



Free Short Fiction

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Friction

I pulled on a pair of nice jeans and a semi-sheer sweater. No point in taking it over the top. The clothes would be on the floor in less than an hour anyway... if I could convince Gabe that fucking was better than a movie at home. When he called yesterday to ask me out, that's more what I had in mind.

I locked the door to my dorm room and glanced around, praying that no prying eyes followed me. The whole building was co-ed, and more than half of the residents were witches. Female witches were the norm and highly supported by the Dominion, the governing body of magic. I had the misfortune to be the only male on campus studying magic. The girls tried to drive me out through pranks and teasing, just to prove that guys couldn't be witches. That was why I had a single room to myself, no one wanted to bunk with the pariah of the whole campus.

So far all the pranks had been minor. Nasty notes slipped under my door, people tripping me in the hall or pushing me whenever they passed. I could handle it.

"Hey, Seiran."

I turned around, expecting someone to throw something or curse me out. Ryan Federoff, one of the offensive linemen for the football team, stood just a few feet away. He was in my math class, but had never really said more than two words to me. In fact, he hung with some of the witches who spent a lot of time tormenting me. Such as Rose Pewette, the current Pillar of earth. She seemed to take the "mean girl" concept to a whole new level.

"Hi," I said carefully.

He smiled and his face lit up, making some of my anxiety fade away. "Going out?"

"Just for a while. Meeting a friend." I tried to be casual. Ryan was cute in that rugged sort of sports-star way. Long face with lots of angles, and a bulky body – probably from steroids.

He crossed the hall and walked with me toward the main exit. "A date? Is it serious?"

Was he really hitting on me? No one at school had even spoken to me in the past two months. I gave him a wide, but fake, smile. Maybe another night. "Just meeting a friend."

"Can call me sometime and we can go get a drink." He touched my arm and ran his fingers down the edge of my sweater's soft fabric until they reached my wrist.

"Sure." I didn't mention to him that I wasn't old enough to legally drink in public, but he wasn't really looking for conversation over alcohol anyway. His body language said sex in a thousand different ways. He'd do for a one-off some night I didn't want to leave campus.

He gave me his number and walked me to the door, seeming very gentleman-like for a jock. "Later," he said.

"Later," I told him and watched him head off down the hall.

The feeling of being watched came in a rush, apprehension pouring over my shoulders. I tried to shrug it off. The unease that tingled a warning down my spine had become a way of life. It felt heavier than usual as I darted out of the building to my old car.

My meager savings from mowing the neighbors' lawns and walking pets had paid for the car. My mother, one of the regional leaders of the Dominion, gave me enough money for food and gas each month. It was at her insistence that I studied magic. Her coercion had been the kind I couldn't say no to since she could be very demanding. Living on campus had been my only chance to escape her constant supervision, but the lack of options had begun to cause building stress in my life.

Only two things really helped me find peace: sex and shifting into my lynx form to run free on the new moon.

The second was illegal by Dominion law. Witches were not allowed to shift since, unlike lycanthropes, they had a tendency to not want to return to human form. But sex could be easily procured, as I planned to do tonight. Gabe was always a pretty sure thing, ever since I became legal two years ago. And if Gabe wasn't up for play apparently I had a backup plan in Ryan Federoff.

Unlike on campus, I'd be safe from scathing glances at Gabe's. He was a two-thousand-year-old vampire. Anyone who messed with him deserved to have their throat torn out.

I drove into the lot of Gabe's condo, parked in a spot beneath the light, and hurried to the door. Somehow the unease had followed me, at least until I rode the elevator up to his loft. The door stood cracked open for me. He could do that because he lived in a secure building on the good side of St. Paul. His place was all wooden floors, granite counters, and endless windows that overlooked the city skyline. Beautiful, if you liked that sort of thing. As an earth witch, I preferred trees, but who was I to tell a vampire how to live?

The first thing that hit me when I entered was the breeze from the open balcony door. We rarely went outside at this height, and because it was late October, the wind was a little more than cold. Usually we retired quickly to the loft above, where his king-sized bed would be turned down for the night. Or he'd fuck me into the wall beside the door or sometimes even on the kitchen counter.

He'd been my only repeat, the only guy I ever came to more than once. I didn't know if it was because of his pretty words, his firm round ass and amazingly sculpted shoulders, or the lack of fear I had when in his arms. Either way, my body seemed to really like everything he did, and my commitment-phobic head didn't gripe too much. As long as he didn't mention the *L* word.

"Hey," Gabe said, his slightly accented voice coming from the balcony doorway. He stood in a casual, cover-model pose with strong arms crossed over his chest. And he looked like a cover model with his blond hair curled on top and green eyes glowing with a light of happiness that only I got to see, and only on rare occasions.

"We're watching a movie on the balcony?" I crossed the room, stripping off the shirt as I moved, showing off my flat stomach and ever-ready nipples. Maybe I'd get them pierced, attract more attention to them. No one ever touched them as much as I'd like.

I reached him and stretched up on my tiptoes to kiss his lips lightly. He pulled me in closer, pressing a hand at the back of my neck, weaving his fingers through my long black hair, and slipping his tongue into my mouth to duel with mine.

"Hmm," I sighed happily into his lips.

He pulled away and stroked my cheek, looking so serious and loving for a minute that it brought on a sense of panic. If he said the words, I'd be out the door. But he knew that. It had happened before. So he just said, "You look great."

I rubbed my erection against his thigh to remind him that I felt great too. "Can we skip the movie?"

"I made you dinner." He pulled away and headed out onto the covered balcony where a small table sat decked out like one from some sort of fancy restaurant. White table cloth, red roses, fancy plates, and a cart beside it that was sure to be filled with gourmet cuisine.

The whole sight made me cold. "What is this?"

"Just dinner." He motioned toward the chair. I hesitantly took a seat and watched as he served the meal. After he returned to his seat, I picked up my fork and dug in to the yummy looking dinner. The salmon was moist and flakey in a rich cheese sauce with steamed vegetables and a flavorful couscous mix. Gabe poured wine for both of us, a soft white that tickled my palate nicely with the taste of the food.

I dug in while he studied me. He sipped at his own glass of wine, swirling it occasionally, and tapped his fingers lightly on the table. Gabriel wasn't usually so animated. He was more of a talker. His silence was beginning to make me nervous.

Finally I put my fork down and stared at him. "What's going on?"

He shook his head. "Nothing."

"So what's the deal with the romantic dinner then?"

"No deal. I just wanted to spend a nice evening with you. One that didn't just revolve around sex." He got up and went to the cart. "Ready for dessert?"

Dessert was simple. Fresh vanilla ice cream with strawberries and chocolate poured over the top. He set the dish in front of me and returned to his chair. Instead of putting my spoon in and going to town on the sweet treat, I picked it up and moved to his side of the table. He slid back enough to let me plop into his lap then held my dessert bowl for me. I dipped my spoon into the concoction, hoping to get this evening moving in a more familiar direction.

I sucked on the spoon, swirled the cream around in my mouth before swallowing, and pressed my lips to his. Gabe didn't hesitate to let me in and deepen the kiss. His normal flavor tinted with wine made me smile into his mouth. He cupped my ass with his free hand, and I massaged his neck and cheek with mine. He offered me the bowl, encouraging me to take another sugary spoonful, and I did, lapping and sucking at the spoon, playing with it to find every drop. Our eyes were locked to each others; mine probably as lust-filled as his. His erection ground into my thigh, and mine begged to be touched.

The chilly Minnesota air made me shiver. "Let's take this inside," I said, slipping off his lap and tugging him away from the table. He left the bowl there and followed me, pressing kisses to my hair as we went. We only made it as far as the stairs to the loft before he shoved me against them, unbuttoned my pants, and slipped hands inside. I sighed as his warm grip enveloped me.

"Heavy on the QuickLife tonight, eh?" I said, meeting his endless kisses. The bottled synthetic blood staved off his hunger and kept his temperature up and ready even when I wasn't feeding him.

"Always prepared for you," he breathed against my skin. He bathed my neck and chest in kisses. When he finally reached my aching nipples and sucked one into his mouth, I arched against him, throwing my head back in ecstasy.

When he moved to the other nipple, I reached up to run my hands through his hair. I hated the smell of his stinky herbal shampoo but it was so *him* I couldn't complain much about it. As he bowed his head to reach my nipple, something across the room caught my eye.

A wall calendar pinned up beside the door had big red X's marked over each day of the month until today, which was circled. Gabe kissed down my stomach. I tugged gently at his hair, "What's today?"

"Hmm?" He answered. "October twenty-sixth."

"I know the date. But why do you have it circled on your calendar?"

He sat down on the stair beside me, still rubbing my lower abdomen. "Older vamps like me have a hard time keeping up with dates. So I have to write things down."

That still wasn't an answer. He tried to kiss me again, but I pushed him away and crossed the room to look at the calendar. Did he have something important today that he didn't tell me about? Why did he insist we go out tonight, on a Tuesday of all nights, if he had other things going on? Written in the big red bubble was: *Anniversary*.

My heart jumped faster in my chest, and my mind raced to recall the dates, but all I remembered about that Halloween party was that it had been on a new moon two years ago, when I was almost seventeen. Panic took hold of me as Gabe wrapped his arms around me from behind. "It's nothing, Sei. Let's go to bed."

"What anniversary?"

His silence was answer enough.

I tore myself out of his arms and grabbed my shirt. "Anniversary of when we first met?"

"Why is that a bad thing, Sei?"

I shrugged the shirt over my head and rubbed my eyes. "Anniversaries are for couples."

"It's for friends too. We are friends aren't we?"

"Friends who fuck. Not friends who celebrate the day they met. What's next, the celebration of the first time you did me?" My lungs felt tight and I could almost feel the world closing in around me. Relationships and I did not work. Gabe deserved better anyway. There was so much about me that he didn't know. It was better if he just thought of me as an indiscriminant whore.

"Don't make this more than it needs to be, Sei. I just wanted to spend the night with you –"

"You're the one who made it more than it needed to be. Fancy dinners, flowers, what else were you planning? Asking for a domestic partnership during the afterglow?" The idea nearly brought me to my knees. I couldn't stay. The hope in his eyes made my heart break. When he learned who I really was he'd hate me, and I couldn't bear that. I wouldn't expose him to my fucked-up head.

I stomped toward the door. "Don't call me."

"Sei, please!"

"Find someone else to play house with you, Gabriel. I'm going to find someone to fuck me." Slamming the door as I left was so childish, but I couldn't help it. I wouldn't really find someone else. He just made me so mad sometimes.

My whole body shook as I made my way down to my car. The world seemed to be falling apart around me. People hated me at school, I couldn't go home to my mother, and now I didn't even have Gabe to rely on for occasional, comforting, uncomplicated sex.

I started the car and took off for the dorm. Once there, I went in only to grab a book then headed out on foot toward the all night café near the library. At least this late at night, I could probably find a nice hidden corner to relax for awhile.

Halfway to the café someone stepped onto the path, and I ran right into a broad chest. He grabbed my arm to steady me. "Sorry," he said.

"S'ok," I said. He was a big guy, probably over six feet tall, long blond hair, and wore a heavy-weight jacket. He smelled of strong deodorant and a spicy aftershave. I had to rub my nose to keep from sneezing. Stupid over-sensitive sense of smell.

"Can I walk you somewhere? It's pretty late."

I moved around him and headed toward the café. "I'm fine, thanks." When he didn't follow I let out a heavy sigh of relief. How had I become so jumpy? I had sex with vampires, lycanthropes, and humans. Any one of the batch could easily hurt a small guy like me, but instead it was the dark that made me afraid. Where was the logic in that?

The café was a welcoming light in the distance. When I finally reached the door and went inside, I felt safe again. I ordered a cup of hot cocoa and found a nice little corner table. The barista knew me well enough to come over and wipe down the table for me.

I gave her a strained smile and opened my book to get lost in a hot romance with man-on-man action. The main character was lavishing attention on his lover's silken, turgid rod and playing with the puckered skin of his love hole, when the chair across from me screeched and someone dropped into it. I glanced up, blinking to focus my eyes on the bigger picture of the room.

Ryan sat across from me. "Hey."

"Hey."

"Meeting your friend here?"

"No. Saw him earlier. That's over." I looked back down to my book, not really in the mood for sex anymore. Maybe another night. Hopefully, Ryan would get the point.

"It's almost one a.m."

"Yeah. It's late."

"Can I walk you home?"

I stifled a sigh. "Sure." I bookmarked my page, got up, and pushed in my chair.

He motioned for me to go ahead of him and waited for me to toss my trash before opening the door for me. The door-holding thing really annoyed me, but I kept my mouth shut. He had no need to court me, I didn't do long term. And I couldn't let Gabe's sentimental crap bleed all over my night.

We walked side by side down the path, neither of us said anything. But halfway to my dorm, he did grab my hand and lace his fingers through mine. The intimacy of the act made me push closer to him, having read him right, bumping hips. Thank God Gabe hadn't ruined the entire evening. My body was waking up and thinking a little play wouldn't be so bad tonight, after all.

"You're pretty hot, Seiran Rou," Ryan said as he tugged me off the path and toward a big tree. He flipped us around and pressed my back to the tree and pressed up against me, all heat and man.

The flattery wasn't something I needed or enjoyed. Also, I'm a pretty blunt guy. "So you know this is a one time gig, right?"

He touched my face, brushing my cheek with callused fingers. "I hear you don't let anyone double dip."

Not many got to single dip, but I let him kiss me. He tasted of alcohol and cigarettes, neither a flavor I liked. He stepped back, smiling at me in an odd way. And then he smashed his fist into my face.

The blow knocked my head against the tree. I saw the flashing stars of consciousness trying to leak out of me as my legs gave out. I slid down the trunk of the tree. The kick to my stomach that came in the blind seconds later doubled me up and had me heaving cocoa all over. Ryan's laugh sounded far away. My ears rung, eyesight weak, but the hits kept coming -- to my head, stomach, arms, and hips. I rolled into a ball to protect myself.

The ground beneath me felt strong and comforting. I took a moment to focus my power and push away some of the pain before kicking out a leg and hearing a satisfying pop and a cry from him. All I could think was "Wrong venue, asshole," as I pulled strength from the earth to help heal.

I rubbed my eyes a few times and my sight began to return.

Ryan leaned against a nearby tree, babying his left leg. "I'm going to fucking kill you, Rou. Fucking freak!" He moved toward me, hopping and putting very little pressure on his injured leg.

I touched the ground and pushed a little magic energy in his direction. A tree root broke up through the ground suddenly enough to trip him. He went sprawling, landing only a few feet from me, screaming the whole way down. I scrambled up and backed away.

"What the hell was that?" Ryan tried to get up, but his left leg was now turned at an unnatural angle. "You broke my leg."

"How did it feel to kiss a freak, asshole?" I asked him, resisting the urge to kick him in return for the beating he'd given me. "Maybe next time you'll fuck with someone who *can't* kick your ass!" It had to be the adrenaline talking because I couldn't believe what I had said, but I turned and ran, heading for the dorms.

"Rou!" Ryan's voice screamed behind me. I didn't stop. My heart hammered and lungs burned. The pain pushed me to the edge of darkness several times, and only fear kept me moving. I got to the main door of the dorm and stopped to suck in deep painful breaths. My ribs were broken for sure, at least one on each side of my chest, and flashes of pain and light kept bouncing around my head, so maybe a concussion too. If it weren't for the power the earth coursing through me I probably wouldn't have made it at all.

"Sei?" A soft voice whispered from a few feet away.

I staggered, trying to make out the towering figure and praying that one of Ryan's friends hadn't somehow followed me. There was probably more than one bastard out tonight.

When strong arms reached me and kept me from falling I had to swallow the panic. The concrete beneath my feet wouldn't interfere with my magic, and I could take on anybody, so long as I was in contact with the earth.

"Sei? You're bleeding pretty badly, and I think you have a collapsed lung. I need to take you to the hospital." The figure sounded worried and somewhat angry, his touch was strong, but darkness ate at the edge of my vision. Something hot and annoying ran down my face. Blinking didn't help. It wasn't until the towering figure picked me up and carried me toward the parking lot that I realized it was blood on my face and Gabe carried me.

"Gabe?" I asked.

"I got you. Let me help for once, please."

"Okay." I rested my head against his shoulder and closed my eyes, letting the pain take over as the earth recalled its power. Unconsciousness took over on the way to the hospital.

The trip to the emergency room was a first for me. I had three broken ribs, a concussion, a nasty cut on the side of my head, and a dislocated right wrist. My left lung had taken some damage, but wasn't collapsed, and so long as I breathed normal slow breaths it didn't ache so much. Gabe stayed while the doctors patched me up and gave me pain meds.

A cop came by to ask about the attack and told us that Ryan had come in with a broken leg. The officer sounded angry when he talked to the doctors about me, before he entered the room. I heard him grumble, "Letting a male witch enroll was just asking for trouble. Now we have one of our best offensive linemen out with a broken leg."

It wasn't until he walked in that the rage fell from his face and turned to pity, I guess a cop was a cop. I didn't need that from anyone, especially a judgmental asshole like him, so I answered his questions as quickly as I could and waited for him to leave.

When I was finally released it was almost dawn, but Gabe was still at my side. He drove me back to the dorms and even walked me to my door inside the building. "You should go," I told him. I worried about the sun because vampires were highly flammable. The fading night trickled through my window when I opened the door to my room.

"Your door has locks, right?" he asked.

"Yes. I'll be fine. Thanks."

He leaned into me, giving me a soft hug before kissing my head on the undamaged side. "I'm sorry for scaring you last night."

A hoarse laugh escaped me. He scared me? *I* scared me. "I'm sorry –"

"Not your fault. Call me, okay?"

I just nodded and watched him, through the window, as he headed toward his car, and prayed he would get home in time. The first edges of light were beginning to brighten the sky in the east. When he vanished from sight I closed the door, locked it, and crawled into bed.

What a horrible night. If only I weren't a terrified idiot, I would have been at Gabe's all night. Instead I'd gotten my ass handed to me by some brainless jock then gone to the hospital to have eleven stitches in my forehead and a million bandages. I saw enough of my reflection at the hospital to know my face was black and blue. How unattractive for anyone, especially someone as beautiful as Gabe.

I dozed for a few minutes before startling myself awake by thinking I heard the door. I saw by the light coming from the window that it was still locked up tight. I reached for the phone and dialed a familiar number. Gabe answered on the third ring.

"Hey. You feeling all right?" Gabe's voice was soft and sleepy. The sun always made him that way.

"Yeah. Just tired."

"Mhmm. Me too."

"How'd you find me?" It didn't worry me so much that he followed me. I didn't want to think about what might've happened if he hadn't.

"You ran into a friend of mine on campus and he called to tell me that you looked distressed and distracted. So I drove out. Wanted to make sure you were okay."

I let that settle for a minute, trying to decide if it bothered me, but it didn't. "Can we watch a movie tonight? At your place?" Maybe cuddle on the couch in front of his theater-size TV with a bowl of popcorn and a warm protective body under a soft fleece blanket. If I'd been more awake I might not have asked, and that would have been a tribute to the shame I already felt.

"Sure. Want me to pick you up after dark?"

"Yes, please."

"Okay." I could hear the smile in his voice.

"And Gabe?"

"Yeah?"

"Thanks."

"Always."

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Read more about Gabe and Sei in the upcoming novella *Inheritance* coming fall 2011 from DreamSpinner Press.

About Lissa Kasey

Lissa Kasey lives in St. Paul, MN, has a Bachelor's Degree in Creative Writing, and collects Asian Ball Joint Dolls who look like her characters. She has two cats who enjoy waking her up an hour before her alarm every morning, and sitting on her lap to help her write. She can often be found at Anime Conventions masquerading as random characters when she's not writing about boy romance.