



In The Mind Of Darkness

Patricia A. Rasey

ALSO BY PATRICIA A. RASEY

Deadly Obsession

Eyes Of Betrayal

Fear The Dark

Facade

The Hour Before Dawn

Kiss Of Deceit

IN THE MIND OF
DARKNESS

BY

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IN THE MIND OF DARKNESS

A Short Story By Patricia A. Rasey

In the recess of the doorway, Sebastian stood with his back against the cold brick wall. Though the evening was cool, no vapor left his nostrils. His insides were as chilly as the night. No warm blood ran through his veins. He had ceased to exist centuries ago.

No one noticed his presence in the shadows, for the glowing embers of the streetlights barely lit the sidewalks. This breed of people bustled, always in a hurry, never keeping hours. At any given time, humans were easily attainable. That is why Sebastian loved the city; food was always within reach.

He came and went like a mystical shadow, choosing his victims carefully. Because of his alluring dark looks, most were willing. His eyes, black as twin coals, were like mirrors reflecting the moon's light; his long black hair, a curtain of silk, was as iridescent as midnight. Women drew to him like the Angel of Darkness, offering him their souls.

Little did they know how easily he could take that spirit with little or no effort, sending them to the hell he abhorred. He had no problem using women for his own purpose, as he had little choice. He needed them for survival.

Sebastian was always discreet, placing his small puncture-like

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wounds where they would likely go unnoticed, high on the back of the neck beneath the hair line, taking no more than he needed for survival. Murder would never be a part of his nightly ritual, nor would he think to give them a part of his existence and turn them into what he had become.

These women would not remember him; it had been one of his given powers. Come morning, he would be nothing more than a shadow in their memory, a blur in the darkness.

Sebastian led a tortured existence—one he detested. Immortality had not been a choice given to him, but rather chosen for him. Everyone dreams of living forever, but until one lives it, no one truly knows of the desire for death. To him, death meant eternal damnation, sent to the Prince of Hell. Had Sebastian the inclination to spend eternity with Satan, he would have ended his life eons ago.

No, Sebastian wanted back what was stolen from him, the chance to die in peace and live eternally in the place some called Heaven. Somehow, he hoped to find a way out of his dilemma. If there was a solution, then Sebastian meant to find it. Surely, the God of this Heaven had made him suffer long enough for past sins.

Watching the city dwellers rush by, he remembered a day long ago when he, too, was one of them before forced to live this life of eternal humanness...

* * *

At twenty-two years of age, Sebastian had led the carefree youthful life, always looking for excitement. If it didn't find him, then he went in search of it. He would have none of what his father envisioned, a betrothal with lands to behold. Hell, he was too young, by god. He had plenty of years ahead of him to saddle himself with a wife and brats. For now he would drink and enjoy a carnal engagement whenever the opportunity arose, which, with his leering good looks, arose quite frequently.

But one night, as Sebastian strolled along the docks, a seedy tavern

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appeared like a phantom from the mist, rising off the bay along the New England coast. The night had been particularly foggy due to the sudden shift in the weather, but he had known the area fairly well. Or at least he thought he had. Never had he stumbled upon the likes of this place.

Entering the establishment, the heavy oak panels flapped behind him. All eyes lazily turned in his direction; most already appeared well into their cups. Sebastian chuckled as an old fisherman swayed in his seat, then fell to a heap on the wood-planked floor. His companion grasped the old guy by the collar and righted him, brushing the dirt off the man's face. Then, as if nothing had happened, both resumed staring into the bottoms of their drinks. Drunken sot, Sebastian thought, ignoring the rest of the tavern dwellers and approaching the bar.

Women of stature never frequented a place such as this, but Sebastian was uninterested in the women who would not. He wanted action, and what better way than to pay for a whore. No strings attached—no unwanted bastards.

Sebastian had been born to wealth and pennies held little significance to him. Had he wanted to, he could have bought himself an entire harem.

A booted heel resting on the brass foot rod, Sebastian ordered a whiskey. "Better, yet," he told the unfamiliar bartender, "just bring me the whole damned bottle."

The man nodded his balding pate without so much as a word, then set a full bottle of the amber-colored whiskey in front of Sebastian, along with unclean empty glass.

Sebastian tossed some loose change on the counter. The old man greedily snatched up the coins in his gnarled hands, the skin weathered with wrinkles, the veins standing out like road maps of time. Sebastian feared age, never wanting to become decayed like this decrepit old man. But he had little to worry about; youth still stood on his side.

Ignoring the glass, he tilted the bottle to his lips, then wiped the

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moisture from his mouth across his sleeve, leaving a watery track. The burn of the sour whiskey traveled from his esophagus down to his toes.

He glanced about, thinking the place odd.

Conversation was nonexistent. Men bowed their heads, as if finding the answer to the world's problems was somehow hidden in the bottoms of their half-empty glasses. As Sebastian became ready to call the eerie place quits, a cool breeze blew in from the coast, sending the paneled doors dancing on their hinges.

The hairs rose on his nape.

Mist rolled across the floor, drawing Sebastian's attention to the doorway. A beautiful, raven-haired woman, seemingly floating into the room across the mist, approached him. Sebastian shook his head. Surely he would have thought himself drunk as a fiddler, but he'd had only a swig of whiskey. His eyes couldn't have been playing trickery on him already.

His gaze held fast on the woman, one of the most exotic creatures he had laid eyes upon. Her complexion appeared overly tanned for this time of the year, causing Sebastian to wonder from what foreign country she originated. Obviously, she was new to the area, for someone as comely as she, would not go unnoticed.

She stood beside him, an amber jewel suspended from her neck, speaking of money. "The usual," she said to the bartender in a throaty whisper.

Sebastian turned to face her, one arm leaning on the highly polished bar. "You're a regular to these parts?" he asked, narrowing his gaze. "Why haven't I seen you before?"

"The time wasn't right."

Her response startled him nearly as much as her appearance. She tipped the red-colored drink to her lips. Her pink tongue darted out, capturing the last of the moisture.

Sebastian's groin tightened. *Dear God, he had died and gone to heaven?*

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“You’ve seen *me* before?” he asked, commenting on her queer statement.

She smiled. “I have.”

Women regularly pursued him, but none quite this exotic. He wanted—hell—he *needed* this woman beneath him and he wasn’t about to leave this tavern without her.

“Then why wait until now to approach me?”

“You were never alone.”

“Should that have mattered?”

She sat her empty glass on the bar, faced him, and ran an icy index finger down his coarse jaw. The contrast of her cool touch to his fevered skin sent shivers dancing along his spine.

“I wanted you alone,” she whispered.

His heart hammered in his throat. His blood ran hot and thick, ending with a near-painful ache in his groin.

Threading his fingers through the hair at the side of her head, he pulled her close. “And I want you alone...now...beneath me.”

The woman giggled, though no sign of a blush could be seen. She ran a finger along the rim of her empty glass before sticking it between her lips and suckling it.

He could barely breath. His throat nearly closed as he attempted to swallow. He wanted this woman like he had never wanted another in his life. But before he could offer a suggestion of taking their little engagement upstairs or elsewhere, she sidled even closer.

Her hand cupped his erection.

Sebastian swallowed the lump that hampered his breathing. He looked nervously around. Not a single patron paid them any mind. At this point, Sebastian doubted, had he tossed up her skirts and took her against the bar, not a single drunken fool would notice.

Hand still holding his genitals, she said, “I’m Rebecca.”

Sebastian could hardly believe his luck, and within minutes of her cradling his family jewels, he lay beneath her as she unabashedly rode

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him in a bed above the tavern. Never had he experienced such passion, such raw abandon, as though he might just explode from the sheer pleasure. The amber jewel about her throat, marking the hollow pulse point of her neck, began to glow. Sebastian's gaze fixated on the light as he gritted his teeth against the onslaught of his climax. As his body prepared for release, Rebecca bent over him and licked the throbbing heartbeat of his neck.

Her cat-like tongue was his undoing; his world splintered like shards of bright light and his hot seed spilled forth. Sebastian tilted his head into the mattress and groaned as his body convulsed.

Sharp teeth sank into his exposed neck.

"Dear God," he nearly screamed. Warm blood slipped down his neck and soaked the rumpled sheets as Rebecca held onto him with inhuman strength.

Sebastian bucked and flailed, trying to dislodge the mad woman. But soon his energy waned and lightheadedness settled in.

"What's happening?"

Unable to lift his hand from the bed, his body lay limp, zapped of strength. He could not have moved had he wanted. All the while, the creature atop him suckled and slurped until Sebastian thought no more than an empty shell must remain, a body without any life's blood.

He tried to cry out, but no sound left his lips.

His life slipped through his veins and out the holes of his neck. Though he could no longer move, his mind remained sharp. He watched as Rebecca left him, her flawless body turned into something barely recognizable.

A fiend.

Fresh blood, *his* blood, surrounded her mouth as her tongue darted out to capture the moisture from her lips. Slowly her form returned to the exotic creature of before. She pulled her silk dress over her head and gathered her hair in a comb at her nape.

All the while he wanted to rant and rave, to scream at her to give

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back what she had taken. But he could do nothing. Somehow, he was trapped in his empty shell. Fear seized his gut like a vice; panic fluttered within.

Obviously reading his terrified thoughts, she blew him a kiss. “You, I shall return for. Before the sun rises, you will be a creature of the night, a fiend in the realm of life.” And with no more of an explanation, Rebecca vaporized like a phantom into the shadows.

Sebastian tried to sit, though his body still would not cooperate. He cried for help, but again no sound emitted from his lips. His mind screamed in agony; his nerves felt none of the pain. For hours he pleaded for someone to aid him, but no one heard. Only when he thought this to be his fate for leading an unholy life did she return.

Her eyes, no longer black, glowed amber like the jewel about her neck. Her pearly white fangs contrasted against the darkness of her mouth. Her smooth-as-silk hair appeared wild as the winds.

“Have no fear, dear Sebastian,” she hissed. “I’ve come for you. You shall remain in eternity as one of us.”

Us? he thought.

“Us,” she repeated, as if able to read his mind. “I’ve returned to give you the blood of the Nosferatu, the vampire.”

Sebastian’s soul winced and screamed as Rebecca bent over him, giving him little choice. She made a quick slice of her wrist with the razor sharp point of her nail. Blood dripped from the wound as she held it over his dry, parched lips. Unable to help himself, like the suckling of a starving babe to a breast, he lapped at the blood when she placed her arm against his mouth. Disgust turned his stomach and sent the bile to rolling, but still he drank. An icy coldness trickled into his veins. The power of many men seeped into his muscles—a strength like nothing he had ever felt.

Finally, Rebecca released her wrist from his lips, then floated effortlessly beside the bed. Her features softened, becoming the beauty he had first thought her to be.

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Testing his newfound strength, like a colt standing on wobbly legs for the first time, Sebastian rose from the bed, his feet not quite touching the plank floor.

Without her uttering a sound, Sebastian knew through his thoughts what she conveyed.

The powers you now have, I shall teach you to use. Watch and listen and I will show you all the ways of the Nosferatu.

Why me? he wondered.

She laughed, more like a high-pitched shrill, grating to his newly keen sense of hearing. *It's simple. It's because I desire you like no other. We shall rein throughout all eternity together—side by side.*

For one hundred years, Sebastian had stayed with the vampire witch, needing to learn all she had to teach him of their existence. But finally, the day came when she revealed the last of the secrets. He easily separated from her, eluding her as she went in search of new conquests, temporarily bored with him.

For four hundred years, he merely existed.

Never once did he create another fiend as Rebecca had created him. Sebastian could not bring himself to force the tormented permanence he led on another human being. For the past five hundred years, he watched those he had come to love and care for grow old and die. As his loved ones aged, he was forced to disappear from their lives and watch from a distance, so as not to allow them to see his agelessness.

He no longer wanted to feel, to care. Sebastian held himself at bay from all who tried to touch his life...

* * *

Even now, staring out at a passerby, he silently cried for release from his endless torment. Alone in the world, he watched from his shadowed doorway as hunger seeped into his veins once again and clawed at his soul. The desire to feed became a passion of its own, driving him with a force he could never learn to fully control.

The time to feed would soon be upon him.

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Stealing into the night, he walked along the darkened streets, blending in with the nightlife. No one knew how close evil beckoned.

A tenuous line of mastery kept him from feasting like the animal he knew himself to be, waiting for the right opportunity to present itself—an unsuspecting but willing victim.

As he neared the club his band, Kindred, frequented, he noted a scantily dressed woman standing beneath a streetlight.

“One hundred dollars for a blow job,” she purred as he walked by.

The ache in his stomach stopped him three feet beyond.

“Change your mind, sugar?”

He turned on his booted heel and extracted a hundred from his pocket. His entire body numbed with the promise of fulfillment.

“Mmm.” She licked her painted lips. “Aren’t you a sweet thing? I’d almost do you for free”—she snatched the hundred from his hand—“but I won’t. A girl’s got to make a living. Where to, honey? You got a car?”

Sebastian shook his head, not trusting himself to speak, already feeling the change to his teeth. He grasped her hand, turning his head as not to let her see the amber glow of his eyes.

“Follow me,” he whispered, leading her to an alley near the club.

She giggled and ambled along, trying her best to keep up with his brisk pace on her stiletto heels. The sound of her shoes echoed off the pavement and filled the night air. Rounding the corner, very little light illuminated the darkened back street. Sebastian shoved her against the brick wall.

The woman squealed in delight. “My, my, sugar, you are in a hurry. Though I gave you the price for a blow job, for you, honey, I’ll let you do it all, right here against the wall.” Proving her willingness, she squirmed in anticipation and pulled her short red miniskirt up over her hips, revealing black garters with no matching panties.

Sebastian gently grasped her neck, his fingers caressing the pulse of her throat. The animal in him wanted to rip the arteries from her veins;

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the humanness gave him restraint, though very little.

Sebastian growled. The whore mistook his guttural sound for one of pleasure. Her hands snaked down his silk shirt to the zipper of his leather pants, finding him placid.

“Well, sugar, what do we have here? I thought you wanted me?” Her tone held accusation laced with a bit of humor.

“I do.”

Sebastian’s amber eyes glowed off her face as he locked gazes with her. Her lips rounded to scream, but Sebastian rendered her speechless. He lifted the hair at her nape and brought her heated flesh to his mouth, sinking his pointed cuspids into the soft flesh as easily as hot steel slides through butter.

The thrill of the skin giving way to an elongated teeth was better than any sexual encounter could ever be, leaving him no longer placid.

The woman stood spellbound, held fast against the brick wall. Sebastian suckled with the greed of a newborn, feeling the warmth of her blood travel through his body like a shot of good whiskey, appeasing the gnawing hunger, bringing his gut-seizing rage under control.

The animal temporarily banked, he withdrew his teeth, holding the woman fast, lest she land in a heap at his feet. The changes came slowly at first—his teeth retracted back into his gums, the glow of his eyes returned to black mirrors, his dagger-like nails becoming short and well-groomed.

Only then did he release the whore and set her on the pavement, her back resting against the wall. Sebastian smoothed the hair over her nape, kissed her cheek, then extracted his hundred from her cleavage and disappeared into the nightclub through the alleyway entrance. Her neck would be tender when she awoke from her stupor, but she would have little or no recollection of him.

Tommy, the band’s manager, immediately spotted Sebastian. “What took you so long, man? The set was supposed to start ten minutes ago.”

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"I was hungry."

"Christ, you'd think that body of yours is hollow or something." Tommy shook his head with a laugh, then jumped up on the back of the stage.

Sebastian opted for the stairs. "It is," he grumbled, though he doubted Tommy heard as the signal was given to the guitarist and the beginnings of a riff filled the air.

The crowd came to its feet as Sebastian approached his microphone, raking his long hair out of his face. His lips curled back in a snarl even Rebecca would have been proud of. "Are you ready to *rock*?"

The roar of the crowd rose as they stormed the stage, all vying for a place in the front.

"Then let's *roooooock!*" Sebastian howled as the rhythm of the drums behind him had his hips swaying in time.

His eyes fixated on a woman toward the back of the club, who had become his constant, as he began the words of a tune he had sung at least a hundred times. Long blonde hair curled softly about her ears. Pale blue eyes, the color of the Mediterranean, worshipped him with adoration. His thoughts traveled back to a night in his past when he had first gazed into those eyes...

* * *

Kindred had played their last set of the night and Sebastian had approached the bar. "Whiskey," he told bartender, who promptly set a half-full glass of the amber liquid in front of him.

Sebastian knocked it back, tapped the polished surface, and the bartender quickly refilled the glass. About to make a speedy retreat, hunger gnawing at his gut, instinct stopped him where he stood.

Eyes bore into his back—he could sense it clear to his soul. Half-afraid to turn around and find Rebecca had tired of her latest conquest and returned, he stood ridged. His shoulder blades ached from stiffness. After all, she *had* promised they would rein through all eternity together.

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But upon turning, he found a small petite blonde instead of the exotic dark beauty he had predicted. The antithesis of Rebecca. Where she was dark, this beauty was pale. Where Rebecca was wicked, this woman seemed innocent.

Sebastian approached the young enchantress against his better judgment. Her eyes widened. He feared the slightest provocation would send her fleeing from his presence. To her seeming guilelessness, he must surely appear evil incarnate. Though he knew it would have been better had she taken flight, for her good as well as his, he could, for some reason, not bear the thought.

Something more than mere comeliness drew him to her. Hell, *he* should be the one to flee. Too many nights he had gone home alone, holding himself at bay, that this woman seemed like a breath of fresh air to his rotting flesh.

He stuck out a hand. "The name's Sebastian."

"I know," she said. "I come here to watch you—I mean, the band—quite often."

Her face reddened at her admission and tilted downward. Using the pad of his thumb, he brought up her chin. She turned her head to the side, still not making eye contact with him.

Walk away while you still have time, he scolded himself.

Instead, he said, "Don't be shy."

"It's just that—"

"That you didn't want me to know you were interested?"

A jolt like heat lightning sizzled across his skin as their gazes locked for the first time. In that instant, Sebastian knew he had lost the will to leave.

"What's your name?"

"Angela."

"Angel," he whispered.

"Excuse me?"

"I'm sorry, would you mind if I called you Angel?"

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“I don’t suppose.”

“Would you mind if I called you?”

Again, she blushed. Sebastian reached out, smoothing his callused hand down her soft cheek. Something about her felt right—more right than he had felt in centuries. Though his conscience warned against involvement, his humanness wished to embrace it.

“I would love it,” she admitted.

One year later, he still could not believe his luck in finding her. Sebastian knew better than to fall in love, knew better than to allow her to be a part of his life. But it was too late, he had fallen as Adam had for Eve. Angela had become as much a part of his being as the hunger that clawed at him nightly. He likened going without her to missing a night of feeding.

Soon, though, the thin veneer of happiness would crumble and fall; he could sense it. Sebastian could already feel the approaching end like the coming of the Millennium. A relationship built on lies would quickly vanish and truth would rear its ugly head.

Though Angela thought she knew all there was to know about him, much more lay beneath his surface that he could never reveal. And before long, the questions would begin, demanding answers Sebastian could not give, lest he earn her revulsion of his true inner self...

* * *

Now, the band’s set ended and Sebastian tossed his microphone to the ground. In a sudden sour mood, and wanting to be in the company of no one, he jumped from the stage. Women pawed and strove to touch him. Giving no more than curt nods in way of acknowledgment, Sebastian headed for the side of the club where a set of stairs led to a small room used between sets. Most of Kindred preferred to mingle amongst the throng and enjoy what little celebrity they had gained. But not Sebastian.

He preferred solitude, anonymity.

For centuries he had lived without companionship and had become

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accustomed to it. It had become a necessary way of life.

A small knock sounded on the door. Even with his keen hearing, Sebastian barely heard it over Axel Rose's vocals on "Paradise City," a CD being spun by the DJ.

Ignore the knock, he warned himself, not wanting to be in the company of who he already knew stood on the other side of the thin wood. But his heart had other plans; it ached to see her, longed to hold her.

Finally, Sebastian opened the door.

"Can I come in?" Angela's eyes glistened with unshed tears, as though she, too, knew he must soon set her free.

The air hung thick between them.

He had nothing to offer. Hell, he would trade all eternity to be able to give her what one day she would want—a husband and kids.

Satan surely laughed in his face at this one. For now Sebastian longed for what he had tried so hard to avoid when he was but a lowly mortal—a *betrothal with lands to behold*. Leave it to the face and heart of an angel to have him yearning for a life he could no longer have.

He opened the door wider, then closed it behind her.

"What's the matter with you?" Her voice broke from tears she held at bay.

Sebastian gave her his back. His spine ached as he held himself straight. "Nothing."

Angel pushed at his shoulder, forcing him to turn and glare at her. He had never wanted to hurt her, but knew this day would ultimately come.

"Damn you, Sebastian. Don't do this to me. Don't you dare end it like this." She smacked his hard chest. "I loved you, dammit."

Tears slipped past her lashes and down her cheek. He used the pad of his thumb to wipe away the wetness. She swatted away his hand.

"Don't you think that I feel the same way?"

"Do you?" More tears fell.

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“Don’t cry, my sweet angel.” His voice sounded husky even to himself, but he couldn’t cry had he wanted to.

“Don’t you dare pity me.”

Sebastian blinked. “Pity you?”

“I could see it in your eyes the moment you opened that door.”

He barked in mock laughter. “Pity you? My dear, that is pity for myself you see so plainly in my eyes. Pity that I can’t give you your heart’s desires.”

“Why? Be honest with me for once in your life. Tell me why you can’t give me what my heart longs for. As if you even know what that is.”

“You want a husband.”

“And at the age of twenty-one, is that really so terrible?”

“No,” he sighed, sitting heavily onto a padded chair that faced the door.

Angela straddled his lap, grasping his face within the palms of her hands. Sebastian groaned, already feeling the desire to take her running thick through his veins. After centuries of not comprehending, he finally understood how Rebecca must have felt. He wanted to make Angela his—to have her by his side through all eternity. But just as he resented Rebecca for giving him this life of immortality, Angela would one day resent him.

“Then tell me, Sebastian, is it because you don’t love me?” She kissed his chin, then nuzzled his cheek.

“Love you?” he choked out. “My god, if I loved you any more, I think I would burst.”

Sebastian wrapped his arms around her, bringing her flush against him. Her face tilted up and his lips met hers with fervor. He wanted to convey in one kiss how much she had come to mean to him. His tongue parted her lips and explored the softness of her mouth, eliciting a moan from her. His groin hardened as he felt the strong need to show her the extent of his love.

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But now was not the time, not with another set starting in fifteen minutes. He broke their embrace and set her slightly away from him.

“Why are you pushing me away?” Her tender touch smoothed down his coarse jaw. “I’ve felt it for weeks. Like there is so much of you that you aren’t willing to give me. I want all of you, Sebastian, not just half.”

“My dear, you couldn’t imagine how I wish I could give you all that you ask. But believe me, there is so much about me that I can never tell you—or anyone.”

“Why?”

He could feel the ache in her heart, clear to the soul he no longer had.

“Because you would grow to hate me.”

“I don’t care about your past. That’s what this is about, isn’t it? You should know that by now. I love you for who you are today.”

Sebastian chuckled, the sound full of malice and no humor. “You have no idea what you are asking.”

“What could you possibly tell me that you have done in your years on this earth that would turn me away? A lot of people have past lives they are not proud of.”

“Some of us have present ones.”

Angela stood suddenly, as though stung. She glanced down on him, looking deeply into his eyes, as if she might somehow read the answers in their depths.

“Is there another woman?”

As if on cue, a shrill laugh came from behind Angela, turning Sebastian’s insides to ice. “I’d like to hear the answer to that one.”

Rebecca.

Angela twirled on her heel to see the exotic beauty standing in front of the closed door.

“I didn’t hear you come in?” Angela startled.

Rebecca chortled again. “My dear—I come and go like the wind.

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I've no need for doors."

Angela's brows knit together as she glanced from the woman to Sebastian.

"He hasn't told you about me?" Rebecca floated over to him, grasped his chin, and tilted his taut face upward.

He wanted to rip the non-beating heart from her chest with his bare hands. And would have, had he knew it would end her existence.

"Tsk, ts," she scolded. "You forget so easily that I can read your intentions. My dear boy, 'tis I who made *you*."

"I haven't forgotten," Sebastian spat. His teeth clenched with such force, it surprised him they didn't crack beneath the pressure. Every part of his being steeled itself against the returning witch.

His gaze flew to Angela, who stood along the wall, eyes wide in fear as she continued to glance from one to the other. Sebastian wanted to go to her, explain everything about himself, confess all. But the time for that had passed. Rebecca had returned and Angela would be forced to see the horror of his true being.

His fangs elongated past his lower lip. His eyes glowed unnaturally amber, heating his eyes sockets. He didn't need to see the changes, he felt each and every one of them. The sheer horror in Angela's eyes brought life to all his fears of the past year, making him wish the night they first met he would have followed his initial instinct and fled.

Rebecca tilted back her hideous head and cackled, mocking him. He wanted to tear her arteries from her throat with his teeth. He wanted to stake her outside at dawn and watch her incinerate.

Her face sobered. "You can't kill me, Sebastian—again, I created you." She walked an arc around him, a sharp-nailed finger tracing a circle from his chest to his shoulder blades and back. "Besides, 'tis a bit too late to make amends with the little one."

"Bitch," Sebastian hissed.

Her smile widened, exposing her fangs and reddened gums. "Tell me something I don't know, dear Sebastian."

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“That I will never be yours.”

Rebecca sighed, floating over beside a pale and trembling Angela. She winced at Rebecca’s touch. “You would take this human creature over me?”

“I would take anyone over you.” Sebastian’s rage flared, knowing his hate mirrored in his glowing eyes.

“Temper, temper.”

“Stay away from her,” he warned.

Rebecca approached Sebastian, stopping just outside of arm’s reach. “Or what?” She giggled, glancing back to the horrified girl. “Looks like the damage has already been done, dear boy. You should have told her—now I think ’tis irreparable.”

Sebastian glanced at the object of his despair. Angela slid down the wall, hugging her knees to her chest.

“What are you?” Angela asked, barely audible. Her lower lip quivered.

Sebastian wanted to take her in his arms and smooth away her fears. But he knew, however, she would never welcome his hold. Rebecca was right. He could not amend what the witch had destroyed in one breath.

“Tell her,” Rebecca prodded. “What damage is there in that now?”

Her laugh cut like razors through his skin, slashing him to mere shreds. He would kill her one day. It would be his covenant.

“I already told, you can’t kill me, silly boy—I gave you life.”

“No!” Sebastian slowly closed the gap between him and Rebecca. “You *destroyed* my life.”

Angela’s sobs broke loose and nearly tore through his hate and anger to wrench his cold heart from his chest.

Rebecca chuckled. “Your love for her will be your undoing. You can’t even focus your anger on me because you are too worried about the silly little chit.”

“You want all of my anger, bitch?”

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“ ’Tis much better than your neglect of me for a few centuries. I thought if I gave you time, you would come back. Well”—she stomped her foot, trying to drive her point clear through the upstairs floor as the room vibrated around them—“I’m tired of waiting.”

“Now who’s acting like a child, Rebecca? Wait a few more hundred years, a few thousand—and I will still never come to you.”

Angela slid inch by inch along the wall as she tried to move toward the door unnoticed.

“Stay,” Sebastian bellowed, fixing her to the floor. He had never raised his voice to her before, nor had he ever the need.

“How precious. Your little plaything needs you, Sebastian. Go to her. You, I will deal with at another time.”

He grasped Rebecca’s shoulders and pulled her body flush with his. His teeth gnashed. “We will deal with this now.”

Rebecca rolled her eyes, as though he were no more harmful than a pesky puppy. “Really, Sebastian, temper, temper. It will be the downfall of you yet.”

“*You* will be my downfall.”

“Me?” Her eyes widened, though he could see the amusement in them. “That little chit”—she pointed a razor-sharp fingernail at Angela—“and many more like her are your downfalls, Sebastian. You worry too much about not being more like them. You want to see the sun rise, walk in the daylight, have babies, grow old and die. I gave you eternal life—you will never see old age. But *you* chose to be unhappy about it. Can’t you see the gift I have bestowed on you?”

“A gift? A gift?” he roared. “Did you ever once think to ask me if it was a gift I would want?”

“Anyone would have begged for what I gave you.”

“Anyone but me.”

Rebecca stood silent; her eyelids thinned as she studied his face. She sighed. “Aye, anyone but you.”

She shook her head before vaporizing within his grasp. Her voice

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traveled back from the void. “I won’t give up on you, Sebastian—I’ll never let you go. Know this—I will come back for you.” Then she was gone, vapor and all.

Sebastian knew the truth in Rebecca’s parting words. It could be tomorrow, it could be centuries from now, but the witch would return to try and claim him as her own. His torment would never end, until the vampire blood within him ceased to exist.

He turned back to Angela, who shied away from him, slinking further into the corner in which she had wedged herself. *Dear God, what had he done to her?* This was not of Rebecca’s doing. For this, he took the full blame.

She repeated her earlier question as his features returned to his human form. “What are you?”

Sebastian took a step forward, then stopped, knowing she would not accept him, even as he stood before her in his human flesh. He bowed his head in shame. “I am a Nosferatu...a vampire.”

Angela flinched as he brought up his head. The revulsion and horror he saw within the depths of her eyes was like a bucket of ice water being poured over his head.

A knock sounded the door, causing Angela to start. “More of you?”

He shook his head sadly.

“Come on, Sebastian,” Tommy called from the door. “It’s time for another set. If you don’t get up there in less than a minute, Kindred will never play this club again.”

“Then so be it,” Sebastian growled, not taking his eyes from Angela.

“What?” Tommy cried out. “You’re kidding, man. Right?”

“No—it’s finished.”

The doorknob rattled. The lock kept the door from being opened.

“Come on, man. Think of the band,” Tommy pleaded. “Don’t do this. She ain’t worth it.”

“I said, ’tis finished,” Sebastian roared. “Kindred is no more.”

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There was a long silence, then a loud thud on the door as Tommy gave up, slammed a fist into the wood, and trotted away.

Moments later, Sebastian quit the club by the alleyway door and followed Angela to her home, knowing this night would be the end of them. There were finally no more secrets between them, though he knew she would never be able to accept him for what he was.

Angela sat in the center of her waterbed, staring at him as he reclined in a chair across the room. They had said very little to one another since leaving the club. Sebastian wanted with all his non-beating heart to bridge the gap between them. He wanted to crawl on the bed beside her and hold her as he had many nights before.

Although Angela hadn't said as much, he knew her trust had vaporized with Rebecca. He could plainly see her fear written on her features.

"So where do we go from here?" she finally broke the silence.

"We don't." Angela flinched, causing him to laugh, though he felt none of the humor as his insides ached of loss. "What? You still want me?"

"I don't know what I want anymore," Angela answered as she grasped the coverlet, twisting it in her fist. "All I *do* know is that I still love you."

"Love me?" God, how he wished it so. "How can you love me, Angel. You don't even know what I am. I'm a monster."

She shook her head. "I can't accept that. You—you are—"

"What, Angel? You can't find the right words to describe me now. I am a vampire. I suck blood to survive, for crissake. Can you live with that? Even now my gut calls to me in hunger, telling me I need nourishment." He saw her sudden weariness, and wanted to soothe it. "You have nothing to fear from me. I would never hurt you. But can you honestly say you would trust me again?"

Angela shrugged, bowing her head.

"You can't."

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Her head came up and he saw the mistrust in her gaze, as though at any minute he would leap from his chair and take her blood.

“You fear me even now.”

“No.”

“Then I will call you a liar. You *should* fear me, Angel. You should fear that I might bridge this gap in the blink of an eye.” Then, proving his point, he stretched out beside her, his icy finger tracing the pulse point of her neck.

She slid away. Her back crowded the pillows at the headboard. “How did you do that?”

The same way I can do this. His movements were so rapid, that he now licked the hollow point of her throat and she hadn’t even detected it. She shrieked.

“You do fear me.”

“I don’t.” Her quavering voice betrayed her.

“If you really knew me, Angel, then you would not fear me biting you. My teeth are not fangs; my eyes do not glow. Had I the notion to feast upon you, then you would see me as you did before.”

With shaking hands, Angela touched his cool cheek. Tears pooled in her eyes, then slipped past her lashes and down her face. “Make love to me.”

Sebastian recoiled. “You can’t be serious.”

“You say that I don’t love you, but I do, with my whole heart. I can’t stop feeling that way because I don’t understand what you are. And I can’t pretend those feelings don’t exist. Tell me what we would be doing right now had that woman not shown up tonight.”

He tangled his fingers into the blonde curls beside her face. “I would be doing this.” He brought his lips down to hers.

Desperation fueled his desire to have her. He wanted to memorize every line, every detail—the sunshine smell of her hair, the silky softness of her skin, the way she trembled when he ran a hand along her naked flesh.

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Sebastian knew he rode a thin line of control, a line of danger. One that blurred the boundaries of reason and thought. His desire to feed, mixed with his desire to bury himself deeply within her, produced a dangerous concoction, one that could prove fatal to her. He feared during the heat of passion, his hunger would reign over his sanity and take what his empty shell of a body craved.

But he could not stop himself from loving her one final time, no more than he could stop the sun from rising in less than a mere hour.

Come dawn, he would be no more.

His tongue swept the satin of her mouth, eliciting a moan from her. Her fingers grasped the hair at his nape and held onto him as though she, too, knew it would be their final time.

He grasped the edge of her light sweater, shoving it up along her sides, allowing his hands to graze the soft mounds of her breasts. Her small body shivered at his touch, fueling his longing to take her.

Angela broke the kiss, then lifted the sweater over her head and tossed it to the side. Sebastian looked down in awe at her small breasts encased by a lace brassiere. He watched in fascination the flesh rising and falling above the delicate white material before pulling the cups downward and exposing the tiny rose-colored centers.

His mouth itched to suckle each one as the sight held him mesmerized. Finally, he allowed himself the lazy pleasure of tracing each hardened nipple with his tongue before drawing one between his lips. Angela arched her back and tilted her head into the mattress.

"Please," she begged as she raised her hips and her heated flesh met his erection.

Sebastian released her, feeling the warmth of his physical changes taking place. Soon he would no longer be the man she fell in love with, but the fiend that repulsed her hours ago. He tried to move from the bed, knowing his hunger and passion were beginning to mix. Normally, he had always fed well before being in Angela's company. The whore in the alley had not been enough to last him the whole night through.

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Angela grasped his shirt and pulled him back to her, bringing his mouth to hers. He growled in sheer pleasure as he slipped a knee between her thighs, reached beneath her skirt, and ripped the silk panties from her.

He tore away his mouth long enough to ask, “Are you sure this is what you want?”

He could see the passion in her eyes as she nodded.

“Then tell me you love me.”

“You know I do,” she replied, her voice cracking.

“I want to hear it from your lips one last time.” Sebastian could see the sun cracking the horizon and knew his moments were limited. “Tell me.”

She placed her palms on the sides of his face, looking deeply into his eyes. “I love you, Sebastian—I always will.”

He growled in response, turned his face from her just in time to keep her from seeing the changes, the amber glow of his eyes. He entered her in one swift movement. Her hips rose to meet him, thrust for thrust. And before the sun could fully crest, they lay collapsed in each other’s arms.

Hunger had claimed him and had made him into something she would have to remember, a vision she would carry. He knew she had seen his changes, felt his fangs as they grazed her neck, saw the glow of his amber eyes through the darkness.

Yet, she said nothing.

His angel had endured the monster. But he could never allow her to sacrifice her life for him. Nor could he take the chance of Rebecca returning and bringing her harm. He knew, after what had transpired earlier, that Rebecca would never allow him to be free. She would one day return and possibly even kill Angela.

That he could not live with.

Sebastian pulled his pants over his hips and fastened them. As he stood beside the bed, shrugging into his discarded shirt, he felt her light

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caress on his shoulders.

"I thought vampires couldn't survive the light of day," Angela stated as a matter of fact.

"We can't."

"But the sun has risen, surely you can't leave." He could hear the fear in her voice and knew she understood the sacrifice of his staying. "Can you remain in here with the drapes drawn until night falls?"

"No, Angela, daylight comes to me even now. Feel it on my skin."

Her soft gasp echoed in the room as she slid a hand beneath his shirt, against the muscles of his back.

"You're burning up." He heard the broken sob in her voice.

He turned, his eyes still glowing in the dim light. "I must go."

"To where?" she cried, tears flowing unheeded down her cheeks. Her lower lip trembled.

He wished to draw it between his own lips to still it, but knew his time had come.

"I have to go, Angel. And when I do, promise me you will not watch."

She placed her hand over her quivering lips. "What are you trying to tell me?"

"That you are not safe with me. Do not watch when I leave."

"No," she cried, trying desperately to wrap herself around him as though it might somehow save him.

He grasped her shoulders and set her back. "It's the only way."

"I've seen the movies—vampires incinerate if the sun touches them. Is this true?"

He nodded.

"Oh, God," she sobbed. "Please don't go, Sebastian. I love you."

He traced the wetness on her face with his index finger. "Weep for me no more."

She held his hand to her cheek. His heart expanded and he felt human for the first time in centuries as his features returned to his

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human self.

“ ’Tis finished, Angel. I have found my peace. Our souls shall find one another in the realm of the afterlife. ’Tis the only way.”

With that, he exited the room, trusting that she would not watch.

Sunlight streamed through the picture window. His skin blistered. The smell of burning flesh wafted to his nostrils as he stepped onto the porch in the direct sunlight.

He knew Angela would find no more than a pile of ashes, but his soul...his soul would be free at last.

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FAÇADE

BY

PATRICIA A. RASEY

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Winner of the WordWeaving Award For Excellence!

***Honorable Mention “Favorite Mystery/Suspense”—
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Deputy Detective KC Tanner guards his private life much the same as his Doberman, Zappa, guards his home. He's content to live a life of solitude, hiding behind the wall he's carefully constructed around himself. Trouble is Sharalee MacArthur, stuck in a fantasy world of her own making, still envisions KC as the man she will one day marry. That is until reality shatters his isolation and dashes her hopes, and a madman running loose in their homey little community has KC and Shar running for their lives...

Excerpt from Façade

...A twig snapped.

His head turned toward the sound. He caught sight of Shar's black trench coat as she ducked behind a thick pine. KC ran through the woods, jumping over downed limbs and dense weeds. Just as he nearly grasped a handful of material, she ran in another direction.

KC sped after her, finally fisting her coat and halting her progress, pulling her flush against his chest. He could feel her body tremble with each large gulp of air.

He wrapped his arms around her waist, his cheek nestling against her riot of curls. Breathing deeply, her sweet musk scent encompassed him and took hold of his gut. He hadn't even realized how much this woman had become a part of him.

His next breath seemed to depend on hers. Aside from Shar's time in college, a day hadn't gone by in the last fifteen years that hadn't been brightened by her smile and presence. Even as a little girl of nine, she had charmed him beyond measure with her girlish pranks. He had protected her like a brother, cared for her like a father. But today, he felt anything but fraternal. His erection lay trapped between them, begging for appeasement. And damn if he didn't want to appease it...

Facade

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KISS OF DECEIT

BY

PATRICIA A. RASEY

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Marcus “Snake” Gallego lives in the fast lane. Play hard, ride fast, die young. But nothing seems to touch him, not until his faithless wife turns up dead, and a pretty little detective slams his head against a bar, cuffing his hands behind his back.

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Excerpt from Kiss Of Deceit

...He grinned sinfully. "I don't think what just occurred would fall under the category of funny business. I don't know about you, but the thought of screwing you heats my blood, not tickles my funny bone."

"Do you have to be so crude? Screwing?" Her gaze widened. "Is that what you'd call it?"

"What would you call it, LeAnne?"

He advanced on her until they were mere inches apart again. His hot breath spanned her cheeks. She would be lying if she said she did not desire this man. The juncture of her thighs still throbbed from his touch.

"Making love?" he whispered softly.

"It's a more civilized way of putting it," she said, shifting her stance.

"There's nothing civilized about what I'd like to do with you. Besides, making love means there is love involved. Am I right?"

She might have laughed had he not been so serious. Instead, she remained silent.

"You planning on falling in love with me, Detective?"

"No," she stated, hoping she was never that unwise.

"Then it's screwing."

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PATRICIA A. RASEY

A daydreamer at heart, suspense author, Patricia A. Rasey resides in her native town in Northwest Ohio with her husband, Mark, and two teenage sons. At the age of twenty-nine, her boys both tucked away in school all day, she decided to put her creative writing studies to use. A graduate of Long Ridge Writer's School, Patricia has seen publication of her short stories in magazines. With the writing of *Deadly Obsession*, she was able to see her true dream come to pass and become a full-time writer, thanks to the support and encouragement of her very own hero, Mark.

The year 2001 was a good one for Ms. Rasey. Not only was her book *Facade* a recipient of the Word Weaving Award for Literary Excellence, but also received an Honorable Mention (in the "Suspense" category) in the prestigious Dorothy Parker Award Of Excellence 2000 (books voted the best of those read and reviewed in 2000 and presented by the Reviewers' International Organization—RIO). *Kiss Of Deceit* received a nomination for the Dorothy Parker Award as well. Even more special for Patricia, was that *Facade* was the only electronic release listed amongst the winners/honorable mentions. Additionally, *Twilight Obsessions*, a hair-raising trilogy of dark suspense by authors Charlotte Boyett-Compo ("Taken By The Wind"), Kate Hill ("Love On The Wild Side"), and Patricia A. Rasey ("Fear The Dark"), was nominated for the 2000 PEARL, the Paranormal Excellence Award in Romantic Literature, in the Best Anthology category.

Patricia is a member of World Romance Writers (WRW). She also belongs to Sisters in Crime (SinC), and their Internet Chapter. When not behind her computer, you can find Patricia cheering on her sons at various sporting events, or taking karate, which she enjoys doing with her eldest son.

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