



August/September 2004

Novel Notes

Just back from Romance Writers of America's (RWA's) national conference in Dallas. I had a wonderful time catching up with old friends, and meeting new people. Now I'm back home, catching up, and getting ready for the September launch of *Kiss Me Forever* and *Love Me Forever* and *Immortal Bad Boys*. I have several book signings planned. If any are nearby, I'd love to see you.

Paradox III, co-authored with J.C. Wilder, will be out the end of September, so I hope to have it at some of the October signings. This volume has the theme "Stone." J.C.'s story features a gargoyle, and mine a broken stone seal that carries a secret.

I'm busy working on book four of the *Forever* vampire series. This book is set back in Bringham, about a year or so after Dixie's sojourn there. Some things have changed. Some haven't. This will be Antonia's story, and finding a male partner strong enough to partner a 1,500 year-old vampire took some doing, but I found him: Michael Longhurst, the shapeshifting Surrey Puma. There really is a Surrey Puma. He's been sighted in the woods and

heaths all over Surrey since I was a girl. Used to be he was believed to have escaped from Chessington Zoo; but, to my mind, the only thing that could explain a Puma living that long in the wild is that he's a shapeshifter.

Also included in this newsletter is a copy of 'The Green Man,' a short story that was published last May in the U.K. in *Chat: It's Fate*. Several of you on my Yahoo list asked about getting copies. Here it is.

Also, don't forget to visit www.forevervampires.com. New contests, giveaways, and content are being added every week.

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Book signings

September 7, 5 to 7 p.m.

Barnes & Noble, Upper Arlington
3280 Tremont Road
Columbus, OH 43221
Phone: (614) 459-0921

September 11, 4 to 6 p.m.

Barnes & Noble, Streets of West
Chester
9455 Civic Centre Blvd.
West Chester, OH 45069
Phone: (513) 755-2258

September 19, 3 to 6 p.m.

Waldenbooks #1802
2727 N. Fairfield Road
Beavercreek, OH 45431
Phone: (937) 427-9092

September 22

Bent Pages
1422 Barrow St.
Houma, LA 70360
Phone: (985) 876-7626

September 23, 7 p.m.

Borders Books & Music
3131 Veterans Memorial Blvd.
Metairie, LA 70002
Phone: (504) 835-1363

September 25, 1 to 3 p.m.

Munchkin Book Store
10435 Airport Highway
Swanton, OH 43558
Phone: (419) 865-1091

September 25, 5 to 7 p.m.

Books A Million
1500 N Clinton St., Suite 168
Defiance, OH 43512
Phone: (419) 782-8293

October 2

COFW Readers & Writers Holiday
Radisson Hotel Columbus
Worthington, OH 43085

October 3

Barnes & Noble, Upper Arlington
3280 Tremont Road
Columbus, OH 43221
Phone: (614) 459-0921

October 9

Book Exchange of Summerville
405 N. Magnolia
Summerville, SC 29834
Phone: (843) 875-2562

October 23, 2 to 5 p.m.

Around About Books
8 W. Main St.
Troy, OH 45373.
Phone: (937) 339-1707

October 28, 6:30 p.m.

Brentano's #5005
Valley Fair Plaza
2855 Stevens Creek Blvd., Suite 1327
Santa Clara, CA 95050
Phone: (408) 249-1728

October 29, 6 p.m.

The Book Ladies
2776 Hammer Ave.
Norco, CA 92860
Phone: (909) 808-4587

November 3, 3 to 5 p.m.

Thurston Book Exchange
5505 W. Main St.
Springfield, OR 97478
Phone: (541) 726-7126

November 13

Annie's Book Stop
362 S. Main St.
Sharon, MA 02067
Phone: (781) 784-4306

November 14, 1 p.m.

Side Street Books
76 N. Ocean Ave.
Patchogue, NY 11772
Phone: (631) 475-2617

The Green Man

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"Josie, Michael arrived early."

Josie's knuckles whitened on the steering wheel, at hearing her sister-in-law's voice. "What happened, Sally?" Her hand shook holding her mobile.

"He upset Dad by bitching about the funeral arrangements, and nagged about us ordering sherry that was too cheap - but never offered to go out and buy better. He's now drinking coffee in the dining room, and griping because I made instant." Sally paused. "So far, no one's told him you're coming."

"Perhaps I'd better not."

"Yes, you will! Dad's counting on it, and you promised Mum before she died!" That was the main reason Josie agreed to go in the first place. "You'll arrive tomorrow morning. That way Dad will see you, and even Michael won't make a scene in front of all the friends and relations."

True enough. Josie's ex-husband charmed everyone except his ex-wife and close family. Just hearing his name gave her goosebumps. Her ribs had mended and bruises had faded - at least on the outside. She was truly dreading seeing him again, but she'd promised her dying mother-in-law to look him in the eye and then get on with her life.

Josie wished she possessed Margaret Malone's courage. She'd been

an inspiration and support to Josie when she needed it.

"Stay at the Green Man," Sally said. "I called them. They're expecting you."

Sally's directions, to a village pub a few miles from the Malone's house, were easy to follow. She was expected, welcomed, and shown into a large high-ceiling room with two small windows looking down on the painted Green Man pub sign, and the car park opposite. At the



other end of the room, a wide balcony covered with climbing roses in bloom, opened to the gardens and a view of the Downs. With beamed ceiling, carved four poster, and luxurious bathroom, it seemed more like a honeymoon suite than the spare room of a country pub.

"We don't often rent it out," the landlord's wife said as she showed Josie the room. "Just once in a while when a friend of a friend needs it. We call it the Green Man room." She walked over to the window. "On account of being so close to The Man himself."

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GREEN MAN

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The man himself hung from a wrought iron bracket, and as Josie looked down, had an arrogant, almost lascivious, look about him, and a glint in his eyes that was downright sexy.

And she had been alone too long if she was having wild thoughts about a pub sign! She needed a good night's sleep to face the morning - and Michael.

Not feeling quite up to a bar of jovial strangers, Josie took a ham ploughman's and a Guinness to her room, flicked on the TV and tried to settle for the evening.

It wasn't easy. Despite all her ex-father-in-law's insistence, and Sally's urgings, Josie dreaded going to the funeral - or rather she dreaded facing Michael there. But Margaret Malone had welcomed Josie into her family as a daughter, apologised through her tears when she learned the details of Michael's abuse, even lent Josie money after the divorce. She owed Margaret and would go to her funeral, even if it meant facing Michael.

She just hoped she was strong enough to look him in the eye and wish him in to perdition. Trouble was she was scared she'd start shaking and throwing up when she set eyes on him.

When Sally said Michael wasn't arriving until the morning of the funeral, Josie agreed to come the night before to spend time with Sally and her father. Trust Michael to wreck her plans.

Irritated at the mindless cheerful-

ness of the TV, Josie flicked it off, showered and decided to turn in early. A good night's rest might help her face her ex. She knew in her heart that if she could only, just once, look him in the eye, without fear, she'd be free of him. Unfortunately, she suspected she needed some sort of divine assistance to get that much courage and confidence.

She showered, using the expensive lavender shower gel - impressive country pub this was turning out to be - slathered herself with the matching body lotion, and eased herself between crisp, linen sheets that smelled of sunshine and clean air. The pillows and duvet were real down, sheer luxury, and just what she needed for a good night's rest.

Except it never came. Between the talk from the bar below, engine noise, and headlights from departing cars, Josie tossed and turned. Finally she got up, and made herself a cup of herbal tea, from the supply provided with the coffee and tea bags.

She went back to bed, and sipped the aromatic, and vaguely sweet brew. Eventually the noises below eased and the last car revved out of the car park. Lulled by the scent of roses, Josie dozed... The last sound she heard was the old inn sign outside her window, swinging on its rusty hinges.

Her dreams came wild and jumbled: dark images from her marriage, mixed with the kindness for her friends. The Old Green Man creaked, and a dark shadow drifted into the room.

Josie murmured in her sleep, but now the images of hurt and loss

faded into a welcoming tunnel redolent of lavender, moonlight, and rose petals falling in the wind. She dreamt of loving, of gentle touches and sweet caresses. As she turned in her sleep, a whisper of a breeze caressed her back. She threw off the duvet to feel the touch of summer on her skin, and to soak the life around her into her wounded spirit.

She dreamt of warmth and contentment, and the healing that comes from abundant life. The summer air felt like soothing hands on her shoulders, and fingers of life feeding her needy soul, as unseen shadows lingered over the carved bed.

Towards dawn, and long after her sighs faded in the dim room, a breeze ruffled the discarded sheets, bringing night scents into the room, and brushing her skin with the coming morning. As the first streaks of light washed across the sky, the dark shadows over the bed, drifted out the window and the old painted inn sign creaked again.

Josie sank into a deep sleep, missed the rooster crowing in a nearby garden, and the rattle of a milk crate landing on the stone steps. It was the bright light of morning that finally woke her. As she sat up, refreshed and renewed, and ready to face the day, she realised just how weary she'd been the night before.


Later, that morning, Josie parked on the drive that led up to the crematorium, and walked to the chapel, her feet crunching on the gravel.

John Malone nodded at Josie as he passed her on his way to the family pew, Sally smiled, and

Michael glowered. With a courage she never imagined she possessed, Josie returned his glare with a formal nod. Later, in the crush of friends and relatives at her in-laws' house, he cornered her. "What the hell are you doing here?"

His hands gripped her arms, she twisted her shoulders and moved sideways, breaking his grip. "Your mother invited me!"

"She couldn't..." he began.

"She did, and I promised her I'd be here! Now if you will excuse me." Josie pushed past him, and crossed the room. She never looked back at him, and knew she never would. 

Paradox III

Paradox III is due late September. The theme is stone.



The Shattered Stone

Exiled on her parents' death from the only home she's ever known, Alys sets off to find her mother's kin in the far Western Lands. On the way, she meets the Monarch's envoy, Ranald ven Strad. The chance meeting leads to an astounding discovery. 