

T.L. Mitchell

The NightMan

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***“Not one of my bloodline shall be truly yours.
They shall be your torment for all of eternity.
The one who shall have her heart shall be
your reaper of death.”***

Dorian released him and then quickly grabbed the old man's head. With a quick jerk Dorian silenced the man forever. The crimson blood dripped down Dorian's chin as fury flamed in his eyes. He never believed in curses until now. Dorian released Murtough's lifeless body and watched it drop to the ground. For a moment, Dorian stared at the corpse. The power in the old man's words burned a fire through his soulless body, sending waves of chills down his spine. He wondered curiously about this man. A man of such powerful words, one would think of him as a witch.

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Prologue

Mid-morning, a beautiful day where the sun was bright and the breeze gentle. Spring days were always the most beautiful in the mountains.

A twelve year old girl with long curly blond hair sat in the middle of an open meadow and played quietly. Her cheerful angelic face gleamed as she picked the small lavender colored flowers from between the deep green blades of grass.

The cotton lace hem of the petticoat she wore hung low under the bluish grey dress which spread around her. The dress was not fancy. She did not come from a wealthy family.

A playful breeze stirred around her, tossing the soft blond curls around her head. Her pink lips pursed together. Her eyes squinted against the wind as she pulled the hair away from her face. Then she saw the large animal as it approached her.

The girl did not feel fear as she stared in amazement at the size of the black wolf, larger than most of the grey wolves she had seen. She remained calm and curious as the wolf moved slowly toward her. There was no threat, as she could see. It appeared the wolf was as curious about her as she was him.

The wolf stood in front of the child, its height towered over her. Dark eyes watched cautiously as the child's hand slowly moved toward the nose of the wolf. The creature caught his breath as the tiny fingers touched the tip of his nose.

Gently and slowly the wolf pressed its head against the child's fingers. She giggled as the wolf lay down in front of her, nudging her tiny fingers as she scratched behind its ear.

“And you shall be my best friend, forever.”

Chapter I

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The sun lazily drifted down behind the tall majestic mountains, leaving behind a smoldering golden hue of colors. The rich tones of yellow, gold and blue painted the sky a picture perfect sunset for the winter month. Deeper into the bluish tones, the moon arose from its rest. Just as expected, the light of the moon broke softly through the trees and illuminated the tops of the bare limbs with its silvery charm. A thick foggy mist floated silently through the trees, drifting down to the cold wintry ground.

Not far from the small nest of trees a small club, Tiffany's came alive. Saturday nights were usually the top spot for the unique night club. Despite its location in a secluded area several miles from the nearest town, it remained crowded on the weekends. Two major cities surrounded the small town.

A blue '98 Mustang pulled up in front of the club. The passenger door opened as a leggy blond stepped out of the passenger side. Slowly, she stood to her feet and stepped away from the door. She adjusted the short

black mini skirt, giving it a quick tug before she closed the car door behind her. Several strands of her long golden hair fell across her left shoulder as she turned toward the man who stood beside the club's entrance. She drew in a deep breath, preparing herself for the confrontation. The breath she released was slow and steady as she marched directly up to the powerfully built man. Briefly she forced out what she considered a warm smile, giving the muscular man a good once over with her blue eyes. Anyone would agree he was quiet huge, in more ways than one. Slowly her slender fingers dipped into the top of her low cut red silky shirt and withdrew a plastic ID card.

The NightMan stood beside the door and waited patiently. A gust of wind stirred the night air, lifting the long length of his black leather coat gently away from his legs. He shifted his stance, his leg muscles tightened, bracing himself while she handed him the plastic card. The black eyes hungrily roamed over the blond. To him, her scent was obvious. He knew she was attracted to him. The muscles tightened in his broad square jaw when his fingertips touched hers. A cold smile crossed his thin lips. He turned to place the card into the computerized slot attached to the door. The light turned from red to green, followed by a series of short beeps. A small click and a green light flashed and then the door opened.

The man turned around to her and handed back the card. Once again his eyes roamed over her body, admiring her well endowed breasts. He held onto the card one more second. He only wished she could remember what he meant to her. His eyes drifted from hers to the elegant gold necklace dangling around her neck. It was marvelously fashioned, a ruby like setting in the center of a gold Gaelic cross. The NightMan knew

the cross was a special gift from her father, left in his will and testament.

He thought it would do her good to mind her manners before she entered the club tonight. She snatched the card from his hand. A shiver ran up her spine as her eyes met his. A penetrating darkness dwelled in those hellish eyes.

The dark gothic overtones of the music blared when the door opened. The NightMan carefully watched her walk toward the threshold of the door and stop. She turned around quickly to face him. The hot burn of desire swept over him by her sudden action. His body tensed and his senses immediately came alive as he listened to the quick breath she inhaled. She had no idea the effect she had on him. Caitlin aroused the animal instinct within him.

“Is he here?”

“He’s been waiting for you all night.” His voice carried the deep rich throaty tones that caused her heart to flutter.

Her glare indicated her irritation. “Is *she* here as well?”

“It would do you good to mind your tongue before you walk through those doors. He’s rather pissed off tonight.”

“Well he can get over himself. I’m not in the mood,” she snapped.

“Neither is he,” the NightMan growled.

Another shiver ran through her. The hair on her neck prickled to its ends. There had always been a certain amount of electricity between her and the NightMan. The sexual tension between the two had never been explored, at least not by their choice.

The NightMan remained at the club every night when it opened. A debt he owed, she thought, to the Master.

Whatever the reason, he was faithful. He was one hell of a stout man, which highly attracted her. She wouldn't deny there was something about him that gave her chills. It was probably his serious and dark demeanor. Then again, she would have another problem if she dared to touch him, one of which she didn't care to face.

"Thanks for the warning, Adriel," she sneered. She turned to face the entrance.

The NightMan shifted again, his leg muscles flexing against his jeans when he returned to his position. For a moment his thoughts wandered, stealing another glance at the long legged blond. How he wished he could have those lovely legs around his waist. He didn't care what she thought. She was with *them*, and this bothered him. The one thing he did care about was the fact he desired her so badly. There was something about her that drove him crazy every time he was in her presence. Her scent, he inhaled another deep breath, was mesmerizing. Adriel knew better than to cross another man's property. She was taken and marked, bequeathed to another man. Adriel knew the penalty if he so much as even touched her. The penalty of death came to all NightMen who dared to cross *their* property. It didn't matter if the women chose them or not. Death would be faced at the hands of the Master. Sadly for Adriel, the Master owned his only weakness, her. The NightMan's eyes closed. He knew he could only offer her death.

Adriel was a healthy well-built man, even from his late teenage years. The muscle packed man had the body of a professional wrestler. His bulk came naturally as by his heritage. Only a few knew his origins. Few questioned his appearance, tall, black hair and cold black eyes. Many feared him too much to question him, especially *them*. But he did owe a debt and once his

debt was repaid he would leave, return to his home and live his life in peace.

The black eyes opened again. His head lifted toward the moon which hung brightly in the sky. Tonight might be the night, he thought as his hands clasped together in front of him. The night he would be set free from his bond. The bond he had suffered to the Master for over the last 100 years. Yes, he hoped his time would be near. Adriel wished nothing more than to live a normal life. One of which was normal in his eyes.

Inside the club the music blared. The base and drums pounded the walls. From the left to the right, the blonde's eyes roamed the club. She knew he was there. The NightMan never lied. Wall to wall, a variety of people mingled around the small club. Some danced; others talked loudly and laughed loudly along the sidelines of the dance floor. Aggravated, she shoved her way through the thick crowd to the bar.

"Hello, Caitlin."

A rich a lustrous voice caught her attention. Caitlin turned around quickly in the direction of the voice. It was him.

"Dorian." Her voice was flat.

The man who had waited for her the entire night appeared to be calm, despite what the NightMan had told her. But she wouldn't take his demeanor as a fore shadow. Appearances can be deceiving as she knew all too well. She glanced over his visage and took note of anything which may indicate his anger. You did not want to be in Dorian's path of wrath. He was known for his brutish behavior. Caitlin had witnessed it too many times in the past.

Dorian hovered over Caitlin with his tall statuesque body. He stood around six foot – two and muscular but not overly built like Adriel. His black hair was combed

down smoothly against his head. The pronounced widow's peak showed off clearly at the edge of his hairline. The gold tones in his green eyes changed. He had waited too long for her reply.

Dorian's patience was always thin, especially when it came to Caitlin. The time he had spent on her was more than he would have given anyone else. His own selfish desire for her made him wait as long as he had.

The muscles in his jaw tightened. "I believe I asked you a question."

"I had something to do," Caitlin snapped.

"Usual?" The sandy blond-haired bartender placed a glass down.

"Yes please." Her soft voice lingered.

Dorian's hand clasped around Caitlin's arm, swiftly he turned her around to face him. Caitlin immediately jerked away. Her eyes narrowed, sending him the familiar uninvited warning.

"I have waited for you all night. I demand to know where you have been!" He growled as he leaned closer to her face.

"I don't believe I can address your question properly when your hand is squeezing my arm so tightly." Her gaze fell to his fingers.

Dorian released a long sigh as his fingers fell away from her arm. He shoved his hand through the black tendrils of hair.

His eyes narrowed as a hiss slipped through his teeth. "Damn it, Caitlin! Must we go through this every time?"

"You have more than one woman to fill your needs. Where is Alessandra?"

A look of disgust crossed Caitlin's face as the mere mention of Alessandra's name slipped through her lips. Alessandra was nothing more than Dorian's glorified bitch. She was at his beck and call whenever he wanted.

Caitlin knew Alessandra was in love with Dorian. Of course she would do what he asked of her. Yet, Dorian had no respect for Alessandra, no matter what she did for him.

“Alessandra is where she needs to be. You on the other hand...” He inhaled a quick breath. “Smell like one of those beasts! I swear to you Caitlin, if I ever find out you have submitted yourself to one of them I will kill you and then him.”

“Dorian, you have no need to worry.” Her fingers reached down to her necklace. Slowly she lifted the cross in front of his face.

Dorian grimaced then stepped away from her, leaving a substantial amount of space between them.

That damn necklace, he cringed. He knew the necklace was as pure as she was. Untouched. It was his damnation, his curse. The blood looking ruby in the center of the cross was the blood of her ancestors. The few drops of blood created just enough of a protection around her so he would never be able to touch her unless she took it off. He knew better than to try.

The painful memories from the first time he tried to remove it from her still haunted him. Immediately his hands balled into fists. One day he swore, he would have someone remove that damned thing for him. Even if it took him another one hundred years he would find a way. Caitlin was his and his alone to enjoy.

Caitlin pursed her lips into a wicked smile as she knew Dorian feared more than just the cross. His hands bore the memory of the burn from when he tried to remove it from her. The fit of rage he had that one night terrified her. He paced the floor like a wild animal. Horrifying hisses and snarls erupted from him as he cursed her and her ancestors. Blood ran freely down his hand from the scalding burns made by the cross.

She knew he had a right to fear it. It was her father's only means of protecting her from Dorian.

Chapter 2

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The story behind Caitlin's father and Dorian is a rather tragic tale. The memory of the legend still haunted Caitlin, something she would never forget. Caitlin's ancestors were bound to Dorian through the fatal decision of one man.

During the mid-evil times of Ireland, Vikings invaded the Irish some 26 times following their first appearance on the island. When the Vikings first appeared in Ireland many homes were raided and all sorts of malicious behaviors were committed. The Irish clans joined together in an effort to rid Ireland of these barbaric people. One man chose another route.

In the year of 1013 AD, Caitlin's great ancestor Argyll Murtough made a deal with a devil one night that cost him dearly. He did not realize at the time his desperation placed a curse on himself and his entire lineage. A precarious group of strangers wandered onto his land. They did not look like the Norse warriors, nor did they resemble any of the English he had seen.

They appeared to be nomads, yet carried no weapons with them.

The leader of this group was called Dorian, a very civil man who spoke in an English tongue. Murtough's curiosity peaked as he noticed the stranger's accent dated back further than his language. Compared to the Irish, they were all well groomed and dressed in leggings similar to the English. Even the one woman companion of the group dressed in the same attire. The coats they wore complimented the frilly shirts and appeared to be more of the English formal ware. They did not wear the silly wigs as the nobles, allowing their heads to bare the natural beauty.

Murtough met Dorian late one evening. Dorian listened patiently as Murtough expressed his concerns and plea for help. However, the rewards for Dorian's efforts were not nearly enough to satisfy his desires. Dorian wanted more than a share of Irish land as payment for his deeds. Dirty deeds, in Dorian's eyes don't come cheap.

Dorian leaned forward to Murtough. "I will accept your land old man. But, there is something else I will also take."

Dorian's physical appearance indicated an inhuman quality about him. The reddish greying hairs on the back of Murtough stood on end.

"What do you want?" Murtough sat back in his chair.

A sinister smile crossed Dorian's thin lips. His crystal blue eyes smoldered a dark black. "In exchange for my help, I will take a female from each generation in your lineage, beginning with your daughter."

"What ar' you?" Murtough's heart raced. "A demon?"

Dorian's hearty laugh rang out through the tiny hut of Murtough's home.

"I'm much more than a demon old man. Do we have a

bargain or not?" Dorian hissed.

Murtough's answer held in his throat as the front door of his home burst open. His eldest son, a tall stout young brave man by the name of Angus came with terrible news. A band of Vikings had just hit a nearby clan and killed most of the inhabitants. The young man brought more bad news which called for immediate attention of his father. The Murtough clan would be shortly invaded by a small army of Vikings.

Dorian eased back in his chair, studying the old man's reaction to the sudden news. He knew the pressure from the news would accelerate the Irishman's decision.

Murtough's eyes flamed with fury. His attention turned to Dorian who sat calmly waiting on his answer.

"You have a bargain," Murtough spat.

Dorian nodded to the man and then raised his hand to the five members of his coven. No word was spoken as Dorian left the small home to meet the unsuspecting Norse warriors.

The Norse warriors crossed through the forest into an open land to find five pale figures awaiting their arrival. The leader of the warriors stood, remaining confident of his soon to be victory. His hand rose high in the air, holding tightly to a massive steel sword. A smile crossed his lips when he noticed these pale outsiders were unarmed. The sound of battle cries filled the night when the warriors charged toward the five strangers.

Dorian and his vampires moved casually toward the Norse army's first line of berserkers. Twelve against five, the odds were not in the favor of the invading horde. Dorian swiftly dodged the blade of one of the men. To the man's surprise, Dorian grabbed his neck. His sword dropped from his nerveless fingers as his feet swept off the ground. His hands dug into Dorian's pale

fingers in a futile attempt to free himself. His eyes widened with fear as he watched Dorian's eyes flame red with anger and his mouth open, revealing his sharp pointed fangs. A crushed windpipe and throat silenced any screams. Final breaths of air hissed from the deflating lungs as the victor discard the now lifeless body and turned to focus on the leader.

The battle that night ended in an unusually bloody massacre, even by vampire standards. The Norse warriors fought fiercely until their deaths. There was no honor in retreating from battle, even if it was against vampires.

Dorian saved the Norse leader for last. His punishment was not a quick death, nor would he have the opportunity to die proudly in battle. He was held prisoner while he watched his men die one by one at the hands of the blood thirsty vampires.

When the battle ended Dorian turned to the Norse Chieftain. He did not struggle against the hands which held him. He watched Dorian approach.

Dorian walked toward the man, his steps smooth and stealthy like a cat. No words were spoken between the two men as he stood only inches away from the Chieftain. Casually, the vampire grabbed the man's head with his left hand and tilted it to the side. With his right hand gripped tightly around the collar of the shirt, he ripped it from the unarmed warrior's shoulders, exposing the fleshy neck. Dorian inhaled a quick breath and plunged his fangs into the enemy's neck. The battle was over.

Murtough being grateful to Dorian for his help offered him more land and what little gold he possessed in place of his daughter. Dorian desired something more valuable. He reminded the stubborn Irishman of his agreement. Reluctantly Murtough dropped his head

in defeat. He motioned for his wife to bring forth their only daughter. The debt must be paid, but not without a final fight.

“NO!” Murtough abruptly stood, his sword drawn.

Dorian moved swiftly and grabbed the sword from Angus’s hand. If it was a battle the old man wanted, then he would give him what he asked. The swords sang loudly as they clashed together.

Iron to iron the swords collided. Dorian stepped back, giving Murtough the impression he had the best of him. When the old man was clear of the threshold of the front door, Dorian made his move. With a hasty motion, Dorian twisted his body and flipped the sword from the old man’s hand. He plunged his own sword into the ribs of Murtough, watching as the man fell to his knees.

Murtough knew his death was certain at this point. Dorian may have won the victory tonight, but there was one victory he would never have.

Dorian withdrew the sword and dropped the sword to the ground. With one hand he picked Murtough up by his neck. Without a word, Dorian’s mouth claimed his neck. Before Dorian could draw the last ounce of blood from Murtough, he was caught off guard by the man. With the last ragged breath he cursed Dorian.

“Not one of my bloodline shall be truly yours. They shall be your torment for all of eternity. The one who shall have her heart shall be your reaper of death.”

Dorian released the man and then quickly grabbed the old man’s head. With a quick jerk Dorian silenced the man forever. The crimson blood dripped down Dorian’s chin as fury flamed in his eyes. He never believed in curses until now. Dorian released Murtough lifeless body and watched it drop to the ground. For a moment, Dorian stared at the corpse. The power in the old man’s words burned a fire through his soulless

body, sending waves of chills down his spine. He wondered curiously about this man. A man of such powerful words, one would think of him as a witch.

The coven of vampires stood around Dorian. Whether or not it was in amazement or horror Dorian didn't know. Quickly he turned to the male on his left.

"Get the girl and let us go now!" he hissed then wiped the blood from his face with the back of his hand.

The story of what happened that night was carried down through the Murtough's generations. Never did anyone add or take away from the horrifying tale. Each one of the families knew their daughters were cursed.

Caitlin's father feared for his child as soon as she was born. The last of the Murtough line remained in his arms. Alexander Murtough could not bear the thought of his only daughter in the hands of a vampire such as Dorian. He had no defense against this creature. The only hope he had resided in an old priest.

Together he and Alexander created a cross of pure gold. Alexander brought with him a vial containing his blood mixed with holy water and priceless imported wolves' bane. The priest infused the vial into the center of the cross, blessing it and placing it Alexander's hands.

At the ripe age of seventeen, Caitlin received the precious gift. Alexander told the story to Caitlin, warning her of the fate that awaited her in the hands of the vampire.

In 1910, anxiety filled Alexander's heart when his beloved daughter turned eighteen. Dorian arrived to collect his prize, Caitlin, the first born female in her generation, as he had so often through the centuries.

Alexander watched with a grief when his daughter left with Dorian. At least he knew she would be safe. He also knew his death would come soon when Dorian realized he could not touch Caitlin.

Dorian bid Alexander a slow death for his treacherous action. For the first time in Dorian's life he found something more challenging with Caitlin. The cross only added to his fury of wanting her so badly. He would have this beauty, one way or the other!

Chapter 3

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Caitlin replaced the cross over her heart and gave it a soft pat. Her gaze lifted to Dorian, who hissed rather loudly then released a series of curses under his breath.

“One day,” he growled “I will find a way to remove that damn thing from your neck.”

A smile crossed Caitlin’s brooding lips. “Well it has taken you over a hundred years of trying. I suppose another hundred won’t matter anymore.”

Dorian hissed again, this time loud enough to draw the attention of the bartender. Caitlin chuckled as she turned around to face the bartender.

“Your drink Miss.” The bartender raised his brow to Dorian. “And you sir?”

The green eyes narrowed. Dorian glared at the bartender. “Will not have one damn thing tonight.”

Suddenly, Dorian’s stance shifted, as if something had caught his attention. His eyes darted wildly around the crowded room, searching for this new found interest.

Where was Alessandra, he thought. She was here within his view not more than a second ago.

“Damn women!” he huffed to himself.

His glare met hers from a far corner of the small club. Alessandra had found a human male. Dorian’s rage had to be resolved at some point this night. He needed more than just blood to ease this rage. The human male would not suffice.

Caitlin knew exactly how to push Dorian’s buttons. She knew what he wanted her for tonight. Dorian’s desperation clearly showed on his face. The clenched jaw and feral growls were the signs of Dorian’s lust. Sadness filled her heart as she released a long sigh. Dorian would do the same as always. Find a human on which to release his frustrations.

Every so often it was time for Caitlin to be remarked. Remarking was Dorian’s way to keep Caitlin young and alive over the years without turning her. Dorian tried to mark her several times and failed. The first time, he couldn’t bear the taste of her blood. Each time he tried to mark her he became violently ill, preventing him from savoring that which tormented him so very much.

Dorian rudely barged his way through the crowded room over to Alessandra. She knew Dorian was not going to let her feed from a male tonight. It was time for her to remark Caitlin. Before she could do it she had to feed so she wouldn’t feed from Caitlin. Dorian would kill her if she ever dared to go so far.

Even his attempts to satisfy his physical needs failed. The hardness he had for Caitlin ached to the point of severe pain. He had fed from Alessandra in hopes to have the strength to endure the cursed pain. As always, whenever he positioned himself on Caitlin, the pain flared and her body betrayed him. The closer he came to consummating his desire, the deeper the ruby in her

cross glowed, intensifying his pain and rendering him helpless and faint.

Alessandra took the brunt of his rage and with it Dorian's sadistic desires. She was made for him and by him, chosen because she bore a close resemblance to Caitlin. In his own mind, while he brutally ravaged Alessandra, he would think only of Caitlin. With Caitlin, he would have viciously taken her body and then her blood. He would have given her much pain and pleasure before he killed her.

This particular night Dorian would choose a female. One, willing or not, he didn't care. She would be what he needed to accomplish the goal at hand. His eyes darted around the room as he moved toward Alessandra.

A young black haired beauty had caught his eye, medium in height, her hair short on one side with longer layered strands slightly draping around her oval face. A black lace camisole accented her slender frame, which exposed her tattooed shoulder. She topped off the outfit with a black leather mini skirt and thigh high leather boots. Heavy black eyeliner adorned the large blue eyes, which gave her a general gothic appearance. Black colored lips broadened into a smile as she watched Dorian move in her general direction.

Dorian moved closer to the black haired beauty. She would be suitable for tonight, he thought. He had years to perfect his seduction methods. She was young and it would be easy. Most of the women came to this club for one reason, the expectation of meeting a vampire.

Dorian was very attractive to human females, despite his pale features. His dark hair and green eyes gave him an erotic appeal. He was not large built like Adriel. Dorian's body was more slender and somewhat defined. His strength was not determined in muscle mass as was Adriel's.

Tonight, Dorian's prey was no different than the rest. He captured her eyes and held them as he moved in. With his overly sensitive hearing, he noted the increased tempo of her heartbeat. She was easily excitable, just what he wanted. He clearly heard her heart as it raced the closer he came to her. He flashed a warm smile and lowered his eye lids in a shy flirtatious manner. Yes, she was his for the night, he thought as he approached her and took her hand into his.

Caitlin watched as Dorian sent the girl his killer smile. She felt sorry for the young woman because she didn't know her fate would be one of danger. Dorian may let her live and he may not. It really depended on Caitlin. If she satisfied Dorian, then sometimes he let the girls live. Tonight, she was tired of him and in her current state of mind, it was possible this girl may die. The glass of wine tipped slightly to Caitlin's lips as she took a long sip. She was in need of more than one glass of wine before she would submit to Dorian's desires.

Satisfied, Dorian took the young woman by the hand and nodded to Alessandra. He tipped his chin slightly up toward Caitlin as Alessandra moved toward her. Caitlin and Alessandra would meet Dorian and his new prize at his home.

"Let's go," Alessandra voiced dryly as she moved past Caitlin.

Caitlin turned the glass to her lips and drank the remaining contents in one gulp. She placed the empty glass on the bar and slipped the bartender a tip. It was going to be a long night and she was already tired.

Alessandra was already out of the club's front door. Caitlin reluctantly followed. Once outside she stood and waited for Alessandra to bring the car to the front of the club.

Adriel stood by the entrance as always. His attention

immediately shifted to Caitlin. Those strong feelings swept over him again. She wasn't in the club very long. Dorian must have found what he wanted, he thought. There was no denying Adriel knew Dorian's plans. Quickly he glanced down at his watch. The club would be closed in a few minutes. He would return to the vampires' house by himself.

Adriel knew it was time for Caitlin to be marked again. It was also not a good time for it. It was a new moon. Nothing good ever happened under a new moon, especially for Adriel. The intense pull of the moon's force increased his sexual desires. Usually he would find a woman to take somewhere for a few hours. It was more difficult for him, he thought, than the vampires. He had more to control, but timing was of the essence. Of course for him, he could never bring anyone back to the mansion. He knew no human would be safe once the doors closed behind them.

Caitlin was always the exception, continuously marked by The Master's vampire bitch, Alessandra. Adriel despised Alessandra. She managed to seduce him one night under a new moon. He was weak, his desire was too great and she was there waiting for him. Naked, even her pale white silky skin appealed to him. She bit him, nibbled at his flesh until he bled, licking softly the tiny beads of blood as she seduced him. His skin burned. His loins ached. With his manhood painfully engorged with blood, there was no way he could turn away from her. His mind could no longer control his own urge and she was there, waiting for just the right moment to collect her prize. The prize of the animal he really was. He was fortunate that night, as Dorian never found out the deception of his Alessandra.

Adriel's black eyes lifted to the moon again. He inhaled a deep and solemn breath. The sweet scent of

Caitlin intoxicated him. Adriel shifted again and shoved his hands inside the pockets of his jeans to hide the bulge from his erection. Slowly he released a long breath and accepted his defeat. There was no way in hell he could have Caitlin, at least not while she was with Dorian.

“I take it he found one for the night?” The sultry tones lingered against the deep and alluring voice.

Caitlin caught her breath and whirled around quickly and faced Adriel. His black eyes captured hers immediately. Her heart raced, warmth of heat rushed over her skin. How could he have this effect on her? She opened her mouth to speak and suddenly she found the back of her throat dry.

She cleared her throat. “I’m afraid he did.”

“Taking her home the back way?”

Caitlin nodded.

“I suppose I will see you in a few minutes then.”

Adriel’s eyes shifted toward the white BMW that pulled up in front of the club.

Caitlin stepped toward the car and stopped. She turned toward Adriel, sadness filled her eyes.

“No date tonight?” She couldn’t help herself as she pried into his private life.

Often she had wondered about Adriel and his needs. She knew he must be lonely. The stab of pain in heart reminded her of her own loneliness. After all of her experiences with Dorian she knew damn well the feeling of being alone. No matter how many more years she lived, she still wanted to know the experiences of love and romance. Many times she had envisioned what it would be like to actually have a man make love to her. Dorian’s attempts were not love, but lust. Still, she remained untouched. The power within the cross, alone, protected her from Dorian. If there was any one

man who she would want to try, it would be Adriel. Although she knew by his general appearance he was well endowed, she wondered what it would be like to be with him. The hands shoved inside his jean pockets couldn't hide the bulge which preceded him.

Adriel stole one last fleeting look at the beauty. "Not tonight."

Damn, he cursed to himself as he watched her climb into the car. Every muscle in his body tensed. The moon was almost at its peak. He felt the rage as it began to well inside of him. It wouldn't be long before he would have to leave. The muscles in his jaw flexed. He inhaled another deep breath. Tonight, he thought, he would have to do something before the urge became too dangerous. This night he needed Caitlin more than Dorian.

Chapter 4

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Thirty minutes later, Adriel felt relieved as the last person left the club. The bartender chatted briefly with him before he left for the evening. Adriel streamed a series of curses to himself as he walked toward his car. It was already too late. He had not chosen anyone tonight. The insatiable need had grown inside of him and the continual wave of rage began. His thoughts drifted back to sweet Caitlin. If only....

Adriel knew what had to be done tonight. He couldn't tolerate the thought any longer. The need inside of him was greater tonight than any other. Tonight was a new moon. The type of intensity from this moon was uncontrollable, longer than any other month of the year. Tonight was not only a new moon but a wolf moon. It was the night he feared, when his own curse was unleashed against vampires and mankind. The most deadly night for anyone around him. The night he should be chained and bound like an animal until the dawn of light broke and freed him from his curse.

The curse was as much a part of Adriel as his gift.

Adriel's people were born to a curse which transformed them into hideous wolf-like creatures of the night. These creatures were designed for one purpose; to kill vampires.

In the old days, Adriel's ancestors were generally quiet and mostly stayed to themselves. However, one night a stranger came upon them and that stranger just happened to be a vampire with a thirst for blood. He ravaged most of the clan, and those who got away consulted with the eldest of their pack. Something magical happened that night under a New Moon. The men transformed not only into wolves, but something much more terrifying. The large wolf-like beasts with thick leathery black skin and prickly hair stood nearly seven feet tall on their hind feet. Their teeth were as sharp as finely honed swords, true killing machine.

It was that night Adriel's ancestors destroyed the vampire and saved many lives other than their own. But the curse stayed with them as a reminder vampires still exist.

Adriel's thoughts drifted back to Caitlin as he drove the dark road home. He clearly envisioned her lips, parting slowly to welcome his, those soft warm pink lips as they kissed him. What would she taste like? What would her love feel like?

A dull pain grew inside of his loins as his thoughts wondered further. Those lovely long legs wrapped around his waist. His hardness as it entered her, so gently and so sweetly until she moaned to him. She would cry out to him in a heat of passion. Her voice would sing for more of him. Her fingernails would dig into his hard muscular back and bring him to an ecstasy that he so desperately desired. Adriel's fingers tightened around the steering wheel. His foot pressed harder on the accelerated, pushing the car over the

posted speed limit.

Adriel envisioned her slender frame as it straddled him. She would ride him hard, like the stallion - the animal he was, until she exhausted her desires. If there was any way he could control his own animalistic desires, he would let her do anything to him she most wanted. He would lay his life down before her. She could take from him anything and he would gladly give it without any remorse. No thought, just to see a glimmer of happiness and joy in those beautiful eyes. There was just one crushing pain which he must deal with; the truth. In his own grief stricken heart, he knew it was just a fantasy that would never come true.

The newly purchased red Camaro stopped abruptly, skidding to a halt in his parking space. The space he hated so dearly. Slowly his fingers ran through his hair one more time before he grabbed the door handle. Tonight it would end. When dawn broke he would no longer be under the services of Dorian.

The car door opened and Adriel stepped out. Instinctively he sniffed the air. The feeding had already begun. Soon the smells of desire, lust and sex would fill the air. To anyone else the scents would not be so bad, to him they were intolerable. The car door slammed shut and he made haste toward the front door. He thought if he could only manage to control himself until sunrise he would end all of this torture.

The years of service to Dorian passed slowly for Adriel, protecting the vampires while they slept. He was Dorian's personal body guard. Over the years he had been with Dorian, he had seen many things. Uncomfortable things that made him sick. Vile things which would make a grown man, even one as strong as Adriel cringe. Adriel knew he could have killed Dorian and relieved himself from his service many years ago.

But he remained in solitary service to this monster for one reason; Caitlin. He knew he could not take Dorian's life, or any other vampire, unless it was in self-defense. A deadly pact kept by his forefathers and himself.

The heart inside of him was tortured every time Caitlin had to be marked. This time all would end.

The door man opened the tall wooden doors to the elegant mansion for Adriel as he passed through the threshold of hell. He walked swiftly toward his room. His black eyes darted around the mansion, noting the expensive paintings that adorned the burgundy colored walls. The large crystal chandelier hung in the foyer, adding to elegant setting of the mansion.

A sick feeling crept into his stomach as he neared the top of the stairs. The scent of sex and blood filled the air. Human blood had been spilled this night.

In the basement of the large mansion, the vampires gathered. All except Dorian. Adriel was sure Dorian had taken his new sweet to the Master's chambers, where Dorian and Alessandra would enjoy her together. Poor thing, Adriel thought, the girl had no idea what real vampires would do to her.

With all the new hype over vampires, people these days had an unrealistic view of the creatures they really were. The vampires had partially come out of hiding and greedily accepted this new wave of phantasm. Thousands of humans across the world disappeared each day without anyone knowing the truth that vampires walk among the living. Humans acquainted themselves with clubs like Bloody Mary's and Tiffany's just to be a part of the vampire's ingenious plans for feeding. Adriel knew the difference and was disgusted by his first hand knowledge.

For years Adriel had watched Dorian and his coven deceive and devour thousands of humans. They

remained in somewhat of an isolated state, except until the last few years. He watched silently as the vampires emerged from their hiding places, as mortal humans welcomed them with open arms.

Adriel wasn't an immortal like Dorian, however his lifespan was prolonged. It was Adriel's legacy for a long life. It was his birthright. Although, Adriel appeared to be in his mid thirties, he was in fact much older and wiser. Over the last one hundred and twenty years he had lived, aging slowly, until his time spent on this earth was over.

Adriel's race had almost died out, except for the few remaining cousins who would carry on the lineage. He had no sons or daughters to carry on his line. His dreams of having a family didn't die. Hope still knocked on the doors of his heart, reminding him not to give up on love.

Love, the most desired object in the world, brought Adriel to this place in his life. It was love that would change the course in the history of his life. Only a few hours ago, Adriel spent an enchanting evening with Caitlin. The dinner was followed by a lovely stroll in the nearby park. Yes, it was an evening he would remember for the rest of his life. Just to spend a few moments with Caitlin, alone, soothed a lifetime of nightmares for him. Nightmares which included the service to one called the Master. The Master Dorian.

Chapter 5

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Adriel's service to Dorian was one which he had openly accepted. It was the right thing to do at the time. Many years ago, as told by his fore fathers, Dorian saved them from a group of vampire and witch hunters. To Adriel, they were no more than crazy men who were ignorant of the true nature of a man. In Adriel's case it was the nature of a beast.

Dorian happened to ride by on his horse as a group of these crazy people had captured one of Adriel's forefathers. With no interest in the man, Dorian almost passed by without saying anything. He stood aside and was willing to watch them burn the man at the stake like a common thief. It wasn't until the man saw Dorian in the woods and called out to him for help did Dorian's interest peak.

The man who was tied to a stake and hands behind his back, cried out to Dorian. He pleaded with him to save his life and his daughters. He made the unfathomable mistake of offering his services in return. For the man on the stake knew Dorian was a vampire. Dorian's scent clearly gave him away.

In Dorian's eyes, the man marked for death had his full attention. Dorian highly favored servitude.

"Save my life and I swear my services for a season at a time," the man cried out.

Dorian stepped through the woods, followed by his entire coven, outnumbering the seven local villagers and farmers. As calmly as he could manage, Dorian raised his hand, bringing the youngest one to a halt. The crowd stepped back as Dorian walked up to the man firmly bound to the stake.

Dorian's eyes narrowed. "So you know what I am? How can you protect me?" he sneered.

"Save me and set me free and I shall show you," the man begged.

Dorian paused for a moment and considered the man's request. He knew if the man was lying he would take his life with pleasure. With a single gesture of his hand, the vampires moved on the crowd. Blood curdling screams filled the night as the vampires descended. Dorian stood by the man and watched. He waited, biding his own thirst, capturing the youngest one of them for himself. A victim he would use to satisfy his thirst if the man were telling the truth. If not, the man would serve the same fate as the young man.

The screams subsided, which meant only one thing; everyone was dead. Dorian motioned for one of his coven to free the man. Quickly the woman moved and ripped the restraints to set the man free. He stepped down, stumbling over the piles of un-burned wood to stand before Dorian.

Dorian shifted his weight with the boy in his arms, holding the young man tightly to his cold hard chest. His eyes roamed over the man as he stood before him, clearly taking note of the bloody wounds to his thigh made by spears. These people had captured him.

“Show me now, for I grow impatient,” Dorian seethed.

That night the secret was revealed. The man turned into a large wolf before Dorian’s eyes. A Lycan, the elders called it. To Dorian’s amazement he made an alliance with the man and accepted his proposal. To this day, every child of his lineage served one season protecting the vampires and their lair from outsiders.

Adriel knew this was his last year, but he couldn’t bring himself to leave. Not after he met Caitlin. His eyes closed tightly, remembering the endless nights he heard her cry in her sleep. The whispered prayers to a god he only hoped would hear them. The heart broken moment came for him when he heard her pray to her god that they would be forgiven.

It was that moment Adriel saw the beautiful heart of this lovely woman. From that moment, he was utterly in love with her. She showed such compassion for her enemies. Would she show him the same compassion? Surely a woman like Caitlin could accept him, understand him. In his own heart he prayed, maybe even love him.

Adriel growled softly as the urge began to consume him. He closed the bedroom door behind him. His back against the door as his hands balled into tight fists. He took a few steps forward. The towering body dropped to its knees beside the well furnished bed. He buried his head in his hands as the waves rushed over him. There was only one way to rid himself from the demon which possessed him and he passed it by. He could take his chances on the vampires and be tortured or he could deal with the demon-beast himself.

Another growl rumbled from deep within his throat when he bore down against the pain. It was coming and he couldn’t stop it. It was too late. The man would meet the beast tonight.

Chapter 6

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Caitlin paced back and forth in her room. She paused momentarily, noticing the light from a car enter her window. Adriel had arrived. She moved quickly to the window and glanced down. Her heart fluttered lightly as she watched him pause beside the red Camaro. He was alone. In her mind, she knew this was not good.

In the years past, Caitlin kept Adriel's secret. She knew under a new moon he would turn into a raging werewolf if the beast was not tamed. She had witnessed the event before. Little did she realize at the time, Adriel needed to release his rage to keep the evil beast from coming forth. It was not the wolf which she had come to love. No this beast was an evil which came forth every new moon.

It was a few years ago, Dorian had kept Adriel busy cleaning up his reckless messes. The new moon was upon him. Caitlin watched from afar. The strong and handsome man was brought to his knees by the beast. Painfully, the evil creature came forth, leaving no

resemblance of the man she secretly loved. What was left in Adriel's place was a tall, monstrously wicked and evil creature. That night, the monster took more than five vampires to hold it down until the moon's phase was over. When Adriel returned to normal Dorian warned him if he ever let that beast free again he would kill him.

Earlier that evening, Caitlin spent the evening with Adriel, as she had done secretly many times. While the vampires slept in the darkness of the basement, she found entertainment elsewhere.

Adriel remained the perfect gentleman in Caitlin's presence. He never made any advances toward her. She knew his fears were more of himself than of Dorian. Adriel feared the beast which resided inside of him. His concern remained the same, would he be strong enough to hold it back?

Caitlin watched Adriel as he walked toward the front doors. She couldn't bear to see anything happen to him. Not to her Adriel. This time he would be safe. Alessandra was with Dorian as they preoccupied themselves with the young woman. She knew she had at least an hour to try and help Adriel. She pulled her bottom lip inward with her teeth. It had to be done. Caitlin knew she may not be able to save the girl this night, but she still had one chance to save Adriel. Swiftly she turned toward her bedroom door. She knew she was Adriel's only hope. She couldn't lose him. The deep feeling that she needed him overtook her soul.

The bedroom door squeaked and Adriel's head suddenly popped up. He questioned if it was Alessandra who had come to torture him. He would be thankful if it was the bitch. A silhouette of a body moved forward from the shadows of the darkened room. Adriel's heart stopped.

“Adriel,” the soft voice cooed. “Everyone is downstairs. Alessandra is with Dorian and...”

“Caitlin? What are you doing here? You shouldn’t be here! Dorian will be looking for you,” he growled, fighting back the violent urge.

“I know, Adriel.” She stepped closer to him.

Caitlin cautiously knelt down beside him. Her hand feathered the side of his face as she carefully watched his eyes close slowly.

“Caitlin,” he turned his head from her. “You can’t possibly...” Another wave of pain shot through him. It was her scent that encumbered him. The smell of her own desire caught him off guard. Surely she didn’t know what she offered him. “You can’t...”

Before Adriel could say another word, Caitlin removed her silky shirt. Her breasts heaved with each deep and alluring breath.

“I know if you don’t take me...,” she paused. “Adriel, I know what will happen to you. Dorian will kill you.” Her voice was soft and pleading.

Adriel’s eyes questioned her. He glanced away then quickly his black eyes locked onto hers again. “So you are giving yourself to me because you are protecting me from Dorian? I can take care of myself,” he growled harshly.

Caitlin moved closer, ignoring his discomfort with her help. Gingerly she took his head in her hands. Her face was so close to him the soft scent of her breath lingered against his lips.

“I know you have protected them,” her gaze fell from his. “And me.”

He shifted his weight and moved his body to face hers.

“Truly you do not know why,” his voice was soft and lustrous.

“Truly, I know if anyone, you care. Adriel, I’m not a fool. Please...”

“Caitlin, I can’t. You have never known a man, much less known someone like me. I would hurt you. I can’t. Please go.” He pushed her away with his hands firmly locked on her shoulders.

“No.” She insisted. Her fingers reached around her back and unsnapped her bra. “I can’t.”

“Yes you can.”

“No I can’t. I can’t bear to see anything happen to you,” her eyes lifted to his again. “Adriel, take me. Maybe we both might find some salvation in this night.”

“Caitlin,” Adriel pleaded.

Her heart gave no heed to his plea. Her eyes glimmered with the hope he would soon realize how much he really meant to her. Through the hundred years she spent with Adriel not even the careful eye of Dorian could deny her love for the man-beast. Her heart longed to set him free, to set the beast at peace.

Adriel tried to ignore her request, but the overwhelming desire burned against his skin. Wave after wave he knew what was to come. If he didn’t take Caitlin now her life would be in danger. There was a chance he would kill her without thinking.

Caitlin leaned closer, touching her pink lips against his. Softly her tongue grazed against his upper lip. Hunger and desire consumed him. The very scent of her fueled a fire inside his soul. Desperately he fought to control the animalistic urge, the same urge that was never tamed by any woman.

“Caitlin,” he whispered against her lips. Gently he took her face in his hands. He drew her to him and demanded those luscious pink lips to his. His mouth consumed hers, exploring the sweetness of her mouth with his tongue.

Adriel's mind was overwhelmed by one thought; having Caitlin. He stood swiftly and lifted her to her feet. With one quick motion, he ripped his shirt from his body. Deep within him the violent war waged between beast and man.

Caitlin released a soft gasp as her fingers ran over his muscular chest. Adriel quivered from the touch of her fingers that traced the ripped muscles in his stomach. Cautiously, he watched her eyes as they marveled over his muscular physique. Her blue eyes smoldered, taking notice of every inch of his lengthy torso.

Of all the many women he had experienced, Caitlin alone reduced him to a state of weakness. Another tremor from the beast threatened him. Quickly he braced himself against the edge of the bed as the severe pain continued its course. For all that was good in this life he knew he didn't want to hurt her. In this moment of haste, Caitlin meant the world to him.

Caitlin watched Adriel pull away from her. He sat down on the edge of the bed, hands balled into tight fists, battling against the rage. Now more than ever she knew he needed her compassion and far more her love.

Adriel bent forward as he growled against another wave of pain that swept over him. It was the beast every vampire in the house feared that dared to break free. He swore in his heart he would battle the beast. His heart longed to give Caitlin the love of a man who would truly love the very breath which left her body.

Longingly his black eyes lifted to hers. The canines emerged, aching as they pushed their way down. Fear threatened his mind as he hoped she would not run from him.

In truth, Caitlin was not afraid. She saw a man before her. A man who was the most handsome and endearing man she had ever known. As Adriel's eyes lifted to hers,

her heart melted. A small glimmer of hope lingered in those pain stricken black gems. The expression on his face, pleaded, begged for something within her to set him free. She knew he wanted to be released from the torment he endured these lonely years. In her heart, she knew he needed her now more than ever.

Caitlin drew in a deep breath and moved closer to Adriel. Her hands pressed to the sides of his rugged face. Slowly she leaned forward. Her finger softly traced the outline of his parted lips. Yes, she could clearly see the canines, the signs of the animal which dared to come forth. She could see the helplessness in those black hellish eyes as she leaned down and pressed her lips against his. Her lips softly grazed against his. A soft growl erupted from deep inside of Adriel's throat.

"You can do this Adriel." She breathed against his cheek. "I have faith in you."

In that moment something changed inside of him. The beast threatened to come forth. It wasn't the same as before. His eyes drifted to the window, lingering on the moon. Only a man like Adriel, a wolf-kind, could see the rainbow of colors illuminating around the moon. Another wave of pain ran through him. Fire scorched his skin. The very essence of his body shook as the muscles in his body grew.

Caitlin removed the final remnants of her clothing. She watched as his eyes returned to her. Slowly he savored the beauty of her naked body. He drank in every inch of her soft velvety skin. It was now or never, she thought as she climbed onto his lap. With both hands against his face again, she crushed her lips.

Adriel's heart raced. His large hands gripped her thighs tightly. Her hands gripped his shoulders as she pushed him on his back. His own heart pulled, then wavered to a halt. He realized as her tongue gently

taunted him, he was one with the beast. In that moment, he realized it was Caitlin who tamed the beast that longed for her love as much as he did.

Quickly he removed his jeans, as he maintained his position with Caitlin. Another rush of excitement ran through him and the beast, as the warmth of her naked body radiated against his. Caitlin was a brave woman, he thought. She was the first to see him in this state. Slowly he moved Caitlin onto her back. He would take her with care and caution. Tenderly, his finger traced the outline of her jaw. He marveled as her lips parted and her pulse raced. He listened to the rapidly beating rhythm of her heart and smiled. His lips touched hers again, grazing them cautiously. He savored the moment when her fingers trailed up the length of his strong arms. The arms which would hold and embrace her in the warmth of love she needed.

Awkwardly, her legs pressed against his thighs. She could feel him, the hardness of his manhood as it pressed against the softness inside of her. Caitlin's pulse raced. She anxiously waited for the final moment. She felt safe in his arms and never underestimated their strength.

"This will hurt." His eyes locked onto hers.

"It's okay." Her voice was soft. "I trust you."

Adriel inhaled a deep breath. He wished there was some other way to do this. He began to enter her then stopped abruptly. His heart sank, he hated the thought he would hurt her even for a moment. There was no doubt in his mind her body was ready to accept him. He knew he would hurt her, but there was no way around it. He moved slowly and hoped her body would give into his. The muscles in his jaws clenched as he moved, stroking the very essence of her one inch at a time. She was so silky and warm. The overwhelming feeling of

excitement swept over him. Then he felt it, the barrier he must cross. He paused, his heart breaking from the pain he would place upon her. Only for a moment he promised himself and never again shall she feel such pain.

Caitlin quivered in excitement. "Do it!" she growled. Her hands gripped tightly to the muscular arms.

Adriel trembled as the pressure of her fingers tightened around his arms. He pushed himself forward into the warmth of her body. Her breath seized. He stopped. Her eyes widened. He leaned forward and consumed her mouth with his. Aggressively he took her mouth until he heard the soft moans releasing from her throat. As gently as he could he entered her completely. Another wave of pain shot through him. The jolt electrified every nerve in his body. He tore away from her lips. His head buried into the pillow as another growl erupted.

Caitlin knew Adriel was in trouble. A fiery flame ignited inside of her veins, kissing her skin with the hot rush of desire. The instant spark of excitement and expectation ran through her. He was what she wanted. He was almost there. Her body ached to feel him inside of her. She wanted every inch of him. She shifted underneath him, positioning herself for all he had to offer. The softness of her fingers clasped around his hips. Caitlin raised her own body against his. The pain she felt was tolerable, but she remained still for a moment as the shock wore off.

Adriel lifted his head immediately. The warmth and smoothness of her body surrounded him. He couldn't stop himself. He moved, stroking the silky softness inside of her. Her soft blond hair fanned out around her head. His hand slid under her back, cradling it gently as she arched herself to him. She was beautiful, he

marveled. His Caitlin.

To his surprise, her body yielded to his, taking in every inch he had to offer. Deeper he drove inside of her, filling her with every desire he had. He gave her everything that was his. He marveled again at the way her body responded to his. The more he gave, the more she wanted. Joy filled his heart as she moaned softly. The soft cries and moans grew louder as he continued to bring her to ecstasy. His own pain subsided, as well as the beast. For the first time in his life the beast bowed down to a woman. And that woman was Caitlin.

Caitlin felt more alive than she had ever felt. The feeling of him inside of her as he stroked deeply into her very wet existence left her helpless. The moment of pain she felt was replaced by immeasurable pleasure. She wanted more of this man. She wanted more of the beast that dwelled inside of him.

A breath escaped Caitlin as Adriel's mouth bore down on her breast. Gently his teeth clasped around her swollen tips. Delicately, he teased the hard pink tip with his tongue. Excitement ran through him as her hands gripped his hips, her fingernails dug deeply into the tightly muscled buttocks. A throaty growl erupted from him when he felt her body move against his. He tried to focus on control, but she did a good job to unravel him.

"Harder!" She cried as her body squirmed underneath him.

His dark heavy eyebrows rose. "Caitlin?"

Caitlin's fingers dug into his arms, her fingernails pierced into his flesh. The smell of her virgin blood swirled around his senses. Her body slammed up to meet his. Adriel's mind swirled with pleasure. For once in his life, he had found his soul mate! Caitlin was truly his.

“Harder.” She cried out again.

Finally he gave into the passion which raged inside of him. Shifting again, he pulled her hips tighter against his. His mind slipped away.

Heat flamed over Caitlin again. Her fevered body trembled. Her mouth opened only to find his again, covering the cries as she exploded inside.

Adriel’s body tensed. It was now or never, he thought. The pressure built inside of him as her body tightened around him. He fought hard with her, pulling himself out of her only to thrust harder and deeper inside. She came. A rush fell over him as he exploded wildly inside of her. It was over. He knew what was next.

The beautiful blue eyes gleamed with pleasure as Caitlin looked lovingly into his face. Adriel marveled at her beauty once again. He leaned forward and softly took her lips with his. His heart leaped in joy. He knew in that moment Caitlin loved him more than he ever imagined.

Adriel lay helpless in Caitlin’s loving arms. His strong arms encamped around her, sheltering her in the warmth of his hot body. He had never seen such pleasure in one woman’s eyes. She truly desired him. He waited, giving her a moment to allow her breathing to return back to normal before he spoke.

“Adriel?” Caitlin spoke softly. “I have one question for you.”

“What is that my love?” His deep voice rumbled softly.

“Why do they call you the NightMan?”

Adriel took a deep breath and exhaled slowly. It was time she knew the truth. If she truly was what the legends proclaimed, then she would end his torture. He had to trust his own heart.

“Many years ago, my people were a race that was feared by many. We were not harmful creatures. Only to those who attacked us. We lived quietly and peacefully amongst the humans.

“It wasn’t until someone who was involved with one of us found out the truth. Lillian, an ancestor of mine fell in love with one of the local villagers. He was a young and handsome man named Tiberius, from what I was told.” Adriel shifted again as he felt Caitlin’s hips wiggling against his, snuggling herself closer to him.

“Lillian kept the secret hidden from Tiberius for as long as she could. She was warned about falling in love with humans. The relationships always ended badly. I suppose they were not too surprised when Tiberius proposed to Lillian, swearing his love to her for eternity. She didn’t realize his promise would soon be broken.

“When Lillian told Tiberius the truth of what she really was he was mortified. He quickly dismissed Lillian and their love affair ended abruptly. It wasn’t long before he went to the village locals and proclaimed her as a witch. He had witnessed first hand her evil spell.

“Lillian’s father was outraged when a group of crazed villagers and local farmers came looking for her. He hid his daughters deep in a mountain cave and promised he would take care of it.

“It was a full moon that night. The three sisters huddled inside of a cave not knowing whether or not their father would return. Lillian was distraught and was not thinking when she left her two sisters to find her father.

“The crazed group of villagers was not willing to hear her father’s story. They proclaimed him a witch as well, captured him and tied him to stake. If he wouldn’t tell him the location of his daughters then they were going

to burn him alive.

“The father refused and it was Dorian who saved his life that dreadful night. Dorian’s coven killed the entire group with the exception of the young man who was Lillian’s lover. He saved him for last and drained him dry of blood before he tore his body from limb to limb.

“The father revealed the truth to Dorian the only way he knew how. The family’s secret. Dorian was amused when he saw the father change into a wolf before his eyes. He knew the benefits of such creatures. Dorian named us NightMen because we could change into wolves.” Adriel released another sigh as he waited for Caitlin to run screaming out of the room.

His expectations were high. There was no screaming. No one ran for the door. As a matter of fact, Caitlin remained perfectly still.

“My love?” Adriel’s heart was in his throat.

Caitlin shifted and turned on her side to face him. The amulet slid slightly over her left breast as she braced herself on her elbow. Inside, her heart broke for him over the years of torment and loneliness he must have suffered. Tears welled behind those blue eyes. Slowly the tears fell, one by one and drifted aimlessly down her cheek. A single tear drop fell onto the blood red ruby in the center of the necklace.

“Adriel, I’m so sorry.”

Adriel watched the tear drop fall onto the necklace. He picked up the cross and held it up. His finger ran over the wet spot where the tear had landed. Under the slightest pressure the vial of blood shattered. The tiny shards of glass and blood pierced his skin.

Caitlin’s eyes widened with fear. Something snapped inside of her. In that moment, she remembered something her father had told her. It was beyond the initial statement of never removing the necklace.

“My father told me something before he died. He said whomever my heart longed for would shatter the curse of my family and I would be set free. The vial would break and the blood of life would be spilled. By the hands of my one true love I would be set free.” Her tears continued to fall as she looked deeply into those dark hellish eyes.

Chapter 7

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Dorian pulled his head back from the neck of the beauty he had acquired only an hour ago. A single drop of blood ran down from the corner of his mouth. He turned to Alessandra. She had decided to take her favorite spot to feed, inside the groin area. The blood was more flavorful there and satisfying. He held no regrets over the damage he inflicted on this human. The mess he left behind, he knew Alessandra didn't mind cleaning up.

"Enough," Dorian stated firmly.

The young woman lay on her back, her breath shallow. Her heart barely beat from the lack of blood. She would die soon. It was not good to take the last ounce of blood, he thought. It never tasted the same anyway. Dorian watched as Alessandra's head rose from between the girl's legs. Her pale hand lifted to her face to wipe away the red crimson blood.

Dorian was satisfied at the moment. However he knew Alessandra wanted more. She always wanted more. His hand ran down the length of his stomach. The pale fingers grasped his erection, well he could take her now before she marked Caitlin, he thought. He

wanted to make sure there were no mishaps.

Dorian's green eyes smoldered as he moved swiftly to Alessandra. With a blurry motion, his hands clasped onto her pearly thighs. He lifted her to his waist where she wrapped her slender legs around his hips. He would take her like he wanted. He entered her long and hard, slamming her back against the far wall.

Alessandra released a hiss and bared her fangs. A low and throaty laugh escaped him as he thrust himself deeper into her body. She had no choice but to take him. His eyes narrowed when she tried to move. He knew she would try to bite him. This he could not have. Her mouth moved closer to him, but not fast enough as he grabbed her neck with his hand. His fingers applied more pressure to her neck while she struggled to free herself.

Again, Dorian thrust harder inside of her until the breath released from her lungs. She may be a vampire, he thought, but she still felt good. He enjoyed the warmth the humans provided. But all in all he admitted he enjoyed the feeling of Alessandra. After all of their years together, her body molded to his with ease. He fit perfectly inside of her. It didn't matter to him how many men she had, they were still no comparison to him. He released another laugh, watching her tight breasts bounce against his thrusting.

Dorian's eyes traveled from her breasts down to her mid section. She did have a very appealing body. Slim, toned and beautifully shaped breasts despite her pale features. Her blood thirsty red eyes were once a dark brown, but that was before he had turned her.

Dorian thought back to that moment when he first met Alessandra. It was shortly after he acquired Caitlin. Dorian's discovery of the curse had left him in a discomfoting frenzy. He went into town to take out his

frustrations on someone. Any whore would do at that point.

The dirt roads of the little town were often dark and lonely. After dark, the only few people who remained were found at the local tavern. A tavern where Dorian visited only when he needed something more than what the local hunting provided. It was not good to stay in one place very long, for a vampire anyway.

Most people in the little town didn't know Dorian's true identity. However, the locals still carried the gossip and many questions arose as to Dorian's dark demeanor and presence.

Dorian made his way through the dark night to the tavern. He was more or less bored and needed something to entertain himself. His coven remained behind as he strolled into the little pub.

The local music played loudly, laughter and voices filled the air. Once inside, the smell of whiskey and malt brew was strong. The scents of human nonsense, Dorian thought as he found a shadow hidden table in the corner of the small place.

Then he saw her, a beautiful woman who reminded him of Caitlin. He glanced down to his hand. It reminded him of what happened that night. In his haste to remove the necklace from Caitlin he didn't think the burn from the cross was going to be as bad. His eyes flicked up to the beauty that moved in his direction. His fist tightly closed and he forced out a warm smile to her.

"What will it be tonight?" Her voice was charming.

"Whiskey." Dorian smiled broadly. He watched the red color flush her checks.

"Whisky it is. And what would you be having after your whiskey?"

Ah - yes, you my dear, Dorian thought as he leaned forward towards the girl.

“Well, that is a bold proposition,” he stated fully aware the tavern served no food.

“Times are tough and tips are harder these days. My mother is ill, so every penny counts.” Her voice denoted a hint of pain.

Dorian eased back in his chair and brought his hand to his chin. Yes, this may just work, he thought.

“Bring me my whisky and I’ll make you a proposition of a lifetime. I promise you will never have to worry about money or a sick mother again.”

Alessandra did as Dorian asked. She brought him his whiskey and lingered with him a few minutes for a brief conversation. Dorian didn’t reveal to her the truth of what he was, not until long after she agreed to go back to his home.

Once back at Dorian’s home, Alessandra wondered about Dorian’s elaborate wealth...not to mention a few others who looked like him wandering around the large estate.

“What are you?” Alessandra quickly turned to Dorian.

“One who will give you what you asked.” Dorian strolled toward her. “I just ask for one thing in return.”

“You said you will help my mother?”

Dorian nodded and he slipped a pale finger into a lock of her golden blond hair. “Yes.”

Alessandra inhaled a quick breath as Dorian’s body shoved against hers. In that moment she knew he wasn’t normal. No man’s body was as cold as his next to hers.

“Don’t be afraid my dear.” He drew the lock of hair to his face, inhaling the soft fragrance of rose oil. “I can give you more than you asked. I shall give you something men have died for trying to obtain. Just one kiss is all I ask.”

Alessandra’s eyes widened. What kind of man was

this who could ask for just one kiss? Her lips trembled as she nodded in agreement.

Dorian gently slid his hand behind Alessandra's neck, cradling her head in his hand. He watched as her chest heaved with her quickly panted breaths as he lowered his head toward her. As his lips touched hers, he could hear her loudly pounding heart. Her scent was more than delicious to him as his tongue grazed the top of her lips.

Alessandra's lips slowly parted. She felt the coolness of his tongue as it slid into her mouth as he explored the new region completely. The sweet and delightful taste mixed with the hint of whiskey enveloped her. Her mind became lost in an exotic mix of flavors. She became weak as she hungered for more of his kiss.

Delighted by Alessandra's response, Dorian pulled her body closer to his, consuming her with the immortal kiss of a vampire. He knew the venom in his saliva would be enough to weaken her...it always was. He could feel her body molding against his, her tongue delightfully and playfully chasing his. Yes, it was time he took more.

Dorian held her tight against his frame. Her back arched as he leaned forward and moved his lips to her neck. Alessandra softly moaned as the trail of kisses lingered against her skin. He inhaled a quick breath, knowing her worries would soon be over...forever.

As Dorian's mind came back to the present he realized Alessandra wasn't Caitlin. Anger swept over him. His eyes travel further down her stomach to the connection of his body entering hers. He did like to see what he was accomplishing. He watched as the excitement overwhelmed him. Damn, this will be Caitlin one day, he thought, continuing to watch while he drove harder into Alessandra.

Snapping his head toward the bedroom door, he stopped suddenly. That smell! His eyes closed while he inhaled deeply, exploring the scent. Dorian's eyes opened wide. He knew that smell, it was Caitlin's blood. Not only was it her blood, but there was the scent of sex mixed in the air.

"Bitch!" he hissed.

"Dorian!" she growled. The sudden release surprised her as he dropped her on the floor. "You can't leave me this way!"

"Finish it yourself!" he seethed and then he grabbed his jeans.

He pulled on his jeans then quickly headed toward the door. Damn that beast. He would kill them both, he grumbled in thought as he marched out of the bedroom.

Taking his time walking down the hall, he contemplated how he would kill them. Adriel knew better than to cross him. He knew he was not to touch her. How many times had Dorian warned him? How many times had he told him to stay away from her? Caitlin had been warned more than enough times. Still she didn't listen. Over a hundred years of waiting for the right time to take her, the right time for someone to remove that damn necklace and he failed once again. This time Dorian would not fail.

Curse or no curse, pain or no pain, Dorian would kill Adriel then take Caitlin. He would take her so violently she would wish she were dead. Better than that, she would beg for her death to come quickly. Satisfied, Dorian would oblige her request in part and take her life in the slowest manner possible. She would suffer before her eyes closed. Protection or not, she would need more than a necklace to save her now.

Dorian marched down the hallway, following the delicious scent of Caitlin's blood. The scent he

recognized which came from Adriel's room. With every step he took, his anger turned into rage. He didn't care if the damn pendant burned his hand off, he would rip it from her neck. For all the pain and torment she had caused him over these last one hundred years it was not worth it any longer. Tonight the torment would end and with it her life.

Chapter 8

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Before Adriel could speak another word, the door to the bedroom opened. Dorian stood in the doorway, his eyes flared red with a blood rage. A killing rage. Worse yet, Adriel knew what it meant. The Master was enraged because something far more valuable than Caitlin's virtue had been stolen, her love.

"I will kill you both!" Dorian roared as he sprang toward Adriel.

Caitlin's scream froze in her throat. Adriel swiftly moved away from her. Every second was a blur as she watched him leap toward Dorian. It was not Adriel who made contact with the vampire, but a large black wolf. Not the evil werewolf, but the wolf she knew. To her surprise, it was the wolf she played with as a child.

For the first time, in that split second she knew it was Adriel who was the gentle loving and playful wolf who watched over her all those years. He was her watchman, her NightMan.

Dorian caught the massive wolf by its sides as the

two sailed into the far corner of the wall. The two bodies collided with a tremendous crash, tearing down the beautiful tapestry.

The wolf was suddenly thrown to the side, landing sideways against the tall canopy bed. Caitlin grabbed the sheets tighter around her as a scream erupted from her mouth. Dorian moved with incredible speed. He picked the wolf up and gave him another sling toward the window.

“No-o-o-o!” Caitlin’s eyes widened with fear.

The large black wolf hit the window, the glass shattered, but the wolf didn’t fall through. Instead he slid down into the shards of glass that lay on the floor. It was over, Dorian thought. He watched the wolf’s body go limp. Dorian’s attention turned to Caitlin. His eyes burned with joy when he saw the necklace was no longer around her neck.

“Ah Caitlin, my torment has ended this night. At last I shall give to you all that I am and then kill you ever so slowly,” Dorian seethed and then moved closer toward her.

“Let me go Dorian! Please!” Caitlin screamed. “You have nothing to take from me!”

Dorian moved quickly to Caitlin and grabbed her by the neck. “Your life my dear,” he hissed as he pulled her up from the bed.

Caitlin’s eyes widened as they peered past Dorian’s shoulder. Dorian froze for a moment. The expression on Caitlin’s face was something other than fear. Slowly Dorian turned around. A low growl rumbled from the black wolf that was airborne toward the two of them.

Dorian dropped Caitlin, but was not fast enough to catch the large black wolf. Caitlin moved quickly out of the way as the two bodies fell on the floor beside the bed.

The large wolf's teeth bore down against Dorian's neck. Caitlin heard loud tearing noises and a mixture of deeply triumphant and plainly terrified growls. Her heart pounded. Her breath came to a quick halt. For the moment she couldn't tell which one growled in triumph, and which one acknowledged its imminent and irrevocable final defeat. Her mind swirled with the horrifying thought of losing Adriel. If he was lost, then she would gladly accept any death that waited for her. She no longer had the will to live without Adriel's love. Silence suddenly filled the room.

Caitlin slightly trembled as she leaned forward, anxious to know the victor. Slowly Adriel rose to his feet. A flash of fire erupted from the body of what once was Dorian. Suddenly a puff of grey ashes dissipated into thin air. Dorian was gone.

Terrifying screams echoed throughout the luxurious mansion. A deadly silence soon followed as the screams ended. Every vampire in the house met their end. The curse of a vampire was lifted.

"It was you," Caitlin's voice trembled.

Adriel's eyes softened. "Yes Caitlin. It was I who watched over you as a little girl. It was I who watched you grow into the beautiful woman you are now. There was no secret to your father's curse. He knew I was in love with you back then. It was his wish I stay close to you and protect you. Alexander knew one day you would love the man as much as you loved the wolf."

Caitlin moved quickly into Adriel's arms, embracing him tightly.

"I can't promise you forever, but as long as I live I will love and protect you."

"I don't need forever, I just need you," Caitlin whispered against his lips, as she drew him closer.

The moon was still young that night. Caitlin and

Adriel were free to live their lives together in love. Adriel knew it was not the strength of the wolf which killed Dorian. Nor was it a curse. The power of love freed them both. The type of love that was strong enough to break any curse. For once in their lives they could live and love freely.

Chapter 9

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Thirteen years later....Caitlin sat in the middle of a beautiful green meadow. Purple, pink and white wild flowers surrounded her as she reached for a tan picnic basket. The breeze stirred softly around her, tossing her blond hair around her face. Her soft pink lips pursed together as her fingers gently removed the stray strands from her face.

A little girl, twelve years old sat at the edge of the blue and green blanket giggling softly as she grabbed the nose of a large wolf. The wolf playful nudged the child.

“Adriel, come now. It’s time to eat,” Caitlin announced. She opened the picnic basket and pulled out an array of sandwiches.

The wolf turned back into his human form. Adriel dressed in his jeans and joined his family on the blanket.

“Is this the life you dreamed of my dear?” he cooed softly to Caitlin.

Caitlin’s eyes fluttered as the corner of her lips turned into a smile. “A life with you was all I dreamed of

my love.”

“And me too daddy!” the little girl stood and plowed on top of her parents.

Adriel laughed a hardy laugh as he caught the child in his arms. “Yes Eliza. And you too.”

Caitlin smiled broadly, watching Eliza in the arms of her father. She had that same dark tanned skin and those same black eyes. Eliza was her father’s child in more ways than one.

“Will I get to be a wolf one day daddy?” Eliza asked in a bright and cheerful voice.

“Yes, my dear Eliza you will be a wolf one day,” Adriel answered as he situated her on his lap with a sandwich between her hands.

“Then I’m going to be the best wolf ever!” Eliza announced proudly.

“I’m sure you will,” Caitlin spoke softly.

The evening had come to a close and Adriel walked his family back home to the small chateau nestled in the heart of his homeland. Ireland remained the place where he considered home. He knew in his heart Caitlin was elated to be somewhere closer to where she grew up. It had been quite a long trip for the both of them.

Adriel stopped in front of the door and turned to Caitlin, his eyes and heart full of joy. He realized even though she had aged a few years, she was as beautiful as the day they broke the dreadful curse.

“We are home once again.” He opened the door for the two loveliest ladies in his life.

Caitlin paused while Eliza ran into the house. Slowly her eyes lifted to Adriel’s. Could she be more in love with this man? After thirteen years she still felt the same love flow over her as that first night they were together.

“Adriel, I believe I love you more now than I did thirteen years ago,” she purred, moving closer into his arms.

A soft growl rumbled deep in his chest. “And I you...my love. We are here and there is nothing else we need.”

“Well one thing...” Caitlin giggled. “Maybe an extra baby room.”

Adriel’s body stiffened. His eyes widened in surprise.

“You mean...?” he began breathlessly.

Caitlin’s broad smile ensured she wasn’t teasing the hunk of man she married.

“I guess, when you said you wanted a pack of kids...” she began.

“A pack is fine with me, as long as you are the mother of my brood,” he spoke proudly and swooped her into his arms. “It’s a forever thing you know.”

Caitlin nuzzled her face next to his. “Yes...” her lips moved lightly against Adriel’s. “A forever kind of thing.”

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T.L. Mitchell lives in Virginia where she enjoys writing paranormal romance novels and cool evenings drinking a cup of coffee on the deck while admiring the view of the mountains. She is an active member of the Paranormal Romance Guild.

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