

Night Secrets

A woman's face is the central focus, her eyes looking directly at the viewer. Her face is partially obscured by dark, gnarled branches adorned with vibrant red flowers. The background is a dark, textured red, creating a moody and mysterious atmosphere.

*Falling in love with a Werewolf is easy...
It's what else the night holds that might just kill you.*

B.K. Walker

BK WALKER SPINS A FAST PACED STORY THAT YOU JUST CAN'T STOP READING! ~ LINDA BASS

NIGHT SECRETS

BY

B.K. WALKER

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First Edition

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Dedicated To:

My children who always keep my path straight.

Brandon McCloskey for inspiring my musical side always reminding me what an inspiration it is, and being the best drummer in the world! Thanks Buddha!

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Shot In The Dark 357

www.reverbnation.com/shotinthedark357

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You guys ROCK!

Prologue

Mayday! Mayday!

“Mayday! Mayday! Tower this is Flight 697. Can you hear me? Mayday! Mayday! This is Flight 697! Tower can you hear me?” Sweat trickled down Captain Jeffries face as he spoke into the CB. “Mayday! Mayday! We’re going down!”

Looking over at his Co-Pilot, his heart sank as he whispered a prayer, “Please let us get out of this alive. Let the boy enjoy being a father.”

The plane started losing altitude in a spiral motion as engine two died with a loud bang. Donald Crosby grabbed his wife’s hand, interlocking their fingers. Together they spoke in Gaelic to say a prayer, a language they haven’t used in many years.

The plane crashed into the water nose first, the windows to the cockpit shattering instantly with a loud explosion like a bomb had ignited and the water flooded through.

Chapter 1:

“Life Changing News”

My life was about to change...forever! I got up just like any other day and after hitting the snooze button several times, I forced myself out of bed and slowly walked to the bathroom, my eyes still half closed. I hated getting up for school and couldn’t wait until it was over.

I was graduating this year. I never thought senior year

would come, but it finally did. Now that it arrived, it seemed to be dragging on and on. I turned the water on hot, so it would get nice and steamy to help awaken my senses. Taking my pajamas off, I pulled the shower curtain closed around me. Ahhhhhh. Now this is just what the day was asking for.

Pondering in the shower until the water ran cold, I definitely felt awake now. I wrapped my hair in a towel and went to my room to find something to wear. Rummaging through my jeans, it hit me that today was the day. "Mom and Dad are coming home today!" I practically jumped with enthusiasm.

My parents had been gone for a month on a business trip. I was left home to prepare for graduation and study for exams. They would often go on business trips and leave me with Jamison. He was our butler and also my favorite out of everyone that worked for us, he's been with us for a long time.

You kind of get used to it after years of being left, but it was always nice to have my parents home. Don't get me wrong though. I don't resent them or anything, because if they didn't do what they do, we wouldn't have the nice things we have. My Jeep in particular. I loved my Jeep.

I can remember the day we went shopping for it right after I passed my drivers test. *Pulling into the car sales lot, it was the first thing to catch my eye. Shiny silver with dark tinted windows. "That's what I want Dad. Right there."*

We pulled up next to it and I jumped out of Dad's car before he even had it completely stopped, ecstatic at my find. We were looking her over when a salesman came up with the keys. "Want to take it for a test drive?"

"Are you kidding me? I'd love to!" I snatched the keys from his hand and we all piled into the Jeep Cherokee, and I was even more in love. Black leather heated seats,

a moon roof, fully loaded. This Jeep would be mine.

My alarm buzzing again brought me from my reverie. I had forgotten to shut it off after my snooze button fiasco this morning. Deciding on a pair of jeans, a 'Shot In The Dark 357' baby tee, a black oversized zip up hoody with a 'Baby Phat' kitty in the upper left chest. I pulled on my black combat boots, steel toed, and went to dry my hair.

I pulled the towel off my head, letting my long red waves fall to my back the cool wetness sending a shiver through me. Standing in front of the mirror I threw some make-up on, brushed my teeth, then dried and straightened my hair. After a few spins in a circle viewing my attire, I headed to my Jeep.

Jamison met me at the bottom of the stairs, holding my keys. "I thought you were going to be late Miss Keara."

"Jamison, I'm always right on time. You should know that by now." I grabbed my keys from his grasp.

"Of course Miss Keara."

Looking up into his dark chocolate brown eyes and smiling at him, "Please stop calling me Miss Keara. You are like a second father to me." I stood on my tip toes to kiss his cheek. "See you after school Jamison."

Watching him standing there with his hand over the place on his cheek I kissed, I smiled hitting the button on my key chain to unlock the Jeep doors.

"Miss Keara. Don't forget your parents will be coming home today. I'm planning a nice dinner." I waved in acknowledgement.

I slid behind the drivers seat, pulling my sunglasses over my eyes. Starting the engine, I turned on the radio, blasting Lil' Wayne, and waved goodbye. Looking into my rear view mirror, I saw him waving back. Jamison was tall and lean, with thin, graying hair. I shook my head, my heart warming knowing he would never change. He would always treat me like a boss and call

me Miss Keara. Man that irritated me.

I pulled into school to find my favorite parking spot. Without really too much concern for my day I slammed on my brakes noticing a red convertible sitting in my stall. "Who the hell is this? People know this is my spot!" I couldn't believe it. Someone had nerve. Everyone knew this was my parking spot. It has been all year!

After throwing a fit and saying a few choice words under my breath, I moved along in search of an empty space. Finding one I pulled in, taking a deep breath to calm myself before heading in. This was not going to ruin my day. I would let this pass for now.

Flinging my bag over my shoulder, swiping a stray strand of hair behind my ear, I headed to Biology class. Walking through the door I immediately sensed someone new as my eyes instantly diverted to "him". *Wow. Now that was some fine art.* I couldn't help but look at him. Blonde wavy hair called out to be touched, and lapis blue eyes held my gaze. *Who was he? Could this be the owner of that red convertible in my spot?* If it was, I was definitely going to let it slide.

After several minutes of staring, I finally took my seat, forcing myself not to look back at him. Dr. Sprague started class by asking a series of questions. I was just about to raise my hand to answer, when there was a knock at the door. Dr. Sprague answered it and when he turned back, his face looked solemn. "Keara, you're wanted in the office."

I looked at him surprised and stood up. "Um. You might want to take your things with you," he said.

Confused, I loaded my books in my bag, tossed it over my shoulder and headed to the office. *What the heck did I do now? I didn't even throw a fit about my parking.* The halls were empty, with only the echoes from teachers talking behind closed doors and the squeaking of my

heels on the freshly waxed floors.

Arriving to the office, I stood in front of the doors for a second, looking in through the glass that separated the 'dungeon' from the hallway. Dean Henderson's door was cracked open, giving me full view of the police officer. "*What now?*" I opened the door and walked through.

Ms. Stein sat at her desk, the white bun wound tightly atop her head the only thing to be seen as she stared at nothing. Raising her head to see who walked in her eyes widened ever so slightly before she regained her composure. "Go on in Keara. They are waiting for you." She kept her voice neutral, but I could sense something wasn't right.

I walked over to the door and knocked. Dean Henderson greeted me. "Come on in Keara." He put his arm around my shoulders, leading me to the chairs that sat across from his desk. The first policeman sat in one chair, the one I could see from the hall, and another policeman stood by the window. "You might want to sit down here Keara." Dean Henderson motioned toward the chair.

"Did I do something wrong?" The tension in the room was extremely noticeable. Something definitely wasn't right. I had a feeling I was about to find out what was going on.

"Oh no. You did nothing wrong at all. These officers here would like to talk to you." Dean Henderson took his seat behind his large mahogany desk. He was a short, chubby man, balding with only hair above his ears, making a horseshoe around his head. His pale blue eyes watched me from behind thick lenses.

I looked at him for a moment then to the officer sitting beside me. "Keara Crosby?" The officer next to me asked without hesitation.

"Yes. That's me."

The other officer by the window came closer to the desk as the officer next to me stood up. "I'm Detective Santonio. This is my partner, Officer Whitman. I'm afraid we have some bad news." Detective Santonio was dark skinned, with teal green eyes and jet black hair. He was muscular you could see, from the outline of his shirt. Officer Whitman was smaller framed, less muscular with brown hair and brown eyes, they both bore military cuts.

"What bad news?" I wasn't really alarmed. It could be anything.

"Are your parents names Patrick C. Crosby and Shannon Crosby?" They waited for me to answer.

"Yes. That's them." I said, now puzzled.

"We're sorry to be the ones to inform you Keara, but the airplane your parents were on has been reported to have crashed in the ocean. It departed from Kennedy Airport, and was called in as a Mayday at 1100 hours. It went down over the Atlantic. We're sorry...there are no known survivors."

Staring at them in disbelief, my brain tried to comprehend what they just said to me. *What? How can that be? I must be dreaming. It's got to be a dream.* Clutching my hand to my chest I could feel my throat getting tighter, closing around my trachea and cutting off my air. When I felt the dizziness wash over me, I put my head to my knees to keep from passing out.

"Why don't we give her a few minutes Officers." Though it sounded muffled to my ears, I knew it was Dean Henderson speaking.

"Of course." The officers spoke in unison.

"Keara, we'll be right outside. Just yell if you need us."

I nodded, my head still between my knees and heard the door shut. I slowly raised myself to a sitting position. *My parents were dead?* The tears streamed down my cheeks. The pressure in my chest was replaced with

sadness of reality. *How could this happen? I just talked to them last night and so excited that they were coming home.* I had been so wrapped up preparing for mid terms, that I even rushed my mother off the phone last night. *Oh God! What was I going to do?* Lowering my head as far down as I could get between my knees, I started to hyperventilate.

Tap. Tap. Tap. Someone knocked on the door and slowly opened it. "Keara, I think you should go home now. Call your family to come be with you."

"I have no other family." I whispered sitting up wiping the tears from my face. Grabbing my things and pulling my keys out, I looked to Dean Henderson before heading for the door.

"Maybe you shouldn't drive." Dean Henderson stated.

"I'll be fine. Really." I knew it wasn't very convincing when my chest shuttered between sobs and Officer Whitman took my keys.

"I'll drive your vehicle. Detective Santonio can follow us." I nodded in agreement and walked out of school behind them.

Feeling the eyes on me as we walked to the parking lot, I could only imagine what the other kids at school would be saying after this. Officer Whitman helped me into the passenger side of my Jeep then got in and started the engine. I turned the radio down, just wanting silence, leaning back in my seat and closing my eyes. Without looking at Whitman, I told him where to go.

"I know exactly where it is." He stated with pride.

Great. A cop that finds gratification in any type of self knowledge. Just great.

It seemed like only a few minutes before we pulled into our long driveway. Officer Whitman offered to walk me to the house giving that boyish smile, but I respectfully declined. "I'll be fine. Thank you for driving me home."

After watching them drive off in the squad car, I slowly turned around staring at my house.

I envisioned my mother kneeling in her flower bed. She took pride in landscaping our yard and actually did pretty good too. My gaze followed the cobble stone path up to our front door, envisioning my father standing in the door, ankles crossed, arms crossed and one shoulder leaning against the door frame.

I looked up toward the roof. Our house was big, built by my father. Light blue, with stone embedded into the siding along the front porch. Large glass windows allowed you to see into the gaming area, and the indoor pool area. A balcony could be seen off the master bedroom, overlooking a pond we had in our side yard. The house was beautiful.

I heard the door open. Jamison was there to greet me, hurrying to my side, compassion in his eyes. "Miss Keara. Come inside." He draped an arm across my shoulders, grabbing my bag with the other. "It'll be ok Miss Keara. We *will* get through this."

Letting him lead me into the house, I stopped just inside the door. Staring at the spiral staircase that led upstairs, I felt weighted down, helpless, and didn't know what to do. My feet didn't want to move. I was numb.

"Go to your room Miss Keara. I will bring you some tea."

Staring at him a moment too long, I screamed. "I don't want tea Jamison. I want my parents!" Running to my room and slamming the door, tears flooded my face and depression washed over me.

Chapter 2:

“Him”

It's been two months since my parents' accident. My Aunt Aingeal, Dad's sister, moved in the week after the accident. Apparently in the will, it states that she is to move in and care for the house and myself, though it's my house, until I'm twenty one. I couldn't argue with my parents wishes.

I didn't really know Aunt Aingeal, she lived clear on the other side of the continent, in Ireland. She never visited much, and my parents were out of town on business too much for us to visit her. When I met her at the airport, I couldn't believe that this was my aunt. She was dressed in a black dress that hung to her ankles. Her shoes were black, and she was carrying a black bag. Her long red hair hung past her waist, with black streaks dyed in, and her emerald green eyes held a certain mystery about them. She wore a sharks tooth necklace, black.

Once we got home, she let me have my space. Two months passed, and we hardly talked. My Dad always said that she was a weird one. She was quiet, but if you needed someone to talk to she was the best person to turn to. *Obviously, because she never talked!*

She was always burning candles, and sometimes I would walk by her bedroom and hear her...chanting. I couldn't make out what she said though. I think it was in a different language, though sometimes I understood it as Gaelic. I would often find things in my bedroom too. The first thing I found a crystal in my bag, then I started noticing other things like a black feather taped to my

headboard, one time I even found dirt in front of my door with small crystals lining the window sills, I couldn't help but wonder if it was voodoo.

For the most part I just ignored her not really having anything to say. I didn't care to know her, and she looked so much like my father that it pained me to even look at her. I kept myself locked in my room and Jamison was getting worried. He would bring me supper each night, hoping that it would be the night I would talk again. I just had nothing to say.

I never went back to school either. Jamison some how got the school to agree to me finishing my exams at home and I would do home study until graduation day. I didn't care. The only thing I'd be missing was Jared, my best friend since elementary school, but I didn't want to talk to him either. Pushing everyone away was becoming a habit.

Not today though. Today was the day life would start again. Two months of mourning was long enough. I had worried the people that cared about me too long and it was time to get out of bed. Nice and hot, the steam from the shower aroused my senses once again! Just what I needed. A day with a purpose.

After my shower I called Jared, who was all too eager to come over. It seemed like we had just hung up and he was there. "Honey, you can't ever do that to me again. I was so worried about you!" Jared walked through my doorway, swaggering his hips with one hand on his waist. His black framed glasses rested on his nose covering brown eyes. His hair was brown with short blonde spikes across the top, and a fluffy purple scarf was wrapped around his neck.

"I'm sorry Jared. I just needed time to myself."

"Hun, I understand, but you should never shut out those who love you." He flung his arms around me,

squeezing.

“I promise, I won’t do it again.” I squeaked out. “Too... tight...Jared.”

He loosened his grip. “Oh sorry hun. I just missed you so much!” He held my shoulders while staring at me, looking me up and down. “You know I love you right?” He kissed the air next to one cheek and then the other.

“Yes Jared. I know.” I kissed his cheek.

“How are you hun? Really. Are you okay?”

“I feel better now. I’m good, really. Now fill me in on what’s been going on.”

“Oh girl!!!!!! You are not going to believe it!” Jared slapped the air with one hand. He was the gossip king at school, and since he was gay, *like you didn’t know that*, he gets the gossip from both the guys and the girls. Everyone loves Jared.

“Bridget Moore is now single. That beast she was dating finally got caught cheating on her! You know I never liked him. Anyways, she is now dating Travis Johnson. Mmm hmm. That’s right girl. They are now dating, Bridget and Travis.”

“Wow. A lot has happened. I feel so out of the loop.” I looked at my lap.

“Awww. Don’t worry hun. I’ll have you caught up in no time.” Jared chuckled as he jabbered on about all the gossip at school. He was right. I was caught up in no time.

“Your favorite band’s playing tonight. You want to go?” Jared asked with pleading eyes.

“Oh yeah? Where they playing?”

“Down at Club Indigo. We should go. It’ll be fun, not to mention it’ll get you out of this stinky old room. You should really open the windows and let some fresh air in here honey.”

I chuckled walking to the window and opened it. It was

cloudy out, though not raining. *Another one?* A blue crystal, no doubt left by my mysterious aunt, sat in the corner of the window. Shaking my head I left it where it was. Maybe if I quit moving them she would quit replacing them. “Sounds like a plan for tonight. What time should I meet you there?”

“How about seven. That will give me time to do some shopping for tonight. Thinking a new outfit is in the near future! You want to go hun?”

“No shopping for me. You have fun. I’ll meet you at seven.”

“Great Keara. See you tonight then. I’ll have a surprise for you. I best be going so I have time to shop!” He gave me another squeeze before bouncing out the door full of excitement for shopping. “Tonight will be so much fun. Trust me.”

I watched Jared get in his car from my bedroom window, then decided on a nap. Jared’s energy was enough to wear anyone out.

The parking lot was full and I didn’t think I was ever going to find a spot. Driving in circles, I suddenly got this weird feeling, the hairs standing up on my neck and arms and a shiver rippled through my body. Looking in the rear view mirror, I saw nothing. I kept looking around the parking lot. A car pulling out left me forgetting about the feeling, excited to have found a parking space. *Only five minutes late after all that circling.* Jared would be happy I wasn't too late.

I jumped out of the Jeep and started towards Club Indigo. Walking at a fast pace, that strange feeling washed over me again. I stopped dead in my tracks, hair coming to attention once again on my neck and arms,

and looked around. I got the strongest inclination I wasn't alone. Like someone was watching me.

I startled at the sound of a girl laughing as her and her boyfriend walked toward the club arm in arm. *You're losing your mind Keara.* I continued walking to go meet Jared, giving one last look around before entering the club.

Everywhere were posters and stickers for my favorite band, 'Shot In The Dark 357'. Not having been out to see them in so long I felt my heart speed up with excitement. It was good to be out.

I spotted Jared at a table by the bar. Even though it was 20 and under night, they kept the bar open for the occasional legal age patron. Everyone that was underage, wore indigo bracelets, legal agers got stamped on the hand. Jared was talking with some guy I didn't know. He must have had a blast shopping as I looked over his new clothes. Dressed in kaki pants, a yellow button down shirt, and the frames to his glasses matching the shirt, *Elton John* was the thought that couldn't be kept from coming.

Jared started waving high over his head when he spotted me. I walked over to where he was standing and he grabbed my arms and kissed the air on either side of my cheek. "Hi hun. I have a surprise for you." He reached for a bag that was on the stool behind him.

"Oh Jared. You didn't have to get me anything."

"Yes I did. I know how you hate shopping, and I'm tired of that ol' baby phat hoodie you keep wearing. It's out of style honey." He handed me the bag.

I peered into the bag, my eyes growing wide when I saw its contents. I pulled my new zip up sweat shirt out of the bag. It was black, with 'Shot In The Dark 357' going across the front in neon green. You had to zip it up to make it a whole name. On the back was a picture of my

favorite band member, Buddha, the drummer. "I love it!" I screeched.

"I knew you would. Now throw that baby phat one in the trash girl. It's so 2008." He reached to pull it off of me.

"Right now?" I whined.

"Right now hun. Right now! I insist." He slid it down my arms.

I pouted as I watched Jared literally throw my other sweat shirt into the garbage can at the end of the bar. Then he helped me into my Buddha sweat jacket. "See, and it fits you like it's supposed to, not hanging to your knees like that ol' ratty thing you had on. Doesn't it look much better Russell?" Jared looked to the guy standing beside him.

Russell was a good foot taller than Jared. He had blonde hair, a mustache, blue eyes and stylish attire, with his light denim jeans, well fitting tee, that outlined the contour of his chest, and he was very nice looking. More like HOT. He smiled at me. "Oh honey. I almost forgot! This is my boyfriend Russell. Your other surprise." Jared piped in.

I was stunned. *Boyfriend? Jared has a boyfriend? I really was out of the loop. I can't believe he has a boyfriend. A hot boyfriend too.* I blew out a breath, getting my thoughts in order. "Hi. Nice to meet you."

He reached for my hand. "Nice to meet you too. Jared's told me so much about you." His voice was husky, with a bit of a twang to it.

"I'm sorry to say, he's told me nothing about you," giving Jared a look.

"I wanted to tell you honey, but you have been so down. I thought it might be a nice surprise tonight, since you're always on me about finding a good man. You are surprised right?" He looked at me with puppy dog eyes.

"I'm surprised. Well, I'm happy to meet you. About

time Jared finds someone nice.” I smiled, letting it reach my eyes to show my sincerity.

Russell smiled back. Jared flung his arms around me. “I love you Keara! You’re the bestest!” Then whispering into my ear, “You like him right? Isn’t he gorgeous?”

“Yes. I like him and he is gorgeous. Of course I love you too Jared. What if I wouldn’t have come tonight?”

“I would have told you in your room then. When you agreed to come though, I figured why not just surprise her and have her meet him tonight? So that’s what I did!” He was giggling like a giddy school girl.

I smiled and Russell joined in, placing his arm around Jared’s back. Jared wrapped his arms around Russell’s waist and I couldn’t help but smile.

All of a sudden, my ears were filled with the thump, thump, of the drum. Buddha was getting sound checked. I spun around to see my favorite star. I loved to watch him play and there was just something about the drums that sent chills through me, moving me to the beat.

Buddha was looking great. Not seeing him for so long, I wasn’t sure what I thought I was going to see. It had only been two months, but felt like years. He wore faded jeans with holes in the knees, a *Godsmack* tee shirt, sneakers, and his hair fell loosely around his face. Nope, he hasn’t changed a bit. He smiled at me while I was checking him over. I smiled back, half embarrassed at being caught.

“Keep it up honey, Buddha Boy will think you have the hots for him.” Jared smirked while sipping his drink.

“I just haven’t seen him for awhile and wanted to make sure nothing has changed.” I looked to the floor, feeling my cheeks flush.

“It’s okay hun, you’re allowed to look. You’re single and you need a man.” Jared put an arm across my shoulders. “Just kidding on the man part.”

I smiled looking into his eyes. "I'm just feeling a little out of place."

"Well don't. Once the music starts you'll feel right at home. Now come get a drink with me." He pulled me toward the bar. "We'll have two Shirley Temples please."

"Make that three." Russell joined us too.

I looked at him strangely. *A Shirley Temple? He must be old enough to drink, not to mention that ordering a Shirley Temple with that deep husky voice just doesn't sound right. Not at all.*

Like he knew what I was thinking, he responded with, "I don't like to drink when I'm with Jared and driving. I won't risk his life for stupidity." He said it matter of fact-like and smiled at me.

I smiled back, nodding my head in understanding. Who am I to judge. If he wants to be responsible, I'm glad for it. I'd probably never forgive him if something happened to Jared.

Just then the band introduced themselves and started playing. I turned around, taking a seat on a nearby stool to watch them. The music blasted through me, coursing blood through my veins like a raging river. *Man I have missed this.* After a few minutes of sitting, I had to move closer to the stage.

Jared stayed back with Russell. I moved to the stage and just let the music and the drums beat move me, swaying back and forth, singing along with the band. Suddenly I had that strange feeling wash over me again.

I looked around to see if anything seemed out of place. Jared and Russell were still at the bar, talking with their heads close together, Russell's hand resting on Jared's thigh. Homosexuality was a very common thing these days and it never took anyone by surprise. It was nice to see Jared happy.

Continuing to scan my surroundings, I spotted him.

The kid from biology class. He was looking right at me. I felt drawn to him, unable to look away.

His eyes were ice blue, like some rare gem that I was the first one to stumble upon. The blue was so brilliant, gold flecks making it seem like his eyes were glowing. As his lips curled into a smile, I felt my heart stutter. His smile was magnificent, making him seem approachable, like you just had to know why he was smiling.

His features became prominent as I slowly moved my eyes down the length of his body. He was well developed and firm, his dark silk shirt outlining every contour of muscle within his chest. His jeans fit him perfectly, showing off a nice firm behind.

Moving my eyes back up his body, I felt the heat rise in my cheeks, realizing he was still watching me. *Crap! He saw me checking him out.* Even realizing I'd been caught, I still couldn't bring myself to look away.

There was a heat in his eyes, but it wasn't anger. A yearning of wanting to touch him was almost unbearable. Even in this darkened room, with my favorite band playing, his eyes lit up, calling out to me. It was in that moment that I knew I wanted him. That I had to have him. To run my fingers through his short blonde waves while feeling the heat from his lips on mine.

Then, like a needle from one of those old record players being scraped across the record, I was brought back to reality. The banging of the drums during Buddha's solo rang loud in my ears.

What the heck was happening? I never get distracted, or drawn to people like that. What was it about 'him' that attracted me so badly?

Chapter 3

“The Band”

I moved closer to the stage, turning my back towards him. Nothing ever interferes with me hearing my favorite drummers solo. *Damn. I've missed half of it already.*

I glanced over my shoulder at him. *Hmm. Maybe it was just me. Did I imagine it? He's not watching me like I thought he would be. Turning back around...Wait. Did he just look at me? I can't look again he will think I'm crazy. Oh for crying out loud, just stop it. you're acting crazy. A crazy school girl with her first crush.*

I shook my head as if to shake the thought right out. Refocusing on the band, Buddha was almost to the end of his solo when I pulled my camera out and snapped a picture. The LCD screen on the back of my camera showed Buddha just about to tap his drumstick against the snare, then disappeared into the memory card.

Just like my camera, I put him into storage, the storage of my mind, to evaluate later. I managed to watch ‘Shot In The Dark 357’ play their last set with no distractions. I got my dancing groove, trying to ignore the butterflies that were fluttering around in my stomach.

‘You Spin Me Right Round’ was the last song. I was damp with sweat from dancing as I searched for Jared and Russell. Guess they left. “Great job guys.”

“Hey. Thanks Keara. Glad to see you back.” Big Dawg, the bassist smiled. Big Dawg was a tall, buff man, with tattoos up and down his arms. He had a tattoo of a large bull dog, in a protective stance on his back, earning him his nick name.

“Yeah. Well you know how it is.” I smiled back.

“We heard about your parents. We’re real sorry you had to go through that.” Shanker, the lead guitarist and singer, chimed in. Shanker was a great guy, and an even more fantastic artist. He was tall, with a muscled body. He always wore a hat that sported a .357 magnum, and had a voice, that once you heard him sing, you’d never forget him.

Shocked they knew about my parents, I felt special because they knew something about my life. Kicking my toe out like I was kicking a soccer ball, I simply said, “Yeah. Thanks guys.” There was an awkward silence as I stared at the floor. “Okay. I’ll let you guys finish packing up.”

Turning to walk away I caught Buddha out of the corner of my eye. He flew off the stage like ‘*Van Halen*’, landing in a squatting position with one hand touching the floor for balance.

I turned to face him completely. He stood up and walked to me the rest of the way. Grabbing my shoulders he bent down so we were eye level with each other. Looking back into his eyes, unsure what to do, he did the last thing I expected...he hugged me.

I slowly brought my arms around his waist to return the gesture, my heart skipping a beat in excitement and astonishment. He practically squeezed the life, and my soul, out of me. “Thanks fer being’ such a grand fan. If thar’s anythin’ at all we can do fer ya, be sure an’ let us know. We’re here fer ya if ya need us.”

Buddha wasn’t much of a talker, actually I don’t think I’ve ever heard him talk, so I was surprised when I heard an Irish accent coming out of his mouth. He sounded just like my aunt. “Thanks. I’m okay though.” He nodded, let go, and kissed my cheek before turning back to the stage.

“I should get home. See you guys. Great show!” I couldn’t believe it. I was just kissed by my favorite drummer in my favorite band. *What more could a girl as for?*

“Aye. Next shows Friday night Keara. Night Secrets.”

I stopped dead in my tracks. “Night Secrets?”

“Aye. New club do’nto’n.” Buddha called out. I just loved the Irish accent. It brought on a whole new sexiness to him.

“Okay. Thanks. I’ll be there.” I yelled back on my way out the door. My cell was ringing. “Hello?”

“Hey hun. Just wanted to apologize for not saying goodbye. You were having so much fun, I didn’t want to bother you.”

“That’s fine Jared. You had other things on your mind too.” I giggled.

“Luv ya Keara Girl.” Jared giggled back, making a kissing noise through the phone and then hanging up.

Chapter 4:

“Somebody’s Watching”

I got to the parking lot, looking around for my car swearing I parked closer to the entrance. I pressed the panic button on my key chain.

Beep. Beep. Beep. “Oh. There you are.” I started walking towards the flashing lights and beeping horn, singing ‘Devil’s Dust’. Walking along, I was hit by a strange feeling, yet again. It seems since my parents deaths, I’ve been more in tune with people watching me. People were always watching me, probably afraid of how I was going to react to my parents death. It started off with just small sensations of being watched. After looking around confirming my suspicions, finding the person that was watching me, I’ve learned to trust it. Only tonight, I was getting shivers down my spine and my hairs were standing on end.

I knew I wasn’t alone. I slowed my pace, looking around startling with a yelp.

Bottles clanked loudly against metal, causing me to jump. I spun around to see the bartender emptying the nights trash into the dumpster, and the breath I didn’t realize I was holding, released forcefully.

“Quit being silly Keara! Gosh!” I gave one last look around, taking in a deep breath. Nothing could be seen, allowing me to exhale and walk the rest of the way to my car.

Once inside the safe confines of my Jeep, I locked the doors. Shaking the feeling that someone was watching me was becoming impossible. *Was it him?*

After glancing in all the cars and still not seeing anyone,

I turned the key in the ignition and headed home. I checked my rear view mirror several times, still seeing nothing but darkness. I settled on the notion that I was truly being silly.

I cranked up the radio, singing along to 'Bad Romance' by 'Lady Ga Ga' checking the rear view mirror one last time. Something caught my eye and automatically the Jeep began to slow. Still looking in my mirror, "*What the heck was that?*" as a flash of silver ran across the road. *Was that a dog? Surely we don't have wild dogs around here. It looked too big for a dog though.* I stopped the Jeep contemplating whether or not to get out. *You had better just keep moving Keara.* My shoulders shook as another shiver ran down my back.

I turned the music down and lowered the window. "What is that? Howling? It had to be a dog. It almost sounds like a wolf. Hmmm. Maybe we have a pack of wolves out there." I raised the window, made sure the doors were locked, and turned the music back up. *Just go home Keara before you get yourself into trouble.*

I did that a lot and was always wandering off as a kid too. If something catches my attention, there is nothing to draw me away. It would be cool to see a wolf though. I shook my head and headed home. I wasn't going to allow myself to check it out without someone else being with me in case it attacked me or something. I frequently watched my mirrors, hoping to get a better glance of the silver dog. Nothing ever came into view.

Chapter 5:

“Night Secrets”

Tonight was the night ‘Shot In The Dark 357’ would be playing at Night Secrets. I wasn’t exactly sure where it was downtown, so I drove around earlier today to see if I could find it.

It was on the south side of town, in what used to be an old abandoned, run down factory. Pretty much in the middle of nowhere, I wondered how they thought they would make any business out here. They did fix it up nice though with the outside being black, with a shiny exterior that reflected like a mirror around the entire building. Painted on the left corner of the front, were the words ‘Night Secrets’, angled in a white ghostly script that dripped beneath each letter like wet paint from a paint brush.

I couldn’t help but think how perfect the name was, as the whole place put off a secretive, seductive effect. Tonight would be their grand opening. No wonder Buddha seemed so excited, they were the band chosen for the grand opening.

I rummaged through my closet looking for the perfect outfit. It would have to be black, to match the theme of the club. That seems to be all I wear anymore anyways. Black.

I settled for black jeans with a baby tee that sported ‘SITD 357’ in florescent green, with my new Buddha hoodie. I straightened my hair, pulled money from my wallet along with my ID to place in my back pocket. Doing a quick turn around in the mirror, satisfied, I headed to the club.

Jamison met me at the bottom of the stairs, holding my keys. "Thank you Jamison."

"Anytime Miss Keara." He grinned.

I smiled and kissed his cheek. "Don't wait up."

Pulling into the club I couldn't believe all the people surrounding the building. The parking lot was full, people lined up from the door of the club, down to the street corner. It was going to take forever to get inside.

I drove around in circles for fifteen minutes before I finally found a parking space and pulled in, centering my car perfectly between two others. Turning off the Jeep, nervousness swarmed me. *I wished Jared could have come.* Jared had made plans to go to dinner with Russell though and he was going to try and stop in before the night was over.

I anxiously looked around the parking lot, pausing on my rear view mirror. *'Him'. What is he doing here?* Our eyes locked in my mirror. His eyes seemed to glow even brighter than before in the moonlight and again I couldn't bring myself to look away. He was beautiful.

Demanding my eyes to blink, which took extreme effort it was almost like being hypnotized by 'him'. When I reopened my eyes, he was gone. I took a steadying breath wondering if I imagined it, then departed from my car to wait in that dreadful line.

There was a lot of excited chatter in the long line. Everyone was waiting in anticipation, not knowing what to expect once they got inside and a lot of talk on how great it looked from the outside.

I stood there listening in to a couple of girls, watching their reflections through the building. Feeling someone grab my arm I turned sharply to see who it was, meeting dark eyes.

"I'm sorry. I thought you were my girlfriend." He was my height with long dark brown hair, a go tee, and silver

hoops in his ears. His voice was deep, mysterious with an edge to it.

“It’s okay.” I answered, eyes wide with surprise.

After several seconds, he loosened his grip on my arm, looking around in search of his girlfriend. Watching him walk away, feeling bad he had lost her in this treacherous line, I noticed he kept glancing back at me causing a bit of unease in my gut. *Why does he keep looking at me? He already established I wasn’t her.*

“Keara!” I heard my name being called. I looked to see where Buddha was, already recognizing the Irish tone.

“Hey Buddha.” I yelled back, raising my hand.

“Aye. Come on girl. Yer comin’ wit me.” He grabbed my hand and led me inside. “Wait till ya see this place. It so grand.” He said with enthusiasm.

Following behind him, I realized I’d probably follow Buddha to the ends of the earth. As long as he had his drums.

We walked past a bouncer checking ID’s at the door. Very very tall, an obvious well built body builder his arms were huge, the muscles bulging from under the sleeves of his tee. He was wearing dark glasses and I wondered how he could see in this darkness. He gave Buddha a nod as we passed by.

“He didn’t even ask to see my ID Buddha.” I whispered.

“He’d be a weird one. I’ve not ’eard em speak much.” Buddha whispered back.

We walked through the main doors into an entry way coming to a narrow hall, coat racks lining each side. There were several doors on either side of the hall after the coat racks, with tinted double glass doors at the end. That’s where we were heading.

Buddha opened the door and stood off to the side waiting for me to pass. I smiled at him, “Thank you.”

“It’s me pleasure. Wait till ya see this bloody place Keara.”

I couldn’t believe it. This place was beautiful. You would never know it was an old factory the way it looks now. As soon as you walked through the doors, you could hear music playing. A mild classic rock, not too loud, yet not too low you couldn’t hear it at all. In the very front of the room, just past the doors, were a set of stairs, leading to a circular bar. The bar was shiny and black, and sat about five feet off the ground floor. The platform that surrounded the bar was big enough to have five people standing next to each other with their arms outstretched and was full of people.

There were tables on the ground floor, all stationed to be able to see the stage that was off to the back. The floors were glossy black, with the words Night Secrets in the center with the ghostly dripping effect as on the outside of the building. The stage too was black, with the white letters again against the back wall.

This was just the ground level. As I looked up, there were three more levels of floors, all able to overlook the stage. It was almost like a cell block, without the cells. Each level had a railing to keep patrons from falling, and there were people hanging on them looking down to the ground floor. Large screen televisions hung on the wall and from the ceiling, displaying the video to the song that was playing.

I was in complete awe. It was beautiful, shiny and new. “It’s amazing.” I managed after realizing Buddha was staring at me.

“I told ya. Ya wer n’t gonna believe this here place. It’s purdy awesome eh?”

“I don’t think there are words to describe it Buddha. It must have cost a fortune!”

“I’m sure it did. I ‘ave n’t met tha owner yet, but I ‘ear

he's purdy extravagant."

I continued to look around. This place was just too amazing. I have never seen anything so...amazing. *Wow. Just wow.*

Buddha excused himself to go get sound checked. Wandering around like a kid in a candy store, wanting to see everything they had, I went up the first flight of stairs to the next level. The stairs were cement, but had black carpet lining them. At the top of the stairs, the walls were of that mirrored black like outside. A bar centered in the middle, in the shape of a horseshoe and the floors were shaped in a half moon, with stairs at each end. There were several doors again off the back wall, and tables lined up in between the doors. Black stools lined the bar.

Again the bar was shiny black, and this time I could see that Night Secrets was engraved in the wood of the bar, which was stained black, the letters stained white, and a clear lacquer finish on top. Behind the bar were mirrors, and in front of the mirrors were shelves lined with liquor.

The bartender here was built, much like the bouncer at the door. His hair was black, his skin was pale, and he too wore dark sunglasses. *What was up with the sunglasses? How can they see? It's just as dark in here as it is outside. Weird.*

I heard Buddha hitting the drums and turned to peer over the railing. Realizing I didn't need to look over the railing as the television screens that were hanging from the ceiling were actually so people could view the band while they played. It was almost like being right in front of him, that's how big the TV was.

I walked back down to the ground level assuming that all the floors were going to be pretty much the same. I found a table off in the corner, but close enough to the stage that I could enjoy the band. *I really wished Jared*

could have been here.

“Can I get you anything to drink Miss?” I heard a soft, seductive voice asking.

The waitress was wearing a black mini skirt, black tank top with Night Secrets on the front, black stockings and black high heels. My first thought was how could she work in that? “I’ll take a soda please.”

“Coming right up.” She strutted away like she was a super model and wore those shoes everyday on a runway. *Ouch.*

A few minutes later she returned carrying a pitcher of Pepsi and a glass. “I didn’t want a whole pitcher.”

“It’s on the gentleman at the bar dear.” She pointed to a man in a dark suit. “He’s the owner.” She smiled when she said it.

“Why’s he buying me a drink?” I asked.

She just smiled, and after pouring my drink into my glass she walked away. I glanced up at the owner, who was leaning with one elbow planted on the bar. He too was wearing dark sunglasses, his jet black hair hung loosely around his face, curling at the ends where it landed in the middle of his back. Well muscled, you could see the thickness of his arms through his suit jacket. I couldn’t really tell how tall he was from where I was sitting. He looked down at me and smiled.

I smiled back, giving a small nod and quickly looked away starting to feel a little uncomfortable. Turning back to watch Buddha I sipped my soda.

Once the band started playing, I chanced looking up at where the owner was standing. *Whew. He’s gone.* Letting myself start to relax a little I looked around, once again having that weird feeling like someone was watching me.

You are in a room full of people Keara. Quit being ridiculous. Everyone is probably watching you.

Finishing my soda and deciding it was time for some pictures I pulled out my camera, so I could show Jared what he had missed. I started snapping pictures of all the levels, the band, the bar up front. Staring into my LCD screen getting ready to snap a picture of the stairs, icy lapis blue eyes looked back at me. I watched into my camera, afraid to move. It was *'him'*.

I slowly looked up to where he was standing. My heart fluttering at the sight of his beautiful figure. He smiled, moving towards me. *Oh God. What do I do?* In my fluster I dropped my camera. Bending down to pick it up a hand met mine. Looking up into those glowing blue eyes I thought I was going to melt right there.

We knelt, staring into each others eyes for a few seconds. I couldn't move, look away, or say anything. The butterflies in my stomach were fluttering frantically. I felt the heat rise in my cheeks.

I let my hand drop away from my camera when he started to stand up. He reached for my hand. I obligingly took it, letting him help me to an upright position.

"Hi." His voice was deep, and serene. Not like boys from school. It held a touch of mystery to it. I wanted to melt....again.

"H.." I cleared my throat. "Hi." I kept my eyes locked on his, afraid to look anywhere else.

"I saw you at school. Why didn't you come back?"

"Um. We had a family emergency." It came out in a whisper.

"I'm Channing." He smiled.

Oh that smile. His lips were perfect. I want to kiss those lips. "I'm Keara."

His smile curved into a smirk. He shook his head. Realizing my own thoughts, I looked to the floor in embarrassment. "It's nice to meet you Keara."

I smiled back, "You too Channing."

“So do you like this band? I saw you at Club Indigo when they were playing there too.”

“Oh. Yeah they’re my favorite. I’ve been following them for some time now.”

“I just moved here a week before seeing you in school. My family and I move around a lot. We like it here though and may stay for a while.”

I couldn’t get over his smile, or those eyes. I was so drawn to those eyes. Out of all the girls at this club, he was talking to me. *I can’t wait to tell Jared.*

“Canada is nice. A bit cold at times, but all in all it’s nice.” My voice was shaking. I was going to embarrass myself if I kept talking.

“We don’t mind the cold. Actually, we prefer it.” He smiled again.

Just then, I heard my name. “Keara, this one’s fer ya, me biggest fan.”

I turned, and Buddha was starting his drum solo. It was new. *Did he write that just for me? I’m touched.*

I turned back to Channing, but he was gone. *Dang Buddha. You couldn’t have timed that any better? I moved closer to the stage to get a picture of his solo. It was really good. I can’t believe he dedicated this to me.*

Channing huh? Wow. That is a nice name....Channing. I can’t believe he was talking to me. He is so gorgeous! I couldn’t help but to look around for him wanting to know more about him, wanting to hear his voice again, and most of all, wanting to feel his lips on my own. *Ahhh. Those perfect lips.* I was going to dream about Channing tonight.

The band finished up, thanking Night Secrets for having them. Buddha took a short break before tearing down his equipment. “Well Keara, how’d ya like the new solo?”

“It was great Buddha.” I was still glancing around for

Channing. Just as a shiver rippled through my body, I saw the owner looking down at me. *Why was he watching me?*

Buddha turned to see what I was looking at. “Who’s that?” He asked watching the man looking at us.

“That’s the owner I guess.”

“The owner? He doesn’t look so bad.” Buddha said.

“Why do they all wear sunglasses Buddha? It’s weird.”

“I n’t be knowin’ that Keara. Maybe they think ther cool. Maybe it’s tha style wher they come from. From wha’ I ‘ear, tha owner isn’t from round ‘ere.”

I looked back up at the owner. He was still watching me. Another shiver ran through me. I was becoming extremely uneasy. “I have to go Buddha. Thanks for meeting me at the door, and the new solo. It was great!”

“Do ya want me ta walk ya ta yer car Keara?” Buddha was sensing my uneasiness.

“No. That’s okay. You have to clean up anyways. I’ll be okay.” I said more for myself than him.

“Aye Keara. Jus’ be careful goin’ home.”

I nodded, grabbing my things and heading for the door. I gave one last look up, and yes, he was still watching. There was something about him, he seemed familiar. I couldn’t put my finger on it just yet, but I will.

Chapter 6

“Truth Be Told”

The owner of Night Secrets was giving me the creeps. As I left the club, he was standing outside, sunglasses on and watching me. I smiled as I pulled out, but he just kept looking at me with no reaction. I could tell he was watching me as his head moved with the movement of my Jeep. I quickly looked away and started messing with the radio.

‘I wear my sunglasses at night’, I laughed out loud. I remember that song. My Mom and I used to dance to it when I was little. *God I missed my Mom.* I quickly shoved the thought to the back of my mind. It didn’t last long though.

The tears started welling up in my eyes. I knew I should have pulled over, but I just wanted to be in my room. *Why now? Please Lord, help me keep a clear head until I get home.* I was begging God. The tears kept coming, and now were flooding my face like a river. I searched for a Kleenex in my console. No matter how much I tried to push the pain aside, it was as fresh as the day I learned of my parents’ death.

I checked the glove compartment. *There’s one.* I leaned to grab it. I felt the tires hit gravel and jerked myself upright in my seat turning the steering wheel to put me back on asphalt, only I turned too quickly. I heard the tires screeching as I slammed on my brakes. The back end skidded back in the gravel on the side of the road, pulling the rear end into the ditch. My head whipped back against the seat as the air bag deployed in my face, the Jeep coming to a jerking halt. Darkness encompassed

me.

I heard my passenger side door open. “Keara? Can you hear me?” I didn’t know this voice. “Keara? Are you okay? Keara?”

The voice was deep, smooth and he spoke slow as he repeated himself. I liked the sound of his voice. Sensual, enticing, seductive. Forcing my eyes open, my eyelids fluttered as they tried to focus. I don’t know how long I was out, but the pain took my breath away. My head hurt, and my neck felt stiff. I didn’t have to move yet, looking directly at the man behind the voice, and the sunglasses. I couldn’t speak.

“Keara, can you hear me?”

I stared into the face of the owner of Night Secrets, allowing my eyes to blink in response. *What was he doing here?*

“Here. Drink this. It will help you feel better.”

He held a small vile to my lips, tipping it so the contents seeped into my mouth. It was cool, with a sweet taste. I had no idea what he was giving me, but as it ran down my throat, I felt like I was being...energized. “Give it a few seconds to start working.” He said as he gently caressed my cheek.

I cringed at the sharp pain I felt as his hand ran over a certain spot on my face. I was able to raise my hand to my face, my hand coming away with blood. I stared wide eyed at the blood on my hand, my voice still not wanting to cooperate.

“It’s not as bad as you are thinking Keara. It’s a small cut from the air bag. I’d say you are quite lucky.”

Oh God. Don’t cry again! I didn’t want to cry in front of this man. I didn’t even know him, and he gave me weird vibes. *Please don’t cry. Please. Please. Please.*

“It is okay to cry after such a trauma. Do not be embarrassed.”

That was all it took. The tears poured out of my eyes. I found I was able to move more than my arm and hand and started wriggling in my seat. I tried clearing my throat, it seemed so dry. He handed me a Kleenex from the open glove compartment. *This damn Kleenex started it all.* Taking it anyway, I began wiping my face.

“Do you think you can walk Keara?” He started around to my side of the Jeep.

I pulled the door handle, but nothing happened. I pushed on the door, the only thing that happened was my neck screamed with pain. As I tried one more time, it flew open, with Mr. Mysterious holding it from the outside.

“It was stuck. You are probably weak from the jolt. Do you feel anything broken?”

I spun my legs around moving the air bag off to the side, out of my way as I turned in my seat. Letting my legs dangle for a minute I gathered my bearings. My head swam with dizziness. Not the nauseating kind, but the kind like you were drunk. I closed my eyes, letting the blood slow to a steady flow.

“Are you alright? Do you need me to help you?” He grabbed my arm to escort me out of the vehicle.

I slowly opened my eyes. The dizziness was still there, but not as prominent. I slid off the seat, letting my feet hit the ground. *Grass? This can't be good.* I kept leaning against the door frame while he held my arm for support. I took a step forward and slipped, grabbing his arm for support while his other arm came around my waist. *Funny, I didn't feel as weary around him this time as I thought I would. I guess the pain is just too strong to think about that.*

“We're in a ditch. I will help you back to the road.” His arm tightened around my waist as we moved upward.

I kept my eyes closed, trying to breath through the pain. I knew we were on the road when his arm loosened

from around my waist, and we stopped moving. Feeling my body stiffen from muscles being jolted that I haven't used in a long time, I opened my eyes and cleared my throat again. "I don't think anything is broken. How bad is my Jeep?" Finally able to speak.

"Well, the rear axle is laying across a log. It must be from a tree that fell, and they had to cut it to get it off the road. The impact was hard enough that it deployed the air bags, but from what I can see, there is no real damage to your Jeep that can't be fixed. You just won't be driving it tonight. You will need to get someone out here to pull it out in the morning."

I turned to look at my once beautiful Jeep. Sure enough, the back tires were suspended in mid-air. It wasn't going anywhere tonight. I let out a sigh. *Ouch. That hurt.*

"Please allow me to drive you home Keara." He spoke calmly.

I nodded. He walked with me to his car and when my legs gave out, he scooped me up into his arms like I weighed no more than a child. I didn't resist, but laid my head against his shoulder. My eyes felt heavy. Exhaustion was creeping in. "How do you know my name?"

"You rest. I will get you home safely." He ignored my question as he lowered me into his car seat and buckled me in. I kept my eyes closed hearing the car door open from his side, and felt the car shake slightly as he got in. "I apologize I did not get to introduce myself properly, but under the circumstances, I am sure you understand. My name is Corbin. I own Night Secrets."

"Thank you Corbin. I do understand. I don't know what I'd do if you weren't there. What were you doing on this road anyway? It's not a road much traveled." I said groggily.

“I was on my way home actually. A friend of mine showed me this way as a shortcut to my house. I live over in Berwick. I recently bought the Claremont Mansion.”

“Really? That place has been empty for years. It’s a nice place.”

“They told me that it was a Gothic Realm.” He chuckled.

“Well you can’t really be surprised by that statement. It’s obvious you love black and mysterious.” I looked at him, searching for some type of reaction. Nothing. I laid my head back again and closed my eyes.

“I suppose you are right. I do love my black. I suppose when you are a creature of the night, black becomes you.” He chuckled again, this time with a hint of uncertainty.

Without looking at him I asked, “A creature of the night? What is that supposed to mean?” My voice trailed slightly as sleep was setting in more deeply.

“I am a Vampire Keara.” He said it matter of factually.

It was my turn to chuckle. “A Vampire? A Goth with humor.” I mumbled closing my eyes while yawning. “My parents died in a plane crash two months ago. I guess it still hit’s a little close to the heart.”

“Rest Sweet Keara. We are almost to your house.” He whispered softly.

Sleep was calling me under. *I like the way he says my name.* That is the last thought I remember before waking in my drive way.

“Keara we are at your home.” Corbin gently shook my shoulder.

“Wow. I’m so sorry for sleeping the whole way. I don’t know what came over me.”

“You have been through a lot tonight. There is no need for apologies.” He helped me out of the car. There was a

cool breeze tonight, and the moon was shining almost full. Corbin helped me to the door carrying most of my weight as he held me around my waist. “Do you want me to help you inside?”

“Oh. No. You’ve done enough for me. Thank you for everything.” I was feeling much better after that nap. I could see him fully in the light of the moon. Mysterious was right. He was a lot taller than me, six feet at least, with a broad build. His hair was black as night and hung past his shoulders. Dark curls were pulled back into a pony tail and shined in the moonlight. His jaw was chiseled with a cleft chin and lips smooth and red rested against pale skin.

“You are quite welcome.” He started walking back to his car.

I stood by the door watching him. Realizing that I wasn’t aching as bad as I was right after the accident, I moved my head from side to side. *Wow. I feel pretty good.*

Corbin had his car door open and he called to me, “Goodnight Sweet Keara.” With that, he disappeared into a shiny black car with dark tinted windows. The engine roared to life, purring like a kitten, and he drove out of my driveway. I heard howling in the distance.

Hey. How did he know where I lived? I must have told him when we were driving. That must be it. I couldn’t believe I slept in his car like that. Well heck, I couldn’t believe I wrecked my Jeep either. Afraid to see what the damages were going to be, I wasn’t anxious for daylight.

Suddenly I got that funny feeling, like someone was watching me. The hairs on my neck and arms stood at attention as a chill rippled down my spine. Spinning around, scanning the premises I couldn’t see anything, even with the moon shining as bright as it was. Another howl in the distance, closer than before. I turned the

doorknob and went inside, locking the door behind me. I caught my reflection in a mirror hanging on our wall in the entry way. *Hmm. Corbin was right. It seemed worse than what it actually was.* The cut on my face was very small. It must have just been in the right place for it to bleed so much. I did have blood on my face and clothes where it had ran. *Oh Dear God. I hope I didn't get any blood in Corbin's car.*

I went upstairs to wash up. A hot shower would do me wonders. Jamison caught me at the bottom of the stairs.

“Miss Keara what happened to you?” He rushed to my side. “Do you need to go to the hospital?”

“I'm fine Jamison. My Jeep went off the road is all. It skidded on gravel on the side of the road and I lost control. Will you call me a tow truck in the morning and get it to a garage please?”

“Oh my...are you okay? Of course I'll call for you.” He looked extremely worried.

“I'm fine Jamison. The air bag deployed and cut my face is all. It really looks worse than it actually is.” I reassured him. I couldn't believe I didn't feel worse stretching my muscles once again, amazed at how good I was feeling.

“That small cut caused that much blood on your clothes? There's enough blood to have come from a gutted deer Miss Keara. Well you go take a shower, I will make you some soup and hot tea.”

I looked back down at my clothes. There was a lot of blood. Obviously I wasn't as injured as the blood misled you to believe. “Thanks Jamison.” I headed up the stairs.

As I stood under the hot stream, I thought about the night. Corbin didn't seem so bad now that I talked to him. I was lucky he was driving by, though it did seem weird. Nobody ever traveled down that road. Somebody was watching over me, lucky for me.

Chapter 7

“The Real Aingeal, The Real Me”

I almost made it to the kitchen when Aunt Aingeal came running out of my room. She had an incense in her hand and stopped in front of me fanning the smoke around my body, chanting in Gaelic. I watched her in amazement for a few moments, then I'd had enough.

“Aunt Aingeal please? I really would like to get a bite to eat, and can't even understand a word you are saying. What is it with you?”

She paused her actions and looked at me. “Yer father 'as nev'r told ya. I should've figured as mooch. Child, I be placin' prootecton upon ya. Go git yer grub and we be talkin'.” She sniffed the air around me. “I know of yer accident, an' of tha' thing tha' brung ya 'ome. Ya put yerself in too mooch danger all tha time. Now go. Go eat, ya be lookn' like crap, an' th'n be comin' ta see me.”

I looked at her in disbelief. She turned and went to her room. *What the heck was that all about?* She was such a weird woman. What didn't my father tell me? We've always had a pretty open relationship. I did with both my parents. I shook my head and headed for the kitchen. I couldn't wait to hear this one.

After I filled my stomach Jamison was already questioning me. “Miss Keara, do you feel better now?”

“Yes Jamison. I am full and feel like a million bucks. Thanks.”

“You look much better than when you first arrived home.

Thank goodness you're okay. I'm glad you ate it all. It will help you regain your strength.” He smiled.

“Let me ask you something Jamison.”

“Of course Miss Keara.” He stood at attention.

“Is there anything about my dad that I should know about? Something I don’t know?”

Confusion was evident in his expression, yet I waited. He pondered the question for a minute before he answered. “I don’t believe so Miss Keara. Why are you asking?”

I sipped my tea. “It’s something Aingeal said. She said ‘Your father has not told you. I should have figured as much’. I just don’t know what she could mean.” I absently took another sip of tea.

“I’m not sure Miss Keara. You know your father never spoke of Aingeal much. She is a bit....eccentric shall I say?”

“That she is Jamison. That she is. Well, I must go talk to her and find out. Thanks for the tea and soup Jamison. You’re the best.” I kissed his cheek and headed to Aingeal’s room.

From the hall I could smell her incense. The aroma was strong, a mix of coconut and sage. What was with her and her witchery? I just didn’t get it. I could hear her chanting again as I tapped on her door. “Aunt Aingeal, can I come in?”

The door opened, a fog of smoke rolling out into the hallway. She peered around the door so just her head was visible. Her long red hair was wrapped in a black, silk scarf. Her ears had large silver hoops dangling from them. A silver chain with some weird looking stone hung from her neck. “Come in me child. Come in.”

This was the first time I’d ever been in her room since she moved here. Looking around I couldn’t believe all the things she had. Shelves upon shelves lined the walls, and bottles of every shape and size, all different colors sat upon them. There were old books on a shelf that sat

on the floor, they looked ancient.

“Sit down me child. We must talk.”

“What is the incense for?”

“Fer yer proottection child.” She pulled two chairs up to a round glass table and motioned for me to sit. She busied herself gathering a brass ball on a chain, some crystals, and a book off the shelf. She walked over to the other end of the room and grabbed a purple bottle that looked fit for a genie.

“What are you doing Aunt Aingeal?”

“Shush, me child. I be tellin' ya once I've all I be needin'.”

So I waited. Once she was done she came to sit in the chair opposite me at the glass table. She spread all the items out in front of us and opened her book. “Now. Thar's a lot fer ya ta be learnin'. Yer father, bless 'is soul, nev'r wanted ta believe nor carry on our heritage. He thought it rubbish, but he was a fool.”

“What heritage? What are you talking about?”

“Listen me child, and I will be tell'n ya.”

“Okay.” I raised my hands in surrender.

“Our family comes from a long line of Celtics from Ireland. Ya wer' n't born a Crosby, but yer true name is Flannery.”

“What? Where did Crosby come from?” I knew we were Irish with the flaming red hair we all had, but never dreamed that my last name wasn't my real last name.

“Yer father did n't want any part of our heritage. When ya wer' wee little, an' he brought ya and yer mather ta tha states, he changed yer las' name ta Crosby. He was hopin' ya'd never 'ave ta become wha' was foretold of yer future me child.”

“What was that? My future? I'm so confused. Why didn't Dad like our background?”

“We're Wiccan Neacht. Yer father did n't want ta

believe in all of tha folklore tha' went wit' our heritage, nor of yer future when he was told ya'd be doin' great things."

"Wiccan? As in witch?" I chuckled. This was all a little far fetched.

"Yes an' no child." She looked down at her book, grabbing the brass ball on a chain, she started chanting and smoke billowed from the ball. She walked over to me and smoke enveloped me as she chanted away.

"What are you doing?" I exclaimed coughing.

"Puttin' a prootection spell on ya child. Ya 'ave bin in contact wit' mooch evil."

"What are you talking about...evil?" Just then my cell phone rang. I quickly answered to escape my aunt's smoking ball. "Hello?"

"Oh my God honey are you okay? I just saw your car on the side of the road while me and Russell were on our way back from dinner. Are you hurt? Are you at the hospital?" Jared was on the verge of a breakdown.

"No Jared, I'm home and I'm fine. You can relax."

"Oh thank God! I was so worried hun! I thought something awful had happened to you."

"My Jeep went off the road and got caught up in gravel is all. Jamison is calling the garage in the morning. I'm fine, really." I looked up to find my aunt with one hand on her hip, the other elbow resting on her hip while she held onto the brass ball, showing her impatience while she waited for me to get off the phone. "Jared can you hold on a second?"

"Sure hun."

"Aunt Aingeal can we finish our talk later?"

She marched over to me and set the brass smoke bomb on the table. She pulled the chain from around her neck and placed it in my palm. "Since ya are n't ready ta 'ear, wear this child. It'll prootect ya." She closed my hand over the necklace.

I opened my hand to look at the pendant. It wasn't a stone but weird lines encircling each other. My confusion must have shown on my face. "It be a Celtic Knot child. Please Neacht, wear it."

"Okay, I will wear it. I don't know what I need protection from, but I will wear it."

"Thank you páiste. Tha's all me be askin'."

I rolled my eyes as I returned to my phone call with Jared. I recognized the language my aunt was speaking, as my father often spoke in Gaelic, but I wasn't fluent. I also wondered what my aunt was talking about? Evil? Wiccan? I think she's lost her mind. No wonder Dad kept her at bay.

Chapter 8:

“Meet With Evil”

Jared and I were meeting at Night Secrets tonight for some ‘BFF’ time. Since my parents’ accident and Jared getting a new boyfriend, we have barely seen each other. I’m very happy for Jared, and wished I had someone to spend some time with, but am missing my best friend. I’m looking forward to this evening.

I finished my shower and heard a knock at my bedroom door. “Come in.” I answered as I was putting on my makeup.

“Neacht, I wished ya would n’t be goin’ out this night. I’ve a bad feelin’.”

“Aunt Aingeal, I’ll be fine. I haven’t spent any time with Jared and I miss him. There’s a new band playing tonight. It’s going to be fun, you don’t need to worry.”

“Ya be wearin’ yer necklace?”

“Yes Aunt Aingeal. It’s right here. I promise I won’t take it off.” I pulled it out from under my shirt to show her.

“Very well. I’ll be leavin’ ya ta it th’n.” She gave one last glance at me before walking out the door.

I shook my head. “Bad feeling. I wished she would stop with the witchy stuff. I will be fine.”

Jamison was waiting for me at the bottom of the stairs holding my keys. My Jeep was in the shop for a week, but I finally had it back. “Thank you Jamison.”

Just before I grabbed my keys from him he pulled them out of my reach. “You will be careful tonight?”

“Yes Jamison. I’ll be careful.”

“Tell Mr. Jared I said hello and to keep a good watch on you.” He smiled, handing me my keys.

“I’ll tell him Jamison. Now stop worrying. I’ll be fine.” I headed out the door. I wished everyone would just stop worrying. I was going to be with Jared and would be fine. Nothing bad was going to happen.

I pulled into the parking lot and found a space instantly. It wasn’t like the first night I came here. There were a lot of cars, but definitely room for parking without waiting. I pushed the button on my keychain and locked the Jeep doors. I couldn’t wait to see Jared.

No line tonight either. Thank God for that. I started peddling along and dropped my keys. Bending down to pick them up I was greeted with another hand. I felt my heart sizzle as I looked up into those beautiful ice blue eyes.

“Hello Keara. I was hoping you’d be here tonight.”

OMG! That voice. His voice was so sexy. “Hi Channing. How are you?” Keep it together Keara.

“Much better now that you’re here.” He smiled, handing me my keys.

Of course I felt the heat in my face. I didn’t know what to say. “Thank you.”

“Shall we?” He asked holding his arm out to escort me inside.

Jared’s going to kill me, but....ahh. “Sure.” I looped my arm in his and let him walk me inside.

The place was just as fantastic as before. Shiny floors, bars, and a lot of people. Again the bouncers and bartenders were wearing sunglasses, and to my surprise, didn’t give us much hassle at the door. I’m not even sure he looked at my ID.

Channing led the way, still holding my arm in his. I spotted Jared at the bar. When he turned around and saw me with Channing his eyes grew wide. Channing seemed to know I was looking for Jared and led me right to him.

“Well hello hun. Who might this fine specimen be?” Jared looked Channing over, smiling, hugging me.

“This is Channing. I figured you’d know him from school Jared. Channing this is Jared.”

“I knew of him silly, but not personally. Nice to meet you Channing.” Jared batted his eyes.

Channing smiled. “You too Jared. Where’s your boyfriend tonight?”

“How did you know I had a boyfriend?” Jared looked at him with devious eyes.

“I saw you with him at Club Indigo.”

“Ah. He is home. Tonight is Keara’s night. Some time with my ‘BFF’. Isn’t that right Keara?” Jared looked disappointed. I think he was hoping Channing wasn’t straight. Not that he’d cheat on Russell, but he’d definitely flirt.

“That’s right Jared.” I smiled putting my arm around his waist.

“Well you two get a drink and come on over. I got us a table right over there. There is plenty of room for Channing to join with us.”

I mouthed the words “Thank you” to Jared as Channing stepped up to the bar. Jared winked and walked away. Channing turned around and handed me a strange blue drink with an umbrella sticking out of it. “What’s this?”

“I’m not sure, they said it was on the house.”

“Great. Looks tantalizing.” I smirked.

Jared had found a table with a great view to the stage. We took a seat, me in between both men. *Man I wanted to touch Channing. His eyes were so inviting, and that smile of his. Wow. If Jared knew what I was thinking right now.*

We sat around the table listening to Jared chatting away. He was telling Channing his life story, and how he wanted to be a designer.

“What type of designer Jared?” Channing asked with interest.

“I’m not quite sure yet, I love clothes, but I also love interior decorating. I have a way with both. Darling you should see my bedroom.”

I choked on my drink. Both men started patting my back. “I’m fine. Really.” I shot Jared a look.

When he finally caught on to what he said he started laughing. “Oh honey! No pun intended.” He slapped the air with his hand as he laughed harder.

Channing looked between us, then the joke hit him too. He started laughing with us. I loved his laugh.

Our laughing was interrupted by a deep, melodic voice. “Sweet Keara. I see you have healed well, thank goodness.”

All laughing came to an abrupt stop. I could feel Channing stiffen, as the tension grew. “Hello Corbin. Yes, I feel much better. Thank you.”

“I was happy to see you come in tonight. Please know that your drinks are on the house. It pleases me that you are safe and well.” He smiled while grabbing my hand and kissing the back of it.

When Corbin glanced over at Channing so did I. He wasn’t happy. Corbin smiled as he let go of my hand. “Enjoy the night Sweet Keara...and friends.”

“That’s the owner.” I said breaking through the uncomfortable silence.

“I know.” Channing said through gritted teeth. “We’ve met.”

I looked at Channing then at Jared. I cleared my throat. “He was the one that came by and drove me home the night of my accident.”

“Well thank God he was driving by then hun.” Jared smiled shrugging his shoulder.

“You know? I remember something else from that night

too. I remember hearing howling. I could have sworn that I saw a white dog. It was big.”

Channing’s eyes grew wide with surprise and then he regained his composure.

“Well I know you Keara. You didn’t go after it did you?”

“No Jared. I wanted to, but since I was alone I didn’t.”

“Maybe it was a wolf. I hear they are in these parts of Canada.” Channing smiled, his tension slipping away.

“I thought that too. I just am not sure. It ran across the road behind me, I caught a glimpse in my rear view mirror, but it seemed bigger than a wolf. If it is a wolf, I hope I get to see it up close. I love wolves, their so majestic and beautiful.”

As the music started I felt Channing put his arm around my back. His touch was so warm. Jared looked over at us smiling. I could just imagine what he’d have to say. He seemed to like Channing though. So did I.

The band was pretty good as we listened to their music. I would have gotten up to dance, but I was enjoying the closeness with Channing. When they finally played a slow song, Channing asked me to dance. I looked at Jared. “Go. I’m fine hun. This will give me a chance to call and check up on my man.”

I let Channing lead me to the dance floor. He twirled me around then pulled me in close to his chest. He was much taller than me so I just rested my head against him. He put his head on top of mine as we swayed to the beat. He smelled so good.

A chill ran down my spine and my hairs stood on end. I lifted my head and looked around. Channing looked down at me. “You okay?”

I ignored him for a few more moments as I continued to scan the room. There. Up on the second floor, Corbin was standing there watching us behind dark sunglasses. Another chill ran through me as I looked at Channing. He

had already looked up and saw what I saw.

“Just ignore him.”

I smiled. Corbin was giving me the creeps again. Why does he do that? Act normal one second and creepy the next. I just didn’t understand him.

When the song ended Channing looked down into my eyes. “You sure you’re okay?”

“I’m fine. Really.” I smiled.

He lowered himself so he was even with me. Grabbing my face between his hands he laid the softest kiss upon my lips. I felt my knees tremble and he slid his hand around my waist to steady me, while deepening the kiss. His lips were warm and soft just like I’d imagined. The heat he sent through my body reached to my core. The woman in me started to ache for his touch.

When he pulled away I was breathless. I opened my eyes to find Channing looking into them. “That was nice.” He said smiling.

I nodded as we started back to our table. Jared was grinning ear to ear. I smiled back before excusing myself to the ladies room. I needed to get my bearings.

I splashed cold water on my cheeks and looking into the mirror I couldn’t help but smile. *That was a nice kiss. He really caught me off guard, but I’m glad he did.* I patted my face dry with a paper towel and started out the door. I couldn’t wait to get back to Channing. Just as I got out of the door I felt someone grab my arm.

“Again we meet.” He said smirking.

I looked at him for a moment, then realized it was Corbin. *What was with the accent?* “Corbin. You scared me.”

He just smiled. His grip on my arm tightened, and I was instantly filled with fear. He started pulling me towards the door. “Corbin let go of my arm you are hurting me.” He pulled me into the parking lot. “Corbin let

go of me.” Panic was setting in. What was he doing?

I pulled back only for him to turn around, glaring with anger and mouth puckered. “Please let go of me Corbin.”

“My dear lady, I am afraid you have mistaken my identity. I am not that low life of a coward Corbin. I am Dante.” His grip loosened slightly and his face relaxed.

I was really confused now. He looked just like Corbin, then I noticed the shadow of hair forming a go-tee. “I see from the puzzlement on your face that you don’t recall our first meet. I also see you are fond of my brother Corbin. I assure you though that he is a waste of time. I know he has taken a special interest in you as well, and I just had to find out why. From your smell though, I can see clearly. You are truly mouth watering.” He smiled deviously.

He pulled me closer to him and smelled the air around me. “Absolutely mouth watering.” He repeated.

I felt the fear wash over me. I’m not sure what Dante wanted, but it wasn’t good. I could sense that much. Aunt Aingeal was right. I should have listened. As my tension built up, I felt my muscles contracting almost to the point of pain. As he continued smelling the air around me, the tighter my muscles got. I finally realized it was the guy from the first night that the club opened. The one that lost his girlfriend. That is why Corbin seemed so familiar and at times gave me the creeps. They were twins.

One minute he was smelling me, the next he was baring fangs moving in for the kill. I felt my body tighten, I felt a warm wetness envelop me, and I felt like I was looking through etched glass. Before I knew it I was on the ground in a heap, I could hear Corbin was yelling at Dante.

“No Brother. You mustn’t harm this child.”

I watched as Corbin and Dante circled each other,

with a deep hissing sound escaping their mouths. “How dare you Dear Brother. I was just about to feast on the best meal in centuries.”

“Not with her Brother.” I heard Corbin growl.

“You dare interrupt me? This is one too many times Dear Corbin.”

I felt myself being lifted off the ground. I started to kick and scream when Channing pulled me close and whispered in my ear, “It’s okay. It’s just me. It’s Channing.”

I felt my body relax. I looked down and could see the sticky mass covering my arms. I reached up to feel my hair. Oh man, it was a sticky mess. What was that? Gross!

A screeching hiss sounded and I saw Dante_c airborne as he went flying after Corbin threw him. “Not this time Brother. I am much stronger than you remember me. You will not get past me this time.”

As another high pitched scream entered the night I turned into Channing. He held me tight as I heard the fight going on behind me. I couldn’t bare to look.

“I will be back dear Brother. Mark my words, this isn’t over.” I heard Dante_c say and then there was a few moments of silence.

“Are you okay Sweet Keara?”

Channing tightened his arms around me. “This is all your fault. Just stay away from her.”

“Listen dog, I did not know my brother was coming to town. I have not seen him in a long time.”

I slowly turned around. “What did he want with me Corbin?”

“My brother, as you can see is my twin. In some form we have a deep connection to one another, as most twins do. My brother is a bit eccentric though, and we do not see eye to eye. He does not ever want to see me

succeed in life. Dante has always been much of a risk taker, and often doesn't think things through. He has lost much in his life, and hates what I possess. Basically, he wants what I have, and apparently thought I had you. There is much more to this story, and maybe someday I can share it with you Keara, but not tonight."

I looked at him for a long moment, remembering Dante's strength, and the way he looked at me like I was his last supper. "So what are you?"

"Sweet Keara. I have already told you this." Corbin smiled.

"I bet you told her."

"Keep quiet dog and let me handle this." Corbin lashed at Channing.

"I see how you have handled this. You've dragged your crazed brother here and placed Keara in harm's way!"

"I am warning you dog!"

"Why do you keep calling him dog?" I went to pull my hand through my hair, and was reminded of the sticky mess that surrounded me. "What is this stuff?" I wanted to cry.

Channing and Corbin both looked at each other now, then back at me. I could feel my tension on the rise. "What is it?" I demanded.

"Maybe we had better go somewhere more private and let you clean up, then we can talk." Corbin smiled.

"I will not leave her alone with you."

"You are trying my patience mutt!"

"If your brother comes back who will protect her, Dear Corbin?" Channing mocked behind gritted teeth.

Corbin contemplated that for a moment. "I would be distracted, though I do not think my brother will risk coming back tonight. He will need time to think of a new plan. I am much different than he remembers me." He thought for a few more minutes. "Very well dog. Let us

go get her cleaned up, then explain what has happened to her.” Corbin started leading the way.

Channing walked with his arm around my waist offering me comfort as I fought back the tears, looking at the sticky mass that covered me. We followed Corbin around to the back of Night Secrets, into a door that you couldn’t even tell was there until you opened it. Inside we walked through a hallway, again covered in that black mirrored material as on the outside of the building. I could see my reflection. I gasped in horror.

My hair looked matted and wet, my clothes were wet with a thick liquid covering them in spots and my skin looked like it had been sprayed with silly string, gobs of sticky blotches. I looked horrid.

Channing put his arms back around my waist. “It’s okay Keara. Let’s get you cleaned up. You will understand better after.”

Corbin lead us to another door. When we walked inside there was an office with a mahogany desk. A black leather chair sat behind it. A couch sat just to the right against the wall. In front of the desk were two chairs facing towards the black leather chair.

“This is my office. There is a full bathroom through that door. I will see about getting you some new clothes.” Corbin smiled, searching for understanding in me.

I nodded looking at the door. Channing kissed the top of my forehead and then let his arm fall from my waist. “I’ll be right here waiting.”

I opened the door to the bathroom. It was huge. Who has a bathroom like this? It had to be the size of my bedroom if not bigger. A full bath tub was in to the back left corner. It was kidney shaped and deep, I just knew it had jets like a hot tub. To the back right corner was a shower stall, with a sink to one side of it and a toilet to the other.

Again, I could see my reflection from every angle through the glossy black walls. A full vanity sat to the right with a closet of towels. To the left was a wardrobe closet. This bathroom was beautiful, of course I shouldn't have been surprised.

“Well, today it's going to be a shower. I can't wait to get this slime off me. The jets will have to wait until I go to the spa.” I undressed and climbed into a hot steamy shower. It felt wonderful as I tried to decide what I should be feeling.

Chapter 9

“The Making of Corbin”

I felt much better after my shower. When I got out there were clean clothes sitting on the vanity. I dried off and pulled on a pair of jeans and a Night Secrets tee. They fit, perfectly. I combed my hair and let it hang down my back. I didn't feel like drying it. “Oh my God Jared!” I ran out of the bathroom, bumping into Corbin who just happened to be standing right outside the door.

“Sweet Keara? What is your rush?”

“I forgot about Jared! He must be frantic by now.” I half screamed it running for the door.

Channing caught my arm, “Keara he is fine. Russell showed up and I promised to get you home safely. They left an hour ago.”

“Thank God. He'd have never forgiven me if I blew this night. Thank you Channing.”

“I think we must talk now Sweet Keara. There is much to discuss and I'm not sure how you will handle what we are about to tell you. Please sit down.” Corbin motioned toward the couch that was in the office.

I took a seat starting to feel a bit nervous. Channing sat down next to me and placed my hand in his ever so gently. Corbin pulled a chair up and sat down across from us looking a little nervous himself.

“I can hear your heart Keara, please try and relax. It will be a great deal better.” Corbin pleaded.

“What do you mean you can hear my heart? I am relaxed.” I lied through my teeth.

“Keara, just hear us out before you go getting all mad.” Channing suggested. “You may not like us after all is said

and done.”

I looked between the two of them, feeling their tension increase. “What is it you two? You are enough to make anyone nervous!” I was starting to think of a ton of questions and I just didn’t know where to start first.

“I shall start I guess. Unless you want to go dog.”

“Bite me Corbin! I think I *will* let you start first.”

“Do not tempt me dog, I may do just that!” Corbin sneered at Channing then regained his composure. “To begin, I just want you to know Sweet Keara, I would never in my existence want harm to bestow upon you. I didn’t know my brother was coming to town. I have not seen him in a very long time.” He looked at his hands in his lap.

“Why would you bring harm to me? You cannot control what others do.” I tried a smile, but it just seemed out of place in all the seriousness.

“Please Keara, let me finish.” I nodded without saying a word. “Thank you. A very long time ago, my brother and I were very close. As children we were inseparable, as twins usually are. Our mother had died during childbirth due to complications, and our father tried to give us everything we needed, even a new mother. When we were teens, our father brought home a young maiden, telling us he wished her to be his wife. She was a very pretty woman that didn’t know what she was getting into with an older man and two teenaged twins.” Corbin got that far away look in his eye as he remembered his past.

“My father and her married just a month after he told us of his intentions. They were extremely happy at first. My father was a wealthy man and cherished her like she was his first love. Her name was Elizabeth, and Dante took a special liking to her. After all, she was young enough to have been able to be courted by one of us.

“We never questioned our father about this decision. My brother though, in his fancy for Beth, started flirtatious behavior with her when our father was not present. She would giggle and carry on just like a school girl.

“One day our father had to leave town on business and left Beth home with us boys and the help. That first night my father was away, I noticed Dante and Beth strolling through the garden. I watched from our balcony as Beth laid the first kiss upon my brother. I could feel his excitement, and I knew it was wrong.

“That which excited my brother though, excited me and I knew it was wrong because she was our father’s wife, yet at the same time the excitement of our first kiss was memorable. It’s hard to choose between right and wrong when hormones take over.” Corbin got up and started pacing the room as he finished telling his story.

“My father had been gone for days, and each day in his absence my brother and Beth grew closer. When I tried talking to him about it he just accused me of being jealous because he was the one she was turning her attentions to. It did not matter how much I pleaded with him, he would not budge for he was falling in love.

“On the third night of my fathers absence, I felt every emotion Dante was feeling. He was filled with excitement and anxiety to the point it was almost hard to breathe. I wasn’t sure what he and Beth had planned, I just knew that something was about to happen.

“We had gone to bed as usual, but when Dante thought I was sleeping, I heard him sneak out of our room. I thought about following him, but then decided against it realizing it was better if I did not know.” Closing his eyes he shook his head at the memory. “Little did I know that I would know what happened, whether I wanted to or not.” He took a steadying breath.

“I was just about to sleep when I was suddenly brought to my senses by an unknown arousal. I laid there wondering what was happening, as I felt my manhood rising with what felt like each stroke from a gentle hand. I looked around to find myself alone in my bed. My breath caught with excitement and suddenly I could see Beth in front of me. Only it wasn't me with Beth, I was seeing through my brother's eyes, not my own.

“I suddenly felt her lips on mine, her hand on my thickness, gently stroking up and down. I watched as she slowly undressed herself then climbed up on top of us, lowering her wetness onto our shaft and riding us like she was in a rodeo. It felt as though we were one, experiencing this together. Dante must have realized I too was experiencing this as we started moving with her, faster and faster, pulling her onto us deeper and deeper, until we finally exploded in pure ecstasy. All three of us at the same time had an orgasm together. It was amazing and I wasn't even physically there.

“I looked down and then carried myself into the bathroom to clean myself up. I was amazed at the experience that just happened, and suddenly filled with guilt as I too felt like I had betrayed our father.” Corbin stopped talking for a moment.

“Corbin it wasn't your fault. You can't blame yourself. Some twins are just connected like that.”

Corbin shook his head and continued. “It was my fault. I should have stopped it. Dante was the stubborn one of the two of us though and you just didn't stop him from doing something once he set his mind to it. They continued on with their affair even after my father's return.

“They would sneak around and you could see that Beth was pulling away from my father. On the night Father learned of the affair, as you say here in America, all hell broke loose.

“My father banned Dante from the premises, forbidding him from ever returning. Beth was sentenced to her room, where she was only allowed to leave when my father gave his permission.

“My father seemed to go mad. He quit speaking to me as well. I missed my brother, and my father even though he was right there with me. I hadn’t heard or seen from Dante for months, and I couldn’t feel him neither. He had slipped away from me and I wasn’t sure if he was alive or dead. One night he showed up in my bedroom. I don’t know how he got into the house, but he was there. He looked pale and undernourished. I felt sorry for him, and tried convincing him to just come home. I feared for him.

“Many nights he would come visit. He would talk of his new life and his new family. With each night he tried to persuade me to join him. I just couldn’t bring myself to leave Father though. Not in his condition.

“Dante accepted my refusal and quit coming every night, but would still visit on occasion. I was sure he was sneaking in to see Beth as well.

“I watched my father deteriorate more and more, until finally he lay on his death bed. In his last breath my brother and I were both there as my father whispered his apologies. It did not matter to my brother though. He was already bitter from being banned from the family. Beth left with him that night, and I didn’t see either of them until my father’s funeral. They both attended, and I couldn’t help but to notice how Beth had taken on Dante’s skin tone and malnourished look.

“I encouraged them both to stay on at the house, but they refused and left together once again. I didn’t see them for months after that. I tried to connect to him through our bond as twins, but I could not feel him. I was starting to think I was all alone in the world.

“That is until they both came on a stormy night. The air was cool, the rain pouring down with lightening in the sky. The night was even darker as the clouds hid the moon. Dante and Beth came, demanding to allow them and their new family to move into the mansion. Looking at how awful they all looked I refused the “family”, but told Beth and Dante they were both more than welcome to stay. My brother argued in how he had as much right as I did to the mansion. We were both his sons. In the heat of the argument, we started to fight. He was always stronger than me, and in the middle of the tussle, I heard a high pitched hiss come from my brother.

“I backed up enough to see his teeth grow into fangs, just before he bit through the skin on my neck.” I gasped at the surprise, not believing, or maybe not wanting to believe it.

“Sweet Keara, this is just the start of it all. To you it may seem like a movie that you only thought was fictional, but to me it was and is very real.....

“Before I realized what happened, I felt this agonizing pain course through my veins with every beat of my heart. My brother was still suckling at my neck and with each suck the pain grew more intense. My heart beat fast at first, then slowly came to an almost complete stop. I thought to myself, ‘this is it, I’m surely going to die at my brothers hand, or mouth rather’, when suddenly my brother lay me down on the ground. My eyes were fluttering as I fought to stay conscious.

“At what seemed like the very last beat of my heart, I felt something warm against my mouth as a sweet liquid started sliding into my mouth. I started sucking at this liquid until I had the strength to open my eyes enough to focus. As this warm sweet liquid slid down my throat, I felt myself grow stronger. I opened my eyes to see my brother watching me through intent eyes. I forced myself

to pull away from him when I realized I was drinking from his wrist.

“He forced my mouth back to the open wound at his wrist telling me I needed to make sure I had enough or I would be sorry at the outcome. So I drank until he pulled away from me.

“It was then that I became a vampire. That night at my brothers will, against my own, I joined the family he spoke so highly of.”

You could see the sadness wash over Corbin. I didn't really like seeing him look like that. Channing and I both sat contemplating the story we just heard. I was having a hard time wrapping my head around it all.

Chapter 10

“A Reflection of Who I Am”

“A vampire? A real vampire?” I finally asked.

Corbin seemed to perk up at my not running scared by the idea that he was a vampire. “A real vampire Sweet Keara. I make this vow to you though, I would never hurt you.”

“I knew they were real! I suppose werewolves and warlocks are real too huh?” Channing looked at me quickly then looked to Corbin. “They...Are...Real?” I choked out.

“I’m afraid so my sweetness. They are all real.” Corbin smiled trying to make it seem better than it was.

“That’s why you keep calling Channing dog? He’s a werewolf?” I looked at my hand in Channing’s. He let go, not sure if I wanted him touching me. “So what are you going to tell me next, that I too am a dog?” I looked quickly at Channing, “Sorry.” I felt my face flush, *open mouth and insert foot Keara you dummy.*

“No. We don’t believe you to be a wolf or Channing here would have known by your scent. We do believe you to be a shape shifter though.”

“What! A shape shifter? What are you talking about Corbin?” I demanded looking at Corbin then Channing.

It was Channing that spoke now. “That slime you were covered with is usually what you see when a new shifter is born. What I mean by born is a first time shifter.

“When the shift takes place for the first time, the bones reshape themselves to accommodate whatever shape is going to be the outcome. During this transformation, our bodies, how shall I put this, ‘lubricate’, our bones to

assist in the reformation. During a first shift, an excess amount of this lubrication is made so that it's easier for the bones to move and realign as they need to. What is left after a full shift takes place is a puddle of sticky slime. You didn't fully shift though, you only shimmered and that is why you were covered with it instead of leaving behind a puddle." He smiled.

"Shimmered?" I frowned.

"It's when the shift only partially comes, sort of like a caged animal trying to break free. It happened so fast we weren't even able to get a glimpse of your beast."

I contemplated what they were telling me. It was all so surreal, like a bad dream. "So why did it happen tonight then? Why not before this?"

"We believe that the fear of Dante forced the change to start. When we arrived, you didn't feel as fearful and the change abruptly quit. You are not quite ready to shift yet."

"Then why is your brother after me?"

"That is another story. Some years after my transformation, there was a war that broke out among our kind. My brother became quite the gambler, always losing money and belongings. One night, he gambled with the wrong people, bringing the war upon us. Beth was killed, he blamed me for her demise, and has hated me ever since.

"He envies what I have, and now, what he thinks I have. He must have assumed you to belong to me, thinking he could destroy me by hurting you."

"He was here the first night the club opened. He grabbed my arm and stared at me for the longest time, claiming to have mistaken me for his lost girlfriend. He gave me the creeps."

"He has been careful not to make me aware, but he has been here for some time then. I should have sensed him, but I guess our ties are still broken, or he has

learned to block me. I won't let him hurt you Keara."

"I told you it was your fault Corbin! Damn you!"

"Watch yourself dog! I may still take you up on that offer to bite you!"

"Knock it off the both of you! We have bigger fish to fry right now." I needed to talk to my aunt. I should have listened to her. Now who was stubborn? Why wasn't I more afraid of what was going on? I think I should be more afraid, yet I feel eerily calm about the situation. Maybe I was in shock. "I need to go talk to my aunt. Now!" I stood up and started to head out the door when they both caught an arm stopping me.

"Sweet Keara. You mustn't go out alone, especially at night. It is not safe with my brother here. He will not think twice about killing you. He will do it out of revenge, he doesn't care about the truth of the matter."

"I will take you home Keara. Let's go. You get this brother of yours under control while I'm gone fangs! I will tell my family about this after I get Keara home."

Channing walked me to my Jeep and after checking the surrounding area, helped me into the passenger side and went around to get in on the driver's side. "What about your car?"

"Keara, I am a wolf. I can run back here faster than you can probably drive. I will be back to get it." He chuckled.

I stared out the window replaying the nights events. *Is that why I had pain in my muscles? Why my vision went weird? Am I really a shape shifter? I need to know what is going on!* I was probably going to drive myself nuts before I got to my aunt. "Channing, can I ask you a question?"

"Sure Keara. Go ahead."

"Are all first time shifts the same? Does every shape shifter experience the same thing?"

“No. We don’t all experience the same thing. It can be quite different for everyone.”

“Did you have pain the first time it happened to you?”

“Not really. My first time too was when I was scared. I was being bullied by another pack, but at the time I didn’t know they were pack. They knew I was a wolf, I just didn’t know it. They thought it would be fun to force the shift. So they bullied me and pretended to want to kill me until I shifted. My arms and legs cramped a little bit, but it happened so fast I didn’t have time to think about it. Once I realized what had happened I started kicking all their asses then ran home to my parents. My dad sat me down and explained the process and what it was that we were exactly. He worked with me to control it, so now it can’t be forced on me either. Only the really powerful leaders, an Alpha can force a shift.”

“When it started, my muscles cramped up bad. It made me want to cry.”

“Sometimes it does hurt, but you didn’t change completely either. That may have had something to do with it. Hey, what’s that on your necklace?” He was looking at my neck.

“It’s for protection. My aunt made me wear it.”

He reached over and looked at it while holding it in his hand. “That’s a Celtic Knot. It’s supposed to bring good luck. That may be what helped you tonight.” He dropped it returning his eyes to the road.

I clenched the knot in my hand, closing my eyes tight saying a little prayer of thanks. I really needed to talk to my aunt.

I raced to my aunt’s room, pounding on her door. “Wha’ is it Neacht? No need ta be bust’n tha door down.”

“Aunt Aingeal, I’m ready to listen.”

She looked at me for a long moment. “So ya 'ave met tha evil one? Come in an' sit down.”

“How did you know? You knew about him before I left tonight.”

“Me child, I am a witch. I h’ve ben blessed wit’ tha third eye, an’ spirit guides. I be see’n things before they be happenin’. 'as ben a gift since I was a wee one.”

“Something else happened to me tonight Aunt Aingeal. It scares me. I don’t understand it.”

“Wha’ is it child? Be tell’n me everythin’.” She lit a candle and pulled some crystals out laying them in a certain order.

I told her all about my night, even the almost shape shifting part. She never look startled or surprised, keeping an even expression until I was done. When I was finished, she closed her eyes, saying a little prayer making the father, son, holy ghost cross across her body, ending with kissing her pendant on her necklace.

“Neacht, this be wha’ yer father, rest ‘is soul, was afraid of. He wanted ta prootect ya from this world, tha’ others only be knowin’ as make believe. I tried ta tell ‘im he should be listenin’ ta tha Elders.” She took a deep breath.

“Ya see child, when ya wer’ born, tha Elders for’told tha’ ya would be doin’ great things. Thar was even talk tha’ ya may be tha next great Goddess of Ireland. Ya are a descendent of tha Goddess, Morgan Le Fay. It was inevitable tha’ ya should inherit moore th’n jus’ ‘er bloodlines.

“Yer father did n’t want ta ‘ear of any of this, an’ when things started happenin’ when ya wer’ jus’ two, he got scared an’ fled ta tha states with ya an’ yer mather, changing’ yer name in hopes it may interrupt wha’ was ta come. Yer full Irish name child is, Keara Morgaine Fay

Flannery. Tha name of a Goddess.

“Yer father thought by fleeing ta tha states tha’ he could prootect ya. Nev’r in ‘is dreams would he ‘ave imagined tha’ tha fairy tales an’ make believe would find ther way ta tha states as well as other countries.

“Morgan Le Fay is a Fae. She was a great Celtic Goddess an’ a shape shifter as well. She was a raven, an’ was able ta control many wit’ ‘er powers.

“I believe ya poossess tha raven, from wha’ ya ‘ave told me. When ya said tha’ ya felt like ya wer’ lookin’ through etched glass, well tha’ would be how a raven sees. Obscured vision. I also be believin’ tha’ yer necklace helped ya an’ also kept ya from shifting all tha way. Ya wer’ not mentally prepared ta shift Keara. This be causin’ tha body ta react differently when tha shift comes unexpectedly.”

“So I’m a shape shifter? Is it going to hurt like that all the time?” I remembered the pain I felt through my fear.

“No Neacht. It only hurts tha first attempts ta shift. Once tha change happens completely, ther be no more hurtin’.”

“So what else about Morgan Le Fay? Was she evil? Am I going to be evil?”

“No me child. Ya will not be evil. Morgan was known as a great Goddess. She was tha Goddess of tha circle of life, Priestess of the Sea, Goddess of Battle. She had many names.

“Though some believed her ta be evil, she never fully crossed that line into the dark side. She was believed ta be King Arthur’s half sist’r, an’ it has been told tha’ she was always tryin’ ta hinder ‘im in some way. Tha day King Arthur fell ill though, Morgan was tha first ta aid in ‘is recovery, takin’ ‘im ta a secret Isle an’ ‘ealing ‘im completely.

“She was able ta change shapes, an’ ‘er most known

shape was tha' of a hooded raven. She would 'elp durin' battle puttin' a spell on tha nemesis, an' th'n fly in ta feed off tha dead. Givin' her tha name of Goddess of Battle.

"She was also known ta shift into an elderly woman. She appeared at 'er lover several times in th's form, an' when he did n't recognize 'er, she grew angry an' swore at 'is demise in 'is next battle, killing 'im. She was seen on 'is shoulder in 'er raven form after 'is death.

"She is also a Fae, an' poossesses tha ability ta do faery magik. So she is capable of many things from 'ealing ta a death sentence."

She waited for me to take it all in. I couldn't believe this was all true. I thought shape shifters and vampires were only make believe. Of somebody's very wild imagination. A small part of me knew they were real or maybe I just wanted to believe they were. I can't explain it, but I just knew it. I guess I didn't want to believe it is all. "So what now? Why am I suddenly trying to shift?"

"Ya wer' fertold ta do great things Neacht. I believe ya are up against an evil force, a battle if ya will." She looked intently at me to make sure it was sinking in.

"A battle? I don't know the first thing about battle!" I was starting to panic. I couldn't fight my way out of a wet paper bag. How was I going to go up against an evil force?

"Relax Neacht. Tha time 'as come fer ya ta prepare. This Dante' ya speak of, 'e is tha evil twin of Corbin. From wha' tha spirit guides be telling' me, he wants ta destroy 'is brother. Ther' is a background of jealousy an' a lot of hurt. He believes tha' Corbin is tha reason fer tha loss of 'is true love.

"This evil one also be thinking' tha' ya are tha love of Corbin's life, an' seeks to harm ya ta make 'is brother suffer."

"Aunt Aingeal, I hardly know Corbin. How can Dante'

think that we are more than, well heck what are we? Friends?”

“Neacht, Corbin ‘as existed for many centuries. He be knowin’ wha’ he wants when he sees it. I believe he ‘as taken an interest in ya.”

I just didn’t know what to say. Why me? How do I always get myself into these situations? I never once gave the inclination that I was interested in Corbin. What about Channing? *I think my head might explode!*

“Neacht, it is a lot ta be takin’ in. So much in one night ‘as ben presented ta ya unexpectedly. Ya must rest. Drink this, it be ‘elping’ ya ta sleep. We will talk again in tha morning.”

I drank the tea she gave me. It was warm and sweet, and seemed to have an immediate calming to it. I felt my eyes grow heavy as Aunt Aingeal helped me to my bedroom. After she tucked me in, it seemed like seconds and I was in dream land.

Chapter 11

“The Great Goddess”

I couldn’t tell if I was dreaming or not. I was standing in front of a manmade lake, it was completely dark. I was half expecting Dante’ to come out of the darkness and try to kill me. What I saw though is not what I was expecting.

The light started small and could be seen across the lake. It was like a flicker from a candle with an orange - yellow glow. As it grew brighter, I realized something was moving towards me.

I squinted my eyes at the intensity of the brightness. Suddenly the light dimmed and standing before me, floating on top of the water was a beautiful woman. She

wore a long white gown with lace at the end of the sleeves. Her hair was a beautiful shade of chestnut and flowed down her back like a blanket draped over a horse. The shine made me want to touch it to see how soft it was. Her eyes were as green as emeralds, and they were looking right at me.

I was so overcome by her beauty, I didn't even realize she was staring at me. Just as the thought to run came through my mind....

"Fear not child. I will not harm you."

My heart raced, but my feet held their ground.

"I have a message for you young Keara." As she spoke her voice echoed ever so slightly giving her words an eerie effect. She floated closer to where I was standing. "I am Morrigan. The Great Goddess Morrigan. I have many names, though I believe you were told I am Morgan Le Fay."

I felt my heart spiral up to my throat at an accelerated speed. I felt like I might choke.

"I am your queen child. I am here to give you guidance. You have been faced with the most evil creature there is in your time. He wants your blood young Keara. There are many things you don't know about yourself. Things you must learn in order to beat this evil force that is upon you.

"You are a shifter. The change hasn't happened yet, but the next time it starts, you mustn't fight it. Allow it to complete. Only then will you gain access to the powers that are within."

"It hurts though. I don't want to shift. I'm not sure I want to be a shifter."

"Silence!" She screamed with a fierceness I have never heard, her voice echoing in the night and the glowing light around her emanating brighter.

I dropped to my knees and buried my head in my

hands. I didn't know what I was supposed to do, I just knew I didn't like her yelling like that. Why was this happening to me?

"Young Keara, it is in your blood. There is no choice in the matter. I too am a shifter. We are of the same mother. We cannot fight what we are meant to be."

"What do you mean we are of the same mother?"

"We share the same blood lines child. The same heritage. What is of me, is of you as well. If you allow them to come through, you have powers that will help you. You the Fae and a shifter. The powers you hold within will make you a force to fear."

"You must defeat this evil. The only way to do that is to unleash what is inside of you. Trust what your instincts are telling you. Trust who is there to help you as well."

"You mean Corbin and Channing?"

"They will be of great use to you child. There is a war coming, and you must prepare for it. You must make your own army for battle. Unleash the power and you will win."

"I'm not sure how to do that. I don't know what I am supposed to do." I couldn't hold the tears back any longer. This was all getting a little crazy, I didn't know how much more I could actually take before I had a meltdown.

"You won't melt young Keara. There is a lot to learn before the battle. You are young and this is all new to you. You are a Fae and a shifter too. This will help make you stronger. Trust your instincts child. Let the change happen. This is what will make you strong."

With that she started glowing again. As so many questions came through my head, she started gliding across the water back to which she came. Was I ever going to get the answers I needed?

When I woke up the next morning I was still in my room in my own bed. Aunt Aingeal was standing over me, waiting for me to wake up. I screamed.

Aunt Aingeal waited for me to come to my senses before she spoke. “Neacht, why do ya let things be botherin’ ya like tha’. Ya know ya are goin’ ta be somethin’ great, things should n’t be botherin’ ya. Ya will soon ‘ave tha power ta jus’ vanquish wha’ ya be fearin’.”

“Aunt Aingeal, you can’t stand over someone when they are sleeping and expect them not to scream when they wake up to someone standing there that shouldn’t be. It just doesn’t work that way.” I was still clutching my chest, feeling my heart racing inside of it.

“I be sorry me child. I was jus’ anxious ta hear of yer dream is all.”

I scrunched my eyebrows together wondering how the heck she knew about my dream? Was it even a dream? It seemed so real. I shook my head, “How did you know I had a dream?”

“Child, I am a witch. I ‘ave tha all seeing eye. ‘ow many times moost I be explainin’ this ta ya?” She was losing her patience.

“Sorry. I forget these things. It’s all new to me so cut me some slack.”

She nodded.

“You might as well pull up a chair.” I told her. I waited for her to grab a chair before I started. She was like a little kid sitting at circle time for the story of Where The Wild Things Are, that he’s hearing for the first time.

I told her everything that happened in my dream. When I was finished, I waited for her to tell me what she thought.

After a long moment of silence, “Not many ‘ave seen

Morgan ev'r bafore. She only comes ta those truly powerful. Ya mus' do as she 'as told ya Neacht. I'm afraid if ya don't shift before yer next meeting with this evil, 'e will be able ta defeat ya because ya will be distracted from tha change happening. Ya mus' shift before ya meet 'im again."

"Aunt Aingeal, I can't just shift on a whim. I don't know how to make it happen."

"Well how did it happen bafore?"

"It was when Dante' grabbed me and drug me into the parking lot. I guess I was scared."

"Holy crow child! This would 'ave ben so much easier if ya would 'ave grown up knowin' wha' ya wer' meant ta be. Damn yer father!"

"Aunt Aingeal."

"Well this is 'is fault. If he jus' would 'ave listened ta tha Elders. They told 'im of this. They told 'im ya wer meant ta do great things. This is jus' tha start of it." She was rambling more to herself than me.

I was so listening to what she had to say though. "The start of it?" I wanted to cry again. "What do you mean the start of it?"

"Oh Neacht. Ya be worryin' ta mooch. Let us be takin' one thing at a time. Shall we? Now I must go prepare a spell of prootection. Meet me in me room after ya shower." With that, she turned on her heel and left.

I was left alone with my thoughts, and that wasn't a good idea. Fear washed over me and I let the tears fly. Maybe I should call Channing. Maybe Corbin would be better. Oh my God what am I going to do?

I rolled over and threw the covers over my head. How could this be happening. Would it be happening if Mom and Dad were still here? Am I going to die?

I just didn't have any answers good enough. How could I? I don't even know what I am. How am I going to

tell Jared? I screamed as I got out of bed.

The flutter of birds wings startled me and I went to the window. I could see a flock of birds in the sky. They didn't seem close enough that I could hear their wings flapping like that. I could hear every flap as if in slow motion. As I stared at the birds, they seemed to be staring back.

Enough! I headed for the shower. I have just had enough.

Chapter 12:

“A Raven Exposed”

It's been days since I have talked to Corbin or Channing. I wanted to be alone to think about things and hardly came out of my room. I could hear my aunt chanting and casting her spells outside my bedroom door at times. Whether her spells would work or not I wasn't sure.

As I was coming to grips with what and who I really am, I noticed subtle changes taking place. For one, my hearing was becoming bionic. At times I could hear Jamison talking to the other staff as if they were right in my bedroom. I also noticed that my vision was becoming so much more vivid. When I looked outside, the colors were so vibrant, it was almost as if I was seeing the world for the first time.

Funny how sometimes we just sort of phase through life and never really see the beauty that the world has in it. Of course, it's not everyday someone finds out they are a faery and a shape shifter.

So days of solitaire and I finally agreed to allow Channing to pick me up for our official first date. We were meeting Jared and Russell at Night Secrets to hear Shot In The Dark 357. As much as I protested that maybe we should stay away from that particular club, I was outnumbered.

I heard Channing pull into the driveway. I pinned my hair up off my shoulder and looked one last time in the mirror. *Perfect.* I was actually getting kind of nervous. My palms were sweating.

I ran my hands under some cool water and dried them

before heading downstairs. Jamison had already let Channing in, and as I descended the stairs his beauty took my breath away.

As he stood there in my foyer, I was still taken back by the blue of his eyes. They were definitely like crystals, glowing with essence. His blonde hair fell loosely around his face, giving him a boyish, yet handsome look. As his eyes met mine, I felt my heart skip. I caught his scent and felt my nostrils flare as I took it in. He smelled delicious, even behind the slight scent of wolf. He was gorgeous.

He watched me with intent eyes. "Hello Keara. You look beautiful." He smiled taking my hand, bringing it to his lips for a kiss.

"Hello Channing." I smiled back, hoping my hands weren't sweaty again. If they weren't, they are now. I just couldn't tell.

We said goodbye to Jamison and headed to the club. Tonight Channing drove a shiny red Hummer with dark tinted windows. He must have something for red.

I scanned the grounds outside before letting Channing lead me to his car. I must have appeared apprehensive.

"We will be fine Keara. I will keep you safe. Dante' wouldn't dare come to Night Secrets in the open again." Channing reassured me.

He opened the door for me and helped me into my seat. After I was settled he leaned over me, grabbing my face between his hands. He brushed his lips across mine ever so softly. I felt the chill of excitement run down my spine. He touched his lips to mine again, deepening the kiss. "I just had to do that. You're irresistible." He whispered before pulling away and shutting my door.

The ride to the club was way too fast. I wanted to be alone with Channing. I wasn't really in the mood for people, but I promised Jared.

As soon as he had seen us Jared was rushing to our side. “Oh my God hun! You are glowing! You look stunning. Seems love wears good on you.” He smiled twirling me around to view my backside as well. When I was facing him again he pulled me in for a hug.

When he let go he looked Channing up and down. “You look pretty fab yourself Channing.” He licked his lips.

I smacked him. “Where’s Russell?” I asked to draw his attention away from Channing before Russell walked up and caught him ogling over him.

“Honey don’t worry about Russell. He is not the jealous type. He would probably think adding Channing to our bed would be tantalizing.” He chuckled knowing he would get a rise out of that.

Jared led us to the table and I gave Russell a hug. We sat down and you would have thought Channing and Russell have always been with us. We chatted like old friends. It was nice as we all got to know each other.

“You guys did great as usual Buddha.”

“Aye. Thanks Keara. ‘ow’s life bin treatin’ ya?”

“Good. Sorry I haven’t been to a show in a while. I’ve had a lot going on.”

“Can’t say we din’t miss ya, but I understand.”

I hugged Buddha bye and went back to say goodnight to Jared and Russell. “I had a lot of fun tonight. We should do it more often.” I hugged both of them and Channing shook their hands.

Channing had his arm around me as we walked out to his Hummer. “I wonder where Corbin was tonight. I was surprised we didn’t see him.”

“I was a bit surprised too. I figured ol’ fangs would have been there to see his ‘Sweet Keara’”. He smirked.

“Very funny.” I was actually surprised that this was the first we had spoke of Corbin or mystical creatures all night. He opened my door again and I was halfway into my seat and gasped. “I forgot my jacket.”

“Oh. Okay, I will run back and get it. Be right back.”

I nodded and closed my door. He was really sweet. I loved the smell of him, how his eyes glow even brighter when he looks at me. He was handsome too. How did I get so lucky?

Just then my door opened. “Wow that was....” I couldn’t even finish my sentence before being ripped out of my seat. Dante’ gripped my wrist so tight I thought it might break. “Let go of me!”

As he started dragging me by my wrist across the parking lot I felt my muscles tighten. I knew soon it would be followed by the pain.

“Your precious Corbin isn’t here tonight to save you, *Sweet Keara.*” Dante’ mocked Corbin in a daunting tone.

The pain was creeping in. *Don’t fight it Keara. Just don’t fight it.* My bones felt like they were going to burst from the inside out. I could feel them literally wanting to break. My muscles started cramping and it doubled me over.

It was enough to have Dante’ stop and look back at me. “You cannot fake sickness Keara. I don’t fall for human tricks that easily.”

The pain worsened, and I could feel the muscles in my calves and thighs tighten like a wrung towel. I fell to my knees. I heard the first bone crack as it tried to reshape itself. My fingers stretched outward and I cried out in pain.

“What is happening to you Keara?” Dante’ let go of my wrist when he felt the bones move under his grip.

The muscles tightened in my back and neck, bowing my back and forcing my head towards my chest. "Oh my God!" I cried out. The pain was horrible.

The skin tore as the bones reshaped themselves. Yellow and white goo started pouring from the openings where the skin ripped. My vision started changing, again like I was looking through etched glass. I heard more bones breaking. It hurt so bad, too bad to cry even. I clenched my teeth, trying to breathe through it. *Just don't fight it. You're fighting it!* I knew I was fighting it. It was so sudden I couldn't even think.

More warm liquid flowed from my body. I could feel my hair starting to stick to my face. The next thing I knew, I could see clearly. I was looking down at the ground, and I saw Dante' staring up at me. I looked around and realized I was in the air above, gliding on feathered wings. I looked at my body, my wings, shiny and black as night. A raven. I was a raven.

I started to descend to the ground, when a wave of fear washed over me. I wasn't sure I could land on the ground. I didn't even know how I was flying. Then just like that, not far above the ground, my body shifted back and I fell to the ground. *Ouch that hurt.*

I lay there on the ground, trying to sort through my brain what just happened. I could barely move, my muscles felt limp. I tried lifting my hand to feel my hair. It didn't want to co-operate.

"No wonder my brother is so smitten with you Keara. You're a damn shifter!" His voice seemed loud in my ears as he knelt beside me. "First shift huh?" He mockingly said. "The first shift is always a bitch. Leaves your body catatonic after. I've seen it many times. Makes for an easy hunt. Takes all the fun out of playing with your food though." He laughed.

He smelled the air above me. "Even covered in that

shifting lacquer, you still smell mouth watering. I can't believe I didn't sense it before." He licked his lips, showing his fangs. "I believe a quick taste, a sample of the good wine would be delightful." He grabbed a handful of my hair pulling my head to one side, baring my neck. "You are like a fine wine Keara. My mouth is watering just thinking about it."

His fangs were out fully now and he was moving closer to my neck. I thought for sure I might die, right here, right now. I closed my eyes tight.

I felt his warm breath on my neck, the heat from his lips as he rested them on my neck. He pulled back just slightly, taking in another breath. His tongue danced in circles, just above my jugular. *I'm going to die.*

It hurt like a nail being driven into a wall as his fangs pierced my skin. He slurped as he drank my blood down. I could hear every contraction of his throat as he swallowed. I got a vision of a beautiful young girl, with flowing brown hair. She was in a vintage dress with a bonnet on her head. Her eyes were blue as the sky.

'Rip'. The vision was gone and I reflexively brought my hand to my neck. Thankfully it moved. Dante' was gone.

Chapter 13

“Knight in Shining Fur?”

Growl. Hiss. Growl. Hiss. I turned to see what the noise was. Dante’ wasn’t gone, but attacked. Attacked by the most beautiful creature I have ever laid eyes upon. Circling Dante’, was a large, silver and white wolf. He was larger than an average wolf, maybe the size of a pony. As they circled around, I could see this wolf had the brightest blue eyes. *Channing*.

“What are you going to do mutt? You are just a pup, no match for me.” Dante’ laughed.

Channing growled even deeper. He lunged for Dante’. I heard the tearing of skin. More growling and hissing. I watched still unable to move. I could feel my muscles tingle with sensation. I would be able to move again soon.

I heard a yelp and blood splattered. My heart raced as I wished desperately to help. Channing pounced again, sinking teeth into Dante’s arm. Dante’ ripped him from his arm, throwing him across the parking lot. Thud. You could hear Channing land like a car being dropped from a crane in the junk yard.

I stared at the battle before me, my thoughts running wild. Thank God Channing came when he did. Dante’ probably would have killed me. I wonder who that woman in my vision was. I would have to talk to Corbin about this.

So I was a raven. Aunt Aingeal and Morgan said once I shifted I would unlock powers I didn’t know I had. I don’t feel any different. I wonder what powers they were talking about?

The sound of glass breaking brought me to reality. Dante' was thrown into a car, breaking the front windshield. He flew up off the car, landing on his feet in front of it. Channing charged at him again. I watched Dante' levitate above the ground, just before Channing got to him. Channing realized his miss, spinning around. Only his claws digging into the asphalt of the parking lot as he was trying to get traction to turn around could be heard.

The sensation returning to my legs and arms left me sitting up trying to get my bearings. As feeling came completely back I was able to stand up. Knowing that it would make Channing angry, Dante' was at my side like a flash of lightening. Wrapping fingers through my curls and yanking my head to one side, fangs pierced my skin once again. A scream whisped past my lips as pain shot through my body, feeling like metal shards ripping into my veins. Energy was literally being sucked from my body. As fast as the pain came it was over as he released from my neck, still holding me with his arms. Lowering me to the ground, a warm liquid could be felt against my lips. Feeling a bitter taste in my mouth I tried pulling away only to have Dante' force his wrist into my mouth leaving me no choice but to drink what was given.....his blood.

Changing from a bitter taste to a sweetness, the realization hit hard that this is what happened the night of my accident, only it was Corbin giving me blood instead of Dante'. New found energy could be felt revitalizing my cells and I now wanted more, gripping my own teeth into his arm. Sucking faster and faster, it was like a high from drugs as his blood filled my mouth. It was also Dante's turn to panic as he now tried to pull away and my teeth dug harder into his skin the more he tried to get away. I heard him scream before feeling myself flying through the

air.

Channing was upon him just as he ripped me from his wrist, and with such force I screamed out in pain. Channing flew into Dante' and they both tumbled to the ground. I couldn't move.

Chapter 14

“Surprise”

Out of nowhere a big, brown wolf appeared. He was bigger than Channing and his fur was dark, like chocolate. He howled and then charged for the fight. Dante' had met his match with two wolves and ran like a scared rabbit being hunted. Channing and the brown wolf howled at their victory.

I could feel my consciousness slipping away. I fought to keep my eyes open when I saw both wolves standing in front of me. Channing whimpered and nuzzled his nose to me. I reached up to pet him. *Was that even proper? To pet the boy you were attracted to?* I chuckled at the thought and both wolves looked at me as laughing caused the pain to flare.

Then, much to my surprise, the brown wolf shifted back to human form. In too much pain I couldn't even gasp. It was Buddha.

“I know lass. Do n't be tryin' ta talk. I did n't want ya findin' oot this way. She's purty hurt here Channing. We best be gittin' 'er ta Corbin an' see wha' he can do.”

Without another word, Buddha picked me up in his arms and carried me to Corbin. We walked into the back door of Night Secrets and down a flight of stairs. He wasn't taking me to where Corbin had let me shower. The stairwell was dimly lit and seemed to go down forever. It amazed me how Buddha didn't strain at all while carrying me.

“Open tha door thar lad.”

We walked through the door and I squinted against the light as it grew brighter. I knew I was weakening and

could barely lift my head to look around. I closed my eyes and waited.

After several more minutes, we walked through another door and I heard Corbin's voice. "What happened?"

"Your brother." Channing snapped.

"Dante'." Corbin didn't sound pleased.

"I thought you were with her dog."

"I was with her, your brother is a bit crazy and relentless."

"No arguin'. We need ta git Keara fixed. She be bleedin' purty bad."

Buddha laid me on a couch and Corbin kneeled beside me. "How you doing Sweet Keara?"

"Just fix her fang face." Channing was growing impatient.

Corbin ignored him, keeping his focus on me. He moved my hair to examine my wound. By the look on everyone's faces, I knew it must look pretty awful.

"Quickly. You must get Aingeal."

I heard the door slam as someone went for my aunt. When I looked over, Buddha was still pacing the floor, so it must have been Channing that went to my house. Corbin stayed by my side, offering comfort and a damp cloth. The pain in my neck was almost excruciating. I know I was slipping in and out of consciousness when I didn't remember my aunt getting there.

"Oh Neacht. Wha' happened?"

The room was silent. I waited for someone to speak as my aunt stared at me.

"Sumone best be tellin' me wha' happened ta me niece."

Channing retold the nights events. "Aye. Evil." I heard my aunt spat. After he was done, my aunt said some sort of chant and lit something on fire while doing it.

Pointing at Corbin, "Ya can 'eal 'er."

"How?"

"Ya mus' be sinkin' yer fangs in tha same spot tha' evil one did. Drink 'er blood until tha bitter taste is gone."

Corbin sat down beside me. The people in the room looked serious. "I'm sorry to have to do this. It's going to hurt some."

Pushing my head aside and moving my hair out of the way, Corbin bent his head to my neck. I felt the hot breath from his mouth just before he sank his fangs in. The burning sensation was immediate. My neck felt like it was on fire and that someone was stabbing a rusty nail into me over and over again.

Chapter 15

"M.I.A."

It turned out that Corbin's vampires couldn't find Dante'. He had not been seen in weeks. We all assumed that he fled the country, knowing Corbin would be hunting him. What we never thought is that we would become the hunted.

Corbin drank from me that night and immediately we had a connection. It felt like a bonding of sorts, and I wasn't sure if it was from him drinking my blood or some magic my aunt did. I know I must have been looking at him strangely when he responded with, "Don't worry Sweet Keara. You will not become a vampire. Shape shifters cannot be turned. Their blood though, when we feed from them heightens our powers beyond belief. That is why my brother is so enticed by you. You make him feel invincible."

The dizziness was fading and I was able to keep my focus more readily. I hadn't blacked out since Corbin removed...well whatever it was that Corbin did from my wound. I sat up slowly, making sure I wasn't going to pass out from the change in position. "So what do we do now?"

"We hunt." Corbin smiled.

"We hunt?" I raised my eyebrows.

"Yes. We find my brother and he will be punished for what he's done to you. Please excuse me while I speak with my entourage." He stood up to leave.

"Corbin?" Channing said before he got to the door.

"What is it mutt?"

"What do you need from the pack? We are offering our

services to help find Dante'." Channing looked over at me with a worried look upon his face. "We will do anything you need to keep Keara safe."

"Oh...Neacht will be safe now. She will n't be 'angin' wit' tha likes a ya noo more." My aunt said sternly.

"Aingeal, now we must work together. If Keara is to be protected, we can't have you trying to lock her away in a dungeon. She can be escorted at all times if need be. If she stays in one place too long, Dante' will find her." Corbin warned.

"Aunt Aingeal, you can't keep me from my friends. I'll go crazy. Besides, I'm a shape shifter too, doesn't that mean something?"

"No Neacht. It does n't. Ya are a raven tha' has n't learnt ta use 'er powers yet. Tha' makes ya an easy target."

"I'm sorry to say Keara. You're aunt speaks the truth. Now if you'll excuse me."

"I'll excuse ya alright. Puttin' up with tha likes a 'im." My aunt shook her head while cleaning up her things.

Buddha nodded to Aunt Aingeal, and then walked over to me. I stared at him not sure what to say.

"ow ya feelin'?"

"I'm okay. So you're a wolf?"

"Aye. Sorry I did n't tell ya. Is n't somethin' ya spark up a conversation ya wit' if ya be kn'wn wha' I mean."

"I guess not." I chuckled.

"I'm glad ya be alright Keara. Ya 'ad me worryin'."

"Thanks but I'm fine."

He bent down and kissed my cheek. "I'll be seein' ya th'n. Channing. Tell tha pack we be ready when they are."

"Ok. I will be sure to let them know." It was Channing's turn to take a seat by me. "I'm glad you're okay too. You really had me scared."

I smiled looking into those ice blue eyes. Seeing sadness in them my smile faded. "What is it Channing?"

"I was just really worried. I don't want to lose you."

"You're not going to lose me Channing." I couldn't help but to smile.

Channing looked to see where my aunt was and then leaned in and laid the softest of kisses upon my lips. Electricity surged through my body as I felt the heat from his breath mix with mine. He smelled like a wolf, musky mixed with pine. His smell was slightly different after shifting than his human form. I guess the wolf was stronger in that aspect. I heard someone clear their throat and Channing quickly pulled away from the kiss.

"We be 'avin' none a tha' now. Git yer things wer' 'eadin' 'ome."

"Aunt Aingeal you have impeccable timing." I growled. Channing helped me to my aunts car and I watched him as we drove away. I couldn't help but wonder when I would see him again. I raised my fingers to my lips, still feeling the sensation of his kiss. *What a kiss it was.*

"Ya need ta be keepin' yer head outa tha clouds lass."

I didn't say a word as I looked at her. Why did everyone have to be so serious. I liked Channing and it would be nice to be a little normal at times.

"Ya be 'earin' me Neacht?"

"Yes Aunt Aingeal. He's so hot though, and a great kisser to boot." I smiled with a dreamy sigh.

"Listen 'ere lass. I think ya n't be realizin' tha seriousness of yer situation."

Aw man. She had to ruin my moment. I wiped the smile from my face.

"Thar is a nasty vamp 'untin' ya. He be a wee dangerous I migh' add. Ya need ta be on tha lookout an' be prootectin' yerself."

"I get it. I get it. I'm still a teenager. I have a right to

dream." I turned my head and looked out the window. I didn't want to hear anymore. My cell phone rang; saved by the bell. "Hello."

"Keara?"

"Hey Corbin. Did you find him?"

"Well I have a search party out hunting my brother. I want you to be on the lookout tonight. I don't think he'll return tonight, but just in case, keep all your doors and windows locked."

I chuckled some. "Do you really think that will keep him out if he's determined to get in?"

Silence.

"Corbin?"

"No I don't but you will hear him and that will give you more time to call someone or run or whatever you must to keep safe."

"Lighten up Corbin. I'll be fine."

"Well we have some wolves patrolling the boundaries of your property too."

"Seriously?"

"From Buddha's pack. He insisted. That boy really admires you."

I thought about Buddha's surprise tonight. I never expected him to be a werewolf. What a shocker. "Fine." I was still trying to take everything in. How often does a teenage girl find out they're a witch/faery, and a shape shifter that is destined to do great things, all in one night? Plus the whole vampire and werewolf thing I'm still getting used to. Let's not forget being hunted by a deranged vampire that is out just to hurt his twin brother, who just happens to be a vampire as well, and doesn't care who he stomps along the way. *I'm getting a headache.*

"Very well my Sweet Keara. Sleep well and I will be in touch tomorrow."

"Goodnight Corbin. Oh, and just in case I don't see

Buddha, tell him I said thanks." I hung up the phone.

My aunt was looking at me every couple seconds. "Is thar a problem Neacht?"

"No, but you might be happy to know there are wolves staking out our house."

"Aye. Tha' pack be a good one lass. We can be trustin' 'em."

I know I saw a smirk before she quickly composed herself. We drove home the rest of the way in silence.

Chapter 16

"The Woman in Me"

The wolves continued to patrol our property for the next few weeks. Between Corbin, Channing and Buddha I didn't think I'd ever get any sleep. If one wasn't calling, then they were stopping by. If they weren't stopping by they were stopping in....my bedroom window. I had a balcony just off my bedroom and it was nothing for them to jump up and peer in my window to make sure I was still in bed and sleeping, unharmed.

Tonight would be Channing's turn to stop in. When I heard a growl I turned to face the window, finding Channing squatting in the window frame.

"Hi." He smiled.

"Don't you know how to use the door? Do any of you? It's not like you need to be sneaking around."

"It's more challenging this way." He smirked. "Plus, if you were sleeping I didn't want to wake you."

"Who can sleep when there's a vampire hunting you and wolves that won't let you rest." I smirked back.

"We just worry about you Keara."

I sighed. "I know. It's just that I hate having babysitters all day everyday. I'm a bit too old and it makes me feel like a kid. I am a shapeshifter too, I can't be all that vulnerable."

Channing jumped off the window sill and landed with no sound. Sitting next to me on my bed he put an arm around my shoulder pulling me into him. "It's only for a bit longer. We're just trying to find Dante's whereabouts. He's an old vampire and that makes him powerful. The fact that he's a bit deranged makes him a dangerous

vampire. We are just taking precautions."

"I know that. I'm just frustrated."

"Plus you are still learning about your powers and abilities. So yes, that makes you vulnerable." He kissed the top of my head.

I looked up into those gorgeous blue eyes. My heart melted along with my frustration. He was so hot when he was being serious. He raised his hand to my cheek and caressed it softly. "I would hate myself if anything happened to you." Then he brushed his lips across mine.

As my heart started to race, he deepened the kiss. I took in the moment, feeling the warmth of his lips against mine. He was such a good kisser, soft and passionate. I couldn't help but wonder what it would be like to do more than kiss him and felt my body react. My mind wandered and wetness flowed at my core. Just the thought of it made me squirm. He slowly pulled back from the kiss. I couldn't bring myself to open my eyes just yet, for fear he would see the desire in them.

He kissed my nose and I let out a sigh. I knew then I was falling for him. "Stay with me?"

"Are you sure?"

I nodded my head. "I'm sure."

I held the blankets up and patted the bed beside me. He crawled in, and the heat radiating from his body was relaxing. He snuggled up against me wrapping his arm across my waist. I backed into him getting as close as I was able. I was trying to relax my libido when he kissed my neck. I didn't think I was ready for this. I needed a distraction. "How did you become a wolf?"

"I was born this way. It's genetic." He slowly ran his hand over my hip.

"Do you like being a wolf?" I cleared my throat, shifting under his touch.

Feeling the heat radiate off of him, he brought those

warm, soft lips to my neck. My body stiffened, and I was unsure what to do. He continued laying soft kisses down the length of my neck, and the woman in me took over. I turned meeting his lips with my own, feeling the heat rise under the blankets. His hands ran the length of my body and I felt my body respond, wetness pooling at my core.

Slowly he eased his hand inside my shirt, my nipples becoming hardened peaks. He flicked his finger across my nipple causing me to sigh. Sliding my shirt over my head, he closed his mouth around my nub, the wetness from his tongue sending a shiver of excitement through me. I arched my back, my breathing becoming heavy.

He ran his hand down my stomach, ending at my mound. Sliding my panties off, he let his fingers run in a circular motion across my clit, the wetness growing. Slowly he slid his fingers between my folds, entering into my warmth. My legs automatically fell apart, giving him the access he was seeking. "I won't hurt you Keara." He panted. I could feel his manhood rising to the occasion and I moaned.

"I know." For the first time I was sure this is what I wanted. I reached down and wrapped my hand around his shaft, giving a gentle squeeze. When he moaned, I stroked him from the base to the tip.

He moved between my legs, kissing my mouth. As the passion intensified, I wrapped my legs around his waist. Looking into his eyes, he positioned himself above me. "Are you sure?"

Pulling with my legs, his shaft entered between my folds, and I moaned out in pleasure. Slowly he pushed deeper inside of me. Sweat formed across my forehead and I wanted more of him. He worked his way in until his cock was immersed in my wetness. Finding a rhythm that was our own, he swallowed my moan with a kiss. Running my hands down his back, I felt him shiver as my

nails dug in. My hips met his every thrust, moving faster and faster. Bringing my legs above his shoulders, he penetrated deeper, bringing me to the edge, my eyes closed tightly and my breathing ragged.

“Please look at me Keara. I want to see you.”

Forcing my eyes open, I stared straight into those ice blue eyes as he moved his hips faster, pushing himself deeper inside of me. We were both panting and sweat poured from our very being. I dug my nails into his back and we both moaned as the orgasm took us both into oblivion.

With us both trying to catch our breath, he rolled to the side. Brushing my hair from my face he kissed me, letting me know he enjoyed our time together as much as I did. As our breathing slowed, we curled into one another and the exhaustion from our love making washed over us. This would be one night I would never forget.

I felt hot breath on my face and I thought I was dreaming. When the hiss like a wild cat erupted, the hand tightening around my neck, I opened my eyes in a panic, gasping for air.

"Well isn't this just cozy!" Dante' hissed through gritted teeth, throwing me against the wall.

Channing jumped up already transforming into his wolf. Dante' charged at me, nails scraping my skin as Channing ripped him from in front of me. I grabbed my neck trying to get the air to pass through.

Dante' broke free once more, charging me. I closed my eyes, waiting for the pain. It didn't come. Peeking through my lashes my vision was extremely clear. The raven broke free and I didn't even feel it coming. Channing had gripped Dante' around his waist, struggling to keep him at

bay.

"Get out of here Keara!"

I took flight, wings tapping the frame of the window that we had forgotten to shut and lock, allowing Dante' entry. I squawked as a raven does, alerting the rest of the patrolling wolves. From high above I could see the wolves scrambling to get into my room. Snarling and growls erupted from my window.

I circled, praying Channing would come out alive. Dante' wasn't just angry or seeking revenge. I could smell the jealousy pouring off him like sweat. I moved in closer to try and see what was happening. A long branch from a tree nearby seemed perfect to get a better view. Landing with ease surprised me. *Where in the hell were these powers I was told I would have? The only thing I have is the ability to shift. A raven was not going to help me against a big bad vampire.*

I could suddenly hear a knocking on my door. Jamison and Aunt Aingeal were on the other side. "Keara? Are you okay?" I heard Jamison muffled by the door.

Dante' leapt through the window, the wolves nipping at his heels. I flew back in and rolled on the floor in the middle of turning back. Jumping to my feet I grabbed my night shirt, quickly sliding it back on. Running to the door, I unlocked it and pulled it open. Acting sleepy, I yawned. "What is it Jamison?"

Jamison knew nothing of our family secrets and Aunt Aingeal and I agreed to keep him in the dark about it. He's been with us a long time, but I just wasn't sure how he would react to me being a shapeshifter with faery majik. That is if it ever came. I may just be one that didn't inherit the majik.

"We heard banging around. Did you fall out of bed?"

"Yes I did. Bad dream. You guys can go back to bed. Sorry I woke you."

"Would you like me to make you some tea Miss Keara?"

"No Jamison. I'm fine really. I'm just really tired and I'm going back to sleep."

"Very well. G'night Miss Keara."

"Good night Jamison."

He looked at Aunt Aingeal, pausing a moment before heading back to his room. One thing was for certain, Jamison was no dummy. Before long he would figure out we were holding a secret. A very dark, night secret.

"Ya alright child?"

"I'm fine, really. He was here but the wolves chased him off." I looked out my window towards the woods. I hoped they either caught Dante' or chased him off for good. Now that he knows I have the wolves close by, he may just deter from entering my house again. I hoped Channing came back too. I missed him already.

"Ya best be lockin' 'em windows tight Neacht. Do n't be takin' any chances, ya 'ear?"

"Yes Aunt Aingeal."

She walked away shaking her head. "I swear yer goin' ta be tha death of me child. I be puttin' together anoother spell of prootection." She mumbled as she returned to her room.

I heard a tap on my balcony and almost screamed. This time it was Corbin. I closed my door and went to the balcony. "Corbin, you about scared me half to death."

"I'm sorry Sweet Keara." He started pacing, deep in thought. "I'm taking you away from here. I couldn't bear it if any harm came to you. I need to know you're safe."

"What are you talking about Corbin?"

"My brother is crazed. I can smell him, his emotions. I think he's confusing you with Beth."

My eyes grew wide and my jaw dropped open.

"He is acting like our father, only worse because he's a

vampire. He's more dangerous than I thought. I need to keep you safe." He pleaded with his eyes.

"What about Jamison and my aunt?"

"They will be safe once you're gone. It's not them that Dante' wants."

"Where would we go Corbin? My life is here."

He stared at me a moment before answering. It was almost like he was at war with himself. "Ireland. I started Night Secrets there. It's an underground world, a safe haven for all vampires. A place they can feed, a place mortals can live out their fantasies. It will be safe there and Dante' will not get in without us knowing. He won't ever reach you there."

I stared at him in disbelief. This is what it's come down to? I have to leave my home, my family and friends, Channing? Just when Channing and I were getting started? Tears welled in my eyes, threatening to fall over. "When?"

"Now. There's no time to waste."

Channing jumped back through the window, startling us both. "We lost him." He looked between the two of us standing on the balcony. "What's going on?"

Seeing the tears in my eyes he rushed to my side. Burying my face into his chest, I let the tears fall over, water breaking the damn.

"What have you done fang face?"

Corbin turned around, and the pain he was feeling was evident, even without special powers.

Channing kissed the top of my head. "What is it Keara?"

"I have to leave."

"What? Where are you going?"

"Ireland."

Letting out a long breath, Channing tightened his arms around me. Corbin still stood with his back to us, not

saying a word. Channing just held me until the crying ceased.

When I was breathing normal and Channing knew the tears were finished, he pulled my face from his chest, lowering himself to my level. "I had a feeling it was going to come to this. I want you to be safe Keara. I don't know what I'd do if anything ever happened to you. As much as I hate to agree with him, Corbin knows his brother best. We will get through this." He kissed me, not hiding the desire in his eyes.

Corbin turned to face us. Looking at us, he cleared his throat. When we looked up, he spoke directly to Channing. "I believe that Dante' is deranged worse than we thought. I think he believes Keara to be Beth. I could smell his emotions as soon as I stepped on the property after tracking his scent here." He waited, and I assumed he was expecting Channing to flip out." I will take her into the Underworld."

Channing nodded, accepting the seriousness of it. "I will speak to Aingeal, let her know what's happening."

"I need a shower. I'm glad you two have decided my fate without even considering that I have a say over my own life." Annoyed, I headed for the shower. How dare they treat me like I'm a child. I'm now a woman for God's sake. I stood in the shower for a long time, afraid to come out. I couldn't help but think that they were just going to whisk me away and I really didn't want to leave. I wanted to bring Jared along so I could have something familiar. I knew that was impossible. I wouldn't expect Jared to leave his life behind, including Russell.

When the water started running cold I turned it off. Standing in front of the mirror staring at my reflection, I pondered my fate. Tears flowed down my face, and I kept repeating to myself that it wouldn't be forever. Dante' had to be caught someday, right?

"Keara?" Channing spoke softly.

I took a deep breath and exhaled, squaring my shoulders and drying my face. "I'm going to Ireland." Heading for the door, I looked over my shoulder at my reflection one last time. *Time to face the music.*

Chapter 17

“Going to Ireland”

We came up with the story that I was going to do some research on my parent's plane crash. It was the best we could come up with that wouldn't cause Jamison to worry so much. Aunt Aingeal had prepared everything, even a few vanquishing potions and spells of protection. Jared got the same story as Jamison, though I had the feeling he knew something else was up. I never was any good at keeping secrets from him.

Aunt Aingeal hugged me goodbye. "Now ya be sure ta be wearin' tha' necklace at all times. It will be keepin' ya safe, ya 'ear?"

I nodded hugging her back. "I will Aunt Aingeal." It surprised me how close we've grown since I became a shapeshifter. I never would have thought it the first day I picked her up at the airport. Now here she was seeing me off at the airport. Irony.

I watched the planes land and take off through the large window in the terminal. Panic struck at the realization that this is exactly how my parents were killed. I was about to board a death trap and I wasn't sure which would be worse. Dying by the plane crashing or by Dante' sucking the life out of me.

Channing rode with us to see me off and was walking me to my departure point, holding my hand. Feeling it tremble he stopped and turned to face me. "What is it Keara? Why are you suddenly shaking?"

Tears again. I was starting to feel like the child they felt needed protecting. "My parents were killed by a plane crash just before I met you. That's why I never returned to

school."

Pulling me in close, his arms enveloped me like receiving blanket. "It's going to be fine." He kissed the top of my head.

"I don't want to leave you." I breathed in his scent, burying my nose in his chest.

"I'll be right behind you."

Lifting my head I looked into those gorgeous, entrancing eyes. "You're coming to Ireland?"

Leaning down he planted a kiss on my lips, causing things to stir that didn't need to be stirred here. Breaking our kiss, I fell into him as my lips tried to follow his. "We are just getting started. I'll be there before you even have time to miss me." He pecked my lips again, teasing.

I tried faking a pout, but the thought of him coming to Ireland was just enough to plant a permanent smile on my face. "You better be right."

"It's time to go Keara." Corbin came to grab my bags.

"How come you don't have any bags Corbin?"

"I've a home in Ireland and here, as well as a few other places. I don't need clothes to travel back and forth." Holding his arm out, he waited for me to willingly join him.

I looked into Channing's eyes one more time. Unable to stand the goodbye, I quickly kissed him. Grabbing Corbin and looping my arm through his, we started walking away. "Don't be too long." I yelled over my shoulder winking at Channing.

"I won't." I could barely hear him he was talking so low.

Corbin checked my bags and we boarded the plane. Waiting for take-off was agonizing. Thoughts of the plane crashing swept through my brain like a tornado. I had to change my thinking fast or I was going to be in a full panic attack mode. Closing my eyes, I thought of me and Channing making love. It was enough to relax my mind. Smiling now, I imagined him still standing watching our

plane. Before I knew it we were taking off, and I waved to the airport, hoping Channing was there waving back.

Corbin grabbed my hand and laced his fingers through mine. "It's for the best Keara. It's the best way I know to keep you safe."

"I know." I forced a smile. *I know.* I wasn't sure how long we'd be gone, or if we'd ever find Dante' before he found me. I knew the people that cared about me most wanted to keep me safe. If this meant allowing them to take me to Ireland, I would be the woman I keep claiming I've become and go. Aunt Aingeal said she will be alerting family of my arrival and they would help me figure out exactly what powers I was to be withholding. I've always wanted to see Ireland again anyways. The timing just couldn't have been more wrong.



BK Walker is currently living in Central Pennsylvania with her three children, Brittney, Hunter, and Daniel. She works as a pediatric home care nurse which she truly enjoys. Always having a love of writing, she has created a world of her own through her imagination and her muse. She loves to write paranormal romance and has also dabbled in dramatic romance. BK is working on her first Young Adult Paranormal Fantasy, and has learned so much through her writing endeavors. Helping other authors to promote and market their work, she also founded The 'Virtual Book Tour Cafe' and a book review site at BK Walker Books. With a huge love for animals, supporting Animal Rescue Organizations such as ASPCA and Pit Bull Rescue, she loves spending time with her dogs, a pit bull named Rancid and daschshund named Sadie, an adoptee. BK also owns a kitten named Whiskers and a goldfish called Fat Albert with room in her heart and home for more.

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