

A Requiem Eternal
By Samantha LeBrun

**This is a work of fiction. Similarities to real people, places,
or**

events are entirely coincidental.

A REQUIEM ETERNAL

First edition. December 25, 2014.

Copyright © 2014 Samantha LeBrun.

Written by Samantha LeBrun.

Dedicated To:

To my beloved, miracle and every day sunshine daughter, I thank you for your input, inspiration and undying determination to help me finish this book. You are the one who inspires me to wake and live each day.

To my Mother, who never spoke down to me as a child and allowed me to grow into an expressive and well-spoken, adult.

To possibly the coolest computer geek on the planet, you know who you are. Thank you for making me a part of something when I really needed it. "Sweet."

To the muses who are the fuel for my imagination and make my writing possible, Cristina, Loreena, Billy and Stevie, thanks so much for the soundtrack.

Chapter 1 – The Children of Psyon

My Lord, William of Wyckham,

The once rampant occurrences of vampirism have waned considerably across your lands. However, they are replaced by an even more insidious condition. Increasingly among the peasants I notice a mania that is long lasting. Those afflicted no longer work their fields as they are left completely mad. They wander or are cared for by family having lost all sense of self and province to my Lord. Some are not as fortunate, falling victim to the highwaymen who lay in wait for them at the outskirts of our village. I have witnessed how this disease is spread. I saw a man approach another. A red demon came from his eyes and touched the other man. Soon after, the man who had been touched by the demon sat in the street swaying back and forth. When asked his name he did not speak. There was nothing of a soul in his eyes. He is cared for at the abbey to this day. I fear if not cured, this affliction will have dire consequences for the people. The most urgent to my mind is swift restitution by His Highness King Edward due to unpaid taxes. Please accept my humble request for audience immediately, so we may speak of this further.

*Your servant,
Hospitaller Brandan O'Duinn*

Brandan O'Duinn was a humble man who served his Lord with naive loyalty, the church with unwavering faith and the people of his village with the compassion of a saint. O'Duinn's responsibilities to his Lord were twofold, serving as the village priest at the Abbey and in a smaller capacity administering the care of the sick. Lord William of Wyckham received the Hospitaller O'Duinn's letter, bringing the Lord much

displeasure. Not even a week passed before Wyckham sent for the Hospitaller.

O'Duinn wondered to himself along the walk to his Lord's home, why he must attend such an early audience. He stopped to catch his breath atop the ridge of the village countryside. The shell keep glistened from a distance like a battlement of pure silver in the early morning mist. He strode to the massive iron studded oaken doors which shielded the castle grounds from the surrounding woods. Two guards flanked the entrance. They opened a sliver for him to make his way through. The courtyard, usually brimming with servants and courtiers was still with the hour. They led him through the claustrophobic tunnel to the grand entry in silence. Then through the opulent hallways, quiet except for the occasional sigh or muffled giggle of women. Linens of colors he had only imagined draped stone walls. A depiction of the Virgin Mary painted with such care to each shadow and crease of her body he almost believed she was there in the flesh. He reminded himself again in his wonder at all of the Lord's fine possessions; he would one day receive an even greater reward. The guards opened the chamber door.

“Hospitaller Brandan O'Duinn, my Lord.”

Lord Wyckham stood before him in nobleman's dress; his long waves of black hair slightly disheveled.

“Leave us,” Wyckham said in a low whisper to them then turned to O'Duinn, the tilt of his deep blue eyes pierced the priest. The doors to the chamber closed and locked behind him. He humbly bowed to Lord Wyckham.

“My Lord, thank you for your gracious and expedient acceptance of my request,” the priest said, nervously launching into his prepared words. “I have another for you to hear today. On behalf of the people who serve you, I request funds to investigate the affliction mentioned in my letter.”

Lord Wyckham walked closer to him; his indignant stance matched his tone.

“You request funds?”

Brendan remembered his other meetings with the Lord were much more cordial. Indifferent or not, he must ask him for help on the people's behalf.

“Yes my Lord.”

“How will funds assist you? The church tithe, is that not enough?”

“The disease grows. It sweeps your lands. The abbey is overwhelmed with the people's need of care.”

“Simply shackle and feed them bread and water. I am sure this madness you speak of will then leave them soon enough.”

“With all due respect my Lord, shackled peasants cannot pay taxes.”

“You care for their plight too much, O'Duinn. It is a shame. It will take at least a fortnight to replace you,” Wyckham replied with a deep breath moving closer to O'Duinn.

The man of faith was paralyzed.

“My Lord--- NO--- It has found you? What demon is in your eyes?” he choked out, struggling under Wyckham's grip on his throat while red slivers of light escaped from the Lords eyes to reach out to his. O'Duinn was astonished by the shimmer of a gold mist drifting from his holy black robes.

“Speak the exorcism rites of your faith aloud, O'Duinn. They may give you comfort in your last conscious breath.”

The priest remembered the rites well though he suspected they would have no effect on this demon.

“Deus, cui proprium est misereri semper et parcere, suscipe...My Lord, Stop! Your soul in eternal damnation...Our King rules under God as do you. Has your own will left you?” he pleaded.

A deep red light enveloped Wyckham. It joined then consumed the gold light it captured from O'Duinn. He tried to no avail, to fight Lord Wyckham's invasion of his memories which brought an involuntary tear with each remembrance lost to him. He could no longer see Lord Wyckham and the castle around him. He could only see a black and swirling abyss Wyckham created in the priest's mind. Unseen hands dragged him from reality to a place of deep and unjust despair. The priest was sent to the one shame pushed back in the recesses of his being. The souls who suffered the Crusades surrounded him, tearing at him, pleading for mercy. He prayed and stood staunch in his belief knowing it would bring the light back. He saw the light as an unreachable pin prick. He grasped for it when the weight of the darkness pushed him further into the arms of the

innocent he condemned to torture so long ago. Just as he had turned away from them, there he stood reaching out with his hands in a constant and futile effort for the light which was his sanity.

Wyckham was unmoved by the visions to his mind stolen from the priest; endless deeds of propriety he viewed one by one. After seeing whole the priest's past, he knew better. Wyckham laughed to himself at O'Duinn mistaking his power for a demon. He surmised it was the only explanation the priest's simple and superstitious mind could conceive of.

O'Duinn's life essence in gold turned to black while Lord Wyckham spoke his last to the priest.

"My soul belongs to the Children of Psyon."

The priest sat at his feet grasping at nothing in the air then stopping to sway forward and back. Wyckham touched O'Duinn's face. The priest looked up at him and smiled with the freedom of madness.

"Manservant, come here."

"My Lord."

"Take the Hospitaller O'Duinn back to the abbey. He is not of his right mind. Tell the nuns at the abbey we have need for a new Hospitaller immediately."

"Yes, My Lord."

"Send the maidservant Lorelle to my chamber."

The manservant dutifully collected O'Duinn herding him in his wandering towards the door.

"As you wish, My Lord."

Lorelle arrived into Lord Wyckham's service in a regrettable fashion. Unable to pay their taxes her family had no choice but to send their only daughter to work away some of their debt. Lorelle loathed Wyckham. She was well aware because of her station she would never be more to him than a convenient diversion. His perverse advances toward her were not welcome. He acted as if it were her choice to be near him daily.

She was summoned to the castle while the only man she did love expressed his interest for her hand in marriage. All too

soon, the cruel whispers of people she had once considered friends began. They unjustly branded her as Wyckham's whore. Her virtue tarnished, Lorelle's lone suitor wed another.

Lorelle could endure the frustration of his Lord's repeated attempts to lure her to his bedchamber no more. She made it clear to him she was far from moved by his intentions. He turned on her. His blue eyes of ice lit red. He pulled her close to him in an iron embrace. Vaporous tendrils of light in glowing blood red seeped from his eyes floating on air to reach her. She struggled under his unyielding grip. He forced to her mind visions of all the women he accosted. The myriad of depraved methods he used to instill more terror in them while he fed sickened her. She felt his hand moving her dress upwards at the side of her thigh. She shivered with the cold avarice of his energy spreading throughout her body. The depths of her furious soul spoke to her. He will not have you.

She looked into his eyes while he breathed in the blue energy flowing from her. He was locked in the enjoyment of his power. It looked to her a moment of weakness. She grasped at his hand around her back to free herself. An electrifying pulse left her hand and she found the power over her body returned. The blue light he coerced from her eyes ceased and instead plunged into him in a hot white bolt from her hand to his. Wyckham stood struggling to relinquish from her while she fought back, feeding from him. She watched him fall to his knees before finding the strength to break the seal of their hands. He fell back from her to the stone wall of his chamber startled, breathless and laughing.

“You have achieved far worse by fighting, my dear.”

The sound of her heartbeat became loud then ceased in her ear, yet she still lived. She sensed the other Psyon around her then and knew something else was terribly wrong. None were women. His evil passed to her, he forbade her to leave the castle. He told her to remain close to him if she still wanted to live.

She hated him with no bounds since she was bonded to him for eternity as a Psyon. She knew why he wanted to speak with her. She hoped her actions would bring his demise and possibly her own. Lorelle entered his chamber with a curtsy and a look of guilt so heavy she knew reading her mind was not even a

necessity for Wyckham. He spoke to her in a deceptive tone of calm questioning.

“My sister in Psyon Lorelle, have you created another to our line?”

“Yes, my Lord--he fed from me. The Psyon discovered me then and kept me from him. The grief over his loss--it made him leave before I could show him--,” she replied with her eyes cast down to disguise a subtle half grin; her thoughts returned to the Templar knight and the sensual way of him feeding from her.

He walked to her; in each step she saw his anger rise while he thought out loud.

“The veil of shadows is not maintained with instinct alone, it is taught. A rogue Psyon is a dead Psyon, but not soon enough for us. He has returned and feeds too deeply from my subjects. You have put all that I have and consequently all that you enjoy at risk. I cannot leave and dispose of him myself. I would leave my lands open to invaders,” he replied, so close to her with screams to her face; blonde wispy curls at her forehead moved with the temper in his breath. He grabbed her by the arm.

“Stupid woman--do you see what you have done? Did I not make it clear enough to you? It was for our survival that you were to feed only from me. They know of your creation? We are days, if not hours from judgment. We are left to the Psyon council's will.”

Lorelle's patience wore more thin than ever she could remember; she leaned into him to be as close as possible to Wyckham's face.

“He is beautiful and found favor in my eyes, something you will never know,” she said to him in slow contempt locking the challenge in her eyes with his.

“Yes, the way of you; the taste of your fire within--I remember it still. It is almost worth my ruin,” Wyckham replied, his eyes flashed to her with the red glow of his hunger. He threw her to the ground.

“Take this woman from my sight,” he hissed and gestured to a Psyon guard outside of the open door.

Lord Wyckham retired to his chamber alone to prepare his last will and testament for his two sons and legal heirs. He made

a woman Psyon and she created a rogue who threatened the veil of shadows. On two counts his status was damaged beyond repair. He sat in his chair of velvet and surveyed all the finery which would be far from him soon. It was only a matter of time. Still, he wondered how much time. A voice echoed at once to his mind with an answer.

“Brother Psyon William Wyckham, we speak to you concerning a matter--we of course, are well aware of. This is precisely why the creation of a Psyon from a female is forbidden. Your sister in Psyon, Lorelle is the first and since her creation has brought nothing but strife to our kind.”

Lord Wyckham breathed heavily at the confirmation of his death sentence among the Psyon.

“My affairs are in order. I await the decision of the council in my regard. However, I request the removal of the female and the rogue she has created from the Children of Psyon. This judgment will eventually clear the madness from my lands. My sons will inherit what is owed to them and continue to loyally serve His Highness, King Edward.”

The pause of the Psyon council seemed to go on forever to Lord Wyckham, and then the solitary voice of the elder rang out in a coarse reply.

“We cannot simply take the loss of a Psyon in the warrior class so lightly. The humans we feed on need our protection. Their survival is essential to ours. Because of your willful indiscretion, your essence and that of the female Psyon you created will cease to exist among us. The rogue Psyon she created from the soul of the warrior Templar Knight will serve as a worthy replacement.”

Lord Wyckham smiled at the news of Lorelle while he thought his last.

“If I cannot have you, then no one shall.”

Chapter 2 – Sorin Ladislov

Under the iron rule and massive debt of King Philip IV, the lands and assets of Sorin Ladislov's forced benefactors the Order of the Knights Templar were confiscated. Charges of blasphemy against the Holy Roman church were sure to follow. His haven on the Isle of Cyprus was well known to the King. Each passing day brought the tribunal soldiers closer to him.

Crouched on the chalky limestone of his stark barracks, he kept watch at the window. A Norse ship anchored in the harbor. The thoughts of the humans aboard this vessel called to him. He thought the essence of unbridled evil was appealing, as a reckoning of sorts. So cruel their intentions, he reasoned the world would do well to be rid of them. He approached them with the motive of joining with them to perhaps achieve his freedom while learning the trade of a sailor.

After months of a journey by sea the sight of land was a welcome one, though he soon came to know why he would not want to see it in their company. Their deeds of conquest invaded his mind through the emotion of their victims in the intensity of their cries from shore. No effort on his part would keep their anguished cries from him. With every woman they violated, every child whose caretakers they butchered and every village they set ablaze, his hatred of them grew.

Each night, he fed from one to the point of death until the pain of their victims to his mind mercifully quieted. There was merely enough Viking scourge left to sail the ship. To his surprise, the remaining few had the presence of mind to trace their hardship to him. Sorin knew then he made a grave error in

not continuing to take one each night. They lingered together, never far from one another.

The largest man among them approached. He lifted him high throwing Sorin into the black waters of the night. Sorin's body rose and his head bobbed on the surface of the water. He turned in the water looking for any life to swim to. Through the fog of salty eyes, he saw a dark mass with a hint of green in the distance. This place, their minds called "Vinland".

The Vikings expected Vinland to be a suitable exile. At the first night of wandering the expanse of it, he felt it to be more of a death sentence. In every direction his eyes drank in the dream-scape of pristine forest. He sensed no human thought. No human heart rang out in over a day of searching. He laid down to die in the beautiful silence of his mind not heard since being made a Child of Psyon.

His will flowed from him into the mist, until he sensed a presence. He grasped the air hoping somehow to reach the warm flesh near to him. Language of an unknown dialect occupied his mind and for a moment eased the hunger. He fed from this being at once to save himself. This essence so peaceful was considerable shock after the prolonged taste of Viking brutality. He took just enough to quench his thirst. His strength half renewed, he opened his eyes to see a dark skinned, dark haired beauty with soulful eyes to melt a man to his core. From her he heard "Croatan". He thought this must be the name for this race among humans as they discussed where he came from.

The Croatan called him "Night-walker". They knew he was not human, yet showed no fear when he fed from them. Sorin never witnessed this before them. Their wonder in the ways of his survival inspired them to create a new ritual in his honor. In some way they worshiped him as one of their many gods of nature. His kinship with these wise and mystic people was one of such respect he continued to feed only enough to survive. He wondered with each passing sunset how he had the will to carry on.

Though the time passed agonizingly slow for Sorin, it was after a fortnight when he noticed the thoughts of the Croatan grew anxious. They turned to men who were like Sorin. The

men came by boat to settle the land near the shore. Men like him, Templar's or Psyon who hid in this new land?

This he had to see. He followed a warrior by night to observe the strangers. He sensed from them no amount of evil equal to the Vikings, but an eventual leaning toward it. It was a much better condition for his survival than living with the Croatan. He bid the warrior farewell.

Making his way to the shore, he laid down in the soft brine shallows. The rising sun pierced the veil of darkness casting a mirror of reflection over the ocean. A mind, robust and inquiring broke through to him silencing the annoying mutterings of the other settlers. A small child discovered the ruse of his body floating and called to her mother.

“Mama!”

“Abigail, what have I told you about playing so close to the sea? It will take you right in and--- Oh my Lord!”

heard running in the water moving closer to him.

“Sir, can you hear me?” the voice called.

He calmed his body and gave no response.

“He breathes. His pulse is almost gone. I can hardly feel it. Quickly Abbey, take his feet.”

Two pairs of hands drug him into a small cabin onto a bed covered in the fur of animals.

“Sir, are you alright? Can you speak?”

He coughed up the water in his mouth.

“Thank you.”

Sitting next to him on the bed was a woman with blonde hair streaked with dirt and shadows under her eyes to match. She looked to him as weary as a newborn lamb. He wondered how she was able to carry him only assisted by her young daughter. He touched her hand. It was rough with scratches in various stages of healing. A solitary gold band adorned one finger with a gaping space between the ring and her flesh. This brief contact sent a flash of her mind to Sorin. He saw how she clung to a small strand of reality while the rope of it unraveled more each day. Keeping her thoughts to the daily care of her child and their survival was the only thing allowing her to grab another fiber to cling to the whole of the rope. Sorin understood then pure desperation and panic allowed her to carry him into her home.

She removed her hand from him with a nervous smile. But it was too late. He already knew she needed him as much as he needed her.

“Is your husband about?”

“No sir, my husband fell ill on our journey here. He is gone now, God rest his soul.”

“Then I must go,” He said, sitting up to get his feet to the ground.

She leaned into Sorin pushing him back into the bed.

“Now I’ll have none of that. What happened to you, sir?”

“I fell in rough seas from a ship,” He lied.

Her face brightened with hope. She ran to the window of the cabin.

“Is it approaching the harbor? I can’t see a ship.”

“No, it is out to sea. I swam until I could not.”

She walked back to the bed, crestfallen.

“Well, you need rest. I am Rebecca and this is my daughter Abigail. You are welcome to stay here with us for the winter.”

“I am Sorin and I cannot stay. You are a lady without a man in her company.”

“This is no place for ladies. I am a colonist. These are dire times for us. Every pair of male hands is a god send, married or not.”

“What about the others?”

“Damn the other colonists. If they wish to die with their principles, then let them. I survived my husband and now have to take care of myself and Abbey. This is my charge and I am not ashamed of anything I must do to accomplish it. I can offer you food and a roof over your head. When your health returns you could help us. I trust you can gather and cut firewood-- hunt for food?”

“Yes.”

“Will you stay then?”

Sorin settled back into the soft fur of the bed.

“Yes.”

His hunger returned with the onset of the evening. Rebecca was outside tending to more mud in the cracks of the cabin to better fend off the winter cold. Abigail sat at the table her attention on her school studies. It was his first occasion to be in the company

of a child as a Psyon. Abigail was a vibrant and precocious child bubbling over with a multitude of ambient energy all her own. As much as having to entertain the thought of feeding from a child appalled him, he knew entering the frenzy was also not a prospect to be considered. It would frighten Abbey to no end and eliminate any hope of an exchange with Rebecca.

“Abbey, would you like to play a game?”

“Oh no, Sorin. Mama will skin me alive if I don't finish my lessons before evening.”

“It will only take a minute, you have plenty of time.”

She looked in his direction sideways then ran jumping up to seat herself next to him on the bed. Abigail wrapped one little arm around his. Her cheeks smelled warm from the natural hue of days spent in the sun. The sound of her heartbeat amplified with such volume to his ear it felt as if it was his. He read the question of her lips, no longer able to hear her voice through his hunger.

“What is your game?” she asked playfully.

“I want you to first close your eyes tight. Now see a number in your mind...Do you have it?”

“Yes.”

“Now light it up as bright as you can, good, is it all lit up?”

Abbey's tongue moved to the side of her mouth with the difficulty of focusing on one thought for more than a second.

“Yes.”

“Now, I will tell you the number of your mind,” He replied while entering her mind, taking from her just enough essence to quench his thirst for an hour or two.

He looked up and took a deep breath feeling the relief of her energy pulsing through him. He continued,

“Your number is 3.”

“How did you know?”

“You lit it up so bright I could see it in your mind.”

“Nuh uh.”

“Yes, now would you like to see my number?”

“I don't think I can.”

“Oh, but you can. You can do anything you wish, if only you set your mind to it. Close your eyes again. Now make a big triangle...Do you have it?”

“Yes.”

“Light up the triangle just as bright as you did with your number. Do you see it?”

Her clamped eyelids fluttered with the effort.

“Uh huh.”

“Your triangle can move, so turn a point of it to my head.”

“I see it, Sorin! I see it, your number is 8.”

“Very good, you are right.”

Abbey's tiny hand rose to her mouth to conceal a yawn.

“That was fun. I want to play some more--I am so sleepy--”

“We will play another time.”

She yawned while he guided her back to the table to help her with her school work. She sat in his lap, falling quickly into a deep sleep with her long sun bleached waves of hair falling onto his shoulder.

He whispered to her sleeping mind, while focusing his will on the suggestion.

“Our game flies away from you, instead only dreams.”

Rebecca returned opening the door wide exposing the cabin to the fall evening chill. She looked at him and Abbey in his arms sound asleep with a smile.

“I'll take her, odd for her to be asleep so early...even before dinner,” she said, placing Abbey in her bed.

Rebecca returned to him her face more somber than he had seen earlier that day.

“You are feeling better?”

“Yes.”

She sat at the table across from him, the scorn of her brow weighed down an otherwise youthful face.

“Good, I am glad to hear it. Winter is just around the corner. We need to store enough firewood and food to hold us through it. This being our first winter here, I don't know how much we will need. I suppose we should just gather until the time is upon us.”

“Rebecca--”

“Four more men in the colony died today. They are starving. And if they don't starve, the fever takes them because they are weak.”

“Rebecca, I must speak of a price for staying to help you and Abbey.”

She looked into his eyes then shifted her head down taking a deep breath.

“I expected as much...you are a man. A stranger here and not otherwise...engaged,” she replied, her voice strangely calm as if she were inducing a trance within herself.

She walked to the bed and laid down unlacing the front of her dress. He walked to her lying down at her side.

“You would give yourself to me, without a second thought. Why?”

Her eyes widened with resolve.

“I find most men to be brief, and I need you to stay. We need you,” she whispered looking toward Abbey's bed.

“I could not, as you say, be brief in the company of such beauty, within and without. I assure you though; I am not the sort of man who is moved by surrender in despair.”

She looked into his eyes and stroked the side of his cheek.

“Has no one told you? You are far from unappealing.”

He nodded yes with a smile, taking her hand in his.

“You misunderstand; this is not what I ask of you.”

She sighed with what seemed to him a breath of relief.

“What then? What is your price?”

“I will show you my true self now, please do not be afraid or cry out. Before I begin, you must tell me the truth. Do you trust I would not do anything to hurt you or Abbey?”

“Yes.”

He moved to the front of Rebecca and slowly began to lie on top of her taking her wrists firmly in his hands. He let the hunger kept hidden within him rise. Deep red strings of light in his eyes drifted to her. She was paralyzed, her face frozen in horror. She resisted him with the strongest of wills in her mind while he fed. The red glow of his body enveloped them for a moment. He released her well before having his fill. She ran from the bed toward Abbey when the power over her body returned.

“What did you do to me? What are you?” she asked in a whispered panic, so as not to wake Abbey.

“I am a Child of Psyon. I feed from the souls of humans.”

“Have you stricken me with a disease? I feel--” she said, her eyes rolling back and closing.

She fainted so quickly he barely caught her with the fleetest of steps. He took her in his arms and laid her on the soft animal fur of the bed. The incoherent barrage of questions from her mind assaulted him even before she awakened. He pulled a chair beside her at the bed to wait for her to hear him.

“You will feel weak only for tonight. I did not feed from you as deeply as I require. Your body will renew what I have taken.”

“I have not been harmed?”

“No.”

“Will you do this to Abbey? Will she be harmed?”

“I did feed from Abbey tonight. I had not the time to go into the village and I had not spoken to you of this, yet. She is not harmed and will not remember. Children with their youth, they are often more resilient than their elders. I will not feed from her again if you wish.”

“No...Am I to understand you do not need to eat food?”

“I can eat. Food has no taste and I gain nothing from it.”

“How did this happen to you?”

“I entered into a bargain with a woman. She deceived me and made me what I am.”

“Have you ever-- made someone what you are?”

“No, I have not.”

She turned to him, with wide-eyed desperation, “Make us Psyon, like you.”

“Rebecca, I cannot.”

Rebecca's frustration welled to her face as a rush of tears streaming down from one eye and then the other.

“Don't you see? People are dying all around us. It is the only way we will survive, if we do not eat. Why won't you help us?”

“Rebecca, you will survive the winter as you are with my help. I will make that promise to you. Can you keep this from the others? In return, I will make sure you and Abbey are safe and comfortable.”

“I think--there is precious little I should fear now. I see no good reason why we should speak of it again. It should be much easier to keep from Abbey that way.”

He fed from Rebecca in return for his willingness to do the daily chores of her late husband. Sorin made their weary home as comfortable as he could. He wondered how he could be the only one who knew what they would face. They had no idea how to survive as did none of the other misinformed humans. With every rising sun, he waited for the other colonists to punish Rebecca for her blatant disregard of their strict Puritan beliefs. Yet, they endured nothing more than disapproving stares. The other colonists were too preoccupied with their troubles at hand to worry about the stranger who was warming Rebecca's bed out-of-wedlock.

Each day more colonists withered away starving to death. Many more died from illnesses brought on by their weakened bodies. Their suffering, so audible to his mind day and night became impossible to abide. Sorin knew nothing he could do for them that would encourage life. He wondered often how he survived only on their depleted souls. All he could do was put an end their pain. For some of the worst, he visited them at night, feeding from them to the point of death. Quieting forever the cries to his mind meant for their God.

He sensed the Croatan quite often always at a distance from the colonists. They watched their struggles never offering help. They hoped the colonists would perish. The Croatan longed for their quick demise hoping the earth would forgive healing the wounds and violation they believed the colonists inflicted. When winter ended, the fool's errand of the colonists continued. The scant provisions they brought with them were gone while their newly planted crops could not yet sustain them.

It was nearly the end of spring and finally, Sorin saw a glimmer of hope across the horizon. A ship returned from England to report the progress of the colony to find they were the only survivors. Their human experiment in colonizing the New World deemed a failure; the captain urged them to accept passage back to England.

He helped Rebecca and Abigail onto the ship and took his place with the crew. The ship released its anchor, and Sorin sensed again intense human suffering. The guilty minds of the crew released to him visions of how they came about the wealth of their cargo. They attacked and looted French and Spanish

ships along the journey to the colony. Their absolute power at sea enough to poison even those with the most righteous character among them. The ship was nothing more than a thinly disguised pirate vessel decorated with English naval officers. He secretly tried to find the source of the cries to his mind. Making his way below, he was stopped short by a Lieutenant closing the door to the cargo hold. The shame on the officer's face was visible for only a moment. He glared at Sorin, his eyes filled with challenge.

“Move along seaman, off to your tasks.”

Sorin did not care if the Lieutenant would be missed. He suspected it was more likely he would not be. He fed from him exacting more than his fill, kicking his body to the side of the door he tried to block. He looked through a hole in the planks of the cargo bay. Staring back to him were dark eyes surrounded by bloodied and tear stained dark skin. A woman's voice, soft as it was submissive pleaded in a language foreign to him. It did not matter what her words meant. The urgency in them translated only one phrase to his mind.

“Please, help us.”

The violent impulse of his hunger renewed, he took all of the miscreant crew responsible for the slaves on board. He released straight away the captured to rise to the deck into the light of day again. They helped him to rid the ship of their captors. The hardy male slaves were eager to learn what was needed to sail them back to their home. They ate from the extravagant food meant for the officers. They reveled in the stolen wealth which fell to their disposal. At the sight of land, they divided the spoils among them; enough for each man to swim to shore with and buy his freedom. The shores of their home were thick with agents of the slave trade. They watched as the freed men swam in, ambushing the traders with the fury of the injustice they endured guiding them.

Rebecca, Abigail and Sorin boarded a small boat to the side of the ship to make their way back to England. Rebecca spoke for the first time of her family who were waiting to welcome their long lost relatives' home. He knew how weak her condition was from the hardship of the colony. He accompanied them to be sure she did not believe a hallucination as truth. To his complete

surprise, she stopped at a lane in front of a substantial manor home.

“You are a man of your word. We are safe through the winter and beyond.”

He took a cloth sack from inside his borrowed Lieutenants jacket with a smile.

“I gathered these from the ship for you. Think of it as a gift of my gratitude or maybe a second chance dowry?”

She looked inside and smiled.

“This is most generous, Sorin. I will keep it for Abbey.”

He looked at the stately manor home and back to her.

“You know men will be at your doorstep when they find you have returned without a husband?”

“Yes, all with idea of marrying wealth and all with high ideas of how they will spend it. Just like my former husband. Whose idea do you think it was to go to the New World? Oh no, I do not think I shall ever marry again!” she replied, looping her arm around his to walk with her.

They reminisced of their time together while they walked down the lane. When they came to the gardens, he kept to the shadows to watch them rejoin their family. Walking away in the darkness, Abigail's small voice echoed to his mind.

“Goodbye, Sorin.”

He smiled to himself, realizing why she was so quiet when they parted ways.

“Goodbye, Abbey.”

He sometimes found himself gazing at pictures of the new world with its new name “America”. With nothing quite as extraordinary to hold his attention since his time in America, he often wondered what became of it. Since the last year of Queen Victoria's reign, he languished in the manor of his last departed companion. Complacent in feeding from a supply of indentured servants, Sorin waited for death. He longed for it.

In the haze of his final moments, he listened to the picture box on the mantle spew the daily nonsense. With not enough strength to rise, he was a captive audience. It spoke of a place called New Haven, Connecticut. The humans of this village in America lived side by side with an esteemed institution of learning and some embraced pagan and “new age” ideas. His

instinct awakened with a renewed vitality and the urge for another century of life. His search would begin in America.

Chapter 3 – Lorelle the Messenger

Her life as a human no more, she remained as the essence of Lorelle; the first woman to be a Child of Psyon. Her creation, the fault of absolute power coupled with the desire of a twisted mind. They hunted her because of the introduction of empathy and compassion to their house. They feared these emotions would spread from Lorelle to their population in the warrior class.

She was more than surprised to find guardians among them. They led her to a Templar Knight they coveted. Potential male Psyon were offered the bargain after a courageous fight in battle. The end of their lives looming, most would accept without question. His destiny entwined in secret with another, he proved more of a challenge. They sent her as a messenger when all else seemed lost to him. Their deceit emerged again, once she was successful in delivering their prize; a chosen successor in Psyon for Lord William of Wyckham. The final judgment at hand, they welcomed Sorin's soul and abandoned Lorelle's.

To escape, she entered the shadow realm of the human dead. The thought of hiding within a wandering corpse for even a moment sickened her. She caught the silent grace of a feline moving below as her essence rose in flight. Lorelle evaded the Psyon at the cost of leaving forever the shell of her body.

Inhabiting an animal was a collaboration of sorts. She could stay in them indefinitely. Domestic animals were many in the aristocracy and close to humans. They doted on the animals she lived within remarking on the intelligent qualities their pets displayed. Soon, they became very attached to their animal. She remained close to them, feeding on the humans daily. She could take over a human only for short bursts in time. They took more effort because she must quiet their conscious mind so they would not fight.

She hid from the Psyon council's judgment for centuries, moving from animals to humans if she felt threatened. Although she wondered often if they no longer pursued her; she never made another Psyon feeding from within an animal.

Centuries passed like fleeting whispers seldom heard through the fabric of time. She lived and fed on human souls as a forgotten and exiled Psyon. Existing on the outskirts of their influence afforded her an unusual connection to the insight of their ways. She learned much of them, which was fortunate for her survival. It was her responsibility to pass these on to the fledgling she created, if she could have sensed him for a moment. It was the only time Lorelle missed her human form.

They spread to all corners of the earth with a human population. The Psyon numbers were not large but enough for their comfort. There would be only two or three in a small village. Many more could survive in a large city. They sensed their brethren and sought to stay out of their way. It was a solitary life, though they existed very well in proximity of one another. They moved around freely, choosing to stay or go as they pleased. They watched humans multiply, sometimes taking more if the population allowed.

The will of the Psyon was something humans sensed when they were visible. They could very easily become accustomed to and crave this reaction. It was very much like a human felt in achieving some sort of fame. Humankind was drawn to them not knowing why. Maybe it was because Psyon knew of a purpose to their existence. It was something humans above all would like to know. The answer was so simple the Psyon sometimes wondered how it so easily escaped mankind.

Vampires were not native to this world. Their creation was a mistake in life span altering attempts in another time and place far from here. The laws governing their creators would not allow the destruction of this new mutated race. Instead, they were considered an unfortunate deviate to be banished. The primitive infancy of our world was chosen as the time and place where they would most likely perish. With their tendencies toward secrecy, the vampires in their predatory nature thrived. Humans became nothing more than a constant food source to be culled and maintained.

Although humans were very good at replenishing their numbers, some also formed strong bonds with one another. Blood drinking vampires, Sanguine were bound to feast on the blood of one human at least once a day. It was not crucial they

drained their victims to feed. They found very few humans could keep such a provocative secret to themselves, resulting in their deaths, sooner or later.

Of course, many Sanguine tried to hide their feeding by hunting only among transient humans. The homeless ones with diminished faculties of some sort or the drug addicted. Eventually even those people had a social tie with someone and were missed. The humans then sought out who was responsible. Many houses of the Sanguine were discovered and destroyed.

Soon the hunger among some of the Sanguine began to change. Their minds became highly developed, leading them to feed in a way that was much less invasive; one that left no physical evidence. They fed in the shadows without so much as laying a hand on their victims. The psi vampires who evolved to feed on the essence of humans removed themselves from the Sanguine. Their covens were known as The House of Psyon, their race among vampires; The Children of Psyon.

Psyon souls were never far from their bodies. They were protected in the Psyon veil of being. It was a storehouse of sorts containing the sum of their consciousness. The daylight had no effect on them though, they did not prefer it. There were too many human minds shuffling about thinking of trivial nonsense. The sound of so many minds was deafening not to mention quite annoying.

It was also impossible to use the shadow realm in the daylight. This was the realm of the human dead. It was parallel to human reality with bends where they meet and holes between the two. In this realm, they appeared only as a shadow to humans. It was useful for finding prey and to hide. They could remain there for only short periods of time because they did not belong. They saw and heard only what was left of their essence. Some humans would remain lost there because it was the journey waiting for them. Others would move on to begin life again. The Psyon sometimes had strong empathy for the worst of them. But they had to resist. They could not feed from them, try to follow or intervene. It was a human's journey.

Through lucid dreaming and astral travel, they fed from humans in their subconscious state. In the astral plane, they could appear to them as a beautiful dream or a hellish

nightmare. They were shown visions of the human's past lives. The taste of their essence determined whether they would remain with them forging a conscious connection. Although Lorelle's human life was brief, she thought it was like their emotion of love. Were they attracted to the way of them? Did they bring something to them they could not exist without? It was only in feeding on their conscious minds did they risk harming the mental capacity of a human.

Fortunately, the true capabilities of their minds were largely unknown to humans. So many different mental disorders they created to describe the aftermath of Psyon feeding, it was staggering. It was also flattering in a way. The skillful among them fed on so many who were completely unaware. It allowed their houses to survive completely unnoticed.

Humans might wonder how they would see them. It was really quite simple. They could not. Psyon appeared no different from humans. Some of them might be a bit paler, due to the aversion to being out among humans during the day. They also had the means to exude the health of tanned skin. Their features were a bit more striking. If they fed more often than not they were returned to their youth. Most Psyon were chosen because they were attractive in some way. They could not survive if they were not. It was very advantageous to initially lure prey. Certainly, Lorelle had known of Psyon who survived with only a magnetic way about them, just not as many long-lived ones.

When royalty was the rule of the land, they lived close to them. They were chosen as warriors, knights, confidants and consorts because Psyon were hard to kill. They have even been royalty. This situation they found to be a problematic one to manage. Royal Psyon were too self-protective. They became recluses going insane more often than not. Hiding among royalty, enjoying their spoils and influencing them was much easier.

As the power structure of the humans changed, they changed with them. Why humans might ask? Because with power came wealth. Independent wealth was essential to being Psyon. Feeding could be a time consuming practice. They influenced many in positions of power all over the world. Their lifestyle was most successful in the area of creativity. Living for

centuries, they drew on this experience and shared their vision. Many Psyon were poets, writers, actors, philosophers, musicians and artists. They were able to get very close to those of influence with such ease in these professions.

There were so many humans. New souls and energy renewed daily. A problem emerged only when numbers of the human touched rose in close succession. This meant a Psyon fed too deeply on too many. Some would wander into their own demise. Their minds weak, they were often preyed upon by their own kind. The missing and transient were favorites of human serial killers. If enough of the touched turned up at one time; humans questioned and sought answers to this pattern. This endangered the veil of shadows for not only other Psyon close by, but all Psyon.

In a dark time of human history, only Sorin's soul shone bright to Lorelle. The slate of his memory illuminated only one life to her mind. The life of a slave, who despite the injustice done to him; called to her with the resolve of survival at any cost. She chose him because she thought he above all deserved to live. His essence was so beautiful yet new. She couldn't resist him. The perfection of his soul allowed him to feed from her. In their haste to be rid of her, The Psyon severed Lorelle's mind from his. Hunted and desperate, Sorin escaped her influence with only pure instinct to rely on, endangering himself and the veil of shadows.

“Rogue Sorin...I will know your taste.”

It was not often she heard his name in a passing thought of another. What she found most curious, the thought was a lustful one; distinctly female. It brought a certain amount of enjoyment to her each time she sensed a female among the Psyon. Despite their best efforts to prevent and eliminate them, women inevitably joined their ranks. How long they survived was another matter. She searched the Psyon consciousness and found the origin but not the identity of the owner. It might have been the mind of an elder. Only they had the status to hide their motives. She was not sure if it was one or two. However many; this Psyon spoke of feeding from their own kind.

At once she formed a triangle of white hot light in her mind's eye turning a point of it to the location of this thought, posing a question.

“Are there not enough humans for your appetite?” Lorelle asked.

“Your question is of no consequence to me.”

Her envy urged her to ask in a more forceful manner.

“Tell me, what do you know of Sorin?”

“He seeks another century of life.”

Lorelle then spoke to this Psyon with some trepidation as she knew something of Sorin that she did not.

“Yes, and for this he will find a human.”

Her statement was met first with an obvious deliberate quiet. She believed the presence had left, and then her laughter rang through Lorelle's head.

There were not many who practiced this. It was an aberration. Psyon numbers did not allow much of an opportunity for it. Feeding from another of their kind was said to be even more enticing than feeding from humans. The hunger would not cease purely by feeding from Psyon alone. It drained them to feed from their own kind. They then must seek humans to replenish, many more humans.

With a point of origin burned to her mind, it was on this day Lorelle set her will to find Sorin. It was not known to her, how she would reach him with the ways of the Psyon he would so desperately need to know.

Chapter 4 – A New Start

“Can you do me a big fat favor, Tess?” Kate asked, though Tess was involved with whatever angst ridden music that blasted into her ears from her mp3 player.

“Tess?” Kate asked again as she pointed to her eyes then to Tess's with her fingers in the sign of a horizontal V. She was beginning to regret not leaving Tess at home for this particular errand.

“What, Mom?” Tess said while she reluctantly removed her ear buds.

“I know how much you...get involved with house hunting. You know like running from room to room and picking out which one will be yours. Can you just contain yourself this time? The last thing we need is for the real estate agent to know---”

“Yeah, I guess,” Tess interrupted as she replaced the ear buds back in her ears with a grin and hung one flip-flopped foot out of the open passenger window of the car.

“No really. I'm not kidding. There's no way I'll get a good deal otherwise.”

“Okay, mom I get it,” Tess said, way too loud over the music only she could hear in her ears.

It was new start for Kate and Tess Hartley; a new town with different surroundings. No more of the frowns and whispers of the ex-husband's small home town. Since the divorce Kate had been looking for a new place they could call home and better yet really feel at home in. She wished she could afford to look at one of the brand new houses in the suburbs of New Haven. Or even smack dab in the middle of Boston. The budget just wouldn't allow it, yet. A reasonably priced home with a commute was where she had to begin. It was a possibility to consider because she'd be working from home and spending only one day in the office. Still, it was frustrating to her beyond belief. She didn't have much patience when it came to the advancement of her career.

The position she accepted in Boston would get her there provided she could come up with something that would set her

apart from the pack. She was excited and a bit anxious to begin writing for The Examiner. It was an institution in New England she had aspired to since she began writing. Even though she had been delegated to what she considered to be the bottom of the food chain, lifestyle pieces. She needed to find that one ground breaking story that would tell everyone where she belonged, investigative pieces. It wasn't a gig that was given out easily. It was earned. Her chosen profession took a considerable amount of patience to rise up the ladder. As a writer, it would just seem to be part of her make-up. It had never been that way for Kate. She knew what she wanted and she wanted it now.

Kate drove into the long lane beside the house and couldn't believe her eyes. Her temples started to vibrate with stress as she double checked the address the real estate agent gave her over the phone. She discovered grudgingly the outdated numbers on the house matched. The agent had chosen a big old Victorian to begin their tour of three homes. It was a stately brick home, probably owned by a very wealthy someone back in the day. She strained to see all of it looking up from the steering wheel of her car. It rose three stories with green flowering vines along the sides seeking to devour the front of the home. Rose bushes lined the walk to the front door. The flourishes of flowers and abundant gardens couldn't disguise the sinister character of the house. Tess broke the silence in the car with her excitement.

“This place is so creepy it's cool.”

“Do you remember at all what I just told you?”

Tess rolled her eyes.

“Like she can hear me clear over in her car.”

“You know what I mean, for later.”

“I know, Mom.”

Kate stepped out of the car walking over to the agent's “I'm too rich for my own good” Hummer. The lawn was like a carpet of soft thick green shag with blades so fine they infiltrated the crevices of her sandals snapping off under her feet as she walked. The agent walked over to her with what she judged to be a half sincere smile.

“Hi, Lana Barrows,” she said, extending her hand.

“Hi Lana...Kate Hartley and this is my daughter Tess,” Kate said, returning a firm handshake.

“Good to meet you both...Well I know you must be wondering why I chose this house to show you.” Lana said, looking up at the house.

“Yes, it's...a pretty big house. It will be just the two of us, for a very long time.”

Kate entered the house to find that all the furnishings of the previous owner remained in their restored Victorian splendor. Mostly antiques with a smattering of a reproduction here and there. Tess immediately broke away from them to run up the stairway and check out the upstairs rooms. Kate thought it was a good thing because she could tell already her daughter was way too excited.

“Are the owners in the process of moving?”

“No, everything comes with the house. It's not often an offer like this comes on the market, but I thought maybe with your situation, it might be something you would consider?”

“Well you have a point there. I just wish it wasn't such old decor. It's not really my taste.”

The house was lit in every corner with the morning sun. Kate didn't think at all from the outside that the house could also be bright and cheery. Taking a deep breath, she smelled just the hint of lingering mustiness under the air freshener the staging company used to ready the house for showing. She wondered about the time it must have taken to get this place ready. Every detailed nook and cranny was clean and free of dust, from the ornate shined gloss of the stair banister to every crack in the polished wood floors.

She did her best when entering the kitchen to contain the good impression it had on her. She expected to see a cast iron gas stove along with all the staples of an old kitchen. But in this one room the previous owners had the right idea. It was completely remodeled with new appliances that had the antique look of the rest of the house. With a growing teenager, the kitchen was the room Kate spent the most time in. She also liked the nook with a bay window seat. She could picture herself enjoying many a good book there.

Going upstairs into the master bedroom, Kate sensed how much someone really loved this house. It washed over her when she saw the four poster bed. The deep red mahogany spires to its sides were encircled with white gauze sheers ending in a soft puddle of material on the floor. The mattress was probably the most substantial she had seen. It was higher up than most. She gave the mattress a punch and found the reason it sat so high from the floor was because of the amount of its goose down fluff. Someone loved this room. In fact, the whole house oozed of it. This was their sanctuary. So then the inevitable question slunk into Kate's mind. Why would they ever leave it?

She stepped into the hallway to join Lana. She didn't want to love the house but she was practically there. Now for the reality; the reason she wouldn't take it.

“What did you think of the master? It's great, right?”

“This is in the price range I gave you?”

“Yes, it's bank owned. The bank will take any reasonable offer.”

“So it's a foreclosure then?”

“Yes, the previous owner is actually...missing. She's been gone for two years now. The payments fell behind..,” Lana said, seeming to revel in the gossipy aspect of the information.

“Oh okay. I get it. Is there any disclosure that comes along with this place?”

“Yes, I was just getting to that. It does have a...reputation.”

“Okay, now it's making more sense. It's haunted, right?”

“Yes, some say it is.”

“Who is some?” Kate asked as they descended the stairs.

“We had to go through several cleaning companies. After a few days working here, none wanted to return to finish the job. Finally, all of the agents in our office had to come out and finish it up. Some of them had experiences too. It wasn't anything too menacing really, just a presence.”

“What did they see?”

“Well one housekeeper said she saw a shadow that materialized in front of her by the stairwell, just there,” Lana said pointing to the stairs. “Then she said it went up the stairs. She said she could hear the stairs creak as it went up and she

could see impressions of footprints in the rug as it went upstairs.”

Kate felt an immediate chill spread from her back to up her neck, “Oh...is that it? I wouldn't be creeped out by that at all.”

“Well it was enough for her,” Lana said, either not catching Kate's sarcasm or pretending not to. “Some people are just over sensitive. I think it has more to do with the surroundings. This house just has the atmosphere to spook people. Truthfully, I haven't seen or heard anything out of the ordinary in the ten or so odd times I've shown this house. The owner of the agency thought a disclosure was necessary though, for legal purposes related to contracts, of course.”

Tess came bounding down the stairs ending with a double jump on the landing.

“Mom, we could so Goth this place up. You should see the bed in my bedroom. It's huge.”

Lana turned to Kate with a confident smile. Kate shot a “thanks loads” glare at Tess.

“I'll think about it while we look at the other houses.”

Throughout the day, Kate tried to get her mind off the first house while they looked at the others. The second was very small, almost too small, with only one bathroom. Kate knew from experience living with a teenager dictated there must be two bathrooms, or at least one and a half bath; if she ever wanted to get out of the house quickly in the morning. The big Victorian had a bathroom attached to the room that would be Tess's. The third was a fairly new house in the suburbs but an even bigger stretch on the budget for Kate. So it seemed the only logical choice was the Victorian in town. She left New Haven with a big decision weighing on her mind. She decided to prepare Tess for her choice during dinner.

“It's haunted?! Sweet. I can bring my recorder and get EVP's and--”

“Before you start investigating the house we live in...you know what I think? I think that just pisses em off. That's why all the paranormal people go to a house they don't live in, piss all the ghosts off and leave.”

“But, Mom.”

“This is just a starter house; a place where we will live until I can afford something better. So don't go getting all attached to it. If there is anything hanging around, I don't want it all riled up. I've got enough to deal with right now. So you've got to promise me, no Ouija boards, no EVP's, none of that.”

“Whatever. Way to take all the fun out of it. Just like you always do.”

Moving day turned out to be a sunny and oppressively hot summer day even for New England. So much better the choice that they filled the car with only their belongings. Kate thought if she had to move furniture today she'd really be regretting it right now. It was the first time Kate had moved into a house that didn't need loads of work done to it. They could pretty much just bring their things inside and organize. Kate had also been dying to rifle through all the built-ins in the old Victorian. Who knows, maybe there were some really old advertising tins with some kind of value to them. She planned to auction those off on eBay lickity split.

Tess was also in an unusually good mood. Nothing short of a miracle as Kate considered the ups and downs of both of them lately. Kate always had problems accepting sweeping and unplanned change. She kept forgetting this change was better for the both of them. The two had always been more of a family than they were with Kate's sociopath, alcoholic and non-present ex in the equation. It was understandable that Tess would adjust better than Kate. Tess was not even fazed by leaving her familiar school and starting a new one in the fall. But to her it was probably worlds away. She was still in the throes of summer vacation. Fall to her would happen eons from their move. Kate guessed, better to deal with that can of worms when it happened. She didn't even have to plead with her to take her things up to her room and Tess was helping her with boxes that weren't even Tess's? She took in a well-deserved deep breath of relief. Life was almost enjoyable again. This was a good day. Kate couldn't hide her smile when Tess came in with another box from the car.

“What?” Tess asked.

“Nothing, thanks sweetie.”

“For what?” Tess laughed, shaking her head. “Well this is the last one,” she said placing the box on the desk beside Kate. “I’m gonna go upstairs and unpack my stuff now, Okay?”

“Okay, I’ll be down here getting my office put together.”

“Okay, Mom. You have fun with that.”

Tess wasn't the only one who gawked at Kate's kind of fun. She loved to put things in order, clean, and generally being organized made everything feel right in her world. The prospect of looking through all the built-ins of the new office excited her to no end. The bookshelves were filled with so many books; it would take them both at least five years to read them all. She decided to sort through a few to add some of her collection to them. She pulled a handful of books from the shelf and noticed a carved out notch on the side of the bookcase. A blast of cold air gave her hand a chill as she passed it near the void. She looked into the hole and could see the beige outline of the pages of a book. The book was lying on its side. Kate was never too crazy about sticking her hand into unknown places. Her curiosity urged her to just this once put aside this silly aversion.

Reaching into the dark crevice, she pulled out a dusty book with gold leaf lettering on the front. The title was written in a language foreign to Kate but at the same time sparked a snippet of her memory. Now if she could just remember the name of this type of writing. It was a very old language. Kate thought she remembered it from a trip down to New Orleans. She had her fortune read by one of the many vendors there. All used different techniques, most used the Tarot. She remembered being drawn to a table where a woman was instead using a random scattering of stones with symbols carved into them. Now what did they call those?

Runes.

Yes.

She took out her laptop and feverishly searched the internet for images of Rune symbols. She found there were many types of Rune writing. She matched up the writing on the book with the Germanic variety.

Kate grabbed one of her blank notebooks and began work on a primer; a key that she could refer to while translating the book. She struggled with her patience and hoped she had created the

key correctly the first time. The bold title print on the cover meant nothing to her; it read “Leabhar na Scáthanna”. But the translation made sense. It meant “Book of Shadows”. There were smaller symbols toward the bottom on the right of the cover. Their translation could reveal the owner of the book. Her hand was shaking so much from the excitement of the discovery; she could hardly get the letters written in her notebook fast enough. She was right. It was a name. The name was “Sara O’Duinn”.

Guilt washed over her like the dirty film of dust on the book’s cover. She remembered what she told Tess about delving into the immaterial of the house. It wasn’t any different, what she was doing. A spell book was certainly nothing to trifle with. Still, the question nagged at Kate underneath the sheer joy she felt in her new found independence. She wanted to know. Did the house belong to Sara? Why would anyone just walk away from this place they put so much time and love into?

She heard Tess’s footsteps moving at a good clip down the stairs. Kate replaced the book and covered its hiding place with the books that had been there before.

“Mom, it’s an hour past dinner time. Aren’t you hungry yet?”

“Oh sorry-- the time got away from me, I guess. Sure, let’s make some dinner. I picked up a frozen pizza.”

“That’ll work. I wanna get my room done before I go to bed.”

They managed to clear away just enough boxes to have a place to sit in the kitchen. Kate hoped Tess still had a fuzzy feeling towards the house after being alone up in her room for a few hours.

“So how’s it going up there?”

“I’m not really going to do much to change it. I’m just putting my stuff away.”

“What? No posters of hot guys and hanging swirly things from the ceiling?”

“I read somewhere that houses get haunted when people move in and change things.”

“Are you afraid of your room? Did you see something?”

“No,” Tess laughed. “Maybe it’s just ‘cause it’s new. Ya know...our first night here.”

Sometimes Kate forgot. Tess was growing up, but she wasn't there yet. Not often enough for her anymore, but sometimes she got to see the little girl from years ago. The one she really missed. She thought this was one of those rare moments and jumped on it.

“Okay, well how about this. Let's eat up in my room...maybe watch a movie?”

“Yeah, we can do that.” Tess smiled.

Kate could hardly believe the opportunity she had been given. She popped the pizza in the oven and this time, thankfully it turned out perfect. She took it up to her bedroom.

The empty plate from their pizza fell to the floor with a ping when Kate tried to get out of bed unnoticed. She turned to look at Tess and she didn't stir. She was over and out. Slept like a rock most of the time since she hit twelve. Kate relied on this aspect of her sleep patterns a lot. She slipped past the bed and looked at her again from the doorway. Tess was still sound asleep, her arm hung over the side of the bed. Kate walked to her and placed her arm on the bed. She didn't utter a word. As long as Kate returned to bed before morning, she'd never know the difference. She just couldn't wait to translate more of Sara's book.

Kate let out an involuntary gasp for breath when she reached the doorway of her office. The book was lying square out in the open on the desk. The books formerly concealing its hiding place were scattered on the floor. The red ribbon bookmark lay across one page. Kate looked behind herself. No one was there. Tess was with her all evening and was the only other person in the house. She looked up to speak to whatever was in the room.

“Okay whatever you are or whoever you are you have my attention. Now, let's get a few things straight. I know you are here and from now on this book stays hidden.”

Taking the book in hand she sat down slowly looking around. She felt the small hair on the back of her neck stand on end. Something or someone was present and watching. It wasn't as frightening as it could be. In fact, she felt more sadness than fear at the experience. There was a mournful and desperate way drifting from it and filling the room.

“Okay, this just won't work. I want to find out what's in this book as much as you want me to, but I won't do it with you watching over my shoulder. If you leave now, I'll help you. Just leave me and my daughter alone.”

The feeling of being watched dissipated the instant her sentence was finished.

“Thank you.” Time stood still for Kate while she sat translating Sara's handwritten journal until the very early morning hours. She started with the first few pages. It began as a collection of spells for just about everything; all of them fairly innocuous, protection spells. She then advanced to the bookmarked pages. Instead of spells, this section was more like some form of automatic writing. No breaks at all. No paragraphs or punctuation. It was just one continuous line of text going around the margins and using up all the available space. It was almost as if all the information needed to be immediately purged out of Sara's head onto paper.

The language was cryptic and brought to Kate's mind a time long past. For a moment Kate wondered if it was true. If there were no shred of truth to it, why would Sara go to so much trouble to encode the writing? And why was there an entity in her house so intent on her reading it? Had Sara actually died and chose her to somehow set things right? She had so many questions and it seemed a new interest to keep her anxious mind busy in the days ahead.

Chapter 5 – An Aura of Interest

Sara O’Duinn, Grimoire Entry, 22nd October, 2008 - Arriving in America was an immediate shock to his eyes. Much of Europe still looked as it did centuries ago to Sorin. While making his way to New Haven, he observed enough change to know without question it was a time to stay hidden.

By design of the Psyon, he was outnumbered. He walked along the street as he walked along many, always moving in the shadows at a pace which allowed him to hide. He felt strangely at home, even though it was his first visit. The streets emptied early. There were many large ancient trees lining the streets. None were as old as he. Pity, he thought to himself while he listened to a chorus of the heartbeats of animals, all very present though they kept to the dark crevices as did he.

Just once he would’ve liked to have shown himself to the lot of them. A man of such power, he thought it was a shame he, Sorin Ladislov could not be known to those weak mundanes. He learned the lesson well over centuries. Feed alone in the darkness and take them one by one. He fed absolutely to quench the thirst. It kept him hidden. When he hungered, the onslaught of mass human thought was not far behind. The madness of the frenzy to quiet them followed. He noticed the people of this era were completely entranced with peering into small picture boxes they held in their hands with flagrant human disregard. Though he did suspect, to become a madman attacking indiscriminately in the streets would have eventually drawn some attention. It was a condition he learned to control long ago for his survival.

He was hungry, but there was something more pressing at hand. His instinct consumed Sorin to keep searching. His mind sought an essence of unrivaled quality; one that would sustain him and bring another century of life. His control would be tested more than expected. Maybe there was another of his Psyon brethren in the area; or perhaps recent tales of a killer of their own kind. The streets were deserted near dusk.

With the setting sun, his sense of New Haven changed for the better. Sorin positioned himself outside at a local bar and grill to observe more closely the people of this village. He saw a

number of young humans from the nearby university filter alone into the street, their minds self-medicated and subsequently more open to their society. He thought just a few more hours should suffice. The village would provide him with such a bounty; he knew he would not have to put forth much effort. It would be very easy to find a soul to quench his thirst later in the night. A local tavern could provide a range of choices. There was always a straggler; one who was alone hailing a cab. Or one who was too trusting of a wayward stranger.

He wanted to find a gathering soon. The urge to feed grew stronger when his thoughts focused on it. A strong heartbeat captured his attention near the end of the street. Sorin drank in all the sound pulsing in his head. He enjoyed this part of the hunger. Enduring the anticipation of it for as long as he could, he snapped open his eyes. They focused on a young woman who was carrying boxes into the door of a shop. In his mind's eye, he formed the triangle. It illuminated to a full hot white as it turned to direct on her. She was dark haired with spiraling deep auburn curls falling to her waist. Her stature was petite with a presence anything but small. She was different from any he sensed before her. Her thoughts conveyed knowledge of the ages with a subtle emerging clairvoyance. She had much excitement and enjoyment of life. It was difficult to determine if this happiness was just a temporary emotion. The flood of information was overwhelming. He didn't know whether he was being blocked with consummate skill or if this human truly had no idea of her abilities. Such a presence to come from a small and young human soul!

Captivated with the unexpected quality of her essence, his sense of self protection was abandoned. He had to be still and feel her joy with the box she was carrying. Drawn to her, he moved closer at a feverish pace. A behemoth of a black car blocked his view. She reached into the car to collect another box. He moved into the shadow realm to view her unnoticed. His entrance there would ensure Sorin's image to be hidden except for a slight shadow on the window of the car. Peering through the window, he was close to her but felt confident in his disguise. Her eyes rose to meet his. He thought they were the deepest and most captivating natural green. His senses were

bathed and then locked in the warm radiance of her emerging intuition.

Alarmed she was able to sense him, he filled the young woman with thoughts only the unawakened could understand. The distraction would resume his cloak of the shadows, at least long enough to allow him to think of a way to her. They resembled his thoughts before feeding, but could not be translated to her kind. The car drove away as she stared with a blank look into the distance. He plotted in a park across the street and watched her as she moved to return to the building.

The impulsive urge of his instinct told him, take her now you desire her. His more rational side told him a soul such as she could infuse him for a long while. He thought she would be well worth the wait. His mind explored the thought of what she would bring to him, were she willing. She was the first in his memory to gain reprieve from the excitement of discovering more of her. Just as well, he thought to himself as another woman walked into view. The woman was speaking to her and motioning to the box she was carrying. By no means was she Sorin's choice of fare, but the unfortunate woman who blocked his view of her would have to do. Feeding could no longer wait. He walked up to the portly woman and produced in his hand some artifacts she would find interesting. She was entranced at the thought of purchasing some antiques much finer than those she was inquiring about with the woman of Sorin's interest. Red threads of light crept from his eyes. She looked at them enthralled and motionless. Locked in his gaze with her greed, the woman became Sorin's next unlikely conquest.

Drawing his distasteful meal to a swift close in the alleyway, the door to the shop of his interest creaked open. She locked the door as the bells on it clanked. She looked about then began a walk alone. He followed to her place of comfort. His curiosity was more than piqued. How could she sense him with his practiced defenses up? This and more he hoped to find when exploring her mind further. Her home was on a tree lined street and was positioned far away from the village thoroughfare. Fortunate for his efforts, she valued her privacy as much as he did. The back courtyard of her home contained an imposing weeping willow tree where he found refuge. The gentle fall

evening breeze moved the long branches this way and that. The branches grazed the ground just enough to hide the shadow of his image behind them.

Her mind and body became still as she prepared for sleep. He would take the opportunity with her subconscious to delve more deeply into her essence. The triangle of his mind formed with such ease. It had not been far from Sorin since first seeing her. Tucked away safe in her subconscious he searched her secrets. She hid these things from others and herself. The triangle turned to violet. The color of her psychic will. Unexpected flashes of many lifetimes blurred and uncertain transferred to his mind's eye. He saw layers of her essence as the pages of an ancient volume that could no longer be translated. Enticing glimpses of extraordinary long forgotten past lives out of sequence and context. He could read her, yet the more he tried to piece together the disjointed succession of images he was bombarded with from her mind, the more confused he became. She was revealed to him as an old soul of much knowledge. The information was completely unknown to her. He found this to be intoxicating, to say the least.

He was aroused in a way that had been abandoned long ago, along with his human life. Sorin knew he could indulge himself while he had a mental connection with her. Her remembrance of the experience would no doubt be ruled by the conventions of her time. This would serve her sanity well, he thought. His appetite was more immediate.

Chapter 6 – Tess Hartley

Tess couldn't believe the school nurse, Becky Williamson, wouldn't cut her any slack today, of all days.

“Tess, I helped you out the last time two times you came to my office...I absolutely can't do it again. Go back to class.”

“Come on, it's even worse today. My head is throbbing so much I can't concentrate and the light burns my eyes. I can't go to class. If I can't go home, can I at least lay down on your couch in the dark? That's what I do at home. It really helps.”

Becky's expression softened.

“Okay, I can give you a couple of hours, but that's it.”

Tess settled into the leather couch in the school nurses office while it creaked with sounds making her flinch when they cut right into her brain. Pain from the migraine made her even more aware of how cold it was in there and the bitch hadn't even offered her a blanket. She wondered if there would ever be a time in her life when she wasn't restricted by the stupid rules of adults. When she could be herself and do exactly what she wanted to. She felt as if no one really knew her or cared to in this crappy new town she had to live in. Maybe it would be better if she just disappeared. Then there would be no pressure from anyone to deal with, no rules and nothing to do but take care of herself. Tess knew she could do just that if she had the chance. The muffled echoes from the school outside the door wafted away on the disinfectant scent of the room as she concentrated on nothing but the dark, nothing but the silence she wanted so much to hear. She closed her eyes to dream about it again, what it would be like, being completely on her own and living life only on her terms.

Tess heard a voice speaking, crisp as if someone was talking right into her ear.

“If you really want to go, I'm probably the only one who can help you.”

Tess sat up straight on the couch in the dark. She couldn't see anyone or anything in the room. She lay back down with a plop

on the leather and closed her eyes again slowly hoping what just happened really hadn't.

"You can't see me with your eyes, yet. Keep them closed and I might let you, see."

"Oh yeah, right...Now I get to go bat shit crazy? Awesome. My life just keeps getting better and better. What the fuck, bring it on."

"You aren't crazy; in fact you are less crazy than anyone around you. You have migraines because deep down you know there is much more to life than what you see and what they tell you. I can show you how right you are, if you want me to."

"I want to see you now."

"To see me, you have to pass one test."

"Crap, I hate tests."

"I know, but this one is easy for you. See a triangle in your mind."

Tess saw it right away. She made a big red triangle.

"Great, only it can't be red. It's still too dark in here. Make it white. Then light it up so you can see me."

Tess saw the triangle turn to white and light up the expanse of her mind. In the distance, a tall young man walked toward her. He had wisps of straight jet black hair framing eyes of a deep and calm cobalt blue. The contrast of his flawless ivory skin and his dark blue eyes were beautiful to Tess. He ducked under her triangle with a smile and walked to her taking her hands in his. Instantly the mind numbing pain of her migraine dissipated.

"Perfect, see told you it was easy."

"Now what?"

"I can show you what life is really like for someone like me. My mind is open and powerful because of it. You can go with me without leaving this room."

"So good for you. Your life is great. You can cure headaches. So can migraine pills. What does any of that have to do with me?"

"Your migraines, they won't leave you for a few hours. They are gone for your lifetime. You know, I think you could have the life you want in a second."

"How?"

“It's not something I can explain with words. You'd never understand. You have to see it for yourself and then decide.”

“Who are you and why are you in my dream?”

“My name is Daniel and I wanted to know more about you, Tess. And not just what you show to other people, or who you think you are. I need to know you.”

“Wait, I am still dreaming, right?”

“Yes.”

“Okay,” she said with a disappointed sigh, “So why not? Yeah, I'll go with you.”

He took her hand and they walked through a place that looked very much like New Haven in Tess's mind. They came to a park with a solitary chair and an acoustic guitar leaned up against it. Daniel sat down and began to play and sing a song she had never heard before. It was beautiful with an emotional yet dark melody. People flocked to him almost immediately. When the crowd grew to over twenty people or so she saw Daniel's head lean back as he seemed to take in a deep breath. Vaporous beams of light in every color of the spectrum flowed from the center of each person in the crowd. They mingled together on air then lingered around Daniel's dark blue eyes. He took in each one slowly through his eyes while the ivory color of his skin changed and flushed to a darker tone. She watched as the mesmerized crowd clapped enthusiastically at the end of his song, piling money into his open guitar case.

“So you got a pretty good thing going on, why bring me into it?”

“What you saw only keeps me alive day to day. I need a deeper connection to really live. There is a good chance you are the one human who could provide it. I was just like you when I became...what I am.”

“Yeah? And what are you?”

Daniel turned to her holding her arms making her face him. Something told her she shouldn't look into his eyes. She looked down determined to avoid them. He lifted her head with his hand under her chin. Then she felt an overwhelming urge to look at him. When their eyes met, the full force of the loneliness and despair in his deep blue eyes froze her. Even though he was tall, she didn't think he was especially strong. She thought she

could probably take him. But in this moment he was stronger than her. She couldn't move away from him or close her eyes.

“I am Psyon. I live from the energy of humans. I have power over your minds and I will never die.”

Tess struggled as strands of light in emerald green left Daniel's eyes. They met hers as his head leaned back in the way she had seen before when he fed from the crowd. She felt him in her body and in her mind. A static electrical shock pulsed through her. At first it was painful, but then it ran through her body to places never touched by another living soul. The infinite pleasure she felt distracted her from struggling and she became motionless in his arms. She could only watch along with him while he rifled through visions of her inner most thoughts and memories. He saw her childhood when she lived with her Mom and Dad. How warm and secure she was when she felt they were a real family. Then he saw how things were going lately, visions of her family in two broken pieces in which she felt pitted against the two of them. But both shattered pieces still loved her equally. Immediately, he let go of her and backed away.

“I've made a mistake, Tess. I'm sorry.”

“What do you mean? Where are you going?”

“You are nothing like me.”

“Maybe not, but does that really matter much? People who aren't alike hang out together every day.”

“Yes it does. You aren't alone in life like I am. Your thoughts before when I read them outside of the school, they were different. You can't and won't live life completely on your own, ever. You would be missed more than you know.”

“So what now, I just go back to my miserable life, forget the truth just because I don't measure up to your standards?”

“Your life, as miserable as it feels to you now is only temporary. And yes, I will make sure you forget everything including me.”

“Yeah, right. Don't count on it.”

He moved close to her with a smile full of sadness and touched the side of her cheek. He put her face in his hands and brought her lips to his for a long and deep kiss. She felt the same electricity as before move throughout her body. Time slowed to a crawl. She could hear her heart beating loudly in her ear.

Then through it all she heard only Daniel's voice whisper in her ear.

“I'm glad I had the chance to know you, Tess. I wish things could be the way we both want them to be. I'm sorry this can only be a dream.”

The door to the Nurses office creaked when it opened. The sound made Tess turn over to face the back of the couch for just a moment more to watch Daniel walk away and memorize him. Mrs. Williamson pulled back the curtains. They snapped as the light of day assaulted the room. Tess opened her eyes and for one fleeting second had a terrible feeling. Even though she felt happy, energized and her headache was for once completely gone, she didn't know why.

Mrs. Williamson sent Tess back to class. She took her seat in 6th period Math unable to concentrate. She stared out of the classroom window conniving ways to get out of school. Tess knew there would be consequences if she skipped. But today she really didn't give a flying fuck. She kept seeing a face in her mind. It was the face of a guy so incredible looking any girl would fall all over herself to meet him. She'd never seen anyone like that in the school. She reasoned he had to be somewhere in town. Maybe she'd seen him working as a waiter somewhere Tess and her mom had eaten or at the movie theater taking tickets. But quickly then she thought no, that face didn't belong to someone who would work. Tess knew what she was about to do was crazy. She would get caught eventually and have to explain herself. But she'd take the hit when it happened for a chance to find him.

When the bell rang she walked out of school and just kept walking, not looking behind her. Tess walked to the center of town and hopped a transit bus not knowing or caring where it would take her. She would watch all the faces along the way until she saw him, she thought. A crazy stupid plan but it would pass the time until she had to be back at school when her Mom came to pick her up. She sat on the bus and checked out every passenger and every face outside the window as it took its route through town picking up and dropping off commuters. Endless scenery of office buildings, men in suits and women shuttling their children around made her bored beyond belief. She saw no

one around at this time close to her age. The last stop was the town park. Tess knew she'd have to get off there if anything just to keep from falling asleep and waking up somewhere unknown to her. Tess had heard about the commons but didn't understand the vibe of it all until she saw it in its full glory on a crisp autumn day. Some of the trees were just beginning to change into their bright yellow of the season. Others had falling leaves in full red fall fury. The park was full with the people of the university. They were gathered together on blankets, some with their laptops and still others talking on their phones. But all were facing the same direction and seemed to be listening intently to something. She got off the bus and heard the faint sound of some music coming from a far corner of the park. She began to walk toward it.

The song was familiar to her though it wasn't the usual kind of music she listened to. She loved the sound of the acoustic guitar and the voice singing. When she finally was close enough to hear and see the person playing, the song ended. The guy looked up from his guitar and Tess immediately felt like she could talk to him. He looked like he was close to her age, maybe a few years older. She thought he had a nice face especially his eyes that were a shade of blue she'd never seen on anyone else before, a deep midnight blue. So dark the light only reflected a hint of blue now and then. She leaned over to put the couple of bucks she hadn't used for her lunch money into his guitar case.

“Nice, is it yours?”

“Yeah, I write all my own stuff. Thanks.”

“Hey, um I'm having pizza later if you'd like to stop over. I live here in town.”

“So do I, where are you at?”

“828 Chapel Street.”

“Yeah, I know it. I've gotta get going for now but maybe I'll see you later. Oh, uh what's your name?”

“Tess.”

“I'm Daniel.”

Tess decided to give him the test to see what kind of guy he was and if he was interested.

“Okay, later Daniel.”

She looked back at him to see if he was still looking at her. If he was checking her out from behind she knew for sure she'd see him later. He wasn't. He was looking down, putting away his guitar.

Tess glanced down at her watch. She had exactly ten minutes to get back to the school to meet her Mom.

“Shit!”

She ran to catch up with Daniel. Everything stopped around her as she looked again at the scene in front of her. She remembered he'd walked away from her before. Then it all came flooding back, her migraine, why she left school and who Daniel was. And he was pretending that he didn't even know her. After the way he made her feel and what he said to her. Now she was pissed.

“Hey could you give me a ride?”

“Sure, where do you need to go?”

“ Just up to 12th Street.”

“Oh yeah, by the school? Okay.”

“Thanks.”

“Okay this is me,” he said walking up to a dark blue Charger.

“Nuh uh, really?”

“Yeah.”

Tess moved to get into the car and noticed he had a lot of clothes in the back seat. He had to move some out of the front seat so she could sit down. She began to think that his guitar, his clothes and the car were really all he had. She thought it served him right for being such a douche.

“I'm looking for a place, just really haven't turned up anything yet. I don't have any credit yet so it's hard to find an apartment.”

“How'd you get the car?”

“I saved most of the money; the rest was through some persuasion.”

“Yeah? The same way you tried to persuade me that you actually gave a shit about me then tried to erase my memory? You can be one cold Mother-fucker. I wish you weren't as stupid as you are though, then maybe I wouldn't remember you.

Duh, you live in the same town as me. Like I wouldn't figure it out eventually.”

“This isn't supposed to happen,” Daniel said, the miniscule color his face washed away.

“Well it did, I remember you. Now what?”

“You're lucky, you know. You have a family, a home. The rest of what you want will come to you eventually. I didn't want you to remember because it wouldn't be right for me to take it all away from you.”

“No one has ever said to me what you did. And no one has ever made me feel the way you did.”

Tess knew in an instant from the look on Daniel's face that he knew exactly what she meant.

“Tess, I'm so sorry.”

“You can look into my soul but you couldn't even see that? I don't need your pity so don't be sorry, I'm not. I gotta admit though it's kind of weird to lose your virginity, but actually not lose it?”

Daniel's blue eyes widened at her question.

“No, you didn't lose it. Look, I don't pity you, Tess. If anything, I wish I could have what you do.”

“You don't have to be alone anymore, Daniel. I know you and I'm not afraid.”

He dropped her off with no time to spare for her to get across the street to the school. She wanted to talk to Daniel some more but had to rush out of the car.

“I'll see you tonight. But you can have the pizza,” Daniel said to her leaning down and smiling from the passenger window.

Chapter 7 – Natasha Cross

Sara O’Duinn, Grimoire Entry, 23rd October, 2008 – The collector drove up so late that all the other shop owners closed up while Natasha Cross was still working. Still, she thought she was glad to stay late and accept the walking canes. It was her acquisition. She bargained with the old man over the phone exclusively. He wanted to get a lot more out of the canes than they were worth. Every time they spoke she whittled him down a bit more. They finally reached an acceptable price. He didn’t want to deal with anyone except her and she thought he had so many wonderful unexpected pieces. When the day was over, she couldn’t wait to go back to work the next day and get a good look at each one of them.

She was uneasy for the first time taking her familiar walk home from work. It took quite a bit to shake her. Somehow she didn’t feel alone. Tasha laughed to herself thinking how quickly she lost all the ground gained in the comfort of her surroundings. She couldn’t help thinking how the months of self-classes still didn’t overrule her fear of being singled out as a small weak woman.

Reaching her street, Tasha remembered why she loved living in New Haven. In the fall evening quiet she heard the leaves crunch beneath her shoes. It was so quiet and creepy sometimes. After so many years she loved the weird way of the place, in fact she didn’t think she could live without it. On that night though, it only added to her apprehension. She was really no stranger to odd feelings and goings on. Like when she thought about talking to that woman on the street about the walking canes. Only seconds had passed when she looked up and the woman wasn’t walking down the street. She just vanished. She’d experienced much in many an old building in New Haven, but never outside on the street. She thought maybe she was just tired from working late. It’s possible she never spoke to anyone at all. She supposed the streets could have a recorded history too.

When she looked in all directions in front and behind she saw only people that belonged in her neighborhood. Her best friend, Alex would be welcome company. She locked the door behind

her and with his black saunter, Alex mewed a greeting to Tasha from the floor. All seemed as it should around her house. Nothing was out-of-place or moved. She was really starting to freak herself out. Looking for things that were out-of-place? Of course nothing was out-of-place. She was the only one who lived there. Maybe some wine with dinner would take the edge off? She often prepared dinner while drinking wine. The suburban wildlife outside the kitchen window milled around, watching them go about their business had a calming effect on her.

She sat down in the kitchen nook and lit a solitary white candle. Tasha closed her eyes and wished for someone, a man who would share her interests to come into her life and take away the loneliness. She blew out the candle and took her dinner to the bedroom as Alex followed her down the hallway. He assumed his begging position next to her on the bed. She offered him a tidbit of her steak. He turned his nose up then looked back at her with a finicky cat scorn while moving to the foot of the bed. Strange for Alex she thought, he usually ate any type of meat offered to him. Full with dinner and medicated with wine, she fell asleep. Sleeping only for what felt like a moment, she startled in her sleep. When she looked up Alex was nowhere in sight. A flowing mist settled into her view. The figure of a man was standing at the foot of her bed. It was difficult for her to see him. She'd heard of waking dreams but never actually experienced one. Her eyes were wide open yet she couldn't move. As hard as she tried to refocus and wake up, it wasn't possible. He was dressed in a deep red silk robe. His skin was luminescent and pale in the moonlight of her room. Long dark hair cascaded over his shoulder. In one fluid moment he was sitting next to her, moving the hair away from Natasha's face. She kept waiting for some type of fear response. Natasha's heart pounded, but not because she was afraid. She thought it was only a dream.

His eyes were deep brown and blackening. He drew closer taking in the smell of her hair and neck. He gripped the hair at the nape of her neck to capture her full attention. Encircling her wrists, he immobilized her first with his hands and then with his piercing gaze into her soul. Vaporous tendrils in violet drifted

from her face to his. He breathed her in until violet turned to red. She felt a precise electrifying pain and then relief as he consumed some part of her being; every cell in her body was alive for the first time. The red glow of his body enveloped them. She felt her back lose contact with the bed as they rose.

Chapter 8 – A Healthy Obsession

“I almost didn't see you. Why are you waiting over here?”
Kate questioned while she thought to herself.

“Oh here we go, she's embarrassed to be seen with me.”

She wondered why there couldn't be bus service straight to her door. She knew Tess would much rather roll up to a big old house on a bus rather than in Kate's outdated excuse for a car. Or maybe that insecurity was all on Kate. She didn't know for sure but she could still worry about it for Tess's sake.

“Can you start picking me up here?”

“Why Tess? Is my car not acceptable to your new friends or something?”

“Um No...You'll miss getting caught up in the after school traffic if you pick me up over here. Duh, Mom, relax.”

Kate took a deep breath and smiled with relief.

“Yeah, okay.”

“I don't have any new friends yet anyway. I'm not really trying to make any. They can come to me,”

“They might think you are stuck up or something.”

“I've decided to something new here. I'm going to not care so much what they think.”

“Well whatever works for you, Tess. You are the one that has to go there every day. We aren't moving for at least a couple years.”

“I know, Mom. Trust me I know what I'm doing. I can already tell they are just dying to find out about me.”

When they reached the house, Tess plopped down with her books on the porch swing while her eyes shifted across the street for a split second. Kate pretended not to notice.

“It's really nice out. I think I'll do my homework out here.”

“Okay, well you know where I'll be. I've got some catching up to do before my day off.”

Kate knew this was coming. She'd been spared longer than most. Tess was definitely at that age, or actually way past it; but now? Why did it have to be now? She rushed to her office. The sun room windows gave her an unobstructed view. The blinds were drawn so she lifted one up just one section. A figure

dressed in black jeans and an oversized black shirt came into focus. He was a tall, lanky and pale young man. His black hair shuffled with the scant breeze as he walked. He looked up, right at her. She was too stunned that he noticed her staring at him to let go of the blind. His eyes of the deepest dark blue were a stark contrast to his ivory skin. She noticed a hint of smeared mascara below them. He looked down with a smile. Wait, he has mascara on; a guy? Kate dropped the shade and sat down in her desk chair bewildered by what all this meant. More change.

The welcome distraction of investigating the house returned to Kate's mind. It had become her obsession of choice when things got crazy. She pulled out the abstract of the house to look for Sara's name. She was surprised to find that her name wasn't anywhere on the abstract. The last owner of the house was listed as Natasha Cross. She was where Kate needed to start. She thought she could probably find out more about Natasha at the library or courthouse. She remembered the pressing need to check on Tess first. There was no way she was leaving the house with some guy hanging around. Kate looked out the side window blinds to see that Tess was intent with her studying and alone again. She took in a deep breath of relief and walked out to the porch.

"I'm going to the library, wanna come with?"

Tess clapped her school book shut.

"Nope, I'm all done,"

Kate sat down on the porch swing next to Tess smiling at her.

"Okay, what Mom?"

"How come you didn't introduce me to your friend?"

Tess took a deep breath and rolled her eyes in silence.

"I know we haven't gone over the whole guy thing yet--"

Tess interrupted.

"Geez, I just met the guy. I think I'm all good without the sex talk now."

"No one ever wants to...I just love you and..."

"I know, Mom. His name is Daniel."

"Okay well just so you know, no guys allowed when I am not home."

"Weren't you going to the library?"

“Oh yeah...No, I'm too tired now. I think I'll just finish up in my office and go to bed.”

Kate's Mom radar told her it was not the time to leave her daughter alone. Instead, Kate returned to her office and began to translate the next section of Sara's grimoire. Writing down the first few paragraphs, they struck her as odd as the previous ones she had read. The visions were not entirely from Sara's perspective. Instead they were complete with the inner thoughts of the person or persons in the visions. She suspected Sara must have had some sort of psychic ability and was spilling words to the page through automatic writing. When Kate finished the text, her suspicions were all but confirmed when she read the last two sentences. The section ended with a spell:

“These things I see, I do not want. Torturous visions end. Writing to the page will free me. As I will, so mote it be.”

Chapter 9 – An Unsettling Guilt

Sara O’Duinn, Grimoire Entry, 24th October, 2008 - Tasha woke up in the morning with an intense feeling of guilt. Guilty she wasn’t repulsed by the experience in her dream. Instead she felt revitalized, and in some way, disappointed because it wasn’t real. The candle ritual crossed her mind. She quickly dismissed it. It was only something she did to heal herself. A made up affirmation to keep her mind open to meeting someone. What else could make her mind create such a fantasy? Her thoughts returned to working late and accepting the walking canes.

In an instant she thought of me. I have known Natasha Cross for ten years since our first meeting in college. She remembered hearing very little truth about me before sitting down next to me in the corner of the library I chose as my sanctuary. Only that half of the students thought I was too odd to merit friendship. The other half was just plain scared of me. The whispers on campus created a peace around me I thoroughly enjoyed. It made her smile whenever she saw me. She thought I was a beautiful young woman, waif like with long flowing blond curls and calmness about me so unlike the others. She was drawn to me not only for these qualities but she thought at once, what an interesting person to know.

She was one of the few whom I allowed to know I could see a window to the past simply by laying my hands on an object. As owner of the auction house, acquisitions passed through my eager hands first. She thought I could shed some light on the origins and history of the objects. More so than she could ever glean from searching endless library microfiche or researching on the internet.

Only first she would have to get past Nori. He was our freelance webmaster for the auction house. Nori was lord geek of the town. If it was computer related, Nori had been there done that ten or so years ago. There was a playful chemistry between them, and also such an affinity that I didn’t think either of them would ever push it further than friendship. Although he was mainly a colleague, he knew her well enough to suspect that she was definitely up to something. Just hiding her unusual good

mood from Nori would be hard enough, never mind trying to get the canes out of the office.

When she walked into the office, Nori had the box of canes on his desk. He was carefully scrutinizing, photographing and cataloging each one for the online auction web site.

Oh, great. She thought to herself. The difficulty rating of getting the canes out of the office jumped from a five to a ten.

Nori looked up from the box, his green eyes glinting.

“Hey, what’s up, Tasha? Sweet find by the way.”

“Yeah, and I think I already have a buyer. Well sort of,” she lied.

“No way, these could go upwards of \$1,000 each at auction.”

“And who do we know that will pay that or more sight unseen?”

“Um, the boss spooky Sara?”

Tasha noticed the web page he had been painstakingly creating in her absence.

“Yep, so tell me that’s not live yet.”

Nori deleted the page with a quick keystroke and pushed the box away as though it were plague ridden.

“You know my hours, I just got started.”

She continued to feed his superstitious nature.

“You didn’t touch any of them, did you?”

“Hey why not just tag crap like this “Spooky Shit for Sara” so I don’t waste my time or worse, have some kind of weird shit follow me home?”

“Then how would you get your game fix using our T1 connection for the rest of the day?”

“My gaming monster blows the shit out of this MS office crammed crap even with a dial up connection. But it doesn’t have your sweet ass,” he replied, ducking as if to avoid an invisible flying office object.

“Euro trash.”

“Beautiful American terrorist, would you like to come dumpster diving?” Nori replied with his signature exaggerated Belgian accent, his head playfully tilted toward his crotch.

Tasha grabbed the box laughing all the way out of the office.

The drive out to my place was intimidating no matter what time of day it was to Tasha. The roads were completely covered by

thick oak trees under which no sky escaped. My century plus farm was in an area just outside of town. It had a shroud of the tales of children disappearing or just downright being chased by unseen entities through the woods. A few children could be telling tales just to fabricate the legends further. Every child that mistakenly wandered down my lane had a frightening tale to tell. The stories were all independent and similar. My ancestors before me lived there for centuries. In some way, Tasha sensed they were watching over her.

I was lounging on my cottage porch with my cat, Shadow. I greeted Tasha with a customary hug.

“Good to see you, Tasha. It’s been a while, how have you been, lately?”

“You tell me.”

“You aren't your usual.”

“I have something I want to show you. I thought...well I’ll just go get them.”

The scent of chamomile permeated the air from the nearby acres of herbs. Usually this had a soothing effect on Natasha, only not today. She could feel my penetrating gaze seeking all the information I could get without her participation. She placed a long thin box of gentleman's canes on the wicker table in front of me. I took the first cane in hand. It had a silver bar down its side with some inlaid pattern and gems scattered sparsely down the length of the bar.

I closed my eyes and now and fortunately for Tasha, focused my inquisitive mind on the canes. “This one was a favored possession for many years...he liked to thump the heads of his spoiled, ungrateful grandchildren with it. He longs for it, even now. He intended to be buried with it. They were very quick to sell it as soon as he passed.”

She tried to listen further, but kept slipping into daydream mode. It was probably because she wasn’t hearing anything that would put her mind at ease.

“Tasha, would you like some tea to calm your nerves?”

She smiled politely.

“Yeah, sure.”

“I’ve just made some rose hip tea. Anything you’d like to talk about?” I asked, while leaving to pour some tea for Tasha.

“No not really. I just came out to find something out about the canes, they have a weird feel to them and I thought you may want a shot at one before they go up for auction.”

Returning with the tea, I looked at her as if she was full of shit and I knew it. We never kept anything from each other, especially the strange stuff.

“Sara, there is nothing to tell. Lately it's like the same thing happens every day. Sometimes I only know what day it is by watching the news in the morning. Okay, tell me what makes you think anything is different?”

“Well first of all, Shadow didn't jump in your lap and harass you for attention when you sat down. Second, I can feel how uneasy you are, that's not like you.”

Shadow moved away from her preferring instead to make circles around my legs. She pled her case further.

“Well this week has been a bit more stressful than most. You know, all the extra tourist traffic with Halloween coming up. Work has just been crazy, that's all. Maybe that's it? I dunno...are any of these interesting to you?”

I rolled the cane in my hands while the crystal reflected light to my eyes.

“Yes, this cane with the hand holding the crystal at the top.”

“Well, I'd better get going, I promised Nori I'd come back and close.”

I smiled with suspicion.

“Okay, well you know you can tell me anything, right...when you are ready.”

Chapter 10 - Evidence

Kate began to think of any spare time as a nuisance. It was usually something she didn't dread but her obsession with Sara's grimoire became more consuming with each passage she translated. She felt guilty with something that might be pure fantasy taking so much of her time. The most recent text she read was both disturbing and intriguing to her. In Sara's vision, Sorin described walking through the streets of New Haven with modern detail, as though he had been there yesterday. The urge was strong to translate another section, yet she usually went with her gut instincts. They told her today wasn't a day to read. Instead of getting all swept up in a story that possibly never happened, she wanted to find out if these people were real, if Natasha Cross and Sara O'Duinn actually existed.

Kate left a quick note for Tess who was at school. She told Kate she was supposed to get a ride home with Daniel and his Mom after school. Kate knew the keywords were "supposed to". She also knew this kid Daniel was old enough to have a car and a license. She thought teenagers were so funny that way. She didn't understand why Tess thought she could put things over on her so easily. Did Tess not realize that Kate had been there done that a million times over? Since Tess had her appointment last month Kate didn't mind lengthening her leash a little bit more, but still selfishly enough, not too much.

Tess,

Dinner is in the fridge. I'll be at the library for about an hour.

Loves Ya,
Mom

P.S. No Daniels allowed.

She felt absolutely silly for a moment. She was researching the house on her only brief freedom from work for a while. She had so many errands that would only get done if she did them on her day off. Picking up the dry cleaning, grocery shopping and the list went on. Yet she couldn't deny the overwhelming urge to go

to the library and dig into the past. In the back of her mind, Kate dreamed this was it. If there was any truth to the book of shadows, she could imagine a million ways it could help her career.

She found a couple references to Natasha Cross in some old periodicals. Sitting in front of the microfiche projector Kate scrolled through each old newspaper. They moved past her eyes with a dizzying blur. Finally, she found the first reference number she was looking for. It was a write up in a ten year old newspaper about the grand opening of an auction house. There was an ad below it with a picture of two women below it standing close together grinning from ear to ear. Under pictured, it listed the names Sara O'Duinn and Natasha Cross. It said, "The two longtime friends are now in business together."

She flipped over to the second reference number and saw the headline "Two Local Women Reported Missing". It saddened her even though she already knew something happened to Natasha. The article said Sara's family hired a private detective to follow up on any leads that the two went somewhere else. He found nothing. Eventually it came down to a search of the surrounding woods and waterways for their bodies. The searchers found nothing. "Co-worker Nori Laurent was questioned then released by the New Haven police after his whereabouts around the time of their disappearance was corroborated. "The New Haven Police Department reports no other persons of interest are indicated at this time. The investigation remains open." The newspaper was dated only two years ago. Sara O'Duinn did exist.

Kate rolled back the microfiche to their faces in the newspaper ad. It struck her as the happiest time in both of their lives. Something just didn't ring true to Kate. She didn't believe they would ever leave New Haven on their own. What really happened to them? She hurriedly jotted down the address of the auction house.

"Are you looking for anything in particular?"

She walked closer to the back of the store and owner of the voice. Accidentally, she connected with his eyes from a distance. He was a tall young man with a slightly dark tinge to

his skin and spoke with an intermittent accent. He had a certain European distance about him.

“Actually...I was hoping to get some information.”

“About what?”

“Um...Well, I just moved here. I bought an old house uptown.”

He breathed out deeply with what seemed to be relief to Kate.

“And you want to know more about the house?”

Kate nodded yes thinking, hey, he said it not me.

“The abstract lists the last owner of the house as Natasha Cross. I understand she worked here?”

“Ah, well at least you aren't with the media. I've had enough of them.”

“I'm sorry to bring up a sore subject...I mean if it is one.”

“No, its okay...I knew her very well. She's been missing for two years now,” He said looking over Kate; his mind seemed to be somewhere else. “So you bought Tasha's house. I guess she'll have to stay with me now, if she ever comes back.”

His hand extended across the jewelry counter to Kate.

“I'm Nori.”

She shook his hand.

“Kate Hartley.”

The bells on the door of the antique store jangled. Kate thought to herself, “*Damn.*”

“I have to go now, but I think I understand why you are curious about your house. I'm going to the bookstore just down the block after I'm done here. Would you be interested in joining me for coffee?”

“Sure.”

“Okay, Great. Say about 6:00?”

Kate's mind was running through more questions for him.

“Yes, I'll be there.”

Returning home she gave in to the compulsion to translate the next section. With the information that Sara existed her writing took on a new meaning. Although it seemed more credible to Kate, with still so little information about Sara; she still had so many questions. The alarm on her computer went off scaring the crap out of Kate, but she was glad she set it. She probably would have missed meeting with Nori altogether. She breezed past Tess as she was coming in the door.

“You're late and we'll talk about it later.”

“What? Where are you going?”

Kate kissed the top of Tess's head. “To the bookstore, I'll have my phone if you need me. I don't really know how long I'll be. I've got to go. We'll talk later, okay?”

“Geez, okay Mom.”

Kate spotted Nori at a corner table in the bookstore. He hadn't seen her yet so she smoothed her hair and caught her breath so she wouldn't look and sound like a total lunatic before going to the table. Sometimes Kate got a little over ambitious while she chased her interests. He was on a netbook with a coffee near him and one in front of his.

“I ordered a Mocha Latte for you. I hope that's okay.”

Kate grinned while she settled into the chair.

“Perfect, Thank you,”

“No problem...so have you seen anything strange in the house yet?”

The hot coffee seared her nostrils and thankfully, or not so much, went back into Kate's mouth instead of out of her nose.

“Oh, sorry...here,” he said laughing and handing her a napkin.

“I'll take that as a yes?”

Kate nodded yes wiping her nose.

He leaned further over the table.

“Never has the gossip mill been so accurate.”

“I guess...something tells me though, you didn't get that just from town gossip.”

“Tasha worked at the auction house because antiques are her passion. She is an avid collector. Do you know if any of her objects are still in the house? In the attic, maybe?”

“They sold the house to me with all of her belongings still in it.”

“Well there it is then. Get rid of her things and problem solved. It's not so much the house as it is what she collected.”

“And Sara O'Duinn, she is the owner of the auction house?”

He leaned back in his chair.

“Yes, her family asked me to run it until her return. How do you know about Sara? Are you sure you aren't with the media?”

Kate blurted without thinking to change the subject.

“I found her book.”

Nori showed no sign of surprise.

“Sara went insane before she disappeared. She didn't speak for almost a year. Then when she did seem to come out of it, she scribbled nonsense almost twenty-four seven. No one could make any sense of it.”

“It wasn't nonsense. It was code...in Rune symbols. I translated it.”

Nori stared at her in silence then he shifted his weight in the chair.

Kate blurted again.

“Does Sorin exist?”

Nori's expression didn't change. He had the most wicked poker face she'd ever seen.

“Even if you think you were able to translate it, they are still the ramblings of someone who was sick in the head.”

“I'm sorry. I didn't mean to upset you. It's just the more I read of it, the more I sympathize with her. She couldn't speak because the visions disconnected her from reality. I think she thought by writing them she could get them out of her head and put an end to them.”

Nori leaned over the table closer to Kate looking her square in the eye.

“Look, it's pretty clear to me I can't stop you from reading the book. You can translate it and it can mean anything you want.”

“Why would you want to stop me from reading the book? Maybe it could help you find your friends.”

His poker face became somber.

“No one knows why Tasha and Sara are missing.”

“Is that a threat?”

Nori shot up from his chair then took a deep breath possibly to gain his composure.

“Believe me, I'm not the one you need to worry about. Take my advice. If I were you, I'd burn the book when I got home,” Nori said leaving the table.

“Who do I need to worry about, Nori?” Kate called after him completely forgetting she was in public.

Nori gave Kate a talk to the hand gesture and left the bookstore. The store was silent for a moment enthralled with what they were talking about then just as quickly was abuzz again as Kate

left the bookstore with her head down to avoid the questioning stares of the crowd.

Chapter 11 – A Midnight Craving

Sara O’Duinn, Grimoire Entry, 25th October, 2008 - There was a renewed confidence in his step walking down the empty street to what several minds called “The Common”. Sorin was elated with the energy robbed from the young woman with the essence he couldn’t forget. The hunger to feed was then spurred on by the discovery of someone who could hold his interest for more than a few hours. He sat on one of the many benches in the park and consulted the pocket device to find a willing companion for the night. He found an ongoing conversation on what was called a “message board”. The device gave information regarding a gathering not too far from where he sat. How fortunate to find it among the effects of his last meal. As unappetizing as she was, he thought at least some good came of it. The thin electric box was somewhat complex in operation. It vibrated when he returned it to his pocket. Not only was it complex it was annoying. He left it on the bench so it could annoy someone else.

He made his way to the gathering with a quick step and as calm as his will would allow. For his survival, he need not seem wanting to his hosts. As described by the message board, a nondescript glass doorway with black paper blocking the view to its contents beckoned him. He entered the building to find in front of him the option of only a flight of stairs to a lower level. He descended the stairs and saw a single file line of people standing to the side another entrance. In unison, they immediately turned to view the stranger in their midst. A large African fellow standing at the entrance locked the door behind him and walked toward him. He motioned for Sorin to come with him. He opened the door with a knowing smile and invited him to go inside.

A chasm opened to him at the entrance of the gathering. He was amused at the sea of humans taking visual stock of him as he walked slowly through the crowd. He thought as laughable as the fashion of renewed interest in Sanguine vampires was, it served him well. Their minds were so open. All were adorned in what they perceived would attract others of their kind to them.

Most of them had very little covering their bodies. The sound of what Sorin hungered for whispered to him. It surrounded him at every turn.

He stood with his hands clasped at his lower back, his head tilted upwards to take in each delicious nuance of the individual energies flowing past him; he felt a warm touch gather his hands from behind. He turned to see that a female was intent on guiding him through the crowd. They divided for them to walk through. To the corner of the hallway, the sense of two Psyon brethren surprised Sorin. Standing in the corner alone, they were easily noticeable, the two dressed in opulent suits of the English Regency style. Sorin supposed they were elders because they were out in the club without much of a care. It made him wish he was of their status, dressed in the attire of his choosing as they were. He knew there was probably no hope of him becoming an elder because he was never able to find Lorelle, his maker. The music pumped loud in the club, yet he heard their voices to his mind with a deafening clearness.

“Rogue Sorin, you can sense as we do that this human is touched, why do you waste your time?”

Sorin spoke back to their minds while navigating the glut of the crowd in front of them.

“She is my diversion of the moment, what concern is it of yours?”

“We were alerted to your existence. Dining on the insane is a temporary solution. You will find a companion soon or be eliminated from the Children of Psyon.”

“And the two of you will make this come about?”

“Yes, we live because it is our charge.”

“Then I beg of you, do it now. I have no care as to my future. I welcome death.”

“Yes brother, unfortunately in this case we must acquiesce for one reason. We have seen your chosen. She is of an extraordinary line and would suit us and the Children of Psyon very well indeed, but you have made contact with her and she remains in your hands to bring to us.”

“And bring her to you I will if you can overlook my recreation of the night and wait for her to join the fold. Which I guarantee will come about.”

They looked at each other with more than a little hesitance.

“Do not doubt my ability with this mundane, believe me, she is mine.”

“Very well brother, you are absolved...for tonight. But make no mistake, she is not yours. She is ultimately ours.”

Only briefly concerned with the distraction of the Psyon elders, he continued down the corridor with the one who had chosen him. She was a dark haired beauty in the subdued lighting of the club. Sorin thought she was suitable for his taste, though he would need more seduction from the beginning to respond.

He stopped and asked of her, “Where are we going?”

“Oh nice accent, I thought so...Victorian right?”

He smirked.

“Yes, how did you know?”

“Your cologne, it's like musk mixed with lavender.”

From the back, he could see her hair drawn loosely in a thick long braid. Curly wisps of jet black hair escaped from the nape of her neck. Her dress revealed a milky and pale muscular back with a small view of some tantalizing art near her spine. She guided him through the long hallway and turned to Sorin with a smile. Her false incisors were lit by the candles along the hall. This female was no doubt sure of herself. He managed a courteous smile to hide appearing visually amused at the ease of it all. She had no idea what she had chosen for herself this night.

She led him to a small room with the look of a Victorian drawing room. Two heavily curtained glass paned French doors appeared out-of-place yet a welcome and inviting sight to Sorin. They walked to the corner of the room where there was a chaise. She sat on the chaise in front of him, her bejeweled hands rising toward his belt. She looked up at him with a hunger almost rivaling his. He stopped her hands to begin forming the triangle of his mind. She spoke to him with a reassuring tone.

“It's okay baby, Leave him to me. I know what he needs.”

She leaned back with a smirk and tilted her head slowly to the side without breaking her gaze. Every fiber of his being wanted to end her self-amusing mockery of what she perceived as his kind. His incisors were by no means sharp. They could cause her pain. Something told him though they would suit her. He would oblige her fantasy if only to heighten his experience. She

didn't flinch or so much as move an inch when he began his ruse of drinking from her.

Wiping her blood from his mouth, he focused on her bright insatiable eyes. He took a deep breath and focused the illuminated triangle of my mind on her. Engaging the psychic wound slowly, he was ready for her. He guided her hands to his belt once again. Straddling her ashen perfection on the chaise, he noticed the glint of a jewel on her tongue. He felt the dull coldness of it as her mouth surrounded him. She teasingly grazed him and then playfully bit down with the edges of her teeth to taste him. Her expression revealed she reveled in the shock value of this sexual overture.

Fortunately for her and for Sorin, He could no longer feel the sharp pain a male of her kind would feel at that moment. He laid on top her, moving her scant clothing aside to take her raised nipples in his mouth. He enveloped her breast in his mouth and bit down. Her breath became shallow as she pushed down on his shoulder to request he pleasure her underneath her dress. He lifted her dress and looked into her eyes with a deceptive knowing smile. She sighed with abandon and forced his head down again with her hands. Eyes darkening and seething with contempt, he moved her dress upward to bare her femininity more fully. She pulled him toward her forward grasping him with one hand guiding him into her. He entered her and drank in more essence as her excitement rose.

It was much the same each time he fed. And here was the rub of his existence, He lived yet could no longer enjoy the spectrum of emotion, pain and sensuality as he once did. Except, he remembered as a pleasurable chill radiated through his body; except with the one whose dream he visited. With this thought, he grew tired of her and relinquished before she could gain her pleasure from him. Turning from her, he heard the wish of her mind.

"No...Please baby, finish me."

He turned to her again and looked into her eyes this time with his true hunger. She was alarmed by the red threads of light escaping his eyes to meet her. She struggled under his grip. He forced her torso down into the pillows and pierced her mind deeply for the last time viewing the exquisite terror on her face.

This was the moment Sorin longed for. Her memory of self drained from her to his. He moved closer to her face. Taking in the sight of her dying eyes before the last conscious breath of the soul extinguished.

He moved her clothing back to cover her once more while she sat in front of him eyes vacant, mumbling to herself. The taste of insanity from her essence ran through him. He left the club in the early morning mist hoping he would reach the hotel before he blacked out.

Always before the inconceivable pleasure of another essence pulsed through his body, Sorin was made to relive his shame before the hunger within was satiated. He could no longer dream or sleep but endured fractured visions of her. It was always the same moment in time.

It began despite both their attempts to deny it, the descent into the ruin awaiting them. He, Sorin Ladislov; a Knight Templar sworn to God and the holy war before him and she his Genevieve, a Daughter of the Holy Order of Templar's sworn to comfort him with prayers after battle. A young and foolish man, he disregarded the vow of the Templar's. Sorin believed he was invincible. His strength in battle enough to carry him through any temptation the world could offer. It wasn't customary for those of her station to serve Templar Knights as nurses. Though, stubborn warriors often warranted it. The two sat beneath an ages old tree on the island retreat of the Templar's, Cyprus while she tended to his wounds. She touched the crook of his arm, the under cloth beneath stained red from blood in the gap where the armor couldn't protect him.

"This is beyond the surface, Sorin. It begs for stitching."

"You may do what is necessary."

She winced at the thought of taking a needle to him.

"Would you prefer to have some wine...before I begin?"

He smiled at her sensibility.

"The pain from the dagger...I am sure is much worse than the repair of it."

She stitched the wound leaning in to cut the end of it with her teeth.

“I think no better a stitch than that of a practiced doctor. It should heal,” she said, looking up at Sorin, her eyes locking with his.

At once the vision turned to black returning Sorin to the cold stark reality of his hotel room in New Haven. The quality of his last meal left him in a state of confusion complete with an episode of time unaccounted for. He barely knew how he returned to the hotel. Somehow though, he was there and even managed his bedclothes. He wondered sometimes why he ventured out knowing what he found would not satisfy him. The merit of each soul lacked more with every encounter. He didn't know if it was his disappointment when the hunt was over or if it simply was this time. Perhaps for every hundred there was only one. Sorin remembered once again he'd found her.

Sorin's thoughts wandered back to his chosen one. The aftertaste of the intoxicating way about her still lingered with him. Closing his eyes, he focused the path of the triangle to her. She was sleeping and just beginning to dream. Her subconscious appeared as a tangible streak of violet amongst all the grays and almost indistinguishable streams to sample. She summoned him by her own will. He was pleased there was a place in her mind for him, even if it was only in the realm of dreams. It was impossible for him to resist eavesdropping. Sorin stepped into her image of him. To participate unnoticed, he allowed her this time to create the dream. If he exacted any will, she would awaken.

Immediately he drew back at the shock wave of deep emotional disruption that visited her mind. It was a view to another lifetime she was not aware of. So much pain and injustice experienced to the height of her being and never acknowledged. Pushed further down with every instance and forgotten. What was it love, who did this? Quickly then and mercifully the view became a much more inviting one.

She would have him slowly with deep and soulful kisses. He sank easily into the lush seduction she created. He had not felt pleasure such as this since the beginning of life as a child of Psyon. Admittedly, it was not as pronounced but decidedly more enticing. The violet of her joined with his red to entwine and deepen. Her essence flowed into him with the same ease that

silk is moved by a soft current of air. The feel of her warm enveloping embrace, he wished to stay in her arms for a few moments more. Her heartbeat raced, he felt it beat within him becoming his. The energy within her flowed to him quenching my thirst and healing the effects of time.

“Who are you?”

His concentration was shaken by the sound of her voice. She was aware of him in a subconscious state? It took a considerable amount of effort to orchestrate the events of her dream and to ask a question. For this reason alone, it warranted an answer.

“I am the one you will favor, though now the memory escapes you.”

He could only hope the suggestion would be enough to contain her curiosity. She continued to awaken in her abilities. Her skill surprised him at every turn. Yet in her waking moments it was still unknown to her. The deepening colors signaled the time for Sorin to break the connection or risk the strength to find her again. He focused on the cold reality of the surroundings and his energy falling away from hers. Slamming down on the bed in a profuse sweat he reveled again in what happened. A part of her entertained thoughts of him; she became the master of her dream to speak to him. It was by far an impressive achievement for a human.

The prospect of a new companion gave him reason to continue; the anticipation of it, the discovery and final surrender. In the time to come he planned to make intimate contact with her to persuade her conscious mind to yield to him. He would enjoy the introduction to her conscious mind.

Chapter 12 - Blackmail

Kate loved many aspects of her new life. She loved not dreading coming home to a non-existent person taking up space that she wished he wasn't. She loved the happiness she and Tess found in just being alone together and finally having the time to find out about each other, instead having to spend every evening rushing her to bed to cover up for someone else's inevitable drunken behavior. Sometimes she wished she had divorced when Tess was two rather than now that she was sixteen. She was still so stupid then and had so many of her own lessons to learn. Kate only hoped her lost time in stupidity wasn't too long at Tess's expense, especially now that she felt Tess pulling away from her more every day. In the back of her mind, she knew it was just the natural way kids grow up. Still, it was bittersweet to watch feeling so powerless to change it.

Tess was spending more time with Daniel than she would like. Not to mention the fact that Kate hadn't really even met the kid yet. She kept reminding Tess not to get too attached to this place because they would be moving someday, though not too soon it would happen. She didn't want her to fall in love with Daniel and then try to move her away. Tess didn't need that heartache and Kate didn't need the problems it will involve.

She cut her a little bit of slack though because Tess was doing well in school for a change. She had settled into a group of friends she was comfortable with. More so than she ever seemed to be in the small town they used to live in. They weren't the popular kids. They were more on the eclectic side if she had to pin it down. They dressed different from the others, almost seemed to have their own language and inside jokes. Any other parent would have checked her room for drugs. She thought it wasn't about that though. She could remember wearing some pretty out there stuff herself. It was about being an individual. There was certain independence in being the weird one out. She could tell it was why Tess loved it there too. The very small part of Kate that wasn't worrying about Tess all the time was glad for her.

As for herself, she was drowning in work. She tried to be as busy as possible because she couldn't get Nori's warning out of her mind. Yet she couldn't bring herself to burn Sara's grimoire. With Nori's reaction, she suspected it might be true. She couldn't ignore Sara's cry for help. And she didn't want to destroy and forget about a story that could put her on the map. Even though she also knew there was sometimes danger in exposing the truth. Kate would take on the risk in a heartbeat if she were the only one in her life to consider.

She needed time to contemplate what she and Tess had to lose if she continued to translate the book. She put the book away and tried to forget about it. She didn't even go into her office anymore, as if it would keep whatever was in the house away from her. It had been unusually quiet considering she had broken her promise to read the book.

Kate left a lot of what she needed for work in there, like her computer for instance. It was pretty hard to be a writer without one. She spent a lot of time at the library working and tried not to give in to the urge research more about Sara. The last time she was there, Kate noticed a new sign in the lobby. "Until further notice, computer use will be limited to one hour, per day, per user.

"*Crap,*" she thought to herself.

The time had come to confront whatever was lingering in her office. She went home and unlocked the door to her office for the first time in months. On her desk, the book was out of its hiding place and open with the red ribbon bookmark splayed diagonally across the page. She looked behind her hoping that she was the only one who saw it. She took a deep breath of relief remembering it was Saturday. Tess would be sleeping at least until noon. Her teenage sleeping habits saved Kate again. The melancholy of the entity attached to the book drifted into the room. Kate whispered to it while she shoved the book back into the shelf.

"Not now."

Kate hurriedly moved her desktop computer to the kitchen table. It crossed her mind it might be a good time to get out of the house for a while to think about what she would do next. Burn the book? Sell the house? Lose the money and be

homeless on the streets with a teenage daughter? Who cares, she'd still have her sanity. Her mind whirling in nonsense possibilities, she rushed to the hook on the wall where her car keys hung. They were not there.

“Damn it.”

She tore apart the house for over an hour. Furious, Kate continued looking for the keys until she stood up and stopped in her tracks with a solitary thought. She walked slowly to the open doorway of her office. The book was again open on her desk with the keys displayed on top of the book. She grabbed the book from underneath the keys and shoved it back through the slot with a spin. Keys in hand she ran outside to the car. She looked at her office windows with spite. She had won. As Kate was driving away, she glanced up to the window of Tess's room as she always did out of habit. A figure of a man held the curtains open looking down at Kate. Frantic, she pulled back into the driveway.

She bounded up the stairs leaping up as many as she could at once. Standing in the doorway of Tess's room she watched the man dissipate from solid to mist. She looked over at Tess. She didn't stir. In fact, she slept through the whole thing. Kate breathed in deep with relief as she descended the stairs on her way to the office to finish the fight. As soon as she hit the doorway, the book flew across the room hitting Kate square in the chest knocking the breath out of her from the force of its flight. It fell to the floor in front of her. The red ribbon bookmark floated to a stop diagonally across the page. Kate looked up and talked to the room.

“Okay...you've won. I'll keep my promise, if you, from now on keep yours.”

Chapter 13 – Lorelle’s Journey

Sara O’Duinn, Grimoire Entry, 26th October, 2008 -
Cradled in the arms of the wind, Lorelle flew with the starlings each day moving closer to Sorin. She thought at once she should like to stay within a bird for some time. Flying naked and free through the air was the making of dreams. One with the starling, she banked and soared following the tail feathers of another in an exhilarating airborne ballet. Precarious was the existence of a small bird. This she found when a hawk took the life of the starling, quiet and efficient as a razor to a throat.

Lorelle joined with the hawk only to find she had a brood. Instinct prompted the mother hawk to fly only to the edges of an established territory lest risk death. With motherhood a large part of her predatory condition, she was lead to hunt often to quiet the shrieks of her little ones. She moved from the hawk to a gull that flew in close to protect her young but was not the intended of the hawk. The gull floated down to the sea for a rest after her attack.

She saw the shark well in advance but could not puppet the gull fast enough ahead of his speed. She swam with the bull shark witnessing the carnage he inflicted to fill his stomach along the way. He swam briskly in a figure eight contemplating one last inviting morsel for the night. Lorelle felt the resistance and then the shock within him of being pulled against his will from the safety of his home in the dark depths of the ocean.

Two burly fishermen sat on the pier flanked by their coolers. They had one ice chest with an ample supply of beer. The other for their catch. Jack took a swig of beer and exclaimed,

“Oh yeah...you're the man. It’s perfect eating size!”

“Such a fighter too, he felt like a brick on my line. What a rush.”

Chester's mouth watered.

“I think we should fix it up gourmet style...simmered with some lime, garlic and butter.”

“Meow,” asserted a black cat from the shadows of the dock. It sauntered to the fishermen with a playful head butt to each of their legs.

“Well, look at you. Where did you come from? You'd like a hand out would ya?”

“He's a nice looking tom cat, that's for sure. Give 'em a chunk of the stuff we'd throw out.”

“Yeah well he's a tom but he's not a stray. His tag says he's Alex.”

“Well Alex, your family must not be feeding you enough, eh? Here ya go.”

Alex strode up just close enough in wary cat fashion to retrieve the gift of the shark's innards. Lorelle moved into him as he cautiously took them in his mouth trotting off head held high with his prize dragging across the deck. At home in a cat again she suffered through his meal to remain with him and see which human he was close to.

Since beginning her journey Lorelle didn't hear a whisper of Sorin. This led her to believe his aim may have shifted to an even more dangerous path.

It was true. They could feed in a way that harmed none. They could stand in the middle of any gathering of humans feeding from them in unison. Ambient feeding quenched only the hunger and kept them hidden. For Psyon, feeding deeper provided immortality healing the aging of the day.

With the quest of living beyond one lifetime, there was also risk. Feeding deeply was sometimes surprisingly addictive depending on the human they took. The more essence they consumed the more they were shown of a humans' history, their triumphs and failures over several lifetimes. The taste of these unfolding visions was sometimes too enticing to break away from. The more essence they took, the more they injured their mentality. It was the reason for humans with diminished sanity. A Psyon fed from them too deeply. This risk was avoided if they developed an intimate relationship, one that they fed from exclusively. They called these humans companions.

During the times in their lives when lacking a proper companion, they were forced to feed from the fringe of human society. This was a survival tactic at best. The flaws in their

character manifested as a breakdown in the essence retrieved from them. They would black out or simply not remember how they returned to the safety of the shadows. It was not a condition the Psyon favored, but used to survive in between companions.

Companions served as long term hosts. They knew full well what Psyon were. Sometimes they lived with them, affording them a haven for long periods of time. Most certainly, they fed only from them. They chose companions carefully. They were to read humans and find out who they had been over many lifetimes. Very few were suitable hosts. They would above all have the ability to be discreet and utterly loyal. As years passed and human society developed, this became increasingly difficult to find indeed.

In return for a haven, Psyon companions shared in their wealth and an intimate relationship few humans could dream of. Psyon combined their feeding with sexual prowess. This was a powerful compliment to keeping their status with their companions secure. No one would reveal the source of such pleasure. It was an instant and highly enticing addiction almost impossible to describe to one who has not experienced it. No drug humans could conceive of had a stronger grip. When there was an older woman with a younger man, he was Psyon. They stayed with their hosts for a span of about twenty years. Unfortunately, the continued deep feeding they and their companions so enjoyed also led to advanced aging.

Of course, they could kill with their feeding although it was very rare. They kept this to a minimum so that their society remained secret. As centuries passed, humans developed ways to save information. It flowed more quickly throughout the world. This coupled with a new value of human life changed forever the veil of shadows. This was the doctrine of their houses which dictated Psyon society must remain secret. The veil of shadows remained intact only when humans were not killed for feeding.

Most victims of a deep Psyon feeding would lose their memories and go mad for a time. Ultimately they did recover remembering nothing of their lost time in madness or how it happened. The length of their recovery depended on the quality of their mind and their will to live. Killing a human was only

happen for one of two reasons; in extreme cases when the veil of shadows was compromised, or to gain another century of life. Again, immortality came to them at a price. They searched for the very old souls that lived several lifetimes with courage and resolve. They read them carefully to be sure they had not led a more exalted life than their own. If a Psyon took a human with a higher status on the karmic chain, they risked their own life. This rare human had the power to overtake them.

Lorelle watched the rogue Sorin as he sought his new companion. Inside of the cat that belonged to his new interest, she learned much about her. Lorelle thought Alex was a lovely creature. He had a very close connection with his human, as he affectionately called her. She inhabited Alex and had a clear view to the astral plane. She saw their energies meet, their colors so vivid and fetching from all the others. In an instant, she saw the flash of an image of one familiar to her from her memory.

There were some among the humans who could feel Psyon presence. Those who developed their psychic abilities could sense them and try to become their ruin. Such was the self-appointed charge of the O'Duinn family since their ancestor Brandan O'Duinn first discovered the Children of Psyon. It was not so much the clan O'Duinn could harm them with their knowledge of the Celtic craft, but they could protect themselves or worse call attention to Psyon society. They were to the O'Duinn's no different from their Sanguine ancestors; a plague to be eradicated. Most Psyon were discreet enough to avoid being seen. But only when they were taught the ways in addition to strong instinct. Lorelle knew Sorin garnered the attention of this psychic family with each encounter throughout time.

To speak to Sorin she would have to inhabit a human. Inside of a human, Lorelle could be seen by the Psyon. She couldn't intervene until the moment his existence was threatened.

Chapter 14 - Confessions

“Come on Daniel, it's just my Mom. Can't you just talk to her for a few minutes so she'll get off my back?”

“No, I can't.”

“Where do you go after you play at night? Do you have any place to stay at all?”

“Sometimes they let me hang out in the back of the club, only if the owner has plenty to drink that night. A lot of the time I buy him drinks with my share of the gig money. But it's getting harder to get him drunk with just that.”

“Where do you go when you can't stay there?”

“You don't wanna know.”

“My mom would take you in, if you'd just talk to her. She's not like other parents, or I'd be staying with my Dad, right?”

“It's hard enough, controlling myself around you the way it is now.”

Tess turned her back to him and leaned in close to Daniel putting his arms around her. He thought there could be no more of a perfect fit as she melted into his arms. He encircled her yet was careful not to touch her hands. He breathed in deep, tilted his head back and felt the hunger rise with the sound to his ear of her heartbeat becoming his. He couldn't hear her voice anymore. He could only read her lips. From above, he saw her say, “Why don't you just do it? I want you to.”

The voice Daniel had come to know as instinct rang through his head at first far away then close and loud as the sound vibrated beneath his forehead.

“No.”

Daniel whispered, “No.”

He couldn't remember the last time he had felt the warmth of another against him. He certainly didn't remember it ever feeling as good. Daniel forced his arms to end what he longed for with his embrace of her. She stood alone in front of him with her eyes closed for a moment then turned to him.

“What's wrong?”

“I can't. It would be wrong. I feel...different about you than anyone else I have met. You know?”

Tess smiled and nodded yes.

“I don't know what will happen if I--” Daniel stopped short, shaking his head.

As Daniel spoke, Tess looked into his deep blue eyes and saw for the first time they were surrounded by small threads of neon emerald green. They withdrew back into his eyes as Daniel calmed himself. She stepped back and tried not to look as curious about him as she continued to be.

“What?”

Tess smiled, “Nothing.”

She sat down with him next to the old cottage in the woods where they always met, but not too close so he could relax.

“How did it happen to you?”

“I was playing a gig in Boston. I remember everyone wanted to play that place. After the show we were all hanging out backstage smoking weed. I had way too much to drink that night. These two guys got backstage and no one knew who they were. It happens sometimes. We just figured they came back for the party like everyone else. I thought they must have known someone or how else would they get back there? They started talking crazy, saying weed was for pussies and they knew of something much better. I must have passed out after that. When I woke up the other guys in my band were gone and those two guys were standing over me, each one holding one of my hands.

“Well you know what I thought then, right?”

“Yeah.”

“I tried to move but I couldn't. It felt like all of the wind had been knocked out of me and I couldn't get it back. A green light was coming from my stomach and going off into their eyes. They saw me trying to breathe and just laughed at me. I was pretty sure they were trying to kill me. It pissed me off.”

Tess laughed.

“The only thing I could move was my hands. So I squeezed their hands as hard as I could. The light that was coming from me stopped and went back into my body. A red light came from both their hands and went into me. I could finally breathe then

and I could move, but they couldn't anymore. So I got out of there as quick as I could. They tried to chase me down. They were yelling, "Wait, brother" or something like that. I was like, yeah right and just kept running."

Daniel could see the question in her mind as she thought of it. He failed to make it clear to her. She wanted him even more and he wanted her. But he also didn't want to lose the only friend he had in the world. The only one he could talk to.

"But say you did, couldn't you just stop before--"

"That's just it, Tess...sometimes I can't stop," Daniel said as he closed his eyes and told her no again with his mind.

Daniel couldn't tell if she could hear his thoughts yet. He was afraid of what might happen if he even tried to read her again to find out. Instead, he thought it was better to change the subject. Daniel stood up and walked to the front door of the cottage. It had a huge pad lock on it. He walked around to the back. The same thing happened.

"What are you doing?"

"Help me try the windows. I want to crash here tonight."

"I found one. Come here, this one is open."

Daniel walked over to Tess. "This place is really out here away from everything. How long did it take you to find it?"

"Not long, I heard some people at school talking about it. They were daring each other to come out here. They said something about a witch used to live here. I came out here to see which ones had the balls to show up because that's who I wanted to hang with. None of them did."

Daniel climbed into the window and turned to smile at Tess. "I should be good here then."

"If you hear anyone, bail and head for my house. I'm gonna ask my Mom tonight if you can stay with us for a while."

Daniel began to protest. "Tess---"

Tess interrupted, "She gives me more crap every day she doesn't meet you. It's either that or I can't see you anymore."

"Yeah, right."

Tess turned to walk away from him and waved goodbye with her back to him. "I've got this, you'll see...night Daniel."

Tess got home right at dusk to a Mom who was not amused. She had forgotten to come home after school and had been gone too long without calling. Tess knew she was in deep shit when she heard her Mom shove her dinner into the microwave and slam the door. She knew it wasn't the time to ask for anything.

"Where have you been? You're late and you didn't call."

"I was talking to Daniel about something. I didn't realize the time."

"So lemme get this straight. You were right across the street and couldn't remember to call?"

"Daniel doesn't live across the street, Mom."

"Since when? And since when do you lie to me?"

"Since always, I didn't lie, you just assumed...He ran away from home."

"The stuff about Daniel's Mom giving you a ride home was total crap. You are so grounded."

"I'm sorry I lied Mom, but he needs help."

Kate reached for the phone. "What he needs is a call to his parents."

"He doesn't remember their names or where he's from."

"What? Well how convenient. That's a good one, Tess."

"He told me someone, maybe his Dad, hit him in the head so hard, he can't remember. I dunno, probably why he ran away?" Tess said, embellishing on the truth for Daniel.

"Look Tess, I feel bad for any kid who is out on the streets, for any reason. Even so, if he's having problems at home it needs to be reported to Child Protection so they can place him with foster parents."

"He's 17, Mom. By the time they find foster parents for him he'll be an adult. Plus what kind of people will they be? They'll care more about the money they get than him. At least I know that wouldn't happen here."

"You're still grounded for a week," Kate said, her finger in her mouth as she thought about how it would be just like setting a

candy store down right in front of Tess. Then on the other hand, about how cold it would be letting a kid she knew of hide out on the streets alone. "Where is he now?"

"He's out at the old O'Duinn place. I told him I'd ask if it was okay if he stayed with us a while."

"What?"

"He didn't want me to, but---"

"No, before that what did you say?"

"He's at the O'Duinn place?"

"Where is the O'Duinn place?"

"It's just an old house in the woods. The talk at school is a witch used to live there."

"Can you take me there?"

"Yeah, Mom but it's a little late for that tonight. Don't ya think?" Tess said, waving her hand in front of Kate to snap her out of it.

"So what about Daniel? Can he stay with us?"

Kate took a deep breath.

"I'll make a bed for him on the couch tonight, he better be on that couch in the morning or he'll have worse problems than just being homeless. Then...we'll see about him staying in the guest room," Kate said already regretting her decision.

"If everything goes okay we'll talk about the rules of the house."

Tess got up and gave Kate a big excited hug.

"Got it, Thank you Mommy."

Kate got out the extra bedding all the while thinking about what Sara's place looked like. She knew Sara was practicing witchcraft, but didn't know she had a public reputation for it. Kate finished up making the couch into a bed for Daniel and went to her office. She didn't want to deal with anymore drama tonight. She heard the knock at the door when Daniel arrived. She heard Tess help him get settled on the couch. Kate listened as Tess's footsteps ascended the stairs. Now it was her time. It was time to escape into the fixation that helped her forget about the worries of the day. It was late, but she hadn't been able to

sleep very well lately anyway since she read the last section of the book. It was a vision of Natasha. Perfectly describing her bedroom, now Kate's bedroom as Sorin entered her dreams. It crept Kate out thinking it could have happened to Natasha in the very room she now slept in. She never felt as if she were really alone in her bedroom again. She sat down to translate more of the grimoire. When she felt the reserved presence of the entity in her office watching her again, Kate acknowledged who she suspected it was all along.

“I'm going to your house tomorrow.”

Chapter 15 – O’Duinn Rites of Protection

Sara O’Duinn, Grimoire Entry, 26th October, 2008 - Tasha drove away followed by a cloud of white road dust. All around me was the darkness I felt since she came by with the walking canes. It was insidious yet in some way familiar. A chill washed over me when I saw the glint from the crystal of the walking cane. It occurred to me I'd probably taken on another haunted object to my collection. The presence within the walking cane was malevolent and not welcome. I had cleansed many objects in the past. When the natural darkness of night arrived, I would cleanse my home of this silent invader.

In the Celtic tradition passed down by the family O'Duinn, I cast the sacred circle. Holding the athame high, a sense of calm returned to me as I called each guardian of the watchtowers.

“Great and mighty ruler of the North lands, protect the gates of the North. Come, I summon you.”

A red glowing mist drifted into the room.

“Great and mighty ruler of the East lands, protect the gates of the East. Come, I summon you.” I recited, continuing to scatter salt of the earth in my circle.

The presence manifested too late. The mist was held just outside of my circle. I motioned the incense three times in the circle. The incense burner became white hot in my hands. I had no choice but to drop it to the floor. I continued casting the circle.

“Great and mighty ruler of the South lands, protect the gates of the South. Come, I summon you,” I said, moving to stand at the south point of the circle with a white candle in hand. With each protection of the watchtowers the mist was present but couldn't enter the circle.

“Great and mighty ruler of the West lands, protect the gates of the West. Come, I summon you.”

I released three drops of water in a succession of three to the ground in the circle. The mist at once rose and formed a wall from midair to the ceiling and then dissipated. Determined, I ended the casting of the circle.

“Anu, Amanentia, Arravogue, Ambisigru, Come I summon you. As I will so mote it be!”

With the protection of the circle cast, I began the cleansing of my home. I stood completely still at my altar. The house was closed to the outside but I could still hear an incessant whispering which sought to break my concentration. Fighting to still my mind, I focused on lighting nine white candles to guide the Goddess to my home. The mirrored candelabras flickered and added more light to the room.

I picked up the mirror and focused it on the other side of the room. “Lunar light protect my home!” I commanded as the candles across the room lit in unison. The presence was strong, but couldn't continue to invade my home.

“I'm protected in my home! Do you hear? You will leave me now! Great Goddess of mystic night, within this place of candles bright, and with my mirror nigh, we banish your presence and cast you into the light. As I will, so mote it be!”

At the end of the last incantation, I raised my hands and the candles burned brightly as if they were infused with gasoline. It was a good sign the presence had left. It left only because its curiosity had been satiated. It by no means left willingly, and I knew it was probably not the last time I would sense it just beyond the borders of my power. The confrontation reminded me that the rest of the canes were probably still in Tasha's possession. I returned to my altar and retrieved the athame. I pointed it towards the direction of Tasha's home.

“Souls of evil, unwanted presence, Be gone, leave us, leave the place where you now dwell, Leave that the Goddess may enter, Go or be cast into the outer darkness, go or be drowned by the watery abyss, go or be burned in the flames, by the power of the Goddess, we banish you, we banish you, we banish you. As I will, so mote it be!”

The dagger, pointed away from my body turned on me. With all my strength, I fought its journey to just beneath my chin pressing further with every moment into my neck.

In my head, I heard a deep male voice speaking to me and knew that I should listen to know how to continue to fight.

“Lowly Witch, you have crossed the line. I will have you know, I rather like the outer darkness-- You have no idea the difficulty of closing this door.”

The hold on my strength disappeared and the athame dropped to the ground at my feet. I was rattled by the unexpected confrontation; more important was to contact Tasha about the rest of those canes. I looked at the clock. The time flew while I was performing the ritual. Knowing her, my call would go straight to voice mail. And it did.

So I banged out a message in instant messenger instead. Tasha, please call or message me. It's about those walking canes from today.

No answer.

Talk to you soon. Sara. I closed the message and wished she were there.

At least she'd get the instant message in the morning when she went online before work. I knew if anything, she was a creature of habit.

Chapter 16 - Introductions

Kate woke up disoriented and sore from falling asleep at her desk. It wasn't something she let happen very often. She soon remembered in her morning fog why she was still in her office. Sara's grimoire contained a tangible revelation, one that she could follow up on. Sara's vision of Sorin mentioned a club he went to for the purpose of hunting victims. She wondered if she could find this place, if it actually existed. It was described with such detail; Kate thought she might be able to find it. She had a sinking yet exhilarating feeling she was getting close. So close to finding someone that spoke through Sara it was starting to frighten her.

"Mom...I wondered where you were," Tess said startling her.

Kate closed the book sliding it underneath her notebook when she heard Tess's voice behind her. She turned in her chair to face Tess rubbing her eyes. "I fell asleep reading."

"Exciting," Tess said sarcastically. "You really should get out more. I'm good with that, you know."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah. Anyway I made breakfast. Daniel's up too."

Daniel? Kate had forgotten. Oh, great, she thought; just what she wanted to deal with this morning.

Kate entered the kitchen to a busy Tess hovering over a full layout of breakfast with eggs, toast, sausage and fresh squeezed orange juice. Daniel sat at the bar with his head down and nothing on the plate in front of him.

"Help yourself Daniel."

Daniel lifted his head and Kate saw his unsettling eyes, their deep dark blue in unobstructed living color this time. The thought crossed her mind that he was really easy to look at but more towards the pretty side for a guy. His face had a haunting intensity to it for someone so young. She could understand why Tess was attracted to him.

Daniel pushed his plate to Tess. "Thanks, I'll just have some eggs. I don't eat much usually."

"Yeah, I can see that. If you want to do well in school you'll have to start eating a good breakfast."

“Daniel isn't in school, Mom. He's a musician.”

“Yeah, I play just about every night. I don't make very much--right now. But I can pay you something for staying here if you want.”

Kate cringed at the fact that Daniel wasn't in school. She internally kicked herself for assuming again. Of course he wasn't in school. Tess said he was a runaway.

“*Damn it, you walked right into that one,*” she thought to herself.

She hated how sometimes in her zeal to help others she forgot to pry out all the important facts. She suspected not being in school probably just gave him more time to get into trouble. She pictured him lying around all day doing nothing and the kind of influence he would be on Tess.

“I know you probably think since you aren't living at home anymore, you don't need an education. Nothing could be further from the truth.”

“Mom.”

Kate gave Tess the zip it look and continued.

“I'm not going to say you need to stop playing in your band while you live here, but during the day you will study for taking the GED.”

“Mom--”

“No, Tess it's okay. I can do that Ms. Hartley.”

“Call me Kate and a few more things for now. I'm sure I'll think of more later, but pretty much Daniel, any rule that applies to Tess also applies to you, except her curfew. I know you will need to be out later if you are playing, but I want you here precisely after shows and not a minute later. I'm always up late anyway, so I'll let you in. Also and most important, I will be living in this house too and I don't want to feel uncomfortable in it. So you two will keep your hands off each other. If Tess is the one for you, Daniel, you can wait. And the same goes for you Tess. If any of these main rules are broken just once I will call Child Protection. Do both of you understand?”

“Yes, Kate.”

Tess elbowed Daniel with a snicker.

“Suck up.”

“Tess.”

“I know, Mom. I understand.”

“Now that we have all the rules out-of-the-way, are you guys up for a little road trip?”

“See, I told you Daniel, You are so random, Mom.”

“I want to see the old cottage you were talking about, Tess.”

“I've spent enough time there. I'll just hang out here if you don't mind.”

“Yeah...that's okay Daniel, I understand.”

The road out to the cottage was shaded completely with old oak trees that joined from above to create a natural tunnel. At the end of the lane, Kate could see nothing but weeds she could measure in feet.

“Are you sure this is it?”

Tess looked around.

“Yeah, I've only come out here this way a couple times because you can't see the house from the road. So I know this is it.”

Kate got out of the car and saw to the left the remnants of a large garden also unkempt. She breathed in deep and took in the blended scent of both floral and other strange herbs. To the right, she finally saw a small stone cottage almost hidden in the background behind all manner of overgrown native plants.

“Wow, this place is absolutely beautiful. It's like something from a painting.”

“Yeah, I guess,” Tess said unimpressed.

“Wanna see inside?”

“That would be trespassing, Tess.”

“So is this, we are standing on their property.”

“Yeah, but going inside the house is a different thing completely.”

“I know you didn't come all the way out here just to walk around on the outside. I'll stand outside and watch for anyone driving up if it makes you feel better.”

“Okay, maybe for just a few minutes.”

Tess grabbed Kate's hand. “Come over here, there's an open window on the side.”

Kate followed her and reluctantly climbed inside. She felt the urge to cough as soon as the dust flew up when her feet hit the floor. It had nearly the same kind of decor as Natasha's house. Antiques everywhere with one exception, by the fireplace;

something drawn on the floor had been smeared away either by Sara, Daniel or two years of time. To the back of the forgotten symbol was a large black console table with a red silk runner down the middle. A large box resembling a chest with a latch sat on top. Kate opened the box to find a mortar and pestle, several chalices, and a dagger. There was an indentation to the sides in the purple velvet of the box where she was sure the book of shadows would have fit on top perfectly. Kate smiled to herself with the confirmation, the tools of the craft. It was all she needed to see. She glanced at the fireplace as she turned to leave. Her hand went to her heart with shock. The letter K appeared on a dusty mirror above the hearth. She stood frozen as KATE was written with an unseen hand.

Kate whispered, "Sara?"

"Mom," Tess whispered from the window.

"What is taking you so long?"

Kate couldn't answer. Tess climbed inside the window and looked up at the mirror.

"Geez Mom, first rule of trespassing. Um, don't write your name on shit."

Tess smeared KATE away in the dust of the mirror and took her hand while she stood motionless.

"You okay?"

Tess's voice made her snap back to reality.

"Yeah, fine."

"Let's go then."

Kate was climbing into the car when she heard a rustle in the weeds behind her. She stopped in her tracks.

"Ssssh," Kate whispered to Tess.

"What? I don't hear anything, come on Mom. Let's go."

"Meow."

A gray cat was making brisk circles around Kate's one leg that hadn't made it into the car. She stooped down to take a closer look at it. She pet its head while clumps of fur stuck to her hand. She picked up its claws and retracted them. They had been worn down to nubs. She felt its belly. It was mostly hanging fur but no meat. Kate checked the collar around its neck. No tag. It looked as if it had been trying to fend for itself for some time. Faced with her weakness for taking in strays again, she

remembered something she had read in Sara's grimoire. She lifted the cat up high and looked into its eyes. The cat stared back purring in her outstretched hand.

Tess came around to her side of the car. Great, Kate thought to herself. There was no way she was leaving the cat there now.

“Aww, it's a kitty. I've been out here tons of times and never saw a cat,” Tess said stroking the gray cats head as it head butted her hand for more attention.

Kate didn't know why she was dreading the inevitable question from Tess.

“Can we keep her?” Tess begged.

Kate responded with a deep breath, placing the cat in the back seat.

On the drive back to their house the cat was completely silent. It didn't move. She sat in the middle of the back seat and stared at Kate when she looked back at it in the rear view mirror. When they arrived, Tess grabbed the cat and ran inside with her.

“I hope you like cats, Daniel,” Tess said throwing the cat into his lap.

The cat began to purr and rub against Daniel's face.

“She sure likes you.” Tess laughed.

“What's its name?” Daniel said moving his face back and spitting out fuzz.

“I dunno, me and Mom just found her out at the O'Duinn place,” Tess said with a shrug.

“We'll call her Shadow,” Kate said.

Chapter 17 - Legacy

Sara O'Duinn, Grimoire Entry, 30th October, 2008 - Sorin wasn't far from Tasha's mind since entering her dreams. On the eve of their meeting, her thoughts drifted to him in my midst. He thought human attachments usually became a problem. This one though, was particularly bothersome to him because it was a connection with the family O'Duinn. Why did he cross our path at least once a century? My family had knowledge of the Children of Psyon. We multiplied and spread through the world like rabbits or he would have put a swift end to our line long ago. A gold pocket watch on the bed with his other belongings reflected the light from the window onto the wall reminding Sorin of the last O'Duinn who pursued him.

The place was New York City. The time was just after the turn of the century. Sorin was enamored of New York and the sheer numbers he could feed on at any time of the night. Dr. Christopher O'Duinn was a psychiatrist who slaved away in the hell hole that was the Fairview Public Asylum. The doctor discovered among his patients a rising rate of catatonia. He was experimenting with a therapy called past life regression. When his recovering patients were in a regressed state, he was able to retrieve their memories of Psyon attacks. He was about to publish his findings, which to most in the scientific community would have been laughable at best. It was a risk Sorin was not willing to take, however. He decided to pay him a visit. Sorin entered the regression study and met with the psychiatrist.

"Mr. uh...Artis Miller you said?" said the doctor.

Immigrants were looked upon as a lesser lot. The old world name of Sorin Ladislov tended to illicit suspicion. He used a more Americanized name in those days. Everyone hiding from something in New York did.

"Yes, Doctor," Sorin replied, his inner smirk begging to emerge.

"Very good, I want you to picture the place you long for the most, the place you would return to if you had the chance," he said in a calm measured voice. "Drifting-- drifting there now with ease. Are you in this place?"

“Yes,” he replied.

“Who am I speaking to now?” O’Duinn questioned.

“Artis Miller,” he replied.

O’Duinn took a deep breath rolling his eyes.

“Artis, now I would like you to drift away from this life. Drifting away from your body...drifting. You are now away from this life, traveling...moving closer to a time before.”

“Yes,” he replied.

He leaned into Sorin to stab him with a straight pin evaluating his hypnotic response. He didn’t move or flinch.

“Who is here now? What is your name?”

“Artis Miller,” he replied.

He adjusted himself in his chair leaning over Sorin with a renewed interest.

“Describe your dress and what do you see around you Artis?”

“I am wearing sackcloth britches and a shirt made of the same, the clothing of a prisoner. A mob of people, they surround my Genevieve. She is bound to a stake with a fire beneath. There are too many, I do not know how to save her,” Sorin replied.

“You are far from her now...you feel nothing, but can see everything in a haze around you. Can you tell me what year this is Artis?” he questioned, his interest rising.

“1307,” Sorin replied with one eye a miniscule slit open to view his response.

“Not possible,” he replied under his breath. “Artis I want you to leave this place now. You will remain in this life and drift to a time later in this same existence. Do you understand?” he commanded, his voice shaky with anticipation.

“Yes,”

“Who am I speaking with now?” asked the doctor.

“Artis Miller.”

“Yes, Good...Tell me Artis what clothing do you wear now?” he questioned.

“I wear the clothing of a Troubadour; I play my guitar and sing-- and I am hungry.”

He smiled at Sorin’s honesty. “What surrounds you Artis?”

“I am in a great hall. A hall made of stone. There are many people dressed richly dancing in front of me. I am but one performing in honor the celebration of marriage. My guitar and

my voice singing, they sound the best I have ever heard. The Princess, she listens intently smiling down at me while I sit at her feet playing a favorite lyric.”

“At the feet of a Princess, yet you are hungry?” he asked.

“Yes, she is beautiful and she is human. Her heart beats within me,” Sorin replied lustfully.

“What is the name of this Princess? The one who’s feet you sit beneath?”

“Her Royal Highness, Catalina, Princess of Wales,” Sorin replied.

“In what year do you sit at the feet of this Princess?” he asked.

“1501.”

“You say her heart beats within you. What of your heart?” he questioned with a certain insistence.

“Mine is silent, hers is to me a chorus of angels. My instinct tells me she has the essence of a Queen. If I can be alone with her...to feed, she will sustain me for some time to come. I must-”

He sat to the edge of his chair.

“Yes, you must what?” He continued his prodding.

“How do you feed from Catalina?”

“She is taken with me, leading me to the bedchamber of her own accord. I put my hand to her mouth to soften the screams when she sees the light from my eyes enter hers. Yes-- she is more exquisite than I had imagined-- I cannot stop,” Sorin replied.

“--What do you gain from...this feeding?” he interrupted.

“The essence of her, the energy that sustains me-- everything she is, and everything she was.”

“Yes, Artis now you will drift-- drifting to later in your life. Where are you now?”

“I am in a grand manor in England, the home of my companion.”

“A companion-- You have a family?” he questioned.

“No. She is my chosen one. She is dying.”

“Do you feed from your companion?” he asked.

“Yes. I feed only from her.”

“Artis, you will drift back to me, back to this office. You will awaken at the snap of my fingers. Do you understand?” he said, buying himself some time.

He saw the doctor on the phone calling his paid goons in white suits to collect him. O’Duinn mumbled to someone on the phone and hung up with a confident smile.

“You have returned to my office and will now awaken,” he said with a snap of his finger.

“Artis Miller, I find it quite curious...you are the first I have regressed who has no past lives. May I ask how you feel now, after our session?”

Sorin knew all that he heard. Playing his game, he answered with the proper human response. “I feel very well, relieved in some way. I do not know why.”

O’Duinn moved to his desk sat down and put on a different pair of spectacles to scrutinize Sorin further. He scratched with a pen to paper for some time until he glared at him and picked up the phone. Beads of sweat collected on his forehead. His call for help went unanswered. In a last attempt to protect himself, the doctor slipped a syringe into his pocket. Sorin pushed his patience further.

“I am curious to know what you wrote about me on your paper, Doctor O’Duinn.”

“I apologize if it was not explained to you; the data is now the property of the study...It is interesting though, this one life of yours has been going on for quite some time. You described events from the past with astonishing detail. I suspect if I were to fact check them I would find you are correct, wouldn't I Mr. Miller? You also alluded to feeding from “humans” as if you are not one. So either I am to believe you have lived in this one lifetime for well over 600 years or you are quite mad, Mr. Miller.”

Sorin moved to the front of his desk and ripped his spectacles from his smug face with one wave of his hand. They hit the floor glass first shattering. A man of science, it was not long before O’Duinn realized his mistake. He ran stumbling for the door stopping midway when his legs buckled from underneath him.

“How surprised are you to learn it is the former of your beliefs which is correct Dr. O’Duinn?” Sorin said grabbing him by the neck at the ground, raising him against the wall into view. O’Duinn didn’t respond, only stared at him wide eyed flailing his arms in escape.

“I suspect not surprised at all,” Sorin said for him, the Psyon hunger lighting red in his eyes.

The anger inside of Sorin at his arrogance made him wish to kill the Doctor. But he didn’t. Sorin instead thought a stay in his own den of nightmares would suit him better. He fed from him almost to the point of death. At the end of it he lay at Sorin’s feet his body convulsing. A string of slobber made its way from his mouth to the floor. When the orderlies finally entered the room, Sorin wore O’Duinn’s clothing and he wore Sorin’s. His hair was slicked back and he wore another pair of the Doctor’s spectacles.

He pointed to the newly blithering idiot O’Duinn on the floor. “How did this patient make his way to my office? Please see to Mr. Miller immediately,” Sorin commanded.

The simpleton orderlies looked at O’Duinn, their faces red with embarrassment. They apologized profusely to Sorin for their imagined oversight while placing the Doctor in a wheelchair. Sorin handed the paperwork he had so thoughtfully written to the orderlies and walked out into the bustle of the New York night; a bit wiser about how he should feed to stay hidden. Dr. O’Duinn recovered although he languished at the Fairview Public Asylum for many years. It seemed the good Doctor was then diagnosed with a neurosis in which he believed he was a doctor of psychiatry.

Chapter 18 - A Guardian

“You're not supposed to be in here.”

“What? I can too. I'm helping you move in.”

“My guitar and some clothes?”

“Yeah.” Tess laughed. A sneaky grin lit her face.

“Mom won't be home for another hour.”

Daniel shifted his fake sad eyes to her.

“I can't remember the last time I slept in a bed.”

“I thought you said-- Okay, okay. I get it. I'll go downstairs,” Tess said, leaving the room with a wistful look to Daniel, reluctantly closing the door to the guest room.

Daniel sat at the end of the bed. He let himself fall back into the middle of it. The goose down formed two soft channels beside him. He thought about the time he had left. At least it would be spent in comfort instead of in hiding and constantly watching his back. Daniel closed his eyes. The astral plane opened to him without any effort to summon it. He stared in awe at how it was more vivid than he remembered. It enticed him so that he didn't realize until it was too late that he was under attack. A stream of conscious blue captured his in one fluid moment. His strength was already so depleted he could not fight when it joined with him. A serene pleasure washed over his mind and body. One so calming, he no longer wanted to find the strength to resist. A beautiful woman appeared to him dressed in a gown from a time past. The dress was a blue as deep as the stream of her consciousness. He gave in to her, allowing her blue glow to entwine with his.

“Your instinct is correct. You cannot survive feeding only on the ambient of the humans much longer. And Tess cannot be yours...unless you wish her to be what we are,” she said.

“No...I want to die. I'm not afraid of it anymore,” Daniel replied.

“Spoken with the true conviction of a warrior-- I am Lorelle. I come to you now because we have something in common. I also was not a chosen one. By now you know that humans return to life more than once?”

“Yes,” Daniel said.

“It is not the same for us. We were given the power of the Psyon by mistake. Our souls are stained. We are no longer accepted into the realm of the human dead. And neither are we favored by the Psyon. In fact, there are two elders very close to you now. You must feed soon from another willing soul or you will enter the frenzy allowing them to find and destroy you.”

“I didn’t ask for this.” Daniel thought, forgetting she would hear.

“Yes, I know-- Daniel. I can help you. There will come a time when you must feed from a willing soul--”

Daniel became unsure of her intentions. He remembered the first and last time he fed. He didn't want it then and he wasn't sure about it now. He gathered up all his remaining strength to break away from Lorelle's grip on his mind. His body slammed back through the membrane of human reality as though he were spat out.

Covered in sweat, he rose from the bed. Daniel could hear Tess's heartbeat ringing in his ears as loud as if she was standing next to him. He felt his hunger as it spread from the core of him to his eyes. He couldn't stop himself as he descended the stairs to stand in front of her. He couldn't hear her as she looked at him with the emerald threads of his eyes almost reaching her.

“Daniel!” he heard Tess scream from a distance.

The vibrations of the terror in her voice to his body were enough to stop the impulse of the frenzy to his mind. He fell to his knees gripping his head in his hands. Tess ran over to him taking his hand and helping him to stand up. He dropped his hand away from hers abruptly.

“You can't touch me, it's not safe,” Daniel explained with a gasp continuing, “I have to feed... now...Tess. Think fast...I need a place with a lot of people.”

“The mall.”

“You have to help me get there. It's too late for me to--”

“--I'll get your car,” Tess said.

Tess and Daniel entered the mall and immediately Daniel was drawn to the Cinema Six. A horror flick was playing there. Daniel could sense the range of emotions from the theater even as Tess hurriedly paid for their seats. Once inside, he motioned to her to go up to the front and take a seat. He didn't know if she

would see. She refused and there was no time to argue. As soon as he sat down the streams of the collective hit his center like the rush of electricity from a Tesla coil. Tess sat next to him mesmerized, watching each colored bolt of light as they passed through him one after the other. It was the only time he could remember her being speechless. Although she couldn't talk, Daniel could hear her mind speak each question.

“Yes, I feel better,” Daniel answered the first.

“No, I didn't just kill all those people,” He answered the second and most bizarre.

“No you don't! I wouldn't wish this on anyone. Especially you,” He answered the third and most ridiculous looking at her incredulously.

“And you can read minds,” Tess blurted as soon as she could talk.

“Just yours right now,” Daniel said.

An elderly man leaned over looking at them with curiosity at the weirdness of their conversation.

Tess giggled.

Daniel took Tess's hand in his. “Come on, let's get out of here.”

Kate clapped shut Sara's grimoire. The warning of the translated words before her in Sara's account of Sorin's attack was clear. Time and again the Psyon went after anyone suspected with knowledge of the Children of Psyon. The means was discretionary, either by madness or death. That was, if they existed. The lure of an untold story proved too enticing for Kate. She had little more to go on than a grimoire penned by a missing allegedly insane woman and a chilling warning from her friend. It was time to find living and breathing proof of them. Part of her didn't think she would find anything at all. The other part that just had to know if they were real, hoped she didn't.

She walked alone to the middle of town. Kate retraced Sorin's steps just as he described how he had found the club from the message board. The hour was late enough that the streets were clear of people except for a small group gathered in front of a glass door painted black from the inside.

“You'll have to do better than that if you expect to get in,” a woman's voice said to Kate.

Kate turned to look behind her.

“It's my first time here. I'm Kate.”

Kate was awestruck at the woman standing behind her. She was small in stature yet her confident presence commanded respect. Kate found a much needed comfort looking into her eyes. She knew instantly by the waves of her blonde hair and the calm she felt around her who she was.

“Now listen closely. I don't have the strength to appear to you much longer.”

Kate nodded yes.

“Your essence will appear black to them. It is a wall your subconscious has constructed to block them. It will illicit their distrust very quickly. You must not be afraid to show your true self. Calm yourself and imagine Tess is with you.”

Kate brought Tess to her mind. It was easier than she thought it would be.

“Yes. Good. This is what you will show them and nothing more. Take care the black does not return. Do you understand?”

Kate nodded yes. With that Sara dissipated into a transparent image and finally into a mist.

Kate turned to see a tall black man at the front of the line surveying everyone and speaking to each as he moved to them. He whittled down the crowd one by one, letting very few into the club. Finally he stood in front of Kate. His towering height intimidated her. She repeated Tess's name over and over to herself.

“Your key?” he bellowed.

“Sorin said I should come here,” Kate replied.

He looked her up and down then smiled. “I haven't seen Sorin for a while and you don't seem to be his sort of lady.”

“I know,” Kate stammered. “He said I should come here to find someone else like him,” Kate smiled.

He nodded in agreement.

“I'm sorry but without a key I can't let you in. If you were meant to be here, Sorin would have given you his key,” the man said turning to walk away.

“Cyprus,” Kate said, guessing in desperation.

The man turned to her with a certain amount of surprise. "What?"

"I remember now, he said the key is Cyprus," Kate stammered.

"Well then, come with me," he responded reluctantly, leading her to the door.

He said to her with his deep voice, "This being your first time here-- I strongly suggest you seat yourself close to the door."

Kate felt the immediate urge to run with his warning. She struggled to contain it and think only of Tess. What had she gotten herself into? It was more real than she could have imagined and there was no way to turn back now. To raise their suspicion would have consequences worse than if she just went through with it. She walked past the bouncer without hesitation and sat three seats down from the door at the bar. She could feel and hear the beat of the metal music pulsing through her body. Kate felt the pull of it, the anger in it. She wanted to experience it. The throng of people behind her didn't allow her to see anything when she turned to look towards the stage. She turned her chair to the bar and ordered a shot. Downing it, she hoped it would give her the liquid courage she needed to force herself through the crowd.

The moment Daniel waited for tonight was near. Everyone at the stage was whipped up into a trance of frenzy. He could see all eyes on him anticipating the chorus of the song they loved. The part they all knew. He watched as their lips moved the same as his, singing the lyrics back to him without one missed step. They made it so easy. Their masks of the day melted to the floor in front of him. Their will was his. He played his guitar with the same abandon they gave him. The notes lingered with his voice at the end of the song. The crowd roared in admiration. He slid his guitar to the side of his body, opened his arms wide, tilted his head back and drank them all in at that precise moment.

Each essence flowed into him one after the other renewing him with every pass. Daniel took a step back from the force of their sheer willingness to join with him. Over the crowd, the air mingled their stream of consciousness into a cloud of mixed

color. He saw each particle of light first mingling then bouncing off of one another to become whole again and find him. He went to the back of the stage and leaned on the amplifier to gain his balance again at what he thought was the end of it. One last stream passed through him while his back was turned. He felt a familiarity to it that sickened him. He thought at once it must be Tess. He told her time and again she could never watch him play. They went to her junior prom that night and he left her sound asleep at the house. Or so he thought. Daniel couldn't bear the thought of her deceiving him.

He turned and shielded his eyes from the intensity of the piercing lights above the stage. In the corner of his eye, he saw someone he knew. He stopped, dropping his head back in disbelief.

“Kate?” he said covering the mike.

“Daniel?” Kate said. No sooner had she spoken than her legs buckled from underneath and she fell to the floor, the crowd forming a mound over her.

Daniel signaled the band to play on. The music began while he jumped down from the stage, parted the hungry crowd and picked Kate up to carry her out of the club. He couldn't remember the last time his anger was so out of control. He dared all takers bumping into them in a forceful rage. He could feel their wishful thinking while he exited the door with an unconscious Kate.

Daniel heard Kate come around on the drive home. He didn't know how much she saw. He wasn't sure who she talked to while she was there. He didn't speak. He thought it better to wait for her reaction. She was silent for a while looking out the side window, pressing her head into the glass.

“They do exist. I can't believe this, but I saw it. You fed from me. I felt it. And you are one of them,” Kate said shaking her head, looking out of the window.

“Why were you there Kate?” Daniel asked.

“Thank you for what you did,” Kate said. “But please tell me you haven't--”

“--Fed from Tess?” Daniel interrupted. “What you saw tonight is how I keep myself from her and you,” Daniel said.

Kate sighed a heavy breath and fell into a deep sleep.

Daniel carried her into the house, all the while contemplating if it was time to leave Tess and Kate. But somehow he just couldn't. He didn't know how or if he could help them at all, but he wanted to try. They were the closest thing to family he had now.

Chapter 19 – All Hallows Eve

Sara O’Duinn, Grimoire Entry, 31st October, 2008 - The alarm clock in her head wasn’t functioning. Tasha woke up usually around 7:00 am every morning. Sometimes she woke up earlier on this day, her favorite of all. All Hallows Eve in New Haven. It was best place to be on her favorite of all days. The town doubled in size. There were so many new people to meet and to talk to. Even with the twinge of a migraine starting, she wouldn’t miss it or let a headache spoil it. She took a pill and headed out towards the door. Checking the computer screen, there was a message. It would have to wait. She looked in the mirror and smiled remembering something from a dream. She thought a memory like that would allow her to handle even the inevitable Nori razzing for being late.

When Tasha arrived, late beyond belief he was at the door of the auction house, playfully tapping his foot and looking at his watch.

She knew he was kidding. Yet she still felt the need to assert her usual morning self. “Yeah I know, bite me. I’m not really feeling the best, but I’m here.”

“Hey no problem, it’s just looky-loos right now anyway. Geez, take a pill,” he said.

“I did. And it’s not helping,” she replied.

She moved to her usual position at the jewelry case. To further annoy her, Nori followed. “So, do you have any big plans for tonight?”

“No, just the usual, I’ll be passing out candy to the kids. It’s just about the only time you see children anymore,” she said laughing at her pathetic life.

Nori grinned.

“Well, once you are done with that exciting activity, there’s some roasted pumpkin seeds and Young Frankenstein at my place.”

Just as she was about to take Nori up on his offer her train of thought stopped dead on the tracks. She caught a dark figure in the corner of her eye. She turned to see a man in a jet black leather jacket. His long hair matched the jacket’s color and

shine. He was perusing the gun case at the far end of the store. The style of his clothes was so distinctively different from any of the locals she knew instantly he was from somewhere else; somewhere far away. She supposed a place vastly more interesting than her neck of the woods. She was deep in thought about the possibilities when Nori noticed her pretending not to notice a customer and grinned from ear to ear.

“Okay, I guess I can take this one,” he said with an obvious false start to walk over to the stranger.

“You do and you die,” she replied under her breath.

She cleared her throat and threw on her best confident smile. “Is there anything I can help you with?” she asked, though in her self-conscious state this sounded completely stupid to her as soon as she said it.

“Yes, I have some items I would like to have appraised,” he replied, looking down at her.

His face struck her as classically good looking. Sharp features and a masculine square jaw. She thought his eyes were the most striking of all. They had a bright smile of their own. If you couldn't see the rest of his face you would still know he was smiling. So deep brown it was almost impossible to see where the center blackness began or ended. The kind Tasha could easily fall into the depths of. And she did, almost forgetting to respond to his request.

“I can help you with an appraisal.” she remembered.

She moved behind the counter while he took out several items wrapped in handkerchiefs. He moved a handkerchief to reveal the first. It was a heavy gold ring with a large iridescent black stone in the middle of 13 smaller stones that appeared to be diamonds.

“This black stone I'm not familiar with, it's striking. Do you know anything about it?”

“I was told it is a Boji stone, it is said to give the owner the power to heal,” he replied.

“The diamonds around it are at least 2 carats each. I would say about \$5000 for the ring.”

The second piece was a small gold box with precious gems arranged in a diamond on the top. Tasha opened the lid to the

box and found a small inscription on the inside. *“For my beloved, who has so eloquently translated me to the ages.”*

“This was payment to a relative of mine from a woman who was very happy with her self-portrait; he was an artist by trade.”

“Quite a pricey fee he had,” she smiled.

“The gold is 24 carat, and because of the weight I can tell it's not plated. This is gold through and through. The gems are 5 carats each and all of mined origin. I would estimate this piece at \$25,000.”

The last was something she had only read about. It was a necklace in silver with a small pendant delicate and intricate in its design. She noticed there was a small latch at the top and opened it. There was a swab still inside that smelled of a pungent odor. It was for a Victorian lady of means to be revived after a fainting episode.

“This was a personal item and came from the Victorian era. I would date this at about 1885. It is made of platinum. Because of the rarity I would say about \$50,000 for this one. May I ask how you came about these pieces?”

“Yes, of course.” He explained while gathering the items and returned them to his inside coat pocket. “The ring and necklace were passed down in my family. My mother told me these belonged to my grandmother three generations ago. The box is more contemporary. It was probably passed down in the late 1800s.”

“Well you have quite a fortune in your pocket. This time of the year unfortunately brings the pickpockets to our streets. We have safety deposit boxes on the premises. I recommend the use of one during your stay.”

“Thank you. But I have a safe at the hotel,” he replied.

“Yes, that's a good idea too. Our premises are monitored 24/7 by security cameras. She pointed to his image in the close circuit monitor above them. “We also have a state of the art alarm system. We are given top priority in response by local law enforcement.”

He smiled and removed the handkerchiefs from his inside coat pocket.

“I suppose you may keep these here for tonight.”

The accidental touch of his hand on hers felt like a surge of energy without the static shock. Tasha looked up finally with the courage to meet his dark eyes again.

“You know-- I can't tell you the last time I saw antiques from the turn of the century in such good condition.”

He smiled and leaned in across the counter closer to speak confidentially to her. She whispered smiling back at him.

“Sorry...nice try though. There is no way Nori won't hear you.”

He gave a slow look down at Nori and turned back to her full on with those eyes and the warmest of smiles.

“Would you join me for dinner tonight? I would enjoy the company of someone who shares my interest of-- a more refined time.”

Locked in his deep brown gaze, Tasha remembered the flickering warmth of the white candle and the anguished wish she pushed into it so many nights alone. She decided in the moment to accept the invitation from the beautiful man on her favorite of all days.

“Give me a minute. I'll see what I can do.”

Nori was silently surveying the conversation. He gave her an uncharacteristic look of concern from his corner. His eyes released daggers meant for the stranger as he left the store to wait for her.

“It looks like I do have plans tonight,” she said, beaming.

“Come on. What do you know about this guy?” Nori questioned.

“I know that he is definitely more interesting than the last three months I've spent playing RPG's.”

“Okay, well you have my cell number.”

“Yes, Nori and I also know how to dial 911.”

“Oh, well I feel so much better now,” He said, rolling his eyes with a sigh.

“Well I guess I'm good with closing if you want to get out of here.”

“Thank you Nori, you're the best!” she said, hugging him then taking a step back to raise the corners of his mouth into a smile with her fingers.

“Yeah, you're all thank you and hugs right now...just don't let me find you on the side of the road in sixteen pieces rotting in a garbage bag,” he replied.

“Oh, nice,” She replied, shrinking at the visual. Tasha took a sideways glance at Nori as she left. She thought his concerns were valid. She had them for herself too. But she also knew she had to take a chance sometime.

She purposefully guided him through town towards the harbor, one of her favorite places for an impromptu third degree. Nori's last words made her a bit suspicious of being with a stranger. She thought the most public place in town would help her to relax and enjoy the moment.

“So what brings you to New Haven on...All Hallows Eve?”

“I travel often, something told me to be here, tonight. I have never been here. It is strange though, I feel as though I have been here before.”

“Yes,” she laughed. “It has that effect on people...Your accent is different from most of the European tourists I have heard. I can't quite place it. I don't get out of the states much though, so that's probably why.”

“You should, the world has much to see and experience. I am originally from Prague and more recently the island of Cyprus. There was a time when my ancestors owned the island, but their funds were strained. The island is no longer their property. It is a beautiful place with many countries in line to claim it. I travel most in Europe. It is probably the reason for my...way of speaking.”

She watched a calm overtake him when he related his home to her. Finally, Tasha began to calm down too. He turned to her and in a fluid gesture took her arm in his to walk with him.

“Well, I would like to show you the best of my home tonight.”

He smiled looked up and drew her arm closer to his.

“I believe I have already found the best of your home.”

“*Yes!*” Tasha thought.

There was an attraction and not just a lonely man who didn't want to eat dinner alone. Postponed by her excitement at the moment, it crossed her mind she'd completely forgotten any semblance of manners as she often did in social situations when

she was flustered or nervous. She forgot to ask his name or introduce herself for that matter.

“I’m sorry I forgot to mention my name, its Natasha, to my friends, Tasha.”

“Tasha, it is a beautiful name. Mine is Sorin.”

The best location for a dinner date was on the harbor. There would be plenty of activity there and just private enough to have a decent conversation without being interrupted by curious neighbor chit chat. They walked down the cobblestone past the lit jack o’ lanterns in the town square. She could already see the inquisitive glances passed their way from everyone who walked by. When they reached Sage on Water Street, there was already a line out of the door. A quick peek around the corner revealed the covered deck wasn't nearly as crowded as the restaurant. A glass of wine would be in order before they began dinner, if only to calm her further. Inside her head, she had all the usual alarms going off. But tonight she didn't listen. Tasha thought she deserved this and to just let go for once and enjoy it.

He chose a bottle of Pinot Noir to continue their conversation with. Not only was it her favorite wine, it is almost impossible for her to refuse a glass of it. Shortly after having a second, she was feeling no pain. She practically handled the two person lobster dinner he ordered all on her own. Tasha thought then it was time to start talking so that she didn't polish off the entire meal on her own.

She looked up to see him smiling with amazement at how much she'd eaten. “No need to be shy; eat as much as you want.”

“I know, right. I skipped lunch today because of a headache. It’s gone now. So I’m a bit more hungry than usual,” she explained with a slight blush.

“It is good to see such a small person with a healthy appetite,” he replied.

He smiled and leaned forward, his black hair moving with him.

“How did you come to live in here in New Haven?”

“I followed my roommate Sara here like a lost little puppy after college. She became a close friend of mine and I lived with her for a while when she inherited her family home. Her business, the auction house really took off and she asked me to work for her. Then I found an old home to restore that I just couldn’t pass

up. That was about 10 years ago. I've lived here ever since. In fact, I think you more than anyone would really appreciate my house, would you like to see it?" she blurted the question without thinking it through, then kicked herself internally for inviting a stranger to her home.

He seemed a bit surprised she would invite him to her home.

"Absolutely," he replied, a polite smile returning to his lips.

On the walk to her neighborhood children dressed in Halloween costume filled the streets. They weaved in sugar filled frenzy from house to house. Reaching her home she opened the door expecting to see Alex waiting there as usual. No Alex to be found.

"I love Empire Vic's. Most people find them too institutional, to me they are comforting. They just say home." she said, motioning him into the entry.

He walked in further toward the parlor and rested a hand on the staircase. "Yes, you have returned her to a great lady," he said, turning to her with an impressed smile.

He led the tour continuing into the parlor.

"And you kept the original parlor, very nice."

His silhouette was lit by the moonlight. Following, she celebrated silently to herself. Tasha sat on the sofa still wondering how it was she wasn't alone again. He stood in front of her his hands moving across the intricate carving of the mantle. Tasha watched his face in profile in awe. She couldn't believe someone so perfect was giving her his undivided attention. He loved her home and was interested in antiques. While her mind began sorting through the flurry of questions and the why of the moment, he moved close to her then knelt. Stroking the side of her face with the back of his hand he looked into her eyes. A chill spread throughout her body making each hair stand on end in unison. Then she noticed Sorin wince as if he had taken a quick sharp pain.

He touched his forehead to hers and spoke.

"Thank you for your company tonight, Tasha. I had hoped to continue our conversation. As much as I would like to remain here with you...it is time that I leave."

Breathless and surprised at how attracted she was to Sorin, Tasha couldn't manage a response quick enough. "No...I mean, I wish you would stay...in my guest room tonight."

He rose to his feet and backed away from her, his head down speaking as if some pain had taken his breath away. "Tasha...I should return to the hotel."

He turned from her to enter the foyer. She followed in disbelief. Why couldn't she have just let the evening end? Had she ruined everything? Then Tasha began to wonder if he really was in some kind of pain.

"Sorin, are you okay?"

Reaching the door, his body straightened as he turned to face her. His face was lit only by the outside moonlight behind him by two slivers of porch windows. Small luminous red threads of light began to seep from his eyes. The flash of a recent memory suppressed for its intimacy returned to her mind. An instant wave of recognition washed over Tasha. Her chest became tight. Her heartbeat rose into her head and was amplified ten times its normal volume. Abruptly, his eyes returned to normal. Tasha's body was paralyzed as he leaned in to hold her in his arms. His lips touched hers creating an electric surge throughout Tasha's body. A rising curiosity did make her wish she could speak. A million questions came to her mind in an instant, so she thought it was probably a good thing.

He released Tasha slowly first steadying her stance then continued down the walk of her home. "Good Night, Tasha," he said, pausing to turn to her for a moment. He walked away, his image turning to shadow before becoming one with the night.

Chapter 20 - Truth

Tess looked up slowly from her breakfast, “Okay. What is going on? What's wrong, Mom?”

“Why don't you tell me, Tess?” Kate said stern and quiet.

“That's not fair.” Daniel said, slowly shaking his head, “Would you have believed her?”

Tess's face drained of color.

“Mom, you know about Daniel?”

“She was there last night. I don't know how or why,” Daniel replied, glaring at Kate.

“What? How did you find out about the club?” Tess asked Kate.

Kate took a deep breath at finally having to reveal her deception.

“I found a book in the house. It is written in code. I found out how to translate it and read it. A woman named Sara O'Duinn wrote it. A Psyon named Sorin spoke in visions to her and described feeding on a woman at the club,” Kate said.

“Oh, so that's why we had to go out to the O'Duinn place?” Tess said in final recognition.

“You've got to show me the book. I need to know more about them,” Daniel said.

“I don't understand, don't you already know?” Kate asked.

“This happened to me by mistake. The ones who made me didn't know how young I was. I'm not sure, but I think the only reason the Psyon have left me alone so far is so I can get to you,” Daniel said.

“What about Tess?” Kate said, in desperation.

“They know about her, but I think it's you they want.”

“I don't know everything, I haven't translated the whole book yet,” Kate reasoned.

“Good, don't touch it again. Who knows what damage has been done by you reading it and going to the club. Teach me and I'll read it,” Daniel replied.

“You come with me,” Kate said to Daniel.

“Tess, I don't want you anywhere near that book. And we still have a lot to talk about later,” Kate said.

Kate took Daniel to the small room outside of her office.

“Daniel we have to be straight with each other from now on, okay? I have to tell you everything and you have to do the same,” Kate said.

She sat down at the desk and took her notebook from the drawer.

“I’ll try. There are so many things I don’t know. I don’t even know my name. The ones who made me called me Daniel when they were trying to chase me down. I couldn’t remember anything. I couldn’t go home and I didn’t know how to keep on living. Everything I know, I have learned just by experiencing it...except... I don’t know if it was real,” Daniel said with a drop of his head.

“What did you see? They talk about appearing in dreams and the astral plane,” Kate offered.

“I saw a woman. Her name was Lorelle,” Daniel said wistfully.

“Lorelle speaks in the book, she is the one who made Sorin,” Kate remembered.

“I didn’t know if I could trust her,” Daniel said.

“They tried to execute her.” Kate said, thinking aloud.

“Look, here’s what I already have for you to read. We need to translate more when you are done,” Kate said, leaving Daniel alone to get Sara’s grimoire.

Kate entered her office and found everything out-of-place and in disarray. Her personal papers and books were strewn about throughout the room. She went to the hiding place hoping they hadn’t found it. She felt inside, on her face a visible squirm at having to subject her hand to the old cob webs, spider dinner remains and dust again.

“They’re not here. The book and primer are gone.” She thought.

“What? Are you sure?” Daniel said from behind her, scaring her to death.

Kate felt around further back. The dusty void was flat and cold. Her face turned red with the thought of who might have taken them. She couldn’t believe he had the nerve to do it.

“God damn it, why didn’t I lock them up? What was I thinking? Or not thinking. Crap!” Kate said.

“Who do you think took them?” Daniel asked.

“I don’t know for sure, but I have a really good idea.” Kate replied loud with her anger.

“I was trying to find out about Natasha and Sara and told someone about it. His name is Nori Laurent. He was close to them, knew them both and used to work with them. He is so close to Sara's family they asked him to run her business, just in case she came back. She’s been missing for two years. He told me to burn the book.”

“Geez, Kate,” Daniel said. “You're right about the crap part. He probably burned it himself.”

“Maybe not--- Maybe there is still time. I remember he said no one knows why Natasha and Sara are missing. At first, I thought he was threatening me. But maybe he really doesn't know either and wanted to find out why,” Kate reasoned.

“Well it's not like he will have it out just lying around. How will we get it back?”

“I don't know, yet...I could tell he is still grieving. He needs to open up about the whole thing. He can't talk to anyone who lived around here when it happened. The police thought he was responsible for a while. He lost two close friends. I've got to get him to open up to me somehow,” Kate replied.

Chapter 21 – A Lingering Presence

Sara O'Duinn, Grimoire Entry, 1st November, 2008 - When I didn't hear from Tasha, I went out to the auction house to retrieve the walking canes before they were auctioned off to some unfortunate new owners. The unsettling residue of an unwelcome presence assaulted my senses when I opened the door to my shop. There was a slight ringing in my ears underneath indistinguishable whispering. The whispers weren't loud enough to squelch the ringing. It served no other purpose than to annoy me further and draw me to the source. I followed the ringing to the back of the shop where the rows of safety deposit boxes were housed. Quickly sliding out the aurally offending box the ringing and whispering was silenced. The intense quiet around me was almost more disconcerting than the previous situation. I expected to see the other walking canes but the box calling me didn't contain them. The items contained within were interesting by their condition in antiquity alone. I found a gold trinket box, gold ring and silver necklace. The gold trinket box would be a good starting point as it might have at some time secured all of the effects. Wrapping my hands and then my mind around the box, I opened a window to the untold story of its past. The vision showed me first an old woman commissioning an artisan to create the box as a gift for a loved one. She appeared to be very old. Stepping into her being there was a sense of the health of a young woman. But her will to live was drained somehow. She was in a bed surrounded by the wealth of an English manor home. Standing at her bed side was the tall and dark figure of a man in Victorian dress.

"It is a cruel price to pay...to enjoy your charms my love," she said, reaching for his hand.

He smiled a wide grin lowering his head, taking her hand in his. "We did enjoy them, and many times over."

She smiled weakly back to him.

"Yes, I have no regret. I feel I have lived enough for ten women."

He moved closer to her taking her hand to his face.

“I am glad to hear it.”

She coughed loudly struggling to speak.

“Our time together draws to a close more quickly than I had prepared for, Sorin. I have appointed you executor of my estate. Please see to it when I am gone.”

He kneeled to be closer to her, speaking in a low confidential whisper.

“My love, I will relinquish power of your estate to your heirs. Surely they will contest such a judgment on their inheritance. I cannot risk the attention it would bring.”

She stroked his hair and smiled in agreement. “Well then, I have some gifts for you. Please take them as either remembrances of me or currency for the journey ahead.”

He shook his head and smiled. “I will keep them always with me, my love.”

The trinket box rolled from her lifeless hand to indent in the softness of the feather bed. I stepped into his perception as the woman's drifts into black. His expression was as blank as his thoughts of her passing. He transferred the box from her death bed to his coat pocket. The tale from the box was slowly fading. My hand shaking, I reached for a large ring with a glittering black stone to continue following him. The impression from the ring was choppy. The ring wasn't favored enough to be worn daily.

Through his eyes, I was transported to another time. Such hopelessness and squalor my mind interpreted it as the middle ages. A young woman was crying behind iron bars, disheveled and beaten. A sense of deep sadness and injustice overcame me. Tears involuntarily welled in my eyes as the vision rewound to an earlier time. I saw the same young man in armor engraved with religious symbols. The young woman I had seen previously joined him. She was seduced by him into a romantic overture. I understand as time passed in the vision it was not allowed by their society. I saw the prison surroundings again and a cloaked woman whispering to the soldier. A bargain was accepted. The bargain was not enough to save the young woman. She was bound to a wooden stake with a bonfire burning beneath her. The vision turned to a red door slamming shut. I opened my eyes to see the outline of a man standing outside the glass door

of my shop. A familiar sound penetrated my mind. It was the voice from the night I performed the ritual. His voice bellowed with anger in my head.

“Enough.”

I fired back to his mind.

“What are you?”

He stepped forward pressing his forehead to the glass. The floodlight above the door bathed him in light allowing me to see his face with frightening clarity. He peered at me with a more direct challenge. My eyes were met by the calculated coldness of his stare. The heat of adrenaline rose within me. He built energy around him, wrapping himself in a deep red illuminating glow. A wicked smile slid to fruition on his lips. The threat was no longer an unseen entity but a flesh and blood man. The sight of his power left me so stunned I was unable to stop watching him. Deep red tendrils drifted from his body into the doorway. They seeped through the invisible cracks to seek me out. The fear of witnessing the ease he commanded psychic energy sent me into panic. I ran to the side door pausing first to listen. The quiet of my mind chilled me. The still of the night filled the corridor at the late hour. I opened the door a crack. The door handle was at once ripped from my hand. I tried to turn and run but my feet felt as though they were weighted to the ground. He stood inches from me his hands bracing the jams of the doorway. The ribbons of color streamed from him reaching me with a quick stab. An electrifying pulse of pain filled my body. Something of me, a small stream of blue he took in from my center. Paralyzed, I viewed the deep red pulsing energy encircling his body turn to black. My last conscious thought was of how to protect myself. I focused on a triangle of hot white energy in my mind. He spoke in my head with a flippant tone.

“Your essence and any other of my interest are completely open to me. For one such as I, there are no barriers including your feeble attempts to bind me.”

His words to my mind were the last I remembered when I woke up at Tasha’s desk. I stumbled in a mental fog to the open safe deposit box I had left open when I tried to escape. As I suspected, the items I read earlier were gone. Whether or not the neutral energy I sent out was enough, I couldn’t be sure. Checking the ladies room

mirror, I saw no bruising or visual effects. It could mean he had to leave his attack on me. Placing me in the desk chair was an attempt to make me believe this encounter never happened. I turned my head to the ceiling and delivered a message to his mind.

“I know what you are,” I asserted, grabbing the first phone close to me to call Tasha.

Chapter 22 – From the Ashes

“Good god, Kate. What do I have to do? Get a restraining order?” Nori said after the bells on the door signaled Kate's entry into the antique store.

“Don't pretend you don't know why I'm here, Nori. Give me the book,” Kate said walking up to the counter and extending her hand.

“And I won't press charges against you for breaking, entering and theft,” Kate informed him.

“Haven't you found out how dangerous it is? Why didn't you just destroy the book? I really wish you had.”

“Then you still have it?” Kate asked.

Nori took a deep breath.

“It's in a safety deposit box in the back. I really tried to...but I couldn't destroy it. I had to find out about him the bastard. Look, you've got to stop coming here. I can't talk here. I've pretty much been under surveillance since it happened.”

Kate couldn't believe her luck or her insight into Nori. He did want to talk and she would jump on it.

“Come to my house tonight with the book. There is someone you need to meet,” Kate said.

Nori looked down shaking his head.

“I'd rather not go there Kate.”

“Did you really think it would end with your friends? Just come over with the book and I promise you'll never see me again,” Kate pleaded.

“I can't tonight, but rest assured, you'll get the book back. I don't want anything else to do with this.”

Kate left the antique store and got into her car with the relief of knowing the book was safe and sound. Her comfort was all too brief when Kate remembered she had more damage control to do. Something she'd read from the grimoire about companions took over her mind. In a panic, she checked her watch. It was almost time for Tess to be home from school. She wondered with everything going on at home if Tess had even gone to school. She hit the gas pedal, speeding towards home.

Kate ran into the house, up the stairs and flung the door to Tess's bedroom open. She was sitting on her bed surrounded by books and alone.

"Where's Daniel?" Kate said out of breath.

"I don't know, Mom. I think he's in the guest room. Why?" Tess asked.

"Did you go to school today?" Kate drilled.

"Yeah, I had tests today. It was really hard with everything going on but I did it anyway," Tess said.

Kate sighed with relief and sat on the bed next to Tess.

"We've got to talk. Why did you bring Daniel here?"

Tess's face lit up when she thought about Daniel even before she spoke. Kate's heart sunk. It confirmed her worst suspicions. Kate took Tess's hand to relieve some of the severity of what she had to tell her. Even though she knew it wouldn't help. First love was so powerful. It was all consuming in its moment. She knew this would be the hardest thing she would ever have to tell Tess.

"You can't ever be with him, Tess," Kate said.

"Just because he's different---" Tess began.

Kate interrupted with Tess's blatant understatement of the facts.

"--No, Tess you don't understand. There is still so much you don't know about them. There is still a lot I don't know. But there is one really important thing I have to tell you," Kate squeezed her hand when she saw the tears of frustration flood Tess's eyes.

"He stops himself. Every time we are close enough...Why does he do that? Do you know?" Tess asked.

She recognized the glint of a grown woman's hurt in Tess's eyes for the first time. She knew it very well. It said "Why doesn't he love me, the way I love him?" She hated for it to touch her so soon.

"To be with only you, he has to take you as a companion. Once you are his there is no going back. It would kill you way before your time, and he would live on."

They both heard the thump rattle the front door downstairs soon after Kate let the revelation roll from her lips to Tess. Kate jumped to her feet and ran down the stairs swinging the front door open wide. Below her feet in the entryway she noticed the

grimoire and the primer. Walking away down the sidewalk from her house with swift purpose she also saw Nori.

Kate called to him, "Seriously, you're going to just leave it all up to me, with all that you know?"

Nori's head dropped. He turned around.

"Yes. I told you, I'm done. You have what you wanted, now leave me alone," He said to her with a glare, turning to leave again.

"Yeah fine, then you'll be all good if I don't contact you, should I find anything new out about Sara or Natasha?" Kate asked with her hand mocking a motion to close the door.

Nori came to a dead stop and listened to her without turning around. She knew that would do it. "Nori, you don't have to face this alone anymore. If you need to talk, I'll listen," She added hoping it would seal the deal.

Nori turned calmly and walked to the doorway. Kate showed Nori the way to the living room in silence. Nori sat and looked her straight in the eye.

"Sara asked me to help her find Tasha the last night I saw her. Before that I had been at her bed side for a month. She woke up, barely knew me and didn't make any sense at all. I thought she was out of her mind and left her at her mother's request. Then I read this and it makes complete sense. I wish I'd never read it," Nori said dropping his head and running his hands through his hair.

"Nori, you couldn't have known. I'm still having a hard time believing it," Kate said.

"I don't see how knowing more about them will help you. It can't do anything but put them right on your trail, like Sara."

"I have one living with me," Kate confessed. "His name is Daniel."

"What? Why the hell would you ever do that?"

"I didn't know until just a few days ago. My daughter brought him home and said he was a runaway. I felt bad for him and took him in. He's just a kid," Kate explained.

"A kid who could kill you with little more than a thought...without your mind, your soul...you are nothing. I watched it happen to Sara." Nori warned.

“No, it's different with him. Something happens to them when they are made as young as Daniel. He doesn't know anything about what he is. I think he wants to help us. Maybe he can if he reads the book.”

“You say you have a daughter? I can tell you from experience, it's not safe for him to be around her or maybe even you for that matter,” Nori said.

Kate heard someone coming down the stairs. She knew it was either the entity or Daniel, she hoped the latter.

“Speaking of...would you like to meet him?” Kate asked Nori.

“I suppose,” Nori reluctantly replied.

“Daniel, it's okay. Come in,” Kate called to the stairs.

Nori stood up extending his hand to Daniel. “Hello Daniel.”

Daniel didn't offer his hand, instead he eyed Sara's grimoire and the primer on the coffee table. He glared at Nori while stooping down to pick up the books.

“She's right you know. I wouldn't do anything to hurt them.” Daniel said to Nori looking him straight in the eye. Nori became hypnotized for a moment just as Kate had.

“It's impolite to eavesdrop,” Nori said snapping out of it to chide him.

“Yes I know. Unfortunately, I don't have to eavesdrop anymore,” Daniel reminded him, then turned to take the book to Kate's office.

“Sorry, I think he's still pissed at you for taking the book,” Kate said

“A teenage boy who can kill with a thought and reads minds...Awesome. I'll be interested to know how that works out for you, Kate. Do you expect to have any control over what happens from here on out?” Nori asked sarcastically.

Kate took a deep breath. “I went to the club Sorin described. It exists. The place was swarming with them. I saw and felt Daniel feed from the crowd. He sensed I was there and got me out. He's different, Nori...Besides, I'm learning there is not much we really control in life. They came here and took it from us centuries ago.”

An uncomfortable silence fell between them. Nori took a deep breath, stood up and began walking towards the door.

“If you hear anything about Tasha or Sara, you can reach me here.” Nori said turning to her handing her his card.

“Thanks, well of course you know where we are.”

“I really do hope it happens that way, Kate. Rather than reading about you on the front page,” Nori said with his back to her walking away.

Chapter 23 – A Companion for Sorin

Sara O'Duinn, Grimoire Entry. 2nd November, 2008 - Sorin sensed Tasha around him seeking answers to the questions that arose from their brief time together. He wanted more than anything to put her at ease. He knew a willing companion was far too valuable to lose.

Remembering their first meeting, Sorin recalled how she threw him completely from the confidence of his power. The light of her essence so close stirred memories of a passion in life lost to him. She invoked a hunger that lay just beneath the surface. The experience of it was unexpected. It was all he could do to keep from losing control and taking all of her that very night.

Without his will in place, he would surely feed from her to the point of death. The finesse that came with feeding just enough, required patience. He was unsure in his approach. Sorin waited longer for her than any other human. Most were his within first sight. He arrived at her door, his senses heightened for conflict.

Opening the door, she managed a nervous smile then leaned forward looking to each side for someone she might call to for help.

“Sorin...I--”

He smiled his warmest to regain her comfort in him.

“—You have questions, allow me to answer them.”

She said nothing with a slight nervous smile while moving the door open. Her curiosity had almost overridden the fear of what he was. A part of her wished for him. The conventions of what she learned of her world prevented her from letting go. She wanted to retreat back to their safety, but it was too late. Sorin thought there was so much humans didn't consciously want to know of the world around them.

She moved to her table where dinner, a rare prime rib surrounded by a pool of barely pink fluid, was waiting.

“I would offer you some dinner, but I think you probably don't eat, do you?”

“No, I do not.”

She smiled at the one tidbit of knowledge she had of him. Her delicate hands shaking, she poured wine into a glass in front of him and a very full one for herself.

“The night we met. I realized you were the one from my dream.”

“Yes, do you understand how I found you... why I chose you?”

Settling back in the chair his eyes tilted in a severe focus to hers.

“You wished for someone who shares your interests to come into your life and take away this... loneliness. Your soul calls to me even now, you long for something more than this existence.”

She didn't answer and instead took a long swig of wine and stared at him, her eyes welling and face reddening.

“You have always known it to be possible. The power you wish to have over others. I know it is within you. Show it to me.”

He let the hunger inside well up into the violent impulse it became with other prey. He moved around the table close to her and broke easily through her unprotected energy. The quality of it was the experience he'd waited for. The taste of her was amplified ten times in her conscious presence. The wine glass in her hand dropped to the floor spilling its contents into broken crystal shards. She struggled mentally as he held her motionless body. Her pupils dilated to their fullest resembling a frightened porcelain doll. Holding her in his arms on the floor, he calmed her to dissuade the onset of mortal physical shock.

“Tasha, let go of it all. Let go of everything you have learned to be true of this world.”

Her body was calm but her mind fell silent. He fed deeply from her. Deep enough to pierce another of the walls the subconscious had built to contain her present mind. Early in her background he saw her as a protégé, learning from others; learning to save her life. Deep in her history, she was a valued confidant associated with one of royalty and infinite wealth. He sensed insanity. He saw rivers of blood. The blood was not hers, but others, many others she was made to witness. Far away, in a hidden stone antechamber known only to her Queen, she stood with a Lady in Waiting disposing the deeds of madness.

“Continue to say nothing of this and I will be able to help you escape her fate.”

Tasha looked down at the remnants of a young woman on the ground below her, covering her nose so that she could speak.

“I can't believe it myself. How would I ever--”

The Lady in Waiting was not interested in what Tasha had to say, she interrupted injecting her own suffering.

“--Her Highness forgets all but her own selfish devices and ignores the obligations to her court. I am betrothed but grow lonely with every day that passes. Yet I must remain chaste to marry.”

Tasha looked at her unable to hide the obvious disgust.

“How can you think of such things now?”

Her Lady moved close to her, wrapping her auburn curls around a finger and pulled her into an embrace.

“If not now then, when? Death in this place never ceases, yet our lives brief as they may be, continue. If you please me, help me to remember that I will be far from here someday...I will keep her from you and reward you with your life.”

Tasha cast her eyes down to hide the aversion to what her Lady requested.

Her lady lifted her face to find the beginning of tears forming.

“You are fortunate; the way about you is pleasing enough to me. It will allow me to be brief. If you like you may let your mind wander. Make yourself believe you are elsewhere. Come child, I know of a place where we can be alone.”

And there it was. The reason she stood above all others to Sorin. It was why his secrets were still unknown to anyone but the two of them. Serving royalty required discretion, the utmost in loyalty. In this lifetime it was learned and in the current it was remembered by her subconscious. He could hope for no one better as a companion. When he could no longer bear her pain in this vision, Sorin opened his eyes to see the disbelief in hers. He spoke to her mind.

“I have fed from you, Tasha. In return for your essence, I would bring you pleasure beyond your dreams of me. But, I will show you nothing more without your consent. Without it, I will walk away and your memory of me will cease. With it, you will be my only companion. But know that your life as it is now will

never be the same. Will you take my hand and open your mind to me?"

He waited for her decision. Her eyes focused intensely on his she replied, "Yes."

An electrifying surge of white hot light in violet streamed from her hand to his. She achieved an unexpected yet welcome power over Sorin. He embraced her and looked up to see her violet color rise and then meet his body with a force almost as strong as his to her. A phrase in the language of his heritage, he thought lost to him escaped from his lips.

"Yes, take from me as I have taken from you."

For the first time in centuries, feeding was again alive to Sorin. The exquisite pleasure in the blending of their energy would not allow him to merely feed from her. She fed from him with such abandon he couldn't break free. He let go and enjoyed his existence with her. His essence once protected and hidden for too long was one with hers. Her heartbeat slowed and was pulsing loud in his ear. Time slowed to a crawl.

His body in some long forgotten memory rose to the occasion. She smiled with the introduction and lowered herself. She knelt with her eyes fixed on Sorin, peeling away his black jeans. Her mouth, warm and inviting around him aroused his mind and body in a building passion he felt with no one before her. She brought him to the brink of ecstasy before his mind called out for him to pull away from her.

He put his hand under her chin and raised her body to stand with him. She looked into his eyes and brushed the long hair back from his face. They kissed as she unbuttoned his shirt releasing it to the floor. She stepped back from him removing her clothes to reveal the small curves of a young woman. Her green eyes deepened with hunger. His dropped his head back and closed his eyes with the feel of her inside of him feeding deeper with every moment.

Sorin embracing her, they rose into the air as she breathed to his neck pulling his mouth to hers with deep slow soft kisses. He slowly turned her, with her back facing him he caressed her breasts and kissed her neck. His hands moved over her body to her hips moving forward to feel inside of her before he entered her. She sighed with urgency reaching down between her legs to

guide him into her. At once he felt the plush softness of her. He embraced her close struggling with the need to give her just a small measure of him.

In midair, she moved with Sorin, seeking more of him with every rhythmic pulse. He held her hips from him allowing her only enough. He felt the ache to have more with each slide into her. He thought she felt so... inside she was to him a velvet glove growing tighter with each stroke of her. The color surrounding him deepened. He could be no closer to her. The sensual pillow of flesh to the top of her enveloped him for only a moment. This caress filled him with urgency to see her face in the passion of the moment. He turned her to face him and entered her once more. He kissed her lifting her upward to taste her breasts, raised nipples in his mouth just inside of her warmth. He could wait no more, her body and essence one with his. Embracing her, he said to her mind.

“I will wait no more to have you.”

“Yes.,” she replied, looking down at him.

He rose slowly into the depths of her. The sound of pleasure echoed across the ceiling. He released restraint of the building wave inside of him the moment she trembled from within. He pulled her hips closer to him with each pleading breath she made until he was in turn bathed in the lushness of her liquid warmth. Her hunger for him grew as he moved with her into every deep caress. She smiled kissing him deeply. She released more of her deep violet essence into Sorin. The light of it washed over him each time he enjoyed her again. Wet and breathless from their dance on air, her head of soft auburn curls fell to his shoulder. Her violet color withdrew from him. They drifted to the floor. She kissed him softly breathing heavily to his lips. Sorin smiled scooping up her small body into his arms to ascend the stairs.

Chapter 24 – Hidden Gifts

Daniel felt Tess behind him while he sat reading, going over the translated words of Sara that told him what he was. Why did Tess have to be so different from the others? Why did he feel so comfortable with her? She could see him feed and wasn't afraid of him. And he didn't know why. To be cold to her was the last thing he wanted to do. He needed to know if she could hear him. Daniel turned the triangle of his mind to her.

"We can't be together, in the way you want, Tess," Daniel said to her mind.

"I've told her why Daniel," Kate said with her head down walking to Daniel.

Daniel turned around, his face drained of what little color it had. "Kate, I'm sorry...I thought--"

--"I know, it's okay. We must seem a lot alike being mother and daughter. You might want to look before you...uh, speak from now on," Kate reminded.

"How did she take it?" Daniel asked.

"It's not going to be easy. This is her first time, being in love...It's going to take some time and a lot of willpower from you I would guess." Kate smiled.

Daniel sighed heavily not wanting to deal with the added tension he felt would soon come from Tess. Luckily another question came to his mind to change the subject.

"You both can hear me and see me feed. How is it possible? I have done all I can to keep you both from bonding with my mind."

"I don't know...But I do know where we might be able to find out. Are you ready to learn how to translate the rest of the book?"

"Yes," Daniel said happy to focus his mind on something else.

Kate got out the primer and Sara's grimoire. But when she tried to open it, the book wouldn't budge. Daniel looked at her curiously. She slid the book over to him. After several strong handed attempts, he couldn't open it either. He looked up at her hoping for an explanation.

"Sara it's okay. He's here to help," Kate said to the room.

“Who are you talking to?” Daniel demanded in a whisper.

“The person who led me to the book, the woman who wrote it, Sara O’Duinn,” Kate replied.

“You can communicate with spirits?” Daniel asked.

“Not always, just since I moved here. Believe me, I tried to ignore her...but she is more than determined,” Kate replied.

“He is different, Sara...like Lorelle. Let us open the book.” Kate looked around, talking to the room.

A mist collected at the corner of the ceiling. It plunged into the center of his body. Daniel sensed a warm and calm presence moving to his mind. He let it linger there sifting through his past as long as it wanted. He found it surprisingly pleasurable and he wanted it to know he had nothing to hide.

The grimoire spun around to face Daniel. It opened with an unseen hand turning the pages. The red ribbon bookmark floated down to the page marking the new passages to translate.

“Looks like you’re in.” Kate smiled stating the obvious. “I think Sara trusted Lorelle. So maybe you should too,” Kate reassured him.

“Okay so here is the primer. Just match the sounds made by each symbol to the corresponding letter and you should pick it up in no time,” Kate said, moving to the office door with a yawn.

She looked back at Daniel; he was already engrossed and silent with translating. Kate grabbed her laptop, shut the office door silently and went upstairs to her room.

Lorelle arched her back inside of Shadow. She knew she could not feed from Daniel again. Though she found it enjoyable, he was becoming too weak. She was just as curious about Kate and Tess as he was. They could hear his mind and see him feed. It only meant one thing. It would be disastrous for Daniel to feed from either or both. She needed to find out for Daniel, how it happened to them both. How pronounced it was.

She convinced Shadow to climb the stairs and go to Kate’s bedroom. Once there, Shadow didn’t need much more encouragement, jumping up onto the bed. Lorelle saw her,

asleep with a thin lit box next to her. Shadow curled up next to Kate purring with contentment. Lorelle glanced at the white lit box and noticed it had words she could read. She read her words from her journey to find Sorin. They cut her again just as if she were reliving it. How stupid she had been in his regard. How could she have been so deceived by time? If anything this human, Kate had a boldness which might serve her. Lorelle closed her eyes and focused on the astral plane. She saw Kate's consciousness in a searing translucent stream of gradual blue to red. She began to feed slowly hoping to hide in the mist of her dreams. She soon began to wish the visions flowing from Kate would evolve from the mental anguish of her early childhood.

A handsome young man with dark hair and smiling eyes knelt down in the driveway to speak to Kate.

“Where are we going Daddy?” Kate asked.

“Let's go have some ice cream,” he said looking back at the front door of the house anxiously.

She knew this meant Mommy was sick again. Her mother screamed at no one inside of the house, screams of inexplicable rage. So filled with her irrational hate of the moment they were hardly distinguishable as human speech. She was so involved with her tirade she hadn't noticed Kate and her Dad left the house minutes ago. The handsome man Kate called Daddy swept her up and placed her softly in the car closing the door. She looked back into his big dark brown eyes like hers through the car window with questioning. Would they make it out of there in time? They usually did. Her Dad made sure of it. Kate squirmed in her seat waiting for him to turn on the car. She saw her Mom coming out of the front door of the house. Kate curled up in the smallest ball she could and covered her eyes. She heard the car start and the screech of the tires when they pulled out of the driveway. He had done it again and she loved him for it.

Lorelle was beginning to see why Kate's color ranged from the calmest of blues to a deep blood tinged red seething in anger. She paused for a moment from the hopeless terror and hurt of a child. She didn't often connect so fully with the sorrow of another. Kate's childhood memories were so powerful. They ripped Kate apart and happened in her youth well before she had

the tools to cope with them. She saw Kate awoke one morning to find she lost her Father and protector in the space of minutes in an early morning car accident. Kate sat behind a closed casket, her face as white as its pearl finish. Around her, they talked about how he had been taken before his time. All she knew was he left her. She didn't understand why. Was she really as worthless as her mother told her she was every day? He must have finally just given up on her too. She did understand now she would have to live every day without him to help her.

Lorelle broke away from Kate's mind still immersed in her deep resentment of a mother she didn't know was deeply touched but in the constraints of human society was bound to love. Kate's mother was fed upon for many years. She tortured Kate with her resulting madness every day. At a young age, Kate learned to look for patterns, to anticipate and get away from her mother's relentless attacks on her developing sensitive nature. She subconsciously gained the skills of an empath. This protection she passed on to Tess upon her birth.

Lorelle glanced again at the thin lit box with her words and the secrets of the Psyon spilling across it. She searched within herself for a reason to continue. Daniel needed her help and she wasn't ready to die.

Chapter 25 – The Seeds of Regret

Sara O'Duinn, Grimoire Entry, 3rd November, 2008 -

Tasha slowly turned her head to look in Sorin's direction. He was lying on his side, his long hair splayed across the pillow, begging her to run her fingers through it. She just couldn't bring herself to. She didn't want to become wrapped up in another unbelievable encounter with him. Not again. As she remembered everything she felt and saw through him, a searing pain began at her temples. Tasha thought she was either suffering an intense hangover or something she half remembered he told her was true. His words filtered back to her in a rush of full on regret.

“Know that your life as it is now will never be the same.”

She could hear what sounded like a radio transmission in her head. So faint she couldn't make out the words, but with enough volume to interpret it as a crowd of people talking. She couldn't make it stop. Her head was pounding. She felt drained, then the next second filled with energy. She'd never had a panic attack before but thought this had to be close. She was mentally sorting through everything in her mind when the cell phone on the bed stand started to vibrate. Anyone who knew her also knew they shouldn't call exceedingly early. She let whoever was foolish enough to call her so early in the morning vibrate to the floor.

She tried to settle back into sleep when a heavy and urgent sounding knock prompted her into action. No time to dress. Where was her robe? She found it and almost lost her grip on the banister running down the stairs. She thought it was funny, at that moment she was more concerned with who the hell would have the nerve to knock like that on her door.

“Tasha, it's Nori. I know it's early...it's an emergency, I have to talk to you, or believe me I wouldn't be here.” he said in a half whisper and half urgent yell from the closed door.

Her heart sank when she heard the strange tone of Nori's gravelly voice. It was too early for Nori to even be alive yet, so she suspected it wasn't anything good. Tasha prepared herself and grudgingly cracked the door to hide that she was dressed only in a tiny burgundy silk robe.

“What is it Nori? I'm not really dressed.” she said behind the crack of the door.

“Come on Tasha, you don't have anything I haven't seen before,” he replied more annoyed.

She looked at him wide-eyed as if to say, you've got to be kidding.

“Oh you know what I mean, on another woman. Come on. Let me in, it's important,” he pleaded.

She opened the door and Nori stepped into the foyer while looking her up and down for a moment. “Okay, I lied...awesome,” he said with a grinning nod.

“Nori, what is so damned important!”

“You need to have a seat.”

Tasha sat on the sofa while Nori followed and took her hand. If Nori was touching her, she knew it was bad.

“Nori, what's wrong?”

“Sara has been taken to the hospital,” he said with a heavy sigh.

“What happened to her?”

“I found her at the auction house this morning. She was very weak, Tasha,” he said with his head down.

“What do you mean by weak? What's wrong with her?”

“Well, I'm not sure. The paramedics said they couldn't get any response out of her.”

“I can't believe this. How did it happen?”

“They don't really know. It was weird though, she had the strangest expression on her face, it was like she was afraid of something. Like something really shocking happened to her. Even when they were taking her away that look was still on her face.”

“Oh my God...Sara,” Tasha said.

“They said she had probably been there like that for a couple days. So she's weak and not responding to anything. They took her to the hospital to give her IV fluids and to do more tests.”

“I'm so sorry it had to be you to find her that way. It should have been me.”

Nori took her in his arms for a comforting hug.

“Nope, it is your day off...remember?” he said with a pat to her back.

She couldn't hold back the lump in her throat any longer and her sobbing became audible.

"It'll be okay Tasha. I'm not sure that what they think is wrong with her is actually true. I tried to get through to her before I called for help. Her expression changed for like a millisecond. But when it went back I knew I had to call 911. It's like she's still in there but can't communicate."

"I still just can't believe this. She has the strongest mind of any person I have ever known. How could this happen to her of all people?"

"I know. They aren't allowing visitors right now. Hopefully that will change soon," he said with a slight smile returning to his face.

"Thank you for letting me know, Nori."

"Yeah, no problem. Hey, it's gonna be okay. We'll all get through this together. She's gonna need us. You stay strong, okay?" he said.

"Yeah, okay," Tasha replied weakly.

"Okay, so I'll see ya Monday?" he asked.

"Yeah, I'll be there."

Nori was still sitting on the sofa. Not really moving to the door, even though their conversation was over. She began to hope that Sorin wouldn't hear them and come downstairs. Unjustifiably paranoid, Tasha tried her best to let Nori know it was time to move along by walking to the foyer.

"Sooo...am I right that you aren't alone here this morning?" he asked.

She looked at Nori with the honest shock that he would ask about her personal life, especially at this point. And still he continued.

"Lemme guess, the boogeyman from Halloween?"

Tasha's face reddened.

"Oh, it is? You've got some strange taste in men, Tasha."

Damn her blush response to everything, Tasha thought. He wouldn't have known.

"Hey, be careful of him...just something I don't like--"

She interrupted him. "--Look Nori, I appreciate the concern but don't cross the line with me right now, I can't handle it," she said to him walking to the door.

Nori followed with his head down. He walked out onto the porch but still continued the twenty questions.

“What's his name?”

“What? It's Sorin.”

Nori grinned.

“Okay and his last name?”

Her face reddened again with the realization that she didn't really know.

“Why Nori, what does it matter?” she replied, annoyed.

“I'd like to do a little checking up on him, for you and for myself. Oh my fucking God Tasha...you don't know his last name? Was I really that wrong about you, or is this just something new because of him?”

Her patience just about gone, she gave him her best morning death look which he was well acquainted with.

“Okay I get it. Wow, remind me again never to talk to you before you've had your happy pills,” he replied.

She attempted to lighten the mood.

“We'll talk soon, okay?” Tasha said sweetly.

Nori shook his head while walking away.

“Yeah, see ya,” he replied with a distinct calmness to his voice letting her know the damage was done.

Ascending the stairway, Tasha looked up to see Sorin standing there waiting for her. “Your friend, she is ill?” he asked, his face a mirror of the concern on hers.

“Yes,” she replied, walking to Sorin burying her face in his chest.

“I am sure she will return to you. But it will take some time,” he said, wrapping his arms around Tasha, stroking her hair.

“How do you know? Can you help her?”

“I can do many things, but repairing minds is not one of them,” he replied.

“Will you stay here with me? I really don't want to be alone now.”

“I would not leave you alone. Today, you begin to live.”

Chapter 26 - Distraction

“Kate, so glad you could join us...today,” her boss, Steve Mac chided Kate.

“Sorry I'm late.”

“I wouldn't be if phone conference was okay for this meeting,” Kate thought smiling weakly. She wished she was still at home in her jammies and slippers as usual.

“Okay, so what's hot for Sunday? Go!” Mac said opening the meeting.

“I've got the pumpkin pyramid in New Haven. Jeremy will follow me out for pics,” Judy replied.

Kate cringed. What? That was obviously supposed to be hers. Judy was in Boston. It was probably her punishment for showing up late.

“I've got the annual rope off of Beacon Street for Halloween,” Roger replied.

“I guess I'll take the Christian alternative stuff,” Cristina replied.

Kate was conspicuously silent. She didn't plan for having her piece handed to someone else for being ten minutes late. Things at home had been so crazy she hadn't thought of work once until she hit the door. The only thing she could think of was the story she didn't necessarily want to give up to a newspaper. Funny how fate worked, she thought. She really had no other choice now. But there was no way she could give it up in a brainstorming session.

“Got any other ideas Kate?” Mac asked, confronting Kate full on.

“I've got probably the ultimate lifestyle piece. But I have to explain in private,” Kate said nervously.

“Really?” Judy said with an eye roll and a sigh.

“How much longer are we going to coddle her? I'm about over it, Steve,” Judy continued.

She was on. Kate had too little coffee in her system allowing her to all too well rise to the occasion.

“Well seeing as you were handed my story, I would think you would humor me more than anyone else, Judy,” Kate snapped back without thinking.

The room erupted into a buzz.

“Okay, knock it off. And that goes for everyone.”

He turned to Kate.

“My office, in five, it had better be damned good. And you've got just about that amount of time to pitch it to me,” Mac said.

Kate entered Mac's office and closed the door behind her. She couldn't believe she was about to tell someone else.

“Okay, I'm all ears,” Steve said.

“I've got information on a secret society of psi vampires that has been in existence since the 14th century. There's a huge hive of them in New Haven,” Kate spilled.

Steve stared back at her for a moment, wide eyed and silent.

“I thought you were a serious journalist, Kate. And to think I was hoping that New Haven wouldn't ruin you like the others.” Steve laughed.

“I'm completely serious and I can prove it,” Kate replied.

“Sure you can,” he said shaking his head. “I can't even keep track of all the weird ass shit that flows out of there anymore,” Steve replied.

“Yeah, well what I've found out has dominated my life since I moved to New Haven. It's not like I went looking for it either. And now I can see them everywhere. What's even stranger and completely out of character for me is I'm putting my life and my daughter's on the line with this ‘weird ass shit’.” Kate replied, putting her head in her hands.

“My first rule for the crazy coming out of New Haven is a source, and not a confidential one. You bring me a source, an undeniable one that will speak directly to me and back you up. And then...I might think about running it. “Otherwise, I gotta tell you right now, your job is on the line.”

“I've got that and more.” Kate said, her heart felt like it would beat out of her chest even though it felt right to stand up to him.

Steve sat up straight in his chair.

“That better be true, Kate. I'll leave it up to you. On my desk well before deadline and a source interview by me or you can explore your options elsewhere.”

“You got it,” Kate said standing up and storming out of Mac’s office.

Kate knew Steve was right. It was irresponsible of her to put work on the back burner no matter what was going on at home. She was clearly too preoccupied to deal with both, but what other choice did she have? At least her rage had left the option of a steady paycheck open.

Daniel put his head down in the middle of the book on the desk. He was too weak to hold his head up. The passages under his face made him question his purpose. He hoped it wasn’t true, what he suspected about Tess and Kate. He wanted to read more. There was so much more he needed to know. His mind and body wouldn’t allow it. He felt the frenzy coming, inching its way into his brain. It meant to overtake him this time. The minds in his head were deafening. His hunger could no longer be denied. He turned his head to the side and saw the mist of the entity form above him.

“Not now. I want to be alone when I die,” he said to the room while he closed his eyes.

The darkness of his mind receded and Daniel walked a path. It was cut through a meadow so striking in its natural beauty he knew in an instant it couldn’t be real. He didn’t know why he was there, only that he should keep walking. The further he walked the more the pain of his mind and body departed him. From the fog gathering in front of him, a familiar blue presence parted the mist.

“No Lorelle. Leave me alone.”

“I wish to live and so shall you,” Lorelle said.

At the end of her echoing reply, a beautiful calm entered Daniel’s existence. It brought a peace to him he vaguely remembered from his childhood. His head dropped back and he smiled while the wake of it washed over him.

“I would bring you pleasure beyond your dreams of me, Daniel. I can show you no more without your consent. Take my hand and feed from me.”

“No Lorelle. I can't.” Daniel said backing away from her, the mist enveloping him.

“Your courage in the face of death is admirable, Daniel. But without seeking the knowledge I could give you so easily, it becomes tedious.”

Lorelle moved to him. The mist gave way to her face. Razor thin streams of light in electric blue from her eyes met his plucking each emerging emerald energy strand from the air he tried to suppress. He stood there, motionless with every breath trying to fight feeding from her.

“I am Psyon but not of your line. Let the fear of harming another go, Daniel. You cannot harm me. Give me your trust now and feed from me, quiet the frenzy and live.”

Daniel felt his legs give way underneath him. He fell to the ground unable to move. Lorelle knelt above him. Thick cords of her color and light rushed into his eyes. With each wave of her energy into him he gained more strength to quiet the minds invading his. The frenzy eased and then ended.

“It is time that you left them, Daniel. You cannot remain as their guardian. Tess and Kate are empaths. They are unawakened Psyon. It is why they can see you feed in the ambient and are not afraid. One misguided touch to your hand and they will become Psyon or it could mean your life.”

“I don't understand-- where will I go? You have only appeared to my mind,” Daniel said.

“I live within other beings sometimes cats, sometimes a woman named Sara O'Duinn.”

“You are Sara?” asked Daniel confused.

“Yes, sometimes,” Lorelle said.

“Where will I go?” Daniel asked.

“There is a coven of turned Psyon in New York City. They will welcome you there,” Lorelle said. “And you will have to leave quickly. You cannot risk a confrontation. Leave without a trace.”

“Kate is so afraid. She thinks I can help her,” Daniel said.

“You need not abandon your promise to Kate. Only now for their sake and yours, you must leave them. I have seen Kate's mind. I know what she plans. She means to expose the Psyon. The Children of Psyon begin a transformation for what is to

come. You witnessed the beginning of it when Tess remembered you entering her dream. It is at hand, but we cannot help them now,” Lorelle said.

Chapter 27 – An Unlikely Pair

Sara O'Duinn, Grimoire Entry, 4th November 2008 - Sorin agonized over what he had done. He could feel the need in Tasha as it grew. It pulsed through him as if it was his and would remain with him until she was transformed...or her soul ceased to exist. Tasha had not become his companion. She began the awakening.

Regrettably for Sorin, the evening arrived to teach his fledgling some of what was needed to survive, and none too soon, as he could sense the beginning of the madness that would visit her until she fed. It was by no means as strong as his hunger, but was an annoyance just the same.

It fell to him as her maker to take her from fledgling to Psyon. On the bed, she was pale and writhing with the compulsion to quiet the voices she heard. Her questioning eyes deserved an answer.

“What's happening to me?”

“I was drawn to you for a reason. You have suppressed abilities only my kind can sense. My intention was only to enjoy your presence and--”

“--Feed from me?”

“You are more skilled than you know. I wanted you and once sharing a dream with you, I wanted you more.”

“When you visited my dreams?” she questioned in her haze.

“Yes, I could not break away last night. You had the power to overcome me. Do you remember, Tasha?”

“Yes, I remember, how?” Sorin interrupted her questions with the need to soothe her suffering and his.

“--I never meant for this to happen. Because the will to deny you escaped me, you are becoming what I am. You begin the awakening as a Psyon.”

He took her hand and grasped it tightly so she could not move away. Her body was calmed and she connected with his thoughts almost instantly. Sorin's origin with the Children of Psyon began to unfold in a vision. The memory of his history stung once again as he related it.

“My history began with deception. The deception was religion. Today, my belief is that they are as one. I was born into my former human life, bound by involuntary servitude. I served ideas that did not suit me, that made no sense to me, then or now. I began life as a ward of the Knights Templar. I took their vows. I shared in their wealth and stature. They brought with them a life of forced celibacy and lies. The first lies came from the flawed entity I put my naive trust in. Then more lies from the core of my being that could not suffer the ruse they force-fed me each day. The only light in my darkness was the daughter of a Templar elder that was appointed to me, named Genevieve. My Gennie tended to me in the physical and mental pain the Crusades generated. Only she could understand and comfort me after battle. Numerous battles I did not understand or have a moral conviction for. Her unwavering faith in me and the cause drew me to bring her to our shame. The seduction was many years in the making and completely my fault. The forced birthright I had gained could not sway me from indulging myself with her love. I took her as my own on a warm spring day; knowing from that moment we would be hunted and faced a difficult if not impossible future ahead. Whispers of our bond circulated. The whispers soon turned to a trial.”

“Sorin Ladislov, what say you to the charge of Heresy?”

“Not guilty.”

“They dragged Gennie into the court in front of me. She was fatigued from the fight of her life. Her face bruised almost beyond recognition from the beatings that yielded their evidence.”

“There is proof of relations with this woman,”

“Sorin, I--”

“Quiet, woman. The court has not addressed you.”

“Let her go, she has no guilt in this matter. I was a child, a slave who was sold to the church when I took those vows.”

“Irrelevant. You have long since become a man and remained a Knight of the Templar. As such you are held to a higher standard. The vows are in place so we are not distracted from spreading the doctrine of the church. I am told you have been exemplary in your service until this time and it pains me to see you here. However, such a grave charge cannot be ignored.

Jury, what say you to the charge of Heresy against the accused?"

"Guilty."

"The church proceeded to take my love and life away from me. Our indiscretions were the public topic of the day. I soon found myself in a cell separated from Gennie with only a messenger between us to convey our intentions. This messenger at the time I believed to be a godsend, a gift in a brutal existence that would help us to communicate in our final moments."

"I bring good news today. There are benefactors who will help you."

"Lorelle, you know I cannot remain without Genevieve at my side. I have accepted what is to come."

"Join the Children of Psyon with your companion. See here, I have the keys to your cells. In return I will release you before first light. The Children of Psyon offer you a new life. You will feed from the essence of others and become their master. You will never again be harmed and death cannot touch you."

"The time has passed for religion."

"No, you do not understand. Here, now quickly take my hand and open your mind to me."

"Wait, you swear to me that Genevieve has agreed?"

"She is reluctant and awaits your decision. Show her the way. Take my hand and give me your consent."

"Red columns of light streamed from her face to mine. My body was immobilized. Her energy was transferred as visions of several lifetimes. Her essence inside my mind created a rapture that was as addictive as it was energizing. After living so much of life in deprivation and denial, my mind begged for more of her sensuous exchange. A deep red stream of light surged from my hand that held hers with an iron grip. She had fed so deeply she was able to relinquish from me, but not before I had my fill of her. I fell to the dank floor of the cell. The new bloody lash marks on my chest sealed and disappeared. Old bruises and scars from a lifetime of war healed. Dirt slid down to my feet from the signature crevices of age, which were no more. My body grew cold. I listened as the sound of my amplified heartbeat slowed and then ceased. I awoke and found my cell door unlocked as promised. I went to Gennie's cell so that we

could escape together and find Lorelle in the valley. I remember, the moon shone through the iron bars on the wet empty floor of her cell. The death march of my captors rattled the corridor behind me. The opportunity for escape shrinking with every boot step of their numbers advancing, I remembered the bargain and fled to the valley sure that I would join the two of them there. I survived. Genevieve did not. It was only then I realized Lorelle was the deceiver and not the giver of life. She unlocked only my cell door in a selfish wish for herself. She was not to be found after I had given myself for the bargain. Psyon abilities not yet practiced and known to me, I watched as my beloved burned at the stake for heresy. The shame and guilt have haunted my being through the centuries to this day. Alone in this increasingly tedious existence I search every essence hoping to find Lorelle. Or to find somehow a soul that equals or rivals the qualities I found in my beloved”.

Tasha’s body tensed and she released a scream Sorin had not heard since the day Gennie burned before his eyes. The unexpected sound of it shook him to the core. Now quiet, she rose to him with tear streaked and somber face.

“Will you leave me too, like Lorelle? Will you leave me like this, not knowing how to survive?”

“Tasha, you are unlike any soul I have experienced. Your essence sustains me more than any other and draws me to you. It fills me with contentment that I have not felt for ages. Not since—”

Her expression softened as she thoughtfully replied “Gennie?”

She took a measured and deep breath. “Then teach me. Show me how to survive,” Tasha said.

He took her to a village park where people were beginning to filter home for the evening. Sorin thought the small number of people in transit would have been a good starting point. He was wrong.

“There are too many. Too many voices make them stop.” Tasha said, putting her hands on her head.

“They are not voices. They are the minds of those around you. You can hear them now and will hear them from this day on. You will make them stop. Focus on my voice. In your mind’s eye create a white energy. It envelops you. It is all around you.”

“Yes. I see it. They are quiet now.”

She took her hands from her head sighed with relief.

“You can choose to block the minds of others when you need to. Sometimes it is helpful to read them in the beginning.”

“Whatever for? That was annoying as hell.”

He laughed at her honesty and because it was true.

“You can determine the quality of those around you by their inner conversation. You will need to seek out quality to feed from. You must try to avoid the sick or touched feeding from them only as a last resort. But that is a lesson for another day. Today you will feed on ambient energy. See in your mind’s eye a triangle and direct a point towards the line of people walking together in front of us. Focus the power from deep inside and illuminate it. Do you see it?”

“Yes.”

“Good, now take an inwards deep breath.”

He watched her intense concentration on the task at hand. The veil of being from the collective walking in front of her began to stream in a rush towards them. Not just a few, but all. She was not prepared for the sheer number of energy fields seeking her body and neither was he. Sorin took her hand in his to steady her.

“Do not move away. You summoned them, now let them find you.”

He released her hand so she would be the only one to feed, but somehow he still connected with some residual energy. Sorin thought the power she summoned was remarkable for a fledgling.

She smiled in his direction at her competence.

“Everything I see is so different from before. It’s hard to tell what is real. Is there any way to block this...new sight?”

“At this moment, you exist between two worlds. Your eyes will adjust to the blending of the astral and physical plane and interpret them as reality soon enough. The day will come when you will not remember how you existed any other way.”

“Am I becoming a vampire?”

Her question was valid yet inspired a bit of indignation in Sorin.

“Vampires are our ancestors. We have evolved to a more refined existence than the vampires who thrive on blood. We need not kill or touch anyone to feed. The energy we take from them is renewed in their bodies every day, provided you do not feed too deeply.”

She looked at him with concern.

“I don't know if I am capable--”

“--You are, and you have longed for it. It is how I found you.”

Looking down, she told him the secret of her mind.

“I do sometimes wish I had some kind of power over others. I'm so tired of being afraid.”

“All of you have remnants of this instinct. I believe the human, Darwin called it ‘survival of the fittest’ It does not just apply to the kingdom of animals. Humans have reached their highest potential because of us. We pick and choose among them, sometimes eliminating those who are not strong of mind.”

“Somehow I don't feel qualified to choose who lives and who dies.”

“Yes, for you in the beginning there will be some learning involved. I have yet to see to the depths of your soul, Tasha. Your subconscious prevents me somehow. But I have seen you in many lives as a victim, as prey. You have yet to become a predator.”

“I've never consciously wished to harm anyone. This is all so confusing. Is there anything else I need to know?” she sighed heavily, her head tilting down.

He stopped walking and turned to her taking both of her hands in his to drive home the severity of what he needed to reveal.

“What remains is for you to become one with the Children of Psyon. You will feed on the essence of others and become their master. No one will ever harm you again and you will never die.”

She looked at him wide eyed and then in complete silence turned to continue walking home. They arrived at her house and she turned to Sorin. She was still shaking from the energy surging through her body.

“You are talking about immortality,” she blurted.

“It is in our reach to achieve, but comes at a high price,” he replied.

He moved closer to take her in his arms.

“I feel better now, but I need some time...to think,” she said becoming rigid in his embrace.

“I understand. I will leave you to your thoughts,” He replied releasing her, only to be met with more silence. She paused, the confusion visible on her face. Sorin leaned down to kiss her, but it was not returned. He walked away from her, his mind restless with what lay ahead.

Chapter 28 - Desperation

The moonlight shone through the stained glass of her window dividing one ray into a changing kaleidoscope on the floor. She watched it every night before she went to sleep. Tess snuggled deeper into the bed covers and thought of all the other things about her new life she loved. The very next to enter her mind was Daniel, even though she didn't see a lot of him lately. He was so preoccupied with that damned book. So she waited keeping Daniel high on the pedestal she placed him on when they first met. She knew there would be a time when he would come down from it to spend time with her again. Then in a faint echo to her mind, she heard him say "*Goodbye.*"

She instinctively went to her window and looked into the clear moonlit abyss of the night. A shadow moved away from the house. It became the outline of Daniel but his body was nowhere in sight. No, this wasn't happening. She wouldn't let him leave without knowing why. She ran down the stairs, opened the front door and called after the shadow, screaming, "Daniel!"

The shadow stopped at the end of the street. Lights in the homes of her street blinked on. To her mind he said, "*Quiet, Tess.*"

"No I won't," she yelled after him. "I'll wake the entire neighborhood if you don't show yourself now!"

Daniel stepped out of the shadow realm still continuing to walk at a brisk pace. Tess sprinted to catch up with him.

"Stop Daniel. Stop and tell me why."

"I knew it. I knew you can hear my mind. It's too dangerous for me to stay," Daniel said.

"Why is it dangerous, Daniel? Because I'm not like you?"

Tess lunged towards Daniel and grabbed his hand in the space of less than a second. He tried to move away from her before she could touch him. The intense neon indigo light flowing from her hand to his became magnetic, sealing his hand with hers. With all of his strength he tried to release her, but it had already begun. The pain when her color surged into him was charged electric and instantaneous. It made him drop to his knees. She

looked down at him, from her eyes he saw the light streams reaching out for him. He shut his eyes tight while the streams entered pulling at the vaporous green hunger from his. Still he tried to resist her.

“No Tess, you don't want me like this.”

“Daniel it's too late, you have to take me with you.”

“You don't know what you've done. I should kill you. You'll wish you were dead.”

“What? No Daniel. Why would you say something like that?”

Tears welled in her eyes.

“Now we can be together.”

Daniel stood up. He interlaced his hands with hers touching her for the first time. He kissed her in the way he sensed her mind ached for him to so many times before. Daniel let his light flow deep into her eyes, feeding from her. He embraced her as the man she wanted. He felt the innocence and purity of her inside of him for the first time. He gave it back to her, exactly how he felt for her when they met.

Kate rubbed her eyes and remembered why she didn't want to get up that particular morning. She turned her back to the light rays filtering through the lace design of her bedroom curtains and tried her best to go back to sleep but the stress of the day had already reached her. She begrudgingly slid out of bed and wandered downstairs in a sleepy fog. The creak of her footsteps made her flinch in the uncommon silence with each step she took.

Something was off and Kate knew what it meant in an instant. She turned halfway down the stairs and headed back up to the guest room. The room looked exactly as it had when she and Tess first moved in. She fell to her knees in disbelief.

“You little son of a bitch, I trusted you!” Kate screamed at no one.

She ran to Tess's room. Kate rifled through her chest of drawers and found everything gone. No clothes. No perfume. No

makeup near the mirror. Her baby was gone. And so was he. What had the bastard done? Why else would they both leave without telling her?

“What the hell?” Kate said to herself sitting on Tess's bed with her head in her hands.

“Why? Why would you do this?”

Kate's body shook with the oncoming anxiety of complete shock. Did this mean everything she wanted for her, everything she hoped her life would be was over. Or was it? Or had it just changed? Change, the thing she hated most in life confronted her again. But this time it was so bold and in her face she couldn't ignore it. Instantly her mind calculated. Daniel and Tess left in a rush. Could it still be there?

Chapter 29 – The Unawakened

Sara O'Duinn, Grimoire Entry, 10th November, 2008 - Psychics posed a very difficult problem when Psyon sought a companion. There were practiced psychics who knew their talents well and used them in their conscious state. Very few practiced psychics had the talent to overtake them. Conscious psychics were sometimes successful only at blocking Psyon attempts to read their minds. The conventions of what they learned stopped them. Their minds were no longer completely open.

As ages passed, a larger population of subconscious psychics among the humans emerged. They had immeasurable mental skill but were unaware of it when they were awake. The mind of a subconscious psychic was like that of a child. Every possibility could take shape. Such an open mind could have disastrous results. They had the ability to feed from them. They were potential Psyon. They called them the unawakened.

At the beginning of the Psyon consciousness, very few souls joined their ranks. This would only happen when a human was chosen because they had the utmost quality of character and an inner desire to escape the constraints human life. Psyon power was seductive and consuming. Once the practice of bending humans to their will was learned, in some Psyon it only devolved their righteous impulses into sadistic and selfish evil.

Among the chosen Psyon when one was made, they were to them a brother or sister. It was forbidden to feed from one they transformed. This was their equivalent of human incest. This truth was a particularly harsh one for Lorelle to learn. Unfortunately it was not part of Psyon instinct. It was taught by the one who made them.

Sorin was chosen but Lorelle did not think of him as a brother when she made him. Though she fed from him only at the time of his creation, she remembered every nuance of the experience. He remained the most sensual being of any she encountered. He was capable of blending his feeding with intense male urges, yet with an intoxicating passion unlike any Lorelle experienced since him. He was able to feed more deeply without harm and

was sustained longer than most Psyon. She wasn't sure how he accomplished it. She thought possibly being a rogue extended his experience of the Psyon consciousness. Nevertheless, she knew how his companions could become hopelessly addicted to him.

At first, Sorin fed with only vague memories of male satisfaction. Lorelle saw his blending with a new essence in the astral plane. The thought of him feeding from another, still felt like a cut to her insides with razor sharp precision. The light of her being shone as bright as his and it became brighter every time he returned to her. Yes, she was watching. Sadly, it was all Lorelle was allowed to do for his protection.

His first instinct was partially correct in choosing her as a sacrifice for another century of life. But then Sorin was seduced by the awareness of the sensual combined with feeding as a Psyon. She was the first to reawaken this in him because she had so many qualities reminding him of the only human love he experienced. This persuaded him to choose her as a companion instead, further blinding him to her potential.

He did not know it fell to him to show her the ways and let her go. When one began the awakening by mistake or not, they were to then think of them as a fledgling and give them the unconditional love of a brother or sister. They were expected to love them enough to let them go. Sometimes Lorelle wondered if it was easier for her because she was a woman. But still, she knew the heartbreak of it. She wanted Sorin more than any other. A part of her was glad he had found love again. But more than a twinge of jealousy took her over when she saw their souls as one. And if she could see them, the Psyon also watched. They would watch with the zeal of old lady gossips for a while. But soon they would tire of it. They would then expect Sorin to make a choice he had no knowledge of.

He would need to either remember his first intentions with her as a sacrifice or love her enough to transform her and let her go. Lorelle knew this would be the first firm test of his existence as a Child of Psyon. If he could survive, Sorin would no longer be a rogue. He would know all that was needed to be an elder Psyon. Attaining elder status would make him even more powerful. She did not relish being the one who would once

again tear his love from him. She suspected the hatred festering within Sorin for her because of the unfortunate turn of events with Genevieve. However it looked to Sorin, she knew the truth. Lorelle remembered how Gennie resisted when she approached her with the only way to save her life, just as she had with Sorin.

The path to Gennie's cell was scattered with the bones of the others who perished before her. Through the still and heavy air, visual vapors of death wafted in every direction. A ray of moonlight pierced a small hole in the wet stone wall in the corner of the cell to reveal the outline of a withered human, frail and sick. She reeked of dysentery and plague. Gennie's face was turned to the light. She seemed to plead in silence to some invisible entity to bring death or some way out of her suffering. Lorelle knew there could be no better time to strike the bargain with Gennie. Lorelle crept up to the bars of the cell. Genevieve's blonde curls fought the pasty dirt on them, their spring creating measured droplets resembling muddy strings of pearls from her scalp to her waist. Patches of a radiant complexion struggled to shine through a mixture blood, filth and the soil she had been dragged through before being thrown into her cell. Still, Lorelle could sense the beauty inside Gennie projecting into the ray of moonlight she prayed to. She wasn't a particularly handsome woman in a traditional way, but Lorelle could feel her inner essence was strong and loyal beyond compare. She understood Sorin's attraction to her in an instant. Gennie's face grimaced in pain as she turned her head to the side finally noticing Lorelle there.

"You've come!" she said in a whisper walking to Lorelle, reaching out for her hands.

"I am not the angel you summoned."

"Yes you are." Gennie said with desperation.

"Would a divine spirit appear to you outside of your cell? I am flesh and blood, Gennie."

"But wait, summon? One does not summon an angel." Gennie said, her exuberance turning to a frown and backing away from the bars.

"I am neither a demon, Gennie. There is not much more time to explain, I bring to you a way to avoid more suffering and death. I've come because Sorin wills it."

“Sorin?”

“Yes, he has all but accepted the bargain I put before him, save one part of it.”

Gennie shook her head trying to understand.

“What bargain?”

“Become one with the Children of Psyon. Open your mind to me. Take my hand and I will show you the way.” Lorelle said, reaching to Gennie through the bars.

“No, you cannot touch me.” Gennie said, hiding her hands behind her back.

“You may have no thought of your life, What of Sorin's? He refuses to go without you.”

“As well he should, I will not give my soul to you either, demon.”

“I told you, Genevieve...I am not a demon nor is what I offer, demonic. There is not time to waste or to explain. Trust that Sorin would do nothing to cause you harm. You can either join him for eternity or die. The soldiers return. Hurry, what is your choice?”

The thunder of measured footsteps echoed through the hallway to Gennie's cell. Lorelle looked at Gennie for an answer.

“Eternal damnation is not a choice.” Gennie answered, her head tilted to the sky and hands clasped in prayer as if to further ward off Lorelle.

The sound of the soldiers' cadence became louder. She couldn't risk being seen. Lorelle ran around the corner to another hallway of cells and listened to Gennie's fate.

“Are you ready to burn, Witch?” The soldier said, brandishing the key to her cell in front of Gennie.

“No, it's too soon! My family-- The last rites--none will be here to witness--”

“--Just as well, the likes of you won't be buried on hallowed ground.”

The soldier opened her cell and all the others descended on Gennie. They dragged her down the hallway and out of Lorelle's sight. There were too many of them for Lorelle to help Gennie escape. She watched helplessly as Gennie was taken to an inner holding cell away from everyone except the executioner.

Lorelle remembered the truth, but knew if Sorin were not a rogue and she his equal, he would have disposed of her for less than this long ago.

The time had come to find a way to him. Lorelle would have to find a human so she could speak. She heard the mind of another who lingered in the madness Sorin again created. She pleaded with him for her release. In a catatonic state she would be weak and her mind unable to fight. Lorelle thought it would stand to reason it was a descendant of the family O'Duinn. She set out at once within the cat, Alex to find a way to my tortured mind.

Chapter 30 - Severance

Kate's phone vibrated for what was probably the fiftieth time. The display said it was her boss again. She played with it and twirled it on the kitchen table while she took another drink of vodka. He was calling her constantly probably trying to find out if she was coming back to work. She didn't have the courage to face the world yet or to talk to anyone, especially him. She just wanted to be numb, to cry and then be numb again. It was the cycle she'd kept up for days. And it was working. She couldn't remember how many days of that and reading Sara's grimoire.

A terrible thought began to wade its way through to her alcohol sloshed brain. New Haven wasn't too far from Boston. She'd better call him or risk him stopping by the house. She was in no condition or mood to speak to him in person.

"I changed my mind, Steve. I'm keeping the story," Kate slurred.

Steve laughed.

"No source, huh?"

"No at least not before deadline."

"Well, I'm sorry to hear that Kate. But I can't say I'm not surprised. I'll Fed Ex your last check and your belongings from the office tomorrow."

Call ended.

Job ended.

Career ended?

Vodka was still there. Kate smiled. She took another big drink and passed out at the kitchen table.

Steve Mac poured himself a drink. He always kept some scotch on hand in his office for these occasions. He really didn't like firing people sometimes, especially when he had no choice. He knew Kate was a good person and a good writer. It seemed to him she was going through some hard times at home and they were seeping into her work life. He knew she had just gotten divorced. That had to be hard. Working, going through a divorce

and trying to raise a teenage daughter alone. Still, he couldn't let her incompetence, temporary or not, affect the bottom line of the company he was in charge of.

He sat back in his chair and decided to take a look at her computer. He hopped on the network and found the link to her computer was still there. Maybe there was an email or some clue as to what was going on with her. He rifled through her files until he stumbled across the piece she was talking about.

"Inside the Children of Psyon" He read aloud, shaking his head. He began to read. He meant to only read the opening but found he couldn't stop. It wasn't complete, but she was right. It was an incredible story. If it were true, they would really be telling the world something mind-blowing and boosting sales and readership if they made into a series of articles. Steve knew he'd need an original and new completed take on it. Then it wouldn't really be stealing. He picked up the phone and called an intern.

"Hey Josh, I need a new writer, pronto. Can ya send me in someone good for an interview?"

"Yeah, I know what time it is. It's time to do that thing. You know the one I don't pay you a great salary for but you were hoping someday you might make money at it," he laughed.

"About an hour? Why so long? Is it a chick? Yeah? Figures. Alright-- I'll be here."

When she walked into the office, Steve couldn't believe his luck at being alone with such a striking woman. He would definitely reward that intern. Her long deep auburn hair, her full young hiked up breasts made him think instantly,

"Yeah fire crotch...you got the job."

"Hi, Lily Eiffel," the young woman said, extending her hand across his desk.

"Hi Lily, Steve Mac."

He said reaching out to grasp her hand for a brisk handshake.

"Thanks for coming on such short notice. You must be pretty hungry."

"What?" Lily said.

"Sorry, I mean...you are eager to prove yourself?"

"Yes," Lily said.

“I've got a strange and off-beat story I need investigated and covered. You up for it?”

“Depends on what it is,” Lily said.

“Smart lady, I like that. You'll need a bit of street smarts for this one. It's about an underground community of psi vampires. You'll have to infiltrate them and do some interviews. And you'll have to get one of them to come out as a source. I can't run it without that.”

“And where'd you hear about this?” Lily asked, leaning forward onto his desk appearing engrossed in what he was telling her.

Steve appreciated the flash of cleavage for a moment then snapped out of it.

“It's been making the rounds for a while now, but no one has gotten a source to talk. I bet you could get them to,” Steve smiled lasciviously.

She smirked looking into his eyes.

“Steve, you were so right...I am hungry.”

Lily didn't move her position on his desk. But instead of her cleavage, he finally saw her eyes. Blinding violet threads of light trailed out of them. On sight of them, he couldn't move. They reached out to him. Why couldn't he move out of his chair or close his damn eyes? She walked around his desk and sat on his lap, gripping his throat while she spoke to him.

“Getting a clue why no one has talked yet?”

“Wait, I know you. Your name isn't Lily.”

“I knew you would remember me, once you shut the hell up.”

He vaguely remembered her name from a piece he investigated years ago as a young reporter. She was one of them? He couldn't believe there was one on top of him. And she...Oh she liked it rough. He felt his groin growing into a stiff mound. How he wished he could move so he could undo his pants and give it to her. His last conscious thought was wondering what her beautiful face would look like when she came for him.

She felt a warm and wet release underneath her. The young woman stood up and slapped him hard.

“Ah, you disgusting sack of shit.”

Instant rage led her to raise him from his chair with one hand lifting him high until his feet no longer touched the floor while he gasped for air. The threads of light from her eyes connected with his. They multiplied into pulsing ropes of chromatic tubes in which his energy flowed to her, robbing him of the strength and energy to fight her. Still, he managed to laugh before she released his limp body back to his black leather executives' office chair. He was amused with reliving the past and more so that she had no choice but to see his deeds as well. She saw visions of all the terrified underlings he bullied. He harassed them into silence through numerous instances of office politics. Deeds which catapulted him up the office food chain until achieving a position of power.

His laugh soon turned into incoherent mumbling, his face, frozen in a lecherous smile. And though he no longer had control of any of his faculties, his crotch maintained its stiff condition.

Finally accomplishing a vacant stare from him, she stood in front of him and thought how appropriate it was, leaving him this way. Walking out of the skyscraper, she almost wished she could see the paramedics' reactions when they were called to the scene. His essence so perverted and vile still pulsed through her mind and body. It had made her forget to read him fully.

"It doesn't matter," she thought. It was done. Even if she had endured the most distasteful feeding one could ever imagine, she took a man who misused his power over others and brought him to his knees. A new charge and pleasure she would revel in, eventually.

Chapter 31 – A Trapped Mind

Sara O'Duinn, Grimoire Entry, 12th November, 2008 - Overwhelmed and in need of an escape, Tasha laid down to sleep. A previously elusive Alex curled up in the crook of her body vibrating with a comforting purr to express his approval. Although everything was in place for her to relax, Tasha found sleep was no longer a luxury she could enjoy. Her mind raced with thoughts of what the future held. The guilt arrived for thinking of herself while I was possibly bound for a mental ward.

“What happened Sara?”

As soon as the question left Tasha's mind, the black slate before her turned to full color disjointed visions. The visions were fractured and blurry. They flashed before her too quick to fully comprehend. Her mind grasped it was me somehow trying to communicate.

“Sara, slow down. I don't understand.”

The vision I transferred to her degraded into a swirl of colors and then one pinpoint of light into black again.

“Sara!”

There was no question in Tasha's mind then. She needed to see me. In a panic she left bed, dressed and got to her car. Fumbling with the car keys haphazardly, she happened to look down at her hands. They were fading from existence, solid for a moment and then fading again. She got out of the car to examine her hands in the light. The startling condition they were in removed the grip strength from her hands. The keys dropped to the pavement. The condition was probably not just confined to her hands, she thought. She turned to go back into the house to check a mirror. Sorin appeared in front of her, hands clasped in front of him with a slight amused smile. His mind spoke to her.

“Before you make contact with your friends, you will need to resolve--”

She couldn't help smiling at the lunacy of the moment.

“--Yes, I suppose it is beyond noticeable.” Tasha felt compelled to walk closer him as though we were in a verbal conversation.

“A selfless nature may prove a challenge for you as a child of Psyon. There will be times when you have no choice other than to consider only your immediate needs. The ability to see the shadow realm signals the end of your awakening. Your body will stabilize soon.”

She didn't like the sound of “shadow realm”. It sounded ominous.

“So this is how you appeared at my door out of nowhere?”

He looked around surveying for people. “Yes, now come inside now before you are seen.”

Stepping inside, the familiar sights and sensations of her home disappeared. She was frightened by what her eyes beheld of the shadow realm. Multitudes of people flowed past her in varying dress and condition; all questioning their purpose and destination. So many voices and the grotesque appearance of some caused Tasha to shut her eyes tightly. Instinctively, she knew what it was. She entered the realm of the dead. They could see her and what was worse, she could see them. Mercifully, she felt Sorin's presence next to her, his hand holding hers.

“They will not harm you. The purpose of their path does not allow them to contact you. But you must never try to contact them. We do not belong in the realm of the human dead and can remain here only moments at a time. Come, it is time to leave.”

Returning to her home, Tasha opened her eyes again to see it and Sorin in vivid comforting color. Somehow her eyes were more inclined to take in Sorin. Even with the pressing need within her to see me, the thought crept back into her mind for another chance to be with Sorin.

“*What is wrong with me?*” She thought.

“I am glad you are beginning to think of yourself,” he said with a smile, amused she forgot he could read her thoughts.

She checked herself in the large mirror on the mantle. Her body had returned to its solid human state.

“Yes, now we can go and see your friend,” he said. His statement only encouraged more fear in Tasha at the thought of him around my family.

“We?” she asked.

He looked around as though he heard something she couldn't.

“Their questions have already begun. The connection with you is strong, though it is no match for mine. You will call the white light again to protect from their intrusion and I will be at your side if only in your mind.”

Entering the hospital, Tasha was reminded how much she absolutely hated them. She supposed there were happy outcomes such as births and people recovering from illnesses. But mostly they were harbingers of sorrow and death to her. The thought crossed her mind how happy she was to be liberated from their walls. She reluctantly shuffled into the hospital room like a child who was wary of punishment. The room was so bright it was blinding. It brimmed with flower arrangements of every variety. She thought the only thing missing was the calm that surrounded her friend.

“Tasha,” a loud voice startled her; she looked up to see Nori's face to the side of a large vase of flowers he was carrying.

“Sara's going home.”

Well that's good right? she asked, afraid to hear his answer by the look on his face. “Does that mean she is getting better?”

Nori sighed heavily and continued gathering my belongings while answering her question.

“There was talk of Fairview.”

“The mental facility?” Tasha asked in disbelief.

“Yes, but her family insisted on taking her home with the help of visiting care nurses, of course. She doesn't need to be fed intravenously anymore. Her physical health is better.”

“Mentally?” she asked.

“Well that's the thing. She started moving her hand like she wanted to write something down. At first we thought it was to communicate because she couldn't speak. I gave her a pen and a book to write in. She writes in it constantly. They have to sedate her to make her stop and sleep. When I was finally able to pry it from her hands...it was nothing but gibberish,” Nori said shaking his head and continuing. “And she still isn't speaking or

responding. So she needs a different kind of treatment now. Her family arrived today from Ireland. They asked about you,” Nori replied, exacting the guilt from Tasha as if he cut her with a knife.

“I know, Nori. I'm sorry I haven't been around more. It's just that some people handle this kind of thing differently, you know?”

He turned to her with a disapproving glance.

“Yeah I know it's hard, but let's turn the tables for a moment. Where would she be if you were here?”

Tasha knew the answer. The guilt returned with a sharp ache in her throat.

“I'll follow you over, okay?”

Nori sighed deeply with relief on their walk into the waiting room.

“Good, that's a relief. I don't think I can stand in for you much longer. I don't know, it's not easy to explain. They're just really intense people.”

Nori was showing a bit more comfort around her so Tasha decided it was the time to make something right.

“Nori, I want to apologize for the way I acted when you came over to tell me about Sara.”

Nori turned to her with visible embarrassment.

“Yeah I'm sorry too. I get it, right. You have a boyfriend. I'll tell you right now I don't like him, but hell I don't even know him. That doesn't change anything about how I feel about you. I'm still your friend.”

“Telling yourself it's just a phase?” She asked, teasing him.

“Exactly,” he replied rolling his eyes with a sarcastic grin.

“You could be very right about that, Nori. Everything has happened so fast I can't even wrap my head around it yet. I don't really know where it's going. But I promise I'll try not to get so wrapped up in it from now on, okay?”

“As a friend, that's all I can ask for.”

“Yeah...hey I'll ride over with you to Sara's, it'll put a limit on your alone time with them.”

The challenge before Tasha was daunting. A room full of the clan O'Duinn. She had held out hope I would recover before it came to this. She hoped the white light she'd called to cover her would keep them from seeking every morsel from her mind. Still every fiber of her being told Tasha they wouldn't approve. No one would. She was torn between loyalties. Sorin was no longer a guilty pleasure she could hide. Her mind and body craved him with every step she took toward me. Even if she had the resolve to distance herself from Sorin, it was not an option anymore. She didn't know what would happen to her next. Her life depended on learning more from him.

In the drawing room of the library, my family gathered. In her condition it was hard to tell the difference between verbal speech and private thought. She heard them equally audible. She was disabled and in panic of her approach. She had no choice but to join the den of wolves in front of her. The room became very close to silent when she entered the room. My mother was the first to break the ice. Clare O'Duinn hugged Tasha and drew back with a motherly look of concern.

"I'm so glad you could make it over Tasha, I know it will be good for Sara."

"I'd like that too. Can I see her?" she said avoiding contact with my mom's extended hand.

"Sara is in her room, I'll take you to her," she said with an uncomfortable half smile.

My room was bright with the afternoon sun. The wheelchair was placed in the corner of the room away from the light. I sat with a blank stare towards the window. Tasha moved me into the light. I grabbed Tasha's hand and filled her mind with visions. They were visions of Sorin. The emerging instinct within Tasha urged her to shake off contact, but she just couldn't. She had to know why he was in my head at all, when and how we came into contact. The culminating vision was from Sorin's past. It was a much different time. Bright colors and mod furnishings told her it was most likely the 1960's. He was in a studio flat in London, a student of art in his studio sketching a model to canvas.

"Turn this way?" said the model.

He looked at her with impatience and replied, “No, let me show you.”

He posed the model into a contorted inhuman stance for his own amusement. He stepped back to admire her nude body in the grotesque placement of his creation. “Yes. That will do.”

She laughed at him.

“You can't be serious. I don't know if I can hold this position for more than a few minutes.”

He replied to her without looking up from the canvas.

“I pay very well and I think you'll hold any pose I request.”

She stepped down from the platform walking to his side to get his full attention.

“What...really? I think I'll do whatever I please. I don't need your money that bad.”

He looked her nude body up and down then returned his stare to his canvas.

“Oh but you do. Your little one still waits for her dinner tonight.”

Her eyes seething with rage began to pool in frustration. She walked to her clothes in a huff and dressed while throwing her belongings around with a bang here and there. Sorin walked to her and ripped the robe from her body. Her eyes widened as she balled up a small fist. He grabbed her arm in while it was airborne before she could connect with his face. He smiled and grabbed her struggling body.

Sorin's perspective was chilling to Tasha. She could see the terror on the woman's face. Locked with his eyes she couldn't move or speak. Each memory, she viewed for the last time as they escaped her one by one. A blue light left her face. It met the deep red glow enveloping Sorin. The blending light turned to black. Her head tilted back and her body fell backward towards the floor bending over Sorin's arm like a lifeless marionette. He took her back to the platform and posed her exactly as she was before their altercation. In the calm silence of the room he returned to the canvas. He surveyed his tools choosing the same charcoal to resume sketching her vacant eyes. His words when they met returned to Tasha.

“This was payment to a relative of mine from a woman who was very happy with her self-portrait; he was an artist by trade.”

Remembering his deception drove home to her just how long he had been doing this throughout time. Preying on women, taking everything they were from them. Leaving them to wander or be taken to institutions. How many families were missing young women because of him? How many had he made vulnerable to fall prey to a psychopath?

The visions from my mind released Tasha from the addictive fog that had been all consuming from her first encounter with Sorin. They also made her fearful and filled her with sadness. He didn't lie to her. He simply didn't mention a confrontation with me. Tasha began to wonder how many more omissions of truth were left to discover. She was incensed and more hurt by what it meant. The deception of entering her dreams was playful when coupled with his seduction. It had to do only with Tasha. It was in no comparison to harming her friend. For the first time, Tasha saw the perspective of Sorin as a predator and those who feared him. She was weak and her stomach turned at the thought of what she would become. She knew his connection to her mind grew stronger with each passing moment.

Too exhausted to leave, Tasha transferred me from my wheelchair to her bed when dusk took the light. She sat next to the bed laying her head down. The craving for Sorin was gone and she had no want of ever being with Sorin again. But she knew he was unavoidable. What was set in motion couldn't be stopped no matter how she denied it was real. He would find her and she would feel the same dread of his victims in his presence.

Chapter 32 - Insight

The morning thump of the newspaper against the door jolted Kate into reality. She laid in bed sorting through her trip to New York and what a waste of time it had been. Two weeks after Daniel and Tess disappeared she began to see calls coming in on her cell phone bill from New York and knew it was where Daniel and Tess were hiding. She flew out there and roamed the streets hoping to catch a glimpse of them by accident. All she succeeded in was nearly getting mugged in an alleyway while she was chasing down shadows. Out of desperation, she went to the police and reported Tess missing. A detective took her information and coldly advised she should keep her chin up. The cop told her “her runaway daughter would probably call her after about a month in New York”. Frustrated and broke, Kate had to leave New York when her savings ran out.

Why were they still delivering the newspaper to her? It was weeks since she was fired and they still hadn't updated their records? She was tired of it, yet couldn't make herself call and have them stopped. It was a reminder of her failure. She deserved to have a kick to her pants every day. It became the only thing keeping her sane and getting out of bed in the morning. She made herself read it as a form of self-punishment. Then it was time for a drink. The headline jumped out at Kate's eyes from the page.

“Media Kingpin, Steve Mac Found at Examiner Office”.

She had just begun to devour the words on the page when the doorbell rang.

“Dammit.”

She looked at herself in the mirror in the hall. Yes, it was the middle of the day and of course she looked like total shit. She peeked out the side window. It was Nori. She remembered her car wasn't in the garage. It was in the driveway, the consequence of a late night alcohol run.

“Oh, God Dammit.”

She knew there was no choice. Her car was there out in the open and he would know she was there. She straightened herself

up as much as she could and opened the door. Nori stood there with the paper in his hand.

“Well your name isn't on here, Luckily, I know enough to read between the lines,” Nori said, livid.

“Come on in, Nori,” Kate said with fake joviality. “I didn't give him the story, that's not in the paper, right?”

“No it's not, but it's pretty damn obvious he knew something. That's how they shut you up,” Nori said pointing to the paper. “Why did you do this?”

She felt the raw emotion and the hurt aching in her throat.

“I don't care what they do to me anymore! I don't care if the world knows about them! I don't want this to happen to anyone else,” Kate screamed.

Nori walked to her.

“Wait a minute, slow down...What else has happened? What do you not want to happen to anyone else?”

“Tess is gone. She left with Daniel. I don't know when or if I will ever see her again, Or if she is Psyon now. All I know is that she is alive, if you can call it that,” she said, breaking down.

Nori held her for a moment. Then he helped her to sit down on the couch in the parlor. He sat across from her.

“I think you're right. It's time. I've been thinking about it myself for a while now. And I think I know how to do it. Where's your computer? Nori asked.

Kate wiped her eyes and smiled. A glimmer of what Nori was suggesting entered her mind. She gave Nori her computer and sat next to him on the couch.

“I'm going to set this up for you and you need to write all of it up in one sitting,” Nori said. “Do you need some time to think about it? It'll be out there for good and there's nothing you, I or they can do about it,”

“I'm ready if you are,” Kate said with a deep breath.

“Let me know when you're ready and I'll send it.” Nori said.

Kate wrote through the night and into the morning. She transferred Sara's words from the grimoire then added her own experiences with the Children of Psyon. It all came to her so fast. She couldn't believe the risk she was taking. It wasn't like her at all. She didn't know if they would come for her. All she could think about was seeing her daughter again one last time.

Nori was sleeping on the couch across from her. He woke up when the light of day returned to the room. Kate smiled nervously.

“It's done. Now what?” Kate asked.

Nori walked over to her and hit send on her computer.

“Now we wait,” Nori said.

“Please don't leave Nori. I don't want to be alone when they come for me.”

“I'm not going anywhere.” he smiled.

Kate smiled back uneasily.

Nori stayed with her a couple of days and then had no choice but to return to work. Weeks passed and nothing happened. No Psyon materialized to take her knowledge of them away. It didn't remove the uneasy feeling Kate had about her future, though. When she did have to venture out, she wasn't seeing them anymore. It was as if all of them left New Haven at once. She went to the club and found that it was just an empty space in a strip mall. The black on the door was removed. All of the elaborate Gothic furnishings she remembered from that night were gone. It was as if the club and the Psyon never existed. Everything was so quiet it scared her. Because she knew that was how the Children of Psyon operated, in silence and in secret until they chose to strike.

A month later to the day they released the information to the Internet, Kate's depression and fear lifted long enough to let her curiosity seep through. She wanted to check the website Nori created. She read through the teaser at the top of the home page and was surprised with how well written it was considering how her body shook the entire time she wrote it. She clicked on a link for the message board and was shocked at the activity there. A conspiracy theory had developed completely on its own. As she read through the conversations, she found some believed the Psyon were based on something real because of their own similar experiences. While the skeptics argued vehemently they were completely crazy and the blog was simply pure fiction. As she scrolled down further her heart nearly stopped at the number of hits her blog had received, nearly 10,000 for the month. It was bittersweet but good news. She thought at least if she lived another month, expenses would be one less thing she had to

worry about. Finally, when Kate reached the bottom of the page she saw something that made her cringe. Her personal email was listed as the contact address.

She pulled up her email account immediately. The inbox was practically inundated. She thought it would probably take her days to sort through it all. She found most were from the crazies, everything from misplaced adulation to death threats. But one email subject line in caps and in bold red letters captured her attention. It read “Offer for publication of 'The Children of Psyon’”. It was from a publishing house she'd never in her life dreamed would contact her about anything. She opened the message and found a lucrative offer to publish her blog into a book in soft and hardcover. The undeniable urge to pace and think this through began. She paced and thought. It had been a month with no contact at all from the Psyon. Maybe they needed another stab at their heels to get their attention. It would either incite them towards some kind of vengeance or provide a slight chance to see her daughter and at this point she was beginning not to care which. A large part of her wanted to get back at them and wanted the world at large to know just what they had put her through. Hands shaking, she banged out a reply to the email accepting the deal. A familiar mist filled her home office when she sent the message, but this time Sara was silent. Her computer shut off without powering down at all. Kate stared at the black screen and realized the temporary quiet she had enjoyed was gone. It was on. She just didn't know what yet.

Chapter 33 - Possession

Sara O'Duinn, Grimoire Entry, 13th November, 2008 -
From the perspective of the feline, Alex, Lorelle saw infinitely more of the local woodland than she wanted. She knew it was often a condition of directing a feline. Even in the most intelligent such as Alex, she could still only hope her request of him to find me was being met. It could be no more than his daily rounds as cats do as they please, their interests do not lie with pleasing anyone else. Not to mention that he could have refused the request all together in confusion. He was more apt to remember what color my scent was than a human name.

At last she saw a clearing and a welcome change of scenery. A richly layered blend of rare flowering plants and herbs swayed gently in the breeze as they made their way to a small cottage. Lorelle thought it was a good sign signaling the environs of a witch. Alex entered the home unnoticed when the door was slightly ajar and people filtered in and out. They were visiting someone. A family was gathered in crisis. Through the whispers of their low toned conversation, Lorelle heard mention of the name she had hoped to hear. Alex slipped down a hallway to the most quiet of the rooms. There, she saw through him another cat, a gray female with large emerald eyes, perched atop the bed of a loved one. She mewed a distressed greeting to him. He walked to her with a sympathetic rub of his face to her whiskers. Lorelle entered the gray cat while she and Alex curled up next to the human form in the bed.

The gray cat purred as a hand weakly brushed the fur at the back of its neck. She entered the body attached to this hand at once.

Sorin underestimated my mind. It took most of his effort, the frequent attacks to keep me away from Tasha. I could hear the conversations of my family and friends but couldn't respond to them. I was weak the effort to keep myself alive while also fighting my way back to humanity. His presence wasn't far since I defied him, releasing to Tasha visions of him.

Lorelle's heart felt as if it had dropped to the ground when she saw Sorin for the first time in centuries through the mist of my

mind. She thought he far was more beautiful than she remembered. Even then, beaten and covered in a mixture of blood and the musty dirt from his jail cell, he captivated her. He appeared to her with his long shining hair of black and eyes glowing with the force of preternatural anger. Though Lorelle wished above all to alert him to her presence inside of me, she couldn't bring herself to. He was overtaken with the fury over his brief loss of control. His head tilted down, dark eyes seething and fists clenched he walked with vicious purpose seeking the quickest route to me through the fog of my mind. His mind spoke to me with a rage Lorelle thought unbecoming of Sorin.

"You are no more skilled than I expected-- only more devious in your methods. Even with Tasha near you, keeping vigil-- Know this, you will not reach her again."

"I will continue as long as there is breath left in my body." I replied.

"Why do you persist in intervening on her behalf? She does not want your help. She waits for me, longing for what she is to become...I have no wish to harm you, Sara O'Duinn."

I heard bells begin to sound off one by one. Two female humans dressed in white bustled with hurried activity around me. A triangle of white hot light formed to my mind. I felt my hand touched by another. The faint echo of a voice cut through the thick haze to my consciousness.

"Hang in there Sara, we are here. Keep fighting, sweetheart we'll help you."

My mother and family sensed his attack. I squeezed her hand.

"She squeezed my hand!" Mom shouted. "I know you can hear me now Sara, please baby you have to help us."

The light of the triangle was pulsing and getting brighter with each moment.

"No, No! Sara, baby...you have to help us fight. Don't give up now. Don't go!" My mother pleaded.

Lorelle invoked a calming peace to my mind. It was the kind felt only at the beginning of life. The voices of my family trailed away.

"I love you, Mum. So much...I'm so tired," I explained to my mother's mind.

My mother's voice frantic, answered quickly.

"You've done so much already sweetheart, I know, just a little more."

I felt I should apologize for my weakness, for failing, but the words wouldn't come. "I love you."

I didn't have the heart to tell her. I felt as though I would like to remain asleep forever.

My body calmed and the alarms ceased returning to the sound of my measured repetitive heartbeat. I was in a deep induced coma and with Sorin so close to my mind, Lorelle told me it was time for her to contact Sorin.

Chapter 34 – Out of the Shadows

“He is no one, why bother with reading him? He knows just enough of our kind to be dangerous and not even of his own volition. He learned about us through his relationship with an unawakened. We have every right to end him now.” Charles Rothschild II said to his fellow elder William Brookingshire while they walked through New Haven's antique district.

“That is precisely why we should always read, Charles. This is a different age. There are many more unawakened, sometimes I think more than we suspect. There is no other way to be sure he will not be made Psyon...or worse.”

“Let it be on my head then William. I'll do it.”

“NO-- This one falls to me. Do you realize what is at stake if we do not continue? There are few chosen Psyon with elder status sufficient to rule.”

“Very well, but I highly doubt this mundane has the strength of character to give you another century of life.”

“Stop talking; keep your mind focused to the task at hand, Charles. We need to find him quickly. He has been mindful of being on his own as of late. This may be our last opportunity for some time to come.”

“I hear him. Do you see? That one, going into the shop.”

William and Charles entered the shadow realm. Two shadows in the shape of men walked up to the antique shop. They quickly stepped into the glass to hide themselves from the people window shopping on the street at dusk. Charles tried to continue past the glass with the intention of entering the shop. William raised his arm across Charles's chest to stop him.

“Be still, Charles. I will read him now to know what we are dealing with.”

Visions of two former past lives in addition to the present one flowed into William's mind, all very long-lived, but none remarkable. Lives William judged were squandered with collecting scientific knowledge, the minutia involved with avoiding social interaction and lastly in his most recent, human technology. Much of William's life had been spent in the time and place of Regency England. Computers, cell phones and

everything that exchanged information in the present world he found a complete mystery. It was why he wasn't able to detect Nori's intention of striking a blow to the Psyon veil of shadows until it was too late. William thought at least if there was no chance of another century of life from Nori Laurent, he would gain something almost equal of value; information that would make him stronger and more equipped to carry on. He motioned to Charles to move from inside the glass door into the antique shop.

With their first steps, a voice cut through the darkness like the shrill shriek of a dying animal in the forest at night.

“Who's there?”

William and Charles walked to Nori's desk in shadow. Nori was illuminated only by an overhead desk lamp. On his desk were several antiques he was photographing for the antique auction website. Charles picked up a gold pocket watch and transferred it to his pocket. Nori watched as the pocket watch levitated then disappeared into the black nothingness beyond his desk. When his eyes finally adjusted to the dark he saw the faint outline of a shadow. It was about the size and shape of a man.

William looked at Charles with contempt at the loss of the element of surprise.

“Five minutes, you could not restrain yourself for five minutes?” William sighed.

Startled at the sound of a disembodied voice, Nori pushed himself back in his chair about a foot from the desk. The chair shot backward. It became unstable dumping him to the floor. Nori scrambled to his feet and ran to the door of his office.

William looked at Charles with annoyance and walked again to Nori. With a thought towards the office door, he locked the deadbolt then broke it off halfway in the aperture. Nori tried the door knob repeatedly then realizing the door wouldn't open began frantically hitting it with his shoulder, trying to break it down.

“Nori Laurent, you have been expecting us-- No?” Charles said, mocking Nori's accent.

Nori leaned against the door and slid down to the ground closing his eyes tight.

William motioned to Charles to approach Nori. Charles stepped out of the shadow realm and walked to Nori taking his head in his hands and holding it back to face William. Nori didn't open his eyes and remained motionless. Charles forced open Nori's eyelids. William materialized in front of Nori.

“Keep your eyes open, or I'll rip your eyelids off.” Charles threatened Nori.

Without another word, William focused on Nori. Radiant yellow threads of light spilled from Williams eyes into Nori's ending in a flash of blinding luminescence on Nori's face. Digital strands of cognition began to flow into William's mind which brought a smile to his face. Then unexpectedly William began to see visions of a stunning young woman with deep red hair. Abruptly the memories of her became blurry and ambiguous. A slow and thin stream of blood ran under Nori's nose.

“He is bleeding.” William heard Charles say from the distance of reality.

“Let me see her.” William told Nori.

Nori's body began to tremor in seizure. Charles felt a sticky wetness on one of his hands that covered Nori's ear. He looked he saw his hand was covered in Nori's blood. He called again more urgently to William.

“William stop, something is happening--”

William watched as hazy visions rushed past him into the distance then faded into the onslaught of black taking over Nori's mind. Then all was dark and he could see nothing but the pinpoint of light from the realm of shadows coming for Nori. In a rage, he struggled to break free of Nori's mind.

“Useless.” William said with his hands on his temples, stepping away from Nori.

“Are you alright, William?”

“Yes, You need not hold him down now, Charles. It's done.”

“What is useless, William?”

“Everything.” William said with frustration.

“This human you believed to be insignificant, it held her identity. The one who is leading a coven of turned Psyon.” William said, his hands clenched in tight fists, then kicking Nori's body on the floor. The kick broke loose another stream of

dark blood. It ran from Nori's mouth onto the floor and pooled to the side of his face.

“I've never seen one bleed like that.”

“I have. It was the single reason for his status as a wunderkind in computer language at such a young age. I was trying to get information out of him he didn't want me to see. He had a dormant embolism at the left of his brain. It broke loose precisely when he began to think of ways to resist me. Everything I saw of her became complete gibberish. All that we have succeeded in is carrying out the sentence levied against him by the Psyon for violating the veil of shadows.”

“Which is all we were sent to do.” Charles reminded William.

William stepped in to the shadow realm and Charles followed.

“That was not all; we also need to know the whereabouts of the unawakened he learned of us from.” William said with an impatient sigh.

“She cannot be far from him. A few more days and I suspect more than one mundane's thoughts will lead us to her. She's becoming quite notable among them. It is only a matter of time.”

“Yes...time I would rather spend hunting my estate grounds, rather than one more moment in America.”

Chapter 35 – A Transformation

Sara O'Duinn, Grimoire Entry, 14th November, 2008 - Relinquished from my mind, Sorin noticed a renewed strength in my essence. A slight defiance still existed. The color of my energy in the astral plane remained bright and unfaltering. Incensed his attempts to subdue me failed, he returned to my subconscious. A faint reserved presence manifested. It became stronger until it was fully recognized. The presence invaded his mind and drew awareness like a fresh slashing of Sorin's throat. "She is a beautiful soul in more ways than you know, Sorin," said the voice of Lorelle.

The familiar sound behind him boiled the anger in his head.

"You return to me now... for what purpose? I have learned enough on my own terms. I have no need of your...help," he replied.

"I have only a small measure of time to speak to you. It will serve you well to listen."

Through the mist of my unconscious state, she walked to him in my visage parting the fog speaking with the all too familiar voice of Lorelle. She had chosen an adversary as a vessel for speaking to him. It only reminded him of how evil he thought she was. He walked to Lorelle wanting to end her with every word she spoke, but he was still a rogue, her equal and couldn't.

"Do you know...My will has driven me to survive only to exact vengeance for what you did to me and Genevieve. Is it why you appear to me here in the astral plane where I cannot touch you? I suppose it is the only way for you to survive...in cowardice."

"Put aside your hatred of me Sorin. It should not be so difficult for you to understand...Now that you have done the same to another. You allowed Tasha to feed from you. Are you aware that she has completed the awakening?"

"Yes, I am aware. It was not my intention," he replied.

"You know very well it was your intention. In the beginning of your dalliance with this mundane, you thought her to be suitable for another century of life. She could be that for Psyon of an elder position. For you she is neither host nor sacrifice. You cannot read her fully and neither can I, therein lies the danger.

One thing is certain you can no longer feed from each other. The Children of Psyon do not permit it. You risk her existence and yours if you persist.”

“Why would something so enjoyable not be allowed?” he deviously questioned.

“She did not become your companion; once the awakening is complete she is to you, a sister,” she replied. She shook her head and continued with a heavy sigh, “Sorin, they kept me from you before I could tell you...It is forbidden to feed from one you have made Psyon. She is now part of our lineage, our family in the Children of Psyon. The time has come for you to make a choice.”

The jealous rise he intended instead delivered an answer which surprised Sorin when it pierced to the core of his heart. “I cannot, she is mine. I will not just give her to another...Is it enjoyable? Feeding from the enduring pain you cause? You are nothing but a deceiving wretch. Why should I believe you?”

“I gave you a chance at life where there was none. I vowed to do the same for Genevieve, but your captors took her before you or I could take her with us. I loved you then and I am bound to you as your maker. Believe what I tell you is the truth. They kept me from you and now you have made the same mistake,” she replied.

“You would have me believe a fledgling I created could cause me harm? You know nothing of her...or the power within me,” He said with the conviction of his belief.

“Think carefully Sorin. She surprised you when she fed from you. My time with you has come to an end, so I must leave you with this. If you cannot bear for her to feed from another, then you know what must be done. No one can make this choice for you. I am sorry, Sorin,” she replied.

Turning to hiss more venom at her, he found my visage was drifting back into the mist. So Lorelle left him again. And again Sorin thought he was no better for her grace.

The balance of her fate and his weighed on Sorin. Once discovering the hidden fire of her wish to be free from humanity

smoldering within her, he wanted Tasha as a companion from his depths. The same quality which attracted Sorin, blinded him to her gifts. She was Psyon, the hunger to feed intensifying. He would have to put aside how he longed for her. His instinct told him she was the one he should take for another century of life. For this, he would consume the light of her for himself. What part of him was it he wondered. The one whose heart splintered with wishing it was not so.

“Touching...You should know we will not have to wait much longer to take her ourselves,” a voice to his head interrupted.

Sorin looked to each corner of Tasha's home which had been their haven. He suspected they had been following them for some time but had not made themselves known. They seemed to him nothing but cowards so he spoke to them as such. Sorin called out to the room.

“You make this challenge to me, yet you do not show yourselves?”

They appeared to Sorin in the urgency of their anger with his confrontation. The two were the first of Psyon brethren he had witnessed, when he saw them he remembered them from the club in New Haven and also knew they were there to settle an aforementioned score. They were there to check on his progress with Natasha since their last meeting.

“Allow me to introduce ourselves. I am William Brookingshire of the County Kildare and he is Charles Rothschild II duke of Wurtherford--”

“You know what is to be done brother, why do you not take her? We think it is because you cannot.” Charles interrupted.

“You have not the status or backbone for her. Now leave me, I have matters more important than the fantasy of your wishes to attend to.” Sorin bluffed.

“She is not one to be taken lightly. You must transform her then give her to us. She is not of our line and we think, would suit us well. We can feed from her...and she from us.”

“Now I understand. So is this the reason for....your weakness, you feed from other Psyon?” Sorin questioned.

William moved to Sorin with a confident laugh.

“Give her to us, it seems we are more suitable to show her the ways, brother.”

“I wonder...Yes...Now I am certain of it. She would find you as repulsive as I do.” Sorin replied with a devious smile to them.

William's back bristled as he rushed to Sorin speaking inches from his face.

“You are ready for death then?”

Sorin pushed him away.

“I have ended many a human for another century of life. Why would she be any different?”

“It is not she who has changed.” Charles said with a smile.

“Stop wasting my time with your cowardice...say what you mean!”

“The creator of your line was a woman. She not only created you, she passed to you her...empathy. This mundane is simply the first to bring it full circle for you. You will not end her life...because you cannot bring yourself to.” William replied.

The anger in Sorin's blood boiled with his baseless observation. He walked to him speaking slowly as one would for a complete idiot.

“Even if I were not to take her, and make no mistake I shall...I think I should die rather than give her to you.”

William smiled smugly beginning to disappear from Sorin's sight while he spoke his last to his mind.

“As her maker, for a brief moment she is yours...do what you will. Then you are to prepare her for what awaits, mark my words...brother.”

Sorin could hardly control his laughter at his words. “What indeed.”

Sorin knew then the light of Tasha shone as bright for him as it did for every other who would see and cause her harm. The wolves circled her. The time was at hand to put his decision into action.

Chapter 36 - Status

“Hey! Do you have these in green?”

Daniel winced at the impatient shout of a young girl standing within a gaggle of others near the case at the back of their shop at the end of the brownstone block. He knew exactly when they all entered. It was hard not to. Their mass insecurities and general anxiety within their skins preceded them like a dark cloud envelopes the sun. He had decided to ignore them when the girl tapped the glass, then he was so annoyed he had to look.

“Yeah, I'm talking to you. A little help here? Geez.”

He walked back to them deliberately slow. He noticed the girl's manicured false fingernails which he had no doubt mommy and daddy bought for her via their credit card hours earlier. When he finally made his way back to her, he saw she was pointing to a pair of diode contacts. They had become a popular item since Kate's blog hit the internet. All the posers who wanted to be Pson simply had to have them when they went out to the underground and private clubs that seemed to spring up overnight. The contacts contained a microscopic sliver of fiber optic light diode. With a targeted jerk of their eye, they would emit a pulse of light from the human's eyes who wore them.

Daniel cut his eyes back to Tess and smiled.

“What makes you think you can pull off green?”

Daniel said pulling out a neon fuchsia pair.

“These would be more of a match for your energy.”

The girl looked at him with a pout and a smack to her gum.

“I don't remember asking your opinion.”

Daniel leaned down close to meet her eye level. His neon green threads flashed to her eyes for a moment, then returned back to him. The group of girls looked up, stopped texting on their cell phones, all with mouths wide open. He took just enough of her, enough of her essence for himself and Tess. Her knees buckled and she fell back into her friends.

When she came to a few seconds later, the girl was the first to break the silence.

“I don't care what color they are if they work as good as yours.”

“Yeah, I’ll take a pair too.” said another girl in the group behind her.

“Me too.” said another.

Daniel grabbed a few more pairs for the crowd and began walking to the front for Tess to ring them up. The girls trailed behind him credit cards in hand. He arrived at the register depositing several pairs of contacts on the counter with a Cheshire grin. Tess shook her head and rolled her eyes with a sigh at Daniel.

He mouthed “What?” at her, then turned to go to the stockroom.

Daniel climbed the stairwell from the stockroom of their brownstone rock shop “The Quarry” leading up to their townhouse. He knew Tess wouldn’t be far behind. He sensed her hunger as it worsened from the start of the day. With the onset of dusk, she was getting weak. He was teaching her as much as he knew but also had other turned Psyon living next to them on the block to help out. Lorelle told him the brownstones had been a stop on the Underground Railroad. It was the reason all the eight three story townhouses were connected by secret passages and contained some sort of hidden room. When the elder turned were looking for a place to start the new coven, it fit them perfectly. The turned could use the tunnels to get in one room in a moment if they were threatened in any way.

Tess was gaining confidence and learning quickly, but she still didn’t know how to feed on humans in plain sight and also didn’t know how deeply to feed if she was discovered. These two techniques were crucial to feeding as a turned Psyon. For her safety, Daniel couldn’t let Tess feed alone until she mastered them.

Daniel walked out to the terrace. He hoped she would appear soon because the girl’s energy still pulsed through his body. He went to the balcony and looked out across the street to the other colonial brownstones of Greenwich Village. He looked down at the limousine and motioned a greeting to their driver, Neale. He was one of two drivers of two waiting limousines the Psyon employed. Neale was his favorite because of his English accent and his limo always smelled of ginger snaps. Just as he was being pampered by his new status among the turned Psyon, the

mother he could hardly remember used to spoil him by making his favorite ginger snaps. Daniel loved New York City, so much energy, and so much of it all of the time. He could almost quench his thirst just from standing outside focusing on the multitudes of passing mundanes from their balcony at night.

He and Tess had more of the life he'd dreamed was possible. He spent many a night remembering the ones who made him. They were very well dressed and had the attention of everyone. They seemed to not really want for anything. That was the only reason they ended up getting so close to him. Daniel admired them, at first. He knew there had to be something more to this existence. There had to be a reason why the chosen gave their human lives up willingly.

Daniel and Tess were welcomed into the upper echelon of the new turned Psyon society, given a luxury apartment for which they never had to pay for, and were living amongst others like themselves while learning more about what they were from them. A far cry from New Haven he thought, having to hide what he was and nearly starving every day. Daniel heard the front door slam, then the sound of Tess's keys hitting the counter with the same force as a bullet shattering glass. Daniel walked to the kitchen. Tess was standing there, looking down at her hands. They appeared and disappeared from reality. She was slipping in and out of the shadow realm without any control over it. Tess looked up at Daniel too shocked to speak. It was time for her first test.

“It's okay, Tess. Come here.”

Tess walked to Daniel shaking, her face drained of color. Daniel took her hands in his and dropped his head back. “Remember the girl I just fed from downstairs? Find her and take it from me.”

“Daniel, I--”

Daniel gripped one of her wrists tighter. Then adjusted her face with his other hand underneath her chin and made her look into his eyes. “There's no time to talk about it, Tess. Just see the triangle and do it NOW.”

Indigo streams of light danced from Tess's eyes into Daniel's. The fuchsia energy from the girl in the shop began to flow out of Daniel's eyes to her. She took a deep breath and smiled at

him. Tess stopped shaking and he saw the beautiful color of her face he was accustomed to return. Satisfied she had fed her fill, Daniel moved to walk away from her and let go of her wrist. She grabbed his hand and wouldn't let go. Daniel tried to wrestle his hand away from her but in this moment she was stronger than he'd ever imagined she could be. She kept feeding from him until his own emerald green energy began to emerge from him into her eyes. He dropped to his knees looking up at her. He tried to speak, but all that came out was a dry choking sound. He had almost lost the ability to speak and she still didn't stop. Somehow he found the strength to stand, looked in her entranced eyes and yelled at her.

“Stop it, Tess. You're draining me. Stop!”

Tess released her grip on his hand. Daniel staggered backwards from her.

“I'm so sorry Daniel, I don't know why I couldn't stop. I could hear you the whole time, but I couldn't make myself stop.”

“It's alright. I'll be okay. You did exactly what you were supposed to do.”

“What?” I almost killed you.”

Daniel laughed while he rose to his feet.

“No you didn't...Look, I needed to know how deep you could feed if you ever needed to. What you did just now, that's what you do if a human ever finds out what you are. It doesn't kill them but it's damn close.”

“Can we take all the energy from them completely?”

“Yeah, I guess. They haven't taught me that yet, though.”

“That's what they'll do to my Mom, isn't it...the chosen.”

“Where'd you hear that?”

“Nowhere, it's just...She calls me every day, leaves messages on my voice mail. I miss her and I'm afraid for her. If I don't call back soon and just let her know I'm okay, she'll do something else until I do. I just know it.”

“Stop worrying about your Mom. We are all on top of it. We will take care of her when the time comes. You've got too many things to learn, think about yourself right now.”

“Take care of her? What does that mean? Daniel, if you know something, you have to tell me.”

“All I can tell you is we have it handled.”

“Look, I know it's hard for you because you don't have a family left. This is my mother we're talking about.”

“Okay...there is talk about her book coming out in print. It goes against everything the chosen meant to do with the veil of shadows.”

“I want a meeting with the Elder turned. We have to put a plan in place for turned who have to leave their families, like me. It happened to me and it's not like it won't happen again. I know what's in her head. She wouldn't do this for any other reason than to get to me.”

“No, you're not getting it. Among the turned your Mom is like a savior. You saw how I fed on that girl today. She wasn't afraid, she and her friends saw the whole thing and didn't even know I was Psyon. It's all because of Kate. The turned will protect her at all costs.

Okay... so then it's not the turned I'm worried about.”

“We rule New York City. This is the largest concentration of turned Psyon. Theoretically, within our coven her thoughts can't be detected by the chosen.”

“Then lets do it. Let's go get her.”

Daniel fell silent and walked out to the terrace. Tess followed on his heels.

“We can't go, Tess.”

“Why the fuck not? We know what needs to be done.”

“Do you know the one thing that kills most of us?”

“Like I give a crap...Stop fucking with me and get to the point. Why can't we go now!”

“Impatience. And you've got way too much of it.”

“What? We can't go because I'm too impatient?”

“NO---, that's what kills us. You've still got a lot to learn. You wouldn't be able to feed in New Haven, not yet. I can't risk it.”

“Then I want a meeting with the elder turned to know for myself what their plan is.”

“You're not even ready for that yet. They view it as a waste of time until you are ready. You have to feed without hiding. Once you can completely function as a Psyon, once you have proven yourself, then they will talk to you.”

“Okay, so bring it on. When can I do it?”

Daniel walked to her and put his arms around her.

"Just calm down and trust me when I tell you not to worry."

He felt her body stiffen in his arms.

"God, sometimes I really hate it here you know."

Daniel threw up his hands in frustration.

"What is there to hate here? We have a great place to live. Do you know how many people would shit themselves if they even thought for a minute they could have an apartment in New York City like this one? Not to mention there's other people like us, who understand us--"

Tess interrupted.

--I don't like that you know everything and I don't know anything. It makes me nervous and it's not fair."

"No it's not fair, but that's the way it has to be and I'll tell you why. It's because you have to trust me to learn from me, not the other way around!"

Tess was finally silent. She put her head down. Daniel decided it was time to change the subject to calm Tess down.

"I think what we need is to get out of here tonight. Do you feel like going out for a while?"

Tess took a deep breath and smiled.

"Sure."

"Okay, let's get dressed. Put on something you used to wear in New Haven."

Tess was making her way up the stairs to their bedroom.

"What? Why?" Tess said, stopping on the stairs and turning her head.

Daniel patted her on the butt pushing her up the stairs in front of him.

"You'll see."

Daniel walked to the terrace and looked down at Neale. He signaled him to bring the car to the downstairs entrance of their brownstone. He took Tess's hand in his and they went down the stairwell to street level. Neale stood on the sidewalk opening the passenger side of the limo for them.

"Where to tonight, sir?"

"Not far, Raven in the village. You don't need to wait there for us."

"You won't require a lift back?"

"No."

Neale gave him a puzzled look.

"As you wish, sir."

Daniel thought on the way over, with the traffic they probably could have walked and gotten there quicker. Being out among the mundanes was never about that. It was all about how the entrance was made. The only way to immediately get respect in New York City was to show up in a vintage black limo with of course; a driver. This said you were part of the elite. The old money that ran the place since it's beginnings. Neale opened the passenger side for them. There was a line out of the door and twisting around the building. A familiar friend met them on the street beside the limo.

"Your password sir?"

"Hey Jamal good to see you, Uh password? Oh yeah, New Haven."

"Thank you sir, good to see you as well, Follow me."

Jamal muscled his imposing self through the crowd leaving plenty of room behind him for Tess and Daniel to follow.

Daniel noticed the interior of the club was nearly identical to the one in New Haven. It was almost like all the furnishings had been transported and set down in New York City. Daniel pictured in his mind what he wanted to accomplish that night. A pair of dark haired men walked over to them. They were finely dressed in black tailored suits with sheen to them. The taller of the two looked like he was Italian. The shorter had slightly a more Asian appearance. Daniel heard a voice to his mind.

"I'm Salvatore and this is Chu Wang." he said, extending his hand.

Daniel shook his hand.

"Good to meet you. Are there any seats left?"

Salvatore motioned to the side of the club.

"Yeah, over there."

They found a semi-circle booth facing the bar.

Salvatore didn't waste any time.

"I've got some disposables in mind for you. The punk mundanes I'm thinking of roam the streets at night terrorizing whomever comes across their path, but they are partial to tourists."

"Nice touch, brother. "

Chu Wang smiled

"No problem. Make them sorry they ever came across Kate Hartley."

"No doubt, Done."

Tess sat up straight in her seat. Daniel heard from her mind. *"Wait, what are they talking about? What is this about my Mom?"*

Salvatore and Chu Wang looked at Daniel without a word, not willing to say anything if Daniel didn't want them to. Daniel put his hand on top of Tess's.

"Kate came to New York City a couple months ago looking for us. Pretty much a week after we left. She made the mistake of going out alone at night. She got mugged by a gang of mundanes. They took all her money. That's the only reason she went back to New Haven."

"They just took her money, she's okay, right?"

"Yeah, they roughed her up a little. Enough to scare her and get her money, but that's all. She's okay."

Tess looked down and took a deep breath. Chu Wang slid his cell phone across the table to Daniel. Daniel caught it and noticed it was set to GPS coordinates in Manhattan.

"Chu Wang knows these guys. He used to be Chinese mafia like them, so he knows their patterns." Salvatore said.

Chu Wang pointed to his cell phone.

"They'll be around Times Square tonight. You're dressed just right to attract them, they'll have a hard time resisting the two of you out alone. They're looking for the super wealthy who usually don't report them or fight back. You know, people that are uber rich and don't give a crap about giving a donation to New York City while they are here. They're all about easy money and not the fight. Walk around some alleys. I'd say you won't have to go far, in fact they'll probably find you first."

"What do they do if someone does fight back? They gotta be armed." Daniel asked.

"They carry guns and knives. Mostly for protection. They won't use them unless they have to. It's more time in prison for killing during a robbery. But I wouldn't put it past them."

"They'll wish for prison--" Daniel said.

Salvatore interrupted.

"--Ha ha nice hunt to you both." Salvatore and Chu Wang got out of the booth and stood beside Daniel and Tess.

"Thanks Salvatore, good meeting you, Thank you Chu Wang." Daniel said.

Salvatore and Chu Wang tilted their heads toward Daniel with discreet acceptance then turned and quietly left the booth.

Daniel turned to face Tess.

"Remember you told me to bring it on? Well, it's on."

Tess smiled. *"Umm, Yeah I kinda figured."*

"You're not nervous at all, are you?"

"No."

"This is why I gotta love you."

Daniel kissed Tess full on the lips and grabbed her hand.

"Let's go."

The light from the signs and streetlights of Manhattan reflected off the wet sheen of the black asphalt. The rain had come and gone while Daniel sat in the club Raven plotting their hunt. Walking in the night streets of New York City with Daniel moving closer to Manhattan, Tess felt an uneasiness welling in the pit of her stomach but it was overshadowed by the blur of undistinguishable conversations in her mind. So many thoughts she didn't want hear. They became louder with every street corner they took a turn at. She couldn't help gripping Daniel's hand tighter. It was the only thing keeping her from screaming at no one. The no one which was every single mundane she walked by to make them shut the fuck up. He looked at her then he stopped walking. He put his hand in front of her to keep her from walking any further. Daniel motioned to his ear. She heard him louder than the others in her mind.

"Can you still hear me?"

"Yes. But it's not easy, I--"

"I know. Just concentrate on my voice now."

"Okay." Tess said.

"Can you hear me better now?"

"Yes."

"You have to only see the white triangle now. I'll take you where we need to go. You have to see it and nothing else until I tell you. Don't lose sight of it for even a second."

"Okay."

Tess's eyes were wide open. The city in her peripheral vision melted down a pure black canvas. She replaced it with a pulsing triangle of a soft yet blinding white light. The corners of it alternated between being close to her, then further away. Its lines changed from a solid beam to a chain then back to lines of light. It was mesmerizing and it was there for her. There was no way she could take her eyes off of it.

Daniel knew he would have to be Tess's eyes and also protect himself. She was too inexperienced to feed while shielding herself with the triangle. It had taken him years of trial and error to learn it. When he looked down to the end of the alley in front of him he saw four figures in the darkness. He turned his back to them and pretended to scroll through information on his cellphone. They walked side by side and began to move closer until they passed underneath a spotlight aimed from the side of a building. The tallest stood in the middle. They stopped halfway down the alleyway and the tallest in the middle looked Daniel over from head to toe, sizing him up. Tess grabbed Daniel's hand looking into space above them as if she were blind. He was amused internally. How he loved her instincts. She was adding to the illusion that they were lost and helpless tourists.

The one in the middle smirked.

"Tell her to throw her purse to me." he said, pointing at Tess.

"Uh, she can hear you. I think you should come closer, you know we could just start running right now."

He tilted his head to the side and moved his jacket. Daniel saw the gun tucked into his pants. "Fuck you...Bitch, throw me the purse."

Daniel pulled Tess along with him a couple more steps into the alley. He dropped Tess's purse and his wallet at his feet. Daniel heard him weighing the options in his simple criminal mind, gripping the gun handle so tightly his knuckles became white. He quickly moved to pick up the wallet and purse all the while with his eyes glued to Daniel. Tess grabbed his arm when he rose from the ground to spin and run. The columns of indigo light coming from Tess's eyes hit him so hard the light splashed off of his face and behind him, alerting the others. They rushed up to help. He was motionless facing Tess. The wet night air released the sound of the

gunshot slowly. The bullet stopped inches from Tess then turned mid-flight and hit one of them in the leg. Another one fired a shot. When the same thing happened, they looked at each other in disbelief then without a word all of his backup turned and ran. Daniel ran after them.

Tess could see his shadow moving closer to her. She heard the pulse of life echoing, vibrating in her body. She dropped her head back and took a deep breath in. His heartbeat became hers. The black canvas of her mind's eye came alive with color. Awash with so much detail, a sharp pain made its way to her temples with a jutting stab of misery. Then the visions came on with a vengeance. In the first she saw him as an Egyptian queen's favorite, protected in a life of privilege. She sought comfort in his arms after the death of her husband, Pharaoh Djed. They were together many years until her death loomed closer. She promised him they would rejoin in the afterlife. He willingly left life allowing himself to be buried alive to follow her. Tess saw him accept his fate when the last torch in her tomb extinguished. She saw him in the chair she had the royal artisans create for him as the centuries turned him to dust. No embalmer came to preserve his remains, which bound his essence to continue its journey, never finding her. In the next he was a Samurai warrior until his hastened death from being discovered in a secret affair with the empress consort to the emperor. The third and last doomed him in the karmic chain for giving his loyalty to the wrong side of a cause. He was a kamikaze pilot in WWII. He flew to his death and was born again immediately. His present life on the streets, stealing from and victimizing the weak, a constant torture leveled for the third. He had little will left to live. He held on to her when she tried to break away from him. Tess almost felt obliged to end his suffering. She kept feeding until she heard his heartbeat weakening and the visions stopped giving way to a white empty canvas in her mind's eye. She shook from the concentration of living energy from his body in hers and from what it all meant.

Chapter 37 – In the Way

Sara O'Duinn, Grimoire Entry, 15th November, 2008 - I opened my eyes forcing their sealed state away. Lorelle was there with me disoriented and too weak to leave my body. Weary of my fight back to consciousness with a strong singular purpose she could no longer deny. I gasped for air as if it were my first breath. My vision was cloudy at best. Scanning the room, I saw sleeping people who were somehow familiar. I connected with the only pair of eyes staring back at me.

“Sara?”

A pool of collected saliva choked my efforts to speak. A dark haired woman walked over to me with a washcloth. She looked familiar but I wasn't sure if she meant me harm. I moved back from her in the bed.

“Sara, it's okay. I won't hurt you. Do you remember me?”

A woman with small scatterings of gray in her dark brown hair came into focus. The sight of her became comforting. I slowly recognized she was Claire O'Duinn, my mother. Claire moved the hair to the side of my face; her eyes spoke volumes to me before she said a word.

“Mom?”

“Yes that's right, I'm your Mom.”

“Where are we?”

“You are at home. You have been here for almost a month. This is the first time you have spoken since you were brought here. Our family is all here and we have been so worried. I'm so glad you are back, Sara.”

“There is a reason I'm here. But I can't remember why. I need to remember why...now.”

“You need to rest. Don't push it. It will come back to you.”

My last conscious moment came back in a rush of shame. It was as frustrating to me as when it happened. Lorelle watched with me as Sorin assaulted me with a concentrated psychic malevolence she would never have dreamed he was capable of. The veracity of his attack on me was such that even Lorelle his maker couldn't justify it. She too began to believe it was just, my wish for his destruction should come to pass. His descent

into evil from the power of the Psyon had come full circle. I could do nothing but try to neutralize him and protect myself. I also recalled who else he meant to harm.

“Tasha? Who is she?”

“She is your best friend.”

“Tasha is why I'm here. I was trying to protect her.”

“What? Okay, maybe you need to lie back now and calm down.”

“No. Where is Tasha now?”

“I don't know, maybe at home.”

“We need to just go.”

“Sara, you are recovering from a serious attack. Most of us wouldn't have the strength to be speaking so soon. I'm so glad you came back to us,” she said tears welling into her eyes. They streamed down to pool in the smile lines of her face.

“Mother, we need to find Tasha and perform the ritual. With her help, I know we can--”

“--Sara, I have something to tell you. I wish I didn't have to tell you now.”

“What mother, what is it?”

“Tasha is lost to us.”

“No Mother, you don't understand. She will never be what he is. He wants her soul for this reason. I saw his mind. I know what he plans. We have to go to her and help. He has never had to face more than one of us at one time. If we stand together and help her fight she has a chance against him.”

Chapter 38 – Another Century of Life

"What the hell have you done?" Daniel said, walking up to Tess.

She looked at him somewhat bewildered, releasing the lifeless arm of the young man he had left her with to deal with the others. When he left they were both standing and Tess was reading him, feeding from him and he was alive. Daniel couldn't hear his heartbeat anymore and became livid. He didn't know if she could see the world around her yet. He snapped his fingers loud in front of her face.

"Can you see me? Answer me, dammit Tess."

She slapped his hand out of her face.

"It was an accident, Daniel. He wanted to die. He wanted me to."

"Holy shit, that doesn't matter. It doesn't mean you do it!"

"Well it's done isn't it?"

"Yeah exactly. That's my point. Fuck! Now we have a body to deal with." Daniel said, running his hands through his hair. "Your DNA is all over him too."

"Do we still have DNA?"

"Yeah, I guess. Crap I don't really know." Daniel said, beginning to fast walk away.

Tess followed him trying to talk and keep up with his pace.

"I read him you know. From what I saw the cops would thank me."

"Yeah? It doesn't mean that there won't be some hysterical mother leaning over him crying her eyes out for the cameras. Or that we're not officially in deep shit."

"We? You didn't do anything wrong."

Daniel was so busy thinking of what to do he didn't notice Tess stopped trying to keep up with him. When he looked back she was holding her hands to her ears in what appeared to be pain. He walked back to her. She looked at him and waved her hand as if she were trying to hear something.

"It's alright. Go there. Go where you need to. I'll call for the car."

Tess called the triangle to her mind's eye as soon as she was aware of the presence. She saw herself in the tumultuous black storm of her consciousness. She stood still, her hands clenched with focusing her will. She saw a woman approaching from the distance in a flowing blue dress. As she drew closer, Tess noticed it was made of blue velvet inlaid with small pearls around the neckline. She suspected it would have been quite the fashion long ago. The woman didn't pause for a moment when stepping through her triangle. She had a kind and inviting manner about her. Nevertheless, Tess stood her ground. Tess took an involuntary step back when a wall of transparent indigo light appeared in front of her. She looked around and realized it was surrounding her, separating her from the woman and it wasn't something she created.

"You have taken a mundane for a century of life."

"It was an accident."

"I assure you, it was not. It was a task designed to bring you to us. Your instinct tells you something has changed?"

"Yes, who--"

--I am Lorelle, Daniel's guardian among the elder turned." Lorelle's hand came through the radiant wall surrounding Tess to touch her. The fortress of blue light fell to the ground.

"Daniel's guardian? Then why are you here?"

"You are absolved of this kill and will take your place with the elder turned. I have been chosen to guide you, to show you all you are capable of."

"Why can't Daniel help me?"

"You have surpassed his status. From now on it is your charge to teach him."

Tess smiled.

"I want a meeting with the elder turned."

"All in good time, Tess. First it is essential you demonstrate to me some level of control. They will not allow you to be among them without it."

"I don't have time. I need to help my mom."

Lorelle took a deep breath and stepped back from her.

"It is what we are working toward."

"Okay, okay. I'm sorry. I'm listening."

"You must focus and keep a reign on your anger. It is imperative you learn to project your mind's eye into reality or you are too vulnerable."

"I'll do anything you ask. Just help me."

Tess saw Daniel approaching them in her mind.

"Tess."

"Good Daniel, you are here. We will need your help."

"We are back at the brownstone. What's going on? Why are you here, Lorelle?"

"Tess has taken a life. And one who once was exalted in the karmic chain. She is an elder."

Daniel looked at Tess as if someone had knocked the air out of him.

"What are we supposed to do when the body is discovered?"

"She was very fortunate, this time. Everyone who once cared for him is gone."

"And the police?"

"I doubt they will believe the story a witness would tell. Were there any others?"

"Yes, I fed from them. They won't remember anything for a while. That is, if they make it home."

"Good, then relax Daniel. We can move on to the task at hand. There is no time to waste.

We have to be prepared for what is to come with the chosen."

"The chosen?"

"They are the hidden who chose the bargain. The Psyon have split into two factions. They turned rather like the new freedoms afforded by your mother's release of information to the internet. The chosen neither understand or want the change that is happening. They believe staying hidden is the key to power. They do not realize humans are evolving and so shall we."

Chapter 39 – A Life Remembered

Sara O'Duinn, Grimoire Entry, 21st November, 2008 - Somehow Tasha felt protected in my garden. She went there to forget the inevitable. There were no minds to invade her thinking. She found a sense of peace in wishing for the calm of her friend.

The silence of Tasha's hiding place was shattered with Sorin's voice to her mind.

“I had no quarrel with your friend. She sensed my presence in your life and sought me out.”

“You fed from her so deeply it caused catatonia. Why did you let me go to her knowing what I would find?” she replied.

“She did not understand the bond we share. I cannot tell you what it is to be Psyon. I wanted you to see...to know, to feel the pull of it...the power. You need not worry for your friend. She will recover.”

“Will she be the same Sara I knew?”

“Yes, but for a time with no memory of the witchcraft she used for harm.”

“Sara would never harm anyone without a good reason.”

“Do you remember Tasha, I gave you the chance to have me walk away, never to see you again?”

“Yes--”

“You could not resist because you did not want to. I believe your soul spoke to me for a reason. You secretly wished to no longer live life as a victim. You wished so much to escape the fear of human life...your subconscious took over with the resolve to feed from me. Now that you will be transformed and shed this affliction, you question it?”

“No it's not true! What if I've changed my mind? What if I want to continue life the way I was?”

“Tasha, if I do not transform you it means certain death. The Psyon will kill you simply because you know of us.”

Her time was short. He was on his way to Tasha. His progress as he read her was remarkable. He was not far and she was in no way prepared.

“No, just a moment more...please, Sorin.”

“You are becoming weak and should feed soon, to Psyon you are beacon they cannot resist.”

“Good, maybe they will find me and end this,” she said defiantly.

She saw him then in the clearing with a red glow swirling to cover and envelop him. His anger with her compelled him to speak aloud. “Still you speak of ending your life...a life in which you will have equality for the first time in centuries. I do not understand. Why do you not regard this as a gift, a new beginning?”

“How did you take the sacrifice of your soul so lightly? Is that how you thought of it? As a new beginning?”

“Yes...but I was deceived.”

“Yes Lorelle. She is where all this began. You need us. Yet above all is to control us. It's why you loathe women to this day. That's what makes it so easy-- lying to me now.”

The full force of his anger was revealed in the white hot pain of him plunging into her body. Begging was no longer an option. Tasha's body was immobilized. Her mind's eye turned to a black swirling canvas. At first, she thought she was dying and seeing the culmination of events in her life. It was Tasha, but in another time. She was curled up in a trunk on top of a king's ransom in jewels. The air inside was thin. Her breathing was shallow. She was weak and hungry after a long journey. The jewels scratched and punctured her skin. Still, she didn't dare make a sound. The carriage containing her hiding place stopped. A muffled conversation took place between a regent and his servant outside. Tasha listened carefully to be ready if she was discovered within the wooden chest.

“You have checked the contents of the shipment then?” said the regent.

“Yes it is secure,” replied the servant.

“And what of the wine?” the regent questioned.

“The wine has been tasted and is the most outstanding of the region, my Lord,” said the servant.

“This has been done well in advance of arrival, I trust. All tasters are well?” asked the Regent.

“Yes, my Lord,” said the servant.

“Very well, couriers will arrive within the hour to take these to the court of the Marquis de Vallado.”

“I assure you this wedding gift will find favor. His Highness assembled the finest Hungarian craftsmen,” said the servant.

The footsteps of one of the men led away into the distance. Tasha let out a silent breath of relief then passed out from the pain in her legs. The pain of being rolled up in an inhumanly taut position for days.

She woke abruptly when daylight returned to her eyes. Her heart sank with shame at the sight of the open trunk lid. Standing over her was a man with a confused expression. Two other men rush to the front of him.

He looked at them with frustration then pushed them away.

“She is but a child. Stand aside...Come child to my court, I am sure they are as interested as I am to hear how you became part of a wedding gift to the King,” he announced.

She removed herself from the trunk stumbling to stand. Tasha curtsied deeply as she was taught to do in respect for royalty. Tasha knew there was little time to show him she was not simple gutter trash to be dismissed.

“Please, my Lord...I meant no harm,” she said looking up to him from the ground.

He walked to her raising Tasha from the ground with his forefinger underneath her chin. His demeanor and tone changed.

“You must be hungry. Maidservant, see to her wounds,” he said with a snap of his fingers.

He looked into Tasha's eyes, surveyed her face and smiled.

“When your strength returns, then we will speak.”

The maidservants bathed her in rosewater. They dressed Tasha in clothes of such quality a smile finally returned to her face. She dined on food fit for nobility all the while rehearsing what she would tell the Marquis in her head. Instead of a court hearing, they led her to his chamber. Tasha prepared herself to yield to the advances she expected he would demand in return for such kindness. He walked to Tasha and held her hands out from him to take in the change of her appearance from their first meeting.

“Ah yes, beautiful. I knew there was beauty hiding beneath the defeated expression.”

Tasha nervously cast her eyes down unable to suppress speaking her mind.

“Why do you entertain the tales of a maidservant my Lord?”

He moved to his chair directing his attention to a bowl overflowing with pomegranates sliced on the half. He ate heartily while speaking to her.

“It was nothing short of bravery, my dear. I could not ignore one with such a desperate will. Now, how is it you came to me?”

Tasha chose her words carefully as she was speaking to royalty. In fact, he was a direct relative of the same royalty who brutalized her for years.

“I was spirited away by a gracious Lady in waiting of Her Highness Queen Bathory's court. My Lord, I witnessed unspeakable acts of cruelty,”

With her brevity, he leaned forward to press Tasha further.

“You must speak of them now, my dear,”

“Her Highness is not in her right mind...She kills maidservants for their blood. I am witness to many who were tortured then killed.”

Tears streaked Tasha's face with the years of suffering in silence drifting away from her. He walked to Tasha handing her a linen handkerchief finer than any she'd seen. So fine, she could barely bring herself to use it.

“My child, you are without guilt and still rationalize her behavior as an affliction. You are a remarkable young woman. Consequently you have saved many lives. Do not worry for those you left behind. Your Queen, Her Highness Elisabeth Bathory will answer for her crimes soon enough. Until now I have heard only the hushed fragments of gossip throughout my court. I had not for a moment believed these abhorrent rumors to be true. Your escape and coerced account has served to convince me. I will not hear of her madness again,” He replied reaching to ring a small bell on the table beside the bowl now scant with half eaten pomegranates.

“Maidservant, take my Lady to her quarters,” he commanded.

Tasha's heart jumped at hearing someone refer to her as “My Lady”.

“My Lord?”

“Character such as this is rewarded in my court. I will recommend you to my Queen as her Lady in waiting. When she learns what I know of you, I have no doubt she will agree,” he replied.

Tears streamed down her face, Tasha walked to him. She was at once relieved and astonished by the decision of the Marquis.

“Thank you, my Lord.”

He took her hand in what Tasha thought was for a kiss. But he did not lean toward her hand. His grip became crushing and she found struggling to move away from him was impossible. Deep cobalt streams of light radiated from his eyes to find hers. She was paralyzed by the pain of him entering her body. The thought crossed her mind that she hadn’t survived years of injustice to be saved and then die at his hands. She heard his voice to her mind.

“Yes, child it is unjust. Now...rise up and feed from me. You are chosen to gain the power of your mind over them. You will become their master. No one will ever harm you again and you will never die.”

A stream of violet light plunged to his body from Tasha with such force her hand was ripped from his. She knelt on the ground. The bruises and punctures on her arm healed. The beating of her heart slowed then ceased. Visions flooded past the black slate of her mind. The endless faces of those she fed from were shown to her one by one. Though none with the fear she had witnessed from the visions of Sorin. She saw herself feeding from others with the same violet streams of light that accosted the Marquis and Sorin. A life unknown to Tasha split into two pieces by her conscious mind to protect her sanity. In one, she was Natasha Cross. In the other, a Child of Psyon who lived since she fed from the Marquis ages ago.

With the truth of her existence finally known, the visions ceased. Tasha saw Sorin again in front her and the power of her mind and body returned. She saw the triangle form again in her mind, only she wasn’t forming it. It turned to focus square on Sorin with a blinding white light. A surge of his deep red energy flowed into her. He couldn’t move. His grip on her weakened. His essence drifted into the hot white and violet of Tasha’s energy. The connection wouldn’t break no matter how hard she

concentrated on it. The look on Sorin's face was one of complete surprise. She questioned his mind. He was silent. He turned his head to slip from consciousness.

She shook him hard.

“Sorin, what is happening!”

“A woman rewarded by the Psyon and protected with elder status. It is why...I could not read you. Yours is not a life I cannot take.”

A wicked smile drifted to his lips with the last message his mind conveyed to her.

“You are bound to me, Tasha. I will find you in the next--”

The charming smile which was so much her undoing turned to a vacant stare. His body lifeless in Tasha's arms, the remaining red glow of his presence joined the surrounding mist. Within minutes all that remained of Sorin was a smattering of dust on her legs. Her body shook first with the realization that she had ended his life, then anger ending in confusion. A willow of an arm enveloped in a white light extended in front of Tasha's face to help her stand. She rose and turned to see it was me. My family stood behind her in the clearing surrounded by the same white light. The sound of their collective heart beat coursed through her head for the first time.

Chapter 40 - Judgment

Kate knew her days were numbered. She decided to start living each one like it was her last. She walked out to the beach and sat down with her coffee from the bed and breakfast she checked into the night before. The waves rushed in and waned back on the beach soothing her. There was nothing else that could calm her quite like losing herself in the rhythm of the ocean. In an instant, she thought her decision to leave New Haven was the only one to make. If she were there, she'd be depressed beyond belief not to mention in even bigger fear and dread for her life. She remembered the flash of events which made her leave. Nori's parents found her number on his cell and contacted her. It seemed to her he had quite the falling out with his family. They didn't know very much about him to call random people on his phone contact list. His mother was the one who told her. Nori had passed away. He was found dead at the auction house. She said he died of natural causes, an aneurism. Kate thought without a beat at the time, yeah right. They pressed him, the Psyon wanted to find her and he wouldn't give her up. She felt it was her fault. Nori died defending her. This she just knew. Kate also knew he'd want her to do everything she could to defy them. And so far, at least eight weeks into her journey she was doing just that.

She never stayed anywhere more than a day and night and if she became bored less than that. Then she was off to where ever her heart desired. A mist began to roll in from the distance. Kate watched it for a moment mesmerized by its undulating curves just above the water. She thought it odd it didn't stretch the entirety of the bay. It wasn't until then she realized it wasn't something from nature. She got up and turned her back on the beach running as fast as she could back to her room at the inn. Kate heard Sara's voice behind her.

"You can't run from the Psyon Kate. They are one mind away from finding you."

Kate stopped running. Her arms fell to her sides.

"Really, who's mind, Sara? Everyone I know is either dead or missing."

"I am not Sara. I know where your daughter is. She sent me to bring you to her."

Kate turned to the voice she heard. She lowered her head to glare at the entity with full on rage.

"She won't answer any of my calls, texts or voicemails...I go where I KNOW she is and...she sends you to get me...Who are you?"

"I am Lorelle."

Kate's rage was appeased somewhat by her curiosity.

"I read about you in Sara's grimoire."

"Yes, I know. I also know you plan to expose the Psyon."

"You are Psyon. Why aren't you here to kill me?"

"The Children of Psyon have split into two factions. There are the chosen who knew full well their contract and chose the bargain. The other is the turned, empath's who were turned against their will.

Kate could feel her face redden and her eyes well with tears. Her hands balled up into fists until she could feel her fingernails digging into her palms.

"Is that what happened to my daughter?"

"Yes. She is with others of her kind learning all she can about how to survive."

"This is all Daniel's fault isn't it?" Kate said, sitting down on the soft lawn below her.

"You must not blame Daniel. He tried to leave but she would not allow it. His inexperience and her determination combined are to blame. It was by accident she became one of the turned."

"Why didn't she call and talk to me?"

"She feared the chosen would find a way to you."

"I can't stop what is going to happen, neither can they."

"It is a chance we would rather not take. Come with me. I have a car waiting."

"You'll take me to Tess?"

"Yes."

"I'll go get my things."

"There is no time for that. Things can be replaced."

Kate startled out of a deep sleep with the light touch of Lorelle's hand on her shoulder. It was the best sleep she'd had in months. She was stressed beyond belief but still managed to

sleep so deeply she forgot where she was, why she was there and even who she was for a moment. Kate sat up and looked out of the car window to see the scenery changing from rural to suburban and then into the beginnings of the city. It all came rushing back. She was going to see her daughter and confront the miserable beings who took her. Then the white hot pain to her temples began. She wasn't surprised. She almost relished it. A migraine was just what she needed. Getting them always made her angry. She needed to be angry. She needed the courage to fight them.

"I need to prepare you for the reception you will get in New York."

"What do you mean?"

"You have some notoriety among our kind."

"Well of course the Psyon know who I am."

"Not all Psyon, just the turned. We have guarded your identity, the elder turned from the chosen Psyon. And while you are in our charge we can block them from finding you...for the time being. It is easier if you are close to as many of us as possible."

The car pulled up to the curb of a brownstone. The side door swung open. The driver, Neale motioned to take her hand and help Kate out of the car. At once she was in a trance with the view of the new reality filling her eyes. New York City seemed as if it were nearly transformed in to a Psyon coven. Every other person looked like one. Kate was still able to distinguish the real ones among them. They were out during the day with their psi energy glowing bright around them, not even attempting to hide themselves. The most surprising of all was that there were more women Psyon than men. Kate's cell phone rang.

"Mom, you're here right?"

"Yes sweetie. It's so good to hear your voice. I'm glad you are here and I can't wait to see you." Kate said almost out of breath with excitement.

"I don't understand any of this...Anything that I am seeing."

"It's gonna be okay Mom, calm down. I'm okay, we'll explain it all to you when you get upstairs."

"So you're just okay?"

"Mom I'm really doing fine. It's just....different. I'm different. Go with Lorelle and you will meet up with our bodyguard Jamal on the way. I'll see you in a minute. I love you."

"I love you too, Tess."

Lorelle and Kate walked to the door of the brownstone and were met with a familiar face to Kate. She recognized him from the club in New Haven, the imposing man who was the bouncer there. They stepped into the entry of the brownstone. A young man ran up to them coming close to them alarmingly quick. He was tall and lanky with piercing dark eyes. Jamal stepped in front of Kate. Lorelle's light engulfed Kate and Jamal.

"Ms. Hartley, it's you right?"

Kate looked at Lorelle. She was so surprised at the question she didn't have time to deny it.

"I can't believe it's really you." he said, struggling to look at her behind Jamal. Oh come on, stand aside. I'm not going to hurt her. None of us would."

The young man reached inside his coat pocket and pulled out a copy of Kate's new book.

"I can't thank you enough for all that you have done for us, all of us. Would you please sign this?" he said, handing the book to Jamal.

The reason she hadn't been pursued by the Psyon finally began to soak into her. She was protected and the Psyon were in the midst of sweeping and profound change. She felt a mixture of relief, joy and curiosity. Kate no longer cared whether or not people believed the Psyon were real. There was really no reason they should. Unless there came a day when they needed her to put in a good word for them. Kate smiled signing the book and handing it back to the young man.

"Thank you." He said.

"You're welcome." Jamal said.

In one swift gesture he took Kate's hand and swung her to him away from Jamal. She felt the breath of cold steel grazing her neck. The white triangle of Lorelle's guardian wall of light fell to the ground.

"What do you want? And why do you threaten an innocent physically, it is sad and beneath you. Lorelle said stepping closer to him.

“Where is Natasha?”

"Sorin--" Kate gasped.

The knife at her neck came in tighter.

"—Sssssh. We will be alone soon enough.”

Sorin hissed softly in her ear. His calm and measured breath chilled her to the bone. She stood motionless.

"No matter. The ages are no matter. I told Natasha I would find her in the next. And here it is...my next."

About the Author

Samantha LeBrun is from Austin, Texas. She temporarily calls

Lincoln, Nebraska home with her daughter, Tess and three cats, Baby Kitty, Charlie Manson and Zander. She holds an associate's degree in business administration and has published articles for the web and print. Topics for articles include technology and travel.

Read more at [https://www.facebook.com/pages/A-
Requiem-
Eternal/271771086712](https://www.facebook.com/pages/A-
Requiem-
Eternal/271771086712).