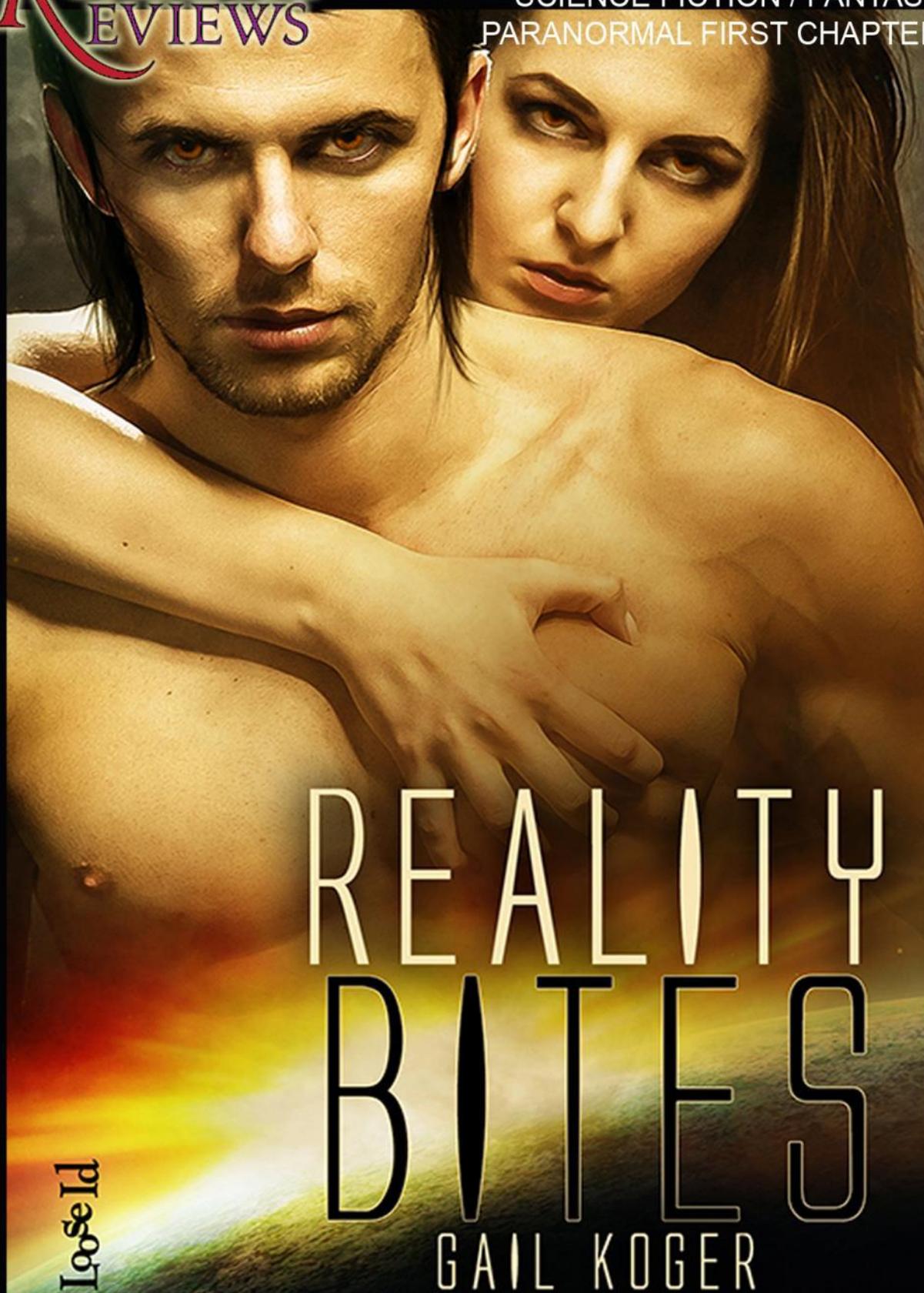


THE
ROMANCE
REVIEWS

September 2014

SCIENCE FICTION / FANTASY /
PARANORMAL FIRST CHAPTERS



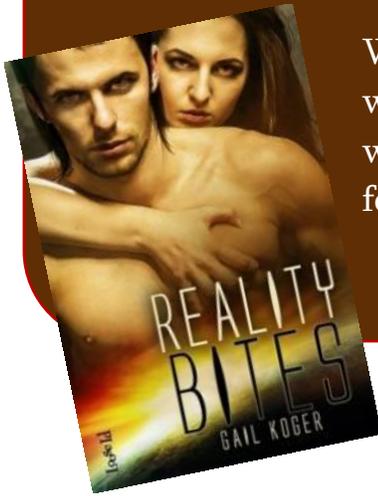
REALITY BITES

GAIL KOGER

Loose Id

Cover Story First Chapter

3 Gail Koger



Who knew a Coletti warlord would think being zapped with a cattle prod as foreplay?

Dear Reader,

In this issue, we showcase the **First Chapters** of Science Fiction, Fantasy and Paranormal Romance!

For our cover story, we have Gail Koger's mesmerizing cover of her erotic science fiction romance, **REALITY BITES** (p. 3).

While in Fantasy / Paranormal, we have:

HUNTER BETRAYED by Nancy Corrigan (p. 10)

BROKEN SOULS by Laurie Olerich (p. 20)

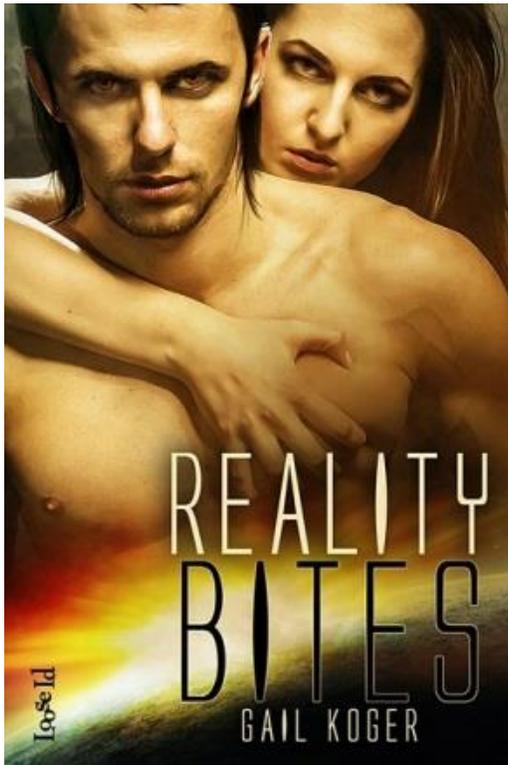
Happy reading!

Carole

P.S. The [Fall into Love Party](#) is now ongoing! Join for a chance to win lots of awesome prizes, including \$100 Gift Certificate. Don't miss it!

Reality Bites

Gail Koger



Bree never thought her dimwit act, military grade mace, cattle prod, or dumping a ton of stinky manure on Jaylan's head would encourage his pursuit. Who knew a Coletti warlord would think being zapped with a cattle prod as foreplay? Or a clever opponent only heightened his enjoyment of the chase?

The chase comes to an abrupt halt when the Tai-Kok attack Tucson, forcing Bree to team up with the Coletti warlord to stop them. Suddenly plucked from Earth by a crazed Tai-Kok commander, Jaylan and Bree find themselves stranded on a hostile alien world, and being tracked by a deadly Askole assassin. Neither of them expected to find love.

Available at:

[Amazon](#)

[Loose Id](#)

Praise:

"I love it when a book contains all of my favorite things to read about – action, adventure, romance, sci-fi/paranormal – oh, and let's not forget the steamy scenes! This book (and the entire series) has it all, and I give kudos to Ms. Koger." ~ **5 star rating from Norma** ([Amazon](#))

"This was a great book! Gail is a funny, entertaining, and an action packed author! If you haven't read Gail before I would recommend her! So, on to the book! Jaylan has just discovered his mate Bree...but there's just one problem! Bree doesn't want to be claimed and she will use all the tricks in her bag not to be caught. What's a little, poop, cattle prod, and stink bombs between friends?! LOL! Enjoy reading....I did!" ~ **Karla** ([GoodReads](#))

Chapter One

Dead Man's Gulch, a piece of the Wild, Wild West plunked down in the middle of the Arizona desert. Off the beaten path, its isolation made it the perfect headquarters for our resistance movement. Underground bunkers had been added when the Tai-Kok and Rodan began raiding our world.

My tiny office was located in the jail. I loved the atmosphere. The walls were covered with old wanted posters. A leather duster and gun belt complete with a functional 1873 Colt Peacemaker hung on the antique coatrack.

I polished the gold badge pinned to my fringed leather shirt. Officially, I was Dead Man's Gulch's marshal, and when the need arose, I was authorized to make arrests. With my long black hair and copper-colored skin, most people thought I was Native American, not Coletti. Which worked out perfectly when the theme park was still open. I could either become Calamity Jane, the great American sharpshooter and sheriff, or an Indian princess.

My latest bust had been a transient who thought an abandoned ghost town would be the perfect place to set up housekeeping. The buildings might look empty, but they're not. Two hundred soldiers usually live below ground in the bunkers. Pops had taken all but the command staff to raid a holding center in Texas.

Through the dusty front window, I watched a coyote amble down the dirt street. With a sigh, I surveyed my cluttered desk. Paperwork was the bane of my existence. As Pops's second in command I was responsible for strategy, equipping our troops, and getting new identities for the rescued women.

Central Command had a stranglehold on weapons, and we were forced to buy from Mexican gunrunners. Not an exercise for the faint of heart. The thugs thought a woman would be an easy mark, until I taught them otherwise.

To make things really interesting, the Overlord had sent his best hunter, Jaylan, to Earth to track down and eliminate all members of Earth First. He had already destroyed our bases in Nevada and Oregon. Pops was beyond pissed.

A thousand fireflies sparked in my brain as my internal radar went on red alert. I almost inhaled my gum when an enormous Coletti warrior abruptly teleported into my office.

His fangs bared in a feral snarl, he demanded, "Where are they?"

Holy hell, it was Jaylan! This was so not good. I quickly stomped on the silent alarm hidden beneath my desk, and assumed my mother's ditzy demeanor.

"We're an Old West theme park, and while your costume is very authentic, we're looking for gunslingers, not Jedi knights or Coletti invaders."

Jaylan cocked a disbelieving eyebrow and leveled the barrel of his laser pistol at my chest. "Put your hands up."

"No sense in getting all cranky. We aren't hiring right now, and even if we were, you'd have to lose those fangs."

The warlord leaned across the desk, literally oozing menace. "Do you wish to die?"

"Boy, someone sure got up on the wrong side of the bed. With that stinky attitude, no one is going to hire you, but seeing how you drove all the way out here, I'll give you an application form." I reached into my top desk drawer and froze when Jaylan jammed his laser pistol against my forehead.

"Do not move."

I popped my gum loudly. "Okeydoke."

"Put your hands up," Jaylan commanded again.

Blowing a huge purple bubble, I slowly raised my hands and tried not to laugh when he grabbed the trash can and ordered, "Spit it out."

I spat. My wad missed the trash can and hit his spiffy boot instead. "Oops."

"Oops?" Jaylan's eyes burned with the promise of retaliation.

"Sorry. My aim was off a bit. Let me get that for you," I added in my best dumb-as-a-rock voice and smeared the offending glob over his boot. "Sticky little bugger."

"Leave it!" he bellowed.

"You sure?" I swiped my finger upward, spreading the goeey mess onto his pants. "I've got some fingernail polish that will clean it right off."

"Enough! Do you take me for a fool?"

I burst into tears, sobbing as if my heart had been broken. "I was... I was...just trying to help."

"Stop your sniveling."

Grabbing a bunch of tissues off my desk, I noisily blew my nose and offered timidly, "Can I get you some coffee?"

"No." The warlord studied me suspiciously for a long moment, then turned his attention to searching my desk.

My gaze roamed over Jaylan's chiseled features and strong jaw. Damn, he was one hot dude, if you were into the whole merciless-predator thing. His black battle suit displayed an amazing amount of muscles, and he wore a large bronze communication bracelet on each arm. A bronze chain was woven into his ebony warrior braids. Two daggers protruded from his knee-high armored boots, and he even had a wicked-looking sword hanging from his weapons belt.

I added a quiver to my voice. "Is this a robbery? Because, buddy, you picked the wrong place to rob. There's no money here."

Jaylan yanked me from my chair. "Tell me where your commander is, and I will be merciful."

"*Merciful?*" What kind of dialogue is that? You sound like someone out of a bad action movie."

A growl rumbled in Jaylan's throat. Grabbing a handful of my shirt, he picked me up with his left hand. "Where is your commander?"

I glanced down in surprise. My toes dangled inches from the floor. I was six feet tall, and this guy had lifted me effortlessly. "Commander? Oh, you mean my boss?"

"Yes," Jaylan snapped, giving me a hard shake.

"He's not here."

He shook me again. "Where is he?"

"I don't know. I'm just the part-time secretary. I come in twice a week to do the paperwork."

Animosity glittered in Jaylan's amber eyes. "You cannot be this stupid."

I narrowed *my* amber eyes and huffed, "Excuse me?"

"We tracked the females here. You will take me to them."

"If you're looking for the whorehouse, it's another twenty miles down the road." I tugged at his hand. "Could you put me down? You're wrinkling my shirt."

Jaylan dropped me in the chair and commanded, "Do not move."

"Who died and made you boss?"

He pushed his laser pistol against my nose. "This makes me the boss."

Crossing my eyes, I stared at it. "How do I know it's real?"

Jaylan's expression was one of total exasperation. He moved his laser pistol three inches to the right and obliterated my filing cabinet.

"Oh. My. God. You're gonna get me fired!" I shrieked in dismay.

"If you do not cooperate, you are going to wish you were dead."

"You know, nine dollars an hour is not worth this shit. I quit." Picking up my backpack, I headed for the door and ran into a rock hard chest.

"You are not going anywhere."

I yanked out a canister of super-duper military-grade mace from my backpack and sprayed him in the face. "Wanna bet?"

Yowling in fury, Jaylan staggered back, rubbing at his eyes. "You will regret this, female."

My eyes watering badly, I growled, "The name is Bree. Not female, and you're a bully. I *hate* bullies." I grabbed the cattle prod we used on our Brahma bulls off the desk. I shoved it into his neck and lit him up.

With a grunt of pain, he dropped to his knees. Barely ten seconds later, I felt Jaylan's mind bounce off my rather awesome mental shields.

Damn, he was a tough one. "Surprise, I'm a Siren. The first line of defense against alien monsters like you. You know, one of those women whose psychic abilities make us prime breeding stock? The ones you assholes turn into broodmares."

Jaylan's mental voice was mesmerizing, compelling. "*Drop your shields.*"

"*Oh, give it a rest. Mind control doesn't work on me.*" I zapped him again and again and again until he lay quivering on the floor. Bullies brought out my mean streak.

Jaylan's amber eyes locked on me. A cold rush of fear tightened my stomach at the terrible fury burning there. How was he still conscious?

"*There is no place you can run that I cannot find you.*"

"I beg to differ." I picked up his laser pistol, switched it over to stun, and blasted him. Crackling red energy danced over Jaylan.

"I. Will. Find you," Jaylan snarled between clenched teeth; his body convulsed violently.

Wow. Color me impressed. The dude didn't go down easy. Just to aggravate him a bit, I leaned over him and patted his cheek. "It's been fun playing with you, numb nuts."

A low growl broke from him.

My cell phone beeped. I scooped it off the desk. "Hello."

My father roared, "Are you fucking nuts?"

Damn, he must be monitoring the security feeds. "Hey, Pops."

"That Coletti will never stop until he captures or kills you."

"That Coletti is Jaylan. You know, the Overlord's big, scary hunter, and I just defeated him."

Horror filled Pops's voice. "Good God, what have you done?"

"Captured a bad guy." Something none of our soldiers had ever accomplished. Where was my pat on the back?

"Kill him," Pops commanded.

"What?" Was he nuts? I couldn't shoot Jaylan in cold blood. A zillion fireflies danced in my head as my radar went to DEFCON 1. *Fuck*. Jaylan had summoned reinforcements.

"Gotta go. Company's coming."

Pops snapped, "If you let him live, you will regret it."

Spasms still rocked Jaylan's body, and I smiled confidently. "The warlord has been neutralized." Lowering my shields, I used my Siren abilities to scan the area. A bunch of Colettis were approaching on foot. I was definitely outgunned.

Jaylan's voice was an ominous whisper. "Neutralized?" He darted psychically across my lowered shields and tried to pin me down mentally.

With a gasp of pain, I instinctively struck back, punching the hell out of the bastard's mind.

The warlord blocked my blows and hammered my inner shields.

"The only brains getting scrambled are yours." I stunned the warlord again with the cattle prod and kicked him out of my head. A shuddering breath escaped me. *That'll teach me to get cocky.* "Bye-bye."

A hand clamped painfully around my right ankle and yanked me off my feet. "Not. Leaving," Jaylan rasped.

I knew warlords were a relentless bunch, but enough was enough. I drew my left foot back and kicked him in the face with my steel-toed boot.

He smiled at me.

Holy Mary, Mother of God. His smile was the most terrifying thing I'd ever seen.

Pops's voice sounded from the cell phone. "The self-destruct sequence has started. Quit playing with the Coletti."

"Yes, sir." I pulled the knife from my boot and waved it at Jaylan. "Let go, or I will use this."

His grip tightened.

"Not too bright, are you, buddy?" I stabbed the jerk in the hand and yanked my foot free.

"Mine," Jaylan rumbled, stark possessiveness in his eyes.

"Never gonna happen. If I were you, I'd start crawling. You've got about ten minutes before this place goes boom." I typed a command into my computer, and a door opened in the wall. Picking up my backpack, I smiled sweetly at him. "See you around, numb nuts."

As the door slid shut behind me, the warlord's horrific battle cry echoed off the walls.

The hairs on the back of my neck stood up. If he ever caught me, I'd be in big trouble.

Available at:

[Amazon](#)

[Loose Id](#)

About the Author, Gail Koger:

I was a 9-1-1 dispatcher for thirty-one years and to keep insanity at bay, I took up writing. Not to worry. The insanity isn't catching – much. Other than the addiction to chocolate and the twitch in my left eye, I'm good.

Check her out at: <http://www.gailkoger.com>

Hunter Betrayed

Nancy Corrigan



Wild Hunt, Book 1

Tainted from birth, Harley lives a life cloaked in darkness and temptation. She resists the lure of her evil legacy by holding the memory of her ghostly savior close. Every night without him is agony. She fantasizes about him and yearns for his body, but he's not the protector or lover she's envisioned. He's a Hunter bred to eliminate her kind. He's also her only hope of salvation.

Calan, the leader of the Wild Hunt, was created to protect mankind from the Unseelie Court. For a millennium, he's sacrificed to ensure the horrid creatures remain in the Underworld, but his strength wanes. He must rely on his enemy's daughter to save him, but he doesn't expect the intensity of their lust or love. Her touch calms his wild nature and ignites his carnal desires. He'll risk all to save her, but doing so forces him to make the ultimate sacrifice, one that'll damn him to suffer forever in his own living hell.

A Romantica® paranormal erotic romance from Ellora's Cave

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Praise:

"The wild hunt and the Hunters, reminded me a little of Larissa Ione's Lords of Deliverance Series. I also believe those who enjoy Kresley Cole's Immortals After Dark Series would enjoy this new series. The series is sexy and will most likely feature a new sibling in each new book." ~ [Mad Hatter Reads](#)

"This was an amazing paranormal romance! It grabbed my attention right from the start and kept me captivated throughout. It has action, romance, and the steamy scenes are just wow!" ~ [SBM Book Obsession](#)

"Hunter Betrayed is a fast-paced interesting story. The ending was fantastic and definitely left me wanting to continue reading the series. Nancy Corrigan created a strong foundation for the Wild Hunt Series. This is a great novel for people whom enjoy contemporary Fae novels." ~ [Diane's Book Blog](#)

Chapter One

Nine Years Ago

Tegan's screams echoed in Calan's head. He tried to connect to his sister, but she rarely acknowledged him anymore. She was slowly losing her mind and it was his fault.

His desperate attempt to stop Dahm, the dark fairy prince of the Unseelie Court, from opening the gates of Hell had damned his siblings, the other riders of the Wild Hunt. They bore the weight of the punishment meant for the corrupted fairies by dying over and over in the worst conceivable ways. It was their fear and pain that fed the magic which held the damaged barrier between the realms closed.

It should have been him who suffered. Instead, he hung from chains in a solitary prison no god or human could enter. The only thing he could offer his siblings was his company. He could touch their minds, engage them in conversation and share their pain, but not alleviate it.

None of the Huntsmen blamed him for the tragedy that had befallen them, but the suffering they'd endured over the past thousand years had broken some of them. He hoped he didn't lose Tegan too. Third born, she had fought in the Great War at his side.

On his other flank, his second had ridden. Calan conjured his face. Rhys's dark-brown hair and glacier-blue eyes made him both striking and frightening. Calan recalled the battles they'd won, the nights of drunken revelry and the affection he'd always felt but rarely showed. The pull to his brother flared and Rhys's personal hell became Calan's too.

Thick smoke filled his lungs, burned his eyes and wrapped around him in a suffocating blanket he couldn't escape. Calan released his breath in a slow hiss and embraced the pain. It didn't ease the suffering Rhys experienced, but the compulsion to protect him couldn't be denied.

Hot air washed over Calan, bubbling his skin and searing his throat. He locked his muscles and waited for the first flick of the never-ending fire. A crackle and whoosh heralded the hungry flames' arrival. The living inferno crawled up his legs, down his arms and wound around him until every inch of his body ignited. He fought the urge to cry out even though he knew it was the only way to make the blaze retreat.

The flames ate away at his skin, his manhood, his sanity. A scream built in his chest. He clamped his jaw. *Too much, too much.* He thrashed against his bonds, twisting and turning to escape. There was none. The pressure in his lungs intensified. His lips parted against his will. Laughter echoed around him and the fire raced into his mouth.

He burst into flames.

The scent of his burning flesh surrounded him along with his continuous roar. On and on, the torment continued until his heart took its final beat. The flames retreated, their task complete for the time being. The sacrifice had been made and his suffering fueled the magic.

The barrier separating the human realm from Hell would hold for yet another hour.

Minutes passed and he wondered if death would finally find him and give him relief, but the curse of being the child of a god reared its head. Flesh regrew. Bones reformed. The clothing he'd worn the day he'd been imprisoned wove itself over his body. The hope fizzled.

He sagged in his bonds and dragged in a shuddering breath.

Why do you insist on sharing our suffering when you do not need to?

Rhys asked the same question every time they spoke. Calan gave his usual answer. *Because it is my punishment, my hell and my sin for condemning you. I would bear it all if I could.*

Rhys sighed. *You did not know what would happen anymore than I did. I would have done the same.*

Calan's next words would've been—*No, brother, you would've saved us all.* He couldn't utter them today. The game they'd played for what might have been forever felt like a betrayal without Tegan's sarcastic retorts.

How is Tegan today?

Of course Rhys would guess at the reason behind Calan's hesitation in their choreographed act. They'd been together since the humans had first drawn the attention of the fairies and upset the fabric of the world. Calan closed his eyes and attempted once more to draw her mind to theirs. A mental shove pushed him out.

She refuses my company. Calan cursed. *She's slipping away from us, Rhys. I cannot bear the loss of her.*

She senses the end is coming and has given up.

There is still hope. If I can convince one of Dahm's children to release me—

Stop, Calan. Our sister is right. There is no hope, not for us or the humans. Dahm has won. The Unseelie Court will rule the human realm exactly as they had vowed to do eons ago. We have only delayed the inevitable. We continue to do so.

No. We wait. Our key has not yet presented itself.

Rhys groaned. *Dahm's half-breed children are of no use to us. His hungry minions pick them off as soon as their darkness flares.*

Calan flexed his right hand. His other remained stretched above his head while his feet were shackled to hooks on the floor. He rested his head against the smooth stone wall at his back.

Not always. A hundred years ago, a young boy had stumbled upon him. Calan had convinced the half-breed to free one of his arms but the child had fled before he finished releasing him. *Perhaps once my prison moves to a new location, I will have better luck finding a half-breed who'll help us.*

His prison moved with each new moon. In some locations, he could connect to Dahm's offspring, the only other fairies remaining in the human realm. In others he found none. The frustration came when he discovered a child who was too young to be reached. By the time he returned, the young half-breed was either already dead or too corrupted to be coaxed into unlocking him.

Silence stretched. Finally, Rhys released a long, weary breath. *No child will free you, Calan. Those unfortunate offspring instinctually fear the ones bred to kill them. We have lost. The sooner you accept that—*

I will never accept it, Rhys. Never. Do you understand me? Harsh pants heaved his chest. The nails of his unshackled hand elongated into sharpened tips. He curled his fingers, piercing his palm with the points. The pain helped chase back the rage and allowed him to think. *I can't abandon the vow I made to protect the mortals. I have to believe we will succeed.*

Then I too will endure. I won't abandon you, my brother.

Rhys broke their connection and left Calan alone with only his regret as company. He should've reached out to his other siblings to ensure they were still coping, but Rhys's words bothered him more than he'd like to admit.

Time was running out.

The Huntsmen couldn't pay the price demanded of them to hold the barrier to Hell closed when their minds shut down. As more of his siblings succumbed to madness, the crack had widened and allowed the chaotic aspects of the Underworld to slip out. Only returning the curse to Dahm would mend the damaged barrier, but Calan couldn't do that while he hung in a prison only a fairy could see or enter.

He had to make another attempt at connecting to one of the half-breeds, but he feared Rhys was right. None of Dahm's unfortunate children would be brave enough to release the very creature who would destroy them.

* * * * *

Harley Callahan peered through the windshield. No lights shone in her house. She scanned the windows for movement. After a week of late night dates, she considered herself an expert at sneaking out. Sloppiness would get her caught, though. No way would she risk that.

The past seven days had been the best of her life. Today, her eighteenth birthday, would be even better. She was moving out. As soon as she worked up the courage to tell her mom, anyway.

She continued her survey. Deep in the Catskill Mountains of New York, her parents' secluded three hundred acre estate offered walking paths, gardens, a lake and a greenhouse. It was beautiful. It had also essentially acted as her prison. She could count on one hand the number of times she'd left it, but that had changed a couple of months ago when she'd taught herself to drive.

The experiences she'd had since had changed her. No longer the obedient daughter, she hungered. For what, she didn't know, but she'd find it. It was out there, waiting for her.

Darkness covered the grounds she knew by heart. Nothing unusual grabbed her attention. She opened the car door and listened. Only the sounds of insects and the hoots of owls carried over the quiet of the night. She scanned the windows once more and breathed a sigh of relief. Her mother still slept.

Harley had evaded the woman's oppressive control again. She grinned at the small victory. Of course, she hadn't made it back to her room yet. She hoped to leave on good terms, not storm out like her brother, Ian, had done three years ago. She loved her mom, even if the feeling wasn't mutual.

She slipped out of her car and took several steps across the lawn before a dull ache spread through her chest. She pressed a balled fist to heart where the hollow feeling she experienced nightly flared, worse than she'd ever endured. She nibbled her lip and considered mentioning it to her mom, but dismissed the idea in the next breath. It'd be pointless. She refused to take her to a doctor.

The familiar anger rose and made the burning sensation worse. Harley breathed through the discomfort and pushed the violent thoughts away. Good girls didn't act like that and she was good, no matter what her mom said. Besides, soon she'd be on her own. She'd get a job and go herself.

She shrugged off the unease and made her way across the lawn. The thin piece of plastic she'd shoved between the sliding glass door and the doorframe still held her escape route open. With her lip caught between her teeth, she pushed the door and squeezed inside.

Heart pounding hard, she waited. Nobody came running or shouted accusations at her.

Thank god.

She tiptoed across the room. The grandfather clock next to her chimed. She jumped, a hand over her mouth to muffle her cry.

"Harley Marie! Where have you been?"

Shit, shit, shit. She turned and came face to face with the woman who ruled the house—supermodel, actress and tyrant. Harley flashed a hopefully innocent smile. "Hey, Mom. What are you doing up?"

"Where were you?"

At the livid glare stamped on her mom's flawless features, Harley groaned. "I went to see Ron."

"In town?"

As if there was anywhere else to go. Harley nodded, no use denying it.

"How did you get there?"

Here it came. The fight she'd hoped to avoid. "I drove."

Her mom's eyes widened. "Drove? You don't have a license."

Because Harley hadn't been allowed to get one.

"No." She sighed. "I don't, but I borrowed one of the cars and taught myself."

Curses fell from her mom's mouth. She threw her arms up in the air. "You disobeyed me, put that boy and yourself in danger. Why, Harley, why?"

She was so damn sick of the crazy rules only she had to follow. "Why not? I'm eighteen!" Her chest heaved. All the pent-up rage and resentment spilled over. "You keep me locked away in this prison, barely talk to me and when you do it's to reiterate your stupid rules! I'm sick of them. I'm moving out!"

Her mom—a taller, thinner version of her—stepped closer. "Those stupid rules are the reason you're still alive! You should thank me, you ungrateful little brat! I could've aborted you or given you away, but I didn't because it wasn't your fault you were created from that monster who raped me!"

Harley stumbled back. "R-raped you?" Here she'd thought she was an oops from one of her mom's numerous affairs.

"Yeah, and it's about time you learned the truth. You're not hu—"

Breaking glass stopped her words. A hulking man stepped over the shards of the sliding door. Harley's gaze locked onto him. He wore a black baseball cap, a t-shirt with a screaming skull on it and motorcycle boots.

The burn in her body faded and heat replaced it, not the same kind she'd experienced in Ron's arms, but it still filled her with the same promise of ecstasy. She stared at the stranger

unable to make sense of her reaction. Something about him struck her as familiar. He intrigued her and repulsed her at the same time. Heart pounding hard, she locked her knees so she wouldn't go to him.

He wasn't...*right*.

The guy faced her. Black pupils swimming in red locked onto hers. He grinned, showing off a mouthful of pointy teeth.

Fear replaced her fascination. She screamed.

Her mom yanked on her hand. "Run, Harley, run!"

She couldn't. Her body wouldn't obey her mind.

The man shifted his gaze to her mom and licked his lips. He leapt at her with outstretched, clawed hands.

"Please, baby, r—" Her mom's words turned into a shriek.

Harley pivoted on her heel and ran. More screams sounded—her little brother's, the butler's, her dad's. She pressed her palms to her ears and kept running. In the front yard, monstrous men prowled—misshapen, hunched and frightening. They all turned at once. Garbled roars added to the pitiful cries spilling out from behind her.

She turned her back on them and fled across the grass toward where she'd left her car parked farther down the driveway. Her lungs squeezed. Muscles burned. Still, she ran. Her mother's last plea to her urged her forward.

A Charlie horse contorted her calf. Her pace faltered. The grunts and groans from behind her grew louder, but a gust of wind swept over her back. The cool breeze calmed the burn tightening her muscles and filled her with strength.

She grabbed hold of the power and ran, faster than she ever had. The trees around her blurred. At the butterfly garden, she turned right, caught her toe on a tree root and fell face first toward the ground. She never hit it. Hands at her waist stopped her. She spun, ready to do battle, and came face-to-face with a pair of pale blue eyes...floating without a body.

She screamed.

* * * * *

Calan couldn't believe his eyes. It was her, the child he'd spied the last time his prison had resided here. Then she'd sat in the middle of a field of white flowers with butterflies perched in her platinum hair and on her arms. More of the small creatures had danced in the air around her.

He'd recognized her for what she was, one of Dahm's bastard children, but the purity emanating from her soul had shocked him. It still did. She'd retained it along with her life. How he didn't know, nor did he care at the moment. Her fear demanded his attention.

She shrieked and scrambled backward, using her hands and feet to put distance between them. He reached out to her mind the same way he did with the other Huntsmen whenever they needed him. He didn't know if it would work, but he had to try something. The female was in danger. He heard the sloughs in the distance.

Unbelievably, her raucous breaths slowed. He drew more of her fear into him. The trembling in her body eased.

"That's it. Be calm. I won't hurt you."

"Wh-who are y-you? What..." She focused on where his chest should be. He glanced down and saw the ground, not his body or even a ghostly apparition. "What are you? A ghost?"

"Not a ghost. I'm alive. I'm just not here."

He stretched an invisible hand out... and touched her cheek. The surprise in connecting with her in a tangible manner nearly pulled him away from her. With mental fingers, he tugged her closer. He wouldn't lose her.

Not now, not ever.

He slid a hand to her bottom and pressed her body flush to his. The cushion of her breasts stirred his lusts. His erection thickened in response to her nearness. Impossible, so he would've thought.

The half-breed fairy in his arms would one day become his enemy. A child of Dahm, she carried the chaotic taint he'd willingly invited into his body. It should've begun to corrupt her, turning her into a monster too. Yet...it hadn't. Why?

Calan tipped her head back. Her dark blue eyes captivated him. He skimmed his fingertips over the contours of her angelic face. Possessiveness rose within him and mixed with an intense need to protect her. She was special. He sensed it, but didn't have time to explore it.

"You need to run. You cannot allow them to steal the goodness you've managed to retain." Because it belonged to him. So too did the female. He would claim both and she would be the one to free him. The rightness of his vow took hold.

A millennium had passed without him finding the one half breed who would have the courage to free a Huntsman. Nine years ago, when he'd spied her in the midst of flowers, he had. Today, he would ensure she did, no matter the cost.

Brows pinched, she mimicked the exploration of his face. He saw the confusion in her eyes at not being able to see him. She didn't voice it. She slid her fingers into his hair and drew him close.

"They want to kill me." She whispered the words against his neck.

The knowledge angered him. Confined to his cell, he could do little to prevent her death. Helplessness settled over him. So too did desperation.

He could think of only one way to prevent it, by sharing a piece of himself with her. Doing so would give her the strength she needed to escape the creatures who wanted to grow powerful on her Seelie blood.

Of course. That was what made her special. She held both sides of the fairies within her body—the chaotic taint of the Unseelie and the pure goodness of the Seelie.

Unfortunately, he couldn't offer his body as her cornerstone or his full protection in the ghostly form he held. He needed to touch her. Love her.

He closed his eyes against the surge of lust and buried his face in her silken curls. "Not intentionally. They want your power, but the taint they hold has corrupted them. They'll feed off you, uncaring that doing so will kill you." He pressed his lips to her ear. "I will save you, my flower, but you must promise me you won't let them get a hold of you until I can. You need to live for me."

She rested her head against his chest. He ran his hands over her back in an effort to remember the details of her body. They didn't have much longer before he had to let her go.

"I promise, but how can you save me? You're not really here."

He grinned against the mound of bouncy blonde curls on her head. The trust in her voice reinforced the rightness of his decision. "Words have power and a vow made cannot be broken. Doing so will damn you. You must remember this."

She turned her head and captured his gaze. "Okay, but how—"

A roar cut through the night. She clutched him tighter. Time was running out. He cupped her face in his hands. "You will take my knowledge and strength." *Along with a piece of my body.* He kept the true gift he offered to himself. He would explain everything to her soon.

He covered her mouth with his and breathed into her, leaving a piece of himself behind and imprinting the information she would need to survive the next few days without him.

She swayed.

He eased back. Unfocused, dilated eyes met him. He ignored his physical demands that wanted to claim her body tonight. Her safety came first.

"You must return to me before the next full moon for me to finish saving you. Do you promise?"

"Yes."

He breathed a sigh of relief and stepped away from her. "Good, but now you must run."

She grabbed his hand. "Don't leave me. I'm scared. I don't want to be alone."

"You'll never be alone again." He closed his eyes. The enormity of what he'd initiated tonight hit him. The tainted half-breed daughter of his enemy would soon be his mate, the keeper of his body.

It's the only way. He would take any risk and offer any sacrifice in order to gain his release from his prison. He needed to capture Dahm and return the curse. But Calan knew there was another reason, one much more personal. He didn't want her to die. She belonged to him.

More roars and grunts rent the air. Their time was up.

He took several steps back. "Now run."

She reached for him. He allowed his ghostly body to fade. Her fingers passed through air. "No! Stay with me."

Can't. Remember your vow. Do not betray my trust, my flower. I need you.

With that he slammed back into his body and prayed his sacrifice would save them all—the humans, his siblings and her. If she didn't return to him, the Wild Hunt would never ride again.

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About the Author:

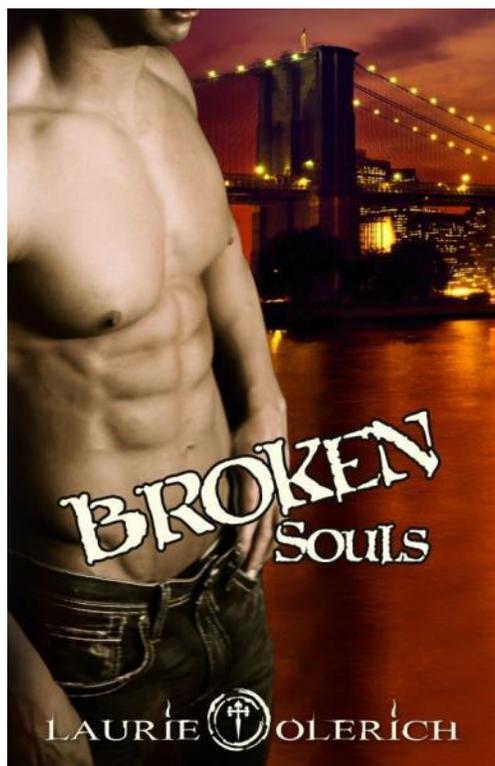
Nancy Corrigan believes in unending love and epic tales with a paranormal flare. She enjoys transcending the boundaries of reality to take her readers on an erotic, emotional and romantic journey.

She resides in Pennsylvania with her husband and three children. When she's not weaving sizzling fantasies, she works as a chemist in a pharmaceutical lab.

Check her out at: <http://www.NancyCorriganAuthor.com>

Broken Souls

Laurie Olerich



Stalked by evil...

Psychic Rori Austin's life is over. She just doesn't know it yet. Plagued by recurring nightmares and terrifying fugues, she's hanging on by a thread. When she blacks out and wakes up in 1969, she knows she's out of control. Broke and alone in the city that never sleeps, she's desperate to find someone who can hold back the darkness in her mind. When gorgeous Declan shows up out of nowhere, she's thrilled until he starts asking questions she has no intention of answering.

Haunted by guilt...

Primani Declan Manning is a ruthless killer and a renowned healer. Demons fear him. Humans love him. Life is good. The last thing he needs is a human woman. After saving Rori's life, he walks away but can't forget the fear in her eyes. It haunts him, dredging up memories better left buried deep. Intrigued by her secrets, he uncovers the horrifying truth. She's been marked for Hell, and her time is up.

Available at:

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Praise:

"This is my first Primani story and I really enjoyed it! ... I loved the interaction between Rori and Declan and I will definitely go back and read the other books in the series." ~ **Five Star rating from Tracey (Amazon)**

"Who knew the Primani series could get any better? I was captivated from the Prologue (Never saw that coming!) to the end of the last chapter ("In the space of a heartbeat, it was done."). All of my favorite characters are back (hot, sensuous, no-nonsense Killian; "my favorite fallen angel Sean O'Cahan" in all his dangerous, sexy glory; and lovable, buff, surfer boy Dec to name a few) along with some new menu offerings that will excite, thrill, intimidate, terrify, and sooth you; all by the end of the first chapter! ...Proceed with caution, a wonderful, exciting thrill ride is waiting for you just inside the pages of "Broken Souls."" ~ **Five Star rating from Athalee (Amazon)**

Chapter One

“SHIT, SHIT, SHIT! I AM SO LATE!” Rori balanced on one foot desperately shoving her toes into the strappy sandal that was about to lose her job for her. Stupid shoes weren’t cooperating this morning, and she was way out of time. After jamming two toes through the side straps, ripping her pinky toenail and falling on her ass, she finally threw it into the wall. “Frickin’ shoe!”

Five minutes, and a lot more cursing later, she slammed the apartment door and flew down the three flights of stairs to the lobby. Damn, damn, damn! She was so late. Again! Her boss would fire her if she was late one more time, and then where would she be? She barely had enough money to pay for the dump she lived in, and forget about eating. There was precious spare change for silly little things like food. These days she was living on noodles and the rare piece of fruit she snagged from the corner store. She was pretty sure Raul knew she was stealing his fruit, but he never said anything. He always turned his back when she came into the store. She was thankful for the small kindness. Those things were rare in her world.

Glancing at her watch, she picked up her pace. She never had enough time. In her universe, it ran in fast-forward. It didn’t matter how much time she gave herself to get ready, she was always late. And of course, she was out of bus money so she was walking - no, make that running - the ten blocks to the flower shop where she worked. The owner, Angela Donatucci, was a total bi-otch about time. She was opening, so technically Angela wouldn’t know if she was on time or not... but she had a pissy habit of showing up out of the blue. “Spot checks”, she called it. She’d been busted three times in the last month. One more time, and she was jobless. And jobless meant *homeless* soooo... Crap! Dodging around a kid on a scooter, she hung a fast right and cut through the alley behind the Downward Dog Chinese slop shop. A couple of delivery trucks were pulled up to the back door. No problem. She’d just squeeze through. With her mind on the time, she didn’t see the backup lights until it was too late.

A starburst exploded and then... nothing but darkness. Excited voices babbled nearby, but they drifted on the wind. Sirens warbled in the distance, the sound fuzzy and faint.

“Hey! Are you all right?” a man’s voice snapped next to her ear.

Yes, yes, I’m fine! She tried to speak, but her mouth wasn’t working. No sounds came out. This was so not good.

“Holy shit, Ramirez, you killed her!”

What? No way! I can't be dead! She struggled to move, to show them she wasn't dead, to sit up, something, anything, but she was frozen inside her uncooperative body. A wave of dizziness rolled in slow motion through her brain, spreading from head to toe. She was too weak to twitch. She strained to lift her hand, but vicious pain stabbed into her belly. Why wasn't anyone doing anything? Didn't she moan? She could've sworn she'd moaned out loud. If ever there was a time to moan, this was definitely it. No one responded, so maybe she hadn't. Darkness pressed in, her inner vision tunneling to a single spear of bright light. Seriously? Damn... I am *dying*. Well, this sucks.

I should've seen this coming.

"Hang in there, darlin'. You're going to be all right." In contrast to the muted sounds around her, the soft words rang clear as a bell inside her head.

Someone loosened the hoodie's zipper before lifting the tiny gold cross she wore around her neck. An amused chuckle floated in her head, and the voice came again. "Nice metal. Okay, hang on to your heartbeat; I'm gonna rock your world."

Dec studied the woman's pale face and prepared to work a little miracle 'cuz that's what he did. Piece of cake. No way was he letting her die. He was in the right place at the right time and he could fix this. Looks like it was her lucky day! He laid his cheek against her breast to listen for the music of her heartbeat. When it faded to quiet, he got to work. Okay, sweetheart, time for a little preventative kissing. This is the fun part... Carefully parting her lips, he gave her mouth-to-mouth while the ambulance screamed from blocks away. A small crowd had formed, chattering loudly, but he didn't care. They had no idea he was using his powers to heal her. In between breaths, he ran his hands over her body, searching for injuries. Poor woman had some internal bleeding. He could hear the blood pooling in her abdomen, sloshing against the side of the visceral peritoneum. Where is it? Ah ha, here we go. Celiac artery. Not good. It was damaged enough that blood was flowing at a good clip. She'd never make it to the hospital without bleeding out. Soooo, time for that miracle. He tucked his hand inside her hoodie. With palm flat overtop of the torn artery, he got to work. After a few seconds, the ragged edges were neatly knit back together. Now back to her lovely mouth... she seemed to be breathing, but it wouldn't hurt to be extra positive.

Rori's back arched off the ground. Her arms opened to welcome what her brain didn't yet understand. Glorious fire warmed her from the inside out. Brilliant light flooded her mind, blocking all memories, all thought, until there was nothing but tranquility. Floating weightlessly, all substance drifting away... she was nothing and everything at last. There was no time, no place; nothing but the light pulling her higher.

Peaceful, so peaceful...

Settling like a feather to the earth once again, she gradually came back to herself. The blinding light dimmed to a soft luminescence behind her eyes. She must be dead after all and this was Heaven. The excruciating pain in her abdomen vanished. Her inner vision was still taking a siesta, but she was acutely aware of the strong fingers that held her jaw, the lips that pressed against her own... slightly rough. Male. The loops and whorls of his fingerprints branded the soft skin of her face. Capable hands... A fresh green scent washed over her, sending her mind to a fantasy of forests and waterfalls. As her heartbeat steadied to normal, she could almost see him in her mind's eye. The images came in fragments, ghostly and unclear. Windblown blond hair... cobalt blue eyes... a lean face was taking shape when the voice came again.

"Gotta bolt, beautiful. Have a nice life."

The half-formed face scattered like dandelion fluff just before she sank into a dream-free sleep.

Available at:

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About the Author:

Laurie Olerich is the author of the urban fantasy romance series Primani. She loves to create guilty pleasures full of exciting locations, rollercoaster action, strong, quirky heroines, and steaming hot heroes who'll raise the temperature in any room you're in!

Paranormal romance? Check!

Urban fantasy? Check!

Romantic suspense? Check!

Her Primani series combines the best of the three. When not plotting, writing, or fantasizing about her next hero, she's planning parties, traveling the world, and spending lazy nights with her son, her Dal pals, and friends. Laurie spent most of her life in the Northeastern United States and in Germany. She now lives in San Antonio, Texas, with her son and Dalmatian duo, Domino and Rambo. Before throwing caution to the wind and diving into a writing career, Laurie dedicated 20 years to a career spent around men with guns and cool toys...this explains her obsession with both! Connect with Laurie online!

Check her out at: <http://www.laurieolerich.com>

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