# Women Making Love to Monsters

*by* Emily Schultz

I started dating the Minotaur because of Colleen; at the time she was going with a friend of his. The whole thing was a surprise to me because I'd never been attracted to Greek men.

This is how it happened. Colleen's new guy, Ian, was known by many names, most commonly The Dullahan. But when I met him, Colleen said, “Please, *just Ian*. You wouldn't believe some of the things people call him!” I was stunned she would talk that way in front of him, but then again, he didn't have any ears. He was a headless man on a headless horse, and carried a whip made of human spine everywhere he went. He was a real hit at dance bars on Goth nights, a local legend, but otherwise his life was fairly lonely, Colleen confided. Ian worked from home, driving up traffic numbers for various websites by clicking on certain ones all day long. That was how he and Colleen met — through an online dating site. She said he gave good email. She'd always had a penchant for the dark and the bizarre. They'd had a few drinks, hit a club, and gone home together that first night. Colleen told me that Ian was insane in bed. He really knew how to take control, not like these metrosexual types the city was so full of who she usually wound up getting fixed with. The fact that Ian couldn't talk really did it for her; she'd always liked the silent type and here, he had no head at all. An Irishman without an accent — what was the point? I wondered.

They'd had four dates and she felt it was time for him to meet her friends. I was the only one to agree. We went to see a movie. Dark places seemed to be the one spot she could take Ian; people got scared if they saw them out together. The three of us quickly crossed

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the lobby, making for the cover of darkness when the Minotaur recognized Ian and came over.

The Minotaur was the buffest guy I'd ever seen. Maybe it's a tired old cliché, but my knees got weak, that's just what happened. He kind of scared me with his horns, but were they any worse than the stupid hats worn by college boys or the stylized helmets of avid cyclists? I'd dated a few of those. The Minotaur's name was Ambrose, and he seemed like a really sweet guy. I mean, you'd expect him to be an egomaniac with that bod, but he wasn't. He just caught Ian up on what he'd been doing — it sounded like he was into a totally different scene than Ian — then said he'd catch us in the show, that his girlfriend was getting popcorn and he should get back to her.

“But we've barely gotten to know you,” Colleen put in expertly. “I'm Colleen and this is Carrie.”

Colleen must have seen me sneaking glances at the leather skirt Ambrose wore which barely covered his you-know-what (and let me tell you, *like an ox*). A true friend, she was quick to invite them out with us for drinks afterwards.

We all sat together in the darkened theatre. Somehow I wound up elbow-to-triceps with Ambrose. His date was a real harpy. She was the ugliest thing I ever saw. Her skin was positively gray, and where it turned into feathers, yuck. She had giant black wings and she wouldn't just lean over Ambrose for the popcorn, she would practically swoop down with a hiss and steal it before Ambrose could get any. I couldn't help but notice. One time it happened, he and I exchanged glances, actually. I gave him a sympathetic look and wondered how long he'd been with her.

At the bar afterward, I made the mistake of asking Ambrose where he came from. I meant, like, had he been in the city long? It was supposed to be polite conversation — especially since Ian didn't talk at all, and the harpy just went around stealing drinks and things from nearby tables. But Ambrose thought I was asking about his ancestry. Suddenly we were having an intimate conversation about some relative of his, Pasiphae, and how she hired a famous architect

to build her a wooden cow. She wanted to be able to climb inside it so she could trick her husband's best bull into copulating with her. And she did too. It was really disgusting but kind of hot at the same time — the way Ambrose told it, leaning in, shaking the ice in his scotch, glancing up at all the right moments. To have a history like that, he was so interesting.

The harpy, whose name was Niko, was suddenly back at our table and shooting me death looks with her lidless eagle eyes. I could see her talons clamping around the table's edge, like she wanted to lunge at my throat.

Ambrose kept talking — he told me his name meant *immortal.* When I laughed and asked him if he was, he shook his horns sadly. He said it was no different than naming your kid something that meant *joy* or *beloved* — a kind of wishful thinking. Too bad, I told him, a guy might be more faithful if he knew he'd have eternity to sow his oats.

That was when the harpy hooted, and said fidelity wasn't a problem for Ambrose, but “As for oats, that's all Ambrose eats!”

The two began having an intense quarrel then — about his vegetarianism. I'd never gone in for earnest political debates, but Ambrose was descended from cattle. The fact that Niko endorsed not only eating them, but stalking them at night and ripping their throats out — well, I can understand how the whole thing escalated. Ian and Colleen seized the moment to excuse themselves; they headed onto the dance floor where Nine Inch Nails had the crowd thrashing about. I should have done the same. Instead, I wound up in the ladies room, reapplying my lipstick four times to avoid going back out there. That was when Ambrose charged down the little hall where the bathrooms were and straight out the back door. I could hear him in the parking lot behind the bar, breathing hard, his hooves scraping the gravel. I stuck my head out the door, and watched as he ran full-speed into a dumpster, butting his horns against it with a terrible din, the muscles in his man-chest shivering. He did it two or three times, then he saw me in the doorway and stopped.

Snorting, he said, “That was kind of stupid, I guess.”

“Did it hurt?” I went out into the parking lot and stood with him.

He shrugged. “I've chipped them tons of times.”

I asked if I could touch them.

He leaned down, still snorting and breathing hard. We were so close that I could watch his nostrils flare. Even in the dark, his nostrils were big, and flat, and slightly hairy. I raised my fingers and ran them over the crown of his head, tracing the ridge of horn, stroking the sharp tips, before I wrapped my hands around them like bicycle handlebars and pulled him to me. The harpy was history.

I never thought I'd date a monster. But monsters aren't bad like everyone makes them out to be. They're more beasts, really. There are a lot of myths. Ambrose had a bad temper, yeah, but he never took it out on me. And he worked really hard as a personal trainer, urging people to reach their full potential. He couldn't work for a gym because sometimes people were wary of him, so he was an independent. He did all his own marketing and found his own clients. I went vegetarian, started working out, and started delving into meditation and stuff too. I was getting all self-actualized. I mean Ambrose was a monster in bed, but he was a regular guy too, and I really grew as a person. I liked all our times together, from sitting in the sun chewing the cud, to lying in bed curling my toes around his knotted, furry shins. I didn't even get that angry the time his hooves tore holes in the sheets or when he tracked mud through my apartment. I bought extra flypaper and strung it up through the place so Ambrose would feel comfortable. Sure, some women do it just for the thrill — but I wasn't one of them. I was committed.

Colleen, however, was a monster hunter. She jumped from the Dullahan to the gargoyle; to a satyr who was really charming and jolly if a little lecherous; to an enormous Cyclops who mostly acted like somebody's drunk uncle at a wedding, lurching, spluttering, and grunting. Next came the incubus. He was the scariest. A slithery demon with a ponytail named Geoff, he would only come by late at

night, for a booty call, she told me, and she had to be asleep, or at least pretend to be, or he'd bolt. He had the coldest penis she'd ever felt. He would lie on top of her, very still, and slip it in. She wound up having two abortions before she dumped him for a werewolf. I was so grateful when that happened. I'd been really worried about her! It wasn't like a gang where you got “jumped in” and suddenly were in the thick of it — but naturally once you'd dated a monster, you met more and more of them. At least the werewolf was human half the time, and, unlike the incubus, a pretty responsible guy. His name was Lucas, and he was great at sports and karaoke. I mean, I couldn't express any opposition because I was dating a monster too — she'd pretty much set me and Ambrose up — but Colleen had become so promiscuous….

Besides, Ian the Dullahan wasn't really over her, and he was a friend of Ambrose's. Ian would come over and sit in the corner, not saying anything, cracking his whip half-heartedly, without a lot of wrist action. It made a pathetic *zutt-zutt*. He'd just sit there for hours, letting the whip slip to the floor, hands on his knees. He didn't even exercise his horse anymore. It languished in his barn. He'd given me the creeps when he was dating Colleen. But now I felt sorry for the guy. It had been almost a year, and he was still moping.

That was when I got the brilliant plan to fix him up with Ambrose's ex—Niko, the harpy. We'd have a party, I told Ambrose. It would be perfect.

I spent a long time putting together the guest list. I invited my girls who'd hit off best with Ambrose from the beginning and never said a word against him: Jessie and Anna. We invited Maddy the Medusa because she was a good friend of Niko's and we definitely wanted Niko to show up. We invited Ben the Behemoth because he was a good friend of Ian's and we wanted to make sure Ian showed too. I tagged on Colleen's *canis lupus* Lucas, and a human guy I'd known since high school named Steve, because otherwise we would have had an odd number of girls versus guys. Everyone confirmed.

I did all that I could to make for an awesome evening. I made an immense spread, everything from wild grasses and clover for Ambrose and the Behemoth, to worm salad for Niko the harpy, to a crate of live mice for the Medusa's snakes, to chicken for the werewolf, to hummus and guacamole for everyone else. Monsters can really put it back so four cases of beer were chilling in the fridge. The apartment looked amazing too: party lighting to encourage one thing. We'd talked about having our soiree at Ambrose's place. It was a big warehouse space but sometimes it smelled a tad like dung, and we wanted a cozy feel to push Ian and Niko together. So even though my place was a second-floor walk-up, we both admitted it was the better meeting grounds. I had a wee deck in the back, and I put plastic chairs and citronella candles all around.

Things got off to a bad start.

Steve the Human was the first to show up. I was fussing here and there, and we were old friends.

“Go ahead and help yourself to a beer,” I told him, pointing.

He'd just closed the fridge door, when Niko the Harpy and Maddy the Medusa arrived. Ambrose let them in. Maddy walked into the kitchen and Steve looked up from closing the fridge. All of the color drained from his face. His features froze. His fingers hardened around the beer he was holding. He slowly just went ash and when I put my hand on his sleeve it was no longer fabric but rock-hard with deep-etched wrinkles. Basically, *boom*, he'd turned to stone. Okay, so that's a problem.

“Sorry,” Maddy said. “Happens sometimes.”

We decided to uncork some wine and make the best of it.

The girls came next, Jessie and Anna. Even though they're my best friends (besides Colleen) they were being kind of cagey. They just kept talking to each other—no one else. They were acting like banshees, pardon the expression. Anna said something nasty about

Maddy's hair, thinking the Medusa wouldn't hear her, except Anna was high as a kite and screeching like a raccoon.

In response, Maddy knocked back the wine and blurted, “What else have ya got?”

Meanwhile, Niko the Harpy had already picked half the food plates clean. She was like a seagull, that girl. I had forgotten.

There *were* two bottles of wine, but one had already disappeared. I'm not saying the harpy took it, but she was the most likely suspect. Due to my careful preparations, *all* the beer was trapped in the fridge with Steve the Statue now blocking it in. We couldn't open the door without risk of crumbling him. Ian the Dullahan, Lucas the Werewolf, and Ben the Behemoth arrived.

“I'm sorry,” I told them, “But the beer is trapped in there behind Steve.”

“Carrie, can someone take that one?” Lucas asked, nodding at the beer in Steve's frozen hand.

“I dunno. I guess…” I was feeling like a pretty bad host by then.

Ben went to pry it from Steve's fingers, but Ben's not the most delicate creature. He's like a rhinoceros, an elephant, and a hippopotamus all rolled up in one. I mean, his limbs are as strong as copper, his bones a load of iron. His hand can't really be called a hand; it's more an elephant foot. So he just kind of swiped at the beer with his huge scaly toenails. The beer fell.

Being in peak condition Ambrose has good reaction times. He lunged and grabbed it before it could hit the kitchen tiles. Everyone laughed, and Ambrose thumped his pectoral muscles and raised the beer above his head, triumphant. That was when I spotted something near his hooves. Two gray stone chunks. Ben had gone and knocked off two of Steve's fingers.

“Oh damn,” Ben said, like it was nothing. Well, I guess he'd never met the guy, right?

I felt just horrible that this could have happened. Steve had always played the guitar. He'd never been a professional musician or anything, but still. What really topped it off was when Ambrose handed the beer to Ian—like, here you go, buddy. Ian didn't even

drink; the guy was skeletal and had no mouth. I ran to my bedroom in tears.

Ambrose charged down the hall, knocking over a decorative table to get to me. In the end he calmed me down with that sweet musky breath and his solid embrace. Steve was already gone from us, he told me, and “There's nothing we can do for him now.” We returned to the kitchen. Jessie and Anna had disappeared. So had Ben and Lucas. We found Ian, Niko, and Maddy out on the deck. This was a good sign. Our plan was working in this regard at least: Niko and Ian were spending time together.

“Can you snuff these things?” Maddy asked. One of her snakes was waving at the citronella, dodging its green head, tongue extended.

“What's the problem?”

“My snakes are starving, they'd really like some insects.”

I told her there were a dozen mice inside.

“Not anymore. Sorry about that.”

“What do you mean?” Ambrose asked. He was always quick on the defensive.

Maddy blew out a couple candles, and then lit up a cigarette right away, which I thought was a real contradiction. She waved the cigarette around. “You know Ben. He knocked them over. They ran everywhere. They're in your walls now, honey.”

“Only nine.” Niko grinned like she'd done me a big favor. “I managed to prey on three while they fled.”

The two monsters exchanged glances and I realized for the first time that maybe Maddy and Niko were not just friends, but together. It had been a long time since Ambrose had seen her, but that would ruin our plans for Ian—and the whole purpose of the party. I wondered how they worked that out, with Maddy's head swarming with snakes, and Niko being a worm-eater. Then I thought maybe that was part the appeal. I noticed a few of Maddy's green locks hanging decapitated.

It was at that moment the missing foursome burst out of the bathroom. Jessie and Anna had brought the coke, which I should have realized before since they weren't ordinarily so catty.

I opposed Ambrose doing it because it went against his clean living thing, and he said glumly, “There's no beer. This isn't a party.”

They all went back in. When they emerged from the bathroom again, it was clear they'd done a whole lot of blow to make up for the lack of swill. Jessie and Anna started checking out the monsters.

“Look,” Jessie said, gesturing to Ben, “His tail hardens like a cedar.”

“That's not his tail,” Anna said.

“I like your hair,” Lucas growled, skulking up to Jessie, playing with her teased-out retro do. “There's so much of it.”

The foursome started canoodling, Anna and Ben against the kitchen sink, and Jessie and Lucas out on the deck under the full moon. Lucas was making a real racket, while Ambrose, jacked up, sprinted up and down my hall, charged through the bedroom overturning a mattress, and into the living area where he knocked a couple pictures off the wall. I'd never seen him this way, but then, he'd never been high around me before —unless too much Red Bull counted.

“Stop it! You're going to knock into Steve!”

“I always feel like a bull in a china shop in this apartment,” Ambrose snorted and put one of his horns through the drywall. At least that stopped him. “Look, look how he stares at you,” Ambrose commented as he wiggled himself loose. “Uncanny. He's a statue but no matter where you are he's staring at you, Carrie. He's in love with you. Look at his beady little human eyes, his beady little human genitals, and his beady little human heart. It's so sweet.”

I couldn't speak. The way Ambrose said it, it wasn't sweet at all. He grunted and panted with anger. And he was sweaty from the coke. It streamed from his hairline, dripping down his curved black horns.

Suddenly, he did the unspeakable. His two back hooves shot out, kicking, and Steve the Statue tipped over. I watched Steve break

into two halves. Ben and Anna just kept kissing on the kitchen counter.

Gasping for breath, I walked out — downstairs and out the front door.

That was when Colleen arrived.

We hadn't invited her because of Ian. How could he get over her if she was right there?

I saw her coming down the street with not one but two beasts in tow — a kurupi, and an enormous serpent. I'd heard a lot of harmless rumors about the kurupi. Ambling behind Colleen, I saw it was true that this short goblin man had a penis wrapped several times around his waist like a belt, exposed, curving over his torn woodsman's clothing. I couldn't believe how enormous it was: the head of it looped and tied through its own length. As the gossip went, he was a mischievous creature who snuck into girls' rooms throughout South America, causing hundreds of mysterious pregnancies. His face was creased and hideous.

But I barely had a moment to sneak a glance as the other beast took down a streetlight with its tail: red light smashed to the ground.

The serpent, I realized, was Leviathan. Out of the dark, a dull light shone, her crocodile folds and eyes, like the eyelids of the morning. On dinosaur legs she slithered, tail extending half the block. She twisted her armored head and spouted fire, burning up the neighbor's forsythia. In a tiny fenced garden overlooking the street, yellow blossoms bled blue smoke.

“You can't come here!” I shouted down the street.

In spite of her high heels, Colleen started sprinting toward me. “Why didn't you invite me? What the hell, Carrie!”

Somewhere in one of Ambrose's magazines, I had read that the Leviathan and the Behemoth would fight at end of the world.

“Get out of here, now!” I shouted, but Colleen was already on the porch. “Now!” I tried forcibly to keep her out.

She grabbed my arm and yanked me around, saying she thought I was her friend.

“It's not that!” I yelled. “Listen to me…”

The kurupi became excited when he saw us tussling. I watched in horror as he unfastened his member and tried to slip it under Colleen's skirt.

“Not now…” She swatted it away. The thing seemed to hover almost like the serpent.

Ambrose's hooves clattered on the stairs inside as he was drawn toward the racket. His eyes flared when he spotted the Leviathan, which he knew would eat us all after finishing off Ben the Behemoth. Ambrose galloped back up and through the apartment. I heard a resounding crash and a shuddering. I was sure the refrigerator had fallen on Steve, turning him permanently to dust, but it could have been my kitchen cabinet collapsing from the force of Ben and Anna's shagging against it.

My knees buckled and Colleen caught me.

Then came the snorting and stamping Ambrose only made when he was desperate to communicate something. In contrast, from the back of the apartment Lucas began to howl, a hollow throaty climax.

“I know that howl! Who else is in there?” Colleen demanded.

“No one. You've got to leave. Please, trust me. Everything will be wrecked if—”

But she pushed me out of the way and stormed upstairs. Through his wrinkles and warts, the kurupi bared his yellow teeth at me, then nodded and followed, his phallus now hooked around his neck like a towel. He held onto it, his hands on either side like a pro athlete. Halfway up the stairs he started chanting, “Par-ty! Par-ty!”

The Leviathan was last, so gargantuan I thought she would tear my staircase asunder. I watched her tail thrash at the moldings. I sank to my knees on the cold concrete of the porch.

The shopkeeper at the end of the street stood peering at the downed traffic light. He raised his fist to me, made an obscene gesture.

My downstairs neighbor ducked outside and said, “Sure, it's Saturday night, but what's going on up there?”

“Don't worry,” I assured him, “It will all be over soon….”

Just then a swift snap swallowed the other sounds: something splitting the air. It came again, then again, zinging, hissing, and whispering through the spring night. It was the Dullahan, I realized. The Leviathan must have made an immediate impact on him — her breath of cinders and the sea, her serpentine movement, the scale of her destruction. It was a Goth boy's dream. Ian had sprung to his feet, whipping for all he was worth. The crisp *whisk* of bones sliced the silence.

Leviathan roared in response, and the whole house shuddered.

Above the house, the sky lit up with a cataract of blood mixed with fire. As long as the Behemoth and the Leviathan didn't battle, it sounded like we had made a perfect match after all.