

Author Interview

Please give us a brief bio, your website, my space page and blog links.

Cat Marsters lives in the UK and is the devoted slave to a pride of cats. She has an incredible amount of shoes and books and spends vast amounts of time Tweeting and Googling for pictures of Richard Armitage with his shirt off. When she's completely run out of other things to do, she occasionally writes books.

The Writer:

1) What is the best thing about being a writer? The worst?

The best thing about being a writer is that it's a job I can do in my pyjamas.

Actually, the best thing about it is that I really, really love it. I make up stories all the time; now I actually get paid for it. Best job in the world.

The worst thing? Well, the actual pay is a bit rubbish, but probably the worst thing is that it's quite isolating. You're on your own all day, even if you've got a distracting internet connection; you don't get out much; and it's really tempting to congratulate yourself on a fab paragraph with a bottle or two of wine...

2) What is your method of breaking through writer's block?

I ignore it until it goes away. I can't actually say I've ever had writer's block, although I did have a period of not getting much writing done earlier this year while we were having building work done. The electricity kept being switched off, or someone would be drilling outside my office, or singing along (badly) to the radio, and I was constantly interrupted. For quite a while I found it hard to write anything as I just couldn't

concentrate, and I was tired and stressed. Then my editor asked when I could turn another story in, so I put on my big girl knickers and made myself write a damn book.

3) Do you bring your own life experiences to your writing? Your own personality? If so how?

Well, I once based a character entirely upon myself (Sophie Green in my mystery series), at least to start with. She evolved a bit away, but she had my old job working check-in at Stansted Airport, and she looked like me. Well, maybe a bit thinner.

I think every writer brings their personality to their writing. It comes through in your voice. I know I have quite a light, humorous voice, and that's probably because I'm constantly cracking jokes in real life (I was a pasty, chubby geek: I had to find some way of getting people to like me). I also write about quite dark things. I love a bit of cartoonishly vicious violence, and that comes through in my books too.

4) What fuels you as an author to continue to write?

Money. And the knowledge that if I didn't, I'd go stark staring mad from all the voices in my head.

5) Can you tell us a bit about what book(s) you have coming out next and what you're working on now?

Well, with my Cat Marsters hat on (that's the erotic romance hat. I'll leave it to your imagination what it looks like), I have a brand new release from Changeling, Dreaming of You. It's about two best friends in love, and a sex slave. Matt's bought Amy a torc for her birthday, unaware that it contains the spirit of an ancient warrior cursed to have sex with whoever wears the necklace. Being that Matt's madly in love with Amy (and she's the only one who doesn't know it) he's pretty upset about this turn of events.

I'm working on a full-length book set in the Almost Human/Mad, Bad & Dangerous world about an amnesiac assassin and a brothel-keeper. Annoyingly, I lost the first few chapters recently when I bugged up my files through my own stupidity. Must rewrite.

With my Kate Johnson hat on, I have a mainstream paranormal romance out in April from Choc Lit, about an alternate universe where England is a third-world country. It has my most delicious hero, Major Harker, who makes Mal Reynolds and Richard Sharp look like nancy boys.

And I'm working on the next Sophie Green Mystery, which will be a bit different from the others. But I'm not going to tell you how, so there.

The Person:

1) Which season do you prefer? Spring, Summer, Fall or Winter?

I'm going to be pedantic (I'm English, we're allowed) and call it Autumn. I love cold, crisp days, the amazing colours of the leaves, sitting inside a warm house while it's dark and rainy outside. Plus, I look cute in a bobble hat.

2) What is your favorite Holiday?

Er. Well, I'm going to say St Patrick's Day, although it's not technically a holiday here in Blighty (if I lived in Ireland it would be!). It's an excuse to drink my own bodyweight in Guinness, plus it's my birthday.

(In my house, whenever I'm wished a happy birthday, I reply, "Happy St Patrick's Day." My brother replies to birthday wishes, "Happy Christmas." We're not mad; that's when our birthdays are)

3) Do you like Comedy, Drama, Romance, Foreign Language, Indie or Mystery movies?

Oh oh oh, I like all of those! Well, I can't say I watch a lot of foreign language films, all those poetically gloomy French ones and the passionately miserable Italians, although someone's just lent me Amelie and promised I'll love it. I love films that are funny, although straight-up comedy often makes me wince rather than laugh. I like dark comedy, and smart comedy. I just saw The Social Network and thought it was brilliant and very funny, although there wasn't a single joke in it.

I mentioned my love of cartoonish violence, and coupled with my love of half-naked muscular men it brings me to films like 300 or Sin City. I love big classic blockbusters, like Indiana Jones or Back to the Future. I love classy drama like Gosford Park or Pride & Prejudice. And I love funky indie films, a lot of small British films like Hot Fuzz (see above re: cartoon violence). I even love animated films. I could watch The Incredibles over and over, it's perfect in every detail.

But what I really love is a good crime caper. I love movies where the good guys are bad guys. Probably my favourite film of all time is Butch Cassidy & the Sundance Kid. There's quite simply nothing wrong with it. Nothing at all. And that's pretty rare in a film.

4) When you get a chance to read, what books do you love to read?

Romance, mostly, although I'll read dark paranormals like Jim Butcher's Dresden Files, he's an amazing writer, just astonishingly good at world-building, and the pace is faster than Usain Bolt. I also adore Sir Terry of Pratchett, the cleverest and funniest author I've

ever read. Oh, and quirky, hard-to-define authors like Jasper Fforde. And I love historicals. And smart, funny chick-lit. Basically, I'll read anything. Except Thomas Hardy.

5) What bores you as a reader?

Heavy descriptions, inaction, clunky dialogue. I've read a few books where the premise sounds great but the author can't write for toffee. No voice to speak of. Might have been written by a computer. Slow, boring, dull dull dull narrative. Book, meet wall.

6) What is your favorite food and what is your guilty pleasure food?

A friend said to me the other day that if she could only eat one food for the rest of her life, it would probably be cheese. I agreed with her. None of your fancy cheeses, just a really good bit of Cheddar. Marvellous. And since I've been on a diet since I was twelve, it pretty much is a guilty pleasure.

7) If you could go anywhere on a vacation where would you go?

There are so many places I'd love to go, but my favourite place to holiday is in the UK. I don't really like heat and I don't care about swimming pools or fancy bars. I'd like to go to the Peak District, because it's absolutely beautiful, and I've never been. This is shameful, since it's not actually far from where I was born.

8) What is your favorite feature on a person?

I have a thing about cheekbones. Men with gorgeous cheekbones really do it for me (I have a poster of James Marsters as Spike above my desk as we speak). And I adore strong hands and forearms. Musicians have really, really gorgeous hands.

9) Do you have a secret talent?

Er, no. I tend to boast about my talents wherever possible. I have a passable singing voice, and if I warm up I can get my feet behind my head, and sometimes I can draw nice pictures. But my main talent is my writing, and I rabbit on about that all the time.

10) What is your favorite time of day?

Do you know, I've never thought about it. Probably six o'clock, when I can have a drink without feeling guilty about it.

11) What do you think is romantic? What does the word Romance mean to you?

Romance means...it means something personal and unique to everyone. It means wanting to do small, every day things for someone else, to make them happy. It means giving in to silly cliches and throwing them out of the window at the same time. It means don't buy her roses unless you know she likes roses. It means don't expect him to take you somewhere expensive for dinner when you both secretly prefer pizza. It means not taking someone for granted.

12) What type of music gets you dancing?

Old-school cheesy pop. And proper good rock'n'roll, the type the Beatles used to do. Can't hear John Lennon singing Rock'n'Roll Music without wanting to dance to it.

13) Who would you go out on a date with if you could?

Richard Armitage. And it'd be the kind of date where we weren't in public, if you know what I'm saying (and I think you do).

14) You're having a dinner party, what five people would you invite?

Right. The aforementioned Mr Armitage, if only to look at. Joss Whedon, because he's really really smart and funny. Neil Finn, because he's a top bloke and we could have a little singalong afterwards. David Tennant, because I want to have dinner with a Timelord. And...hmm. Nathan Fillion: great to look at and an absolute loon.

Have you noticed I'm the only girl at this party? Terrible seating placements. My mother would be appalled.

Random Questions:

1) Aliens have landed on the planet. What are the three things you would tell them that are great about this planet?

Trees. Cheese. Cats.

2) If you could create your own drink what would go in it and what would you call it?

Well, I think the margarita is pretty perfect as it is, but... I'd do something with vodka and sherbert and call it the Cat's Claw.

3) You have been locked in a mall and told you can get anything you want and when they open in the morning you won't have to pay a single cent. What stores would you hit? Better question how would you haul away all your loot?

I'd hire several burly men to take off their shirts and carry all my stuff. Most of it would be shoes. My favourites are Irregular Choice, but I could go upmarket and try some

Jimmy Choos. And I've always wanted to see how I'd look in Dolce & Gabbana. And, of course, I'd really hit up the bookstores. And stationery. I'd buy masses of wrapping paper and ribbons.

4) If your life were turned into a cartoon, what cartoon character would you want playing you?

Lisa Simpson. Aside from the pointy hair and American accent, she's pretty much me anyway.

Either that, or Jessica Rabbit.

5) If you were a pirate what would your booty consist of? What would your pirate name be?

Yarr, I'd be Mad Queen Cat and my booty would be millions of pairs of drop-dead-gorgeous shoes that magically wouldn't hurt my feet at all.

6) Okay I have to include a crazy question so here goes: He-Man, GI- Joe, The Thundercats, The Transformers and Jem are all in a battle to decide who is the best 80s cartoon, who do you think will win? I told you it was a crazy question. No one said I was sane. :-p

That would depend on who Jem was, but obviously the Thundercats. They're freaking cat people! They're awesome.

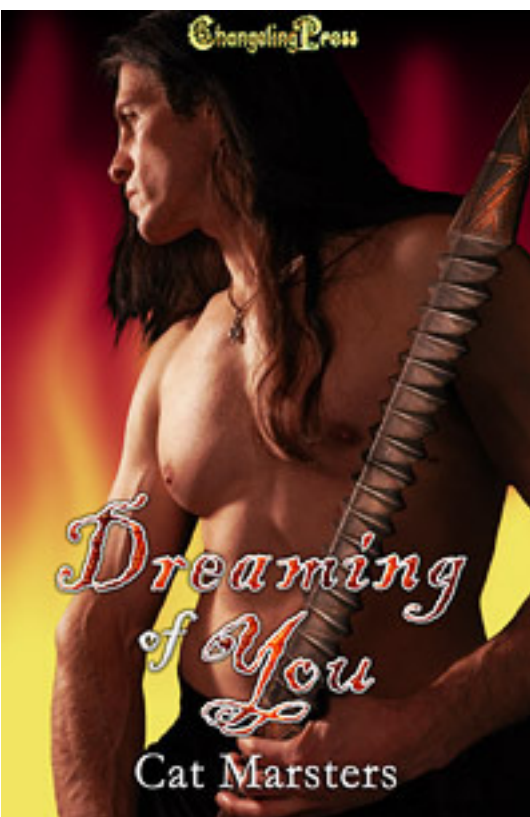
7) You've been given the honor of naming a planet, what would you name it?

Marvellosia.

8) If you were in a rock band what would the name of your band be? What would your rocker name be?

Oh! I did one of those daft quizzes on this a while back. My rock star name would be Spike St John, which admittedly is confusing since I'm a girl, but it's an awesome name anyway. I think I'd be something like Anastasia Awesome and my band would be called Awesomesauce.

If you'd like, you can include excerpts from your latest work. Please include the 'Buy' link if it is available. Thank you for participating in this interview.



Excerpt: Dreaming of You

By Cat Marsters

ISBN: 978-1-60521-503-7

Out Now at Changeling Press

Two thousand years ago, Tamenorix of the Segovantes was cursed to live forever as a slave, providing pleasure to whoever wears his torc. A torc bought centuries later by a lovelorn academic for his best friend's birthday.

Matt's been in love with Amy for longer than he can remember. And Amy's just as mad about him. The only problem is neither of them will ever admit to it. But when he gives Amy a gold torc for her birthday and a muscular warrior turns up to start having sex with her right under his nose, Matt realizes something's got to be done...

Buy link:

<http://changelingpress.com/product.php?&upt=book&ubid>

[=1472](#)

Warning: This title contains explicit language and sexual content not suitable for readers under the age of 18.

Excerpt 1:

Amy writhed in the arms of her dream lover and squeezed her thigh over his hip. His fingers were toying with the soft skin at the top of her inner thigh, but that wasn't what she wanted.

She wanted his fingers inside her, wanted him to stroke and rub her to an amazing orgasm, and then another, wanted to see if that amazing cock of his could truly fit inside her.

This was turning out to be a bloody good dream.

She reached down, sexually aggressive in a way she'd never dared in real life, and pushed his hand between her legs.

He laughed softly against her mouth. "You know what you want," he said.

"I want you to touch me," Amy said. Then, boldly, she added, "I want you to make me come."

"Your wish is my desire," he promised, biting her lip as his fingers parted her. He stroked all the way up, between her folds, until he reached her clit. Amy was so wet it was nearly embarrassing, but who cared? This wasn't real.

Hell, she could probably give that massive cock a ride and it would fit in easily, but right now his fingers between her legs were so damn pleasant she couldn't think very far ahead.

He rubbed her clit in maddening patterns, sometimes pressing hard, other times with a feather light touch. He dipped down into her wetness and spread it around while his lips scorched hot patterns down her neck.

He paused at the torc, then continued on over her collarbone.

As his lips reached her nipple, his finger slid inside her pussy. Like the rest of him, his finger was big. She'd never seen such a big man, not in real life. His shoulders were massive, his body packed with muscle, his chest enormous. His stomach was ridged with muscle, his hips narrow and his buttocks just perfect, hard as marble with a delicious dip in the side of each.

As he pushed her gently to her back she slid her calf up and down his leg. His thigh was strong, hard, corded with muscle. His legs, his forearms and chest all bore scattered dark hair, crisp and unbearably exciting to rub against. Around his collarbone was a complex tattoo of twisted knots. Amy wanted to lick every inch of it.

And then there was his penis. Dear God, such things didn't exist in nature. If Amy had doubted she was dreaming for a single second, the sight of that massive organ, flushed and throbbing, persuaded her she was.

Added to which he was devastatingly handsome. Amy knew that handsome men with large penises just didn't exist. No man had ever looked like this, with his warrior's body and cropped hair and unshaven jaw. He might have been a gladiator, an insatiable warrior, celebrating his victory by enthusiastically bedding a woman.

Now his thumb was pressing against her clit while his finger slid in and out of her. Amy had been to bed with men whose cocks were smaller than this man's finger. She arched her back, pressing her breast harder against his mouth, and began rocking her hips against his hand. Her orgasm built, the pressure wonderful, and she bit her lip as the waves began to pound harder.

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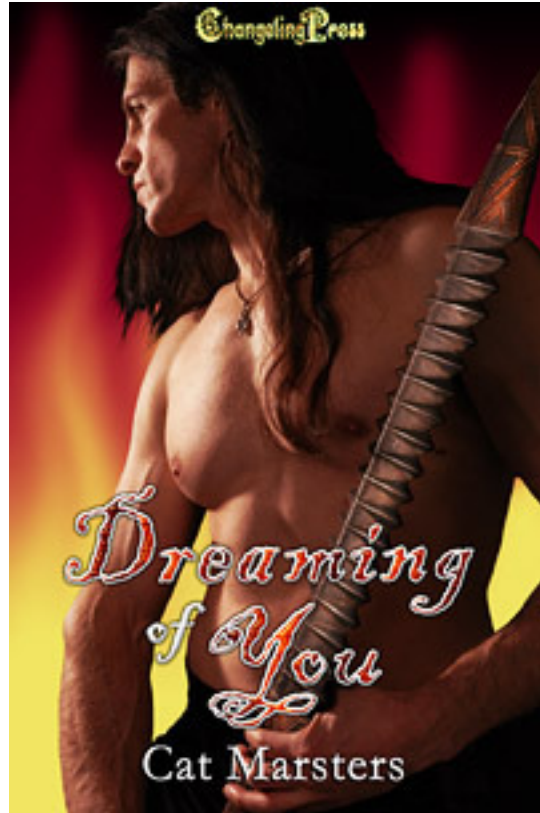
Out Now at Changeling Press

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Warning: This title contains explicit language and sexual content not suitable for readers under the age of 18.

Excerpt 2:



With each beat of his heart, Matt saw something more appalling.

Beat: Amy having sex with someone else.

Beat: Amy about to orgasm with someone else.

Beat: Amy off her head with pleasure and barely coherent with the need to orgasm with someone else.

Beat: Amy's nipples, ripe and tight and hard with someone else's stubble burn.

Beat: Amy's thighs, similarly red with stubble burn.

Beat: Amy's thighs, red with stubble burn and slickly wet with come.

Beat: Amy's thighs, spread wide over the muscular body beneath her, pink wet pussy lips stretched even wider over a frankly impossibly big cock.

Beat: The ludicrously over-pumped man with his cock buried in Amy's pink pussy, regarding Matt as if he was an annoying fly that had buzzed into the room.

Then his heart seemed to stop beating for a while, as Amy screamed and scrambled away from her lover, yelping with what seemed like horror.

The world abruptly came back into focus with a roar of sound, and Matt felt a hot red rage howl through him.

Stumbling, unsteady, Amy lurched away from the bed and Matt caught her instinctively, grabbing one arm and one breast, which made Amy yelp again.

"Sorry, sorry," he muttered, and she grabbed for her bathrobe from the back of the door. She shook as she tried to pull it on and Matt found himself helping her as if she was a child, pushing her arms through the sleeves and tying the belt and trying not to notice how ripely naked she was underneath it.

And all the while the man on the bed, still obscenely erect, lay there watching them.

"Apologies," he said eventually, in a husky deep voice. "We have disturbed you."

"Disturbed --?" Matt began, incredulous. "You --"

"Who the fuck are you?" Amy snapped out, still trembling, and Matt put his arm around her. She huddled against him and for one brief second he enjoyed the contact.

"I am yours, my lady," said the man on the bed, and Amy started breathing hard.

"No," she said, her voice getting higher, "who are you? What -- how did you get in and why -- I thought you were a dream! I thought I was dreaming!"

"A good dream, I hope," said the stranger, still utterly relaxed. His massive cock glistened wetly.

"Shut up," Matt said viciously. "And for God's sake cover yourself up and -- wait, a dream? Amy? What do you mean, a dream?"

She shook against him, her face buried in his shirt. "Oh God, oh God," she muttered.

"Amy?" Gently, Matt steered her out into the living room and sat her down on the sofa. Kneeling in front of her, he said, "What's going on?"

She pulled the edges of her robe closer together, clutching at the fabric and breathing unsteadily as if she was about to start crying.

"I don't," she began, then attempted to pull herself together. "I don't know," she said, voice shaky. "I thought -- that is, I was dreaming, I thought I was dreaming, about...well, you know."

Oh yeah. Matt knew. He dreamed about it nightly -- usually with Amy in a starring role.

"And so I didn't pay any attention to anything, and then you came in and, and, well that can't be a dream, can it? Why would you be in my sex dream?"

Matt wondered whether he should kill Amy's mystery lover first, or himself.

"Why indeed," he said with what was supposed to be wry lightness, but came out more as grim despair.

But Amy didn't notice. "I don't know who the hell he is," she whispered, "and I don't know how he got in. Was the door locked? I'm sure I locked the door. Oh God, Matt."

He put his arms around her, felt her warm, soft body against his, smelled the sweat on her skin, the scent of sex, and an overwhelming wave of despair crashed over him. She was supposed to be in his arms, smelling of sex, because she'd been having sex with him. Not because some stupidly-proportioned lunatic had broken into the flat and started shagging her while she was asleep.

"Do you want me to call the police?"

"And tell them what? I was hardly unwilling, was I?"

"Breaking and entering," Matt said, in an effort to banish the image of Amy being so clearly willing to ride another man's cock. But it didn't help, mostly because of the word 'entering'.

Amy stared at the door, which had to be opened with a key and showed no signs of forced entry. "But all the windows were shut when I went out," she said, "and I didn't open any when I came back."

She frowned, now looking more puzzled than shocked. She turned her gaze on the door to her bedroom.

"How did he get in?"

Matt got up and checked the living room and kitchen windows. Then, quickly so as not to leave Amy unattended, the windows in his bedroom and the bathroom. All of them closed and locked from the inside. None of them broken.

His gaze followed Amy's to the bedroom door. Their burglar-who-wasn't-a-burglar and rapist-who-wasn't-a-rapist hadn't come out yet. Matt half expected him to have disappeared, as in a locked-room mystery. But when he pushed the door open, the guy was sitting on the bed, a sheet wrapped around his waist. It barely concealed the massive bulge of his cock, although thankfully it no longer seemed to be so horribly erect.

Matt made a mental note to burn that sheet.

He glanced at the window, which was as secure as all the others had been, then back at the muscular man sitting calmly on Amy's bed.

"All right then," Matt said, jerking his head at the living room. "You'd better come out here."

The big man did as he was told, and stood as if at attention before the mantelpiece. Amy remained sitting on the sofa, her legs drawn up beneath her. Matt wanted to sit with her, put his arms around her, but he knew he'd get better leverage if he remained standing.

The big man was tall, but no taller than Matt. However, that didn't make much difference when he had about a hundred extra pounds of solid muscle.

"Who are you," he asked the big man, "and what are you doing here?"

"I am Tamenorix of the Segovantes," came the reply, and then with a searing look at Amy, "and I am here for your pleasure."

Buy link: <http://changelingpress.com/product.php?&upt=book&ubid=1472>



Excerpt: Hardest of Hearts

By Cat Marsters

ISBN: 978-1-60521-119-0

Out Now at Changeling Press

Buy link: <http://changelingpress.com/product.php?&upt=book&ubid=1349>

Emma and Aidan can't keep their hands off each other. There's just one little problem: she's sworn to kill all vampires and he likes the taste of blood a little too much.

Emma's been raised in the knowledge that all vampires are evil. After all, they're responsible for the death of her parents. Meeting Aidan shouldn't change a thing: so he might be the most beautiful man she's ever seen; he's still a vampire, and it's her duty to kill him, not to get him naked. Even if his Irish charm and quiet morality are extremely persuasive.

Aidan's come back to town to avenge the death of a very old friend. But far from the old zealot he expected, his new enemy is a young redhead with a killer body. She's determined to wipe out all vampires, and Aidan sees it as his duty to save his own kind.

And if he has to seduce her to do it, so much the better...

Warning: This title contains explicit language and sexual content not suitable for readers under the age of 18.

Excerpt 1:

I saw my first vampire when I was sixteen. He was incredibly beautiful, a pale, tortured creature haunting the school corridors. An unearthly concoction of glittering skin and soulful eyes, drawing the yearning, desperate love of every girl in school.

I drove a stake through his heart, of course.

So when a vampire walked in through the doors of *Oh My Goth* one Friday night about ten years later, my fingers twitched for the stake in my bag. Unfortunately, my bag was in the back room, and no part of my outfit would have concealed it. Added to which, my boss would probably complain if I staked a customer in the shop. And I'd get stuck with cleaning up the

blood.

The vampire was a looker. It's a trick of fiction to persuade us that all vampires are hot. They're not, just as not all humans are gorgeous. The better-looking ones are more successful, however. They attract more prey, which makes them stronger. Simple as that.

This one moved like a predator, the swagger and grace of a creature who won't ever be challenged. A man who knows no woman can turn him down. A hunter who doesn't believe he can be beaten.

I watched him move around the shop, graceful and predatory, even as my brain checked and discarded every available item it could think of which might be used as a weapon.

He was tall and lean in dark jeans and a leather jacket, and maybe I could stun him with one of the heavy coffee-table *Bible of the Dead* books he was slinking past. No, vampire skulls were thicker than that.

He had dark hair, black maybe, curly and tousled and just brushing his collar, and now he was prowling past the crucifix earrings, maybe I could use those. No, probably not – symbols of religious belief only really work if you actually do believe – and in my experience they're still not terribly effective on anything but the newest vampire.

His skin was pale, like that of most Caucasian vampires. He didn't gleam with the sheen of the newly-fed, which probably worked in his favor. If he looked like he'd just eaten someone, I'd have to leap over the counter and bludgeon him to death with a coffin-shaped handbag.

He needed a shave, which was somewhat unusual amongst vampires, unless they were very old, before the art of clean shaving had been perfected. Maybe I could offer him one of the ceremonial knives to shave with, and then accidentally cut off his head with it. No. The blades were quite small, and I'd have to do a lot of hacking. Think of the carpet.

His eyes were dark, narrowed slightly as he glanced at the admittedly tacky range of Goth gifts for sale. His lips were shapely, and I could see no sign of fangs. Not that it would have bothered most of our clientele if he'd been displaying them.

The vampire moved past the range of dying flowers on the Valentines display to the

Turnbury Murders exhibition, and as he looked up I saw his eyes were a chocolatey shade, with dark lashes. His bone structure was impeccable, with a strong jaw and high cheekbones. His nose might have been broken once or twice, but that only served to make his perfection a little more human.

Except that he wasn't human, and I was considering stabbing him in the heart with an ornamental fan.

I could follow him outside when he left, perform some of my usual look-at-my-neck moves – the vampire version of the crooked finger – and lure him around to the little yard at the back of the shop. Probably, I could hide his body there until the shop closed, and with any luck he might have disintegrated enough to simply be tossed in the organic recycling bin.

Then the vampire turned to look at me, and my breath caught in my throat. I'd assessed the details, inventoried features, dispassionately noted his good looks – but now he was looking directly at me, and that dark chocolate gaze was reaching right out to me and begging me to succumb. He had come-hither eyes, and I sure as hell wanted to hither and come.

Stake through the heart, I reminded myself as he prowled over to the counter. Poison in a pretty bottle. A gorgeous vampire is still a vampire.

Goddamn, he was pretty though.

"I wonder if you could help me," he said, a faint smile playing on his lips, and either the bastard was putting on an Irish accent to be charming or he was actually lucky enough to open his mouth and speak like that naturally. I wasn't sure which would have been the more annoying.

"I'm sure I can try," I replied, as politely as I could – which is to say, not very polite. Thankfully, people don't expect someone working in a shop which sells coffin handbags to actually be polite, which suits me to the ground.

"I'm looking for information about the Turnbury Murders," he said, and my eyes narrowed.

"Well, we have lots of it in our exhibition," I said, waving at the wall.

He smiled then, a proper smile, a wide grin that lit up his face and made his eyes sparkle. His teeth were decent, which told me that despite his lack of shaving standards, he wasn't a terribly old vampire. More than a hundred or so years old and the standard of dental hygiene was so dismal a lot of vamps had a mouthful of brown teeth. Only their fangs looked remotely healthy.

But this vampire, Mr. Handsome Irish Charmer, had perfect pearlers. And dark chocolately eyes, and carelessly long hair. And now he'd moved closer I could see the muscle definition beneath his clothes. He had on a couple of layered t-shirts, frayed and faded, and the hand resting on the counter wore a fingerless glove. His leather jacket was worn in several places, and the silver chain vanishing under his shirt was tarnished.

A lot of vampires tended to dress like they were homeless, and I'd still never quite worked out why.

This guy made it look like the height of style.

"I'm interested," said the vampire, "in Joan Moorcroft, and William Huntley, and Lizzie Bathgate."

His eyes suddenly became less like chocolate and more like wood, old, hard wood, the kind that's turned rocklike with age and hard use, and can't be shattered by anything.

The three people he was asking about had been vampires. And they'd been killed by me.

"There's not much information up there about them," the vampire continued. His gaze never left mine.

"Not very much is known about them," I replied steadily. "It's not even certain they were murdered. They simply disappeared."

Those three vampires had been old, old enough that their bodies disintegrated with nauseating speed. Torrence had simply scooped their crumbling bones into a weighted bag and dumped it in the sea.

"And where do you think they disappeared to?" asked the vampire. His nails were short and clean, his fingers elegant.

I held his gaze. "I think they probably went home," I said. "We have some books on the Turnbury Murders, if you're interested."

"I'm just interested in those three."

"Well, we have very little information on them," I said. He was lean, but muscular. Probably knew how to use his body in a fight.

He continued to stare at me. "I knew Lizzie Bathgate," he said, his voice very low.

"Did you? Then I'm very sorry for your loss."

"Loss? I thought she went home?"

"Well, maybe you should try calling her there."

"Lizzie was never very good with phones."

"Wasn't she." It wasn't a question. I'd given up the pretense of being polite.

"They were somewhat before her time."

I smoothed my hands over a stack of Turnbury Murders leaflets. "How unfortunate."

"She'd have been more than seventy when they were invented."

"Is that so." The nearest wooden object was a pencil far too small to really do any damage with, but I rolled it under my palm in a move I doubt he missed.

"Which would make her nearly two hundred years old."

"Well, she didn't look a day over twenty," I snapped.

There it was. A tiny softening in those hardwood eyes, a tilt of his head, and an utter lack of surprise. The vampire knew who I was.

The three or four other customers in the shop barely turned their heads. Daisy, the only other member of staff present, was helping a girl try on corsets in the changing room. The gloomy Emo music Daisy preferred kept our conversation private.

I was alone with a vampire who knew who I was, and the only weapon I had was a damn pencil.

“You’re Emma Howard,” he said.

“My reputation precedes me,” I said curtly.

“Young vampire hunter with curly red hair and a killer body,” he said, surveying what was visible of said body behind the counter. His eyes caressed me as a lover’s would. “There can’t be many about.”

“Did you want something?” I snarled.

His eyes met mine again, and he smiled, the motion lazy.

“I want plenty,” he said. He reached towards me, and I tensed, prepared to fight him bare-handed if I had to, but all he did was slide a *Guide to the Turnbury Murders* leaflet from under my palm.

“Thanks for the information,” he said, and one eyelid quirked in what might have been a wink. Rage nearly consumed me.

“Be seeing you,” the vampire said, and sauntered out as casual as anything.

Beneath my hand, the pencil snapped in two.

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Excerpt: Hardest of Hearts

By Cat Marsters

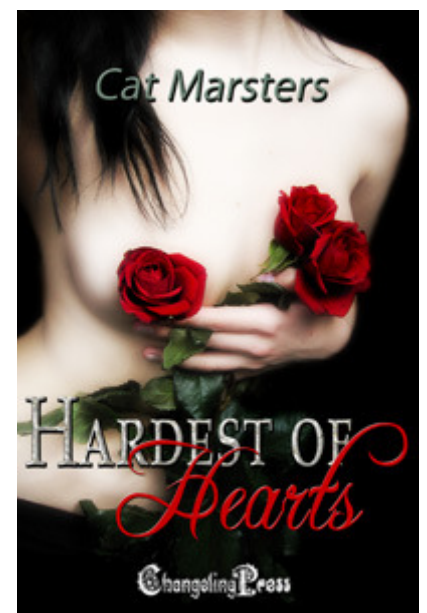
ISBN: 978-1-60521-119-0

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Emma and Aidan can't keep their hands off each other. There's just one little problem: she's sworn to kill all vampires and he likes the taste of blood a little too much.

Emma's been raised in the knowledge that all vampires are evil. After all, they're responsible for the death of her parents. Meeting Aidan shouldn't change a thing: so he might be the most beautiful man she's ever seen; he's still a vampire, and it's her duty to kill him, not to get him naked. Even if his Irish charm and quiet morality are extremely persuasive.

Aidan's come back to town to avenge the death of a very old friend. But far from the old zealot he expected, his new enemy is a young redhead with a killer body. She's determined to wipe out all vampires, and Aidan sees it as his duty to save his own kind.

And if he has to seduce her to do it, so much the better...

Warning: This title contains explicit language and sexual content not suitable for readers under the age of 18.

Excerpt 2:

There were naked people in the VIP section. A lot of naked people. And they were, well, doing what naked people do together.

I stood speechless with the vampire's arm still around my bare shoulders. A couple of feet away, a woman was on her knees, her breasts spilling out of her bra, her skirt pushed up to reveal bare buttocks and a hairless pussy. Her head bobbed back and forth as she sucked on the penis of a man who was otherwise fully dressed.

Behind them, a woman was sprawled out on a sofa, totally naked, while another woman wearing only fishnet stockings knelt between her legs, licking enthusiastically. As I watched, dumbstruck, a naked man with a very hairy chest knelt behind the woman doing the licking, took his penis in hand and pushed it into her pussy. She moaned and wriggled back against him.

Couples fucked against the walls, on the floor, knelt and sat and lay on chairs and sofas and even tables. Some of them were more than couples. Some were threesomes, foursomes, and some had too many limbs tangled together for me to be able to tell.

"Jesus Christ," I mumbled.

"That," purred the voice in my ear, "is blasphemy."

He managed to jolt me out of my shock. "You're a believer?"

"What? Just because a man has fangs and drinks blood means he can't believe in the Almighty?"

"Well," I said, "yes."

He grinned and squeezed my shoulder. "You're so naïve."

I scowled at him, and he grinned wider.

"It's quite charming."

"Fuck off." I attempted to extract myself from his hold, but suddenly his arm was like iron, and I couldn't get out from under it.

"Now, I have to ask myself something," he said, tugging me around to face him. I resisted, but it was pointless. He was ridiculously strong. I'd have to remember that, when I fought him.

He held me against his chest, both arms around me, one hand on my bare shoulder and the other on my butt. I allowed him, but only because we were in a room where everyone else was having sex, and it would look weird if we weren't at least intimate.

Yeah, I know. It sounds like a bad excuse even to me.

"What do you have to ask yourself?" I asked. My heart was thumping and I knew he could probably feel it.

"Why a girl like you is in a place like this."

His dark eyes gleamed. He thought this was hilarious.

“I was looking for you,” I said irritably, and realized my mistake immediately. That wide, infectious grin was back. “I mean – not like *that*.”

“You wound me,” he said, attempting to look hurt and failing utterly.

“Not yet,” I muttered.

“Now then, Emma,” he said, and I rankled at his use of my name. Especially because when he said it, it sounded like syrup and bitter chocolate.

Behind us, the doors opened to admit a couple who were already tearing at each others’ clothes. The woman had her shirt open, her bare breasts being fondled by her partner, whose belt-buckle she was unfastening as they kissed wildly and careened into us.

This just pressed me closer to the vampire, who gave them a dark-eyed smile and moved me out of the way. Urging me up against a poster exhorting all patrons to use condoms, he framed my shoulders with his hands.

“Why were you looking for me?” he said.

I scanned the room as I replied, trying to ignore all the naked people and look instead for threats and avenues of escape. “The same reason I always look for vampires.”

He cocked an eyebrow, and I became very aware of his body pressed the entire length of mine. His broad shoulders and lean, hard stomach, his narrow hips in their rough denim, the fabric catching on the rips in my tights. He was taller than me, but not by a great degree, and his hips rested against mine.

I’d never before considered vampires to be sexy. They were vile beasts, evil demons, murderous parasites intent on causing pain and death. None of these were traits I found to be attractive.

But this vampire –

Oh, hell. He was gorgeous, and he was intensely sexual, and he knew it and he was using those things against me.

For the first time in my life I considered actually having sex with a vampire.

“And do you often look for them in sex clubs?” he asked, voice low, face close to mine.

“Somehow I figured this would be your natural environment.”

His hand traced the line of my jaw, and I tried, I really tried, not to arch into it like a kitten being stroked.

“My natural environment,” he mused. “Surrounded by sweaty strangers in cheap fishnet, fucking each other like porn stars to bad music? Emma, I am twice wounded.”

His fingertips brushed the pulse in my throat, which leapt and pounded madly.

He leaned closer. His lips were almost touching mine. His breath was cool, his eyes were hot, and his voice was like soft, throbbing music.

“But if you mean my natural environment is touching beauty, worshipping it, enjoying soft skin and soft flesh under my hands, kissing perfect lips, feeling long limbs wrap around me and watching pretty eyelids flutter with pleasure, then maybe you’re right.”

I couldn’t move. I couldn’t breathe. The force of his sexuality was holding me against the wall more surely than his hands ever could.

“I enjoy being with women,” the vampire murmured, his voice husky. As he spoke, his hands trailed over my body, following the paths his words described. “I like the way they look and feel, naked and willing in my arms. I love the taste of a woman’s mouth, soft plump lips like ripe fruit. I love the texture of a woman’s skin against my fingertips, against my tongue.”

His lips brushed my jaw, and then his tongue touched the place he’d kissed. I shuddered as a spike of pleasure stabbed through me.

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