stop until she slammed her bedroom door closed behind her and clicked the lock into place.

What the hell had that been about?

Seth stood in the center of the room staring at the closed door.

He knew some women were drawn to the danger his kind represented, but his little wolf hadn’t seemed like that. She’d been genuinely afraid.

Until he’d bitten her. Then her fear had vanished, and she’d melted against him. He breathed in, filling his nostrils with the lingering scent of her arousal. His balls tightened, his cock throbbing with the need for release.

Jack could only expect so much from him.

He followed her scent up the stairs, coming to a halt in front of a door. He turned the handle—locked.

Raising his foot, he kicked. The lock splintered and the door shot open.

He still wore nothing but the black pants, and this time Maria couldn't help but notice him. He must have been young when he was changed, no more than early twenties, and she'd bet he'd been stunning even then, with his dark eyes and sharp cheekbones. Now his face glowed with the inhuman beauty of his kind.

Her gaze dropped to his broad shoulders, muscular chest, and a lean ridged abdomen. Then lower to the bulge where his erection pressed against his straining zipper. Her gaze flew to his face as warmth flooded her body.

"What do you want?" she muttered.

His eyes narrowed in disbelief. "Are you kidding?"

At his words, a wild reckless excitement filled her. She'd been sitting here, unable to understand what was wrong with her. She'd faced her fear and survived, yet the whole thing had left her empty and aching. Now she knew what she needed.

Jumping to her feet, she stalked toward him.

"I am not weak," she ground out, and she knew the words were true.

He raised an eyebrow. "Honey, I never said you were."

She held his gaze as she gripped the hem of her top and pulled it over her head, tossing it to the floor behind her.

His hot gaze ran over her, tightening her nipples, but he didn't move, and she took another step toward him until her bare breasts grazed his chest. She shivered as delicious sensations tore through her. "I'm strong," she said.

"I know."

He didn't, but he soon would.

Unzipping her jeans, she kicked them off and stood before him in nothing but her black panties. He was breathing hard now, but wariness flickered across his face. She liked that. She peeled the black lace down over her legs then tossed them toward him. His gaze sizzled down her body, settling on the curls between her thighs and inside, she melted.

Moving fast, her left foot kicked out to sweep his legs from under him. He landed on his back, and Maria dropped to her knees beside him, straddling his hips before he could move.

She rested her hands on each side of his face, caging him in, then bit her lip hard so she tasted the sweet metallic tang of her own blood. His nostrils flared, and she lowered her head and kissed him. He devoured her mouth, his tongue pushing inside, and she sank down onto him to grind against the hardness of his straining shaft.

His arms came up to grip her shoulders, and he heaved her from him. But she wrapped her legs around his waist and held on, refusing to relinquish control. They rolled, and she ended up beneath him.

Exactly where she wanted to be.

Staring up into his dark, hooded eyes, she slipped her hand between their bodies and lowered his zip. She wrapped her hand around his shaft, and his head went back.

He balanced, poised above her, his eyes darkened to obsidian. "What's your name?"

"Maria."

"Hello, Maria." And he shoved into her, hard.

Seth wasn't sure what this was all about, and right now, he didn't care. She felt so utterly good, like warm wet velvet around his cock.

He moved on her, slowly at first, reveling in each leisurely thrust. Her hips bucked beneath him, urging him on, and he increased his speed, until he was slamming into her hard.

Her muscles contracted around him, and he knew she was close. Burrowing his head in the sweet curve of her neck, he sank his fangs into the vein. She came immediately, her back arching off the floor.

Releasing his control, Seth plunged into her, and his own orgasm exploded through his cock, his balls, melting his spine. On and on, he continued to pump into her welcoming body, until at last he collapsed onto her with a shuddering groan.

After long minutes, he gathered her up and carried her boneless and limp to the bed. He came down beside her, dragged her into his arms.

She blinked up at him sleepily. "I'm not afraid," she murmured. Her lashes fluttered closed, and she slept.

Last night, Seth had let her sleep. Tonight, he had plans.

Right until the moment he found her empty room. Disappointment washed over him, growing stronger as he searched the building and discovered no trace of her. Finally, he confronted Sebastian.

"She's gone to run in the forest," Sebastian told him.

Seth turned to go, but the werewolf spoke again. "Did she come to you last night?"

Seth nodded.

"And she was okay?"

"Why shouldn't she be?"

Sebastian considered him, as if wondering how much to say. "Werewolves are prone to melancholy as we get older."

Seth frowned. "But she's young."

"Maria is a hell of a lot older than you," Sebastian said. "What she needs is a cause, something to give meaning to her life."

Seth had never considered himself "cause" material before, but he was willing it give it a try.

The vampire had been gone when she woke. Maria told herself it was for the best. Seth had cured her of her fear, now she needed to find a way to move on with her life. Tomorrow, she would go to Cornwall. She tried to feel anticipation, but couldn't dismiss the nagging sense of loss.

Slipping out of her clothes, she allowed the change to flow over her, calling her wolf to the surface. Immediately all her senses were more acute. She could hear the distant flight of an owl, a field mouse rustling in the dry grass.

She ran through the dark forest, weaving her way through the huge gnarled oak trees, her pads making no sound on the soft ground. Finally, she came to a halt where the trees opened up into a wide clearing. Overhead a sickle moon bathed the forest in a silver glow. Seth stood in the shadows of a huge oak, leaning against the trunk, arms folded across his chest.

Maria shifted back and stalked naked, towards him. Without a word, she reached up, wrapped her arms around him, and laid her head against his chest. This was what she wanted, where she wanted to be.

"I'm bad," Seth murmured against her hair. "I know it, and I'm not going to pretend I can change overnight." Holding her away from him, he stared down into her eyes. "But maybe if I had someone beside me. Someone who cared whether I was good or bad..."

"What am I," she asked. "A therapist?"

A smile curved his lips. "Could you care, Maria? Would you even want to try for a vampire?"

Could she?

All at once, the darkness lifted from her soul, and the world was once again full of possibilities. She didn't know whether this thing with Seth would work out, whether it was even possible for two such different people to find happiness together. But right now, it was enough that she wanted to find out.

“Have you ever been to Cornwall?” she asked.

The End

Preview Book 1

Sisters of the Moon Series

(Book One)

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Prologue

8 years ago

A prickle ran down her spine.

“Dad, are you there?” Tasha called out, but the words were thrown back at her, echoing off the stone walls.

She was early that was all. He’d be here. He’d promised.

The sun slipped lower in the sky, finally vanishing behind the huge warehouses. Shadows hugged the edges of the buildings, drawing ever closer to where she stood in the encroaching night.

She swallowed, her throat suddenly dry. Something was out there, watching her from just beyond the edge of darkness. Out of the corner of her eye, she caught a movement in the dim light. Tendrils of emotion teased at her mind, like nothing she’d felt before. Not a person; there were no conscious thoughts, only raw feelings. Anticipation, hunger, hate.

For a minute, Tasha stood immobile, every muscle locked solid. Then she turned her head slowly and peered into the gloom. She blinked, trying to make sense of what she was seeing. A dog? But it was bigger than any dog she’d ever come across, bigger even than the wolves she’d seen at the zoo.

It took a step closer, clearing the shadows, and an icy wave of dread rolled over her, threatening to suck her under. Her mind screamed to run, but her body wouldn’t obey, every muscle clenched tight as her gaze locked with cold yellow eyes.

Another step and the spell was broken. She hurled her backpack at the thing’s head, then spun around and ran. She’d only taken a few strides when a heavy weight slammed into her, crashing her to the ground. Stars flashed behind her closed eyes, and the coppery taste of blood filled her mouth.

Tasha rolled onto her back and the beast was on her, pressing her down, hot stinking breath smothering her. She tried to scramble away, but it lunged, taking her shoulder in its huge jaws. Bone crunched loud in her ears. Searing pain flooded her body and mind, and she knew she was going to die.

Maybe not yet.

But soon.

She must have blacked out. When she came to, the beast was gone, and she wasn’t dead after all. Her own shuddering breaths were the only sound in the darkness. She tried to roll over, but red hot spikes of pain pinned her to the ground. Her phone was in her backpack. She could see it lying about ten feet away. It might as well have been a mile.

Her dad would be here soon, all she had to do was hold on.

The beam of an approaching vehicle flooded the area with light. Tears of relief blurred her vision; she’d known he would save her. Always before, she’d balked at using her inner sense, scared it would mean she was accepting the impossible, descending into madness. Now, for the first time she reached out, needing to feel her father’s comforting presence. But the minds she encountered were strangers.

She twisted her neck so she could watch. Some sort of dark van pulled up a few feet away, but she didn’t recognize the vehicle. Two men stepped out and came toward her.

“She the one?” the closest asked.

“Oh yeah. Let’s get her in the van—that thing’s still out there.”

“Wait. My father—” Tasha clamped her lips on a scream as the first man leaned down and dragged her to her feet. He tossed her over his shoulder, oblivious to the moan of agony wrenched from her throat. The few paces to the van seemed to last a lifetime, before she was dropped in the back. She landed with a jolt and lay staring at the roof, trying to get a grip on a world reduced to nothing but hurting.

The rear door slammed and she was alone. Panic tore at her insides as the vehicle started to move, and quickly picked up speed.

The journey passed in a haze of pain and confusion intermingled with brief respites of unconsciousness. Finally, the door opened and a dark figure stared down at her.

“Welcome to The Facility.”

Chapter One

Present day

Jack raced through the dark forest, weaving between the trees, listening for the sound of his pursuers. When he realized he was leaving them far behind, he slowed his pace. He hadn't spent all this time planning the operation just to elude them so easily.

He halted behind the broad trunk of an oak tree, pulled out his cell phone, and punched in speed dial.

"I'm going in," he said.

"Have fun," Sebastian replied.

"Yeah, right, like that's going to happen." He ended the call, tossed the phone into the undergrowth and peered around. The place was in darkness, no sign of any lights. Presumably they were using night vision, because he could still hear them heading toward him, smashing through the undergrowth like a herd of blundering elephants.

Finally, when he was about to give up hope and go looking, one of them appeared. Tall, he was dressed all in black, with camouflage makeup darkening his face, and a rifle in his hand. A second man appeared at his side, and then a third—all armed. Jack was guessing the weapons would be loaded with tranquilizers. They wouldn't go to all this bother to get hold of him, and then risk killing him off.

He hoped.

Not that bullets could kill him, but they would hurt like hell.

Time to get this over with.

He stepped out from behind the tree and turned to face them. Then stopped abruptly and plastered a surprised expression on his face.

"Don't move." The first man raised his weapon and pointed it straight at Jack.

He hadn't been planning on moving, though he did snarl, baring the tip of one fang, just so they could be sure they had the right person.

The weapon made no sound as it fired. Jack released his breath and glanced down. A small dart stuck out of his upper arm. He waited to see whether the drug would have any effect.

Nothing.

Closing his eyes, he swayed and toppled to the ground.

He kept his eyes shut and his body limp as they wrapped him in chains. Silver chains. What did they think he was? A bloody werewolf?

They carried him through the forest, slung over someone's shoulder and finally dropped him in the back of a vehicle and slammed the doors shut, leaving him alone.

The journey took over an hour. At long last, they stopped moving and the door opened.

"Welcome to The Facility."

After two long and tedious weeks, Jack was far from impressed by the hospitality at The Facility. He hoped that was about to improve.

He opened his eyes and stretched on the narrow cot.

Someone was approaching.

With any luck, they were bringing him some food. He'd told them he needed sustenance, that he was starving, might even die without it. Though in truth, he was far more likely to die

from boredom in this place, than he was from hunger. At over five hundred years old, he could go months without feeding, but they didn't know that. In fact, here at The Facility, they knew fuck all. At least about his kind. And if he had any say in the matter—and he planned to have a great deal—things would stay that way.

But he also needed information. After all, that was the point in his being here. He'd thought to coerce it out of the guards, but his first attempt had ended up with the man having some sort of aneurism and ending up bleeding from the ears. Then dead. Very inconvenient.

The guard must have had some sort of implant in the brain, which had reacted to the compulsion. But Jack had never come across anything like it, and he didn't want to risk it again, at least not yet. Once they might put down to an accidental occurrence. Twice and nobody would believe it a coincidence.

That was a week ago. Afterward, he'd decided the best way to get his information was for them to believe he was cooperating. So he'd made them an offer. His "collaboration" in exchange for food, though he was actually telling them a load of bullshit. He'd even managed to convince them he was allergic to garlic, and many a bored hour was spent coming up with even more ludicrous misinformation.

The footsteps came to a halt outside his cell and he heard the numbers being punched into the keypad locking mechanism. There was also a retinal scan—the security was top of the range and far more advanced than anything out in the general market.

The door slid open. Jack sat up but didn't get to his feet. He was expecting one of the guards, but instead a small, almost hunched figure, hovered in the open doorway. Someone shoved her hard, and she lurched forward and then turned and snarled at whoever was behind her.

Johnson, one of the less pleasant guards followed her into the cell, and then a second man stepped in behind her. This was someone new, and definitely not a guard. Probably in his forties, with short sandy hair, he studied Jack as though he were some sort of lab rat. Which he supposed he was in a way, though that didn't mean he had to like it.

"I'm Dr. Latham," he said. "I'm in charge of your...case."

Jack didn't answer, just curled his lip revealing the tip of one sharp fang. The guard took a step back. Latham remained where he was, his expression more curious than fearful. He was a fool.

A small gasp came from the girl. He'd almost forgotten she was there; she was so small and quiet. Now he turned to study her.

She was presumably his dinner. Or not. He had few rules, but not feeding from children was one of them. Then she turned back to face him. Her intense golden gaze locked with his, and he realized she was no child.

He could see why he'd been mistaken. She was short, maybe just a whisper over five feet, and slender—too slender. Her dark red hair fell in ripples to her waist, and her small, pointed face was pale as though she rarely saw the sun. She was dressed in grey sweat pants and a white vest top. Her small breasts pressed against the cotton, and he felt an unexpected stab of lust.

She'd controlled her initial fear and now was returning his inspection with obvious curiosity.

"So, can you read him?" Latham asked.

"I'm trying," she snapped. "Keep your pants on."

She took a wary step closer. Jack breathed in and caught a wild feral scent, like the forest at full moon.

Wolf?

And what did they mean, "read" him?

Then he felt it, faint tendrils of power, probing at his mind, seeking a way in. He slammed down his defensive walls and saw her eyes widen.

“Ow,” she said.

“Well?” Latham prompted.

“No, I can’t.”

“You mean he’s shielded? Like us?”

She studied Jack for a moment, her head cocked to one side. He felt the tentative probing again, but his mind was safely locked away behind his walls. At least he knew now why the guards were shielded. She was a telepath, and the most powerful one he had ever come across. And a wolf? How had she ended up at The Facility? The pack usually looked after their own.

“No,” she replied. “Not like you. Different. You feel unnatural, an aberration.” There was a distinct sneer in her voice and he got the impression she wanted them to hear it. She was baiting them—probably unwise if she was a prisoner. “He feels natural. Right. But there’s a big wall I can’t get through.”

“Why am I not surprised?” Latham said. “Yet again you manage to disappoint.” He glanced from her to Jack and back to her. “Well, perhaps we can find one thing you’re useful for.” He turned to leave the room, followed by the guard, but paused at the doorway and spoke directly to Jack. “She’s yours. Just don’t finish her off. She may yet prove of some use.”

“Bastard,” she muttered as the door closed behind them. Then she turned slowly to stare at him. Her lower lip caught between her teeth, he suspected to keep it from quivering. Otherwise, there were no outward signs of fear, and he was impressed. Because she was afraid, he could scent her fear in the air.

“How old are you?” he asked. Just in case.

Her brows drew together, but she shrugged and answered. “Twenty-one.”

Good.

He didn’t need to feed, but that didn’t mean he wouldn’t enjoy it. She looked and smelled...intriguing. Vampires loved werewolf blood; it was the sweetest. His gums ached at the thought, and his cock twitched in his pants. Maybe the night was improving.

“You know what I am?” he asked.

“Johnson took great pleasure in telling me he was feeding me to the resident vampire. I’m guessing that must be you.”

She was very calm, too calm. Was she in some sort of shock? “Do you mind?” he asked.

An expression of disgust flashed across her features. “Since when does it matter what I mind? Never—that’s when!”

Shoving her hands in her back pockets, she took a step closer. Jack sat very still, not wanting to scare her further as she came to a halt about a foot away. She didn’t have to look down very far to meet his gaze.

“So will it hurt? You know the whole”—she bared her teeth in a grimace—“biting thing?”

Shock ran through him at her words. She was so direct and matter-of-fact. What had made her like that so young? “How long have you been here?”

“Eight years.” She pursed her lips. “Are you avoiding the question?”

“No.”

“No? You mean ‘no’ you’re not avoiding the question, or ‘no’ it won’t hurt?”

“Both.”

“Well, that’s a relief.” She took a deep breath, closed her eyes, and waited.

Jack could see the pulse beating rapidly under the fragile skin of her throat, the tracery of blue veins so close to the surface. His hunger rose. He reined it in, not wanting to frighten

her, and savoring the anticipation. He'd never come across anyone like her and he'd been around a long time and met a whole load of people.

Finally, her lids flicked open and she glared at him. "Well?"

A small smile tugged at his lips. "Are you in a hurry? Perhaps you have other plans for the evening?"

"Funny man, aren't you." She scowled. "I could say the anticipation is killing me, but that wouldn't be quite correct. Just get it over with, will you?"

Jack chuckled, and her scowl deepened.

"Are you frightened?" he asked

She stared him in the eye. "Yeah, I'm frightened. But so what? I'm used to it—I've had a lot of practice."

Suddenly he felt guilty for teasing her. He rose to his feet and she took a step back.

"Wow, you're...big."

He stepped around her, rested his hands on her shoulders and felt her tremble beneath his touch. From here, he could look down and see the thrust of her breasts beneath the thin cotton. His balls ached and he realized with some surprise that he wanted her, and not just because she was here and convenient. He rubbed her shoulders gently, trying to ease her tension, but she stiffened.

"Relax," he murmured. "I can make you forget your fears."

She snorted. "Want to bet on that?"

"I like a challenge."

Looping his fingers in her hair, he lifted the heavy strands to expose her slender throat. He lowered his head into the curve of her neck and breathed in, loving the feral scent of her. This time he didn't fight the hunger building inside him.

He kissed her throat, her pulse point, then the tender spot where her neck met her shoulder. A small moan escaped her lips, and it wasn't a moan of fear. He could have her; he knew it in that moment. With a little care, she would fall into his arms. He grew hard at the thought.

"Did you know vampires find werewolf blood irresistible?" he whispered in her ear.

Her muscles locked, and then she pulled free of his grasp and whirled around to face him. "I am *not* a werewolf." She enunciated each word clearly.

He studied her closely. He wasn't wrong. "Yes, you are."

About the Author

Nina Croft grew up in the north of England. After training as an accountant, she spent four years working as a volunteer in Zambia, which left her with a love of the sun and a dislike of 9-5 work. She then spent a number of years mixing travel (whenever possible) with work (whenever necessary) but has now settled down to a life of writing and picking almonds on a remote farm in the mountains of southern Spain. Nina's writing mixes romance with elements of the paranormal and science fiction.

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