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Cravings

New York Times Bestselling Author

Lauren
Hawkeye



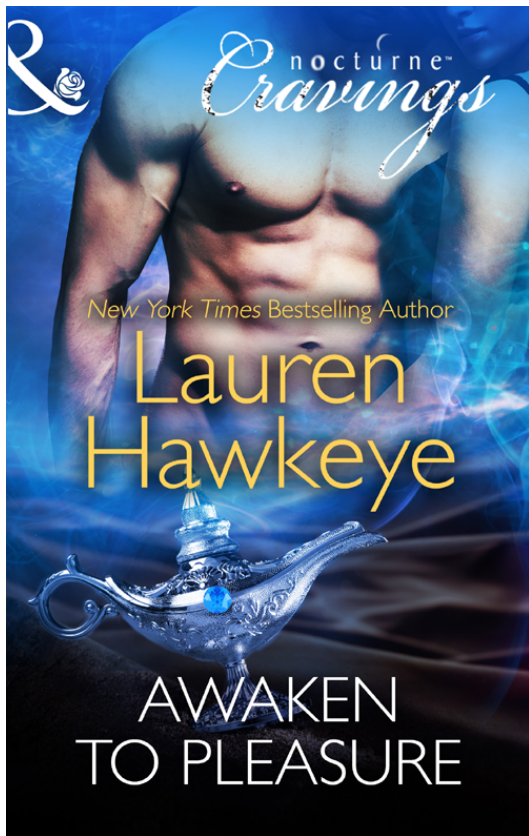
AWAKEN
TO PLEASURE

Lauren Hawkeye

Awaken to Pleasure

Аннотация

He'll grant her one wish.... What if she wishes for him?When Moira Connor stumbles across a jewel-encrusted silver trinket in the desert, she plans to trade it for food. Then the brush of her fingers unleashes a surprise....Freed from the lamp, Boone is bound to the woman who called him with her touch. She has one day to make a wish before he disappears forever. But Moira lives in the ruins of a world destroyed by witches. She hates magic—even when it comes in the shape of a dazzlingly gorgeous djinn. Will the exquisite pleasure of Boone's caresses be enough to earn Moira's trust? And will Moira be able to save Boone from the malevolent creature who would possess him?



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LAUREN HAWKEYE is a writer, yoga newbie, knitting aficionado and animal lover who lives in the shadows of the great Rocky Mountains of Alberta, Canada. She’s older than she looks—really—and younger than she feels—most of the time—and she loves to explore the journeys that take women through life in her stories. Hawkeye’s stories include erotic historical, steamy paranormal, and hot contemporary.

Awaken to Pleasure

Lauren Hawkeye



MILLS
BOON www.millsandboon.co.uk

For Suzanne Rock, without whom I could not write.

Dear Reader,

Thank you for picking up *Awaken to Pleasure*! This story is a bit of a departure from the books that I normally write, in which the creatures that go bump in the night are a secret from all of humanity. For this story, I tried to create a world in which the

existence of supernaturals isn't hidden. The result was a place where humans were no longer the dominant species—and where even in a world where witches are commonplace, there can still be surprises for the heroine.

I hope you will enjoy Boone and Moira's story! I love to hear from my readers, and can be contacted through my website, www.laurenhawkeye.com

Best,

Lauren

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Fifteen Years Ago

Moira Connor remembered the fire.

The dark sky, the ash that rained down, soft and hot, choking her with every breath until she wanted to rip open her own throat,

just to get some blessed relief.

The fire had been all consuming—the unnatural emerald and amethyst flames devouring everything in its path. Its light had all but blinded her as she cowered in the corner of what had once been an alley between buildings.

The entire city of Jackson was being annihilated by the fire.

But she hadn't been blind enough to miss seeing what had been done to her parents. The witches had burned them alive, right before her eyes, and Moira hadn't been able to save them. Hadn't even tried, because she been so paralyzed by fear that she'd run.

Not that she could have done anything. She knew that now, and yet it haunted her every waking moment—and sometimes the sleeping ones as well.

It was guilt of the survivor. But she should have died with them. And the only reason she hadn't was because of a man—a man with a pair of bright blue eyes.

If she ever found that man, she would kill him. Moira would rather be dead, after all.

Instead, she was still alive when, numb with grief, she and the other survivors of what the world had come to call the Great Witch War struggled to pick up the pieces of their existence, to save the last of their race. She scavenged on the streets, seeking out bits of treasure to barter for food while those who were able tried to protect their kind from the witches who would leach the energy from every last one of them.

And now she was a prisoner in one of these shelters. Those

who lived in the enclosed villages called them havens, but she knew better.

They were prisons. Incarceration for those who had done nothing more than act on the basic human instinct to survive.

And so Moira existed, helping those who couldn't help themselves as a way of making amends to the parents she hadn't helped. And all the time, she dreamed of the man who had saved her life. Over the years, her hatred for the witches slowly bled over until it focused entirely on him. Why had he let her live but not saved her parents?

It was because of him that she was still here, trapped in the numbness of her grief.

Because of him she could commit the most cardinal sin of the survivors—she could kill. Kill him.

The kicker of it all?

She wouldn't even know him if she saw him. For all she remembered was the color of his eyes.

Chapter One

Present Day

The late-afternoon sun glinted off the sand surrounding the haven village of Mavi, causing temporary blindness even as it mercilessly made sweat flow. Moira squinted against the glare, wishing that she had brought her goggles, but months of living in the cool comfort of Mavi had softened her once keen instincts for survival. While she had remembered to wear a hood to protect her tender scalp, her goggles had remained, likely buried at the

bottom of the box that held all reminders of her former career as a treasure hunter.

Well, it was her own damn fault. Her destination wasn't far, after all, and if she hurt herself on the way, she had no pressing matters to attend to that would intrude upon her healing. Not anymore, not since she and all other humans had been forced to close themselves in the dome-covered villages that were their only protection against the dark magic that had taken over the world.

Plus, that was just what she did. She took care of the humans who couldn't do so for themselves. And she knew why she did it, but didn't care to think on the matter overmuch.

It seemed silly, really, to go to so much trouble for a sack of rice, but the tiny store located within the dome of Mavi's haven had been running low, and there were others who needed it, others who couldn't venture out onto the now barren plains of Mississippi to get it. And it was no skin off of her back, after all...not unless she ran into a witch. But those with magic ventured onto the plains even more rarely than humans did now...they had little need to, after all.

Almost there. Just a few more steps and she could step into the relative cool of Gale's Groceries, the only building for miles in No Man's Land. It was run by a man who was neither human nor witch, but something else entirely—she'd never asked what.

“Ouch!” Stepping on something that protruded out of the sand, Moira went down on all fours, hard. Cursing loudly, she

rubbed her right ankle, which had taken the brunt of the fall, before turning to glare at the item that had made her trip. It was a tarnished silver bottle of some sort, or a lamp, and it looked old. Set deeply on one side, surrounded by delicate engravings, was a deep blue sapphire gem that glinted brighter than all of the tiny grains of sand put together. Moira's annoyance quickly turned to curiosity. Even though it was pretty, she suspected the trinket had no real value, but it might pay for her sack of rice. If she could trade this shiny little bottle for food instead of spending some of her hard-earned and well-hoarded coin, then she would. So she tucked the object into the long folds of her cloak and staggered the remaining few feet to the store, stumbling a bit on her now slightly twisted ankle.

“Hiya, Moira.” Gale Grocer, the owner of the store, greeted Moira as she entered the tiny shack. Though Gale was always friendly enough to her, there was something about the reedy little man, with his oiled black hair and his nervous twitch, that didn't sit quite right in her gut...something beyond the lizard-like tail that slithered on the floor behind him.

But she had braved the plains to buy goods, not to make friends, so she figured the man selling them was of no concern to her.

“What can I do ya for?”

She ignored the deliberate *entendre* in the man's greeting, though she inwardly shuddered.

Moira liked sex. She liked it a lot. But she'd stick to humans.

“A drink of water would be great, for starters,” she told him tartly, shifting her weight to relieve the pressure on her ankle. “And a sack of rice. That’s it.”

Gale’s face fell a bit beneath the pencil-thin mustache that Moira imagined he shaped painstakingly in front of a mirror every morning. “Rice? That’s it?” He filled a clay cup with grayish water from a bucket and passed it over the counter. “What you coming all the way out here to get rice for? Don’t they got any in that fancy store over in that haven village of yours?” He leered a bit and Moira knew that he was flattering himself, thinking that she’d come all this way to get a look at him. She struggled to keep from wrinkling her nose in distaste and instead gulped at the slightly stale-tasting water.

“I have my reasons,” she informed him flatly, with no intention of revealing what those reasons were. “Just give me the rice, Gale.”

The man pressed his lips together sourly and hauled the woven sack onto the counter with a grunt. It bore an upside-down pentagram, a mark that made Moira shudder—this rice had been supplied by the witches rather than grown under a dome. That fact alone almost made her refuse it.

They all hated the witches for stealing what had once been their world, but not all of them had seen firsthand what horrors they were capable of.

The younger ones, the children...they had no idea. And Moira would do everything in her power to make sure that it stayed that

way.

Her fingers curled over the coarsely woven bag, a shudder passing through her as she imagined tendrils of dark power woven right into the bag, grown right into the food.

She wanted to refuse the rice provided by those who had murdered her family.

But those same innocent children had mouths to feed. Bellies that could be filled with this rice.

“That’ll be five coppers for the rice, and a tin for the water.” Gale’s expression dared her to challenge his charge on the water, which any decent soul would have provided as a courtesy, but Moira said nothing. She had no wish to prolong the encounter. Where she once would have yanked him over the counter and squeezed his throat tight, just to prove a point, the relatively newfound peace in her life helped to calm her instant rage.

It was now enough just to know that she could.

So she reached into her cloak, intending to pull out the bottle that she had found only minutes before. Gale wouldn’t know that it was worthless, and was dumb enough, even, to think that he’d be getting the better end of the deal. But for reasons that she couldn’t explain, she found herself hesitating as her fingers brushed over the smooth metal, the surprisingly cool bump of the sapphire. If she’d believed in such things, she’d have sworn that she felt an odd surge of energy tingle through her fingers as they rubbed over the stone.

That was nonsense, of course, and so she dismissed the notion.

But still, against her better judgment, she reached for her coin sack and withdrew the money.

She could always trade the sapphire-studded bottle later, someplace else.

“So long, Gale.” Moira hoisted the sack onto her back. She thought if she went slowly, she could make it back home without causing any further damage to her ankle.

“That’s it? You ain’t gonna stick around and give me some company?” The leer returned on Gale’s overemphasis of the word *company*, and Moira gagged inwardly. It seemed that her gut feeling toward the slimy little lizard man had been dead-on, for now it seemed that he intended to drop all pretense and become completely creepy.

“Give company to a man who charged me five coppers for a two-copper bag of rice? And a tin for a damned drink of dirty, warm water? Forgive me for not jumping at the offer, sexy though that tail of yours is.” Fixing a ferocious sneer onto her face, she swept out of the ramshackle hut with as much dignity as her wounded ankle would allow her.

And, for the second time that day, fell down onto the sand.

“Oh, for heaven’s sake!” she exclaimed, shoving at the hard body of the man she’d run straight into, the man whose body had become tangled with hers during the short tumble to the ground.

“Get off of me!”

Instead the stranger raised himself up onto his elbows and looked down at her, even as he disentangled his fingers from

her long locks. Her first thought was to search frantically for the bright red pentacle under his ear that would have marked him as a witch. Her second—as she squirmed beneath the surprisingly unyielding male flesh—was that here was man she wouldn't mind keeping company with. His hair was bright as the sun, and his eyes were as blue as the sapphire on the bottle in her cloak.

The eyes. The color made her uneasy. She'd given up ever again laying eyes on the man who deserved the blade of her knife, but still she found herself searching for him in the face of every blue-eyed man she knew.

This stranger was no different. And yet instead of the usual disappointment, or the mild repulsion that that color blue brought, Moira felt...

Stirred.

The body. The *body*. The lean angles that pressed along the entire length of her softer curves had heat humming through her veins. It wasn't often that she was physically helpless with a man, any man, and the fact that she was now excited her a bit, even as it roused her anger.

"Who are you?" she demanded, for the attractive face wasn't one that she recognized.

"I am Boone," she was told, and the husky velvet of the deep voice sent a delicious shiver skating down her spine. "You called me." And before she could argue, she was pressed flat into the ground again while her lips were attacked with a skill she'd never before experienced.

It was a full minute before she could think. Her body responded instantly to the taste of wine and of man on the stranger's tongue, and the burning heat of the sand at her back and of the aroused male body shifting on top of hers had every nerve in her body on fire. A moan slipped unwittingly from her throat as the man's sapphire-blue eyes burned into her softer gray ones; when his tongue slipped between her lips to sample the wet inner cavern of her mouth, she felt an unbearable excitement begin to ball in the pit of her belly.

Boone's booted foot nudged Moira's ankle. The resulting knife of pain brought her back to her senses. She shoved at his chest, hard, until he eventually rolled off her and they both lay on the ground, panting, shielding their eyes from the late-afternoon sun.

"What the hell, buddy?" Moira knew that, after the apocalypse, most people had begun to indulge in the physical comfort of sex whenever, and wherever, they could. Hell, she'd been one of them, for the rioting sense of a blistering orgasm made her forget, for a moment, the horror of losing all that she had loved in the brilliant, horrifying fires of magic. But she had moved past that need now, or so she thought, and she was damned if she'd fuck some strange man in the sand right outside of Gale's little store. The perverted little man would watch the whole thing through his window, no doubt. Yuck.

She pulled herself to a sitting position and dusted sand from her cloak before turning accusing eyes to the slightly hurt face of

the man who called himself Boone.

“Is that not what you wished for?” he asked, scratching his head. “You rubbed the lamp and called me. You came through the door and pushed me to the ground; I thought that that was your wish.” He seemed to think that this was a genuinely sufficient explanation and blinked, startled, at Moira’s reaction.

“You’re crazy,” she informed him briskly as she pulled herself to a standing position. “Absolutely certifiable. What lamp? I don’t have a lamp. And what’s all this wish nonsense?” She shook her head, disgruntled, as she heaved her rice sack back over her shoulder.

“But you touched me. That communicates your wish to fornicate.” Boone seemed genuinely puzzled, and Moira wasn’t sure whether to laugh or to scream.

“Look, buddy, I touched you because I was leaving, and you were in my way. I am not going to fornicate with you, as you so quaintly phrased it, because you stopped in for a sack of rice and thought that you might get a bit of a bonus from the female. So good riddance.” Muttering under her breath about idiotic, good-looking men, she stalked off.

* * *

Boone pressed his lips together as he watched her walk away. He hadn’t understood half of the words she’d hurled at him, but he knew from her tone that none of them had been complimentary.

And he’d felt...strange...pressing up against her that way.

He'd watched her since she was little, after all, and that was something to think on.

But there were stirrings in the wind. When he'd heard them, he'd known that it was time for him to come to her again. He had seduced his last mistress into wishing him where Moira would find him.

And to keep the girl safe, she had to think of him as nothing more than what he was—a genie who granted wishes.

Not the banished witch destined to keep humanity's only hope safe.

Since most of the women who rubbed the sapphire on the lamp took one look at him and decided that their wish would be that he bring them physical pleasure, the safest disguise was for him to act as he had with the others.

But damn it...despite his best intentions, she had grown into a damn fine woman. He had enjoyed himself as best he could in the arms of those with whom he had no choice but to obey, but here...

Here was a woman he actually wanted. A woman he knew was strong and true, as well as fair of face.

Shading his eyes, he watched her appealing figure grow smaller and smaller as she stalked off into the distance. She had a lovely figure—curvy hips, ample breasts. He sighed, then started after her. Since she hadn't rubbed the lamp again, he was stuck outside of its cool interior—damn curse—out in the blistering heat, following around a woman whose touch would be tainted

with the lie between them.

“Some things are more important than your cock,” he muttered to himself as he stalked his way across the sand. This woman was the one who was prophesized to kill the queen of the witches...and like a multiheaded serpent, once that head was gone, the rest would slowly wither away.

He didn't know where, or how. But since he was the one who had had the vision, he had known that he was the one destined to keep her safe. Knowing he had only enough power to save one on the night that the witch fires raged, he had chosen to save her.

And for it he had been cursed. Was condemned to live in a bottle, doing as his master or mistress demanded. And some of the things they'd demanded sickened him to the core.

But none had hurt so much as the disgust he had seen on young Moira Connor's face the night he'd saved her and let her parents die.

As he followed behind Moira, he tried not to torture himself with the sway of her hips.

The best way to keep her safe was to keep their relationship light and sexual, just as he always did. It was his skill—a woman once seduced into his bed would do anything to keep him.

So Moira wouldn't make a fuss when he stayed close. Close enough to make sure that Shiloh would never find out about her.

And yet, as the winds that blew across the plains carried the whispers of magic to his ears, he sensed he was already too late.

[Chapter Two](#)

Moira's skin was flushed from the top of her head to the tips of her toes. Try as she might, she knew that she couldn't blame the now-setting sun, at least not entirely. No, she'd be lying to herself if she refused to admit that it was the memory of the stranger's avid mouth on hers, of his hard body pressing her against the ground.

She couldn't get it out of her head. And, she admitted as she pushed through the force field that kept the witches out of the gilded cage that was Mavi, it was driving her crazy.

She shook her head impatiently as she strode over the muted cobblestones, past the clear pool with its trickling falls. Still, the deep blue of Boone's eyes haunted her, as if it had been burned into her brain, and the memory spread the burn down, down between her thighs.

It made her uncomfortable, because those eyes reminded her so very much of that horrific night in her past.

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