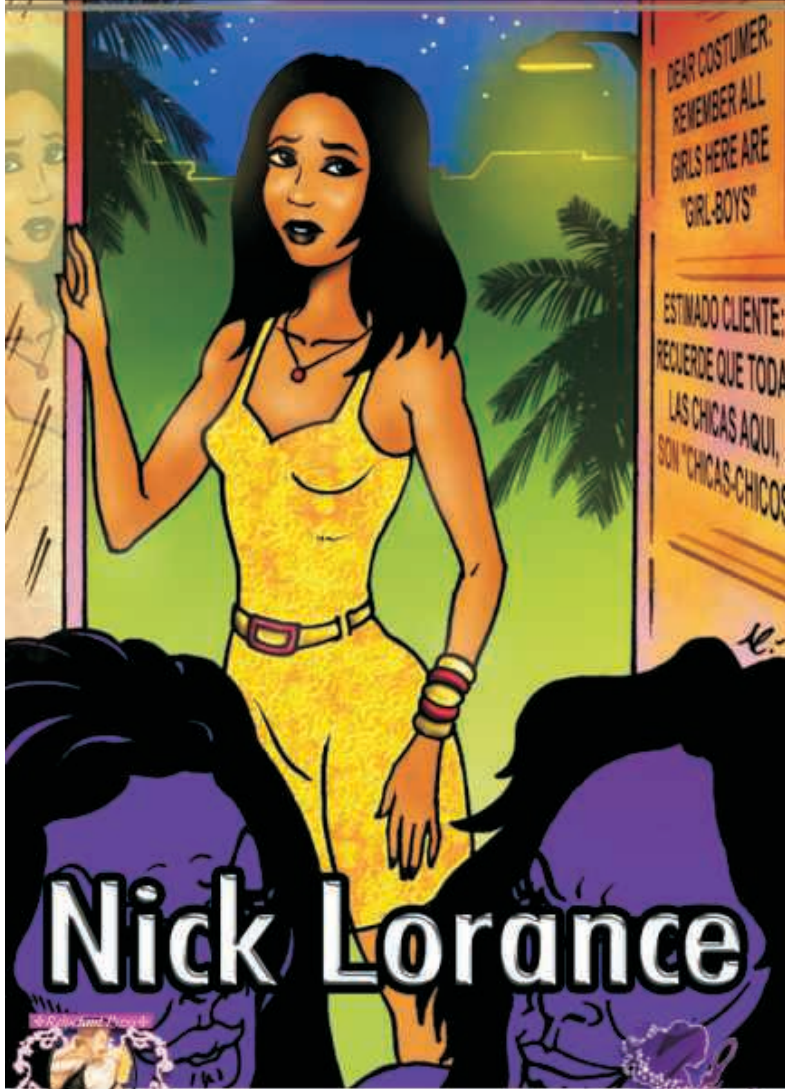


# A Self-Made Woman



# Nick Lorance



A "New Woman" Novel



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# **A Self-made Woman**

**By Nick Lorance**

She was hungry.

Humans did not understand the term; even a famine victim was more easily fed than she was. She needed a very special diet, especially at this time of her cycle.

The bar was packed and the name, the Meet Market, was only vaguely amusing. She had come here for the same reason as the humans had, sort of. They had an appetite just as she did, and they came to feed it.

Her diet was just more... comprehensive.

She had considered different looks. The business woman ready to spread her legs long enough to take care of a craving she refused to admit to. The soccer mom not getting her needs met. The nymphomaniac who would take anyone with a penis and a pulse.

She had gone mildly goth; her hair was now mid-length unrelieved black, her makeup pale and her lips almost the color of blood. She sipped her overly sweet drink and licked them, wishing the lipstick was real blood, rich and warm, satisfying in so many ways.

A man jostled her and she reached out mentally, judging his thoughts. There were few, mainly inchoate. Too much to drink already. Taking him would be like kissing an ashtray.

There. She sensed a man farther down the bar. He was nondescript. He could come here every night and no one who would recognize that he was here unless he sat in the same waitress' section. But no. He had so little of life, it would be a shame to take it; and she needed so much.

There, just past the one she had just looked at. One of those men who thought he was God's gift to the females of the species. She could sense how the women were reacting; obviously this was his favorite hang out. It would also be his last hangout.

She stood, stalking down the bar. To a viewer from behind, there was a feline grace to her stride. Her hips rolled seductively, and she knew there were those behind her who wished she had gone their way instead.

The man she had discarded stood, bumping into her, throwing her pace off slightly. He caught her,

instinctively, looking into her eyes, then away, nodding his head. "Sorry."

"No harm done, she husked. "Perhaps one night you and I..." The phrase ended on a questioning note, and he smiled sadly.

"No, you'd be wasting your time with me."

Maybe not, she considered. She reached into the cup of her bra and handed him a card. "Perhaps you just need to find the right woman. Call me." She pushed gently past him, headed for her quarry.

Behind her she could feel a small wave of regret. She smiled, though it was for the man she had spoken to, not for the one before her.

Jeremy MacDonald watched the woman walk away and he wished he were different. He'd always been shy, and there is nothing more debilitating for a sexual relationship than that. He watched the woman walk over to her target like a cat stalking a terrified mouse. The man just sat there as she wove one long leg around his hip, pulling him from the bar stool. She kissed him, mouth open, tongue forcing itself down his throat for a moment. Then she ran a hand gently down his face, nails grazing his flesh. She stood, tugging him toward the rear parking lot door. Jeremy tipped his glass toward the pair, then turned back to the bar.

She was out of that stifling place, looking for the perfect place to feed. Since humanity had begun overpopulating the planet, places like this were more common. Fewer places to dine quietly. She finally looked into his mind. His car was over there, not the fine vehicle he intended to boast about; rather an older car. At least it had a large enough back seat for what she needed to do. She took his

arm as if they were lovers, pushing him toward the car. He fumbled with the keys, his mind running through taking her to his place, a dingy little apartment across town. She didn't want to wait. She was hungry now.

He opened the door, motioning, and she reached inside, unlocking the back door. Then she opened it. She pulled him to her, then turned, shoving him ahead. She leopard-crawled in after him, pulling the door closed. Then her hands fell to his belt, ripping his pants open.

"Hey, there's no rush!" He whined. She caught him in her hand, looking up.

"I am hungry now. And I *will* feed." His retort died in his throat as she sucked him deep into her mouth. She could feel her teeth sharpening and angrily controlled herself. She was hungry, she spent too much of her time hungry these days. These modern men were a pallid meal compared to latter days.

She could not feed as she once had to repletion over days or even weeks. People moved too quickly and there were enough of them that noticed when a long-term victim would get ill. Worse yet, medical science had grown wise enough to be confused by a healthy body that just wasn't alive any more.

So she was reduced to the equivalent of bolting down junk food. Even there she could not merely gorge in one location. These days, two or three bodies in a single night would draw too much attention, especially when she had to do in minutes what should be savored over a much longer period. He was firm in her mouth, and she rose, pushing him

back until he sat on the back seat, and she straddled him.

“Oh, that is great.” He gasped as she plunged down, taking his length into her. She wriggled her hips, making sure he was fully seated. There was little finesse involved in what she was about to do, but she had always been fastidious in her dining. She rose from his lap until he was almost out of her body, then came back down, drawing a moan from him. Then she began moving, faster and faster. He tried to get her blouse open, but she merely kept moving, forcing him to hold on for dear life.

“Yes, it is great,” she whispered in his ear. She could feel his climax approaching, and her teeth elongated. “But it gets better...for me.”

Jeremy walked out of the bar, sighing into the late evening sky. He only went to the blasted bar because it was the closest to his home. It had started as just a local place, like Cheers from the TV show, and had gone through many incarnations since. A country-western hangout, a sports bar, a yuppie bar, then an Irish pub, (his personal favorite iteration), and now a pick-up joint. Stolidly, he had kept coming, even though only one of those incarnations had been something he liked.

He started walking, heading across the parking lot. He lived a block away but never drank enough to make such a short walk dangerous. He walked toward the street, then heard something odd, a moaning gasp as if someone were slowly bleeding to death. His feet moved him further toward one of the cars in the lot. He leaned forward, a hand blocking outside light.

Not five feet away a man was dying. He had reached his peak a few seconds ago, but as his body tensed to deliver its load into the waiting vagina, everything had gone very, very wrong. Suddenly, the woman had locked her lips with his and started sucking in a way that no mortal woman could. He would have screamed but his very breath, along with his mind and essence, was inexorably pulled into the maw of the creature. A weak flail of his arms as ribbons of incalculable cold void penetrated his body was his final act as he died.

It was several long seconds before Jeremy's eyes shifted to accommodate the low light. Looking into the car he saw something out of a vampire movie. A form, which for an instant more was recognizable as a man, was locked in a death kiss with something that might have been mistaken for a mere woman. A final pulse of soft energy passed from the man and played on the ruby lips of the woman-thing. Then the empty husk of the man collapsed on his side. Jeremy's mind rebelled, refused to accept what he was seeing, and like a deer in headlights, for a crucial second he froze. His pause signed his doom.

The Succubus looked over to the newcomer and recognized the man who had witnessed the result of its feeding and smiled as if his discomfiture was a fine after-dinner chocolate mint. Jer's mind finally sent the command to get the hell out to his limbs, but he barely had time to even think about turning before he was compelled to freeze as the woman-thing looked on, its eyes burning an unholy crimson.

He watched, unable to flee, as her hand pushed the door open. The Succubus wasn't really hungry anymore as she watched the mentally dominated



man, licking her lips. She could have eaten again but another urge filled her with this one.

“Get in!” she ordered, and his mind screamed as he slid into the car. He could see razor teeth in her smile, and she seemed to enjoy the fear he was radiating. Jeremy could only watch helpless as this inhuman predator approached him with malicious intent. The creature leaned over him, her breasts rubbing his lips. “Suck them. I’ll help you find the right kind of woman.”

He bent forward, and her nipple slid between his lips. He sucked and his eyes widened as milk, rich and sweet, filled his mouth. She purred as he sucked deeper, swallowing the nectar.

“Yes my pet, drink deep, feel it in your mind. Feel it in your soul. You are mine, body and soul. And soon you will find a worthy feast.” He gasped as her hand closed on his member and he felt it like a cattle prod rammed into him.

“No, that you will not have. But you will know this feeling again. You will drink, you will grow strong, and only then will you feed.” She gasped as the milk ran out and pushed his face to the other breast. He took it, unthinking, and she felt the milk vanish into him, becoming him, making him what she wanted.

Her breasts drained, she leaned back, still cupping him in her hand. “This I will take. After all, you have taken my fluids, and I must replenish.” She lowered her mouth, sucking him into her mouth. He gasped, then came, and she drank it down with satisfaction. She lifted, up, lips brushing his. “You will call, I swear it. Now do up your pants and go before someone else comes.”

She stepped from the car, waiting until he staggered to his feet. She grasped the dead man, his body nothing more than bones bound together with desiccated flesh, tossing the refuse in the dumpster. “Go.” She closed the door as he staggered toward the street. Soon.

## II

Jeremy went through the next day in a blur. He had gotten home, falling on his face on his bed. He remembered... No, he didn't remember. He thought it had been a dream, a woman sucking a man's essence from him like a vacuum cleaner even as she took his last burst of sperm.

And the milk. He had never tasted such a sweet drink in his life, and he wanted more of it. Too bad it was a dream.

He worked, but he didn't remember much of what he did. His cubicle looked barren and part of him wanted to spruce it up somehow. But he couldn't think of what to do with it. His hand brushed the pocket where the card he had been given rested. It was for a dairy, of all things.

But the last line caught in his mind. “Truly unique milk, available for home delivery. Samples upon request.”

He reached his last break before his resistance crumpled. He picked up the outside line and dialed.

“Leeanan Milk, home delivery,” a bright chirpy voice picked up the phone.

“Yes, I was given a card last night. It says you give samples upon request?”

“Of course. I have your file in front of me. Will a quart do?”

“Wait, how do you have a file on me?”

“Our sales people are wizards.” She replied. “Will a quart do? Or perhaps a half-gallon?”

“I don’t know. How much is the home delivery service?”

She quoted a price that was ridiculous, not because it was so high, but because it was so cheap. Milk at a store was about three bucks a gallon, but she was quoting 75 cents for the same amount.

“I don’t know.”

“How about our free welcome assortment?” she pressed. “A quart of milk, four yogurts in flavors you choose, and a one-pound pot of Sakura soft cheese?”

“All right.” He considered. He chose four flavors of yogurt that were usually not too bland. She hung up before getting his address, and he looked at the phone, confused.

The last hours dragged past, and he walked out of the office to catch the bus. It was the usual drag that settled his life down. He jumped out at his stop, walking the two blocks to his apartment. He walked up the steps, pausing at the small refrigerated crate that sat before his door. The milk that had been promised was already delivered. He knelt, lifting the old-fashioned glass milk bottle. There was a POG that looked like a Celtic demon sitting on a man’s lap while sipping a glass of milk. Under the figure was the slogan, ‘Demoniacally Delicious’. The yogurts were in small glass containers, and the cheese in a small ceramic pot. He picked up the crate, mov-

ing it into his apartment. There was a small folding card, and he opened it idly.

‘Our milk is unique in the world, coming from a perfect source. Our yogurt is flavored with all natural ingredients, and our cheese selection is from around the world. By selecting by name, you can have one or simply check “Variety” and a different cheese can be delivered by the day or week. All are excellent with crackers, and a packet of them have been included.’ The card went on to list the different yogurts, and cheeses, with a little teaser of which were best with what foods.

Shrugging, he took out a glass, pouring a tumbler of the milk. He took half a dozen crackers, spread the soft white cheese, and moved to the couch. He bit into the cheese, tasting a rush of cherry flavor. Sakura was named after that fruit. The milk cut the taste, and was exactly like the milk he’d had the night before.

He found the quart empty, and had already opened a blueberry yogurt as he finished the last cracker. He had already pulled a loaf of bread out, spreading the cheese thick on it. He alternated with bite of the cheese sandwich, then yogurt. He found himself sitting there with four empty yogurt cups, an empty quart bottle, and only crumbs of the cheese. He dug the last out, sucking it from the knife as he finished it.

Wonderful! He picked up the card, filling it out. A quart had not been enough; he needed at least half a gallon! Yogurts, four was not enough; he needed at least eight. Cheese; he looked them over, selecting an Egyptian Sordo to try.

He felt tired. High lactic acid from all of the dairy he had just stuffed down his throat in the last hour. He yawned, stretching. He left the crate on the table and found himself in bed. He usually slept in the nude, but something swaddled him softly. He faded out.

He found himself walking down a street he didn't recognize. A sign ahead was written in, his forehead wrinkled. Cyrillic? He shouldn't have been able to read the language, but it had the same tired old name; The Meet Market. Honestly, were people that limited in their language? It was almost as bad as the Dew Drop Inn.

The place was rocking, though hearing someone belting out the Beatles' Shake It Up Baby in Russian was amusing. He found himself wandering through it, looking for something. There was a man against the bar, and Jer's mind seemed to reach out. He could feel so much vitality and a thrumming sense of sexual energy. He found himself walking toward the man.

The man looked up and smiled. Jeremy thought that was odd, he knew the man wasn't gay. He'd heard him boasting about his prowess often enough. Wait; he mentally paused. He had never been in this bar, never even been to Belarus, so how did he know anything about this man? For that matter, how did he know he was in Belarus?

A hand, soft, feminine, reached out, and the man took it. But the point of view was that it was Jeremy's hand. The man drew them closer, his mouth locking on Jeremy's lips hungrily. They kissed. The kiss had everything but sex in it. But there was a darkness in his soul. If a woman refused, him he would brutalize her, and since he was

a member of the Mafiya, Russian organized crime, he was untouchable. Jeremy pulled himself back and caught a look in the mirror behind the bar. An oriental woman looked back. Her eyes met his, her lips grinning as she winked. Then she drew the man back into the embrace.

Jer found himself walking, an arm around his waist. A sense of urgency made him push, shoving the man toward the concrete block enclosure that held the dumpsters. The man complained until a hand drew down a zipper, clutching his member. Then Jeremy found himself on his knees, his mouth suckling desperately. His eyes went up, seeing the man leaning back, hands clutching Jeremy's head. He felt his teeth elongate. Then, in the dream, he bit down.

The man spasmed in agony and Jeremy felt the part in his mouth come free, a rich red torrent of blood spurting out. It was sweeter than the milk, and he sucked greedily. The flow slowed and he found himself rising, spitting out the part he had sliced free, hands catching the man's terrified face as Jeremy kissed him. He sucked; this made both the milk and the blood he had drunk taste bland. It was not a liquid, it was an essence, and he sucked greedily. He felt the man's face spasm beneath his hands and the tide of sweet liquor vanished. He pulled back, watching the husk of a man collapse at his feet.

"So sweet," a voice whispered, and he spun around. The woman from his dream stood there. She smiled, hands upon his shoulders. "You will grow to be one of the greats." She motioned toward the body on the ground. "But remember to clean up after yourself." She knelt and a blade flashed. Then

she picked up the part Jeremy had excised, sliding it between the man's slack lips. Then she stripped off his watch, rings, and necklaces.

"In the old Soviet Union, go for the gold." She dumped the jewelry into Jeremy's hands. "The currency is almost worthless."

"Why take this?" he asked plaintively.

"Living expenses, eventually. Until tomorrow-"

He snapped awake, turning to stare blearily at the clock. It was an hour before he usually awoke. There was an odd taste in his mouth and he wanted to spit. His bladder clamored; he went to the bathroom. He sat, feeling his urine run free. Then, as it stopped, he found himself holding some toilet paper. Why was he holding that? He stood, confused by the mirror over the sink. He looked like he was wearing a wig. He reached behind him, and the overhead light flicked on.

A woman that looked like his dream woman's Japanese sister, with wide doe-like eyes, and long auburn hair, looked back. He shook his head, part of his mind finding a blue spaghetti strap running up to his shoulder. His eyes wandered down, widening as he saw the cerulean baby doll he was wearing. He looked up, meeting the now terrified woman's eyes.

"It's all a dream," she told him. "Go to bed. It will be better tomorrow. You'll feel more comfortable with who you are becoming then."

He staggered out of bed an hour later. It was as if he had not slept all night. His ankles hurt as if he'd been standing on tiptoe all night.

### III

The crate was outside the door again. He looked at the kitchen table but the card he had filled out and the crate that had been on the table was gone. What did they do? Break in and check his list? Shrugging, he brought it in, setting the yogurts in the refrigerator as he sipped a glass of the milk. He started to dip into the cheese, but held himself back. Something told him he should wait on it until tonight. He popped a blueberry yogurt instead. But he brightened. If they delivered more than once a day, he could try something different tonight along with the Sordo and two other different selections tomorrow on his day off. He looked at the card that had come with this assortment.

‘With the weekend coming on, why not be more adventurous? Try cheeses from different countries or continents, even mix and match them. Try a South Korean Imsil mixed with a Brie de Meaux or, for a unique twist, Dutch Maasdam cheese with Philippine Kesong Puti.’

He’d never heard of these cheeses but the taste of last night’s Sakura had sold him on experimenting. He marked the French cheese, then after some thought, the Philippine one. He showered, getting dressed for work. He caught the bus, his ankles finally feeling more normal as he made the long ride to the office. He went in, sat at his desk, and began to work.

The day seemed to drag. All he could think about was the rich milk he had drunk last night, the smooth yogurts, the sweet yet tart cheese. He’d never been much on drinking milk, but just one day of this had sold him on it as a steady diet.



Sandy the officer supervisor stood behind Jeremy for a long moment. "Jeremy, your hair is a bit long."

"Sorry, Ma'am, I'll get a haircut over the weekend."

"No, I was just wondering." He flinched as she took a handful of the flowing hair, looking at it. "When did you get it dyed?"

"Dyed?" He was puzzled. "I have never dyed my hair."

She chuckled. "Then you must have gotten blind drunk with some hairdresser last night." She patted him on the shoulder and laughed at his confused look. "The makeup is just right for it."

He watched her walk away, confused. He knew he needed a haircut, but that was a couple of weeks off. and dying his hair? Makeup? He logged out of his computer, walking across the room to the bathrooms. He turned the corner, looked in the mirror, and froze.

It was still his face, but the eyes looked vaguely oriental, though he couldn't see any trace of makeup. His hair was long enough to brush his collar and was a deep rich auburn that had never come from a bottle.

He started to brush the hair back and stared at his hand. He had always had blunt hands, almost like spades, but his fingers were longer and delicate-looking. Now he noticed the polo shirt and slacks he wore felt... baggy, as if he had lost a lot of weight.

He went back to work, wondering what was happening.

He had never realized how much his life had become going to and coming from work, and working. He'd expected more from life. His ass was dragging when he reached his room. There was another crate outside the door and the one he had emptied inside, was gone along with his card.

He opened the refrigerator and the cheese beckoned. He opened the pot, hands already cupping the cracker as he spread the heavy cheese. It was sweet and salty, and he moaned in satisfaction, chewing as his hands spread more. The milk drained into him, and he hadn't even realized it was all gone, both bottles, until he found himself licking the open end of the bottle like a kitten trying for that last drop. He had to go for a gallon next time. The yogurt containers were scattered all around him like dead soldiers, empty. Only some of the other cheese, Brie de Meaux, remained, enough for maybe one taste. He spread what remained on a slice of bread, folded it, and stuffed it in his mouth.

He stood, taking all of the glassware to the sink, and rinsed them out. The cheese pots he scrubbed clean. Again he felt the lassitude he had before, as if he'd run a marathon. He collapsed onto his bed, flicking on the TV. His weekends always started with a movie marathon of some kind, and he chose an anime series named Maburaho from his collection.

As the story began, he felt his eyes sag closed, and then...

He bit into the piece of Pita bread, the distinct taste of Kitfo lacing his tongue. He had never had the Ethiopian dish; raw ground beef marinated in a very spicy chili powder but somehow his palate recognized it.

He was alone at a table in a restaurant he had never been in. Above the door was a flowing script. Even as he recognized Arabic, he found himself reading it. The Spirit of the Nile.

He went on eating. The arms of his suit didn't feel right. He had a suit, a simple deep blue gabardine one which, like the ubiquitous little black dress of a woman, was usable for all occasions from parties to weddings, even funerals. But now he was wearing a tight female-cut satin vermilion suit with buttoned sleeves and a poof of lace at his hands and throat.

Again he had little control of what was happening, but he could look down to see a creamy expanse of white silk and lace toward his lap, where it looked like he was wearing a flowing satin skirt rather than slacks. His legs felt smooth and there was the slight catch of silk stockings, and on his thighs, the draw of garters flowed with his every movement. The food was excellent, and the coffee that followed bitter and strong as it should be.

There was a movement, and the woman from his dream sat across from him. "Oh, you are turning out so well," she husked. A predatory grin played on her lips. "Are you ready for the next step?"

"The next step in what?" Jeremy asked. He gasped because it wasn't a man's voice that emanated from his throat, it was a soft mezzo-soprano.

"In your becoming," she replied. "Come with me." He found himself standing, following the woman. His feet felt strange, and he looked down at four-inch stiletto heels and a tiny foot lifting forward, pushing the skirt ahead. They went into the

ladies room, and the woman stood, pointing. “See only one of those you will be.”

